

## Next Generation Skills and Leaders: Future Proofing UWA Library

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## Abstract

The shifting sands and rising tides of digital disruption within academic libraries, and the continually evolving demands and expectations of university leaders, academics and students, require innovative solutions and effective leadership. In 2018, the Library at the University of Western Australia (UWA) commenced two initiatives to future proof its workforce, preparing staff to take advantage and innovate within the rapid pace of change.

Leading for Success is a leadership program designed to provide library staff with a contemporary and relevant skill-set to initiate and lead change to develop and deliver new initiatives. This program builds on a strong history of successful leadership development at UWA Library. Designed and delivered in partnership with UWA's Organisational Development unit, the University Library is leading the way through the creation of a program that can be adapted and delivered into other areas of the University. The program aims to prepare staff for new challenges and opportunities, including higher-level positions, which contributes to succession planning within the Library and the wider University.

In 2018, the Library also commenced a project to develop a workforce plan to identify current and near-future skills required for library staff. This has resulted in the production of a dynamic skills matrix for use as a tool for mapping current staff capabilities and to assist with professional developmental planning for individual staff and teams. The plan is assisting the Library to future proof its workforce and enable staff to engage proactively in career development.

This paper will describe the elements of the two programs and make comparisons with library staff development initiatives delivered elsewhere. It will evaluate the success of the two programs from the perspective of the participants, and provide a framework for other institutions wishing to develop similar initiatives.

## Keywords

Leadership, workforce planning, organisational development

## Background

The University of Western Australia (UWA), established in 1911, is research-intensive and comprehensive and is ranked in the top 100 universities globally [Academic Ranking of World Universities, 2018]. The UWA Library (the Library) supports the teaching, learning and research activities of UWA This includes the provision of strategic leadership to UWA in a range of activities including research publication and data management, open access, and digitisation. The Library is comprised of six physical libraries, records management and university archives; and has over 100 staff.

Like many universities around the world, there has been significant change within UWA during recent years. There was a significant review in 2016 that resulted in the creation of four strategic faculties, and a reorganisation of the University administrative functions into service delivery centres aligned to the newly formed faculty structure. As part of this review, the University's records management and archive teams transferred into the Library, the librarian

liaison function restructured into four teams to reflect the University's faculty structure and new positions were created to better support the new faculties and the student experience.

In 2019, UWA released its new 10-year vision [UWA, 2019a] and 5-year strategic plan [UWA, 2019b]. These include a number of strategies that will directly involve the Library, especially in relation to open and trusted research, and the use of disruptive technologies to enhance the student experience. In 2020, the Library will develop its new strategy to align with UWA's 2030 Vision. This plan will address the evolving information needs of UWA and will reaffirm the primary orientation of library spaces from collections to people, and from physical to digital resource provision. It will also prioritise the development of support to UWA as it transforms its practices to enable data-intensive discovery and openness within teaching and research.

Within this context, the Library's senior management team recognises that to achieve the transformation required to meet UWA's ambitions, strong leadership skills are essential. In addition, Library staff need to have both the skills and mindset to embrace change; develop and deliver new services; and reinvent existing ones. To ensure opportunities are maximised in this context, the Library has commenced a workforce planning process and a leadership development program.

## **Workforce planning**

### **Background/literature review**

Workforce planning is a business process that has been around for many years and practiced widely in many industries. It is defined as the "strategic alignment of an organisation's human capital with its business direction" [Mayo, 2015] and provides a mechanism through which an organisation can ensure staff have the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to deliver on strategic objectives. It gained traction in the Library industry during the mid to late 2000s where planning processes were reported in a number of countries including Canada, the UK and the US [Stokker & Hallam, 2009]. Australian academic libraries were world leading in workforce planning during this time and there are many examples documented including at the University of Melbourne [Kealy, 2009], Deakin University [Cardwell, 2009], University of Tasmania [Warren, 2011], and Queensland University of Technology (QUT) [Stokker & Hallam, 2009].

The literature on these studies reveals some of the drivers behind these initiatives including:

- Concerns over an aging workforce and the implications for libraries facing significant retirements of skilled and experienced staff
- Concerns from libraries about how to effectively retain and develop new staff
- The need to address skill shortages in the face of rapidly changing library services
- The need to support new organisational structures delivering new services
- The need to ensure staff have the necessary skills to deliver ambitious new strategic plans
- The need to find ways to reinvent staffing profiles in the face of budget constraints where libraries are increasingly limited in their ability to create new positions or buy-in new skills
- The need to be more strategic in staff development

While these studies had differing drivers, what was common to them all was their approach. Typically, all of them had four main stages of workforce planning:

1. An analysis of the current workforce. Some of the more comprehensive planning exercises, such as QUT, gathered extensive workforce information including quantitative data for numbers and levels, capability data for skills, and more contextual information for opportunities for redeployment and human resource policies. Other initiatives like Deakin University focused purely on skills and resourcing levels.
2. A process of identifying future needs. In some cases, such as the University of Tasmania, this was through a consultation process with stakeholders, while others carried out extensive environmental scans that lasted 12 months (QUT).
3. Identification of gaps between future needs and current capability.

4. Formulation of plans for workforce development to address gaps. Solutions ranged from the development of training programs to organisational changes including the creation of new position descriptions and services.

One final point of commonality between these activities was the emphasis placed on ensuring they were reviewed annually in order to stay current and relevant.

Since this burst of activity between 2005 and 2010, there has been very little new information published about workforce planning activity. As part of the UWA workforce planning initiative, an attempt was made to gain some more recent insight by emailing the Deputies and Associate Librarians in Australia and New Zealand email list. Four responses were received from three libraries. Only one library had developed and implemented a framework, which was subsequently scaled down to front of house staff. A review was undertaken of publicly available information on Australian academic library websites and only one document was found describing a recent planning exercise carried out at the Australian National University [Australian National University, n.d.]. This indicates that there may be limited workforce planning taking place in Australian academic libraries.

### **UWA Library approach to workforce planning**

In 2018, the Library commenced a project to deliver a workforce plan that would outline overarching current and future skills required to successfully fill the various roles within the Library, and assist the Library to achieve its current and future goals in various ways. Identification of skills gaps would inform recruitment processes and assist in the selection of suitable staff to fill these gaps; the plan would help inform professional development priorities and activities; and it would assist staff and line managers in identifying development areas as part of staff appraisals.

To create the plan an analysis of current position descriptions was undertaken to produce an initial list of current skills required across all position descriptions in the Library. Following this, a workshop was facilitated for the Library Leadership Team to reflect on the draft list and gather information on future trends (defined as within the next 3 years) and their impact on core skills required for the various library roles. In preparation for the workshop, participants reviewed a number of University and Library strategic documents as well as a number of articles on future library trends. During the workshop, participants were asked the following questions:

- What are the trends over the next three years that are likely to impact us?
- What areas of service development do we anticipate over the next three years?
- What are the future capabilities required to achieve these strategic and service development objectives?

The workforce plan was compiled from the analysis of the position descriptions and the workshop feedback and lists the following:

- **Capabilities** - overarching activities required to fulfil library positions. Each capability is comprised of a number of skill sets.
- **Skill sets** - group of skills that are required to achieve a particular activity. Each skill set is comprised of a number of skills.
- **Skills** - specific abilities that are required to carry out an activity. Skills can be linked directly to training requirements.

As an example, the capability "Support for research", includes a skillset "Research data analytics" which includes the skill "Application of research data analytic tools e.g. Python and r". These are then mapped to Library positions (client support officer, librarian, library manager, etc.). Colour coding in the plan is used to highlight new skills requirements as they are identified. Where training is available within UWA this is annotated in the plan against the relevant skills.

The plan will be reviewed at least annually in advance of the UWA staff appraisal process and after the finalisation of the Library's annual plan. New positions, skill sets, and training can be added at any time. A portion of the Library's staff development budget is allocated to support priority areas for skill development needs as identified within the plan.

## **Library leadership program**

### **Background/literature review**

There is a relative scarcity of recent literature on definitive traits that comprise best practice leadership within academic libraries [Hernon & Schwartz, 2008; Le, 2015] and where the topic is addressed, the focus tends to be on leadership amongst director or university librarian roles [Wong, 2017]. Studies on leadership in academic libraries by Le [2015], Hernon et al. [in Le, 2015], Hernon and Schwartz [2008], Aslam [2018] and Wong [2017] do note that leadership skills include:

- Developing a shared vision and leading change
- Management capabilities such as decision making, managing teams and individuals, and motivating and enabling staff
- Personal attributes such as good communication skills, self-confidence, integrity and resilience
- A relevant professional knowledge base

Aslam [2018] and Murray [2007] acknowledge the invalidity of the "great man" theory that great leaders are born not made, and emphasise the importance of providing support and training to develop great leaders. As asserted by Mackenzie and Smith in Harris-Keith [2015] and Wong [2017] library school curricula do not teach leadership skills adequately and it is not possible to fully prepare graduating librarians to be effective leaders. Mackenzie & Smith recommend scaffolding the development of leadership skills within the professional workplace, and Wong recommends development of leadership skills in the workplace through situational work, accompanied by relevant professional development programs.

There are few examples of leadership programs provided internally by libraries in the literature. Mierke [2014] describes an in-house leadership program at the University of Saskatchewan that was implemented to achieve a new library vision. An in-house program was chosen for cost effectiveness, to focus on topics of most relevance to the library, to allow peers to develop a common understanding of leadership, and to support each other in their leadership development journey. Jantti and Greenhalgh [2012] describe an approach to leadership development at the University of Wollongong Library that included identification of core leadership qualities for the executive, team leaders and managers, career interviews and coaching, and a 360 degree feedback process.

In addition to in-house leadership training, library and other professional associations also offer leadership programs. In Australia, the Council of University Librarians delivers a biennial leadership institute and the Council of Australian University IT Directors offers a five day residential leadership institute for aspiring IT and Library Directors. The Aurora Foundation hosts an annual residential five day Institute for Emerging Leaders directed at information and cultural industries including libraries, galleries, museums, archives and records.

### ***Leading for Success program***

In 2018, the Library commenced a leadership program for its 29 senior staff comprising senior librarians, library managers and the Library Executive. Called *Leading for Success*, the program seeks to identify and develop the skills required by senior staff to build on the existing leadership and management capabilities and strengths of the team. The program was developed and delivered through collaboration between the Library and the University's Organisational Development team. The program was modelled on the *Taking the Lead* Program, previously undertaken by the Library [Kiel, 2007].

The program includes the following elements:

- 360-degree feedback activity to determine participant strengths and skill gaps
- Development of Individual Development Plans
- Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) exercise to assist participants understand workplace behaviour
- Formal workshop series
- Informal peer-learning program
- Review of Individual Development Plans
- Final evaluation of the program and recommendations for future development and investment in leadership

#### *360-degree feedback and Individual Development Plan*

360-degree feedback is a methodology that collects responses from an employee's line manager, peers and direct reports, as well as from the employee (self-evaluation). 360-degree feedback is based on the premise that multiple viewpoints provide a more accurate picture of an individual's strengths and weaknesses than that of a single reviewer and that the ability of an individual to compare their self-assessment with that of others leads to increased self-awareness [Carson in Carson, 2006]. The multiple sources of feedback collected in a 360-degree process will likely provide a more comprehensive picture of an employee's performance than the more traditional or downward feedback from a supervisor to a staff member, or the less common upward feedback from a staff member to a supervisor.

All participants participated in a self-reflective exercise using the Quality Leadership Profile for Professionals (QLPP) 360-degree feedback tool initially developed by QUT in 1994 and now managed by The Voice Project. The tool focuses specifically on leaders in professional roles within the Australian tertiary education sector. The individual, their supervisor(s), their nominated peers and direct reports, participated in the survey. Results were benchmarked against a group consisting of over 1200 tertiary leaders. The QLPP framework categorises capabilities into three: staff motivation and involvement, strategic and operational management, and service and community focus.

The QLPP allowed participants in the leadership program to understand how others perceive them, and how these perceptions compare with their own beliefs. All participants were offered a one to one session to debrief the content of the report they received and assist in developing their Individual Development Plan (IDP). The IDPs were for the use of the individuals and there was no requirement to share these, although individuals were encouraged to share and discuss their IDP with their manager and/or a mentor.

A team report that identified common development themes was provided to help inform the sessions that would be offered as part of the leadership program.

#### *Personal Profile Analysis (PPA)*

The Personal Profile Analysis (PPA) assessment, also known as DISC, is a psychometric tool used to look at communication styles and individual insight into workplace behaviours. Based on the DISC theory of William Moulton, Dr. Thomas Hendrickson developed the Thomas Personal Profile Analysis in the late 1950s/early 1960s [The history of the Thomas Personal Profile Analysis (PPA), n.d.]. The tool determines individuals' response patterns to workplace situations as either active or passive, people or task oriented and then further classifies them in terms of four domains: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness and Compliance.

All participants completed the PPA questionnaire and received an individual report. This was explored further in the first of the formal workshops, where participants received their individual report and explored the dynamics of working style when managing and communication with others.

#### *Formal workshop series*

Identification of content for inclusion in the workshop program was developed collaboratively with the participants. Participants were asked to consider the following questions and discuss their ideas in a group session.

1. What kind of leadership and management skills are most important for your role, and for the staff within your teams?
2. What are the highest priorities for investment/development in leadership and management skills?
3. What leadership/management areas for development, if any, were identified during the recent staff appraisal process? (The intended emphasis for this discussion is on skills, not individuals)
4. What expectations do you have of the program? What would you like to get out of it?
5. What should we call the program?

The feedback from this workshop, the results of the QLPP 360 team report and a summary of individual development themes identified in the IDP process, were used to determine the following topics for the formal full day workshops series.

- Working style and managing teams
- Personal brand, confidence and influence
- Decision making
- Creativity and innovation

To date the first two workshops have been run and the final two are scheduled for the second half of 2019.

#### *Talking Leadership Program*

As part of the Leading for Success program, a monthly informal peer-learning forum called *Talking Leadership* is being facilitated. Participants work in pairs to facilitate a one-hour leadership-related learning activity for their colleagues in the program. Participation in these sessions is voluntary and strongly encouraged.

Participants are encouraged to be creative and try something new in their approach to this initiative. Suggested formats include:

- Identifying and organising an internal or external speaker
- Organising and facilitating a panel discussion
- Researching a topic and running a workshop
- Sharing/developing a case study and facilitating a discussion
- Sharing an article and facilitating a discussion

The purpose of these sessions is to provide an additional avenue within the program for both learning and sharing, and an opportunity for participants to build strong connections with their peers.

Topics scheduled or facilitated to date include diversity and inclusion, resilience, staff development, emotional intelligence, integrity, mindfulness, sustainability and monkey management.

#### *Program Evaluation*

Upon completion of the program, a full evaluation will be undertaken. The planned evaluation follows the Kirkpatrick Evaluation four level model that measures:

1. Reaction: how individuals react to the program or the measure of client satisfaction
2. Learning: the extent to which learning has occurred
3. Behaviour: the extent to which on-the-job behaviour has changed as a result of the program
4. Results: the extent to which results have occurred because of the program [Kirkpatrick, 2005]

Level	Focus	Source	Timeframe
Reaction	Individuals' satisfaction	Feedback survey completed after each formal workshop	Ongoing through the program
Learning	Acquisition of knowledge, skills and behaviours	Midpoint "pulse check" survey and end of survey evaluation questionnaire	Midpoint of the program and at completion of the program
Behaviour	Improved on-the-job behaviour	Midpoint "pulse check" survey and end of survey evaluation questionnaire	Midpoint of the program and at completion of the program
Results	Results achieved by participants	Interview with Library Executive and Library Managers Summary of IDP follow up meetings - reflecting on individuals progress against their actions	At completion of the program

*Table 1 Approach to program evaluation*

*Program evaluation outcomes to date - workshop evaluations*

Workshop evaluation responses have been captured for the first two formal workshops.

Participants were sent an online survey asking three questions:

1. Which were the most useful aspects of the session?
2. What could have been left out?
3. What could have been done to improve it?

For the workshop "Working style and managing teams" 11 of 25 (44%) participants responded with feedback. Overall, the feedback was positive. The majority of respondents reported that the PPA/DISC tool used to explore working style was the most useful aspect of the session. There were also a number of comments that the interactive nature of the workshop was helpful in learning and exploring the concepts. In terms of what could have been left out, there was little consistency in responses. Some reported they found all content useful, others noted specific exercises that could have been condensed or left out. Suggestions for improvement focused on logistics (a larger training room or splitting the session over two days instead of one) and spending more time on the topic of conflict management.

For the workshop "Personal brand, confidence and influence" 10 of 24 (42%) participants responded with feedback. Overall feedback was positive. Respondents identified the most useful aspects as the peer-review exercise, giving feedback on impact, the importance of body language and formulating an "elevator pitch". In terms of what could have been left out, most respondents felt all the content was relevant, although a few noted the session could have been shorter. Suggestions for improvement included more case study examples and more time for reflection during that day.

*Program evaluation outcomes to date - midpoint program review*

At the midpoint of the program, participants were invited to complete an anonymous online survey to explore the learning and behaviour change experienced as a result of the program. The response rate was high, with 21 of the 29 program participants (72%) completing the survey.



The midpoint survey asked participants to rate the overall usefulness of the program in developing their skills as a leader. A 10-point rating scale was used, with 10 being extremely useful and 1 being not useful at all. All respondents rated the usefulness of the program at 7 or higher (7 - 50%, 8 - 31%, 9 - 6%, 10 - 13%). Participants were also given the opportunity to comment on the elements of the program that were working well and what could be improved. The common themes in the working well comments were the opportunity for cross-library working and interaction; the value of the informal peer learning sessions; the range of topics covered in the program; and some specific references to the usefulness of the personal branding and the DISC working styles content. Suggestions to improve the program focused on program logistics (length and timing of sessions), and building in more structure to reflect and follow up on ideas and development points.

Learning and impact/behaviour change questions were asked in respect of each program element run to date. A 10-point rating scale was used, with 10 as the highest rating and 1 as the lowest.

<b>Program element</b>	<b>Learning</b> (How much participants felt they learnt)	<b>Impact/behaviour</b> (To what extent participants had been able to put into practice the learning in their day to day role)	<b>Comment summary</b> (Participants could add free text comments to support their ratings)
<b>360-degree feedback exercise and Individual Development Plan (IDP)</b>	Rating 1-5: 0% Rating 6-7: 33% Rating 8-10: 67%	Rating 1-5: 7% Rating 6-7: 40% Rating 8-10: 53%	Hard to find the time to review and implement IDP 360 process was challenging but useful to consider the feedback
<b>Formal workshop: Working style and managing teams</b>	Rating 1-5: 8% Rating 6-7: 46% Rating 8-10: 46%	Rating 1-5: 23% Rating 6-7: 46% Rating 8-10: 31%	Useful to understand and consider different working styles Putting it into practice is a challenge
<b>Formal workshop: Personal brand, confidence and influence</b>	Rating 1-5: 7% Rating 6-7: 21% Rating 8-10: 72%	Rating 1-5: 21% Rating 6-7: 14% Rating 8-10: 65%	Useful for self-reflection Have been able to apply to concepts
<b>Talking Leadership: Informal peer-learning sessions</b>	Rating 1-5: 21% Rating 6-7: 29% Rating 8-10: 50%	Rating 1-5: 23% Rating 6-7: 31% Rating 8-10: 46%	Learning from peers has been very useful Great personal development opportunity For some topics, may be useful to have more "expert" input

*Table 2 Summary of responses to learning and impact/behaviour change questions*

Overall, the results of the midpoint review are positive and they confirm the aims and value of the program. The key learning point is a need to build in more support to aid participants in translating the learning into behavioural change.

### **Looking to the Future**

To enable the continued transformation of the UWA Library strong leadership skills and an appropriately skilled workforce are required. The Library has taken two big steps towards achieving these through the development and delivery of a leadership program and the establishment of a workforce plan.

The Leading for Success program is currently underway and will continue for the duration of 2019. At its conclusion, the Library Executive team will facilitate discussion on, and planning for, ongoing development of leaders who have undertaken this program and ways to induct new leaders in the future. The workforce plan will be introduced to all Library staff as a tool that can be used for both teams and individuals; it will be incorporated into the formal staff appraisal process, and used to identify staff training and development needs.

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