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## Volume 24, Number 1 2002

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### Vital Assets: Developing Wyoming Library Leaders

by Jerry Krois

Where do library leaders in rural or unpopulated areas come from? What elements make for good leadership? In Wyoming, the least populated of our fifty states, library leadership is being encouraged through an institute for individuals from all types of libraries. A state library advisory body proposed that a leadership program be introduced to be sure that not only directors but all levels of staff in all types of libraries have the opportunity to become library leaders. This is important because in our small library community the staff may serve as library association officers, statewide planners, chairs for special statewide projects, and community leaders.

Through a McMurry Library Endowment grant, the Wyoming Library Leadership Institute, focusing on leadership in its pure sense, was introduced in 2001. Leadership traits, conflict resolution, communication skills, and teamwork were some of the topics covered in the two-day camp. The two most important outcomes of the institute are 1) helping individuals identify their strengths and weaknesses so they can build on both and 2) creating a statewide peer group to support each other as each person takes on new challenges.

Issues in librarianship were not on the agenda because institute planners agreed that budgeting, staffing, Wyoming library laws, and planning affect the participants in different ways and can be addressed in other forums. Nurturing leadership requires a different approach. One of the planners suggested using staff from the recognized National Outdoor Leadership School right in Lander, Wyoming. Their knowledge of leadership skills in outdoor survival is world recognized. (NOLS counts NASA as one of its clients, training astronauts in isolation management.) Two professional trainers from NOLS as well as Jeff Enck from Enck Resources, a leadership trainer from neighboring Colorado, offered the sixteen attendees an energizing event. They all left knowing about their leadership strengths and potential and the strengths of their colleagues. The opportunity to share ideas and discuss issues with other library staff from around the state created a special sense of community for the attendees.

In their applications, attendees made a commitment that they would become more active in the Wyoming Library Association, be willing to serve on statewide planning committees, use their newly acquired skills in their libraries, and be more involved in their communities. These emerging leaders may not fill future director vacancies but they will be vital assets in reaching library goals.

For more information, e-mail Wyoming Deputy State Librarian [Jerry Krois](#) or visit the web site for the [Library Leadership Institute](#).

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