

Why mentor? Two BCLA mentors share their experiences

By Amy Ashmore, Sarah Felkar and Caroline Johnson.

Have you ever considered being a mentor? The BCLA Mentorship Program connects and empowers association members by fostering positive relationships in the library community. The program encourages sharing, and aims to promote leadership and commitment to the profession. We caught up with two repeat mentors, Sarah Felkar and Caroline Johnson, to ask them why they mentor, and what they enjoy about the experience.

BCLA Mentorship: What made you want to get involved in mentorship program?

Sarah: I was a peer mentor when the program was first introduced, and just have kept on participating as I can. It is a low stress and fun way to contribute to the community.

Caroline: I remember how challenging it was when I first started out as a librarian. There is so much to learn about the profession that it can be daunting. I was lucky enough to have mentors then and wanted to pass it on. I find it very rewarding to work with new librarians. Plus I learn so much from them!

BCLA Mentorship: Was participating in the program what you expected, or was there anything that surprised you?

Sarah: I wasn't surprised, it is all about the chance to have good conversations with someone interested in the profession, and help them however they need.

Caroline: Initially I was surprised to find that it's very much a two-way process. I have experience and advice to share and they are up on the latest tech gadgets and library world news. Plus, it's a real joy to encourage someone to do what I love. Also, I found that it doesn't take up nearly as much time as I expected.

BCLA Mentorship: You've been a mentor multiple times. What have you enjoyed about the experience that's made you want to participate again?

Sarah: I like talking to people who are interested in the field, the new things that they are learning, are interested in, and interested in learning more about. It keeps me passionate about the field and engaged with the community. Plus library people are awesome people.

Caroline: As I already mentioned I love what I do and I'm delighted to share that with anyone entering the field. You get to meet great people and share your librarian expertise (who doesn't like that?). It's also really rewarding to see someone that you've mentored grow and progress in their skills and confidence. Several mentees have become colleagues, which is great too! Never hurts to be on the lookout for new talent in the field.

BCLA Mentorship: Do you have any advice for others considering mentorship?

Sarah: Do it! It is so rewarding.

Caroline: Do it! It doesn't take up much time, which is something that most people might expect. I've rarely had a mentee that wanted to meet more than once or twice. We do a lot via email. Also, it's really, really rewarding! Makes you understand why all the auxiliary instructors at SLAIS make time to teach! Thanks so much for the hard work done by the committee to match people together!

BCLA Mentorship runs two 8-week sessions each year. The Fall 2014 session is now underway, and the next session will take place in Spring 2015. More information about the program can be found on the web at: https://bclacconnect.ca/?page_id=928

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