

Leap into leadership!

As a relatively new graduate in a role that doesn't conform neatly to any of the categories that librarians generally fall into, I have often struggled to find professional development opportunities within the LIS field. So I was very excited when I saw that ALIA Victoria was offering a day long program on leadership. *Leap into Leadership* was offered to all, though focussed on new and emerging leaders in the profession. It attracted a very diverse range of participants, all of whom were treated to a full day of thought provoking presentations, workshops, and lots of networking!

ALIA Victoria and the State Library of Victoria sponsored this event, with former Aurora participants taking the lead in organising the day's activities. The day started with an introduction to personal leadership by Greg Cook, the Director of the Centre for Leadership and Management. Having a consultant outside of the LIS world talk about identifying our own personal leadership styles helped the room full of librarians to recognise within ourselves elements that we may not have previously acknowledged are important in leaders. For example, the importance of engaging with others, being authentic and humble, and maintaining personal ethics are attributes I recognise in a lot of my colleagues, but not characteristics I would have previously recognised as necessarily being leadership qualities.

After Greg's informative introduction to leadership, we heard from three leaders in the Australian Library community. Craig Anderson is the Director of RMIT in Melbourne, and spoke about the importance of ethics, integrity and respect for those you work with. He emphasised how leaders need the courage to lead, and to make decisions that are grounded in ethics, rather than necessarily in relationships. I found this an interesting distinction, but the example he gave of choosing to keep his book budget rather than a valued employee who was on a contract, was an excellent illustration of the ethics of our profession.

Patti Manolis, CEO of Geelong Regional Library Corporation, spoke about the importance of learning from those who lead you. Watching those around you can teach you not only positive behaviours, but negative ones also, which is just as important a lesson. On a topic that I found particularly relevant in a room full of (mostly female) librarians, she spoke of the importance of the self – self awareness, self confidence, self assessment and self management. She cautioned that a leader needs to be aware of their emotions and not make snap decisions based on a negative reaction or feeling. Patti's emphasis on being aware of your own strengths and limitations, and working on your own weaknesses, whether that's by bringing in experts or learning a new skill, helped

to cement my own feelings on the importance of collaboration and life long learning.

Janette Wright is the CEO of Caval Collaborative Solutions, and spoke a lot about change, mobility, flexibility and learning in leadership. Janette clarified that a leader is not a manager, but someone who knows the vision of an organisation, and the capabilities required to achieve said vision. She spoke about the importance of having meaningful conversations, and listening to others before you try to put your point of view across, especially when you're new to an organisation. Networking and the collaborations that it can bring both within and outside of your organisation was discussed, and the added career opportunities that mobility can bring were also touched on by Janette.

Once the three speakers had responded to some questions we broke for lunch, and after the ensuing networking we went into groups for an afternoon workshop. Some groups had a set topic, and others evolved more organically, but it was interesting in the break to walk around and see on the butcher's paper that many of the groups were dealing with similar issues, much of it around change: how to enact it, how to manage it, and how to deal with those who are resistant to it. The day ended with a civilised amount of wine consumption, and a behind-the-stacks tour of the State Library of Victoria.

Leap into Leadership was for me like receiving a shot in the arm of energy, vitality and enthusiasm for my profession. It confirmed for me that managing is not the same as leading, which as a new graduate it is important to be reminded of. I realised that I can lead within my own role, and outside of the confines of hierarchy. This workshop helped me to recognise those qualities within myself that are those of a leader, and to embrace them rather than feeling that as a new graduate I should stay back in the shadows. And now I'm ready to leap!



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...gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator Naomi Doessel, naomi.doessel@au.ey.com

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