



Frequently Asked Questions

Why have an MLA mentor?

Mentors play a significant role in the lives of developing professionals by serving as a teacher, coach, counselor and role model. They provide feedback and encouragement, offer professional advice and help others make connections between their present performance and their future.

Who can be an MLA Mentor?

Any library professional with more than five years of experience who is a member of MLA can be a mentor.

Who can be an MLA Mentee?

Any library professional or library science student who is a member of MLA can be a mentee.

Is there a fee?

No, the Mentor Program is free for all MLA members as a benefit of joining MLA.

Who do I contact for more information on the MLA Mentor Program?

Amber Sheerin, Program and Event Director

3410 Belle Chase Way, Suite 100

Lansing, MI 48911

517-394-2774

asheerin@milibraries.org

How do I apply for the MLA Mentor Program?

Applications for the mentorship program are accepted in the Winter and Summer for Spring and Autumn matches respectively. Once the application deadline has passed all applications will be carefully reviewed by MLA staff in order to make the best possible mentor/mentee partnerships. Participants will be notified of their match approximately 2 weeks before the official start date so they can learn about their match and initiate the first introduction.

After I apply for the MLA Mentor Program, who will contact me?

After your application has been received and evaluated, you will be contacted by MLA to confirm your acceptance into the program. Once a potential match is identified based on areas of librarianship and interests as described on the applications, you will receive a Welcome Kit that includes your match's contact information, outlines the relationship timeline and includes ideas for getting your relationship off on the right foot, such as goal setting, activity examples and tips for success. It is then the responsibility of the mentee to initiate contact with the mentor. This is a period of your relationship where both parties begin communication and setup goals and objectives for the individual process.

What if I'm not comfortable with my proposed mentor or mentee?

Please tell us! Talk to us frankly if things aren't working the way you had hoped. If you haven't talked directly with your mentor or mentee about issues that are causing disagreement, do so. Often it will be a question of miscommunication that can be cleared up through open conversation. The next step would be to talk directly with MLA to discuss your options.



What if I cannot answer the mentee's questions?

Some questions posed to you by your mentee might not be in your field of interest or within your scope of knowledge. When this situation arises, we encourage you to share this with the mentee and forward their question to MLA. Notify the mentee that their question has been forwarded and that they will be contacted by MLA soon.

What will my mentor do for me?

It is up to the mentee to take the initiative to make the MLA Mentor Program a successful experience. Mentors offer information, support, feedback, contacts and ideas – but the mentee must take it from there.

What types of things should I ask my mentor?

The types of questions asked vary and there are no right or wrong questions to ask. When you first meet your mentor, ground rules should be set so that everyone in the relationship is comfortable sharing information. As a rule of thumb, if you are not comfortable asking a question or sharing certain information, don't!

What role does MLA play in the partnership after the initial match?

Once matches are announced and the program has begun, the impetus is on the mentee and mentor to move the partnership along and meet their set objectives. MLA will check in monthly with newsletters of curated content to help the partnership develop and avoid common pitfalls. MLA will also send evaluations at the conclusion of each phase to see how things are going and will send certificates of graduation to all participants after a successful conclusion to the formal program. If you ever have questions or concerns, you are welcome to contact Amber Sheerin, Event and Program Director, at any time.

Are there certain things I should or should not do as a mentor or mentee?

Always be open, honest and respectful with your mentor or mentee and the relationship and work you are doing together.

Are mentoring connections confidential?

In order to foster open and honest communication, the mentee must be able to trust the mentor not to disclose their discussions with others. Therefore, communication between the mentee and mentor will be kept confidential.

How often should I meet with my mentor or mentee?

The meeting frequency will vary depending on the needs of the pair. Meeting methods and content will also depend on individual needs and preferences – face to face, email, reviewing documents, giving feedback, etc. This is something the mentor and mentee should agree on at the onset.

Is my mentor available any time day or night?

Your mentor's availability and the best times and methods of getting in touch with him/her are items to discuss during your first meetings. You and your mentor should share your communication styles and specifications to ensure you have the best communication possible and set expectations in that area of your relationship.

Who can I go to if I have questions about the effectiveness of my mentor or the program?

Contact MLA staff with any questions or concerns. MLA will follow up periodically with both mentors and mentees to inquire how the relationship is progressing.