**Developing your staff in a cross institutional mentoring program**

**ABSTRACT**

Monash University Library with six other Victorian academic libraries, CAVAL and State Library of Victoria have implemented and completed a cross institutional mentoring program, facilitated by Linda Betts and Associates.

The program originated from a mentoring scheme that was developed and successfully run at Monash University Library in 2010. In 2011 Monash University Library partnered with the State Library of Victoria to broaden the initiative to staff of both organisations, providing opportunities to extend the mutual understanding of and interaction between the two libraries.  The joint program was positively received and at its completion feedback reiterated that one of the key elements to the program's success was the interaction and building of relationships with other professionals from another institution. In 2013 the program was further developed with input from Linda Betts and Associates, Victorian University Deputy Librarians and CAVAL to include the State Library of Victoria and seven university libraries in Victoria and Tasmania.   A key objective of the cross institutional mentoring program for the organisations is to develop senior and middle level managers as part of a strategy to improve professional development, staff satisfaction and succession opportunities.  A particular emphasis has been placed on developing the people management skills as an extension to high levels of existing technical skills and knowledge.  The joint mentoring program offers an approach to staff development that builds on other opportunities such as formal training but in a manner that provides one to one support. Expressions of interest were received from forty eight mentors and sixty mentees. A working group with representatives from each institution along with the consultant, Linda Betts was established. The group matched forty mentors and mentees from across all institutions, except Tasmania. The group also developed three networking workshops to support and engage with the mentors and mentees throughout the seven month program.  The networking workshops include a panel of guest speakers discussing their experiences on topics such as career progression, the future of libraries and leaderships styles.

The cross institutional program was completed in November 2013 and a report on the outcomes and benefits of the program to the 2014 ALIA Conference will be important step in continuing to broaden the program, encourage further participation in the program, and to encourage others to set up a staff mentoring program.

The first Cross Institutional Library Mentoring Program conducted in 2013 as part of a collaborative partnership between CAVAL, Monash University, State Library of Victoria, University of Melbourne, LaTrobe University, RMIT University, Victoria University has now been successfully completed. This collaboration was built upon a previous cross-institutional mentoring program conducted in 2012 between the State Library of Victoria and Monash University Library. The 2013 cross institutional program was extremely successful and the program is currently running again in 2014 and has been further broadened to include other Victorian academic institutions.

Background:
Monash University first started the mentoring program in 2010 within the Library based on the University's senior women's mentoring program. Monash University Library (MUL) offered the mentoring program in the first instance as a way to develop mentoring skills of the senior leaders in the Library. Linda Betts & Associates developed and ran a compulsory mentoring skills development workshop for all senior staff of the Library. Senior Library managers agreed that mentoring was a key skill that every manager and leader should have. Of the 30 senior staff that completed the workshop seven agreed to participate in the program as a mentor. The first program consisted of 7 mentors and 7 mentees. The number of mentors participating limited the number of mentees that could be accepted into the program. The Library based mentoring program was successfully completed but demand from mentees in particular meant that for the program to run again an increase in the number of mentors was required.

Library management agreed to broaden the program to include an external organisation but remain within the profession. The State Library of Victoria (SLV) was chosen to participate in the program as a strong partnership had developed between senior staff at the two institutions. The benefits of broadening the program to include SLV led to increased participation rates from mentors and mentees; new professional networks developed and staff were exposed to different institutional practices and ideas. The program also provided further opportunities to progress discussions on other staff development activities including the possibility of sharing position vacancy information, implementation of a secondment program and providing combined training opportunities.

The joint program with SLV and Monash University was well received and as predicted there were far more mentees (26) who expressed an interest in participating in the program than mentors (13). Fifteen matches were made and once again the program received very positive feedback. SLV and Monash agreed to broaden the program to further include other academic libraries. The Victorian Deputy Librarians group expressed interest in participating in the scheme and the cross institutional mentoring program was launched. Monash University provided a mentee from a previous program to speak to interested universities about the experience and benefits of the program which was well received and perhaps instrumental in some of the universities participating in the program.

Why mentoring?
The mentoring program provided an opportunity to share expertise and experience of librarians across the sector with the intention of improving career development, staff satisfaction and succession opportunities. The mentoring model used for the cross institutional program was based on providing a mutual learning opportunity that built on existing knowledge and skills and particularly provided opportunities to broaden professional networks across the sector. As well, mentoring offers a mechanism for

emphasis to be placed on developing the 'people' management skills as an extension to levels of existing technical skills and knowledge. Importantly the timing of the mentoring program was intended to offer support and development for librarians facing the challenges of a rapidly transforming sector and discipline.

Studies indicate that potential benefits for the organisation include increased productivity and performance as staff further developed skills and knowledge relevant to the organisation, discovery and utilization of talents, attraction and retention of quality staff, learning and behaviour change and fostering of shared values. Results of Kammeyer-Mueller's review on mentoring research 'demonstrate that mentoring does have substantial effects on career and job satisfaction, although factors such as core self-evaluation, tenure and education also have strong effects'.

A recent paper by Ross incorporates a review of library-related literature in academic libraries. He refers to a number of case-studies and observes that 'all mentoring programs, whether formal or informal, continue to evolve'. The benefits to mentees, mentors and organisations are also discussed by Ghouse and Church-Duran, in their paper outlining a mentoring program at the University of Kansas Libraries. The basic principle of the mentoring partnership being initiated by the mentee and then guided by their personal and individual goals is emphasised across the literature. Murphy states that organisational benefits include succession planning and the preparation of both experienced and new professionals for re-deployment in emerging service areas. For individuals mentoring provides additional value through networking and learning through multiple developmental relationships.

The earlier paper co-authored by Hallam (Hallam and Gissing) describes a mentoring partnership between Queensland University of Technology and ALIA for students in the Graduate Diploma of Library and Information Studies program. The later paper by Hallam and Newton-Smith focuses on the evaluation of mentoring programs. The research undertaken by Ritchie and Genoni showed that career-development outcomes were significantly higher in mentoring program participants.

Program overview
The mentoring program was overseen by a Cross-Institutional Library Mentoring Program Reference Group. The CAVAL Human Resources Interest Group, assisted with the communication and selection of a coordinator from each institution to form part of the Reference Group.  Administrative support and coordination was also provided by CAVAL. The networking sessions and training was facilitated by Linda Betts a consultant with extensive experience in developing and implementing mentoring programs and training. Linda also provided expert advice throughout the program to the Reference Group as well as to mentors and mentees. The Reference Group met regularly to determine and develop:
- a communication strategy;
- key messages;
- consistent use of terminology;
- objectives;
- participant selection criteria.

The Group also had to work out how to address discrepancies between the number of potential mentors and mentees; matching of mentors and mentees and coordination within each institution and the topics for the networking sessions.

Over 100 staff from across the participating institutions expressed an interest in participating in the program with an overwhelming response from mentees – sixty

four mentee applications were received and forty seven mentor applications. Forty mentors and forty mentees were finally matched after a lengthy selection process that contributed to by all members of the Reference Group and Linda Betts. Clear selection criteria and institutional knowledge was key to ensuring the matches were well made. The program was developed over a six month period with the program itself spanning seven months.

Training and networking sessions
The importance of the training and networking sessions for the mentors and mentees cannot be underestimated. Where possible each institution hosted a session and tours of the libraries were provided as an additional activity before or after the sessions. Linda Betts facilitated the training program and networking sessions. The mentor and mentee training workshops were held separately for each group and the following areas were covered:
- Expectations, concerns and the theory of mentoring;
- Roles, responsibilities and boundaries;
- Knowledge and skills to be an effective mentor and mentee;
- How to build effective relationships;
- Structure and framework of the process.

The mentor and mentee sessions ran for 3 hours and helped clarify the roles and responsibilities of mentor and mentee, particularly highlighting and discussing the differences between mentoring, coaching, counselling and friend; the theory and insight into the benefits of the mentoring program.

Once the training was completed the mentees initiated the meetings and communication with their mentor and determined the place and time for each meeting. On average the mentors and mentees met four to six times during the seven months.

During this time three networking sessions were held. The first networking session consisted of a panel discussion by University Librarians from the sector on the 'future of the library'; the second focussed on 'Careers in the Library'; and the last was on change management, particularly on people and styles, and was facilitated by Linda Betts. An informal opportunity for networking a break for refreshments was provided at each of these events. The importance of identifying topics of mutual interest for the mentors and mentees was critical. The high level of positive feedback from networking sessions that included an innovative leader or senior leaders in the sector to speak about their careers or the environment in which they worked was very powerful. The networking sessions were well attended and 63% of the mentees and mentors attended all three. Some of the key feedback included: how useful the programs were; the calibre of the speakers and the opportunity to talk to leaders and others in the profession.

Evaluation
Evaluation of the program took place at the end of seven months with two focus-group meetings organised and facilitated by Linda Betts, one with the mentors and the other with mentees. These sessions were followed up with an online survey of the mentors and mentees. The survey included questions on the benefits of the program to the mentor, mentee and the library; what could be improved and should the program run again. It is pleasing to note that the benefits identified by the mentors and mentees aligned with the benefits outlined by experts in the field.

Key benefits of the program identified by mentees included:
- Ability to reflect on career aspirations and pathways;
- Increased self-confidence;
- Better understanding of the sector and how other libraries work
- Career advancement, with four of the mentees having the confidence to apply for positions.

Benefits of the program identified by mentors:
- Increased knowledge about the industry and other libraries;
- Opportunity for self-reflection and building on self-confidence;
- Ability to listen and reflect on events and ideas;
- Career development opportunities;
- Developing trust in relationships;
- Networking opportunities.

One of the key issues raised by the mentees was the low level of confidence in the 'networking' component of the program and the challenge this presented for a number of people. Many of the mentees commented on how difficult it was to start a conversation with people they did not know and the time it took to develop connections and build relationships in a short period of time. The Reference Group has taken this feedback on board and will incorporate some skill development in this area in the 2014 mentoring program. An advanced mentor preparation session will also be provided to those mentors who have previously been involved in the program so they continue to be engaged in the program and expand their own knowledge.

Benefits identified by the by the mentors and mentees for their institution included:
- Exposure to new ideas and other ways of doing things;
- Positive exposure to leaders in the sector;
- Improved profile for their library;
- Overall benefit to the profession and sector;
- Increased knowledge of the sector and other libraries;
- Building more capable and engaged employees;
- Networking opportunities.

Lessons learnt from the cross institutional program:
The feedback received at the conclusion of the program was very positive, but running a program across seven institutions did highlight some logistical and administrative issues. Part of the success of the program was that the administration and coordination of the program was undertaken by CAVAL. The time and commitment required from each institution to participate in the program was also underestimated. The scheduling and setting of dates for the training and networking sessions also required significant pre planning. As the number of participants increases the coordination role becomes more complex and time consuming. The University of Tasmania was part of the initial interested group, but no applications were received. Distance was not seen as a deterrent for participating. Attendance by mentor and mentees at the preliminary training sessions is crucial so that everyone is aware of the objectives, benefits and expectations from the program. This is particularly true for the mentees who need to have a clear understanding of why they are participating in the program and what they expect to get out of the program. Other areas that need to be taken into consideration are:

- Encouraging more mentors to participate in the program
- Running the program for a specified period of time (generally 6- 8 months)
- Providing networking sessions for both mentors and mentees with specific topics for each session
- Providing advanced sessions for mentors
- Providing networking opportunities and developing the skills required to network
- Providing opportunities and workshops for the mentees to develop confidence
- The timing of the program is important to enable mentors and mentees to find the time to meet outside of key library activities such as the start of semester.

To further strengthen the program in the future all promotion needs to include a clear explanation about what is involved, who is eligible to apply and what the criteria are for acceptance. Some mentees appeared to have been 'encouraged' to participate as a means of performance management and experience is that this rarely works as a mentoring arrangement. For the program to work well participation from both mentor and mentees must be voluntary. The overwhelming number of mentees needs to be better managed from within each participating institution.  Further investigation is required to find out why more staff do not put themselves forward as mentors for these programs.

The current rate and scale of change within libraries provided an interesting context for this particular mentoring program. Future program planning will focus on the intended target groups for mentee applications, building the pool of mentors and assisting mentors and mentees in networking through structured introduction activities. The 2014 program will be further refined including the Reference Group setting a clear plan for the frequency and size of the program;  improved communication to all participants; mentee role clarity in the preparation sessions and ongoing skills development of the mentors in a reflective practice style of mentoring. All participating institutions have agreed that it was highly beneficial and the program will be run again in late 2014 with additional institutions participating.

Conclusion
In 2013, the Cross-institution Library mentoring program was conducted for the first time and overall the program was very positively received. The program is currently running again in 2014 with 9 institutions participating.  The mentoring program has enabled the development of collaborative partnerships; with staff learning from each other; gaining a better understanding of career pathways and the wider Library sector.   The success of the program is evident with a number of mentees now positively seeking to become mentors and a number of mentees applying for and taking up different positions. We would encourage librarians from across the sector to either participate in a professional based mentoring program or to develop your own cross institutional program.

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