ALA Emerging Leaders Program: What Difference Does it Make?

Background
The American Library Association (ALA) Emerging Leaders (EL) Program is a leadership development program that enables newer library workers from across the country to:
• participate in problem-solving work groups,
• network with peers,
• gain an inside look into ALA structure,
• have an opportunity to serve the profession in a leadership capacity.

The EL Program puts participants on the fast track to ALA committee volunteerism as well as other professional library-related organizations. Launched in 2007, the program has included nearly 650 individuals across seven cohorts.

Purpose
The purpose of this project was to determine the efficacy and impact of the Emerging Leaders Program.

Methodology
We assessed several aspects of the EL Program:
• Involvement with and understanding of ALA
• Impact on professional career
• Added networking opportunities
• Skill development
• Benefits to sponsoring organizations
• Involvement with other outside professional organizations and associations

Google Forms was our survey instrument. A fifteen-question online survey was sent to past EL participants using direct emails, listservs, and posts on EL networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

Results
Over 200 past and present Emerging Leaders responded to the survey. In addition to answering closed- and open-ended questions about the program’s effectiveness, a total of 28 past ELs provided audio or video testimonials narrating their experience during the Emerging Leaders Program. We created a few short video compilations for your enjoyment and enlightenment:

Have you been more involved with ALA, your local/state library association, or other professional organization as a result of the EL Program?

If you could do it over again, would you participate in the Emerging Leaders Program?

What year did you participate in the Emerging Leader (EL) Program?

In Their Own Words
"The EL program helped me gain a better understanding of ALA"

"It has been an important signifier in my career trajectory"

"I have been published in several professional journals due to my EL teamwork"

"EL fired me up and made me want to make a difference in librarianship"

"EL really gave me a chance to take an honest and educated look at the path I would like to see my career grow"

"I was able to improve my leadership experience"

*The ideas for projects I get from the EL cohort have been invaluable*

Impact
Projects completed by past Emerging Leaders have supported many organizations, including the following:
• PLA
• YALSA
• LLAMA
• ASCLA
• RUSA
• LITA

Project assignments involve hands-on and theoretical work including:
• Creating websites
• Conference planning
• Evaluating data
• Marketing of library services
• Assessment of programs

Improvements
* Create guidelines for mentors and mentees to assist and facilitate communication between groups
* Develop meaningful projects for Emerging Leaders to work on
* Allow for flexibility in the projects to promote creativity
* Attempt to have projects that are more complex
* Develop EL projects that take an appropriate amount of time— not too long, not too short

Conclusion
Generally, the EL Program is engaging future leaders in beneficial ways. You may visit our full presentation online to read the survey responses and our thoughts:
http://alaemergingleaders.drupalgardens.com/