Leadership needs of Asian librarians
An account of an Asian library leadership institute.

Peter Edward Sidorko
Deputy Librarian
The University of Hong Kong
The University of Hong Kong Libraries Leadership Institute

- An intensive training institute for library leaders and potential library leaders
- A 4 day residential institute where librarians learn from other librarians and information specialists through a series of presentations, case studies, teamwork activities and interactive discussions
- An opportunity for librarians from East Asia to learn about developments from other parts of the information world
- An opportunity for librarians to share views, concerns and solutions with colleagues
- An opportunity for librarians to develop supporting networks through discussion, interactive case studies and social activities.
This session will cover

1. The background to creating and delivering the Institute
2. How the Institute operates
3. Who attends
4. The changing needs of participants
5. Meeting participants’ needs
6. Institute evaluation, participants’ views and lessons learned
7. Future directions.
1 The background to creating and delivering the Institute
Why leadership in libraries?

- A *changed and rapidly changing environment* in which libraries operate:
  - Technological
  - Economical
  - Social
  - Accountability
  - User expectations
  - Rapidity

- Limited formal leadership training opportunities in the past (i.e., earlier MLS courses).
Why library leadership in Asia?

- Same as the previous slide, plus
- Funding reductions call for strong leadership
- Funding explosions do the same
- Few (if any) opportunities for professional development of this type in this area, unlike, eg, the USA where leadership and management institutes for librarians are common.
Two objectives for our Institute

- To develop and enhance innovative management and leadership qualities in academic and research librarians in the East Asia region including Hong Kong’s own librarians, particularly at our own University, and,

- To enhance collaboration and foster relations among academic and research libraries in the region.
2 How the Institute operates
Institute operations: Basics

- Multiple days
- Residential
- Limited number of participants (ca 40)
- Use of practical real life experiences
- Case study
- High degree participation and interaction
- Teamwork
- Individual and group presentations
Institute operations: Key aspects

- Content
- Teamwork
- Case study
- Facilitators and their role
- Sponsorship
Key aspects: Content

- Themed sessions
- Presentations
- Interactivity
- Problems
- Groupwork
- Feedback
Key aspects: Teamwork
Key aspects: Teamwork
Key aspects: The case study
Key aspects: The case study
Key aspects: Facilitators
Key aspects: Facilitators
Key aspects: Sponsorship
3 Who attends the Institute?
Who attends the Institute?

- From what region

- From what position in the organisation, eg director, deputy director, etc
### Regionally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macau</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Organisationally

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Director</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(22.9)</td>
<td>(13.6)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deputy Director</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25.7)</td>
<td>(15.9)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Manager</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25.7)</td>
<td>(29.5)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>(24)</td>
<td>(29)</td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mid/Low Manager</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(25.7)</td>
<td>(41)</td>
<td>(56)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(37)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2003 – Hong Kong
2004 – Shenzhen
2007 – Xiamen
4 The changing needs of participants
Identifying challenges

“To help us with the planning and evaluation of the Institute, you are asked to identify the three most important challenges currently faced by you/your library in not more than 50 words for each.”
## Challenges faced by participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing digital/hybrid collections</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting growing user demands</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget shortages including appropriate distribution</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convincing users of the value of the library and its resources</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information literacy in an electronic age</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personnel issues, staff management, motivation etc.</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff shortages and the need to do “more with less”</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space shortages</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Challenges faced by participants (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Learning new skills, professional development, retraining</em></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration v competition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitisation issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining technical infrastructure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual reference</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Web 2.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational restructuring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>95</strong></td>
<td><strong>132</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges

“The dynamic nature of digital materials provides challenge. As databases add new titles & exclude some titles, the information is not always immediately available or even ever available. To guarantee timely information for changes in resources, communication with database providers seems to be very important. We also need to make decisions in time management and project management to be cost-effective. Effective digital resource management also requires cooperation within an individual library, e.g. among library teams such as technical services sections and public services sections.”

2006 Institute Participant.
Challenges

“The uncertainties of government funding and human resources policy in tertiary section have caused latent psychological frustration among staff. However, it seems to be a norm for all organisations following a trend of "doing more with less". How can a library leader lead his team in such adverse context and manage to get results?”

• 2006 Institute Participant.
Challenges

“Current skill sets of library staff cannot cope with the changing technological environment of the library, in relation to the management and handling of electronic resources. The attitudes of some staff are also not well prepared for the change.”

2007 Institute Participant
Challenges

“For many years, we have been collecting all sorts of statistics regarding our services & resources. However, it is no longer sufficient to just use these numbers to prove the value of our existence. How do we translate these to impact and outcome measures that show our contributions to the institution? Do we continue to collect and maintain these statistics or do we abandon/change them for other measures?”

2007 Institute Participant
Content to meet challenges

- **1st Institute (2003)**
  - changing organisational paradigms
  - problem solving
  - performance management
  - project management, and
  - collaboration.

- **4th Institute (2006)**
  - technology and converging changes
  - information management policy
  - open access publishing
  - forging new collaborations
  - scenario planning
  - strategic planning, and
  - project management for an institutional repository
5th Institute (2007)
- changing profiles of library users: accommodating a new generation
- web 2.0 and beyond
- the Open Web: expanding access to digital collections
- the Application of wikis to teamwork
- academic library reinvention
- leadership and change
- project management
- the digital library and intellectual property issues
- benchmarking technology
- web site analysis
- Open Archives Initiative
- optimizing human resources in academic libraries
- the future of library technology.
5 Meeting participants’ needs
Overcoming identified challenges

- Based upon what you have heard and learnt at the Institute:
  - what can *you personally* do to overcome the three challenges you identified prior to the Institute; and,
  - what can *your library* do to overcome the three challenges you identified prior to the Institute.
“I will help the staff to have a proper concept and perception of “doing more with less.” Staff are not independent from the adverse context faced by the library. Understanding and cooperation are needed from staff. Frequent briefing should be given to the staff and encourage them to streamline or re-design their daily work.”

2006 Institute Participant
“My Library will partner with other cultural units (i.e. gallery, museum, etc.) or student service units (i.e. Student Administration Office, Health Centre etc.) to develop into a cultural hub or information hub of the institution. Thus, the access number of the patron could be maintained. And they could have a change of their concept that only books are available in the library.”

2006 Institute Participant
“My library will adopt a management style which takes into consideration humanity. We will create good working relationships among staff and offer awards or encouragement.”

2006 Institute Participant
“To apply the new skills and technologies and ideas learnt from the Institute to our technology development; to apply the mode of training of this Institute in our staff training.”

2007 Institute Participant

“Understand the user needs and provide new services like some of them suggested in the case study.”

2007 Institute Participant
“The staff should be well briefed of the information and knowledge presented at the Institute. A common understanding should be established before actions are taken. Some of the existing mindset about an academic library should, and can be changed. When appropriate, the MPI Institute level management should also be informed of the new trends so that they may pitch in further support to make the library better.”

2007 Institute Participant
6 Institute evaluation, participants’ views and lessons learned
**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction with conduct of the event</strong></td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>8.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Usefulness of the event</strong></td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ comments

“The Institute has confirmed that communications is the key to successful leadership and provided a variety of tools, skills, and techniques to help me. I hope by adopting these skills appropriately, I shall become a more effective manager and a better person overall.”

2003 Institute Participant

“As a leader of a library, I must know how to balance my power and democracy. I will be a more facilitating leader.”

2004 Institute Participant
Participants’ comments

“It's a good career development activity. For mainland librarians it's a pretty new experience in terms of group discussion, case study.”

2005 Institute Participant

“The Institute provides an excellent wake-up call for librarians about their future work environment.”

2005 Institute Participant
Participants’ comments

“Excellent! I've learned a lot. The speaker explains complicate concepts in a simple and easy understanding way, and the examples apply very much to our daily work.”

2006 Institute Participant

“This Institute helps me in choosing/deciding our library direction and how can I work it out to ensure that the library and librarians are still relevant to the institution in future.”

2006 Institute Participant
Participants’ comments

“Group discussions where team members share what their respective libraries did – an eye opener, and useful way to identify potential partner / study visit sites. Can’t get these insights from any book.”

2007 Institute Participant

“Team presentation is an effective teaching method. Knowledge learned can be reviewed and enhanced through case study. Group discussion allows people to learn from each other, develop thinking, and improve cooperation. This is a very good experience.”

2007 Institute Participant
Participants’ comments

“The institute is very useful to me. I have learned a lot in terms of professional knowledge, ways in thinking and work attitude. The institute widened my horizon with its rich and advanced content and various interactive activities, especially the group exercise after each section. The case study was the climax of the institute. This kind of activity should be highly recommended.”

2007 Institute Participant

“More confident of the way I and my library should move forward. Excellent network that I can tap on in future.”

2007 Institute Participant

“Personally, I want to take part every year!”

2007 Institute Participant
Issues and lessons learned

- Language
- Matching content to identified challenges
- Diverse range of management levels
7 Future directions
The Future?

- Expanding cultural diversity
- Including other information workers
- Consolidating identified challenges and how the Institute has helped participants
- Creating a Management Institute for middle level managers
- Assessing past participants.
Creating Leaders?

- No
  - “[l]eaders are not made by corporate courses, any more than they are made by their college courses, but by experience.” (Warren Bennis)

- Yes
  - "there may be 'born leaders', but there surely are far too few to depend on them. Leadership must be learned and can be learned …" (Peter Drucker)

- Maybe
Thank you!

For more information visit:
http://lib.hku.hk/leadership/