

# Energise>>Enthuse>>Inspire

## An Auroran experience

Arriving in Thredbo on the 19th February this year for the 12th Aurora Leadership Institute, I was excited, nervous, and slightly hesitant. What would they make us do? Would I fit in? Would I cry? And finally, was I worthy of the honour to be not only selected for Aurora, but also as the recipient of the 2009 ALIA Aurora Scholarship?

There are three main reasons why I applied for Aurora:

1. I am proud to be a librarian and I love our industry and I do not want to be a sheep. I don't necessarily want to be a manager but I know that leadership is an important aspect of my career development. I don't want to be a passive participant in my career and have the years slip away with nothing to show for them. I have seen this happen to others in the profession and am not going to let it happen to me.
2. This leads onto my second reason – Stephen Abram, the Vice President of Innovation at Sirsitydix purports 'Be the change you want to see'. When I heard him say this during a presentation last year, it really struck a chord with me. Those seven words are the most influential I have heard so far in my career.
3. Finally, as a reality TV junkie, deep down I always wanted to be challenged like they are on programs such as *Survivor* and *Big Brother*. Not physically challenged, but mentally and emotionally challenged, and without the cameras. From what I had heard about Aurora this could be just what I wanted.

For five days, in the glorious surrounds of Thredbo, I and the other 31 participants of Aurora 12 explored the concepts of leadership, strategy, risk, and courage. We examined our profession in many different ways, we scanned the environment, we created visions, we embraced change, we learned about politics and partnerships, and we gained a valuable understanding about working as a team. From the eight mentors who participated in Aurora, we gained valuable insights into their careers. It was refreshing to find out that although they may be university librarians, or senior managers, they are still real people, with real fears that they still face in their careers, and that they survive.

I had been to other leadership and strategic planning workshops throughout my career, but I did not get nearly as much out of them as I did from Aurora. Having a library context was beneficial. However I believe that being in a supportive environment, with like-minded individuals, allowed me to put more into each session, giving me more in return. I felt comfortable sharing my successes and, more importantly, my failures with the group. And although my 'aha!' moment involved something I already knew about myself, there is something special about Aurora that enables you to put things into perspective so you can see more clearly.

Aurora has changed the way I view myself and others. Before Aurora, I struggled with my opinions. I did not value them. I did not think what I had to say was important. I have wanted to write a blog and I have ideas for blog posts that only got as far as a few dot points jotted down on paper. But Aurora has given me the confidence and self-belief to know that I can achieve anything I put my mind to. Even when I start to doubt myself, I just have to take myself back to Thredbo and I know that I can be successful. So watch out bloggers, here I come!

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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, [naomidoessel@gmail.com](mailto:naomidoessel@gmail.com)



*A photo of Rachel Crowe and Aurora room mate, Katrina Dewis*

From Aurora I also gained an insight into public and academic libraries, developed friendships with some amazing people who I will continue to keep in contact with, and, on a totally unrelated matter, found out that I am not a bad wicket keeper. All my self-beliefs about not being able to catch were completely unfounded.

Finally I would like to thank ALIA for their generosity in awarding me the 2009 ALIA Aurora Scholarship. I could not have got to Aurora without you. My parents instilled in me the value of giving through their lifelong commitment to volunteering and giving back to the profession through volunteering with ALIA has been an integral part of my career and one that I will continue in years to come. Aurora has provided me with an insightful view of the future of libraries and a renewed enthusiasm to share my experiences with others through writing and presenting, and to encourage others to do the same. I believe the future of our profession is in safe hands if the participants of Aurora 12 have anything to do with it.

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## AURORA FOUNDATION

The Aurora Library Leadership Institute is held annually at Thredbo Alpine Village, NSW, usually in February. Becky Schreiber and John Shannon lead the Institute, assisted by nine mentors from Australia and New Zealand.

The Institute's mission is to assist future leaders in the library and associated cultural and information industry to maximise their leadership skills and potential through a combination of experiential learning, group and individual exercises, and by working with a strong team of senior and experienced Australian and New Zealand mentors.

The 12th Aurora Leadership Institute was held at Thredbo from 19 to 24 February 2009. Information about the 2010 Institute will be made available later in 2009.