

ACRL's New Member Mentoring Program

Make a commitment to professional development

by Melissa Cast

ACRL is launching an ambitious new initiative, the ACRL New Member Mentoring Program. The program enables new members to engage in a sustained, year-long mentoring relationship with a veteran ACRL member, who can provide advice, direction, and the perspective gained from experience.

In keeping with President Larry Hardesty's theme, "Celebrating our successes, confronting our challenges," the program also actively supports ACRL's goal to provide members with more opportunities for professional growth and development.



Chair of the Distance Learning Section Harvey Gover and Carol Mouldon have made many new contacts through ACRL.

ine one's own knowledge and beliefs from a fresh perspective.

This mentoring program offers participants the opportunity to experience all of these facets of teaching and learning, and, at the same time, it allows mentors to help colleagues new to the profession while enabling them to develop future leaders.

In addition, the ACRL New Member Mentoring Program complements existing chapter and divisional programs by allowing participants to expand their network of contacts throughout the association. It therefore has the potential to foster cooperation and interaction among all ACRL members, regardless of their length of service, specialty, or location.

As academic librarians, we all face similar challenges: changing roles, duties, and responsibilities; the emergence of new technologies; shrinking budgets; increasingly diverse populations; threats to access and intellectual freedom.

Mentors and mentees can benefit from engaging in a yearlong dialogue about these issues, and they can work together to explore ways of meeting these challenges within

Teaching, learning, and expanding your contacts

As academic and research library professionals, our primary goals are supporting the missions of educational institutions and helping our patrons fulfill their academic, professional, and life goals.

One of the things that makes education such a rewarding endeavor is the opportunity to teach, to experience anew the process of learning and discovery, to re-exam-

About the author

Melissa Cast is ACRL director of member services, e-mail: mcast@ala.org

individual institutions and within the profession as a whole.

The mentor program cycle

The New Member Mentoring Program will begin at the 2000 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago and will follow a regular annual cycle. Applications will be due in April, and ACRL staff will match mentors and mentees and notify each partner in May. Mentoring partners will initiate contact with each other at that time, and they are expected to maintain regular contact throughout the year.

ACRL will also provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to meet, outline the objectives and goals of their partnerships, and assess outcomes. At the Annual Conference, for example, ACRL will host a function where mentoring partners can confer, develop action plans for the year, and acquire support materials and additional information about the program. In August, each pair will be expected to complete progress report forms and submit them to the ACRL director of member services.

At the ALA Midwinter Meeting, ACRL will again host an information exchange meeting for all participants in the program, and mentors and mentees will complete a second series of progress report forms after the meeting in February. The program officially concludes at the next Annual Conference. We anticipate that some partners will wish to continue their association with each other after the program ends, but that decision will be entirely theirs.

Applications due May 10

ACRL is now accepting applications for the 2000–01 program; prospective mentors and mentees are encouraged to apply. Application forms and program information are available from the ACRL Web site (<http://www.ala.org/mentoring.html>); there are separate forms for mentors and mentees. Each applicant must submit a completed application form as well as a letter outlining his or

her reasons for applying; applicants should consider and describe the goals they hope to achieve through their participation in the program. All applications are due on May 10, 2000. Please note that ACRL cannot assume any financial responsibilities for participation in the program beyond hosting meetings at the Annual and Midwinter conferences; mentors and mentees bear responsibility for any other costs incurred.

Make the commitment to mentoring

We strongly encourage you to consider participating in this program. Mentoring relationships are extremely rewarding, and, contrary to popular belief, they need not consume large amounts of time. Two meetings at the Annual and Midwinter conferences and some

time throughout the year keeping channels of communication open should be sufficient. The success of the program will depend in large part on individuals' commitment to their own and to others' professional development as well as their willingness to share with and learn from each other. Help us plant the acorns from

which mighty oaks will grow; make a commitment to the future of our profession.

For further information about the mentoring program, please contact Jeff Bullington, Social Science reference librarian, University of Kansas, e-mail: jbullington@ukans.edu; Susanna D. Boylston, reference/instruction librarian, Lafayette College, e-mail: boylstos@lafayette.edu; or Melissa Cast, ACRL director of member services, e-mail: mcast@ala.org. ■



ACRL provides a place to expand your professional network. Here Cathy Moore-Jansen, Maija Lutz, and Sally Willson Weimer meet at the ACRL Leadership Council.

An opportunity to share

More information about ACRL's New Member Mentoring Program and applications can be found at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/mentoring.html>. The deadline for applications is May 10, 2000.

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