RUSA HISTORY SECTION ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS COMMITTEE

MENTORING PROGRAM – GUIDELINES

June 16, 2020

1. The program is open to anyone who wishes to learn more about a career as an academic

history librarian. Should demand by mentees exceed the number of mentors, priority will

be given to mentees in this order: 1) members of RUSA History Section; 2) members of

RUSA; 3) members of ALA; 4) those employed in libraries

2. Mentors should be persons employed in libraries, with some duties related to research,

instruction, or collection development for historical research. Should supply of mentors

exceed demand from mentees, priority will be given to mentors in this order: 1) those

whose primary duties relate to history; 2) those with advanced degrees in history

3. Mentors may, if they are willing, be assigned up to three mentees

4.

Mentee Tip Sheet – adapted from ACRL

1. Keep communications open. You mentor will make first contact with you, but you should feel free to send messages back as
topics or questions arise. Tell the mentor a bit about yourself, professionally and personally.

7. Be prepared to accept honest feedback.

Feedback should be the starting point of further conversation. Ask questions to fully understand

your mentor ’s evaluations and advice. Do not feel like you must impress your mentor, but do

communicate your strengths, interests and skills. Give your mentor feedback and recognition for

the help he or she provides.

8. Be innovative and creative.

Be a resource for new ideas. Your mentor probably hopes to learn as much from the relationship

as you do.

9.Respect confidentiality.

Keep conversations between you and your mentor is private and confidential. Make sure this

expectation for confidentiality is clear and reciprocal: your mentor must also feel confident in

you maintaining confidentiality.

10. Address misunderstandings as they arise.

Communicate problems, issues, and misunderstandings within the relationship directly with your

mentor in a timely fashion.

12. Contact the Academic Librarians Committee with any questions or concerns during the

mentoring program.

Mentor Tip Sheet – adapted from ACRL

1. Keep communications open.

Contact your mentee as soon as you receive his or her name. Tell the mentee a bit about yourself,

professionally and personally. Listen carefully and ask questions for clarification when needed.

Reply promptly to messages sent to you. Consider setting goals for frequency of communication

with your mentee. If email communication seems to be breaking down, try a phone call to check

in and keep communication open.

2. Define expectations.

Establish clear expectations and ground rules at the onset of the mentoring relationship. Consider

writing down a list of realistic goals for the mentoring relationship together with the mentee.

Revisit and revise these goals together, and use them to evaluate progress over the course of the

year. Goals should be based on the mentee’s assessment of his or her ambitions and needs, as

well as your assessment of the help you can provide. You should also assess what you hope to

gain from the mentoring experience.

3. Take initiative and be an active participant.

Be proactive in all aspects of the mentoring relationship. Offer feedback and advice when asked,

but also feel free to introduce new ideas and opportunities to the mentee. The most effective

mentor-mentee relationships are built on mutual learning, so be open and alert to what you can

learn from the mentee. Ask questions, collaborate, experiment, have fun.

4. Foster a sense of belonging.

Through your relationship, help your mentee feel more included and valued in the library

profession. Emphasize commonalities with other librarians and encourage involvement with

professional organizations.

5. Be available / accessible.

Be available to talk with the mentee, answer questions, and provide advice. Look ahead and let

your mentee know if you will be unavailable for extended periods of time. Whenever possible,

plan on meeting face to face at conferences or other professional venues.

6. Be reliable and consistent.

Be careful and realistic about the commitments you make to your mentee, but always follow

through on those commitments. To be an effective mentor, you must keep your mentee’s trust.

7. Offer honest feedback.

Balance truth with tact in your evaluations, and always emphasize the positive. Remember that

your goal is to support and recognize your mentee’s progress and development in the profession.

8. Be innovative and creative.

Be a resource for new ideas for the mentee. Use your experience, but also ask for your mentee’s

help to research, brainstorm, and innovate.

9. Be aware of cultural diversity.

Value your mentee’s unique social, economic, and cultural traits and perspectives. Remember

that helping to foster diversity is a major concern of the American Library Association and

RUSA.

10. Be ethical.

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities – adapted from ACRL

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

Be Reliable and Adaptable ● Be available for questions/consultation as needed by mentee ● Communicate with mentee on regular basis ● Be open to modifications of mentor/fellow relationships if needed ● Recommended: Attend RUSA History Section functions/events when possible

CURRICULUM (suggested topics for discussion each month)

[there are many ways these topics can be ordered, as well]

We encourage participants to consider ways to foster equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout

their work

September: instruction and reference for history research

- How to design instruction sessions for history

- How to effectively deliver instruction sessions (in person and online)

- How to approach the reference interview for history

- Helping patrons refine research questions

October: establishing your presence on campus

- Identifying important contacts

- Outreach/publicity techniques

- Making connections

November: important resources for history research

- Primary source collections in print and online

- Indexes and bibliographies

- Important subject headings and classification numbers

December: collection development for history

- Significant publishers and vendors

- Identifying the best mix of access-vs.-ownership, print-vs.-electronic for your

library

- Weeding

January: guiding patrons in using archives

- Identifying archival collections of interest

- Registering as a user

- How to handle archival documents

- Accessing online archives

February: professional development—service

- Identifying opportunities to serve

- Deciding what to focus on

- How much committee work can you handle?

- How to be a good committee member/chair

March: professional development—research and presentation/publication

- Finding topics to write about

- Managing your time to allow for writing

- Finding collaborators

- Identifying conferences to present at

- Identifying journals to submit to

April: working with colleagues in other departments

- Understanding what acquisitions/cataloging/serials/electronic resources/systems

needs from you to make their work easier/better

- How to say “no” and maintain good relationships

- Supporting digital humanities projects

May: the job search

- Preparing a resume

- Writing a cover letter

- How to interview well

- When is it time to look for a new employer/ask for a promotion/apply to move up

within your organization?

Summer months (further discussion as desired by participants)

- Building good relationships with your supervisor (“managing up”; good

communication; when to take initiative)

- Maintaining productivity in an unstructured job

- Preparing to move into management