

# SETTING STAFF UP FOR SUCCESS WITH MENTORING

**C**urtin University Library in Perth has recently implemented a mentoring program for its library staff. DR JANE PRITCHARD reports on how the recently launched program aims to become a key resource to help new line managers and aspiring leaders to broaden their knowledge, skills and expertise.

This exciting mentoring journey began when a need to provide support to new line managers and aspiring leaders was identified. There was also an awareness that many staff were keen to expand their current skills and broaden their horizons.

A project team consisting of a diverse range of library staff (both library professionals and non-professional employees) was formed in 2016. The diversity of roles and skill sets of the project team members facilitated the successful development and implementation of the program.

The project team started work on the Curtin University Library Mentoring Program by carefully scrutinising the meaning of mentoring in the context of the Curtin University Library. Through this process the following definition was developed to facilitate a common understanding among staff:

'Mentoring is relationship-oriented. It seeks to provide a safe environment where the mentee shares whatever issues affect the mentee's professional and personal success. Although specific learning goals or competencies may be used as a basis for creating the relationship, its focus goes beyond these areas to include things such as work/life balance, self-confidence, self-perception, and how the personal influences the professional.'

The project team (in collaboration with library staff) took the approach of developing a mentoring toolkit, which is designed to self-guide the mentor and mentee through various steps in the mentoring process. It

*Participants in the Mentoring Program (from left) Barbara Parnaby, Diana Blackwood, Marilyn Coen and Kitty Delaney*

provides a framework and guidelines to assist the partners (mentor and mentee) in deciding between themselves the objectives and responsibilities of the partnership, and to establish the structure and parameters within which the relationship will operate.

Interestingly, stakeholder consultation identified that some staff members appreciate less detail, so a quick reference guide was developed to give staff the choice of using the mentoring toolkit (full version) or the quick reference guide.

Flexibility has been identified as a critical success factor in facilitating participation rates in the program and creating a focused learning approach. The mentoring toolkit and quick reference guide therefore serve to provide guidance only; mentoring meetings may be structured in accordance with individual wants and needs.

The Mentoring Program was officially launched for library staff in January this year. The launch was well attended and included an information session with staff in which Mentoring Program packs were distributed to all attendees. The packs contained the mentoring toolkit, quick reference guide and a few chocolates.

The program has created a lot of excitement, and to date approximately 20 per cent of library staff have expressed an interest in participating as a mentor or mentee. It is hoped that the library will reap the rewards of these relationships in the future.

Please contact me if you would like a copy of the mentoring toolkit or the quick reference guide. ✉

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