

Share, challenge, grow: BCLA Mentorship Program launched

By Ana Paula Calabresi and Amy Ashmore.

One of the fundamental purposes of the library profession is the sharing of information and knowledge. With this end in mind BCLA's new mentorship program, launched this spring, aims to foster relationships between library and information professionals (and future professionals) throughout British Columbia. Forty-seven participants have signed on to have or be a mentor in the first 8-week session of the program, running through June and July.

Opportunity for learning and growth

This new association-wide program is open to those involved in all levels of library work. The program is aimed at new graduates, those new to BC, library students, and those involved a career transition or interested in exploring a different aspect of library work. Less experienced participants (mentees) are matched with those who have more experience in the profession (mentors), and pairs are invited to meet via email, by phone, in person, or online. Through the sharing of knowledge, experiences, ideas, and advice, the program is intended to function as an opportunity for learning and growth for both mentors and mentees. Besides developing new relationships and meeting new colleagues, mentors can practice and hone their leadership and coaching skills. Mentees can benefit from the program through meeting more experienced professionals and gaining practical advice on their chosen field of work and on the library profession in general.

Feedback

Feedback from participants and from the library community has been positive. One mentor stated that she wished there had been such a program

when she graduated from SLAIS: "I would have valued being paired with a mentor to answer my questions and share their knowledge," she says. She also hopes to sign up as a mentee in the next session "so that I can glean wisdom from professionals who have been honing their library skills for longer than I."

The mentorship program enables participants to network as well. One mentee, a first-year MLIS student at SLAIS, signed up as a mentee to learn more about the many career options available. She stated that her mentor "has been very good at sharing different things about her jobs with me and talking about different possibilities out there." Another mentee, a recent MLIS graduate, decided to participate in the program "in the hopes of gaining advice and guidance from someone who has experience and "insider knowledge."

Next session

The ultimate aim of the mentorship program is to encourage library and information professionals to continue to develop their knowledge base and professional connections, and to pursue personal growth. The next mentorship session will run in the fall of 2012, with applications being accepted in September, and the session beginning October 15. The Mentorship Program can be found online at <http://www.bcla.bc.ca/mentorship/page/home.aspx>, or contacted via email at bclamentorship@gmail.com.

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