LEADERS AND INNOVATORS TRAINING PROGRAM

A program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Latvia ▶ New children's section

◀ Romania Teens waiting for computer access

Mortenson Center for
International Library Programs

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

2009–2012

Contents

Executive Summary

From 2009–2012 the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs (MC) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was engaged in implementing the Leaders and Innovators Training Program, with the support of Global Libraries (GL) of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The purpose of the program was to have, within two years, a team of library leaders and innovators in two GL countries committed to designing and creating a stronger public library environment.

The two countries selected for the program were Latvia and Romania. The GL country grantees, 3TD and Biblionet, worked with the Mortenson Center team to administer and support the program.

The program included planning visits and agreements, training at the Mortenson Center and attendance at a U.S. library association conference, development and implementation of group projects, and follow-up visits and training. 12 Latvian librarians and 15 Romanian librarians participated in the program.

The result was a cohort of enthusiastic and engaged library leaders.

The training portion of the program consisted of seven interwoven elements: management, content, language, projects, peers, context, and assessment. The training was tailored to meet the needs identified in the initial visits and discussions with the GL country grantees. The training programs were delivered in the native language of the participants. Each group participated in a conference, the Illinois Library Association and Texas Library Association annual conferences.

Each country group was divided into three teams of 4–5 members. The teams had to develop an idea for a library project, write a proposal, and then implement the project. The teams, after submitting a successful proposal, received a small grant. The teams reported regularly on their progress.

The result was a cohort of enthusiastic and engaged library leaders who implemented group projects that were positively received in their communities and by library colleagues around the country. All the librarians reported gains in their skills and knowledge in several topics. New library services were implemented including, among others, working closely with local government, making more active use of technology, reaching out to seniors, and creating spaces for children and teens.

From impact assessments, conversations, and observations, it is clear that the Leaders and Innovators Training Program enhanced the leadership skills of librarians committed to making a difference in their library communities.

The success of the Leaders and Innovators Training Program was measured by indicators such as the number of new partnerships, increases in funding, the development of strategic plans, new library services, and awards and recognition received by the participants.

Background

In 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—Global Libraries (GL) staff approached the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs to explore the possibility of developing a library leadership training program in countries with GL grants.

The GL country grantees were engaged in developing a public library infrastructure that included providing access to computers and the Internet, and delivering multiple layers of training that focused on teaching librarians how to improve library services and public access. The GL staff felt, in addition to the current efforts in each country, that there were other critical training areas that were not being met. Specifically, in the 2008 GL strategy, training for library leaders and innovators was identified as necessary in order to support a library environment that would be sustainable after foundation funding ended.

…the library as a living organism, not a temple of knowledge…

GL staff identified MC as a potential partner for this training need since MC had many years of experience designing programs for librarians and information specialists that addressed the particular needs of a region or country.

The Mortenson Center works to strengthen international ties among libraries and librarians, regardless of geographic location or access to technology. Over 900 librarians from 90 countries have already taken advantage of professional development programs through the Mortenson Center—the only one of its kind in the world. The Mortenson Center is located at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, a world-renown public university in the United States.

The Mortenson Center is a small organization with two professional staff, Barbara Ford and Susan Schnuer. Both have extensive experience in international library work and professional development.

The GL staff and the Mortenson Center team defined success for the Leaders and Innovators Training Program as:

Having, within two years, a team of library leaders and innovators in two GL countries, committed to designing and creating a stronger public library environment.

From impact assessments, conversations, and observations it is clear that the Leaders and Innovators Training Program enhanced the leadership skills of the participants who returned committed to making a difference in their library communities. The librarians reported on new services such as working more directly with local government officials, attracting new users with mobile technology, recruiting volunteers fro library work, and opening spaces for children and teens. Most of the participants advocated for and received increases in library funding. All the librarians reached out to community groups and organizations, and developed new partnerships with schools, NGOs, teacher, media, archives, social services, doctors, and many others.

The words of a Romanian participant best illustrate the desired impact of the program:

"I've learned that the leadership spirit must be improved and cultivated at all times. I've helped change my colleagues' minds, so that they see the library as a living organism, not a temple of knowledge…. It was all new, and the most important was the evaluation of community needs—serving patrons and getting their feedback."

Program Impact

The vision for success for this project was defined as:

Having, within two years, a team of library leaders and innovators in two GL countries commited to designing and creating a stronger public library environment.

Measurable impact was seen in the development of knowledge and skills of the participants. Here are findings from the evaluator's report.

New services… led to increased engagement with library users.

Are the program participants becoming library leaders and innovators?

From the data, it appeared that each team fully utilized the Mortenson Center training. Each team reported that as a result of the program they have acquired new funding, provided new services, and formed new partnerships—all evidence of increased leadership, innovation, outreach, and community connection.

Latvia *(8 out of 12 reports received)*
- **New Partnerships** *(results: 8 of 8 participants)* Partners included local government, schools, media, community organizations, museums, state agency, social services, and more
- **Increased Funding** *(results: 8 of 8 participants)* Measurable growth in funding from local government and mentions of three grants
- **Strategic Plan** *(results: 7 of 8 participants)* New plans developed, some for the future
- **New Services** *(results: 8 of 8 participants)* New services as a result of the projects, and each team also reported additional new programs, services, and outreach generated from the momentum created by the program
- **Awards and Recognition** *(results: 7 of 8 participants)* Participant reports included mention of recognition—primarily from local government

Romania *(15 out of 15 reports)*
- **New Partnerships** *(results: 14 of 15 participants)* Partners include NGOs, schools, teachers, museums, media, archives, universities, businesses, doctors, county councils, and more
- **Increased Funding** *(results: 10 of 15 participants)* Measurable growth in funding has come from local government, community organizations, plus EU and other grants
- **New Services** *(results: 15 of 15 participants)* New services as a result of the three projects, and each team also reported additional new services and outreach generated from the momentum created by the program
- **Awards and Recognition** *(results: 13 of 15 participants)* Many of the librarians mentioned awards, primarily from local government, but also increased media coverage and ANBPR recognition

How are the changes being manifest in the community? What are they doing?

All of the participants of the training talked about the new services in their libraries and how, in most cases, it has led to increased engagement with the library users. Of particular note are the comments made by local government officials. Each Latvian participant was asked to gather comments from local government officials about changes they have seen in the library services since the librarians participated in the Leaders and Innovators Training Program. All the commentary was uniformly positive and quite similar in specifying the ways in which libraries are providing concrete value. Here are examples of the comments, translated from Latvian.

"Library offers new services—lending laptops and communicating with people through the mobile phone. It gives opportunity to more inhabitants to use the library services. The library is more actively participating in the various events and projects of local government."

—Sanita Eglite, Head of Culture and Sports Department, Aluksne Local Government

"The number of activities that are not traditionally considered being related to library models has successfully increased. Now in libraries of the district some small-scale theater performances, concerts, film demonstrations, lectures on various subjects, and social activities (such as practitioners' appointments, hairdresser services) are taking place. In cooperation with its users, the library is applying for projects to allocate financial support to improve the life quality of the local community."

—Aivars Aunins, Deputy Head of the Strenci Region

"For the first time, a rich exhibition of Broceni district historical materials has been compiled and displayed in an innovative way, which was attended by 1,000-2,000 spectators during the local festival and in the libraries of the district. Improved management and financial skills were applied in defending the library budget."

—Solvita Duklava, Deputy Chair of the Board, Broceni District

…indications that the impact is being felt beyond the local community library.

In Latvia and Romania, the librarians commented on major changes in their libraries due both to the implementation of the projects and to their renewed efforts to change how library services are offered to users. The major changes included more community outreach and a new image for libraries.

The librarians reported on activities, such as working more closely with local government, making more active use of technology, reaching out to seniors, organizing local info-education tours, bringing generations together, providing seminars for farmers, attracting new users via mobile services, parading in the town squares, recruiting volunteers for library work, creating spaces for children and teens, and becoming community training centers.

There are also short-term indications that impact is being felt beyond the local community library. Local government officials, in their comments, frequently mention the impact in their districts, meaning that a much larger number of libraries are participating in the new projects. This is due, in part, to the participants' tireless efforts to talk to and engage with colleagues in the entire library community.

In Romania, seven of the 15 participating librarians were elected to leadership roles in the library association, ANBPR. Two of the seven had previously held elected Association positions. Again, this is an indication that the librarians are seeking and being selected for leadership roles.

All the librarians have written articles and papers for local library journals about their experiences in the United States. Most have offered training and workshops for their colleagues. All have presented their projects at library association meetings, and have also engaged in a very active promotional campaign about the projects. They are very determined to have a positive impact on their local library communities.

What changes in skills, knowledge, and attitude did the participants acquire?

Pre-training skills and post-training gains

This chart depicts participants' self-assessment of their skills in several topics at the beginning and end of the training program. They ranked themselves on a scale of 1–10 with "1" being the lowest skill-level and "10" being the highest.

Latvia			
Skills	**Pre-training**	**Post-Training**	**% Change**
Advocacy	5.4	7.8	+24%
Communication	7.3	9.3	+20%
Assessment	6.5	8.4	+18%
Library Building Design	6.5	8.3	+18%
New Technology/Mobile Technology	6.7	7.7	+10%
Partnerships/Collaboration	7.5	8.5	+9%
Management	6.8	7.6	+8%
Marketing	6.8	7.6	+8%
Public Speaking/Presentations	7.5	8.2	+7%
Planning	7.9	8.5	+6%
Programming/Cultural Events	7.9	8.4	+5%
Finance	7.4	7.8	+4%
Preservation/Local History	7.2	7.3	+1%
Customer Service	9.4	9.0	−4%

Romania			
Skills	**Pre-training**	**Post-training**	**% Change**
Assessment of Community Needs	5.8	8.9	+31%
Fundraising/Proposal Writing	5.9	8.4	+25%
Leadership Styles	6.7	8.7	+20%
Marketing	6.5	8.4	+19%
Project Management	6.9	8.7	+18%
Communication	7.2	9.0	+18%
Customer Service	7.8	9.4	+16%
Partnerships/Collaboration	7.1	8.7	+16%
Public Speaking/ Presentations	7.5	8.7	+12%
Teamwork Skills	7.7	8.8	+11%
Technology and Community Engagement	7.3	8.2	+9%

The participants were also asked to rank which of the acquired skills were the most useful and have most-improved leadership and innovation. The rankings are on a scale of 1–10.

Latvia	
Partnerships/Collaboration	9.0
Customer Service	8.9
Planning	8.4
Communication	8.4
Public Speaking/Presentations	8.3
Preservation/Local History/Genealogy	8.2
Assessment	8.2
Advocacy	8.0
Management	8.0
Programming/Cultural Events	8.0
Marketing	7.9
New Technology—Mobile Technology	7.8
Library Building Design	7.7
Finance	7.6

Romania	
Communication	9.4
Customer Service	9.4
Leadership Styles	9.3
Project Management	9.1
Technology and Community Engagement	9.0
Partnerships/Collaboration	8.9
Public Speaking	8.8
Assessment of Community Needs	8.8
Teamwork Skills	8.8
Fundraising/Proposal Writing	8.6
Marketing	8.2

Program Design and Timelines

Selection: *GL country grantees (Latvia and Romania) and participants*

Planning: *visits and agreements*

Training program at MC

Implementation of group projects

Follow-up: *review visits and training*

The Leaders and Innovators Training Program had five stages, each stage built on the knowledge acquired during the previous stage.

Latvia was the first GL country grantee to participate in the program. The program design was refined and adjusted before the work with Romania began. Starting with the planning stage, assessment was carefully woven into the program.

The librarians worked diligently to implement the projects—with great success.

Description of Stages

- **Selection:** A call for proposals was issued and MC received six very strong proposals. Latvia and Romania were selected. Both countries quickly issued a call for participants. The Latvian GL country grantee team visited all the possible candidates in their libraries to make the final selection. Romania held extensive phone interviews with all candidates. The librarians were all selected before the first visit by the MC team.

- **Planning:** The MC team did an extensive first visit in each country— about 10 days. During the visit, the team toured many libraries and met with the selected group of librarians to answer questions and manage expectations. There were long discussions about characteristics of good public libraries and what should be included in the training program. The MC team, upon return, drafted a summary of the discussions and shared the information with each team.

- **Training program at MC:** Each group participated in a training program (included in appendices) of about four weeks. The programs included seminars, workshops, hands-on technical training, visits to public libraries, and attendance at a library conference. The Latvians attended the Illinois Library Association Annual Conference. The Romanians attended the Texas Library Association Annual Conference where they presented a session on Romanian libraries. It was well received. During the training program, each country group of participants was divided into three teams and began to work on the follow-up project. They received two days of intensive training on how to write a proposal and returned to their countries with a strong draft proposal. They were given about two months to submit the final proposal.

- **Implementation of group projects:** Each team had to turn in a completed proposal to their GL country grantee team members, who then translated the proposals for the MC team. The MC team reviewed the proposals. The librarians then had a few weeks to respond to questions and revise their proposals. As soon as the revised proposals were received, the funds were released to the 3TD team in Latvia and to ANBPR, the public library association, in Romania. The disbursement of funds was slow and tedious, but finally accomplished. The librarians worked diligently to implement the projects—with great success. Project timelines in both countries had to be extended.

- **Follow-up:** In the original scope of work, MC was scheduled to do one final visit to each country to visit libraries and hear from the teams about their accomplishments. However GL country grantee teams from both countries made the case that an interim visit was critical. Not only would it keep the projects firmly on track, but it would provide an opportunity for the librarians to showcase the changes in their libraries. They were right. The interim visit proved to be critical in validating the work of the participants, addressing challenges, and bringing the teams together for healthy and extensive discussions. The MC team returned for a final visit to hear about the project successes. The final visit also gave the MC team the opportunity to provide training. In Latvia, the MC team gave workshops on leadership styles and virtual team work. In Romania, the MC team was invited to give a talk at an ANBPR event to about 100 Romanian librarians.

Timelines

The Mortenson Center began the Latvian program in June 2010 and was able to successfully stagger activities between the two countries.

Latvia

- ▶ June 1–11, 2010—Initial site visit
- ▶ September 10–October 9, 2010—Training at Mortenson Center
- ▶ May 1–7, 2011—Interim check-up on projects
- ▶ November 12–19, 2011—Site visit about project progress
- ▶ October 12–20, 2012—Final reports on project and leadership training for participants, Virtual Team training for additional librarians

Romania

- ▶ October 20–November 4, 2010—Initial site visit
- ▶ March 18–April 16, 2011—Training at the Mortenson Center
- ▶ October 4–11, 2011—Interim check-up on projects
- ▶ September 20–30, 2012—Final report on projects, ANBPR Conference

Roles, Guidelines, and Responsibilities

In any successful program, a clear delineation of roles, guidelines, and responsibilities is needed. Most of this work was done in advance, however, that still left a lot of room for exploration and discussion. While many of the program patterns were the same in each country, there were differences in how each GL country grantee team implemented the program.

Roles

MC was the principal investigator, responsible for implementing the program. MC also held the funding needed for the entire program, except for the funding of the team country projects. EIFL, an international not-for-profit organization based in Rome, received those funds and disbursed them.

Internally, each GL country grantee team decided the best approach to selecting and communicating with participants, and for giving support with the project implementation. The Mortenson Center staff adjusted to the style of each team.

Guidelines

While not explicit, MC, GL country grantees, and participants observed the following guidelines:

1. While the Mortenson Center staff has extensive expertise in designing training programs, it was clearly understood that GL country grantee team members and the participants had the best understanding of the needs of the library community in their country.

2. Open, honest, and frequent communication was needed between the MC, GL grantee country team, and participants—meaning everything could be discussed with the understanding of confidentiality.

3. Flexibility was crucial. If something was not working, it was changed.

4. Participants had to work in a team to develop a project, write a proposal, and implement the project. All team members had to implement the same project.

Responsibilities

Stages	Activities	Responsibilities	Activity length
Selection	Visit to the Gates Foundation to talk with program officers	MC and GL program officers	2 days
Selection	Promotion of program and selection of 2 countries	MC	2 months
Selection	Selection of participants	GL country grantee	6 weeks
Planning	Library visits and pre–orientation meetings organized	GL country grantee	1 week
Planning	Discussion of objectives and vision for public libraries	Led by MC in conjunction with GL team and participants	1 day
Planning	Finalize and sign objectives	MC and GL team	Up to 6 weeks
Planning	Baseline evaluation	Evaluator	Several days
Training	Planning of logistics and program	MC	Up to 2 months
Training	Communication with participants	GL country team with MC when necessary	From time of selection to end of program
Training	Program and conference	MC	One month
Training	Challenges and issues	MC and GL country team	During training
Training	Evaluation	Evaluator	2 days
Project Implementation	Submission of written projects	Participants with translation from GL team	Up to 2.5 months after return home
Project Implementation	Review and approval of projects	MC	2–3 weeks
Project Implementation	Disbursement of funds	EIFL	Within a few days of signing of contract
Project Implementation	Disbursement of funds to each library	3TD team and ANBPR	Several weeks, procurement of equipment took several months
Project Implementation	Teams implementing projects	Participants	9–12 months
Project Implementation	Project reports	Participants, GL country grantee, EIFL, MC, Evaluator	On a regular schedule
Project Implementation	Evaluation of projects	Evaluator	2 weeks
Follow-up	Interim visit to discuss project implementation	GL country grantee teams organize, MC visits	One week
Follow-up	Final visit	GL country grantee teams organize, MC visits	One week
Follow-up	Additional Training	MC arranges with help of GL grantee team	One week combined with final or interim visit
Follow-up	Evaluation	Evaluator	2 weeks

Modifications to the Initial Program Design

This [follow-up] visit proved critical to keeping the participants and the projects on track.

While the goals of the project remained the same, the design was modified and adjusted to meet the context of each country.

Major Changes

Visit to public libraries in a third country

The original scope of work included a visit to good public libraries in another country. When it came time to implement this aspect of the program, the logistical hurdles were formidable. Instead, each group attended a library conference in the United States (Illinois Library Association and Texas Library Association). This turned out to be a good change as the librarians gained self-confidence by interacting with U.S. colleagues and also developed insights into what a well-organized conference can do for a library community.

Latvian librarians in a team-building workshop in Latvia

Adding an additional follow-up visit

The initial plan was to have a final MC visit to each country to hear about the project results and offer additional training if needed. It became very clear soon after each group returned to their home country that an interim visit was needed to validate the work that participants had done since then and to discuss challenges in the implementation of the project. This visit proved critical to keeping the participants and projects on track and engaged in showing leadership in innovative ways.

Impact on GL country grantee team was underestimated

As originally planned, the program was a MC-led, GL country grantee-supported effort. In fact, the workload for the GL country grantee staff was underestimated. The need for discussion about GL country grantee strategies, translation, communication, and support for MC visits and training, especially the month spent in the U.S., meant that this program took considerable time and effort. While the results justified the effort, it meant staff was under considerable pressure to get everything done. However, it was also a welcome surprise to see that program participation had a positive impact on the staff from each GL country grantee team. Not only did they benefit from attending the program, they were able to observe how the MC staff organized activities and handled challenges—and they all learned from the experience.

Not-Too-Surprising Changes

Timelines changed

Everything took a bit longer than expected. Areas that slowed down the program included: regulations and policies, need for legal review, disbursement, procurement, and holidays.

Disbursement of funding for group projects

The MC staff expected this aspect to be challenging—and it was. Yet, it was a wonderful opportunity for the participants to show leadership as they struggled to receive the funds, finalize contracts, convince local government officials, and work with accountants (who were not quite convinced of the benefit of all this work). EIFL was a great partner in this effort and worked to find the best disbursement strategy for each country. MC staff had not anticipated that an additional layer of administration would be needed to disburse the funds, however it was. In Latvia, the 3TD team received the funds and purchased all the necessary equipment and services. In Romania, ANBPR received the funds, signed 15 contracts with 15 libraries, and then disbursed the funds.

Number of participants

The original contract provided funding for 12 librarians from each country plus two GL country grantee staff members. Romania decided to fund additional librarians for a total of 15 librarians.

Changes in training content

MC staff had decided that it would be best to offer a two-day project development workshop at the end of the stay in the United States. The rationale for this decision was that the participants would be in a better decision-making capacity after library tours and training. In fact, it was too much, too late in the program. The participants needed time to discuss possible topics for the group project and then time to think about all the possibilities. For the Romanians, the two-day training was split, one day at the beginning and one day at the end of the stay. It was a better approach.

Revising number of objectives for the training

Latvia was the first country to implement the training program. MC simply had too many objectives listed for the training and could not complete everything. A smaller number of objectives for the Romanian training program were developed and successfully implemented.

Everything took a bit longer than expected.

What was Accomplished

Latvia

Participants: 12

Library type: rural

3TD team: three staff

Design and promote innovative services responsive to local needs…

Characteristics of excellent libraries

1. Offer open and free access to everyone
2. Develop partnerships and networks that are core to the mission of the library
3. Design and promote innovative services responsive to local needs
4. Strengthen the identity of the local community
5. Write and implement a multi-year strategic plan based on needs

Training objectives

1. Strengthen leadership skills, with special attention to advocacy, marketing, and communication
2. Develop insights into leadership styles in U.S. public libraries
3. Strengthen financial, management, and assessment skills
4. Develop a better understanding of the operations of rural libraries in the U.S. and how they develop partnerships within their communities
5. Experience how U.S. libraries welcome users and provide open access to information, including the use of physical space
6. Learn more about how mobile technologies can enhance library services and practice with some of the mobile technology tools
7. Learn how public libraries collect and provide access to local genealogical and historical information.
8. Share library practices in Latvia with U.S. colleagues
9. Develop a one-year action plan for their local library
10. Work with a small group to develop a project proposal ready to be submitted including a clear implementation plan for the project

Group projects

Photovoice provides equipment and training in digital photography to local individuals and families, sending them out to take photos and videos of issues in their community that are then on display in the library and online.

Library Comes to User creates equal IT opportunity by providing training and mobile information, lending equipment, and reaching out to people with no Internet access.

See, Capture, Share provides digital photography and video equipment and training to involve local residents in capturing local history, partners with schools, and posts photos on the Library Portal.

Romania

Participants: 15

Library type: regional

Biblionet: two staff

...assess community needs and develop new services...

Characteristics of excellent libraries

1. Have an excellent staff
2. Be part of an active library network
3. Have inviting space, equipment, and a convenient schedule
4. Have a brand and an active promotion campaign
5. Offer interesting and attractive collections

Training objectives

1. Develop skills to become knowledgeable and engaged team members
2. Improve presentation, communication, and leadership skills
3. Implement strategies to assess community needs and to develop new services based on assessment results
4. Develop results-oriented project management skills
5. Learn to apply the basics of proposal-writing and develop an understanding of how fundraising works in the U.S. context

Group projects

Local History@your Library aims to create a portal to support the learning of elementary students of local history. Partners in this project are schools, libraries, and museums.

Click@online training platform for librarians Working closely with the National Association of Public Libraries and Librarians (ANBPR) on a site in the ANBPR portal dedicated to professional development. The focus of the training is new technologies.

Play A Game@your library Wanted to increase the number of teens using the library by at least 10% and was using gaming as a strategy to attract attention. The team decided to create "teen spaces" in their libraries.

What Makes this Type of Training Work?

Upon reflection, seven interwoven elements seem key to success in an on-site international library leadership program: management, content, projects, context, assessment, peers, and language.

Key elements in the GL Leaders and Innovators Training Program

Management: This includes clearly articulated roles, guidelines, responsibilities, and objectives; firm grasp of logistics; ability to handle challenges quickly and fairly; setting a tone of respect, understanding, and acceptance; deep knowledge of the library field.

Content: The substance of the training for the participants needs to focus both inward and outward. What are my strengths and challenges? (Inward focus) I want to assess the impact of youth programming. (Outward focus) If this program is replicated, the following critical sessions are recommended: 2 days of training on development of a group project; 2 days of training on assessing the needs of the community; 2 days of personal development training and team work; communication; attendance at a conference; tours, tours, and more tours. Attending a U.S. library association conference was a good addition to the content. It gave all the participants a chance to interact with many U.S. colleagues in a very stimulating environment.

Projects: The **group** project is the most critical piece in ensuring sustainability. It is a chance for the group to practice their new skills and knowledge, it is a time for the librarians to shine in their community, and it provides necessary accountability for the individual investment. What is important here is NOT the specific project. The group projects were the most difficult and delicate to implement; the MC team and the GL country grantees had to walk the fine line between setting firm guidelines and allowing for buy-in by each team.

Context: Being immersed in a new/different context allows individuals to put aside firmly held beliefs and to explore situations with an open mind.

Assessment: Initial visits allow the MC team to understand the local context and assess needs after long discussions with participants and GL country grantees. The first assessment is critical to developing a program that meets the needs of the participants. On-going assessment is needed to adjust the program and to make changes. Final assessment gives an opportunity to reflect on what worked and what did not.

Peers: The peer-to-peer (PTP) learning is hard to measure, yet apparent in all activities. Participants returned each night to review and discuss the day. These discussions allowed them to better understand information that had been presented and to explore ideas of how they might apply some of the new concepts that they had just learned. The PTP learning also took place before they arrived, by discussion groups, and after they returned. The learning was both face-to-face and virtual.

Language: Offering the training in the native language has several advantages including allowing participants to better understand what is happening and giving them the freedom to express themselves clearly and in a nuanced fashion. Using translators is cumbersome but it does actually help in the assimilation of the new material by slowing down the pace at which material is delivered. It also means that candidates do not have to speak English to participate in the program. This opens the training opportunity to a wider range of qualified and talented librarians.

The group project is the most critical piece in ensuring sustainability.

Additional Questions about the Training Program

The structure for the training program worked, yet there are always lingering questions. Here are some that the Mortenson Center staff has discussed.

Does the length of the program have a big impact on its success?

This is a hard question, but MC can say unequivocally that it does not need to be any longer. Could it be shorter? Maybe.

Does the entire program have to be face-to-face? What portion could be delivered virtually?

Three unique features: the initial assessment visit, the use of native language for training, and the group project.

Another hard question. Of course there are issues about accessibility to equipment that would be needed to offer distance education, but assuming that equipment, power, and access to the Internet are available, then it might be interesting to explore this option. One potential issue would be how to handle translation in a virtual environment.

Does this program have to be offered in the United States?

No, a good library training team in a country with access to strong public libraries should be able to offer a library leadership program with the same impact. Other organizations should be able to replicate this training.

Would it be better to have individual projects?

Absolutely not. Working in a group was a new experience for all the librarians (they all thought that group projects would be impossible to implement). They now say that being part of a group has been great and that they intend to work together even after the project has ended.

There are many leadership training programs. What are some of the unique features of this leadership training?

There are three unique features: the initial assessment visit, the use of native language for training, and the group project. The initial assessment visit to the libraries helps design a program that is appropriate for that country's library culture. Offering the program in the native language of the participants in a foreign country is not usual but critical to attracting the best candidates. Finally, requiring group projects upon the return home is important to the development of leadership qualities.

Should the number of participants from each country be smaller or larger?

It would be difficult to have a large impact with a smaller group. From the MC staff's experience, 12-18 participants in a program is the ideal range. Another possibility would be to have two groups from each country at different times. This allows for increasing the number of participants without sacrificing quality.

Lessons Learned

Romanian Librarians in front of Main Library on the campus of the University of Illinois.

General

There is, indeed, a need for a training program for leaders and innovators that complements the work of the GL country grantee team.

While it will be easier to assess the real impact of the training in the next 3-5 years, it was clear that this training for library leaders and innovators is a value-added component to a GL country grantee strategy. The training supports the work of the GL country grantee team by providing a supportive group of librarians who will sustain public libraries well into the future.

Timing is crucial

The MC staff discussed timing of the program with the Latvians and the Romanians. The work with Latvia was done towards the end of their GL grant. In Romania, the program was implemented in the middle of the GL grant. Both teams felt that the timing worked for them and both recommended against starting this type of program at the beginning of a GL grant.

A new model for financing is needed

The Mortenson Center was given all the funds to run this contract. However, moving funds between the Center and GL country grantees or reimbursing for expenses such as visas and local travel caused hours of work for both the MC and GL country grantees. It would be best to have most of the funds given directly to the GL country grantees, with MC retaining funds for visits to each country and funds for the U.S.-based portion of the training program. It would also be easier to have each GL country grantee team disburse the project funds. The MC team wants to acknowledge the incredible work of ANBPR in administering the funds for the projects. They were great partners.

Ripple effects were seen in libraries and librarians not directly connected to the program

The participants returned and immediately started talking, training, and working with colleagues in neighboring libraries. The MC team, during country visits, was open to offering training to other librarians in the country. These additional initiatives, while at a much smaller scale, help others in the library community feel more engaged in thinking about libraries in a new role and more receptive to the ideas that the program participants were implementing.

In a new rural library, a Latvian participant worked with the librarian to display materials in a more pleasing and interesting manner.

Selection

A competitive application process had mixed results

Six GL country grantees applied and only two could be selected. The application process resulted in some clear thinking about how to best use a Leaders and Innovators Training Program to supplement the work being done in-country. But there is no doubt that there were some hurt feelings amongst the countries that were not selected. Since then, MC team members have been asked if and when they will work with other GL countries.

The GL country grantees are best suited to select the applicants for the training program

In both countries, the GL country grantees selected the applicants without involvement from the Mortenson Center. Both Latvia and

Romania felt that the selection process was a learning experience, as they thought about characteristics of future library leaders, visited libraries or had extensive phone interviews. Latvia and Romania each developed their own unique selection process.

Using new teen space in a Romanian library.

Comfortable seating for users in a Latvian library. The chairs used to be in the librarian's office.

The teams discussed, argued, became discouraged, and found passion.

Planning

Always have a written agreement in place before implementing the training program

The process of discussing objectives and impacts, of writing up an agreement, and of revising the agreement when needed was crucial to the success of the program. An agreement helps with the development of a strong working relationship, helps manage expectations, and helps to clarify roles, guidelines, and responsibilities.

The good and the bad

The MC team needs to understand the public library context in a specific country. It was important to visit a wide range of libraries and also to observe the connections to the communities. After the initial visit, the MC team was better prepared to develop a training program.

Leaders and Innovators Training Program

Providing opportunities to demonstrate leadership and innovation

The MC team developed a very intensive and comprehensive program Monday–Friday from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. There were a couple of cultural activities planned for the weekends. However, outside of the planned programming, the groups had to manage on their own with very little assistance. After all, the MC team told them, this is a program for leaders and innovators. The take-away here is not to manage all the needs of the participants, but to show trust in their ability to live in a new environment.

Participation and presentation at a U.S. conference is a confidence booster

The librarians were able to network with U.S. colleagues and exchange ideas. They were also able to talk about achievements in their libraries. The conference participation helped reinforce the concept that they are part of a large world-wide network of public librarians with whom they share many successes and challenges.

Implementation of group projects

Group-run projects are more difficult and more rewarding

Organizing the librarians from each country into three teams, and then having each team develop and implement a group project was a task that needed to be closely monitored and managed, and called for quick on-site decisions about rules and policies. The teams discussed, argued, became discouraged, and found passion throughout the process and the MC staff took on the role of facilitators, counselors, and cheerleaders, depending on what was needed.

$2,000 per participant was enough to cover the costs of projects

One of the most visible examples of leadership was how the librarians found additional funds for the projects. They lobbied local government officials, they bargained with vendors, and did some local fundraising. It was amazing to hear what they managed to purchase with their funds.

Follow-up

The role of the MC team was to listen and ask questions

This visit is critical to the success of the entire GL Library Leaders and Innovators Training Program. Here, the MC team has to give credit to the GL country grantee teams who convinced it of the importance of this visit. In both countries, the librarians could not wait to welcome the MC team and tell it all that they had accomplished since their return home. They wanted to share and also to be recognized for their achievements. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring the teams together to discuss project logistics and challenges. The visit provided the teams with renewed commitment to reaching their goals.

Conclusion

"Participation in the program has strengthened my self-confidence both personally and at work. I feel more confident about what I do. I have realized that everyone can create changes—even I can! Also, I have understood that the leader without a team is not a leader at all."

—ROMANIAN PARTICIPANT

Does a training program for library leaders and innovators make a difference?... the Mortenson Center's conclusion is a clear "yes."

"It has strengthened our confidence that the library system of Latvia is well organized and that the librarians are real professionals. When getting acquainted with and making analysis of the library system in the USA, and the work of their librarians, we have been encouraged to meet the challenges and not be afraid to introduce new innovative and non-traditional ideas into our work at the libraries of Latvia."

—LATVIAN PARTICIPANT

Does a training program for library leaders and innovators make a difference? From the impact assessments, conversations, and observations, the Mortenson Center's conclusion is a clear "yes." The program has had an impact on the individual librarians and also on their communities. While it will be three to four more years before the sustainability of the training can be measured there are positive and visible behavioral trends in the participants that indicate progress towards increased leadership in the local library community.

Building on the successful efforts of the GL country grantees in Latvia and Romania, the Mortenson Center designed a training program to fit the unique needs of public librarians in each country. The result was a cohort of enthused and engaged library leaders and innovators who implemented group projects that resonated not only in their communities, but in the entire country.

A multi-faceted training approach is needed to create a new vision for public libraries in GL countries. The findings from the Leaders and Innovators Training Program indicate that model worked and built on the efforts of the GL country grantees. If it is replicated it will have to be tweaked and adapted to the circumstances of different countries and regions.

GL country grantees benefitted from working with the Mortenson Center, both because of the training received and the numerous discussions between MC staff and GL country grantee staff. This is important because implementing the training program took a lot of coordination, effort, and time.

Much of the success of the GL Library Leaders and Innovators Training Program rests with the dedicated staff of the GL country grantees. They went above and beyond what was expected and their support contributed to the success of the training and the projects. The Mortenson Center is also most thankful for the support and flexibility of our program officer, Darren Hoerner. He gave the Mortenson Center team wonderful feedback and was willing to adjust the original scope of work to the realities of the local context.