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The Library and Information
Technology Association

A division of the American Library Association

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2018 LITA AvramCamp Report

By Jenny Levine, LITA Executive Director



The 2018 AvramCamp again created a safe and welcoming space where female-identifying individuals working with technology in libraries learned new strategies (100% of survey respondents answered “agree” or “strongly agree”) and felt more confident about what they learned (100% answered “agree” or “strongly agree”).

The day started with Erin Berman and Anastasia Diamond-Ortiz helping attendees combat imposter syndrome, the feeling that you aren’t actually qualified for the work you are doing and will be discovered as a fraud. Then attendees decided to have a full group discussion about promoting diversity and equity in tech environments, followed by breakout sessions on communicating across department silos, building your first peer network, and advocating for accomplishments/invisible work.

We had 34 people register for the day-long event, including 8 scholarship recipients thanks to your sponsorship. We are grateful for your support to make this unique and valuable experience possible.

This year we also partnered with ALA’s Public Library Association to increase public library participation. Thanks to PLA’s support, we were able to triple the number of public library attendees from 3 last year to 9 this year. We plan to continue focusing on broadening the library diversity of participants, including reaching out to school librarians, too.

The 8 travel scholarships were sponsored by EBSCO Publishing Services, LITA, OCLC, and the Public Library Association. Scholarship recipients expressed their gratitude to our sponsors for the chance to participate in this unique day and illustrated why we continue to host it each year.

“The full day workshop was thoughtfully planned for content and break time. I learned a lot from, and thank, my fellow attendees as well as the coordinators and presenters for sharing their knowledge, honesty, and passion.... The AvramCamp creates an immediate support system for the attendees and conveners revealed by the conversations we all shared.” – *Victoria*

“My full day Avram Camp was filled with like-minded intelligent, thoughtful, women-identifying information environment colleagues. It was lively with opportunities for discussion on topics we found important. The part of this I enjoyed most was the sharing of experiences amongst us.... We are a growing collective of women that want to support each other, and we have access to the tools to do so. We are making the most of it and look forward to growing the AvramCamp family. I look forward to participating more in next year’s camp. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be a part of this!” - *Vicki*

“The Imposter Syndrome presentation was a particularly enlightening experience. I appreciated the thoughtfulness and thoroughness of our presenters, and how they fostered an environment for attendees to feel safe and confident in their contributions to the conversation. I appreciated their openness and found their topics and questions to be quite thought provoking.

The women I sat alongside and those who voiced their comments during the day all exhibited varying leadership qualities. Whether they were in leadership positions in their jobs was not the point, but rather, how these professionals navigated their environments, how they fostered camaraderie in their workplace, and how they found the internal motivation to continue onward, were all valuable insights I gathered during AvramCamp. Thank you for providing me this valuable experience where I had the space and time to learn about my colleagues and myself.” – *Giao*

“AvramCamp was well worth attending and one of the most interactive and engaging pre-conferences, I ever attended.... One of the most impactful sessions I participated in was the compliments exercise. Often, as women we have a hard time receiving positive feedback or compliments because of the negative voices inside of us that tell us we are not worth or deserving of praise or encouragement. The best compliment I received in the exercise was from a participant who I never met before, who wrote: ‘Your confidence is palatable.’ That meant a lot to me and made my day because I have worked hard to cultivate that confidence through many confidence-shaking bumps in my career that have come close to making me doubt my abilities and capabilities. I was also told that I am a good listener by a seasoned library professional I admire, which was quite gratifying and self-affirming.” – *Joslyn*

“Women arrive in leadership positions in library IT from all sorts of pathways. AvramCamp hosted a significant range of jobs, careers, and interests that made it more possible for me to consider my future as a leader and manager. As it turns out, there are many people like me, leading from a variety of positions from support staff to directors. I was surprised at how fast my story had unraveled, become ‘might be’ instead of an active: I am. I was encouraged by others and helped attendees reframe their stories toward the possible....

Maintainers are seldom acknowledged and their collective work is rarely understood. I’ve applied aspects of this breakout session after returning home, initiating conversations with my staff about how to best surface the important work we do. The discussions have been promising, giving my staff opportunities to present their work to a larger audience within the library.” – *Angela*

“I was able to attend my first ALA and AvramCamp thanks to a generous travel grant, without which I would not have been able to go to New Orleans. There is no doubt in my mind that this experience has and will benefit me both personally and professionally. I hope I can extend the compassion, hope, determination, and support these women shared with me at this event to everyone I have the opportunity to work with and the communities I serve.

Some of the most meaningful takeaways from that day were not about technology and the struggles we share, but the stories I heard from others about what they need from employers, leaders, mentors, and coworkers. I heard that we all need support and to be taken seriously. I heard that if a colleague tells me they feel discrimination, it’s okay to talk about race or sexuality or gender and address those issues candidly and directly. I heard that we can’t assume someone knows or doesn’t know something. I heard we all have to listen more, speak up some, and be kind to each other. We are all working toward the same goal and are all part of the same team. Our circumstances are different in life, but we all need the ability to grow and thrive and feel pride in our work.

Thank you for this event! I’m still processing it, but my heart (and my head) is full.” - *Amanda*