

## **The MU-SISLT Public Library Leadership Fellows (PuLL) Program**

*Lead Applicant:* University of Missouri, School of Information Science & Learning Technologies

*Partners:* Daniel Boone Regional Library, Springfield Public Library, St. Charles City County Library, St. Louis County Library, Mid-Continent Public Library, Kansas City Public Library

### **1. Statement of Need**

*Project summary and identification of audience.* MU-SISLT will partner with six public libraries to provide 24 master of library and information science (MLS) students with a targeted experience in public library leadership and management, with the expectation that these students will go on to become public library leaders after graduation. The project meets the needs of two constituencies: Missouri public libraries, which are in need of potential leaders, and library & information science (LIS) students who are interested in public librarianship and specifically in leadership roles within public libraries. These students will be recruited from our current student population based on their aptitude for leadership. They will take three specialized courses on public library leadership and will be paired with public library administrators across the state for their practicum experiences.

*Project activities and goals.* The primary goal of the MU-SISLT Public Library Leadership Fellows (PuLL) Program is to educate the next generation of public library leaders in Missouri. The PuLL Program will be a capstone experience covering 12 credit hours per year: three 3-hour classes and one 3-hour practicum. Classes will focus on issues such as working with library boards, legal and financial elements of public libraries, managing diversity, and community relations. These classes will be team-taught by SISLT faculty and public library administrators. The structured practicum will place students at a library, working with public library administrators.

PuLL Fellows will be expected to 1) practice key public library managerial skills such as budgeting, resource, and personnel allocation, 2) identify and practice key public library leadership qualities such as empathy, communicating vision, and acting with integrity, and 3) establish a supportive network of public library administrative mentors. Students' achievements in these areas will be measured by both SISLT faculty and library administrators, so students will have multiple perspectives on their performance. While some of our data collection would fall outside of the grant period, we also intend to identify specific outcomes of this program: 1) whether PuLL Fellows find public library employment within one year of their graduation, and 2) whether PuLL Fellows move to administrative positions within three years of graduation.

*Assessment of audience need and similar projects.* By creating the Public Library Administrator Certificate, the American Library Association has already indicated the importance of management skills for public librarians. However, that certificate caters to librarians who are already working in a supervisory position. Previous funded IMLS grants have focused on administrative training for current public library employees (University of Alabama, 2012) and public library senior administrators (American Library Association & Public Library Association, 2012). Long Island University also has a public library administrator certificate program, again only open to people who already have experience.

New MLS graduates going into public libraries often end up managing branch libraries or becoming directors of small and rural libraries. In the past four years, at least 15% of MU LIS graduates worked as public library branch managers or library directors immediately after graduating. Several more have worked as branch managers prior to finishing their degree. Students intending to become public librarians need more emphasis on managerial-level training than they currently have. *This project expands on previous programs by providing leadership education to MLS students who are not already working in libraries.*

MU-SISLT has worked in this area previously, with an IMLS-funded project oriented toward academic librarians. The previous project trained 16 Academic Library Fellows and developed stronger relationships between the LIS program and other academic libraries across the state. Given our previous success with academic librarians, we are well-suited to provide administrative education to public librarians.

Missouri is facing an aging population of public library leaders. While larger libraries with numerous branches may have the opportunity to train the next generation of leaders, small and rural public libraries do not. This project will benefit Missouri in supplementing public library leadership training for small and rural libraries that cannot afford to train their own leaders.

Process used to determine needs. Local needs were determined using 1) student placement data indicating where students were employed after graduation; 2) surveys of LIS graduates and Missouri employers to determine what their needs were and where they wanted additional curricular emphasis; 3) anecdotal evidence gathered from Missouri public library directors and from MU-SISLT's LIS Advisory Board in biennial meetings.

Research on public library managers and leaders. The national need in this area is demonstrated by the literature on public library leadership. There is evidence that certain types of people make better leaders and managers, but that the skill needed to be a good manager or leader is developed on the job. This project will first identify the right kinds of people (as described in the literature) and then pair them with mentors who have demonstrated leadership and management skills.

In 2003, Herson, Powell, and Young said that there was an urgent need to recruit and train "highly qualified individuals likely to assume library directorships" (p. 1). They specifically discuss the leadership skills that public library leaders should have - for instance, taking initiative, envisioning the future, developing and managing staff, planning and budgeting, political skills, community involvement, and fundraising. They also address the personal qualities that successful managers have - for instance, strong interpersonal communication abilities, motivational skills, and creativity.

Haycock (2011) studied the psychographic, demographic, and professional aspects of exemplary public library branch managers and leaders and found that the best managers are extroverts with high levels of emotional intelligence (i.e., interpersonal skills). They are highly flexible, or agile--meaning that they are able to deal with external pressures with grace. He recommends continuing education for library leaders that emphasize community involvement

and development. He also asserted a need for stronger management candidates from library science programs, summarizing leadership characteristics from previous studies: “library managers were expected to motivate and inspire followers across diverse internal and especially external constituencies. Empathy, emotional intelligence, transformational ability, political savviness, behavioral complexity, and networking were among the recurrent “people skills” mentioned throughout the literature. Other themes were visionary and strategic ability, flexibility, innovativeness and the ability to challenge the status quo” (p. 267).

Chow and Rich (2013) provided evidence that students need to learn more about management and leadership. They found that students are often misguided; untrained students “believed the primary job of leaders and managers was to take charge, be firm and uncompromising, and rule with an iron fist.” However, the literature, and their study, said otherwise. The ideal qualities of public library leaders and managers are empathy, an outward vision, flexibility, and the ability to delegate appropriately. Flexibility and adaptability are again discussed in Jusic’s 2013 description of the entrepreneurial leader. Current economic realities point to a need for leaders who “creat[e] something new that adds value and/or because their activities involve innovation” (p. 33). Participants in the study bristled at certain business terms (i.e., ‘exploiting opportunities’ and ‘generating revenue streams’), but they embraced technological and other innovations that “focus on the greater good for libraries and library users” (p. 33).

Zou and Konata (2008, in Kennedy, Vardaman, and McCabe) stress the importance of educating a diverse workforce. PuLL students will learn about the importance of cultivating a diverse workforce and working with a diverse community. By emphasizing diversity in the PuLL program, there will be a trickle-down effect as graduates assume management and leadership positions in their libraries, recognizing diverse talents in new employees and encouraging them to enter the profession.

The literature provides descriptions of qualities of the students that will be very valuable in selection for program participation (through their essays, interviews, and previous classwork), and for forming the curriculum activities to provide opportunities to develop their skills with effective managers and leaders.

## **2. Impact**

The PuLL program will have an immediate impact on Missouri libraries and community organizations in the following ways:

- Increasing the number of Missouri public librarians prepared to take on leadership roles.
- Providing financial support and mentorship for PuLL Fellows
- Developing new graduates with foundations in ethical leadership and organizational development.
- Creating projects to impact the community, through their final semester service-oriented projects in the Community Leadership class and the practicum.

The long-term impact will reach beyond Missouri:

- The PIs for this project will publicize the PuLL Fellows model to encourage other LIS programs to adopt or adapt the model as they see fit.
- PuLL Program graduates will form a cohort and support network for each other during their careers.
- PuLL Program graduates will be primed for leadership roles within the profession and in national organizations.
- MU-SISLT will benefit by developing closer relationships with the Missouri public library community, which can be used to sustain a focus on public library leadership after the grant period has ended.

### 3. Project Design

#### *Description of the PuLL Program*

The goal of the MU-SISLT Public Library Leadership Fellows (PuLL) Program is to educate the next generation of public library leaders in the state of Missouri, with the objectives of:

- Developing highly qualified public library leaders through classwork, mentorship and networking, and,
- Providing a model of educational coursework for public library leadership at the master's level.

A secondary goal is to develop a series of courses that builds on the public librarianship focus within SISLT, with the objective of

- Including the contributions and participation of current public library leaders in course and program design.

The PuLL Program will be an educational capstone experience for students who are interested in public librarianship and leadership. The last 12 credit hours in the Fellows' master's programs will be oriented specifically toward public library management and leadership: three 3-credit classes and one 3-hour practicum. We anticipate educating eight students per year over three years.

The three courses will be **Community Leadership**, **Leadership for Diversity in Public Libraries**, and **Public Library Administration and Management**. The courses will be team-taught with library administrators and the PIs. This will allow the administrators to contribute their subject-area expertise while faculty provide pedagogical expertise and support so the administrative team-teacher can attend to his or her regular job responsibilities.

The **PuLL Practicum** will be in partnership with large public library systems in Missouri. For this program, we would like to have Fellows spend some time shadowing library managers and administrators, learning about the challenges and complexities involved in library administration. We have chosen relatively large library systems in order that the Fellows get a wide range of experience, from branch management to library directorship, meeting with boards of trustees, Friends groups, and Foundation groups.

Grant funding is being sought to pay Fellows' tuition for the 12-hour capstone, a small stipend to allow them to pay for books and fees, and coverage of students' attendance at ALA and MLA conferences in their Fellow Year. Additional grant funding is requested to support the PIs in the development of this program and attend conferences to supervise PuLL Fellows.

*Integration of PuLL Program with LIS and Partner Libraries.* PuLL Program activities will not disrupt normal SISLT and library operations. The PIs have asked for one course release for planning purposes. If the project is approved, the courses will be included in the PIs' regular teaching loads. PIs and library administrators will work together in teaching classes to create a supportive environment for each other, so that administrators' operations will continue. Partner library schedules will be accommodated so they can scale back or increase their hosting of practicum students as needed.

Partner institutions have committed to providing: an administrative team member who can serve on the PuLL Program Advisory Committee, recommending administrative team members who can serve as co-instructors for the three courses offered, and providing a practicum experience for our PuLL Fellows. In this way, we will minimize the impact on any one partner organization while still benefitting from their expertise. Co-instructors will be paid for their teaching time based on SISLT's pay scale for adjunct faculty.

*Innovation.* The PuLL Program draws on practitioner expertise from leaders in the dynamic field of public library leadership on a half-time basis. PIs will be responsible for student management and program administration so that each partner is able to contribute his or her expertise. While SISLT often draws on the expertise of professionals in the field, we hope this partnership will provide groundwork for integrating practitioner-leaders into other classes. Results of the team-teaching approach will be evaluated using student evaluations of classes and instructors' evaluations of the team-teaching process.

*Program Design and Evaluation.*

*Planning and Preparation.* Baseline program need data came from the MU-SISLT LIS Advisory Board (which includes the State Librarian and three public library directors) and previous surveys. Initial support was provided by six of the seven largest library systems in the state, who have agreed to participate. Further planning will be undertaken each summer when program partners meet to formally evaluate the program and plan for the coming year.

*Student Selection.* Students applying to the PuLL program will be required to submit a three-page application essay focusing on their leadership potential in public libraries. The PI's and the PuLL advisory board will select students for the program based on their application statement and prior academic work. Current SISLT students who are interested in working in public libraries will be recruited for this program.

*Coursework.* The eight fellows will be required to take PuLL courses, but other students will be able to sign up for the classes. We will cap the classes at 15 students in order to provide special opportunities for learning, such as field trips and webinars. During the grant period, there will be no costs to the students for these webinars. After the grant period, SISLT will

include the cost of new webinars in student book fees. After the grant period, we will continue to offer courses to both admitted students in our program and certificate students.

Because this project reaches out to six libraries at four different sites, and because instructors may be located in different areas than students, we will be using distance education to support some elements of the project. SISLT has successfully used Blackboard as our content management system, with Blackboard Collaborate providing synchronous communication opportunities. The three classes will be scheduled as synchronous classes, so that participants can interact in real time. The practicum experience will be done in a face-to-face environment with our partner libraries.

*Student Assessment.* Coursework in the PuLL program will be guided by existing standards within the profession (ALA Core Competencies), supplemented by the advice of the PuLL program's advisory committee, comprised of public library administrators. Students will produce a portfolio that is integrated into their coursework. It will require the students to upload all documentation that demonstrates mastery of ALA Core Competencies related to public library management, including self-reflections on their achievement of elements of leadership. They will reflect on their coursework and experiences. The PuLL advisory committee, composed of public library administrators, will provide feedback regarding student progress and adequacy of preparation in public library leadership roles, through a standardized form providing student feedback on elements of leadership.

*Program Assessment.* Each year the PuLL Program Advisory Board and the PIs will evaluate the program and determine whether or not the program should be altered in the coming year. Evaluation will be based on student and teacher course evaluations, practicum site instructors' evaluations of students, and the PuLL Fellows' portfolios.

SISLT's advisory committee has asked us to develop opportunities for continuing education for librarians in Missouri. We anticipate that, if the PuLL program is approved, we will be able to use the materials to develop a Certificate in Public Library Management that will be offered on a regular basis to both students who are enrolled in the Master's program and people working in public libraries who already have an MLS, as continuing education.

#### **4. Project Resources: Personnel, Time, Budget**

*PIs.* PI Adkins has professional public library experience, and focuses on public libraries and diversity in her research. She has served as the president of REFORMA (The National Association for the Promotion of Library & Information Services to Latinos & the Spanish-speaking), has been awarded the MU Graduate and Professional Student Council's Gold Chalk Award, and with PI Bossaller, won the 2011 Reference Services Press award for an analysis of public library community awareness. PI Bossaller has completed multiple fellowships incorporating course design. She brings subject expertise related to management, library history, and public library issues, especially related to social justice and diversity. The PIs will be responsible for the following: creating an application and selection process for students wishing to become PuLL Fellows; designing the three public library management courses and recruiting public library administrators to team-teach those courses; helping those

public library administrators become familiar with grading and standards; working with public library administration to solicit practicum sites and qualified practicum supervisors; and evaluating student performance. PIs will devote 10% of their time during the first year for development and 5% in subsequent years for maintenance of the PuLL Program. The PIs will work together to ensure that both can balance their other responsibilities. PIs will also work with public library administrator team-teachers to enable them to meet their own time commitments.

Partners. Public library administrators will play two roles. A selection of administrators from across Missouri will team-teach courses designed by the PIs, to provide a practical perspective while at the same time respecting the time constraints imposed by administrative positions. These team-teachers will be responsible for providing feedback to students about their grasp of administrative concepts and suggestions for resources or experiences to enhance their knowledge. These administrators will be chosen based on type of experience and representation of diversity. They will sign contracts and be paid on SISLT's standard adjunct payment scale.

Administrators from the public library partner sites will serve as practicum supervisors for students, supervising those students for 135 clock hours over the semester, to include board meetings, budget hearings, and other matters. The public library partner sites represent the largest library systems in Missouri, and allow students to work with a variety of administrators. The wide distribution of these library systems allows students across the state to participate in the PuLL Fellows Program, rather than limiting the program to one location. Practicum supervisors will be responsible for mentoring and supervising students in a variety of settings, and providing constructive feedback to help students improve their skills. Administrators at the practicum sites will be asked to sign a letter of agreement to take on two practicum students per year, and they will be paid a courtesy stipend of \$100 per student.

Staff Support. The PIs are supported by an experienced cadre of financial and academic personnel. Grant funds will be administered by **Toni Milstead, Manager, Finance**. Milstead has been in SISLT since December 1999. She has a MBA and 33 years of management experience in academic and clinical environments in the areas of finance, grant administration and human resources. The LIS Program's **Practicum Coordinator, Anita Phipps**, will supervise PuLL Program practicum students as 5% of her normal workload. Phipps has a master's degree from the University of Northern Colorado and is employed as a library media specialist in Alvin School District (TX). The **College of Education Assessment Director, Lori Wilcox**, will provide PuLL Program assessment and graduate follow-up. Wilcox holds an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership.

Timeline.

- June 2014: Formal course development and organization. First meeting with PuLL Program Advisory Board. Recruitment and selection of PuLL Program Cohort 1.
- PuLL Program Cohort 1, August 2014-June 2015

- August 2014: Students will take Public Library Administration and Management and Leadership for Diversity in Public Libraries. PuLL Program Cohort 1 attends MLA conference.
- Spring 2015: Students will take Community Leadership and complete their practicum.
- Summer 2015: PuLL Program Advisory Board will meet to review student portfolios, student evaluations, instructor evaluations, and assessment of student achievements and complete annual program evaluation. Program modifications will be made as necessary. PuLL Program Cohort 1 attends ALA conference.
- PuLL Program Cohort 2: August 2015-June 2016
  - PIs submit Public Library Leadership certificate application to MU Graduate School.
  - Cohort completes coursework and practicum, attends conferences, as described above, barring any adjustments.
  - Summer 2016: PIs and Partners will review the two cohorts' performance and make adjustments to begin regular course rotation and implementation of Certificate Program in Public Library Leadership and Administration.
- PuLL Program Cohort 3: August 2016-June 2017
  - Cohort completes coursework and practicum, attends conferences, as described above, barring any adjustments.
  - Expected certificate approval from MU Graduate Faculty Senate. Preparation begins for formal development of certificate program.

Facilities. Distance education resources will be provided by the University of Missouri. These include access to the Blackboard Course Management System and Blackboard Collaborate facilities for synchronous conferencing. Classroom space is available in all locations through our agreements with campuses in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Springfield. The University of Missouri has provided computers and videoconference resources, which will be used to support classes and communications in the PuLL Program.

Matching Funds. Matching funds will be provided by the University of Missouri to support in-kind contributions of faculty time. As the PuLL Program will be grant-supported, no revenues will be generated from this program. Future revenues may result from offering the three courses after the grant period.

## **5. Diversity Plan**

The PuLL Program intends to create culturally competent public library leaders. As such, the Program addresses diversity in several ways.

Student recruitment. We will engage in affirmative recruiting for students, making an overt attempt to recruit and educate students of color and students representing other diverse populations, including sexual preference and disability. We will recruit from the current student population, which is limited in diversity. Therefore, we will also emphasize cultural competence in our course content.



Course content. The PuLL Program emphasizes diversity explicitly in its class *Leadership for Diversity in Public Libraries*. This course will be taught by PI Adkins, a diversity scholar, and we will recruit a public library administrator of color to serve as a team-teacher. This class will cover hiring and personnel laws and policies, culturally competent leadership, issues of creating and leading diverse teams, and serving diverse communities' needs. Diversity concerns will also be emphasized in our *Community Leadership* course, wherein students will develop projects with community organizations for the benefit of both the library and the people served by the organization. These student-led projects may benefit people of low socioeconomic status, low-literate adults, or veterans, or other groups.

Partner library recruitment. Partner libraries represent the most diverse regions in the state. Our students will be working with community agencies and visiting libraries in diverse areas in each of these locations, in conjunction with the partner libraries and their administrative teams.

## **6. Communication Plan**

Audiences who would benefit from hearing about this project include public library administrators and employees, public library boards of trustees, LIS educators, and LIS-focused students in our own and other programs. Further audiences that may be interested would include state and municipal elected representatives and representatives of community organizations, both of whom could benefit from projects undertaken as a result of the PuLL Program and who could ultimately mount arguments for the benefit of hiring fully qualified librarians with administrative and community-building expertise.

The project will be communicated via the following mechanisms:

1. A dedicated web space on SISLT servers will be used to house and make available curriculum and reports resulting from the PuLL Program. The web site will be updated at least yearly, with end-of-year performance reports and reflections.
2. A blog site will be available for stakeholders (PIs, PuLL Fellows, and PuLL Program Advisory Board) to post their thoughts and experiences. Pursuant to compliance with FERPA regulations, this blog will be publicly accessible.
3. PIs, PuLL Fellows, and/or the PuLL Program Advisory Board will make conference presentations about the results of the program at various locations, including the conferences of the Missouri Library Association, Missouri Public Library Directors Group, Association of Library & Information Science Education, Public Library Association, and other conferences as deemed appropriate. We will ask other library science programs that have related projects to collaborate on program evaluations and presentations in order to communicate results of the program to other LIS programs that might be considering similar projects.
4. PIs will make use of the marketing resources of SISLT and the university to publicize this project in news media. Using these resources, several SISLT faculty members have had national press coverage of some of their endeavors.
5. PIs and PuLL Fellows will work with community organizations and external library stakeholders to learn more about their needs and complete a project with them.

## **7. Sustainability Plan**

After the grant-funded PuLL Program is complete, we will be incorporating elements of the newly designed curriculum into a Public Library Leadership certificate program. The PuLL Program curriculum will provide the groundwork for the types of courses necessary for students who wish to become leaders in the profession. Library administrator networks developed through the PuLL program will be utilized for further development of the certificate program. Adding the certificate program would also allow SISLT to meet state demands for continuing education opportunities for librarians.

Upon completion of the first year of the PuLL project, the PIs will submit the Public Library Leadership certificate application to the University of Missouri. The turnaround time for certificate approval is approximately two years, which will allow us to start offering the certificate immediately upon completion of the grant-funded PuLL Project. Moving the PuLL Program Curriculum to a certificate program would put public library leadership curriculum into a revenue stream, which would allow the school to be able to offer this curriculum after the grant period has ended.

The University of Missouri and the College of Education operate under the principle that syllabi and course content are the intellectual property of the instructors, who can make these materials available to others as they wish. Evidence of student participation, such as actual classroom discussions with names and identifying information, can only be released within the bounds of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. The PIs will also make a point of sharing information about the PuLL Program and the materials produced for it, through conference presentations and among other public library educators.

Some elements of the PuLL Program will be offered through distance education. All course materials delivered through Blackboard Learn (MU's classroom management system) will be archived by ET@MO, MU's educational technologies team, for at least two years. Course materials developed by the instructors will be preserved separately on SISLT web servers, along with annual reports and anonymized data. These will be accessible for at least three years after the completion of the PuLL project.

In LIS education there is a dearth of faculty or resources dedicated to public library administration. This is one of the reasons that the Public Library Association has had to resort to providing its own continuing education program (ALA-APA 2012). We anticipate that the PuLL Program will bring public librarianship more to the fore in LIS education, both for SISLT and for a wider audience.