

SLAV's Mentoring Program

By Dr Susan La Marca

The Committee of Management of the School Library Association of Victoria has long recognised the depth of knowledge and experience held by our members. It has also been acknowledged that our profession can often be an isolating one, due to our unique role in a school. A great deal of the SLAV program – professional learning, publications and our excellent branch structure – works to bring members together to enable quality interactions that can lead to shared knowledge. The mentoring program is an initiative of the association designed to enhance the connections we currently have and to extend the reach of our highly able and professional membership outward toward each other.

The mentoring program will have two foci: to support current members and to closely mentor new members.

Current members

On our new SLAV website we will create a member-only, password-protected area for a range of resources that will be provided as part of membership of the association. One part of this new website area will be our new mentoring program space. This will be an area for current members to access lists of those who they can consult for advice, or direction, in particular areas of teacher-librarianship. All members will be invited to take part by offering a list of areas that they feel confident in – areas in which they could offer counsel and support to others wanting some guidance or advice. These collegiate relationships already occur in our profession; we have always been expert at sharing. What this new program will do is to formalise the links by offering our members a list of those they can approach for assistance in a range of areas. It is hoped the program will encourage connections that would otherwise have been difficult to create and will enhance the dissemination of knowledge amongst SLAV members.

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New members

Similarly, new members of the association will be offered the opportunity to be paired with an experienced mentor. This pairing will offer valuable support to someone new to the profession. It is envisaged that this relationship will be proactive, involving not just regular communication but also visits, advice and broad assistance. The aim is to have new members feel closely supported by someone who is knowledgeable in the field, while they focus on finding their way and establishing themselves in the profession.

A call for support

Anyone interested in being involved in either type of mentoring capacity may register their interest with either myself or the SLAV office. The new website area will be launched in the near future and we hope this initiative will be well received. We are aware of the wealth of experience that is held by our community and hope to make full use of the generosity that we know exists within our profession. We have all of the necessary ingredients at our fingertips. SLAV hopes to empower members by providing a formal structure to facilitate what could become valuable, collegiate support.

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