

Findings and Recommendations from the Senior Leader Development and Networking Project Regarding the Deputy University Librarians Network

Key Project Information

Project Name:	Senior Leader Development and Networking Project
Project Co-Leads:	Kim Tairi Auckland University of Technology Philip Kent University of Sydney
Project Team:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Subgroup Lead (Awards), Coral Black, UON<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Team member Jane Angel, UniSA○ Team member Chelsea Harper, USC● Subgroup Lead (Networking), Margie Jantti, UOW<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Team member Jane Miller, Deakin○ Team member Clare Thorpe, SCU● Subgroup Lead (Professional Development), Maureen Sullivan, Griffith (Previously Pete Maggs, UWS)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Team member Simon Huggard, Swinburne○ Team member Bruce Munro, SCU○ Team member Sascha Jenkins, UTS
Project Sponsor:	Gwenda Thomas
Program:	Building Sustainable Leadership
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CAUL National Office Contact:	Kate Davis Director, Strategy & Analytics kate.davis@caul.edu.au

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Introduction

This paper is an extract from the Final Project Report of the Senior Leader Development and Networking Project, focused on findings and recommendations related to the Deputy University Librarians Network. It focuses specifically on the work conducted by the Networking sub-group, led by Margie Jantti.

Background

An overview of the purpose and scope of the Senior Leader Development and Networking Project can be found in the Project Brief on the [CAUL website](#).

Key terms

Throughout this report, the following key terms are used:

- Deputies and associates: Refers to senior leaders in CAUL Member institution staff who are direct reports of the University Librarian or equivalent. In some institutions, job titles may include the terms 'deputy', 'associate' or 'director'.
- Managers: Refers to CAUL Member institution staff at the operational management level. They generally report to deputies and associates, as defined above.

Approach

The approach to scope the role, purpose and value of Senior Leader Networks comprised:

- Exploring existing, recognised network models, e.g. workshop with RLUK
- Environmental scan
 - Network definitions and scope
 - Terms of reference
 - Benefits and value
- Interviews with sample of CAUL and DALIANZ members
 - Assessment of audience needs and expectations
 - Assessment of best practice, guidance for effective networking
- Synthesis and assessment of evidence
- Report submitted to project leads.

The environmental scan identified working definitions for networking, reviewed key international academic library networks and higher education networks affiliated with CAUL, GLAMR and IT sector mentoring and networking programs.

Findings

Background

Defining Networking

The following definitions of networking guided the project team's work:

The exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business. (Source Merriam Webster Dictionary Networking | Definition of Networking by Merriam-Webster)

Networking is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, usually in an informal social setting. Networking often begins with a single point of common ground. (Source: www.investopedia.com/terms/n/networking.asp)

Types of Networks

In a 2007 article in The Harvard Business Review, Ibarra and Hunter defined three types of professional networks: operational; personal; and strategic.

Operational networks tend to be those consisting of internal organisational peers, colleagues and reporting lines with the primary focus completing tasks directly associated with fulfilment of the job role. Personal networks are "largely external" and often facilitate for developing leaders a safe space and cohort in which to identify areas of strength or those requiring development and in many cases opportunities to build skills, share information or gain valuable insight. Strategic networks include relationships across the breadth of an

organisation and are likely to come to the fore as leaders move into roles that include planning and development of strategy (Ibarra and Hunter, 2007).

In the context of the Ibarra and Hunter classifications, it is strategic and personal networks that have the most synergy with the focus of this environmental scan. Both strategic and personal networks can be established and maintained via a range of mechanisms and methods including organisational proximity, professional associations, alumni groups, participation in professional development programmes or collaborative projects.

Key Themes from a Survey of DALIANZ List Members

The sub-group undertook a survey of current members of the DALIANZ list, with the following key themes emerging:

- Networking with purpose - importance of structure, objectives, etc for meaningful contribution
- Forging connections - foster collegiality, friendships, organic spontaneity (local and global)
- Building perspective and external reference points - thinking about the issues and opportunities we face within our sectors.
- Career development - networks can support career journeys; an environment to foster succession planning, enabling the next tier of leaders.

Key Themes from Interviews with Senior Leaders

The networking sub-group interviewed a sample of senior academic library leaders (including new University Librarians) in ANZ. Key themes are summarised below.

- The concept of 'networking with purpose' is valued.
- There is a need to refresh the DALIANZ e-list to ensure it is a safe space for information sharing. Suggestions included a review of membership, guidelines for e-list use and for the e-list to be hosted by CAUL.
- There is a need for CAUL to host a networking activity or program to bring senior leaders together to discuss strategic, thematic topics. Interviewees noted that this would ideally kick off with a face to face activity (like the CAUL Conference or Leadership Institute) to establish connections that could then be built on and further developed online.
- Many respondents noted a desire to include more staff in conversations (managers and the next level down).
- There is a need to create and participate in networks beyond academic libraries in ANZ. Possible partnerships with CAUDIT, CAULTT, research support organisations and other international university library associations in the Asia-Pacific region (e.g. Singapore) may be worth exploring.
- From a succession planning perspective, some deputies and associates do not self-identify as "the next generation" due to their age or career stage and see a need to invest in managers as future library leaders.
- Success requires support from each CAUL member institution with the return of investment generated through the sharing of thematic/strategic information sharing and cross-institutional problem solving.
- Respondents appreciated the consultative approach taken by CAUL to progress the strategic programs by including input and participation from senior leaders.
- The most common suggestions mentioned for developing senior leaders who do wish to progress to Director/University Librarian level was for university governance training (e.g. how to influence your Research Committee) and understanding the university regulatory environment. Respondents perceived a communication and knowledge gap between CAUL members and deputies / associates which could be addressed through strategic networking and leadership activities.
- It was noted that three respondents came from non-library backgrounds. This is something to be aware of as a leadership development need. How do we upskill senior leaders joining our libraries

from other industries and backgrounds? An introduction to CAUL and a primer to the 'library in the Australasian higher education sector' might be useful senior leadership development resources to develop.

- There is a need to strengthen the connection that senior leaders at the deputy and associate level have with CAUL. If the purpose of a Deputy University Librarians Network is to advance the agenda/strategy of CAUL, they need to be included in conversations and included in events and brought into the fold of CAUL gatherings and events.

Need for New / Reinvigorated Deputy University Librarians Network

Deputies and associates currently connect primarily through the DALIANZ email list. The project team acknowledge the importance of the DALIANZ email list as a platform by which deputies and associates in our sector share information and the high value that members place on the email list. Their autonomy and self-management underpins its success as an information sharing tool. The project identified a number of opportunities to enhance DALIANZ as a leadership development network.

Moving forward, there is a need to consider the purpose and role of the DALIANZ list, and to strike a balance with a forum for information seeking and exchange as well as drawing on this cohort for input into CAUL's strategic priorities.

Conclusion

Outreach and engagement with ANZ senior leaders has shown that there is an appetite for senior leader networking within the construct of the CAUL/CONZUL membership. The survey and interviews evidenced a nexus between networking and senior leadership development initiatives. At senior leadership levels, leadership development and career trajectories are considered as benefits of successful networks. A balance needs to be struck to acknowledge the value placed on the informality of groups and networks such as DALIANZ and the role they play in information seeking and exchange, with the more formal or structured networking and purpose and the opportunity for these networks to contribute CAUL agendas and strategy.

Recommendation

Recommendation 3: Establish a Deputy University Librarians Network for deputy University Librarians or equivalent, who are currently connected via the DALIANZ email list.

The network should:

- Employ a model grounded in the idea of 'networking with purpose'.
- Have terms of reference, a charter, or guiding principles to define the purpose and expected benefits of participating in a senior leadership network. The principles will provide a foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of the network.

The Project Team offers the following additional suggestions for consideration in developing the network:

- The aim should be to establish a connected network with a sense of a group identity (ie transitioning from 'email list' to 'group').
- The network should be self-managing.
- Establish co-convenors for the network similar to the RLUK model.
- The current membership list for the network should be published to enhance the discoverability of deputies and associates and to ensure those in the network are aware of the group membership profile.
- Review the platform used by the DALIANZ e-list to ensure it is still fit for purpose and transfer administration of the list to CAUL (currently hosted by Curtin University).
- Supplement the email list with other engagement strategies.

- Establish a reporting mechanism for co-convenors to contribute to CAUL business and provide feedback to the CAUL Board through regular meetings with a designated Board member and the Director, Strategy & Analytics.
- Establish a mechanism for updating network membership when institutional staffing changes occur.
- Undertake regular reviews of the membership list to ensure currency.
- The CAUL Board and CAUL National Office should use the network as a means of circulating information and issuing requests for feedback.
- Position the network strategically by expanding the group discussions that currently take place on the DALIANZ elist to include strategic issues and projects.
- Consider the extra or unique value that CAUL networks offer in relation to robust networks that already exist such as CAVAL, VDUL, QULOC, LATN, Go8, CONZUL etc.
- Build relationships and networks with other key groups and library associations aligned with the strategic direction of CAUL.

References

Ibarra, H & Hunter, M 2007, 'How leaders create and use networks', *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 85, no. 1, p. 40, viewed 29 August 2021.