

## The Harvard Leadership Institute in Academic Librarianship

Prior to even applying for, let alone attending the Leadership Institute in Academic Librarianship (LIAL), I spoke with several colleagues who have previously attended to see if I thought it would be something that I would enjoy and get much out of. The answer from each of them was “yes”. Not one of them had anything at all negative to say about the experience. I was also encouraged by previous attendees to go and learn about what others in academic libraries were facing. This was particularly important to me because I am new to academia. So, not only could I attend and learn for myself and my current situation, but I could learn from over 80 other people from across the world who all had different experiences to share.

With the very first session of the Institute which was with a small group to which we were all assigned, I knew that me being there was going to be an incredible experience. Not only was I getting to learn from some of the brightest educators in academia, but also the people in my small group were great from the moment we all first met. We were from all across the country, and we had two international members as well. Just from our basic introductions we all realized what a great experience this was going to be. Throughout the week, we met in our small group first thing every morning and it was a fantastic way to process what we’d learned the day before, as well as prepare for the larger sessions with all of the attendees.

The sessions with all attendees were very dynamic because we got to hear and interact with others we didn’t know as well as those in our group. The instructors were all very dynamic and did a fantastic job keeping all of us engaged. To be able to do that with 80+ people lends great credibility to just how great the education was.

Harvard went out of their way to make sure we were comfortable and had a pleasurable experience. The instructors all had varied backgrounds, yet all knew each other well as they’ve all been part of LIAL since the beginning (nearly 20 years ago). Their lessons worked well with each other, and did a fantastic job of carrying the same consistent message across the entire week.

I loved every minute of being at LIAL. My small group was amazing and really helped me learn about things that I will invariably be facing as my career in academia continues to grow. I’d like to think they learned a fair bit from my experiences and me as well. It was very eye opening to me to learn just how many facets to leadership in an academic library there can be. And while all the attendees were in leadership of some sort, not everyone was a director or even associate/deputy director. That didn’t matter at all though, because everyone was on an even playing field.

The consistency of the educational material, both reading and the in person sessions, really made the week flow nicely and come to a comfortable conclusion at the end. A lot

was expected of the attendees, and there wasn't an opportunity to be a slacker, so if you intend to go you need to be prepared to do a lot of work before you even get there, and forget about having fun in Cambridge during the week. You'll be exhausted at the end of each day, but in a good way. Have fun in Cambridge after LIAL is over. Don't waste a minute of the opportunity you've been given.

I'm incredibly grateful to AAHSL for the scholarship to help fund my attendance at LIAL. Without it I may not have been able to go, and I truly feel like I learned things that are going to be crucial to my development, and what I'm able to do in my current role.

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