

# Connecting, Engaging and Learning: The INELI Oceania network

*Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi*

*(With your basket and my basket the people will flourish)*

This is a Māori whakatoki or proverb that is used in everyday life and refers to co-operation and the combination of resources to get ahead.

## Introduction

With trends toward austerity and cuts to public sector funding impacting libraries in the UK (Peet, 2015) and threats of cuts to library funding in the US (Global Libraries, 2014), building leadership and innovation skills in library professionals across the globe is key to supporting library advocacy efforts. The International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI) Oceania program is a regional model of the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators program, part of the Global Libraries initiative of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Global Libraries initiative works to build and maintain libraries as relevant and enriching community centres. The initiative provides a range of grants for technology, support of library associations and for leadership programs.

The INELI leadership program has objectives of equipping library leaders with the skills to move beyond 'yesterday's logic' when addressing the challenges of today (Gipson, 2012). Since the launch of the Global INELI program in 2011, a number of regional models of the INELI program have been established including INELI Asean, INELI Balkans and INELI Sub Saharan Africa. INELI Oceania was established in 2014. As a place of online engagement the INELI Oceania has developed a network of innovators who are actively engaged in online learning and reflective practice in a trusted and supportive environment. The network, which includes online learning modules on topics such as innovation, risk, change management and advocacy, is supported by a group of mentors and a project manager.

This paper, which has been co-authored by three INELI Oceania Innovators (Cohort 1), will seek to spark interest and conversation about the skills and attributes required to collaborate and lead in the 21st century library. The paper will emphasise the value of a learning environment that promotes trust and honesty, builds resilience and self-awareness, and the absolute value and necessity of networks and support.

## Training for leadership in the profession

Library and Information professionals have a strong sense of the important role that libraries play in our society. White (2002) describes this importance well by noting: "As gateways to knowledge and culture, libraries play a fundamental role in society. The resources and services they offer create opportunities for learning, support literacy and education, and help shape the new ideas and perspectives that are central to a creative and innovative society. They also help ensure an authentic record of knowledge created and accumulated by past generations". To build libraries as gateways to knowledge and culture, we need to build

library professionals and library leaders who are in tune with the changing needs of library users. Library leaders who are able to articulate and advocate for services that reach and have impact to a diverse range of people within the community. This is even more critical as more and more library services are delivered in both digital and physical spaces.

Training and support of future library leaders is considered to be a significant component of building libraries that can be central places for community development and learning. The report *Cultivating global library leadership*, which documented international library leadership programs and trends, noted that:

The role of libraries and librarians in society continues to evolve. While libraries were conceived in a period of information scarcity, today's networked world provides public access to unlimited amounts of digital information. To continue to support communities through these cultural shifts, librarians need, perhaps more than ever before, the skills to lead their libraries in this new, ever changing reality. Stronger and more widely available leadership programs will improve library leaders' abilities to embrace risk and innovation as they manage change in their libraries and help them become better advocates to attract ongoing support for public libraries (Arabella 2015, p. 2).

The report acknowledges the transformative benefits to participants of a range of development programs, however one of its key recommendations is to increase access to such training opportunities (Arabella, 2015, p. 35).

### ***International Network of Library Innovators (INELI)***

The INELI network was established by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries initiative, as means to identify library leaders who are interested in engaging and fostering a culture of innovation, risk-taking and collaboration with others in the field.

INELI aims to create an international pool of future library leaders to build and sustain public libraries throughout the world and to explore and address global library issues that have the potential to stimulate, expand or improve public library service. The network also aims to enhance the leadership skills of library professionals to enable them to redefine public libraries for the future in order to meet the unique in-country needs of their clients (ALIA 2011, p. 18).

The INELI training program seeks to develop strong library leaders to equip them to build high-impact libraries, by creating and testing new service models and engaging community members and other stakeholders in the design and delivery of library services (Gates Foundation 2015). The Global Libraries initiative considers networking, experimentation and exploration of new ideas to be an important component of library leadership. The International Network of Library Innovators (INELI) was developed to:

- Create an international network of future library leaders to build and sustain public libraries throughout the world
- Explore or address global library issues that have the potential to stimulate, expand, or improve public library

- Enhance the leadership skills of new professionals to enable them to re-envision public libraries for the future to meet the unique needs of the people in their respective countries (Gipson 2012, p. 381).

### ***INELI Oceania***

The first INELI Oceania cohort was established in 2014. Based on the International INELI model, INELI- Oceania provides emerging library leaders within the Oceania region - Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific nations - with opportunities to connect with each other to explore new ideas, to experiment with new services, and to learn from one another. Participants, known as *Innovators* work together over a two-year period to develop their skills in innovation, leadership and collaboration.

INELI Oceania draws funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and a number of local sponsors including ALIA (Australian Library and Information Association); LIANZA (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa); and NSLA (National and State Libraries of Australasia.). Other organisations providing sponsorship for the program include the National Library of Australia, National Library of New Zealand, the State Library of Queensland, the State Library of Victoria and Public Libraries Victoria Network as well as Yarra Plenty Regional Library and Auckland City Libraries.

The network, which includes online learning modules on topics such as innovation, risk, change management and advocacy, is supported by a group of mentors and a project manager. INELI-Oceania has two main components: an interactive online site that includes social forums and skills building modules and two, face-to-face Convenings that bring participants together to visit innovative libraries and share ideas and experiences. As a place of online engagement INELI Oceania has developed a network of innovators who are actively engaged in online learning and reflective practice in a trusted and supportive environment. An evaluation program has run in conjunction with the online modules, encouraging reflective practice from innovators on each of the course components. These evaluation data will better assist the Steering Committee to analyse the feedback from innovators, and review the effectiveness of the program in building leadership skills in the field.

### **Building our Leadership Skills**

The three authors of this paper are participants, or *Innovators*, in the INELI Oceania network. We have come from three different public library settings, however we all share a desire to be involved in continuous learning in order to build our skills to be effective as leaders in the 21st century library. Being a part of INELI Oceania has allowed us to be a part of a learning environment that promotes trust and honest, builds resilience and self awareness. Many of the discussions that have taken place between the Innovators and INELI mentors and the INELI Project Manager have been in relation to the broad question of:

*What are some of the essential leadership skills required to facilitate and effect change for libraries in our communities?*

The online learning modules we have completed have taken us through the topics of innovation, risk, change management and advocacy. For the purpose of this paper we would like to briefly introduce the three topics - Innovation, Risk and Change management. We will then focus on the Advocacy module of the course, and share experiences of how the learnings gained in the network have been applied through case studies focused on Advocacy.

## **Innovation, Risk and Change Management**

The first three modules of INELI Oceania included the topics, Innovation, Risk and Change Management.

### ***Innovation***

Defining innovation in libraries is about more than providing something new and includes taking opportunities to make a significant positive change (Bartlett, 2016). Bartlett's literature review provides an overview of the recent innovation conversation within the context of libraries balancing the old with the new. Importantly, the paper flags a call for libraries to articulate their contribution to the innovation agenda and explores the use of innovation as an organisational evaluation measure. This allows libraries to look beyond economic indicators of success to bring goals back to the mission of the profession and to allow room for meaningful impact on an institution's community (Bartlett, 2016).

Innovation can take many forms, and it can mean different things in different settings, for example in developed or developing countries. In discussing the nature of innovation, Guzman (2013) describes four distinct areas of innovation: innovation in concept, innovation in access, innovation in application and innovation in vision. Broadening our understanding of the concept of innovation can help us to find ways to assess how innovation can make a real impact.

Innovation was explored by the INELI Oceania cohort in 2014 through activities exploring creativity, environmental scanning and development of a vision for libraries. Professional networks, such as the one that the INELI setting provides is seen to be the key enabler to innovation conversations (Jamieson, 2016). As well as conversation, there are a number of factors that either enable or stall innovation. Key skills for exploring innovation include an ability to: think about the future; challenge the status quo; have empathy for others; be open to new experiences and playfulness; be committed and driven; be open to exchange of ideas and insight; and be interested in solving real problems (Phillips, 2012).

### ***Risk Management***

"Failure" is a dreaded concept for most business people. But failure can actually be a huge engine of innovation for an individual or an organization. The trick lies in approaching it with the right attitude and harnessing it as a blessing, not a curse (Shiv, 2011)

To progress innovation in libraries, we also need to consider our approach to risk and risk management. Failure is a necessary, but sometimes an unwelcomed factor in working towards change. The INELI Risk Management module encouraged innovators to think about how comfortable we each were about risk. How do we each respond to risks in different settings?, how can we develop our skills to be more comfortable with taking risks?, and importantly how can you assess and manage risks in your own library setting?

We have found that reflecting upon your own personal propensity for risk and your risk taking preferences allows you to identify patterns and behaviors for embracing change or ambiguity. Broadening this to an organisational or professional context, for example in looking at library wide patterns or trends for change, can assist us in understanding and managing the work-related risks that accompany innovation. By sharing knowledge, and being open to risk, we can expand the potential for innovation and change to take place in meaningful ways.

### ***Change Management***

Change Management is a consistent element of managing any project, and is a necessary consideration for implementation of any innovation measures. There are a number of different theories and frameworks to support a change management approach.

The INELI module addressed the concept through innovators first considering their own reactions to change to understand themselves before leading others. It also discussed a number of different change management theories including: Lewin's 3-Stage Model of Change: Unfreezing, Changing & Refreezing (1951); and Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change (1995).

Reactions to change can be diverse, and as was the case with looking at risk management, they can be deeply personal. An understanding of change management can equip library leaders for the necessary skills to implement changes to existing services or programs. Developing an understanding of reasons why people might push back against change, can assist us to open up communication in this area.

INELI Innovator discussions unravelled the tensions that might exist in relation to change, including the possibility of staff resistance to change. The module built skills in this area, acknowledging that in order to be a successful innovator, you also need to become adept at leading and navigating change. This thinking has been the lens through which all aspects of the INELI course have been viewed and are particularly relevant to advocacy.

### **ANALYSIS OF PROGRAM**

Upon completion of the two year course, the INELI Oceania cohort 1 reconvened in Auckland during July 2016 to present back their learning from the course and establish mechanisms to continue involvement in the network. Many of the innovators reported increased self awareness as a result of the content of the modules and the reflective practice encouraged throughout the course. Awareness of one's own reactions to change and risk enabled particular innovators to consciously choose different approaches to their work and embrace innovative ideas with confidence and savvy.

An overwhelming sense of increased confidence was also reported by innovators who moved from feeling junior, inferior or like 'imposters' following selection to the course, to feeling deserving of the title 'innovator'. Innovators reported this sense of confidence arose not only through the information within the modules, but through the safe environment established via innovators forums to share ideas and experiences and build knowledge and understanding.

Perhaps the most visible output of the program was the strong sense of connection and the development of a close network among the innovators. This has resulted in firm commitment from the cohort to maintain momentum in the sharing of ideas, conversation and the critical analysis of the library profession via online forums. The INELI Oceania has been successful in meeting objectives of skilling librarians up through the establishment of a diverse, international network with the capacity to expose participants to ideas on a global scale and develop a shared view of what libraries can achieve (Gipson, 2012).

### **Advocacy - Sharing our experiences**

In the following section of the paper, we will share our experiences of how the learnings gained in the network have been applied through case studies focused on the Advocacy module of the course. Advocacy in this context is defined as:

'The actions individuals or organizations undertake to influence decision-making at the local, regional, state, national, and international level that help create a desired funding or policy change in support of public libraries.' (Public Library Association, 2014).

In looking at the case studies we will discuss challenges in leading development of library services in environments of significant change, for example restructures or amalgamations. We will also look at the role of the library in influencing societal change through community consultation and collaboration, and will acknowledge the value of international and cross cultural perspectives in addressing current challenges and demands.

### ***Turning the Page: Supporting Libraries, Strengthening Communities***

The *Turning the Page* workbook, a tool developed by the Public Library Association (PLA) with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, was utilised as a source of data collection and analysis for the INELI advocacy module. The guide was developed in the context of funding challenges to US libraries, particularly around digital literacy programs (Global Libraries, 2014). The aim of the workbook is to skill library professionals to increase public awareness of the value of libraries, and to 'create a more future oriented narrative for libraries' (Fiels, 2014). The workbook consists of activities designed to be applied to a real project or issue in the workplace. The major themes of the workbook include:

- Defining advocacy goals
- Gathering impact data
- Identifying target audiences
- Developing key messages
- Planning to deliver key messages

- Identifying partners and allies

The workbook provides activities to articulate the value of public libraries as well as useful tools to identify allies and key decision makers; consider their understanding of the library; prepare communications messages and be strategic about delivery of these messages. Activities include workshopping the higher level outcomes that public library services provide, completing a matrix of primary and secondary audiences and their perceptions of the library, and creating your library 'elevator pitch.' The workbook is designed to be completed by a project group and was completed between November 2015 to February 2016 by the INELI Oceania cohort. Examples of its application are provided below in three different public library settings.

***Leading development of library services in environments of significant change***

Heather Davis, Manager, Library and Learning Futures, Waverley Council, NSW Australia

Early in the INELI journey, Waverley Library in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs, was developing the My Amazing Library strategic plan. The aim of this plan was to position the Library as a leader in providing access to opportunities for learning and discovery. The strategic plan outlines how this can be achieved through

- Vision
- Objectives
- High level action plan

Also underpinning this plan was the need to promote the library and raise its profile throughout Council, with other service providers and through the community. This was seen to be a key enabler in getting the library to its leadership goal. With increased visibility comes increased understanding and support.

The strategic plan became the Library's key advocacy tool as well as its management tool.

The INELI Advocacy module, *Turning the Page*, assisted a group of staff within Waverley Library to consider the high level outcomes that the library can provide the community and how our work influences societal change. Through the activities in the module, the team at Waverley Library identified the high level user benefits that our spaces provide and the services accessed. Our spaces include:

- Study space- a serious space where many students living in a high density area can dedicate time and gain the headspace to 'get serious' about studying
- Play space- spaces such as the children's library where toys, music and craft are available for learning by doing. Play spaces are of course not limited to the young, with adults also able to access interactive art exhibitions, craft programs through providers such Laneway Learning and the occasional video game
- Escape space- lounge space for your body to escape the world outside and a collection of resources for your mind to escape

The library team used these examples to workshop the benefits to users and to societal level change from the use of our spaces. These include:

- Management of physical and mental health
- Increased literacy including early childhood, digital, social

- Learning about how society works- from kids learning about how to exist in a public space to adults having a space to question and expand knowledge on particular aspects of life.

The activities we completed as a team have prompted a wider range of staff to consider these high level aspects of public librarianship to inform their elevator pitch on the library and their projects that emerge from the strategic plan.

The module has also informed conversations with Councillors and the Executive Leadership Team. This has helped us establish outreach projects such as our Pop Up Library on Bondi Beach which we were able to combine with a safety initiative of Council, transforming a public space into a friendly and welcoming area; and helped to gain support and a positive working relationship from the Council's Digital team for technology projects and improvements. Identifying the link between the work of the library and the objectives of other areas of Council has enabled partnerships to get our projects done and is helping meet our goal of increased visibility within the organisation and the community.

Advocacy of the public library is particularly important in NSW at the moment as we work through Council amalgamations and Local Government Reform. There are great opportunities for innovation and better practice through such a major shakeup to operations and practices. The library needs to be at the table to take advantage of these opportunities though, or it may face the prospect of others making decisions on our behalf that are uninformed or uninspired.

In this environment Waverley is focusing on building skills in our staff to define what we do, the outcomes we achieve and social impact we have in order to protect our service and boost our voice in decision making. We are using the messages we developed together and reevaluating our stakeholders and their information needs to target our actions.

We are promoting our history of innovative ideas, some of which have been not understood or prioritised within Council. For example our advocacy for early adoption of social media; our attempts at building partnerships with community and cultural service providers to share customer bases and deliver bigger, better programs; and highlighting the impacts of cuts to our funding on our capacity to expand the scope of our collections.

This next step is for positioning the library as leaders within our own organisation and to gain influence and establish our status as experts and key providers and partners to other parts of the organisation.

The INELI program has supported this work through

- Inspiring mentors such as Jane Hill from Wellington who has led through major change in her organisation with a strong vision, a people focus and commitment to innovation (Hill, 2008); Patti Manolis, who has negotiated the incredible new Geelong Library; and by Leneve Jamieson with whom I have had strategic conversations about amalgamations based on her experience
- An extended network of clever and creative library professionals who are proud of their work and want to share it and can also critique ideas, deconstruct theory and are sympathetic to frustrations

- A cross cultural perspective that challenges perceptions of librarianship and expands understanding of its role and importance
- Course work that supports reflective practice and encourages articulation of the role of the library, the potential that library leaders can meet and the self awareness that is needed to get us there.

***Role of the library in influencing societal change through community consultation and collaboration***

Kirsten Thorpe, Manager Indigenous Services, State Library of NSW, Australia

When I joined INELI Oceania network, the State Library of NSW was in the final stages of developing the landmark project *Rediscovering Indigenous Languages, 2011 - 2014*. This project sought to make accessible documentation on some of the oldest languages in the world by locating, digitising and providing access to word lists, records and other cultural documents relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages held within the collections of the State Library of NSW (Thorpe & Galassi 2014). The project aimed to:

- Make available, in a culturally appropriate framework, surviving language lists to Indigenous communities
- Develop protocols for the publication of language lists, to ensure that they meet community needs and allow communities to contribute their knowledge to Library records about their languages
- Locate previously dispersed language lists in the Library's collections
- Increase public awareness of Indigenous language and cultural history
- Be an effective educational resource contributing to school curriculum and further research (State Library 2015).

It is acknowledged that at the time of Australian settlement in 1788, there were some 250 known Indigenous Australian languages across the country, but now only about 20 are spoken comprehensively (Marmion, Obata, & Troy 2014, p.xii). Language is intrinsically linked to Indigenous peoples' way of life, culture and identities. Language brings meaning to cultural heritage and it articulates the intricate relationships and connections between land and community. Some items in the Library's collections are the only known surviving records of these particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. The Library initiative responded to growing community concern about language loss, and the opportunities that exist for revitalisation of languages.

Since the launch of the project website ([www.sl.nsw.gov.au/indigenous](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/indigenous)) the Library has been continuing investigations into ways in which Indigenous collections can be made accessible through digital access. As the INELI coursework progressed, I was able to utilise the Advocacy module to progress questions relating to the development of an Indigenous Digital Platform. The Indigenous Digital Platform seeks to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to both access existing Library collections in a community friendly way, and to enable opportunities for digital community collecting.

The Advocacy module assisted the State Library to articulate the need that existed for the Aboriginal community in wanting to access the State Library's digital Indigenous collections. Broadly this related to civic engagement and redress of a historical situation where Indigenous people have significant collections that exist relating to their history and culture, yet there have been challenges in being able to access them. We also identified the need for education and training for communities to provide information on the background to collections. If this advocacy goal was realised the team discussed the potential positive impact of building a great sense of identity for Aboriginal people, particularly in relation to understanding the impact of past government policies. Access to the digital content and collections also provides an opportunity for Aboriginal people to respond and curate content, and give voice to the experiences of people that may have not had an opportunity to speak in the past.

Three core messages were identified for advocacy. They were:

- The Library holds significant historical collections relating to indigenous Australian people
- the library has an opportunity to build connections with indigenous peoples and communities to return this material and make it accessible
- by making indigenous collections digitally accessible, the library not only can contribute to improving the health and well-being of indigenous peoples and communities, it can build awareness of the deep layers of Australian history. this in turn can positively contribute to the national reconciliation effort.

By developing these core messages, a Library Story was developed which integrated facts, anecdotes and inspirational quotes, to promote our advocacy efforts. Other elements of the module included defining media (and social media) strategies, identification of partners (both existing and those that needed to be developed) both internal and external to the Library. Taking the time to list the wider advocacy goals, and team members, set out a clear pathway to define success and work towards it.

Public libraries can contribute significantly in building connections between culturally diverse groups, and in turn, they can contribute to wider societal change and reconciliation efforts. Access to these Library collections means enabling widespread access to highly significant parts of Australian Indigenous cultural heritage, allowing all Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to gain a better understanding of our nation's rich cultural landscape (State Library, 2015).

### ***The value of international and cross cultural perspectives in addressing current challenges and demands***

Rā Steer, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha|University of Canterbury

When I first became a part of the INELI-Oceania network I was working as a Manager for Christchurch City library, in their newest purpose built library after the devastating 2011 Canterbury Earthquake. This particular Library, Te Whare Wananga o Aranui, opened its doors on September 8th 2012. This library had been in the planning stages from as early as 1992 and was a much anticipated and called for resource in an area of the city that has a

high socio-economic need, where it is rated decile 10 on the NZ Deprivation Index which measures aspects of social and material deprivation, 10 being the most deprived.

The vision for Aranui was to create a place that was

- A safe people space
- Reflected the uniqueness and diversity of its community.
- A place which is a source of pride and inspiration
- Equipped with the technology and surroundings to encourage communication, creativity and learning,
- A place to connect, with people, information, collections, programmes and resources.
- A stimulating, modern and innovative place.
- A place which feels like 'our place' to the people of Aranui.

Since it's opening in 2012 the most frequent library user group are aged between 5 - 16 yrs and are very independent and self-reliant young people. They are predominantly of Maori or Pacific Island descent. Most of the children are also close family friends, if not related to each other. They come from local families who live within walking distance of the library and because there is generally no adult supervision or presence they are fiercely protective of one another.

This characteristic we noticed has developed largely through necessity because of the socio-economic pressures in the area. In the first few months of opening we have seen these young people collectively take on rising gang issues, adult-child bullying, domestic issues along with their everyday teen/tween age pressures. The library by default has become a second home to them and because we have maintained a strong stance that we are a neutral and safe place for all, they have come to respect our rules and learnt to trust us, though this did take time.

Being a new team we were really focused on creating our own kaupapa (a set of principles and ideas that inform behaviour and customs) and how we wanted to get involved in the community. We really wanted to create that sense of ownership from the community and worked on a number of projects to help establish this. Another key objective for us was to also create a safe and welcoming environment. We did this by using aspects of Maanakitanga (respect and hospitality). As well as by staff not recognising any gang affiliations in the library and making people take off their 'colours' when inside the library. This kano ki te kano (face to face engagement) will be ongoing but was the start of building our foundations.

From being part of the INELI-Oceania cohort I was able to take different teachings and learnings from people who were leaders in their organisations and utilise these to Aranui's advantage. From a combination of the online moodles, face to face gatherings and skype meetings, I had a wealth of knowledge and experience being shared and as someone who was also very new to Libraries and Librarianship at the time, the help and support this provided was immense.

## **Conclusion**

The experiences of the authors in applying learning from the INELI Oceania network to their own workplace reflects the valuable contribution to library leadership the program has provided.

Establishing space for library professionals to connect, compare and collaborate is crucial to facilitating leadership and innovation in libraries. INELI has provided this space and the tools for prompting relevant and timely conversations in a safe and trusting environment. The reflective practice running throughout the program has also skilled a new group of leaders to be aware of their own strengths and the tools available to think through big ideas into practical applications.

The experience and knowledge gained by the authors throughout the INELI program has enabled significant contributions to advocacy for libraries within their own organisations and communities through innovative thinking and confidence in leadership.

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