

Thinking Outside the Borders Library Leadership Institute: A Resounding Success

The much awaited Thinking Outside the Borders Library Leadership Institute was piloted in South Africa at the University of Pretoria (UP) from 05-08 November 2008. The general feeling was that it was a resounding success. “New friendships were forged; intense discussions until the wee hours of the morning; sleep deprivation; general confusion amidst vague rules; laughter with and at each other; full and intense days; an unexpected programme; a privilege to have been included” – these are some of the comments shared by the participants during the course of the three days.

This innovative Library Leadership Institute was enabled by a generous grant of R250 000.00 from Swets, which has committed itself to the further skills development of librarians in Southern Africa. Swets was represented at the Institute by the Dirk Lens (Regional Director), Di Man (MD: Swets SA) and Philip De Kock, who also presented on Serials Management: A Vendor’s Perspective. This is a new partnership in the arena of continuing professional development and we are certain that it will strengthen over time.



Thirty librarians were selected from forty seven applications received from South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. They arrived on Wednesday November 05 2008 full of trepidation and anticipation. From the time they registered on Wednesday at the Graduate Centre to their time of departure on Saturday, they followed a full programme that included a variety of learning formats and presentation styles. The group was able to interact with senior library practitioners who have emerged as library leaders nationally and internationally.

This list included Barbara Ford, Kay Raseroka, Susan Schnuer, Rachel More, Rene Schoombee, Karin Kitching, Buhle Mbambo-Thata, and our own Director, Robert Moropa.



Registration on Wednesday November 05 2008. *From Left to right: Swets representatives Dirk Lens (Regional Director), Di Man and Philip De Kock. Delegates from KZN, Eastern Cape and Botswana. Take a note of the attractive centenary bag!*



A novel way of relieving the stress and tension that built up in anticipation of the three days was to hold a drumming



session. It had everybody paying close attention to the rhythm and technique (with many of us believing that we were in perfect rhythm, but alas!) What a lot of fun and sore palms at the end of the session!

A visit to the Constitutional Court was a poignant and thought provoking experience. For librarians, the SA Constitution enshrines the freedom of access to information as a human right, which needs to be embraced in practice. The stark, harsh reality of the former prison serves as a constant reminder of the importance of the Constitution and the Constitutional Court in upholding human rights in South Africa.



Participants were exposed to a variety of presenters, topics and presentation styles. Each guest presenter, together with their unique style and experience, ensured that all sessions were relevant and well received.



Presenters included members of UP staff, Robert Moropa (Director), Monica Hammes (Asst. Dir: Quality Assurance & Open Scholarship), Hilda Kriel (Dep Dir.: Operations), Lita Ferguson (Serials Librarian) and Ujala Satgoor (Dep Dir.). External presenters were Barbara Ford, Rachel More, Kay Raseroka, Susan Schnuer, Rene Schoombee, Sean Moodley, Karin Kitching and Philip De Kock.



Group tasks and activities worked excellently to enable participants to make new friends

and discover hidden talents/skills amongst each other. The planned activities enabled one to introspect as well as engage in groups. Groups are expected to report back in June 2009 on projects they identified. Means of communication in the interim will be via the blogs they set up during a hands-on blogging workshop. The report back session in June 2009 will be a “webinar”, a virtual seminar.



This Institute served to cement our ties with the University of Illinois through the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs. Barbara Ford and Susan Schnuer, Director and Associate Director respectively, willingly shared their experiences, ideas and expertise with participants during the course of the programme. As originators of the Institute, they have entrusted the hosting of subsequent Institutes in our hands.

I would like to acknowledge all who participated and contributed to making this an intense but stimulating and empowering experience.

Ujala Satgoor
Deputy Director: Development, Marketing & Training.
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