

AASHL Leadership Scholarship Report

*Leadership Program: Northern Exposure to Leadership Institute (NELI) 2016
December 3-9, 2016*

Northern Exposure to Leadership Institute programming

The Northern Exposure to Leadership Institute (NELI) is an intense leadership training institute in Canada that is specifically designed to assist in the development of future leaders in the library and information profession.

This thought-provoking institute took place in a remote area of Alberta, Canada, which allowed for minimal distractions from the program, but also allowed the participants, mentors and faculty to become better acquainted. The relationships fostered at NELI have created colleagues and friends from around Canada that will last long into the coming years.

Before the program began, the cohort was sent a list of readings, and was asked to fill out relevant questionnaires that would with future exercises during our week at the Institute, first alluding to the intensity of the program. On the first day of the program, a “Cone of Silence” was stressed, in order to ensure that any problems or challenges within our libraries were not discussed outside of NELI, including social media. I believe this fostered a culture of trust and honesty within our cohort, allowing us to freely express ourselves.

The program consisted of a combination of lectures and hands-on activities, where the skills and techniques that were taught could also be practiced. Activities began early in the morning, running late into the evening. The variety of instructors from various facets of the library profession allowed for unique perspectives that may not have been previously considered. They were all knowledgeable and supportive, allowing the participants to see different challenges in a constructive way.

We were broken into small groups of 8 for many of our hands-on activities, small group discussion and reflection. The group that I was assigned was amazing! We all had different backgrounds and opinions, but were able to work together respectfully and cohesively, all while having a good laugh. I honestly believe that my fellow groupmates, along with a few other participants outside of my group were what made my experience at NELI so memorable and valuable. It was a safe place where I could receive constructive feedback from peers and mentors regarding an array of techniques that would hopefully allow me to become a better leader in the future.

Impact surrounding leadership and job responsibilities

Though I have been seconded as Acting Head of the Geographic, Statistic and Government Centre and Social Sciences Library at the University of Ottawa for the last year, I will be returning to my health sciences library portfolio in early 2017. The opportunity to act in a managerial role this past year has created many new networking connections for me, and has allowed me to see the potential collaborations that could further our Health Sciences Library at uOttawa. That, combined with my leadership experience that I have gotten from NELI, have allowed me to view how manager and leadership roles can come together, but also how they need to be treated separately, depending on circumstances.

NELI allowed me to view different leadership techniques that can be applied to a myriad of situations, including with students, faculty and staff, and my own work colleagues. However, these techniques can also go beyond the professional environment, into our personal lives, which I believe makes NELI all the more special as a program.

As an early- to mid-career librarian, NELI allowed me the opportunity to better prepare myself for future opportunities as a potential leader. It has given me an enormous amount of confidence, knowledge and insight to allow me to prepare for that future. I am especially grateful to AAHSL for granting me this scholarship, in order for me to hone my leadership skills.

Respectfully submitted,

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