The Indiana Librarian Leadership Academy:

Perspectives of Four Academic Librarians

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Abstract

The Indiana Library Leadership Academy (InLLA) was established in 2012 by the Professional Development Committee of the Indiana State Library (ISL). Modeled after the American Library Association's (ALA) Emerging Leaders program, the InLLA brings together librarians accepted into the program from public, school, academic, and special libraries throughout Indiana. A new cohort of librarians is invited each year to a week-long workshop in July, where participants are divided into teams to work on a year-long capstone project and facilitate InLLA group meetings via webinar. This paper chronicles experiences of four academic librarians from the 2013 cohort of the InLLA. It will highlight four different capstone projects for which each of the academic librarians contributed, respectively, with their fellow group members. This paper will identify the greatest challenges each respective group faced during their year-long collaboration, as well as the learning experiences of each author's participation in InLLA.

Keywords: Leadership, Libraries, Training of Librarians, Professional Organizations, Professional Development, Leadership Programs, Leadership Development, Academic Libraries, Career Development

Introduction of InLLA

The Indiana Library Leadership Academy (InLLA) was established in 2012 by the Indiana State Library's (ISL) Professional Development Committee to ensure the future leaders of Indiana libraries were prepared to handle the changing role and nature of 21st century libraries (http://www.in.gov/library/illa.htm). Modeled after the American Library Association's (ALA) Emerging Leaders program, invitees to the academy must enter a competitive application process. The academy consists of one week-long leadership workshop where participants covered leadership skills such as mentorship, strategic planning, communication, community, culture, public speaking, and advocacy.

Literature Review

A substantial number of articles on library leadership programs exist. Most of this literature is explanatory in nature providing program descriptions and motivations initiating the program. This is not a comprehensive literature review, but rather a sampling of articles from the library literature. This review focuses specifically on articles that include feedback or comments from participants of library leadership programs.

In "Leaders: Born or Bred?" Nichols (2002) discusses three leadership programs he attended: Library Leadership 2000 (now known as Library Leadership Ohio), Snowbird Leadership Institute and Leadership Medina County. Leadership Medina County, a local leadership program, provided the author with the opportunity to connect with leaders in his local community who are potential library supporters. This article stressed the importance of connecting with leaders outside the library profession whose perspectives may offer alternative experiences and knowledge to librarians seeking professional development. Nichols discusses how each program helped him develop as a leader and achieve his career goals, while also providing a support network, mentors, and a chance to learn more about one's own personality and leadership style.

In "Transition into Management Develops Library Leaders," Low (1998) discusses the Transition into Management program sponsored by the California State Library. The program participants cited increased confidence, development of a professional and personal support network for advice, and the opportunity for professional development as key benefits of the program.

In "Assessing Diversity Initiatives: The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Leadership and Career Development Program (LCDP)," Neely (2009) discusses the perceived impact of the LCDP institute based on the results of a survey administered to past participants. Many of the participants felt the program had a positive impact on their career progression. However, some of the participants noted that the program did not result in job changes or increased responsibilities.

As with other leadership programs, the survey respondents acknowledged the importance of the mentor, development of leadership skills, increased confidence and networking as benefits of the programs (Neely, 2009). Respondents also noted a change in how they approached their work and being more focused on advancing in the profession as program benefits.

In "Creating the Next Generation of Library Leaders," (Arnold, Nickel, & Williams, 2008) the authors also administered a survey to participants of various leadership programs. The survey results indicated that leadership programs instilled attendees with the confidence, to take on leadership positions, undertake challenging projects, as well as lead, and influence others without carrying a title that implied leadership. The survey participants also indicated an increased awareness of the responsibilities of chancellors, provosts and university presidents, as well as confidence in interacting with university administrators. In addition, respondents felt the programs helped librarians gain a better understanding of how libraries fit into their community, institution or organization. The program also helped them both develop a long range view of their career and define their career goals. As with other surveys, participants also cited networking and mentoring as key advantages of leadership programs.

Akbar-Williams (2012) discusses the benefits of the American Library Association's Emerging Leaders program in "In Order to Lead, you Have to Know What Direction You Are Going: Cultivating Well-Rounded Leaders is Staking a Claim on our Future." As a participant in the program, Akbar-Williams (2012) states that she learned the importance of having a vision for your career as well as the need to take stock of skills needed to develop as a leader. The literature review indicates that librarians feel that leadership programs are beneficial in helping them develop in their careers by providing a support group, leadership skills, training, and increased confidence in their abilities.

InLLA Capstone Projects
In 2013, the InLLA cohort participants were divided into four teams, each charged with developing a year-long capstone project with an all-encompassing goal of improving Indiana libraries. The four co-authors of this paper, representing the only four academic librarians among the original 16-member 2013 InLLA cohort, were dispersed equally among each of the four teams. The remaining members from each team comprised of public, school, government and special librarians.

Each team worked on their capstone project over the course of the following year. Group meeting schedules, communication channels, and tools used for collaboration were established by the individual groups based on what best met the needs of the members. As members of the InLLA cohort reside in all parts of the state, they needed to find ways to meet and communicate through virtual means. To accomplish these purposes, most teams used Google Drive tools, including Gmail, Google Hangouts, and Google Docs. Other collaboration tools included Skype, Photobucket, and email.

As part of the program, academy members presented their year-long team projects to the incoming 2014 cohort. A brief profile of each group's capstone project follows:

Group Name: **Conversation Starters**

Co-Author/Academic Librarian in Group: Madelyn Shackelford Washington, Public Services Librarian, Indiana University-Purdue University, Columbus
Other Librarian Types Represented: One government librarian, one public librarian

Project overview: Conversation Starters addressed the growing challenges presented by the information needs of a diverse and swiftly growing population of library users, each with its own cultural traits and socio-economic distinctions. Identifying a need for cultural competency training among library professionals, Conversation Starters created an online reference tool. This information gateway created for Indiana library professionals, focuses on promoting greater understanding and awareness of socio-economic differences to assist librarians in "initiating the conversation" at their own institutions.

Group Name: **Indiana Libraries OUT LOUD**

Co-Author/Academic Librarian in Group: Brad Reel, Director of Libraries and Online Technologies, Ivy Tech Community College-Southwest, Evansville
Other Librarian Types Represented: One school library media specialist, one public library IT manager

Project overview: Indiana Libraries OUT LOUD designed an advocacy toolkit with resources of value across all library types – school, public, academic, special. The resources on the toolkit are organized for all levels of library advocacy experience; beginner to seasoned advocate. The toolkit secured a permanent and prominent host site on the Legislative tab of the Indiana Library Federation (ILF) website - http://www.ilfonline.org/?page=outloudadvocacy

Group Name: **Library Broads**
Co-Author/Academic Librarian in Group: Chanitra Bishop, Web & Digital Initiatives Librarian, Hunter College, CUNY

Other Librarian Types Represented: Two public library directors and one medical librarian

Project overview: Recognizing that all types of libraries could benefit from having tools to better promote new services and resources available to their patrons, Library Broads created a toolkit called "This is My Library!"

The toolkit – available at http://thisismylibrary.weebly.com – provides both promotional campaign tips and marketing materials, including posters, bookmarks, badges, and other image templates libraries can customize to create publicity materials of their own design.

Group Name: **PASS It On**

Co-Author/Academic Librarian in Group: Vincci Kwong, Head of Library Web Services, Indiana University South Bend

Other Librarian Types Represented: One public library director and librarian and one school librarian

Project overview: PASS It On worked to raise awareness and increase usage of INSPIRE - a collection of freely available resources for Indiana libraries and its residents with access to a wide variety of electronic resources. A preliminary survey was sent to libraries statewide to help gauge usage and awareness of INSPIRE resources. Their campaign to increase usage and awareness included the creation of a website, development of promotional materials, design of short instructional videos, and heavy promotion of INSPIRE's social media presence. The team provided templates of bookmarks, flyers, and other material available for libraries to download. Results of this aggressive promotional campaign proved very favorable to the usage statistics of the resources available through INSPIRE, as well as its Facebook and Twitter following.

Shared Learning Experience
Participation in the InLLA is highly recommended for any Hoosier Librarian eager to gain a competitive edge in leadership development. The academy promises to be a rewarding experience and provide its initiates with the skill set necessary to develop a knowledge base capable of supporting the managerial, technical and cultural savvy to keep libraries of tomorrow thriving.

Evident in the first three learning outcomes for the academy is the importance of tracking the needs of next generation libraries: understanding major landscape shifts affecting the library industry, recognizing societal and cultural evolutions, and identifying key indicators of change.

Completing a year-long capstone project prepared participants to train as project managers equipped with the logic of the strategic planning process. InLLA members benefitted tremendously from transformative objectives intended to change perspective of leadership effectiveness in organizations. Following completion of the program, librarians walked away with an increased desire to initiate positive change in their home libraries, ability to work collaboratively within diverse communities, and a heightened level of confidence as a professional mentor. The authors cite worldview enrichment, expanded network and view of librarianship, improved understanding of stakeholder priorities and practical application of project management as key outcomes of academy participation. The following section will elaborate on the learning experiences shared by the authors' involved in the academy.

Opportunities to meet and collaborate with a variety of librarians statewide are limited in Indiana. As with virtually any conference, workshop, academy, or other professional development encounter one of the greatest benefits of participation is the chance to get to know colleagues from other institutions. Author Chanitra Bishop personally benefitted from working with technology savvy librarians from school and public libraries. For author Vincci Kwong, the opportunity to develop strong close bonds with a team of public, school, and special librarians proved to be fruitful as well. Remarkable to her was the evolution of the relationship that was continued outside of the academy activities. Attendance in the leadership academy significantly transformed Ms. Kwong and the remaining authors existing professional networks. Sharing information about emerging technologies implemented in libraries statewide and uncovering surprising professional and personal supports that fellow librarians can depend is a remarkable perk of academy involvement.

Guidance from the Indiana State Library and the Professional Development Advisory Committee inspired worthwhile discussions about sustainable professional development for librarians in the state. In these discussions, as well as during the project year, we grew more sensitive to our own roles in helping our home library achieve its mission. By collaborating with a variety of librarians academy participants improved understanding of challenges that our libraries face in areas of: facilities maintenance, human resources, training, technology, customer service and generating funding.

Understanding of the role that leaders play as services providers and verifiers of stakeholder priorities more thoroughly lead to another discovery. Seeing first hand what it takes to run a mission-oriented library and learning how to motivate others to help the library achieve its objectives led us to appreciate the professional development opportunities that the state library provides for all librarians. Academic librarians tend to search elsewhere for platforms for publication and presentations. Public librarians are more likely to participate in state-sponsored enrichment activities. With heightened awareness and the support of the ISL all of the authors took the opportunity to lead workshops, and poster presentations with their teams at the Indiana Library Federation annual conference and various events throughout the state.

One of the outcomes of the InLLA was to complete a year-long capstone team project. Collaborating with librarians from academic, government, school and public libraries throughout the state, encouraged the development of transferrable skills in project management and practical values applicable in all types of organizations. During the weeklong workshop, participants improved their previous understanding of the strategic planning process through an instructor-lead workshop by Consultant and Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Regional Library System, Catherine Hakala-Ausperk. InLLA initiates had the opportunity to build on the foundations laid in the week-long workshop over the course of a year. The realization that one must be willing to extrapolate or apply elements of a scenario unknown to our individual area of academic librarianship to improve the work environment was illuminating. The planning, facilitating and recording of meetings helped manage different personalities and build camaraderie among group members. Unifying each member's visions of successful project outcomes takes ability to listen critically and synthesize ideas with finesse. Inspiring a team of librarians that do not share the same job incentives to prioritize multiple projects, and to create deliverables intended for a diverse audience of information professionals provided the opportunity to practice diplomacy. The opportunity to learn more about the art of negotiation lends itself well to another benefit of academy participation: changing one's worldview.

As stated earlier, working with librarians that share different perspectives was a catalyst for learning. Uninformed of the trials that public services librarians in government and public libraries face on a daily basis, the opportunity to work with a variety of librarians was significant.

Working with patrons who are down on their luck is part of the everyday work of many public librarians and understanding how that impacts their livelihood was revealing. In their undying search to create a space for information professionals to discuss, share strategies and best practices for enhancing the cultural climate in Indiana libraries one could not help but to be moved by their intense compassion for human life. As a result of working in a team, it became apparent that Indiana Librarians deeply care for their patrons. Numerous opportunities to share revealing stories of success and failure increased the Conversation Starters's desire to uncover avenues that would lead Indiana library professionals to provide equitable service to patrons from various socioeconomic backgrounds. These valuable conversations were very touching, and helped shape the direction of the team's capstone project.

Conclusion
The 2013 cohort of the InLLA engaged in self-assessment, a year-long capstone project, and facilitated webinar-based group meetings. Striking a balance between competing priorities throughout the year was the most highly cited challenge to participation. To aid in the facilitation of virtual meetings, Adobe Connect, Google Hangouts and Skype were utilized and are highly recommended by four co-authors to help this process. Commonalities among the deliverables for each team of the 2013 cohort materialized in the capstone presentation. From advocacy, cultural competency, marketing of one's own library, or an existing service, each team used the Web as a means to promote their projects.

The authors' dedication, passion and desire for professional growth in the provision of information led each (organically) to enroll in the academy. At the state, region or national level, those that find themselves with similar feelings, will also uncover a strong desire to reform introspectively. The academy provided librarians an opportunity to connect and learn from each other, giving academic librarians the chance to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by public, school, and special librarians. Exposure to a variety of librarians fulfilling several roles throughout the state of Indiana altered the perspective of each participant, as each team worked virtually to accomplish goals. In the spirit of continuous self-assessment, one of the most valuable internal discoveries made during the year-long commitment was the enhanced appreciation of the organizational structures that support the libraries in which librarians work. The opportunity to participate in the academy changed our worldviews and taught librarians to not only appreciate those librarians that have walked before and will walk after us, but to appreciate those that work alongside us as well.

For four years now, librarians from all corners of Indiana have looked towards the ISL for opportunities to formally develop the skills needed to handle challenges of 21st century librarianship. Now in its third year, the InLLA continues its mission set out by the state library's Professional Development Committee to prepare the next generation of librarians to thrive in positions of leadership in the information provision. The objectives set forth by the state library's development committee are evident in the expressed impact of this leadership initiative felt by the four authors: increased confidence, expanded networks, broadened view of librarianship and practical project management experience. This paper provided an overview of the workflow and accomplishments of four InLLA members from the perspective of academic librarians. Each author's retrospective account of the year-long experience and shared challenges, provided intimate detailing of a year-long professional development opportunity unique in the crossroads of America.

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