Mentoring in Victoria

Eva Fisch has details of this new initiative by ALIA's Victorian Branch

The Victorian Branch mentoring scheme was officially launched on 8 December to a large audience of library students, new graduates and many experienced librarians. Pauline Seitz, from the Hawthorn Institute of Education, was an enthusiastic speaker, drawing on her experience of introducing mentoring for staff at RMIT and the University of Melbourne.

Pauline believes that the entire mentoring relationship relies on trust and must be grounded in confidentiality. Mentors need to have good listening skills and may need to identify and articulate the mentees' wants. In some situations the mentee may be able to shadow the mentor, enabling the mentee to observe 'on the job' professional practice.

Of course mentees need to realise that the relationship depends on both participants asserting their rights and responsibilities. Mentees must be able to listen to alternatives receptively, be able to assert their own view, be willing to learn and hopefully be able to develop their own mentoring skills as a long term outgrowth of the relationship.

Some questions from the audience and Pauline's answers were: *How long should you meet with each other and how often?* Probably meet more often at the beginning of the relationship but negotiation is the key.

What if you don't get along? If you negotiate about meeting times, needs, and skill acquisition, this may not be such an issue.

How does mentoring differ from training? Mentoring is usually one on one, and is negotiated. Information aspects of the job and its setting are acknowledged.

Do you have to agree on expectations? Life is not like that! Flexibility and renegotiation are crucial; things may always change.

Is mentoring related to counselling? Mentoring is not counselling—if counselling is needed, negotiate a referral to a counsellor.

When do you bring in your professional networks? It is permissible to say you don't know and to refer the mentee to someone you know who does. The ALIA scheme emphasises introduction to professional networks as one of the basic advantages of the scheme.

What about cross gender mentee/mentor pairs? Mentoring schemes can have two major problems: within an organisation mentoring can be viewed as a form of nepotism, and cross gender mentoring has the potential to hamper the usefulness of the scheme due to unequal power relationships. The ALIA scheme can overcome those problems. It operates outside the power and gender structure of the hiring organisation.

When is the mentoring relationship over? You'll know. ∎

The mentoring working party and their consultant: (from left) Sue McKnight, 1994 Vic Branch Pres; Bea Donkin, Eva Fisch, Branch Councillor and Pauline Seitz, mentoring consultant.

Information Online and On Disc 95

Pamela Lloyd announces the call for papers for this conference

Information Online and On Disc 95, which is sponsored by ALIA's Information Science Section, will be on again from 31 January to 2 February 1995, at Darling Harbour, Sydney. Record-breaking numbers at recent past conferences have necessitated the move to this new venue. Already half of the exhibition space has been booked and over 1000 delegates are expected to attend from throughout Australia and the Pacific rim.

The theme for *Information Online and On Disc 95* will be: 'The Virtual Information Experience'. The conference, will include presented papers, poster sessions, exhibits, a CD ROM showcase and pre-and-post conference events. It will address the many issues arising from the development of online and on disc services, communications and networking technologies.

Innovative, theoretical and practical papers are now called for on all aspects of electronic information. Topics to be covered include: multimedia and imaging; user interfaces; search and retrieval languages; business, legal, scientific and medical information services; marketing information services and products; networked information and navigation services on AARNet/Internet; electronic document delivery; rethinking information management; innovative training approaches and technologies; electronic publishing and copyright; new hardware and software; CD ROM local and wide area networks (LANs and WANs); K–12 education information technology; changing system architecture.

Applications for papers are due by 30 April 1994, with abstracts of 300 words and speaker's biographical details. Send them to *Information Online and On Disc 95*, Australian Convention Management Services, PO Box 468, Paddington NSW 2021, Australia. Tel: 61 2 332 4622. Fax: 61 2 332 4066. Notification of accepted papers will be made by 20 June 1994. ∎