Developing leaders for libraries: The Stanford-California State Library Institute on 21st Century librarianship experience

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Library leadership has become an ever increasing topic of discussion within library circles and professional associations. As the context of librarianship has become more complex, due to both the inherently increasing intricacy of the institutions of librarianship and the framework of information access and organization, so too has the need to re-examine the leadership requirements for libraries in the future become more important. Skills that were sufficient to manage and lead libraries within the past decades may not be sufficient to re-engineer and envision libraries of the future.

Approximately three years ago, Michael A. Keller, Stanford University Librarian, and Dr. Kevin Starr, California State Librarian, developed the concept of a leadership institute for library staff who were positioned within their institutions to begin to take on leadership roles. The concept of the Institute was two fold: to create a learning community of individuals who had self-selected onto a leadership track within libraries while simultaneously initiating discussion of the key issues and trends that would be impacting libraries in the near-term and long range future. The initial goals for the Institute were:

- Elevate the quality of services libraries and related bodies provide to information users in the 21st century through development of library leaders and managers
- Elevate the quality of services libraries and related bodies provide to information users in the 21st century by increasing the understanding and adoption of best practices in information technology

The concept was to address the nexus between the increasingly differentiated needs for library leadership and the impacts of information technology on how libraries were changing and operating. By better understanding the emerging concepts of information technology, leaders would be able to better understand the new dynamics of library leadership. Stanford University was considered the ideal setting for such an institution, due to its location in the heart of the information technology world in Silicon Valley and the University Library’s international leadership role. The notion was that the Institute would become an annual event, eagerly anticipated every year by the library community, with an ever growing alumnae network of new library leaders.

**GRANT FUNDING**

“Librarians in California are fortunate that Stanford University and the California State Library were able to offer the Institute...The minimal tuition made participation possible for any individual or library organization in the state.”

Summer 2000 Participant
As a result of the discussions between Keller and Dr. Starr, in late 1998 the Stanford University Libraries submitted an application to the California State Library for Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to initiate the development of the Stanford-California State Library Institute on 21st Century Librarianship. Library Services and Technology Act funds are a federal funding source under the administration of the federal agency, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). IMLS provides block grants of funds to all state libraries, which then provide grant opportunities for libraries to apply for funding to develop and implement demonstration projects.

An initial grant was provided to the Stanford University Libraries to begin development of the Institute in the winter of 1999, followed by two subsequent grants in the fall of 1999 and fall of 2000 to actually implement the Institute.

ADVISORY GROUP

“I am applying the insights I gained into leadership. I came back ready to work with my staff in a deeper way and I already see the way my approach is paying off in the quality of work accomplished and in the attitudes of the talented people I work with. I feel that my understanding of technology and libraries has helped me make much better decisions.”

Summer 2000 Participant

A key component of the Institute was the formation of an Advisory Group to provide input and direction for the development of the Institute. The members of the Advisory Group were chosen to reflect the diversity of types of libraries that would be participating in the Institute, as well as the geographic and cultural diversity of California. The original Advisory Group consisted of 20 library leaders, including academic and public library directors, school and special librarians, and library school deans, as well as other individuals representing consortia and the State Library. While the specific individuals making up the Advisory Group have changed somewhat over time, the constituencies represented have remained stable as well as the visible leadership levels of the individuals participating. The Advisory Group met for the first time in the spring of 1999 and has continued to meet three times yearly since then. The work of the Advisory Group has been vital in the development of the Institute in that the input has been from a respected group of library leaders in helping to shape and develop all aspects of the Institute. The Advisory Group also took on a significant role in the marketing of the Institute and developing credibility for the organization in its early stages.

INSTITUTE DEVELOPMENT

“I can’t tell you how much looking at the “large issues” changed and recharged my outlook…and the word “stewardship” pops into my head at least weekly and I ask myself what I have done to promote “stewardship” in the broadest sense.”

Summer 2000 Participant
In the summer of 1999 Anne Marie Gold, a well known public library administrator, joined the Institute as Executive Director and began planning for the first major Institute initiative, which would be a week-long residential program on the Stanford campus in August 2000. Additional staff for the Institute included an Administrative Assistant and a Digital Information Technologist. During late 1999 and early 2000 several shorter programs were held that introduced the Institute to primarily the California audience. The plan for the Summer Institute was that it be a weeklong immersion experience for up to 150 library staff who are committed to become future library leaders. The LSTA funding provided funding for 100 California library staff to attend with the intent that the remainder of participants would come from other states and countries around the world.

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

“The institute is very different from other conferences. As far as I know, this is the first of its kind... This institute is cutting edge. We are, in essence, privileged to be part of it.”

Summer 2000 Participant

In order to insure that participants in the Institute would represent a broad base of emerging library leaders, an application process was recommended by the Advisory Group. The decision was made that applications would be from individuals, not institutions, in order to insure a wide cross section of interest. Applications were not limited to individuals holding graduate library degrees but opened to all library staff interested in leadership issues.

Marketing efforts, both print and digital, were launched in January 2000, focused on a national and international audience of librarians and library staff. Print brochures were mailed broadly within California and nationally, and selectively on an international basis. A new section of the Institute website was launched with information concerning the summer program and the actual application document. Postings were sent to statewide, national and international listservs announcing the availability of applications for the Institute.

The application process for the Summer 2000 Institute consisted of three major portions:

- A resume not to exceed three pages in length that detailed educational and job-related achievements as well as involvement in community and professional activities
- Letters of recommendations from two individuals
- Two essays on any of six topics relating to leadership, libraries and technology. One essay had to be a text document no longer than one page; the other essay could be a text document or in any other media of the applicant’s choosing.

A selection process was designed whereby each application was reviewed and rated by two members of the Advisory Group. After reviewing all the ratings of the applications, final selection decisions were made, based on the desire to create a balanced group representing differing types of libraries and positions within libraries.

The application materials submitted presented a dynamic picture of new library leaders interested in building skills and networks. The option for use of media resulted in some exciting presentations such as a video interviewing the leaders in one applicant’s library discussing their concepts of emerging library leadership. Perhaps the most interesting application began with an email from a librarian at the National Library of Swaziland who stated, “I have just receive a
brochure about the Summer 2000 Institute and feel very interested in coming for such a meeting as this would widen our scope of what our libraries are likely to face in the near future.”

After the lengthy application and selection process, in April 2000, 132 individuals were invited to participate in the Summer 2000 Institute. The participants selected came from a broad geographic basis, including 17 states, and 3 international attendees from Canada, Australia and Swaziland. 103 of the participants were from California (78%). The type of library breakdown was approximately 40% public and 30% academic with the remainder split evenly between school and special libraries. Approximately 15% of the participants represented culturally diverse backgrounds.

The professional experience of the participants varied widely:

- 5 years experience or less: 10%
- 5 – 10 years experience: 31%
- 10 – 20 years experience: 27%
- 20+ years experience: 31%

The types of libraries represented by participants were a broad cross-section, ranging from major academic institutions, urban public libraries, specialized technical libraries and small K-5 school libraries.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS

“My goal is to develop valuable contacts and learn from other colleagues.”

Summer 2000 Participant

In the intervening months between April and August, a listserv was launched for participants that became the primary communication vehicle between and among the Institute and the participants. While initially postings were informationally focused from Institute staff, within a short period of time the summer participants were enthusiastically sharing information with each about their backgrounds and interest. The participants began to interact with each other online – responding to each other’s queries, asking questions about postings, and in general beginning the formation of the virtual community of learners that was anticipated by the Institute. The biographical information that was posted by each participant became the basis of a participant section of the website, which allowed everyone to get to know each other before arriving on campus. By the time the Institute began, there was already a sense of knowing who your colleagues would be which enabled a faster integration into the networking and learning processes so essential to the success of the Institute.

WHY PARTICIPANTS CHOSE TO ATTEND THE INSTITUTE

“I want to develop and sharpen my leadership skills, while envisioning the library of the future.”

Summer 2000 Participant
Participants completed a pretest survey administered by the Institute evaluation consultant the first night of the program that asked why they chose to attend the Institute and what their expectations were of it. They noted the following most important reasons for attending the Institute:

Gain inspiration through the acquisition of new ideas – 53%
Develop leadership skills – 45%

Other areas of interest were:
Access to experts and resources on library issues – 34%
Networking with colleagues – 21%
Learning about the role of information technology – 19%

The primary concern expressed by participants was about developing and improving leadership skills. In particular, participants expressed a need to acquire the tools and methods of effective leadership as well as the skills needed to envision, plan and develop a vision for the role of libraries in the 21st century. Participants from academic and public libraries more frequently mentioned such desires. The majority of participants from school and corporate libraries cited a desire to acquire new ideas and insights about libraries and librarianship, as well as about new technologies and how to apply them at their home libraries. Networking was the most the second most common expectation for all but public librarians.

**SUMMER INSTITUTE**

“This conference has given me a broad perspective, helping me to see that as a group—whether as public, academic, school or special librarians—we are leaders and have strength in our ability to articulate the purposes of libraries, to model the principles of providing access to all, and to master the nuances of the new technology and adapt it to our goals.”

*Summer 2000 Participant*

The Summer Institute began on Sunday afternoon, August 6 and ended on Saturday afternoon, August 12. The program consisted of a daily schedule as follows:

8:30 – 10:00  Opening Plenary Speaker
10:30 –12:00  Plenary Topic Discussion Groups
1:00 – 3:30   Topical Presentation Sessions
4:00 – 5:00   Case Study Groups

The plenary speakers addressed the five thematic tracks of the Institute:

- Leadership
- Information Technology
- Library Collections and Services in the Digital Age
- Organizational Effectiveness
- Preservation and Facility Planning
The list of all presenters for the week is included as Appendix A. The plenary speakers were intended to set the tone for the day and the thematic track and to present challenges to the participants for the purposes of discussion in the late morning discussion groups, which were facilitated by members of the Advisory Group. The afternoon sessions were more narrowly focused, discussing topical issues in libraries and presenting opportunities for discussion, dissention, and cooperative learning. The late afternoon case study groups were presented with topical case studies relating to the general themes of the Institute, and served as both opportunities for peer team building and problem solving.

Providing opportunities for more informal networking was an important focus for the Institute. Two evenings were spent off campus at social events, including a baseball game and a visit to a local technology museum. The other two on campus evenings included opportunities for optional classes, which were enthusiastically attended by the majority of participants.

The ambiance of the Institute was also important. Participants were made to feel part of a special group, hand-picked and headed towards success in their library careers. The setting on the Stanford campus contributed to the ambiance, as well as the carefully chosen social events and quality of housing and meals. What emerged was a high-spirited and collegial atmosphere. One participant commented “Librarians deal with people all the time, but rarely does anyone do anything special for them. It’s so nice to have such an event that makes librarians feel special.”

**EVALUATION PROCESSES**

> “I have much better sense of myself as a California library leader; it has given me confidence and insights.”

_Summer 2000 Participant_

In order to assess the impact of the Institute upon participants, an independent external evaluation organization, the Evaluation and Training Institute, was contracted with to do both pre and post tests of participants. A senior researcher from ETI was at the entire Institute, attended various sessions and interacted with participants on a daily basis. ETI then wrote a final evaluation report that provided important insight into the expectations of the participants and their evaluation of the presenters and activities. Virtually all participants completed both the pre and post test surveys.

A six-month online follow up survey was launched in February 2001 that had a response rate of approximately 26%. The participant listserv has remained active and is an indication of continuing participant interest in the topics and issues raised at the Institute.

In preparation for the Summer 2001 Institute, participants from the Summer 2000 session were invited to apply to be interns. The application process required participants to submit an essay outlining the impact of the Institute on their careers over the past year. Fifteen Summer 2000 participants submitted applications to become interns and six were selected.

**INSTITUTE PROGRAM EVALUATION**

> “This conference opened up a world of ideas.”

_Summer 2000 Participant_

> “This conference is about advancing librarianship.”

_Summer 2000 Participant_
A post-test survey was administered to all participants on the last morning on the Institute and asked participants to rate the presentations and logistics and provide information on how they planned on applying the information gained from the Institute.

Overall the participants rated their experience at the Institute as very satisfied with a 3.8 rating on a 4.0 scale. According to the ETI, “The high rating was not only due to the formal aspects of the Institute, such as the speakers, activities, and content, etc. but also due to the collegial and high-spirited atmosphere of the Institute.” 86% of participants indicated that the Institute met their expectations. The remaining 14% hoped the Institute would concern itself more with the future of the profession and effective leadership strategies to cope with the dramatic changes presented by new technologies. 98% of the participants indicated that they would recommend the Institute to colleagues.

The results identified immediate impacts by participants in three important areas:

- Development of leadership skills and techniques
- Recognition of how technology is affecting libraries and the role of library professionals
- Importance of building networks and avenues of communication and cooperation across libraries

The development of leadership skills and techniques was the strongest outcome for all participants, regardless of type of library. A renewed interest in developing leadership skills, understanding leadership styles, evaluating personal leadership techniques and putting leadership into action was noted by many participants.

Participants awakened to a greater understanding of the impact of digital technologies on libraries, not only in terms of hardware and software applications, but also in terms of forms and genres of information, new avenues of information access, new instructional services and practices and new ways of distributing information. A heightened awareness of the need for risk taking was identified as part of the awareness of technology impacts, coupled with an apprehension about the changes taking place.

All participants also identified the need for broad based networking, particularly across types of libraries and outside the profession. One important outcome of the Institute was the cross-fertilization among participants from widely differing types of libraries.

In general, participants found the following experiences to be the most useful:

- Learning about leadership styles, skills and techniques
- Sharing ideas with colleagues as well as with those outside the profession
- Obtaining new ideas and sharing different perspectives on professional issues
- Learning about cutting edge technologies
- Gaining a sense of renewal and excitement about the profession
- Networking

An additional important outcome was the internalization of key concepts and themes. ETI commented “Participants internalization of key concepts and themes generated throughout the Institute was evident on many occasions.” Specific examples relating to the presenter topics, such as task and process leadership styles (Kennedy) and personal leadership profiles (Manning) were cited as being mentioned frequently by participants during the week.
With one of the major goals of the Institute to enhance leadership in libraries, an important component of the evaluation of the Institute is how participants utilized their experience in their home libraries. 94% of participants indicated an intent to utilize knowledge and skills gained at the Institute to make changes at their libraries. Improving leadership was the most commonly cited theme in which participants expected to make an impact. Improving technology and technology awareness was the second most common theme. The examples of the ways in which participants expected to utilize the Institute experience varied from the very general to the very specific, e.g.

- Take risks
- Consistently evaluate my leadership
- Incorporate an attitude of change about technology
- Work with staff to shift services to meet Gen Y needs
- Develop information technology workshops for other librarians
- Answer reference questions via email

The means by which participants planned on sharing their Institute experience and knowledge with colleagues varied widely. The most likely methods were through informal interactions and discussions with colleagues, formal presentations, meetings and reports and sharing Institute notes and handouts.

Many participants noted in private communications after the week to Gold and Keller how important the Institute had been to them. Several participants submitted comments such as “It was by and far the most valuable week I’ve spent in my professional career.” and “I have just spent the greatest week of my professional career at Stanford”.

**OUTCOMES**

“*I have a new position in my organization and I think the Institute helped me get there and also is making me make better decisions than if I had not gone.*”

_Summer 2000 Participant_

An online survey for Institute participants, originally developed by ETI and created on Zoomerang, the web-based survey site, was launched six months after the close of the Institute with the URL sent to the participants via the listserv. The short survey consisted of six questions querying participants about how they had used the knowledge and experiences they had gained at the Institute. 34 participants responded to the survey, or 26%. Responses by type of library
mirrored in general the participant population, with a slight over sampling from public library participants (55% response rate versus 40% participation rate).

Participants had followed through on their intention to share information about the Institute via the following methods:

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<td>Interactions and discussions with colleagues</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations, meetings and/or reports</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sharing handouts and notes from Institute</td>
<td>71%</td>
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The major themes that emerged when asked how they were applying what they had learned at the Institute were around the issues of leadership and risk taking. One participant noted “I have an increased sense of urgency in my work. I am developing a bias for taking action, willing to take more risks, looking further out into the future...” while another stated “The Institute opened my eyes to a whole new exciting world. As a field, librarians tend not to be very change or future oriented, we tend to react to other forces. I now want to be part of change within my organization.” Participants noted that they were more able to be perceived as leaders within their institutions and they used their knowledge of leadership styles to work more effectively with staff. When asked about their approach to challenges, participants responded that they felt more confidence when facing difficult situations within their work institutions and approached such issues with more openness. A participant noted that she had been involved in “several instances that, when I reflect on them, might have been different without the Institute experience.” Participants also commented on the sense of the Institute as an opportunity for reflection and recharging, “…the Institute spurred new energy in me for a job I’ve had for a long while. Thinking about leadership away from the distractions of everyday was the boost I needed.”

In response to a question regarding the implementation of new technologies, participants were less positive about their Institute experience. Most respondents noted that they had not implemented any new technologies they were exposed to at the Institute. However, several participants did note that they had become more actively interested and involved in technology planning for their libraries.

In the intervening months between the Institute and the survey, several participants shared reports and presentations with their home libraries and to professional organizations about the Institute. Additionally participants published articles in professional journals such as Knowledge Quest and law library association newsletters that included comments about their Institute experience. Several participants have commented that they believe their Institute experience contributed to promotions for them within the past year, or success in seeking new positions in other libraries.

Summer 2000 participants were invited to apply to become interns at the Summer 2001 Institute. The application process consisted of a submittal outlining how they were using what they had experienced at the Institute. 15 participants submitted one-page summaries that provided a broad sense of how the Institute had impacted this group of individuals. Most
interestingly, the intern applicants were able to cite some very specific actions/impacts over the past year as a result of their Institute experience, including:

- Implementation of a PDA medical applications program in a major medical library to support the needs of users
- Development of an interdisciplinary effort in an academic library to restructure the University’s IT infrastructure with the library taking the leadership role focusing on its expertise in information management
- Reading more widely and pursuing more actively business models that can translate into good library management skills
- Involvement in a nationwide study on young adult library trainers and their effectiveness
- Decentralizing the management structure in the IT division of a large library
- Leadership of a county team planning an e-government website
- Development and implementation of a “mini” Institute at the home library, keynoted by Mike Keller

Many of the themes that had emerged in earlier evaluative materials – risk taking, leadership, interest in technology – were also present in the intern submittals.

**FUTURE SUMMER INSTITUTES**

“It wasn’t until I started thinking about those who will be attending this year that I realized how much I did get out of the Institute. Overall, I feel I am more able to lead my library... As we look towards the future, there are great challenges facing us, but I feel better prepared and better able to handle them...”

*Summer 2000 Participant*

The second Summer Institute will be held August 5 –11, 2001. A marketing campaign similar to the one for the Summer 2000 Institute was launched in January 2001 with a similar application process. There will be 143 participants from 23 states and 2 foreign countries, Egypt and Singapore. 101 participants will be from California (70%). The type of library breakdown is 58% public, 16% academic, 13% school and 13% special. ETI will once again be conducting an evaluation of participants, both before and after the Institute.

**SUMMARY**

"Dr. Keller and I agree that this... institute establishes itself as the premier forum for development of future library leaders."

*Dr. Kevin Starr, State Librarian of California*
Achieving the broad based goals set out for the Institute:

- Elevate the quality of services libraries and related bodies provide to information users in the 21st century through development of library leaders and managers
- Elevate the quality of services libraries and related bodies provide to information users in the 21st century by increasing the understanding and adoption of best practices in information technology

will take longer than one Institute cycle. However, the results of the first Institute have proven to be impressive. Combining the immediate evaluative comments from the last day of the Institute with the longer term outcomes noted over the past year, it is clear the Institute participants both internalized and acted upon many of the ideas and concepts presented at the Institute. The strong focus on enhanced leadership and risk taking is particularly gratifying, given the continuing nature of the discussion within the profession regarding the difficulty in attracting and retaining new leadership in libraries.

A longitudinal sampling study of participants in the first Institute session should be initiated in order to track longer term, systemic changes and results from participation. At the Summer 2001 Institute the ETI researcher will be conducting a focus group with the Summer 2000 interns to gather continuing data on their application of Institute experiences and career impacts.

The Summer 2001 Institute will also be an important component in analyzing whether the content and context of the Institute can be continued and improved. Some changes from the Summer 2000 Institute, recommended by ETI, have been incorporated including change for the case study groups, more networking time and a stronger focus on leadership skill building.

Developing a sustainable business model for the Institute, independent of LSTA grant funding, will remain the foremost challenge. While Institute participants rated their participation highly, the cost of the Institute will continue to be an issue. During the initial LSTA funding phase, California participants were charged $275 for the Institute, inclusive of all fees and expenses, while out of state participants were charged $2,000. However, the full operational costs of the entire Institute, including all staffing and Summer Institute related costs, were covered by the LSTA grant. Since LSTA funding is limited to demonstration projects, it will not be the long term source of funding for full Institute costs. Given the nature of the low level of funding by most libraries for continuing education and staff development, the potential market for the Institute is likely not large, even taking into consideration its multitype nature. Options for alternative grant funding sources, as well as foundation and corporate funding, continue to be explored.
### APPENDIX A – SPEAKERS AT INSTITUTE

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<td>David Kennedy</td>
<td>Andrew Leonard</td>
<td>Mike Keller</td>
<td>Amal Johnson</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>The Warrior and the President</em></td>
<td><em>The Deep Structure of Duplication</em></td>
<td><em>This Magic Moment</em></td>
<td><em>Challenging the Management Status Quo</em></td>
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<td>Hoover Discussion Group, Meyer 184</td>
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<td>&quot;Leadership for the Future&quot;</td>
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Developing Leaders for Libraries
IFLA
August 2001
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