Synergy: News from ARL Diversity Initiatives

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Issue 1

The Association of Research Libraries Diversity Initiatives created synergy around careers in research libraries during the Third Annual Leadership Institute in Seattle, WA. To build on the monumental moment, ARL has created Synergy: News from ARL Diversity Initiatives. We hope you enjoy reading the inaugural issue and that you will submit articles for the newsletter.

Jerome Offord, Jr.
Director of Diversity Initiatives

In This Issue

ARL hosted its third annual Leadership Institute in Seattle, January 19-21, 2007. The Leadership Institute is a component of ARL’s Diversity Initiatives, which aim to support member library recruitment efforts by promoting careers in research librarianship among underrepresented groups in the US and Canada. The Institute of Museum and Library Services and ARL member institutions provided funding for this event.

The Leadership Institute had three distinct programmatic tracks focusing on MLS graduate students, subject specialists who are currently enrolled in MLS programs, and mid-career librarians. The institute provided an opportunity for participants to gain exposure to current issues and trends in research libraries. The program focused on transitioning into and building career networks in research libraries and included presentations from library directors and other leaders in the field.

In this inaugural issue of Synergy: News from the ARL Diversity Initiatives four participants reflect on their experiences during the institute. Bergis Jules, Diversity Scholar in the Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, answers the question, "How has the ARL Leadership Institute and Diversity Scholarship impacted my career?" Lyn Batty and Vaishali Jahagirdar, Fellows in the ARL Academy, report the highlights of the institute from their perspective. Shannon D. Jones, a Leadership and Career Development Program Fellow, describes how the institute reenergized her desire to become a library leader.

How has the ARL Leadership Institute and Diversity Scholarship impacted my career?

Bergis Jules, 2007–2008 Diversity Scholar

Foremost, I am very proud and feel very fortunate to have been awarded a Diversity Scholarship from the Association of Research Libraries. With this scholarship, ARL has set a magnificent example of how to achieve the mission of balancing the library field in
terms of diversity. As a scholarship recipient, I attended the Third Annual Leadership Institute and it was the most eye opening, confidence building, and positive networking experience I have had in the field so far.

The institute had a tremendous impact on me for two reasons that primarily have to do with the ARL staff and their mission and goals. First, I think ARL truly understands the need for diversity within the library field and because of this, they understand that groups who have traditionally not been well represented in the library field, in most cases, lack an understanding of how that world works. ARL understands that these groups must be introduced to the field in a way that is effective and will create the most options for success while at the same time not being patronizing. The institute really struck that delicate balance. This understanding reflected very well in the way the institute was organized and run. Secondly, the ARL staff who organized and presented at the institute know that in order to be successful and to advance in any profession, one must know how things work on the surface and behind the scenes. To this end, the institute was set up so that the sessions were not all about the everyday issues like education, resumes, finding a job, or networking, but also included "big picture" sessions covering organizational culture, technology in libraries, library fund development, and millennial students' trends in library usage. The latter sessions encouraged me and equipped me to believe that apart from just being an employee in the library field, I can also be a leader and succeed at it.

More importantly though, the institute and the vast number of people I came in contact with showed me ways I could immediately begin working toward success in the library field. I am in the first year and second semester of an MLS/MA program at Indiana University. Ever since returning from the institute there are three things I have done and will continue to do because of what I learned. First, I make it a priority that any job or educational experience I get involved with is relevant to what my career goals are. Second, I submit material for publication every chance I get whether it is a book review, an encyclopedia article, or a journal article. I have submitted seven so far. And third, I volunteer even if it is one or two hours per week doing things I can see myself doing in a career. There is no better way to get experience and build professional friendships if you are student. So as far as how the ARL Leadership Institute has impacted my career, I would have to say that it has given me the confidence to feel like I can succeed in a field of work that was completely foreign to me a year and a half ago. It has also given me the courage to seek out opportunities in order to stay motivated toward fulfilling my career goals.

Bergis Jules is currently enrolled in the dual masters program in Library Science and African American and African Diaspora Studies at Indiana University and plans to include a specialization in Archives and Records Management.

The Third Annual Leadership Institute was my very first professional conference in the US.

Vaishali Jahagirdar, 2006–2007 ARL Academy Fellow

The institute was a stimulating experience, with a great deal of cross-fertilization of ideas. The professional networking and meeting graduates from various programs, as
well as institutions, was such an overwhelming delight! I really enjoyed every minute of it—not only the networking and being with my academy fellows but also meeting the LCDP Fellows and Diversity Scholars, the ARL library directors, HR directors, and other leaders in the profession who were such delights to interact with. The underlying theme of the conference which was promotion of an "exchange of experience" between participants—especially between academics in the area and others with practical experience—was very educational. The conference was filled with formal learning opportunities including many outstanding keynote speakers and presentations from people with varied professional backgrounds. However, it is all the informal lessons that I learned that stand in the forefront of my mind. The "Transitioning into an ARL Library" panel discussion was a wonderful session on the real experiences by the previous ARL Fellows and their experiences in making the transition into an ARL library. From this experience I had opportunities to weigh in my inclinations and develop interest in new areas and learn more about myself as in what type of professional I want to pursue. The Future Library Leaders Reception was the highlight of the conference.

The ARL Leadership Institute was an exciting and informative conference. I have benefited tremendously from the various opportunities to meet and network in an informal setting with people from many disciplines, universities, and other institutions and interact with many other students with similar interests that I made connections with. I was pleasantly surprised by just how relevant and applicable the sessions were to current trends in the library field.

I left at the end of the institute feeling full from the insights, new interests and ideas, and feeling that the conference contributed to my professional development as a student. As such, I got my first taste of the challenges and opportunities I’m likely to face after graduation.

**Vaishali Jahagirdar** is in library school at Catholic University. She holds Bachelors degrees in Economics and Library & Information Science, and a Masters in Library & Information Science from the University of Mumbai, India. Her professional experience includes five years as an Executive Librarian at the Drug Discovery Research Center of Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd in Mumbai, India.

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**The Third Annual Leadership Institute was a whirlwind of immersion and training.**

*Lya Batty, 2007–2008 ARL Academy Fellow*

From the perspective of the ARL Academy Fellows who attended, the institute offered a rapid acceleration of our understanding of the critical issues facing academic libraries. Our teachers were scholars of depth and status in their respective fields of expertise. They represented the progressive edge of knowledge in areas such as information policy, scholarly communication, library assessment, innovative practices in library instruction, library recruitment, and professionalism. Our days were filled with a procession of expert presenters, each displaying remarkable scholarship, experience, and acumen. The benefits of the institute have continued to resonate after our return from Seattle. The eight ARL Academy Fellows at UNC-SILS who attended have been able to bring relevant and timely information learned at the institute to our classes and to our workplaces. We have been able to share tales of innovations in addressing the needs of Net Generation
students, provide current analyses of the frustrations and breakthroughs in the area of
scholarly communication, and bring news of exciting studies and outcomes in the field of
library assessment.

As a further aspect of our training in Seattle, we were presented with advice about library
interviewing, the hiring process, and the art of professional networking. We had a chance
to reflect on what we had learned in small groups and discuss issues of urgency within
the library community with each other. A particular highlight of the institute was the
Future Library Leaders Reception, a relaxing evening event where candlelight and
cocktails provided a pleasant respite from the highly charged daytime schedule. At the
reception we had the opportunity to meet socially with library directors and other library
leaders representing innovative and exciting academic libraries, and also with respected
researchers and thinkers in the field of academic librarianship. As we departed Seattle
and the Leadership Institute, we were exhausted and exhilarated, and we all agreed that
we had benefited greatly from the experience.

Lyn Batty is in library school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She
earned her B.A. in English Literature from UNC-CH and her J.D. from Georgetown
University Law School. Her interests include public services in academic libraries,
copyright issues affecting libraries, information policy, scholarly communications, and
library development.

ARL Leadership and Career Development Program: Taking my career to the next
level

Shannon D. Jones, 2007–2008 LCDP Fellow

The Third Annual Leadership Institute brought together participants from three of ARL’s
initiatives to promote a diverse workforce: the Leadership and Career Development
Program (LCDP), the Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce, and the ARL Academy. I
was one of twenty librarians from across the United States and Canada selected for the
2007-2008 cohort of LCDP fellows. This diverse group of librarians is rich in talent and
has exactly what it takes to become the brightest, innovative individuals our field has to
offer. Each embodies the vigilance and tenacity it will take to become library leaders and
I am proud to stand in the ranks with such a promising group of individuals. My
interactions with these individuals, as well as the institute coordinators, made our first
institute a memorable and enjoyable event.

The LCDP is not your typical leadership and professional development program. In my
quest to become a library leader, I have researched a number of leadership and
professional development programs. What I have discovered about these programs is
that the large majority focus on the role of the librarian in the institution rather than the
librarian as an individual. The LCDP takes this a step further by placing emphasis on
developing my career as a librarian rather than focusing on my role within my
institution.

I arrived at the leadership institute with several professional goals that are my
inspiration ranging from my daily goal of achieving excellence as a librarian and learning
from mistakes to a more long-term goal of becoming a library leader. The LCD Program
with its focus on preparing the next generation of librarians from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups to assume leadership roles in ARL member libraries will nurture these goals by introducing me to information, people, and resources that I may use along the way. The information we are learning will lay the groundwork to help take my career to the next level.

The coordinators prepared an informative program covering topics to start the process of taking our careers to next the level. These included Your Leadership Vision, Your Leadership Perspective, Taking Care of Your Career, and Organizational Culture and Efficacy. One of my favorite presenters, DeEtta Jones, challenged us to think critically about our leadership visions and the role we want to play in the profession. Of all the information we were introduced to, the concept of using strategic planning as a tool for career development was the most beneficial. Strategic planning is a task that a library initiates to set goals and objectives it wants to achieve during a specified number of years and then maps out the steps it will take to achieve these goals and objectives. Strategic planning is just as effective when applied to professional development. So with this idea in mind, as I look back over the experience in Seattle, the highlights for me include:

- Learning more about ARL, its strategic directions, mission, and getting to know its talented staff.
- Gaining a better understanding of why ARL membership is important for a library and the key factors that make a library eligible for ARL membership.
- Reinforcing the necessity of taking strategic steps towards achieving professional goals.
- Collaborating with my career coach over the next 18 months to ensure that I am taking the best steps to achieve my professional goals.

One of the things that I attribute to my success in the profession is having excellent mentors and role models. The professional guidance, constructive criticism, and overwhelmingly support that I have received from seasoned librarians have made the difference in the actions that I take in the profession daily. In a nutshell, these librarians are my biggest cheerleaders, constantly encouraging me to consider new opportunities, to seek out opportunities to enhance my skills, and more importantly, to do well in the profession that I love by becoming a well-rounded librarian. The mentor/mentee relationship is one that I hold in the highest regard and I don’t take the significance of this relationship lightly. I am proud to say that the LCD Program has introduced me to another seasoned librarian who will serve as my career coach. The thing I appreciate about my relationship with my career coach is that the primary objective is to help achieve goals that I have set for myself.

Overall, our first institute was a wonderful and engaging experience. We learned information that will serve us well for the years to come. The interaction amongst my fellow participants was incredible. I am looking forward to continuing to solidify this relationship throughout my professional career. I appreciated the quality of the program and having access to experts such as DeEtta Jones and Jerome Offord, Jr. At the conclusion of the leadership institute, I am even more confident about my ability to make useful contributions to the profession while taking strategic steps towards library leadership. The institute has reenergized my desire to become a library leader and I am more ready than ever to accept the challenge of becoming a great leader in this profession.
Shannon D. Jones is an LCDP Fellow and MLA Scholarship Recipient. She is the Interim Head, Education Services, in the Tompkins-McCaw Library for the Health Sciences at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research deals with the provision of health information to underserved populations in an effort to eliminate health disparities and to address health literacy challenges facing residents of Richmond, Virginia.

The ARL Leadership Institute is funded by ARL member institutions and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Registration for the institute is complimentary for any MLS graduate student and new librarians who are interested in pursuing a career in a research library. *The Fourth Annual Leadership Institute will be held on January 19–20, 2008, in Philadelphia, PA.*

In the June 2007 Issue

The next issue of Synergy will focus on Residencies in Research Libraries. The featured writers for the next issue are:

Marissa Alcorta, Purdue University, Diversity Fellow, *ARL Diversity Scholar 2005-2007*

Julie Brewer, Librarian, University of Delaware

LeVern Gray, University of Tennessee - Knoxville, Resident Fellow, *ARL Diversity Scholar 2004–2006*

Teresa Neely, Director, Zimmerman Library, University of New Mexico

Megan Perez, MLS candidate, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, *ARL Diversity Scholar 2005–2007*