

Sample Supervisor Letter of Support L:
Assistant to Associate

Note: This is a sample letter of support from the supervisor of someone seeking promotion from Assistant to Associate. Every AP's role and career trajectory are unique, and letters must be tailored to their circumstances. As such, the sample letter that follows shows the level of detail and kind of examples that are useful as a candidate's application is evaluated. Letters of support are optional but are strongly recommended as part of the overall promotion nomination package.

[Date]

Dear Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for [Name] who is applying for promotion from Assistant level to Associate level Academic Professional. Writing as [Name]'s current direct supervisor, and as manager of [team], I wish to express in the strongest terms my support for this promotion. Below I've detailed the reasons for my support under the four criteria for AP promotion.

Overall Experience:

[Name] began to work for the [team] in [date] as [position] for [unit]. [Name] was hired to support the software and infrastructure that underlies the Library's IOPN services. This has involved supporting, and upgrading several instances of the Public Knowledge Project (PKP)'s Open Journal System (OJS), the electronic monograph publishing platform Pressbooks, the multimedia publishing platform Scalar, and the digital exhibit and collections platform Omeka.

[Name] is not only in charge of the technical support for these services, but is a key participant in consultations with the authors whose materials are published, helping them to understand the capabilities of the platforms and make informed decisions about which technologies to use. In Addition, [Name] has developed a number of new features for the IOPN platforms. All of the applications are open source software, and, in the majority of cases, the code [Name] has developed has been contributed back into the open source projects. As I'll detail below, [Name]'s development work has been a major benefit not just to our institution but to the open publishing community at large.

In addition to his regular duties as a developer, [Name] has also contributed to the UIUC Library and the Academic community in general in numerous other ways. His participation in the application and implementation of the related African American Studies Publishing Without Walls 2 (AFRO PWW2) and Black Book Interactive: B2Digital grants has been significant. He has also participated in numerous presentations both locally and at professional gatherings.

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[Name] has grown tremendously during his tenure here. He has been an extremely productive team member while developing both technical and non-technical skills to a high degree and contributing his expertise to the community. I have been deeply impressed by his proficiency in gaining new technical skills, and his talent for communicating what he knows to varying audiences. I feel he is more than ready for this promotion.

Professional Service:

[Name] has contributed to the profession in a number of ways beyond his day to day work as a developer. The IOPN service has been closely involved with the AFRO-PWW2 and B2Digital Grants, and [Name] has been a key participant in both. For the AFRO-PWW2 grant, [Name] has been crucial in advising authors on technical requirements, developing educational and technical guides, and conducting workshops on developing technical skills in the digital humanities. Additionally, for the B2Digital NEH Grant proposal, [Name] developed and wrote the Data Management Plan (DMP). Once that proposal was funded, [Name] continued his involvement providing technical consultation and some basic development of custom web components.

[Name] has also worked as a presenter and instructor sharing his knowledge both locally and in the wider community. Two of these presentations have been in the context of the Black Books Interactive Project (BBIP). In November of 2022, he conducted a workshop introducing a group of BBIP digital humanities scholars to HTML and CSS. In June 2023, he led an interactive session for BBIP fellows, also on the subject of HTML and CSS. [Name] has also presented on the AFRO-PWW2 program as part of a panel for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. In the realm of professional gatherings and conferences, [Name] presented on a module he developed for and contributed to the Omeka platform at the 2021 Library Publishers Forum in a presentation entitled "Developing a Press Approach to Omeka S with the Teams Module."

[Name]'s contributions to the research library community also include serving on the ALA Sustainability Round Table (ALA SustainRT). In 2020-2021 he led the Round Table's Website Refresh Task Force, a six person team that overhauled the web content and developed a workflow for managing the site and preventing stale or out-of-date content. [Name] also developed a tool to harvest and centralize information from social media accounts for the SustainRT homepage. For the 2022-2023 term, [Name] served as the Co-chair of the SustainRT Web Committee and piloted the implementation of the workflow developed by his Task Force during the previous term.

Also in the area of Professional Service are [Name]'s multiple contributions to open source software projects. I detail these in the Professional Knowledge section, as they are software features developed as part of his day to day developer duties, but [Name] has been committed to contributing these features back to the open source communities that develop the platforms on which IOPN services depend. As part of those efforts, [Name] has worked with the developer teams that manage the projects and collaborated to develop features that work not just locally but for the community.

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Professional Knowledge:

During his tenure, [Name] has developed and demonstrated his professional knowledge in numerous ways. This is most clearly visible in the major features he has developed for Omeka, Pressbooks, and Scalar.

For Omeka, [Name] developed a modular plug-in feature which allows the platform to better support multiple exhibits by separating administrative users into teams. [Name] has been specifically commended with a public note of thanks by the Digital Craft Archive.^[footnote link] For Pressbooks, [Name] has developed functionality for the dashboard used by authors, which is currently being considered by Pressbooks for inclusion in the project's main github repository. For Scalar, [Name] has worked on a user-friendly interface for academic footnotes. This feature is currently undergoing testing by Scalar developers.

In addition to the development of new features, [Name] has also contributed bug fixes to various projects. Some fixes he has contributed include a fix to improve map-based search for Omeka, a fix to Omeka's "Show Similar" feature, and a fix to OJS's authentication module that affected administrators' ability to manage users.

A major aspect of [Name]'s position involves maintenance work to ensure that the IOPN service's software remains up to date and that the underlying data remains stable. This involves ensuring our applications are running with up to date versions of the underlying platform and that operating systems and database servers stay updated. Among [Name]'s long-term projects has been to restructure the database infrastructure used by the IOPN platforms, so that all applications use the same relational database server software, production databases are more stable and properly isolated, and sandbox databases, which are used for testing, are easy to manage. [Name] has also spearheaded the deployment of an alternative to Google analytics for the IOPN services called Matomo, which allows the service to avoid being dependent on Google or another for-profit third party for analytic data. [Name] manages a local Matomo server, and the knowledge he has gained in doing so is likely to be highly valuable to the institution as Matomo has the potential to improve analytics for services outside of IOPN.

Institutional Leadership or Contribution:

[Name] has also contributed his knowledge within our institution through variety of projects and presentations. The ScaRS developers and Library IT's Infrastructure Management Service (IMS) have been engaged in a series of knowledge-sharing sessions, which have been informally named "Mindmelds." [Name] has taken the opportunity to present two topics for this series so far. In August of 2021, [Name] presented on editing Git version control history, a rarely needed but critical skill which allows sensitive data to be removed from a public software repository when it's accidentally been committed. In March 2022, [Name] presented the footnotes feature that he has developed for Scalar

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along with the development workflow that was used in producing the code so that it can be reviewed by other developers.

Outside of the Mindmeld meetings, [Name] has been active in sharing knowledge and expertise in a number of ways. In March 2022, [Name] delivered a second presentation on Git version control history to the university-wide “Caffeine Breaks” series of presentations for UIUC IT Professionals. [Name] has also helped supervise the development of an Omeka theme, KSharp, with collaborators in the Rare Book and Manuscript Library. This has included development, code review, interviewing end users and stakeholders, and providing training to collaborators.

[Name] is a key part of both the [team] and the [unit]. His knowledge, technical skill, and problem-solving ability are a significant benefit to the library. He balances these technical skills with an ability to communicate with great sensitivity and social intelligence both in person and in writing. He is a role model for our team and embodies the values of the University of Illinois Library. His experience and contributions exceed the criteria for promotion to Associate and I strongly recommend him for that promotion.

Sincerely,

[Supervisor]