

Future Leaders Emerge at Aurora 2012

This year, the Aurora Institute for Emerging Leaders was held at Q Station in Manly, New South Wales. The Aurora Foundation gave 27 librarians from around Australia and New Zealand the opportunity to reflect upon our jobs, learn about our leadership capabilities, and acquire new skills and techniques to integrate into our workplaces. Currently, I work in a TAFE Library with a limited budget for professional development. Hoping to attend, I applied for an ALIA Aurora Scholarship, which would cover the greater part of my attendance – thanks to both ALIA and to my workplace, Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, I was able to make the fantastic trip.

It is important for ALIA Aurora Scholarship applicants to demonstrate personal commitment and contribution to ALIA. Luckily, I have been Secretary for the ALIA New Graduates Group since late 2009, assisting the current Convener, Melanie Chivers, and Andrew Finegan before her. The ALIA New Grads Group shares many of its aims with the Aurora Foundation, seeking to inspire and assist the development of future leaders of the profession. Shameless plug time! Check out the New Grads blog alianewgrad.blogspot.com.au, join our wiki alianewgradsjobhelp.wikispaces.com, and check out our Facebook page! Shameless plug over.

In my application for Aurora, I was asked to consider my goals for the week, and to look beyond that to my career. I wrote that I would like to aim for higher roles, but that I don't want to rush my career. I also wrote that I wanted the opportunity to think about my future in the Library and Information Industry while enjoying the journey, and hopefully meeting interesting people along the way. With numerous guest speakers, and so many friendly librarians from different backgrounds, Aurora was an amazing networking experience. Throughout the week we found plenty of time to interact with each other, and I had the opportunity to listen to the stories of mentors who shared their challenges and successes in leadership.

I was determined to go to Aurora with an open mind about what I might achieve, but I was also nervous. I had met a few librarians who had attended previously, and they had told me that they couldn't share anything specific about their experience in order to allow new participants to attend free from preconceived ideas about the program. Thankfully, all of them went on to say that while their experience had been very positive, it had also been intense, and people had been known to cry! Upon telling my friends I was attending a mysterious professional development opportunity, they suspected I was off to join a cult. It's decidedly not a cult! There's no secret: Aurora allows you to reflect on your career, plan for the future, and connect with people who have incredible experience and knowledge. At its heart, the Institute for Emerging Leaders is an extremely practical

professional development course.

Guiding us throughout Aurora, Corporate Dramatists David and Annie McCubbin, from COUP (www.coup.com.au), began by leading participants through a workshop designed to help us consider our workplace behaviours. With an understanding of the way we had been working, we could focus on the future, and how we might improve our effectiveness in our current roles. We were taught skills to manage group dynamics, strategies for relaxation and focus, and much more. By Thursday, we were ready to pitch a project to the group and receive feedback on how well we engaged our listeners. This was by far the most challenging aspect of the week, presenting in front of a video camera, as well as to our peers.

On the final day, Aurora participants were asked to consider the ways in which we might have grown or changed, having completed the program. As well as providing me with a number of realistic strategies to improve my work, I felt that it had also increased my confidence and made me determined to overcome my phenomenal ability to procrastinate. Some months have passed now, and I still feel more focused and centred. Keep Aurora Institute for Emerging Leaders on your list of amazing things to experience in the Library and Information Industry.

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