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LIOLA: The Long and Winding Road

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JANE CORRY is a retired Youth Services Librarian from Multnomah County Library. She was the President of OLA in 2015–2016 and appointed to OLA’s Leadership Task Force in 2013. Jane served as chair of the LIOLA 2018 Planning Committee.



ELAINE HIRSCH is the Associate Director of Watzek Library at Lewis & Clark College. She is the Vice President/President Elect of OLA and serves on OLA’s Leadership Committee with Jane.

ELAINE: Jane, here we are a month past the inaugural Leadership Institute of the Oregon Library Association (LIOLA)! Can you believe we’ve come this far since we began working together to support leadership development for OLA members in 2013?

JANE: I’m so glad we both stuck with it. I think it’s the longest single project I’ve ever worked on.

ELAINE: LIOLA was held May 16 to 19, 2018 in Pendleton. It had been a while since I’d been to Eastern Oregon, and I was reminded what a charming town Pendleton is with the River Parkway to walk along and the historic downtown with shops and restaurants. I think the location provided an opportunity for many to travel outside of the Willamette Valley and focus on the institute and leadership development.

JANE: Pendleton is lovely. I’d actually never spent any time there at all. As soon as (former State Librarian) MaryKay Dahlgreen suggested Pendleton, I thought it was a great idea. People outside the Valley often feel like OLA is Willamette Valley-centric. Pendleton Public Library director Mary Finney joined the committee and was invaluable with local arrangements.





Jen G,
Oregon City Public Library

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ELAINE: There were 22 participants from libraries around the state placed into cohorts of five or six people with an additional two mentors per cohort. The curriculum focused on the lessons from Gallup's *Strengths Based Leadership*. Participants were asked to complete the Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment prior to LIOLA, and received a personalized strengths-based leadership guide to their top five identified strengths. Cohorts were organized by the assessment results so each participant brought unique strengths to the cohort conversations and activities.

JANE: I like the StrengthsFinder a lot. Since I took it, filtering my way of dealing with things through that lens is very helpful. I found it interesting, though not surprising, that so many of the participants were strong in the Strategic Thinking domain of leadership. What are your strengths?

ELAINE: Most of my strengths fall under the Relationship Building domain, and include developer, empathy, and individualization. I also have input under the Strategic Thinking domain, and maximizer under the Influencing domain.

ELAINE: The LIOLA planning group worked with Dietra Stivahtis of Vibrant Business Solutions to develop the curriculum and facilitate the institute. She was amazing! Jane, how did you locate the funding to hire Dietra and plan the institute?

JANE: This is a case of where my number one strength of adaptability came into play. I have three strengths in the Strategic Thinking domain (ideation, intellection and learner) and activator in the Influencing domain. When Elsa Loftis was OLA president during 2016 to 2017, we both got an e-mail from Maria Wagner, a former "storytime mom" and intern of mine who was the interim library director at Portland Community College (PCC). She said that PCC was the fiduciary agent for a grant that Northwest Central had. She said the money actually belonged to OLA, that it needed to get off their books by June 2018, and it needed to be spent on training. My eyes lit up! Since 2013 we'd been working on strategies for funding a leadership institute. I immediately asked Elsa to appoint me to spearhead the initiative. Or was that activator strength?!

The Road to LIOLA:

OLA's Leadership Task Force and Leadership Development Committee

ELAINE: In 2014, OLA's president Penny Hummel created a Leadership Task Force to research options to provide the association's membership with leadership training opportunities. This is when Jane and I first started working together on leadership initiatives. After breaking ties with Pacific Northwest Library Association (PNLA) in 2010, it became more challenging for OLA members to attend the PNLA Leadership Institute. I was among the Oregon applicants who were not admitted to PNLA Leads, and I believed OLA should provide leadership development opportunities for its members.





Ann Schepcke,
Salem Public Library (Retired)

JANE: Yes, getting something like this started has been a goal of OLA since leaving PNLA. I've been reading through old board minutes to help remember how this all unfolded. When Candice Watkins was OLA president during 2014–2015, we had several meetings with the Washington Library Association (WLA) about getting something going with WLA, but funding was always an issue.

ELAINE: Candice was a champion of leadership development and proposed the creation of the OLA Leadership Committee, which was an outgrowth of the Leadership Task Force. The committee was charged with overseeing leadership development opportunities for the OLA membership, including creating and managing leadership trainings and programs, as well as serving as leadership mentors. At the annual conference in 2015, the well-attended preconference, *Leading From Any Position: Creating Learning Libraries in Five Easy Lessons*, was offered, featuring Becky Schreiber and John Shannon. Schreiber and Shannon had been facilitators of PNLA Leads, and evaluations from this preconference clearly indicated that OLA members were interested in additional leadership development opportunities.

JANE: That preconference, which was limited to 50, filled up immediately. That really let us know that leadership training was something OLA members craved. At the same time the Leadership Task Force was becoming a committee, the Scholarship Committee was having a self-examination. For years, they were giving scholarship money to MLIS students. It was decided that it would be better to focus on professional development for people who already work in libraries, and the task of approving these scholarships then moved to the new Leadership Committee.

I remember Candice's last meeting as president. She had worked so hard to find money to get a Leadership Institute started. You were there, right? She found \$5,000 seed money through a donor who has given money to libraries, but the Board at that time voted against it as it didn't feel like OLA was ready to facilitate an institute. There were issues about being able to sustain it. The Board felt that strategic planning needed to come first and sustainable funding needed to be found for an institute. It was a very interesting meeting.

ELAINE: Yes, I remember that, and that it was under your presidency from 2015 to 2016 that the Leadership Committee was charged with developing a proposal to distribute scholarships to assist in funding leadership development opportunities for the membership.

JANE: Yes, that came out of that same meeting. Between the scholarships shifting focus, the Leadership Committee developing, and the beginning of the strategic planning all happening at the same time, it's no wonder I can't remember the details!

ELAINE: The first scholarships were awarded in fall 2016, and have funded OLA member participation in a variety of development opportunities, including a Women in Leadership program at Harvard, an ALA conference, and library management and leadership institutes including LIOLA! All members of OLA, regardless of position or employment, are eligible to apply for scholarships up to \$1,000. Up to three scholarships may be awarded annually.

<http://www.olaweb.org/scholarships-ola>





Sara Thompson,
Deschutes Public Library

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ELAINE: LIOLA planning got underway after the scholarships were initiated, which brings us back to the start of our conversation! I look forward to the second LIOLA, and to see how leadership development continues to evolve within OLA!

JANE: I'm so happy that it finally came to fruition eight years after OLA left PNLA with the promise of creating a substitute for the PNLA Leads Institute. I think our strategy of using the grant money and saving the tuition money for the next institute will make it sustainable. And, having scholarships helps make it more affordable for people from smaller libraries. 🐼



The participants, mentors and staff of LIOLA 2018.



Cheers to the Leadership Institute of OLA (LIOLA)!