Leadership and Innovators Training Program for Latvian and Romanian Public Librarians at the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs

Susan Schnuer, Barbara J. Ford, and Peggy Barber

Abstract

From 2009 to 2012, the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs (MC) at the University of Illinois Library implemented the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries (GL) Leaders and Innovators Training Program. The purpose of the program was to have a team of library leaders and innovators in Latvia and Romania committed to designing and creating a stronger public library environment. The GL grantees, 3TD, and Biblionet worked with the MC team to administer and support the program. The program included planning visits and agreements, training at the MC, attendance at a U.S. library association conference, development and implementation of group projects, and follow-up visits and training. Twelve Latvian librarians and fifteen Romanian librarians participated in the program. The training was unique for each country group based on the needs identified in the initial visits and discussions with the GL grantees. Each country group was divided into three teams of four to five members. The teams had to develop an idea for a library project, write a proposal, and then implement the project. After submitting a successful proposal, the teams received a small grant. The result was a cohort of enthusiastic and engaged library leaders who implemented group projects that were positively received in their respective 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 working closely with local government, making more active use of technology, reaching out to seniors, and creating spaces for children and teens.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries (GL) staff approached the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs (MC) at the University of Illinois Library to explore the possibility of developing a leadership training program for librarians in countries with GL grants. The foundation was already working with libraries in these countries to ensure that all people, especially those in disadvantaged communities around the world, have access to information through technology in public libraries.

The GL-funded libraries in Latvia and Romania 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. Still, the GL staff felt that there were other critical training areas in these countries 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 GL staff identified the MC as a potential partner for this training need, since it had many years of experience designing programs for librarians and information specialists that addressed the particular needs of a region or country. The GL staff and MC team defined success for the GL 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." In addition to developing a team of library leaders and innovators, the program would also

- build on and contribute to local GL grantee strategies;
- ensure that the training would develop knowledge and build skills that were practical, needed, and sustainable; and
- explore the possibility of scaling and/or replicating the training.

PRELIMINARY OUTCOMES

Latvia
The Latvian Ministry of Culture is the home of 3TD, which works with public libraries to carry out the GL program in the country, and it worked with the MC to develop and carry out the training program as part of that project. The library-development project 3TD brings new life to municipal public libraries by offering free internet access and training for library staff. Twelve librarians from small, rural public libraries were selected to participate in the MC training program.

The MC staff, in conjunction with team members from the Ministry of Culture, developed a list of the characteristics of exemplary rural libraries in Latvia. These libraries

- offer open and free access to all;
- develop partnerships and networks that are central to their mission;
- design and promote innovative services responsive to local needs;
- strengthen the identity of the local community; and
- write and implement a multiyear strategic plan based on needs.

The libraries' training objectives included

- strengthening leadership skills, with special attention given to advocacy, marketing, and communication;
- developing insights into leadership styles in U.S. public libraries;
- strengthening financial, management, and assessment skills;
- developing a better understanding of the operations of rural libraries in the United States and how they develop partnerships within their communities;
- experiencing how U.S. libraries welcome users and provide open access to information, including the use of physical space;
- learning more about mobile technologies' enhancement of library services, and experiencing some of the mobile-technology tools;
- learning how public libraries collect and provide access to local genealogical and historical information;
- sharing library practices in Latvia with U.S. colleagues;
- developing a one-year action plan;
- working with a small group to develop a project proposal, including a clear implementation plan for it.

Group projects. These were an important part of the MC training program. While the group projects were to focus on innovative services, their main purpose was to provide the librarians with a venue to apply their new skills and knowledge. The MC staff was more focused on the *how* than the *what.* The group projects had three guidelines:

- The librarians were to work in groups—only three projects per country.
- Each group member had to implement the same project.
- Each librarian/library would receive approximately $2,000 to implement the project.

Photovoice. The Photovoice project provided equipment and training in digital photography to local individuals and families. The four participating libraries developed creative laboratories to provide the training. The people have used their new skills to take photographs and videos of issues in their community, the work displayed and discussed with local government and business leaders. This project is also being shared with other libraries.

The Photovoice project sends a strong message that libraries are vital to community life. Through the project, the libraries provide up-to-date technology, training, and opportunity so that individuals of all ages can share

their talents and express ideas about local issues. In each community, the project has garnered the attention and involvement of local government and attracted many new library users. All four participating libraries will continue the project because their communities want it.

Library Comes to User. The Library Comes to User project created equal information technology opportunities for all residents by reaching out to individuals with no internet access and providing training, lending laptop computers, and developing mobile information services. Working with local government and media, the team has developed lending rules and agreements, publicity tools, and data on local target groups, such as individuals with no internet access and the housebound.

As the project title suggests, outreach and engagement are essential. Rules and agreements have been localized for each community, and the libraries have connected with social service agencies to identify and compile a database of target audiences. The project team has already shared their experiences in presentations at the Tenth Annual Congress of Latvian Librarians, seminars for librarians in more than six local communities, and meetings with local officials.

See, Capture, Share. The See, Capture, Share project fosters a more engaging role for libraries in community life by providing equipment and training in both digital photography and video so as to involve residents in capturing local history. Many people, even teenagers, have welcomed this opportunity to be creative. Collections of their photos and videos have been shared in newspapers, library exhibits, websites, and tourism brochures and have been presented at programs for local officials.

While libraries traditionally "share," the See, Capture, Share project fostered strong personal involvement and ownership by providing local people with new skills and creative opportunities. The project promoted individuals' transition from passive to active users—to becoming engaged and involved in their library. The project team is also actively sharing their experiences with local and regional groups of librarians and government officials, and there have been a number of articles about See, Capture, Share in regional media.

Romania
Biblionet is a multiyear program financed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that helps to facilitate free access to information for Romanian citizens by fostering the development of a modern public library system in the country. Biblionet conducts the GL training program with libraries in Romania, and collaborates with the MC to develop and carry out the training. Biblionet helps libraries better serve their communities through training and technology. Fifteen librarians from regional libraries were chosen to participate in the program.

The MC staff worked with Biblionet team members to develop a list of the characteristics of excellent public libraries in Romania. The characteristics identified were

- to have an excellent staff;
- to be part of an active library network;
- to have an inviting space, proper equipment, and a convenient schedule;
- to have a brand and an active promotional campaign; and
- to offer interesting and attractive collections.

The training objectives of Biblionet included

- developing skills to become knowledgeable and engaged team members;
- improving presentation, communication, and leadership skills;
- implementing strategies to assess community needs, and to develop new services based on these assessment results;
- developing results-oriented project-management skills;
- learning to apply the basics of proposal writing, and to develop an understanding of how fundraising works within the U.S. context.

Group projects. Group projects were an important part of the training program with this group as well. The guidelines were the same as those for Latvia:

- The librarians were to work in groups—only three projects per country.
- Each group member had to implement the same project.
- Each librarian/library would receive approximately $2,000 to implement the project.

Local History@Your Library. This program aimed to create a portal to support elementary students' learning about local history. Schools, libraries, and museums partnered in the program. The portal was launched at the Targu-Mares ANBPR (Romanian National Association of Public Libraries and Librarians [Asociația Națională a Bibliotecarilor și Bibliotecilor Publice din Romania]) conference. So far, nine articles have been contributed to the site, and there have been over 900 page views.

Click@Online Training Platform for Librarians. These participating libraries worked closely with the ANBPR on a site in the ANBPR portal dedicated to professional development. The focus of the training is on new technologies. The team administered a needs-analysis questionnaire to 105 librarians in Romania. A great deal of content has been uploaded onto the ANBPR website, including seventeen tutorials and a photo collection (related to ideas on how to arrange space). The training platform's content has been advertised via e-mailing and Facebook, and the tutorials have been presented at the ANBPR conference. The participating librarians are now concentrating on the communication and promotion of the tutorials.

Play a Game@Your Library. Many librarians wanted to increase the number of teenagers using libraries by at least 10 percent, and they used gaming as a strategy to attract their interest. The team created "teen spaces" in their libraries by purchasing the necessary equipment to launch the new service. A sampling of the program's reported statistics from various libraries in the country includes the following:

- Filasi: From January through March 2012, 228 teenagers visited the library and used the games.
- Suceava County: 544 students used this service during January–April 2012. The library also started showing movies on Fridays, with the teenagers and children choosing which to watch.
- Ialomita County: In March 2012, there were 571 visits to the children's section and 72 internet sessions. The library organized monthly video-game contests and offered books provided by various sponsors, publishers, and individuals as prizes for winners.
- Dambovita: 169 teenagers used the video games from January to March 2012. The library now has a quarterly teen journal it publishes. In addition, the youth-services librarian offered courses for teenagers and seniors (60 individuals participated); weekly meetings with the student county council (attendance varied from between 12 to 30); Friday night movies with around 40 participants; and one "cosmic image" night with 252 participants.

Program Design and Timelines
The GL Leaders and Innovators Training Program, as designed by the MC, had five stages, each building on the knowledge acquired during the previous stage (fig. 1). 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.

Description of the Five Stages of the GL Leaders and Innovators Training Program
The five stages of the training program are as follows:

- *Selection:* A call for proposals was issued; Latvia and Romania were selected. In Latvia, the MC team worked with the Ministry of Culture team, 3TD. In Romania, the team worked with IREX Biblionet. 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 telephone interviews with all candidates. The librarians were selected before the first visit by the MC team.
- *Planning:* The MC team did an extensive first visit of ten days in each country. During the visits, the team toured many libraries and met with

Figure 1. Five stages of the GL Leaders and Innovators Training Program.

the selected group of librarians to answer questions and manage expectations. There were long discussions about the characteristics of good public libraries and what should be included in the training program. On returning, the MC team drafted a summary of the discussions and shared the information with each grantee team. These summaries were the blueprint for an agreement between MC and each GL country grantee.

- *Training program at MC:* Each group participated in a training program of about four weeks. The programs included seminars, workshops, hands-on technical training, visits to public libraries, and attendance at a library conference. The training programs were delivered in the native language of the participants. The Latvians attended the Illinois Library Association's annual conference; the Romanians, the Texas Library Association's annual conference, where they presented a session on Romanian libraries. The training was well-received. During the training programs, each country group of participants was divided into three teams and commenced work on a follow-up project. They received two days of intensive training on how to write a proposal, returning to their respective countries with strong first drafts. They were given two months to submit their final proposals.

- *Implementation of group projects*: Each group had to submit a completed proposal to their GL country-grantee team members, who then translated the proposals for the MC team. The proposals were reviewed, and the librarians had a few weeks to respond to questions and revise their

proposals. As soon as these revised proposals were received, the funds were released to the 3TD team in Latvia and to ANBPR, the Romanian library association. The disbursement of funds was slow and tedious, but ultimately accomplished. The librarians worked diligently to implement the projects, with consequent success. The project timelines in both countries had to be extended.

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

PROGRAM IMPACT

The training program's vision for success was defined 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." The program's measurable impact was seen in the development of knowledge and skills of the participants. The findings from the evaluator's report follow below.

What Changes in Skills, Knowledge, and Attitude Did the Participants Acquire?

Tables 1 and 2, below, depict, respectively, Latvian and Romanian participants' self-assessments of their skills in several topics at both the beginning and end of the training program. They ranked themselves on a scale of 1 to 10, with "1" being the lowest skill level and "10" the highest. The participants were also asked to rank which of their acquired skills were the most useful and have most improved leadership and innovation. Again, the rankings are on a scale of 1 to 10 (tables 3 and 4).

ARE THE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BECOMING LIBRARY LEADERS AND INNOVATORS?

From the data, it appears that each participant fully utilized the GL training. The participants reported that as a result of the program, they have acquired new funding, provided new services, and formed new partnerships

Table 1. Pre- and posttraining skills self-assessment by Latvian participants

Skills	Pretraining	Posttraining	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

Table 2. Pre- and posttraining skills self-assessment by Romanian participants

Skills	Pretraining	Posttraining	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

Table 3. Latvian participants' rankings of the usefulness of their acquired skills

Skills	Most useful leadership skills
Partnerships/collaboration	9.0
Customer service	8.9
Planning	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

Table 4. Romanian participants' rankings of the usefulness of their acquired skills

Skills	Most useful leadership skills
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

—all evidence of increased leadership, innovation, outreach, and community connection.

Latvia

The Latvian participants' reported results of the GL training program are as follows:

- *New partnerships:* new partners included local government, schools, media, community organizations, museums, state agency, social services, and more (reported by all eight participants).
- *Increased funding:* there was measurable growth in funding from local government, and the possibility of three grants (reported by all eight participants).
- *Strategic planning:* new plans were developed, some due to start after the group project ended (reported by seven participants).
- *New services:* new services were developed as a result of the program, and each team also reported additional new programs, services, and outreach generated from the momentum created (reported by all eight participants).
- *Awards and recognition:* participant reports included the mentioning of recognition, primarily from local government (reported by seven participants).

Romania

The Romanian participants' reported results of the GL training program are as follows:

- *New partnerships:* new partners included NGOs, schools and teachers, museums, media, archives, universities, businesses, doctors, county councils, and others (reported by fourteen [of fifteen] participants).
- *Increased funding:* measurable growth in funding came from local government and community organizations, in addition to EU and other grants (reported by ten participants).

- *New services:* new services resulted from the program, and each participant also reported additional new services and outreach generated from the momentum created (reported by all fifteen participants).
- *Awards and recognition:* many of the librarians mentioned awards, primarily from local government, and also increased media coverage and ANBPR recognition (reported by thirteen participants).

How Are the Changes Visible in the Community? What Are Libraries Doing?

All of the participants in the training spoke about the new services in their libraries and how, in most cases, these have led to increased engagement with library users. Of particular note are the comments made by local government officials. Each Latvian participant was asked to gather comments from these officials about the changes they have seen in library services since the librarians participated in the GL training program. All of their comments were uniformly positive and quite similar in specifying the ways in which libraries are providing concrete value. A few samples of the Latvian local government officials' comments follow.

> The library offers new services—lending laptops and communicating with people through mobile phones. It gives opportunity to more residents to use the library's services. The library is more actively participating in the various events and projects of local government. (Sanita Eglite, *head of the Department of Culture and Sports, 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 quality of life of the local community. (Aivars Aunins, *deputy head of the Strenci region*)

> For the first time, a rich exhibition of historical materials from the Broceni district has been compiled and displayed in an innovative way, which was attended by several thousand 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*)

In Latvia and Romania, the librarians commented on major changes in their libraries due to both the implementation of the projects and to their renewed efforts to change how library services are offered to users. The 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 information/education tours, providing seminars for farmers, attracting new users via mobile services, recruiting

volunteers for library work, creating spaces for children and teenagers, and becoming community training centers.

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

In Romania, seven of the fifteen participating librarians were elected to leadership roles in the national 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 of 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. The librarians are very determined to have a positive impact on their local library communities.

What Makes This Type of Training Work?

On reflection, seven interrelated elements were key to success in an onsite international library-leadership program: management, content, projects, context, peers, language, and assessment (fig. 2):

- *Management:* This includes clearly articulated roles, guidelines, responsibilities, and objectives; the firm grasp of logistics; the ability to handle challenges quickly and fairly; setting a tone of respect, understanding, and acceptance; and deep knowledge of the library field.
- *Content:* The substance of the training for the participants needs to focus both inward and outward. For example, *What are my strengths and challenges?* (inward focus); *I want to assess the impact of youth programming* (outward). If this program is replicated, the following critical sessions are recommended: two days of training on the development of a group project; two days of training on assessing the needs of the community; two days of personal-development training and teamwork; communication; attendance at a conference; and tours, tours, and more tours. Attending a U.S. library association conference was a good addition to the content because it offered all participants a chance to interact with many U.S. colleagues in a stimulating environment.
- *Projects:* The group project is the most critical piece in ensuring sustainability. It is a chance for the group to practice its new skills and knowledge, a time for the librarians to shine in their community, and it also provides the necessary accountability for individual investment. What is important here is *not* the specific project but the teams and the

Figure 2. Key elements in the GL Leaders and Innovators Training Program.

communication strategies that are developed among team members. It is also the training element that is the most difficult and delicate to implement because one has to walk the thin line between setting firm guidelines and allowing for buy-in by the group.

- *Context:* Being immersed in a new/different context allows individuals to put aside firmly held beliefs and to explore situations with an open mind.
- *Peers:* Peer-to-peer (PTP) learning is difficult to measure, yet is apparent in all activities. Participants returned each night to review and discuss what had transpired during 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 they had just learned. The PTP learning also took place before they arrived, by discussion groups, and after they returned; this ongoing learning was both face to face and virtual.
- *Language:* Offering the training in the group's 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 be English speakers to participate in the program, which opens up the training opportunity to a wider range of qualified and talented librarians.

- *Assessment:* Initial visits allow the MC team to understand the local context and assess needs after comprehensive discussions with participants and GL grantees. The first assessment is critical to developing a program that meets the needs of the participants. Ongoing assessment is necessary to adjust the program and make changes. The final assessment provides the opportunity to reflect on the entire program—what worked and what did not.

Additional Questions about the Training Program

The structure of the training program was successful, yet there are always lingering questions. What follows are some that MC staff members have discussed:

- *Does the length of the program have a big impact on its success?*
  This is a hard question, but the MC can say unequivocally that it does not need to be any longer. Could it be shorter? Perhaps.
- *Does the entire program need to be conducted face to face? What portion could be delivered virtually?*
  Another hard question. Of course, there are issues about accessibility to equipment that would be needed in order 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 the program have to be offered in the United States?*
  No, it does not. 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 (and they all thought that group projects would be impossible to implement). The librarians now say that being part of a group has been a great experience, 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 particular leadership training?*
  This leadership training has three unique features: the initial assessment visit, the use of native language for training, and the group project. The initial assessment of the libraries helps to 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 it is critical for attracting the best candidates. Finally, requiring group projects after completion of the training is important for 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, twelve to eighteen participants in a program is the ideal range. Having two groups from each country is another possibility to consider; in past MC programs, which hosted two to three groups from a country or region, it was found that its impact could sometimes be the highest with the second and third groups. Usually, the best people are selected first, and it is with participants of more modest achievements that you sometimes find surprising leaders and innovators.

Lessons Learned

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 true impact of the training during the next three to five 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 team by providing a supportive group of librarians who will sustain public libraries well into the future.

Timing Is Crucial

The MC staff discussed the timing of the program with the Latvians and Romanians. The work with Latvia was implemented toward the end of its GL grant; in Romania, during its middle. Both teams felt that their respective timing worked, and both recommended against starting this type of program at the beginning of a GL grant.

Ripple Effects Were Seen in Libraries and Librarians Not Directly Connected to the Program

The participants returned to their home countries 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 on a smaller scale, help others in the library community feel more engaged in thinking about libraries in a new role and be more receptive to the ideas that the program participants were implementing.

Selection

The GL grantees are best suited to select the applicants for the training program. In both countries, they selected the applicants without involvement from the MC. Both Latvia and Romania felt that the selection process was a learning experience because it compelled them to consider the characteristics of future library leaders, visit libraries, and conduct extensive telephone interviews. Both countries developed their own unique selection process.

Planning
Always have a written agreement in place before implementing the training program. The process of discussing objectives and impacts, documenting them, and revising this written agreement when necessary was crucial to the success of the program. Such an agreement fosters the development of a strong working relationship, manages expectations, and clarifies roles, guidelines, and responsibilities.

The Good and the Bad
The MC team needs to understand the public library context within specific countries. It was therefore important to visit a wide range of libraries and also to observe their connections to their respective communities. After the initial visit, the MC team was better prepared to develop its training program specific to the country.

Training Program
Providing opportunities to demonstrate leadership and innovation were key to the training program. The MC team developed an intensive and comprehensive program—full day (8:30–5:00), five days a week, with some cultural activities planned for weekends. However, outside of the planned programming, the groups had to manage on their own, with very little assistance—after all, the MC team insisted, this was a program for leaders and innovators. The lesson here is not to manage all the needs of participants but to have trust in their ability to thrive in a new environment.

Participation and presentation at a U.S. library conference is a confidence booster, as the Latvian and Romanian librarians were able to network with U.S. colleagues and exchange ideas; they were also able to talk about achievements in their home libraries. This conference participation helped reinforce the idea that they are part of a larger, global network of public librarians with whom they share many successes and challenges.

Implementation of Group Projects
Group-run projects are both more difficult and more rewarding. Organizing the librarians from each country into three teams, 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, onsite decisions about rules and policies. The teams discussed, argued, became discouraged, and found passion throughout the process, and MC staff members assumed the roles of facilitators, counselors, or cheerleaders, depending on what was needed.

The allocation of $2,000 per participant was enough to cover the costs of the projects. One of the most visible examples of leadership was how the librarians found additional funds for the projects: they lobbied local government officials, negotiated with vendors, and did some local fundraising. It was amazing to hear what they managed to purchase with these additional funds.

Follow-up

The role of the MC team is to listen and ask questions. This follow-up visit is critical to the success of the entire GL training program. In this follow-up, MC staff members must give credit to the GL participants, who convinced them of the importance of this visit. In both countries, the librarians were eagerly awaiting the MC staff to welcome them and relate all that they had accomplished since their return home. The librarians wanted to share and also be recognized for their achievements. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring the teams together to discuss project logistics and challenges; the follow-up visit fostered a renewed commitment among teams to accomplish their goals.

Evaluations

Evaluations should be conducted throughout the duration of the contract. The independent project evaluator accompanied MC staff members on trips to the countries and produced a report on each phase of the program. Evaluation data was gathered through repeated one-on-one interviews with each participant, and also with MC, 3TD, and Biblionet staff members. These interviews were followed-up with written questionnaires. The consequent evaluations provided knowledge about what was and was not working and helped maintain the focus on measurable results.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the training program, here are comments from two of the participants, the first Latvian, the second Romanian:

> 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 nontraditional ideas into our work at the libraries of Latvia.

> 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.

Does a training program for library leaders and innovators make a difference? From the impact assessments, conversations, and observations, the MC's conclusion is a resounding *yes*! The program has had an impact on the individual librarians and also on their communities. While it will be three to five more years before the sustainability of the training can be measured, there are positive and visible behavioral trends in the participants that indicate progress toward increased leadership in the local library community. Building on the successful efforts of the GL grantees in Latvia and Romania, the MC designed a training program to fit the unique needs of public librarians in each country. The result was a cohort of enthusias-

tic and engaged library leaders and innovators who implemented group projects that resonated not only within their communities but also within the entire country.

The findings indicate that while the training model was successful, if it is replicated, it will have to be adapted to the circumstances of different countries and regions. A varied and focused training approach in each country is needed to create a new vision for public libraries, as is working with the leaders and innovators to manage the libraries to best meet the needs of their communities. The GL grantees benefited from working with the MC, both because of the training received and the numerous discussions between staff members of both the MC and GL. This is essential because implementing the training program took a great deal of coordination, effort, and time. Much of the success of the GL Leaders and Innovators Training Program is due to the dedicated staff of the GL grantees, who went above and beyond what was expected. Their support contributed to the success of the training and the projects.

Susan Schnuer and Barbara J. Ford work at the Mortenson Center (MC) for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. (After many years of service, Barbara retired from the center in 2014.) The MC's mission is to strengthen ties among libraries and librarians regardless of geographic location or access to technology, and it has worked with librarians from more than ninety countries. Both Susan and Barbara have extensive experience in international library work and professional development; they developed the proposal to receive funding for this project, and directed and implemented it.

Peggy Barber, of Library Communication Strategies Inc., served as project evaluator, interviewing the participating librarians and gathering data at each phase of the program. Her consulting practice has involved communication and marketing-focused work with libraries in thirty-one U.S. states and five foreign countries. Before starting her consulting firm, she was the executive director for communication at the American Library Association.