

International Council on Archives



Section for Records Management and Archival Professional Associations

DEVELOPING A MENTORING PROGRAM: GUIDELINES FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Significant challenges relating to generation renewal and professional development are being faced today by archives and records management associations. Many associations are in a situation where their membership profile is aging with younger members being reluctant to take on active leadership roles. In addition, both new and long standing association members are working in an increasingly challenging, complex and fast changing industry resulting in a situation where they often need help and guidance to enhance professional knowledge and contacts. One approach to address the needs of both an association and their members is to establish a mentoring program. Such programs can be seen as a form of continuing professional development and while they will not meet all of the development needs of members they can provide members with a form of professional enhancement which focuses on their needs providing them with advice, encouragement and empathy. Mentoring can be carried out on a formal basis (i.e. part of an association mentoring program), or informally (i.e. not supported by an administrative framework but rather a casual networking arrangement). These guidelines cover mentoring undertaken as part of a formal association mentoring program which will facilitate relationships between experienced association members and new or less experienced members.

Advice detailed in this document has been developed after a survey of existing association mentoring programs from information available online. The checklist and templates should assist any association wishing to develop a program and the case studies show a variety of approaches.

Definitions

Mentor – A mentor is an experienced professional who has worked in the archives/ records management field for several years, who has a good knowledge about the association, and who is willing to assist members seeking career development and profession growth. A mentor shares knowledge and experience, offers advice, facilitates networking and provides support to assist the mentee.

Mentee – A mentee is a member of the association who may be a recent entrant to the archival/records management profession, or a member who wants to move into a different area of the profession or enhance their professional development.

Mentoring program – Is an established framework designed to support the management of an association's mentoring program. A successful mentoring program has an accepted definition of mentoring and a clear purpose and set of expectations.

Benefits of an association mentoring program

Mentoring programs can bring a range of benefits to an association, a mentor and a mentee, including:

Benefits to an association –

- Increase members' understanding about the association
- Helps bridge the gap between long standing association members and new members
- Assist in developing potential association leaders
- Provides a professional development opportunity for members.

Benefits to a mentee –

- Provides professional formal and informal networking opportunities
- Assists in identify areas needed for professional growth and development
- Obtain new knowledge and insights about the profession
- Learn more about the role, work and structure of the association
- Can assist in clarifying career directions
- Provides regular and constructive feedback
- Provides access to a professional support system
- For the mentee that works as a sole archivist, or is geographically isolated from easy contact with colleagues, offers regular contact with a colleague.

Benefits to a mentor –

- Satisfaction from contributing back to the profession
- Assist in the development of future leaders of the profession and the association
- Provides a way of staying in touch to emerging issues relevant to less experienced professionals
- Enhancement of coaching and leadership skills.

CHECKLIST FOR ESTABLISHING A MENTORING PROGRAM

The following checklist details criteria that should be considered when establishing a mentoring program:

- ☐ Identify aims, objectives and scope of the program
- ☐ Decide on the duration of the mentoring program
- ☐ Define roles and responsibilities for mentors and mentees
- ☐ Allocate responsibilities for running the program
- ☐ Develop a problem solving framework
- ☐ Develop a promotion strategy
- ☐ Develop an evaluation and reporting framework
- ☐ Develop a mentoring program policy and guidelines.
- ☐ Produce documentation to support the program

Identify aims, scope and objectives the program

It is important to identify clear aims, objectives and scope of the mentoring program making sure it supports the strategic goals of the association. The purpose may vary from one association to another, but some examples include to:

- support the introduction of new members into the association and the profession;
- encourage participation in the affairs of the association;
- mentor members to undertake particular roles in the association;
- promote and expand the professional competencies of young archivists;
- provide ongoing support for established archivists working in isolated situations with no possibility of regular and ongoing professional contact
- support professional development.

Decide on the duration of the mentoring arrangement

Generally the time frame should be long enough to allow the participants to achieve their desired goals and objectives but not so long that the relationship becomes superfluous for either party. It is suggested that for a mentoring arrangement to be effective, the mentoring relationship needs to run for a minimum of six months. More effective results would probably be achieved with relationships of one year or more. Of course the relationship can continue after the formal program ceases and an ongoing relationship would reflect a good mentoring arrangement.

Define roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees

The roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees could include:

For the mentor:

- Together with the mentee, decide on the goals of the individual relationship. For example of the mentor it might be to pass on knowledge and share insights about the profession and encourage an active engagement with the association.
- Together with the mentee, decide on regularity, frequency and how contact will occur e.g. face-to-face meetings, phone conversation, by email or some other form of internet communication such as Skype.
- Keep the agreed contact commitments. The occasions when work or personal pressures stop this contact occurring, make sure the mentee is advised of the situation.
- Be a good listener and respect confidentiality.
- Show a willingness to listen and communicate with the mentee.
- Provide guidance, offer relevant advice and give feedback to the mentee when required. Don't feel responsible for solving problems (e.g. finding a position) rather tease out an issue or problem with your mentee encouraging them to find their own solution.
- Introduce the mentee to professional networks.
- Help the mentee explore career development opportunities.
- Understand your own professional boundaries and knowledge and be ready to refer the mentee to others who might have more knowledge.

For the mentee:

- Together with the mentee, decide on the goals of the individual relationship. For example of the mentee it might be gaining networking contacts within the profession to aid their future development and gaining an understanding of how the association operates.
- Together with the mentor, decide on regularity, frequency and how contact is going to occur e.g. face-to-face meetings, phone conversation, by email or some other form of internet communication such as Skype.
- Keep the agreed contact commitments. The occasions when work or personal pressures stop this contact occurring, make sure the mentor is advised of the situation.
- While the mentor will provide guidance, feedback and advice it is up to the mentee to take responsibility for their own development
- Be proactive in initiating contact with your mentor and asking for feedback and advice.
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained.
- Be willing to listen and learn.

Allocate responsibilities for running the program

A decision needs to be made on who should run the program and allocate responsibilities and a reporting framework. Options could include a committee, a coordinator or paid administrative staff. The person or committee will be required to:

- Plan
- Promote the program
- Recruit participants
- Receive nomination forms
- Match mentors and mentees
- Provide advice to mentors and mentees on the operation of the program
- Provide a central point of contact to support the participants
- Solve problems and issues that may arise
- Evaluate the program
- Write to participants thanking them for their participation
- Report on outcomes.

Develop a promotion strategy

A promotion strategy needs development to ensure that all members are aware and informed about mentoring opportunities. Suggested avenues for promotion include:

- Placing announcements about the program in association newsletters/ bulletins; on association listservs and websites.
- Hold information sessions about the program e.g. at association branch meetings and/or association conferences inviting past participants to discuss their experience.

Develop a problem solving framework

There are occasions when mentoring relationships do not work. This can be for a variety of reasons including problems with the mentor and mentee finding time to meet or make contact; a lack of personal connection between the pair, and differences between experiences leading to a lack of empathy. A person (e.g. the Program Coordinator or a Program Committee representative) should be identified as a point of contact for the mentor and/or mentee to approach when there are problems and to take responsibility for coordinating an approach to address the issues. Possible approaches could include facilitating discussions with each party or making a decision to abandon the relationship and re-match the mentor and mentee.

Develop an evaluation and reporting framework

Demonstrating the effectiveness and efficiency of a mentoring program is important in ensuring success and acceptance of the program by members. To carry out an evaluation, criteria needs to be established based on the aims and objectives of the program. It is suggested that evaluations be carried out half way through a program, and at the end.

Methods of collecting the information need to be determined, and can include seeking feedback through an evaluation form or by interviewing the participants. After collection and analysis it is advisable to compile a report, including recommendations for changes, and submit it to the association's governing body.

Develop a mentoring program policy and guidelines

Once decisions have been made on the points outlined in the checklist it is suggested that a written policy and guidelines be developed and promoted within the association so that the philosophies and key operating principles are known and understood and can be referred to by both mentors and mentees.

Develop documentation to support the program

Key set of documentation is required to support the program including:

- Application form(s)
- Welcome letter for the mentor/mentee
- Evaluation form

See the Appendix for examples of these documents. (The welcome letter and the evaluation form are based on those used by the Australian Society of Archivists).

CASE STUDIES OF ASSOCIATION MENTORING PROGRAMS

Australia – The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)

The Australian Society of Archivists conducts a bi annual mentoring program. Information on the scheme is located on the Society's website at - <http://www.archivists.org.au/asa-mentor-scheme>

Aim – The aim of the scheme is “to encourage archivists to be active professionals”. It offers a partnership where both parties, mentors and mentees, can benefit.

Objectives – The following are the objectives of the scheme:

1. To discuss career options
2. To facilitate contacts/networks
3. To overcome isolation (e.g. geographical or sole archivists)
4. To enrich understanding of the breadth of the profession
5. To increase confidence
6. To learn about roles of the ASA

Eligibility – All members are eligible to participate as either mentors or mentees.

Role of the mentor –

- listen and provide feedback, give information on different workplaces, arrange visits and introductions and refer the mentee to relevant reading
- introduce the mentee to colleagues at a branch meeting, refer them to SIGs of interest, encourage them to attend ASA social functions, and introduce the mentee to relevant listservs
- inform the mentee of educational opportunities such as workshops, conferences etc. and encourage participation, and give a reasonable level of technical advice
- encourage the mentee to write for journals/newsletters, assist with workshops, visit the mentee's workplace and encourage the mentee to give a tour for an ASA meeting, and encourage nomination for positions in the ASA
- explain the various roles of the branches, SIGs and Council, mention the ASA Members' Handbook, explain the role of the ICA and refer to relevant internet sites.

It is not the mentor's role to:

- find the mentee a job or give careers counselling
- arrange the mentee's social life, give personal counselling or assertiveness training
- give continuous advice on how to do a job e.g. daily telephone calls, supervision
- force a mentee to be an ASA office bearer.

Role of the mentee –

- request guidance about their professional development, education and training opportunities
- request information about the ASA and opportunities for further involvement in the Society.

Benefits for mentees –

- receive advice from an experienced archivist
- provides an opportunity for informal discussion of professional matters
- provides an opportunity to meet other archivists
- supports the establishment of informal networks
- increases knowledge and skills
- supports professional development
- provides an opportunity to understand other people's experience and different perspectives.

Benefits for mentors –

- satisfaction of offering support to another archivist, contributing to the development of the profession and contributing to another person's development
- provides an opportunity to receive feedback from another professional when offering training advice, to develop your own knowledge and contribute to your own development
- increased informal networks
- provides an opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas and information and an opportunity for reflection and discussion with a fellow professional
- provides an opportunity to improve the ability to share experience and knowledge

Program administration – The program is run by a Mentor Scheme Committee (2 people), who take responsibility for advertising the program, matching mentors and mentees, surveying participants on their experience and reporting back to the governing body of the Society. The program runs for 12 months but participants can continue the relationship after that point if they wish. General invitations are issued in the bi monthly ASA Bulletin, and on the listserv for mentors and mentees to participate in the program. Application is made to join the scheme by completing an online nomination form. Surveys are conducted mid year and at the end of the annual program to assess progress.

Canada – The Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA)

The Association of Canadian Archivists runs an annual mentoring program. Information on the scheme is located on the Society's website at -

<http://archivists.ca/prodev/mentorship.aspx>

Aim and objectives – The goal of the ACA's mentoring program is to facilitate the integration of new archivists into the Canadian archival community by matching them with mentors who may advise and guide them on work and career management issues.

The program is in keeping the ACA Vision Statement goal relating to education and research - "to provide strong and diversified professional leadership by developing, supporting, promoting and, where appropriate, delivering educational and training opportunities, tools and materials that are responsive to the Canadian archival community".

Eligibility – The program is open to new archivists who are members of ACA. Included are student of archival studies, recent graduate of archival studies, or those who have recently entered the archival profession.

Role of the mentor –

- communicate with the mentee on a regular basis during the mentorship period. If possible, one meeting per month is recommended, of at least one half hour in duration. This may be supplemented by phone calls and emails. In the case of geographic separation of the mentor and mentee, communication only by phone and email is acceptable
- give information relating to career and skill development
- listen and provide feedback
- reflect what is expected and valued in the archival profession
- respect confidentiality of the mentee.

Role of the mentee –

- respect the other commitments of the mentor (ie working around the mentor's schedule)
- respect confidentiality of the mentor.

Criteria for mentors – People selected for mentors should have:

- a minimum of 5 years active participation in the profession
- good interpersonal skills
- be open-minded, understanding and patient
- be trustworthy, supportive, advising and encouraging
- recognise mentees strengths to be developed
- recognise when mentees need guidance, and when they need to be independent
- be recognised as competent professionals by their peers

- have a keen sense of their work within the archival profession.

Program administration – The program is annual but it can continue after that if participants desire to do so. It is run by the ACA's Membership Committee with a nominated Program Coordinator from the Committee's membership. An optional orientation session is run for mentee/mentor pairs and a Mentor Breakfast at the ACA Annual Conference. An annual report is presented to the ACA Board and there is ongoing evaluation of the program. Mentors' and Mentees' join the program by completing an online application form.

Sweden – The Swedish Association of Archivists

The Swedish Association of Archivists runs an annual mentoring program referred to as the "Mentor Bank". Information on the program is available on the Association's website in Swedish at www.arkivsamfundet.se

Aims and objectives of the program

The goal of the program is to transfer knowledge and skill from experienced to young archivists and thereby promoting the professional competency of the latter. The program is considered as a complement to the theoretical education in Archival science at the university.

Scope

The program is open to all members of the association.

Duration of the program

A program lasts for one year. Each program starts with a meeting of all mentors and mentees and is concluded with a general seminar.

Role/expectations of the mentor

Through the eyes of the mentee the mentor gets new perspectives on his own job. Mentorship gives a good opportunity for the elder generation to have an insight into the expectations and challenges for younger archivists. The advantage is that the relation mentor-mentee is between two professionals in the same business with a hierarchical relationship but with quite a larger freedom than that between boss and employee.

Role/expectations of the mentee

The project has come to the conclusion that everything evolves from the mentee. If the mentee does not have the will to communicate, set goals for the relation and pinpoint what achievements are expected to come out of the relation, then it will not be a good idea to participate in a program like this.

Responsibility for running the program

The Swedish Association of Archivists runs a modest program. It counts about 5-10 mentors/mentees each program. It is run on a part-time job (25 %) by one person with

some help of working group within the association. It is the board of the Association that has the formal responsibility for the program.

Support for the program

Before the commencement of a program coaching is provided by a professional training on how to be a 'good' mentor.

Evaluation process

Each program is evaluated when it is finished every year by the mentors and the mentees at a general seminar. The Association sends in applications for sponsoring to funds each year. In that process the working group on the project reports to the board what has been done and what are the plans for the next year. It is the board that decides on how to proceed with the program.

Documentation is needed to support the program

The Swedish program includes documentation with advice to mentors and mentees and not the least the evaluation process.

Reporting structures

The working group is continuously reporting to the board of the association. Each year the board gets a report on what has been done and what the plans are in the working group for the next year. The association send applications to funds for sponsoring the program.

Promoting the program

The program is presented on the website of the association. At archival conferences in Sweden the association also promotes the program by distributing a booklet and also giving sessions on the program like at the last archival week in May 2008.

United Kingdom – The Society of Archivists

The Society of Archivists has a strategic objective to establish a mentoring scheme. Information on the proposed program is available on the Society's website at - <http://www.archives.org.uk/careerdevelopment/continuingprofessionaldevelopment/mentoring.html> It is noted on the website that there has been some delay in commencing the scheme due to "hesitancies from the membership".

Aim and objectives – The purpose of the proposed scheme is "to help and support people manage their own learning in order to maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be". It aims to support the continuing professional development of members.

Benefits for participants – Individuals within mentor/mentee relationships develop professionally through the transfer of experience and the opportunity to seek alternative

perspectives over the term of the relationship. Mentees are provided with career advice and enhancement.

Scheme administration – Administration of the scheme is the responsibility of the Continuing Development Sub-Committee.

Mentoring support for candidates on the Society's Registration Scheme – Support is also offered to members who are participating in the Society's Registration Scheme. This scheme if successfully completed over a period of 3 years, results in members being listed on the Society's Professional Register indicating that they possess both professional competence and experience and have demonstrated a commitment to continuing professional development. Details of this scheme have not been included in this document as it is designed to support a specific program objective rather than the type of general mentoring programs being targeted in this survey.

United States – The Society of American Archivists (SAA)

The Society of American Archivists conducts an ongoing mentoring program for their members. Information on the scheme is located on the Society's website at – www.archivists.org/membership/mentoring.asp

Aim and objectives: The SAA mentoring program aims to facilitate communication and to cultivate career development between archival generations. The program brings together members with expertise in subjects and members who want to build their knowledge within those subject areas.

Eligibility – All SAA members are eligible to participate as either mentors or mentees.

Role of the mentor –

- suggest appropriate continuing education coursework, workshops or annual meeting program sessions to help the mentee achieve career goals
- introduce the mentee to other professional colleagues; together, attend the Mentor/Mentee Coffee at SAA's annual meetings
- Serve as a resource for policies, procedures and other information.

Role of the mentee –

- request guidance about resumes, career goals, or continuing education opportunities
- ask for advice about sessions at SAA's annual meeting, or about how to become involved in SAA's committees, sections and roundtables
- explain and exchange thoughts on current trends in the archival profession.

Program administration – The SAA’s Membership Services section runs the program matching participants based on subject interest or geographic location. When a match is made, Membership Services notifies the member and mentee providing contact information and suggested guidelines. Together, the participating individuals determine their expectations and how to best structure their relationships. Participants are encouraged to stay in touch for at least one year. The relationship can be extended beyond this point. Members apply to join the program by filling in an online application form.

Records management program – The Records Management Roundtable of the SAA is currently working cooperatively with the SAA’s Membership Committee to partner experienced Records Managers with future leaders in the field.

A records management mentor is:

- willing to offer suggestions for networking opportunities, pursuit of employment and professional resources
- open to discussing theory and practice of the archival and records management fields
- interested in helping the future of records management strengthen and endure
- striving to refresh and further develop his or her own career
- eager to reap the personal and professional rewards available through the mentoring role.

A records management mentee is someone who wants to explore records management as a profession or learn more about the field. Mentees may be students, archivists or other information professionals who want to learn how records management can enhance their careers, of those new to the field seeking guidance from experienced records managers.

APPENDIX

Examples of nomination forms

Australia – The Australian Society of Archivists

Mentor Scheme nomination form (both mentor and mentee) -

<http://www.archivists.org.au/files/forms/ASAMentorSchemeNominationform2009.pdf>

Canada – The Association of Canadian Archivists

Mentor application form - <http://archivists.ca/downloads/documentloader.aspx?id=7266>

Mentee application form - <http://archivists.ca/downloads/documentloader.aspx?id=7267>

United States – Society of American Archivists

Application form (both mentor and mentee) -

<http://www.archivists.org/membership/mentoring-app.asp>

Minimum requirements for a mentoring program application form are:

Name of mentor/mentee

Address

Telephone number

Email address

Preference for a Male or Female mentor/mentee

Preference for the geographic region of mentor/mentee (i.e. in the same home location, or outside the location)

Preferred form of contact – e.g. phone, email, meeting

Number of years in the profession

Name of current employer

Whether the preference is/ or is not to be matched with someone in the same workplace

Number of years in the association

Areas of interest

Example of a welcome letter to a mentee

Dear [name]

I am pleased to welcome you to the [name of the association] Mentoring Program. I hope you will find the experience an enjoyable and fruitful one. You have been matched with:

[Name of Mentor]

[Address of Mentor]

[Phone contact of Mentor]

[Email of Mentor]

Enclosed you will find a copy of the Mentoring Program Guidelines including a description of the aims and scope of the program, the benefits you can expect from joining, and an outline of the roles of mentors and mentees.

Your mentor has been sent your details and we have asked him/her to make first contact.

It is important to think about and discuss the ground rules and responsibilities you both want to set for your relationship at an early stage. Ground rules can include things like how often you will meet or be in contact, confirm that confidentiality will be adhered to, and what you expect to gain from participating in the Program.

The Program will be supported by the [name of association] for 12 months and we will contact you for feedback of the progress of your mentoring partnership in 6 months. At the end of the program we will contact you again and ask you to complete an evaluation form and invite you to provide any ideas you may have for improving the Program.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the Mentoring Program at any time during the next 12 months please contact:

[Name of Association contact person]

Once again, welcome and the best of luck to you and your mentor.

Yours sincerely,

Example of a welcome letter to a mentor

Dear [name]

I am pleased to welcome you to the [name of the association] Mentoring Program. I hope you will find the experience an enjoyable and fruitful one. You have been matched with:

[Name of Mentee]

[Address of Mentee]

[Phone contact of Mentee]

[Email of Mentee]

Enclosed you will find a copy of the Mentoring Program Guidelines including a description of the aims and scope of the program, the benefits you can expect from joining, and an outline of the roles of mentors and mentees.

Your mentee has been sent your details. As a mentor we ask that you make first contact with your mentee.

It is important to think about and discuss the ground rules and responsibilities you both want to set for your relationship at an early stage. Ground rules can include things like how often you will meet or be in contact, confirm that confidentiality will be adhered to, and what you expect to gain from participating in the Program.

The Program will be supported by the [name of association] for 12 months and we will contact you for feedback of the progress of your mentoring partnership in 6 months. At the end of the program we will contact you again and ask you to complete an evaluation form and invite you to provide any ideas you may have for improving the Program.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of the Mentoring Program at any time during the next 12 months please contact:

[Name of Association contact person]

Once again, welcome and the best of luck to you and your mentee.

Yours sincerely,

Example of a Mentoring Program evaluation form

[Name of association] Mentoring Program Evaluation Form

Did you find that your participation in the Mentoring Program met your expectations?

How have you benefited from your participation in the Program?

Did the mentor/mentee match your expectations? If so, what aspects did you like about the match? If not, how could the committee have better matched your requirements?

What, if any, problems did you encounter?

Did you find the guidelines provided useful? If not, how can they be improved?

Can you suggest any improvements to the nomination form?

If you were a mentor, would you participate in the scheme again?

If you were a mentee, would you consider mentoring?

Any other comments on the Program?

Thank you for your participation