

Historic Libraries Forum

Bringing together and supporting historic libraries

Mentoring

Mentoring supports people of all ages and stages to develop professionally. It unlocks potential, facilitates knowledge sharing and skills development, and enables both mentors and mentees to realise their career aspirations.

The Historic Libraries Forum has identified a demand for professional, career and personal development support among those working in historic libraries, or with special collections. Even if your organisation offers a formal staff development programme, you may feel isolated, either because you work alone, or within a small team in a small organisation, or, if you work in a large organisation, because your expertise and interests are not shared by colleagues in other departments. Whether you're just starting out or you're a senior manager facing new challenges or opportunities, you can benefit from the experience and support of another professional working elsewhere.

What type of mentoring is best for you?

Traditional

A more senior professional shares their experience and expertise to help you develop and achieve your goals.

Peer

A peer professional provides mutual support and encouragement and offers a different perspective.

Reverse

A newly qualified professional provides an opportunity for you to upskill and gain new perspectives.

In practice, all types of mentoring are reciprocal. As a mentee, you can improve self-confidence, develop knowledge and skills, build up your professional network, gain new perspectives, and identify and achieve your goals. Mentors are equally rewarded; you can develop leadership, coaching and influencing skills, improve your

communication, and gain personal satisfaction from helping other professionals achieve their goals.

The Historic Libraries Forum mentoring scheme is unique. It is designed to suit your needs, whether you're looking for ongoing support or want specific advice, for example to change roles or to develop a new skill.

Have you got what it takes?

Whatever your stage of career, you can be a great mentor. You do not need to have staff management experience. The best mentors are curious, non-judgemental, respectful of confidentiality and interested in other people. Mentors share their experiences, expertise, and networks; they listen, ask questions, challenge, and seek to offer a different perspective.

What happens next?

If you think you might be interested in taking part in our mentoring scheme, either as a mentor or a mentee, please complete an application form on our website:

<https://historiclibrariesforum.com/about/mentorship-scheme/> We will introduce you to a potential mentor or mentee based on the information you provide in your application. We find that most people prefer online mentoring via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, but we can try to match people within an accessible geographical area if necessary.

Getting started

We recommend you begin with an introductory meeting to see if you are 'a fit'. You will want to feel that you can trust the other person to be respectful, professional, and appropriately confidential. It is a good idea to agree a 'contract' (set out in an email) to establish boundaries and to confirm your commitment to the mentoring process. You may wish to consider:

Where will you meet?

If you are meeting in person you may wish to consider a neutral setting, such as a pub or café, rather than a workplace.

How often will you meet?

Once a month for a period of six months is typical, with the option to continue as and when necessary if both parties would like to do so. Alternatively, you may wish to 'meet' only via email – you decide!

How will you communicate between meetings?

Whether you decide to communicate by email (we recommend work email addresses wherever possible) or by phone you will want to agree when you are available to be

contacted, how often you wish to be contacted and what you can expect as a realistic response time.

How will you structure your meetings?

It is usual to begin formally but you may find that after a few meetings you can continue in a more informal manner if it suits both parties. If you are a mentee, you will usually set the agenda for meetings and suggest initial topics for discussion. If appropriate, you may wish to take brief minutes of your meetings, so you have a record of your progress and of any agreed plans or outcomes to review at your next meeting.

What are your objectives?

Mentoring is a two-way process. If a mentee, you should think about what you want to gain from the mentoring process, whether specific advice and guidance on a particular topic, support for developing your career in a particular direction or for identifying goals and objectives, or an opportunity to learn generally from someone with more experience and expertise. If a mentor, you will want to consider how you will encourage your mentee to explore ideas and solutions. If you are new to mentoring, you may wish to consider using the GROW model to support your mentee to achieve their goals.



When will it be time to move on?

We recommend planning the end right at the start. If a mentee, you will want to consider what your goals are and how you will know when you have achieved them. Successful partnerships can last for many years on an informal and irregular basis and at the end of your mentoring journey you may wish to stay in touch or agree to be contacted should the need arise – otherwise known as crisis mentoring!

Finally...

Mentoring is not to be confused with counselling and it is not advisable for an untrained person to undertake the role of counsellor. If your discussions seem to be moving in a direction that you are not comfortable with, it is best to stop.

Similarly, partnerships may not be successful for a variety of reasons. If this is the case, don't consider it a personal failure but let us know why you think the match was not successful and we will try to match you with someone more suitable.

Free online resources

CILIP Webinar - Reverse mentoring for equality, diversity and inclusion

<https://vimeo.com/417986940/50d5d5cdbf>

The Mentoring School

<https://thementoringschool.com/category/free-courses/>

GOV.UK website

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coaching-and-mentoring>

The GROW model for coaching and mentoring

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm