

ALIA NSW Mentoring Group – grass roots success!

Alyson Dalby, ALIA NSW Mentoring Group

As the end of my library studies approached, I heard more and more about the importance of mentoring. Mentoring is vital, I heard, to building connections vertically and horizontally through the profession, and was also an essential tool to ensure appropriate succession planning in a big picture kind of way. So I said to myself, 'Self, you need to get a mentor.'

But how? I worked alone in a small special library, and, more importantly, I was way too scared to approach anyone and say 'Excuse me, but will you be my mentor?' I didn't know anyone well enough to broach the subject, and certainly didn't know how to market such a prospect – what's in it for them?

And so, like all good ALIA members, I turned to my professional organisation. Unfortunately there was no mentoring program operating in NSW at the time, something that I raged about on the e-lists. Fiona Bradley raged along with me. Then Claire Hill got involved. Next thing you know, there were the three of us wondering whether we could start one.

It was remarkably easy. Rather than reinvent the wheel, we looked at what was happening in other states. Claire had some experience in mentoring in Queensland, and we adapted programs to suit our needs. By the end of 2004 we had ourselves the outline of a one-on-one mentoring program. And, even better, people signed up for it.

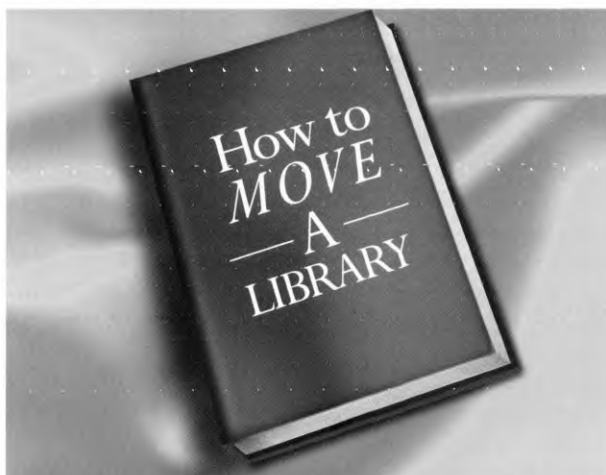
Now we're halfway through our second year of facilitating this program. Running it is simple, and rewarding. We're pairing up people who are continuing their relationships beyond the

group, and all they need is the occasional check-in from us. We run events, a dinner every few months, where all the mentors and protégés have the opportunity to meet each other, giving them a chance for a bit of group mentoring (and a whole lot of eating and socialising!).

To supplement the one-on-one program we developed Library Folk in the Pub. This was simplicity itself. Get a bunch of library folk all turning up to the same place once a month. Get talking, about anything. I must admit, it's not exactly scholarly debate (especially after a few beers), but it's a great opportunity to meet people beyond your immediate circle, and does encourage people to be further involved in networking and professional development activities.

Last year John Elias joined us to oversee the LFIP events. Unfortunately, both he and Claire are being pulled away from us by forces beyond their control (actually, really good opportunities, so we can't begrudge them that!). Fiona and I are looking for some fresh faces to join our committee as facilitators. You don't have to have mentoring experience, and you don't have to be in a senior position. It's a great way to learn about ALIA Group management, as it must be one of the easiest groups around to look after! ALIA PD points are accumulated for being on the committee or even just for being a part of the program.

We're really proud of the program we've established, and would like to see it continue beyond our involvement. If you're interested in helping us out, or would like to join the program for 2007, please contact me, at alyson.dalby@racp.edu.au or ph 02 9256 5413. ■



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