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# OUR VISION FOR STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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On October 20th and 21st, 2016 the **California Library Association** in partnership with **Califa Group** led a Leadership Development Visioning Workshop with the help and guidance of ZingTrain, the training arm of an innovative industry leading company: Zingerman's Community of Businesses.

This event was a rare collaboration between a library organization and an internationally recognized business leader. It engaged a diverse cross section of libraries from throughout the state. All regions of California were represented, as were academic, public and law libraries. Participants had varying roles in their organizations- from paraprofessional to library administrator. Libraries represented were located in rural, urban, and suburban areas.

All participants worked together over the course of two days in what amounted to an intensive and collaborative thought-and-writing exercise and produced a narrative story and vision of what a successful statewide leadership development program *should look like in 12 years time*. Ingrained in this story are key themes as well as specific program ideas for statewide leadership development.

Themes represented in the visioning statement are: diversity, inclusivity, accessibility, innovation, and advocacy. Program ideas present in the visioning statement are hands-on and experiential, adapted from out of industry learning opportunities, include team-building and mentoring opportunities, and focused on ensuring a smooth succession of generations in the workforce.

This vision and aspirational story of what successful statewide leadership development could look like is helping to guide the California Library Association in its efforts. CLA believes that the first step in creating inclusive leadership development opportunities is to engage and listen to the members of the field that our programming seeks to serve. This visioning statement is a valuable first step in engaging the field and a tool for identifying key themes and programming ideas to try moving forward.

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# CA LIBRARY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: 12 YEAR VISION

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It is October 20, 2028, and Kai, a mid-level library manager, is leaving the opening session of the Library Leadership Institute sponsored by the California Library Association's Rural Leadership Division, and attended by library staff and other industry professionals from around the world.

Walking down the hall, Kai's already heard six different languages; seen new and familiar faces; and talked to people of all ages from 18 to 80!

Going up to the message board listing program sessions, Kai reviews the schedule for the day—numerous options, interesting and unexpected types of sessions, something for everyone: academic, public, law, prison, school, special, rural, urban, and suburban library staff.

For example, there's a session on Experiential Learning Fellowships in Room 101, where Kai's friend Alex is co-presenting. Prior to becoming a Library Director, Alex did a one-week fellowship at a local high school. During this fellowship, Alex worked side by side with educators to implement an emerging technology laboratory and learned not only technological skills, but also about how the library could support the technological and educational goals of the school through the lab space. Alex and Kai, as well as their colleagues, have been enthusiastic about experiential learning options since library school, where they were encouraged to participate in a diverse range of programs such as job shadowing, job swapping, virtual internships and more. These opportunities continue to be offered for all library staff, courtesy of CLA's Leadership Development program and its diverse network of connections in libraries of all types, educational institutions, government agencies, and a variety of industries.

Kai looks forward to being in Alex's group for a competitive team building event tonight. They can't wait to see what outlandish problem they'll have to solve together this year. Last year, Kai was able to connect with colleagues, stretch leadership skills, and return home to share the activity with staff at the library.

Another option for Kai, in Room 202, is a session highlighting the most recent examples of libraries adapting the best practices from other industries. Innovation and knowledge derived from other industries is an accepted norm in California Libraries. The efforts of Kai's own library to drastically improve services to seniors by collaborating with a local company in the transportation industry was considered for inclusion in the program.

This open and dynamic environment is what attracted Kai to working in libraries in the first place. Librarianship fulfills Kai's desire to be an agent for positive community change. The profession adapts and models best practices from the most successful industries and works collaboratively with local nonprofits, service organizations and government agencies. Library staff have the opportunity to work with local partners who are both trendsetters and industry leaders. Not only do these partnerships bring tangible benefits to the library user experience, they ensure that library staff are able to cultivate a diverse network of library advocates from outside of the profession.

Another aspect of working in libraries that Kai really appreciates is the diverse and qualified workforce. Kai and fellow hiring managers are thrilled that applicants for all library jobs are ready and excited to connect with patrons from all backgrounds and are well trained, in part due to leadership development programs beginning in library school. The workforce also reflects the diversity of the State of California. It is commonplace for library staff to speak more than one language, and bring their own valuable soft skills and life experiences from a variety of professional backgrounds. In fact, library staff members look like a slice of California.

Recently, the head of circulation at Kai's library retired with a clear conscience and faith that the job would be done well and with passion by a new person. Moving into retirement was less stressful knowing that the new supervisor's transition would be seamless since succession planning, job shadowing, and mentoring are part of CLA-led leadership training programs in California Libraries.

Kai sees an excited group of mentors heading to the Limitless Classroom forum to plan and record new learning sessions. Mentoring is a huge part of Leadership Development in California Libraries, and as a recently selected mentor Kai looks forward to providing memorable experiences, inspiring participants and helping them to perform at their highest potential. Kai very much agrees with the program's mantra that **learners become leaders and leaders continue to be learners.**

But before official mentoring responsibilities kick off, Kai's cohort has to finish their Limitless Classroom orientation. The "Limitless Classroom" is both a philosophy and a learning delivery model where leadership development curriculum is planned and delivered to all libraries throughout the state in a variety of formats, from virtual to in-person and adapted to attendees at all levels in a variety of ways that are respectful of their time, resources, and learning styles. Limitless Classroom programs are successful because of regular evaluation and tracking of how learners have created meaningful outcomes in their libraries and communities.

Even outside of the Limitless Classroom and formal mentoring programs, Kai regularly asks for and receives help and support from mentors and peers. Over time, Kai's been able to give back to the

learning community and provide support for others. Colleagues in need of support always receive it in California Libraries.

Jess passes by in the hallway and they catch up quickly. It brings to mind one of Kai's first experiences at a large leadership development event with staff from all over the State. Newer to the profession at the time, Kai had been reticent to share, worrying that the opinions of new library staff might not be welcomed or valued. Jess encouraged Kai to share and contribute to the conversation, and Kai will never forget the moment when a seasoned, respected leader appreciated the new perspective and Kai was acknowledged by a large group of peers. This experience actually motivated Kai to seek out new and expanded opportunities in Statewide Leadership Development functions. The path to take on new and more responsible statewide roles was made clear through frequent and easily accessible communications from the California Library Association.

Kai finally decides to attend a session jointly presented by a Library staff member and a City Councilmember. Amari has a deep and nuanced understanding of the community, and has developed training for library and city staff on convening conversations and sharing community aspirations with stakeholders and funders to achieve collective goals. Amari is such a leader and change agent in the community. Kai was inspired to hear Amari say, *"Sometimes the library has a seat at the table, sometimes the library sets the table and sometimes the library builds the table."*

Two days later, Kai attends the closing session of the Leadership Institute and listens intently to CLA President Riley's remarks: *"Every California library has a staff member who has been trained and is connected to our leadership development program. Our programs have many elements, but our experiential learning and public/private partnerships mean that the awareness of our leadership approach has reached our community partners, governmental stakeholders, and cutting edge companies."* Kai thinks that this partnership approach is particularly beneficial as the wide recognition and acclaim for these programs ensures funding and support from local governments and draws an enthusiastic crowd of business sponsors.

At the end of the conference, Kai is inspired and ready to continue doing incredible things. Kai has a renewed appreciation of California Library Leadership Development as it is built on a strong, sustainable, and entrepreneurial foundation that is accessible to all California library staff because it is affordable, innovative, scalable, and collaborative.