



(Left to right) Deanne Verity, Kirsten Thorpe, Emma Darby, Hugh Rundle, Lucy Nuttall and Heather Davis

INELI-OCEANIA

— GROWING INNOVATION THROUGH NETWORKING

In virtually every sphere of human endeavour in the changing world of the 21st century, debates and conversations about the kind of leadership needed for the future are focused on words and concepts such as innovation, networking, collaboration, agility, resilience, emergent change and unleashing creativity. LENEVE JAMIESON tells us more.

For the past 18 months a small group of library professionals has been exploring these ideas in a regional program for emerging library leaders in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. The INELI-Oceania program is based on the highly successful Global Libraries Initiative, the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI), which is designed to enhance leadership capability and foster innovation and networking in the public library field. The generous financial and in-kind support of local funders, as well as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is making the program possible for two cohorts of participants.

The Australian participants in the first cohort are Emma Darby, Northern Territory Library and Information Services; Lucy Nuttall, West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation; Hugh Rundle, Brimbank Libraries; Kirsten Thorpe, State Library of New South Wales; Heather Davis,



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Waverley Council Libraries; and Deanne Verity, Geelong Regional Library Corporation.

The vision of success for INELI-Oceania is that it will create a regional network of emerging library leaders, foster collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders in the region, and pilot a regional adaptation of the Global INELI Program model. The third objective is currently being implemented in six regions around the world.

INELI-Oceania started with a four-day convening (a series of workshops and discussions) in Melbourne in June 2014. Program outcomes were discussed and the participants visited some of Melbourne's most innovative public libraries. The program consists of two convenings over the two years – one at the beginning and one at the end – and online learning modules that cover the topics of innovation, risk management, change management, communication skills, advocacy and conflict management. The content involves a high level of interaction among the participants, mainly through the three Professional Development Teams that have been formed. These are led by highly experienced program mentors: Patti Manolis, CEO of Geelong Regional Library Corporation; Debra Rosenfeldt, Manager, Public Libraries & Community Engagement, State Library Victoria; and Jane Hill, Group Manager Community Networks and Chief Operating Officer, Wellington City Council, New Zealand. All have experience with the Global INELI program. The learning groups hold regular Skype conversations that provide valuable interaction, exchange and debate on the learning topics, as well as wider library and leadership issues.

‘... most innovations are created through networks – groups of people working in concert’

*Wall Street Journal ‘Together we innovate’
15 September 2007*

At the halfway point for the first cohort, a one-day meeting brought the Australian innovators together again in Melbourne to discuss what they had learned and to examine their challenges around leadership and innovation. A similar session was held in Wellington for the New Zealand participants.

And what is the sweet spot in innovation for these future leaders? Their responses suggest that the value of networking and exploring ideas in association with others cannot be underestimated. This program is providing the opportunity for networking not only for the participants themselves, but also for the Steering Committee, the Library Associations of Australia and New Zealand, the mentors, the sponsors and the funders. Indeed, to achieve the vision, it is necessary to build collaborative relationships among the library associations in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, as well as with national, state and public libraries along with government and aid agencies in the South Pacific area.

Here is some feedback from our participants:

‘It's very rewarding to be connected with a group of people who are actively involved in questioning, challenging and innovating in the library and information profession ...’

‘The most fun part of the program is meeting the other innovators, learning from the mentors and getting fully immersed in all things library. Learning about successes and challenges in other libraries in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands has been eye opening, humbling and inspiring ...’

‘I went into INELI hoping to be inspired and to meet interesting people, passionate about working in libraries ... What I've found most powerful from the INELI experience is the confidence it has given me. INELI is better equipping me to seek out new ways of doing things, to connect with other professionals, to build partnerships and advocate within the community ...’

There will soon be a call for applications for the second cohort of INELI-Oceania, which will convene in Auckland, New Zealand, in July 2016. Further details are available on the INELI-Oceania website – www.inelioceania.net – or you can contact me at my email address below. ✱

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