

CILIP Leadership Programme Supporting future leaders in the library, information and knowledge professions



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The need for leadership development

Several societal and economic factors impacting on the library, information and knowledge sectors are creating an increased demand for leadership skills at all levels. Many library staff lead projects or areas of work, and are responsible for leading other people, whether through management responsibilities or through projects, committees, or other forms of team working. The skills needed to lead are sometimes developed on the job, whilst there are also leadership development programmes (sometimes within organisations, or within specific sectors).

Following discussions at CILIP events, some members expressed an interest in CILIP providing a leadership development programme. In 2014, feasibility research was conducted to determine whether this would be a desirable development, and if so what form it should take. Desk research, focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders (potential applicants, employers, other sector organisations such as SCOUNL, and coordinators of other leadership development programmes), showed support for the following themes.

Leadership development support for mid-career professionals

In contrast to the American Library Association's Emerging Leaders programme,¹ research in the UK highlighted a need for leadership development support for mid-career rather than early-career professionals. Although definitions of what this means vary, the research demonstrated that both individuals and employers feel there is a need for leadership development for those who have worked in libraries for a number of years, often at a 'qualified professional' level, who have some leadership experience but are looking to develop their skills further to take on more responsibility.

Cross-sector leadership development

One of the strengths of CILIP is that it covers many library, information and knowledge sectors. A key message from the research was that this is beneficial for leadership development programmes for many reasons, including broadening networks, understanding different sectors, and communicating your message clearly to different audiences.

A combination of both face-to-face and virtual elements

Many of those involved in the research had undertaken some form of leadership development training themselves. They commented on the value of face-to-face elements of these programmes, but recognised the difficulty in attending them because of resource constraints. Others commented that virtual elements had been very useful for more regular communication and fitted around work commitments more easily. It was therefore felt that future leadership development programmes should include both face-to-face and virtual elements to make the most of both approaches.

The opportunity for people to develop leadership skills in practical projects

Although learning theory about leadership is of value, the research demonstrated that the added value in leadership development programmes is having the opportunity to put it into practice. Usually this is achieved through individual or group projects. Feedback showed a preference for group projects because there are the additional advantages of networking, working in a team and leading other people.

CILIP Leadership Programme

As a result of the research, a proposal was put together to pilot a leadership development programme. This received support from both CILIP senior management and CILIP Board, and a one-year pilot was approved. Planning began in early 2015. The programme launched at the CILIP Conference in July 2015 and will run for one year, concluding at the CILIP Conference in July 2016.

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Participants

The programme received applications from CILIP members in various sectors and types of roles. Following a selection process (based on criteria outlined in the application), places were offered to 21 applicants, twenty of whom were in a position to accept their place. A few months into the programme, one withdrew because of other commitments. There are currently 19 active participants on the programme, including staff from academic libraries, public libraries, health libraries, school libraries, commercial organisations, and membership organisations. Some of the group are working towards a level of CILIP Professional Registration (Chartership or Fellowship), and many are revalidating.

Programme elements

The CILIP Leadership Programme includes a number of different elements, outlined below. CILIP's VLE is used to support programme communication, both for the dissemination of information to participants to enable them to work on the programme, and to facilitate discussion between participants.

1. Face-to-face workshops

Over the course of the programme, four face-to-face workshops bring the full group together. These have been an opportunity for the group to get to know each other, and to learn through workshops. The focus of the workshops has been active, with participants being involved in practical exercises and sharing their experiences to help each other learn. Topics covered in workshops have included leadership styles, governance, change management and communication.

2. Online activities

When there is no face-to-face workshop, there are online activities, which have included reading, webinars, videos and work on the CILIP VLE. Participants are encouraged to reflect on them and share with the rest of the group via the discussion forum in the CILIP VLE. Topics covered in these activities have included leadership theories, strategic planning, stakeholder analysis and advocacy.

3. Group projects

CILIP Regional Member Networks and Special Interest Groups were invited to propose projects that would support development of leadership skills. Four projects were selected, and participants were invited to select the project they would like to work on. The project group size varies (partly due to the scope of the project) from two to seven participants. The focus of the projects also varies, but each includes communicating with stakeholders, strategic thinking and evaluation, strategic planning, and change management as well as project management and reporting.

4. Personal development plans

At the beginning of the programme, participants completed a self-analysis using the CILIP Professional Knowledge and Skills Base² (particularly focusing on areas of relevance to leadership) and reflected on areas they would like to develop over the course of the programme. They completed the same exercise at the mid-point of the programme, and will reflect on their progress and future plans at the end of the programme. The aim is to encourage participants to consider how to apply what they are learning in the programme, and how to focus their experience on the areas they are particularly interested in developing.

Programme support

I coordinate the programme with support from CILIP staff, who are involved in the planning and administration. CILIP members have also volunteered their time to support the programme, either by providing content, supporting the group projects, or assisting with the participant selection process. The programme is

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sponsored by BDS (Bibliographic Data Services Ltd), and some participants are sponsored by CILIP Member Networks.

Feedback so far

As the programme is a pilot, evaluation is a key element. Feedback is collected on a regular basis from programme participants and others. So far, it has been largely positive, though some changes have been made to the programme while it is in progress. These have included ensuring space is booked for group project meetings after face-to-face workshops; organising informal chats and webinars to discuss progress so far (and to support reflection); and using CILIP's webinar to support project meetings.

Thanks to the success of the CILIP Leadership Programme, NHS Knowledge for Healthcare has commissioned CILIP to lead a similar leadership development programme for their staff. Whilst this has a slightly more specific focus (for health librarians), many of the programme elements are the same. One key addition is Action Learning Sets, which was discussed as a potential element for the CILIP Leadership Programme. This approach supports development and application in practice; however, it was agreed that it would be too much to include in the pilot programme. Each participant in the Knowledge for Healthcare Leadership Programme will attend three face-to-face Action Learning Sets in addition to the four face-to-face workshops.

Next steps

The programme will conclude in the next few months, after which a more extensive evaluation is planned. This will include evaluation from the perspective of various stakeholders (participants, employers, content providers, member networks) as well as evaluation of the processes supporting the programme. It will measure the impact of the pilot programme and inform future planning.

Summary

The CILIP Leadership Programme came about in response to a need for leadership development for mid-career professionals in library, information and knowledge sectors. The pilot programme launched in July 2015 and has 19 active participants. Through a variety of different elements, participants are developing leadership skills and knowledge and applying them in practice. The programme concludes in July 2016 and evaluation will both assess the impact of the programme and inform future planning.

References

- 1 <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/leadership/emergingleaders>
- 2 <http://www.cilip.org.uk/jobs-careers/professional-knowledge-skills-base>

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