Proposal for a Mentoring Program
For The Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives

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Preamble

I am pleased to prepare this document, at the request of Grace Welch, President, ACMLA, for the purpose of providing some background, initiating discussion within the association, and proposing possible initiatives for the Association to consider for introducing a mentoring program.

Background

There is much literature on mentoring in general, however there is very little written about mentoring programs in libraries, and even less on mentoring programs affiliated with associations. However, several discussions with colleagues reveal that associations are beginning to establish mentoring programs, such as ALA, ACRL CLA. ACMLA is not alone nor are we trailing the pack. In fact, this quest is rather timely.

For the purpose of including a definition of *mentoring*, I like Marilyn Lary's:

> "*…a professionally supportive relationship between an experienced, successful mid-career employee and a beginner. It is a time-honored method of encouraging new talent, of sharing expertise and connections, and of providing rapid, upward mobility…*" (in Kuyper-Rushing, 1998.)

> And a mentor; "*An experienced and trusted* **counselor." (Oxford English Dictionary)**

Associations are starting to realize the importance of mentoring due to the changes in job tasks that are imposed on librarians; the specialty of the Map/GIS librarian in particular, and the realization that mentoring is a means of developing professional growth, and ultimately sustaining an association.

However, it is suggested here that the Association first establish the goals and objectives it would like to achieve from such a program since this is important when establishing guidelines and expectations for mentors and mentees. Also, it seems the term "mentor" is used rather loosely. I have learned from experts in the field that "mentoring" is unlike coaching, training, orientation, or providing advice. I quote Margaret Law, President Canadian Library Association, "mentoring is providing **perspective** on the profession, issue, or career direction, and encouraging professional growth". For example, library orientation programs or creating a contact list of association members who are designated specialists in an area of map librarianship (i.e. moving map collections, archival, GIS etc.) which new or existing members can refer to for direction or "how to",

is better described as "coaching" or providing professional support. This too, however, can be a beneficial element of the program.

In keeping with the ACMLA objectives:

> "To create and maintain an active communication network for the exchange of information among members and the cartographic community", and

> "To support the research and professional development activities of members through publications, conferences and seminars", (http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/assoc/acml/objectives.htm)

any mentoring program that promotes professional growth and fosters relationships between members should only strengthen the Association as well as the mentor. Mentors too can gain a fresh perspective on issues in return.

ACRL's *New Member Mentoring Program Workbook* provides some good background and FAQ's on mentoring — worth taking a look @ http://www.ala.org/acrl/mentorwb.html

Proposal

An established mentoring/professional support program can be introduced in a number of phases that include several elements. This is one example ACMLA might consider:

Phase 1: ACMLA New Member Mentor Program

Conferences tend to be the occasion for associations to introduce mentoring programs. They are usually aimed at new member and "first time" conference attendees but could possibly be open to anyone. A conference attendee simply signs up for a mentor pairing at conference registration. Ultimately this would be part of the registration mail-out form. The form should include some background information to ensure appropriate pairings. For example, years of experience, general interests, professional interests, type of library, etc. The following are examples from ACRL mentoring program:
http://www.ala.org/acrl/menteeap.html
http://www.ala.org/acrl/mentorap.html

Once the member has been paired with a mentor, prior to the conference, e-mail can be used for initial contact. During the conference, a meeting of a few hours is usually recommended. It is up to the mentee and mentor whether future communication is pursued. However, a one-year commitment from the mentor is usually the norm where a few minutes per month are all that is required. There is always the possibility that pairings just won't gel. However, conference mentors can also be someone that provides general advice and guidance just during the conference, such as which sessions to attend, introducing, networking, and encouraging participation, with no further commitment.

According to one CLA mentee, one of the advantages of conference mentoring is that she was paired with a senior librarian not associated with the same institution. Therefore, specific issues can be discussed freely.

Other conference suggestions for new members:
- icebreaker introductions
- workshop for new members
- session for new members FAQ; information sharing; orientation

The Association also may want to consider a conference workshop for the mentors.

Phase 2: One yr. cycle mentoring program
Eventually a more structured program could be introduced where partners maintain contact throughout the year on a regular basis, complete progress reports, and provide testimonials to the Association.

Phase 3: Web site enhancements
Not really considered a mentoring process, but web site enhancements can be used to provide professional support. For example, a list can be created which provides various topics of map librarianship with contact numbers or emails of librarians who have specialized in that area who are willing to advise, suggest and provide leadership. Following is an example from the MAGERT web site, "Ask a Map or GIS Librarian": http://magert.whoi.edu:8000/askmap.html
The Western Association of Map Libraries' *Map Librarian's Toolbox* developed by Linda Zellmer is one other example of providing professional support through an association's web site. http://www.waml.org/maptools.html

Implementation issues:
- encourage new members to participate
- recruit mentors
- educate participants about mentoring
- develop a well structured program
- establish expectations of both mentor and mentee
- initial program should be involved with the annual conference
- program requires a feedback mechanism for reporting experiences and evaluation
- web site design and maintenance

Bibliography/Further reading

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