

### The Auroran Experience

On Library Lovers Day 2008, a bunch of intrepid travellers made their way to Thredbo for what they had been told would be an emotional, draining and intense week. The Thredbo Code of Silence ensured we knew little about what to expect of the phenomenon that is Aurora, but what past attendees hadn't been silent about was the ability of this institute to powerfully affect your career journey. So for many of us, it was with some apprehension that we made the trip. What followed was a week of learning from great leaders: about team dynamics, and most importantly, about our own individual leadership styles and potential.

Aurora lived up to the promise of an intense week – long days, late nights and challenging activities combined to make this one exhausting week. But it was also an inspiring week, where our industry's leaders called a new generation to get ready to step up and lead the profession into the future. It's safe to say that every one of us who made the trek this year took away a very personal set of experiences that will shape our paths in this profession.

Here, two 2008 Aurorans share their experiences with you.

**Kate Davis**  
Chair, New Generation Advisory Committee

### Leonee Zito

Aurora. The name resides in me now. It is an echo of an experience which has dramatically changed my view of the library world and shown me my potential. With such a momentous emotional and intellectual experience such as Aurora, how do I articulate this intensely personal, yet collective, experience?

Upon returning to work I struggled to translate the new, seemingly 'other' language of living, breathing, thinking and working shared at Aurora into everyday language. I wanted to slide back into my role with the secret knowledge of things to come: changes awaiting a catalyst, opportunities where I could express my concerns. So I remained silent and introspective, and gave simple answers to satisfy curiosity.

I was floating inside the metaphorical bubble that forms during intense studies. This 'Aurora Bubble' (not yet copy-written) coincided with a feeling of security. It took a week or so to proverbially burst, leaving droplets to fall softly. Although the burst left me feeling exposed, I took each 'droplet' and consciously dealt with what I had learned. With each piece my confidence in approaching my work with a strategic thinking cap on increased. This has allowed me to look some serious decisions at work, and within myself, in the eye.

When leaving Thredbo we all created goals for our personal lives, work environments, organisations, and the whole of the 'library' concept. I made specific, value-driven, manageable goals for my personal and work life. Previously I was not one to make lists, set tasks or have goals beyond the week. I have now found that the purposeful, conscious intent of making goals which are achievable in scope has been an empowering tool.

### Leslie Sharples

In the weeks leading up to attending Aurora, I asked friends and colleagues what to expect. Each person excited for me but would not explain what they experienced beyond 'be open minded', 'it'll be challenging' and best of all 'bring tissues, you'll cry'.

So, none the wiser, I arrived at the National Library. I watched as people of different ages, sizes, and types arrived: from the very young and bubbly to the older reserved; the tattooed and pierced to the conservative, each with the same excitement and apprehension. I sat apart, watching and waiting, unwilling yet to take that inevitable step that would make me a part of an unknown entity-the Aurorans.

We spent the first evening meeting our fellow Aurorans with a game where we

learnt to our amusement that we had amongst us a sci fi addict, an ex opera singer, the proud owner of a superfluous third nipple and someone who bravely admitted to still liking Duran Duran. We met our inspirational facilitators and then our Mentors: people who bring great generosity in sharing their wisdom, experience and insight.

Aurora is as effective as it is because attendees do not know what to expect. You cannot rehearse, study or prepare. There is no manual or written behavioural guideline. You come, warts and all, to spend five days with relative strangers, in an unfamiliar environment doing unfamiliar and often confronting and challenging things. It is a place that encourages you to step beyond your comfort zone, to embrace change and 'out of the box' thinking, to let down barriers and explore your own obstacles and failings.

Aurora is a cathartic emotional journey, one which I urge anyone truly inspired by their profession to attend.

## Aurora Leadership Institute 2009

Applications for the 2009 Aurora Institute will open Monday 15th September and close Friday 17th October 2008. Details at <http://www.alia.org.au/~aurora>

ALIA members may also apply for the ALIA Aurora Scholarship as part of the Institute application process. More information at <http://www.alia.org.au/awards/>



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...gives a voice to the new generation of library and information professionals. If you have any suggestions or topics for this column, please contact the column co-ordinator Naomi Doessel, [naomi.doessel@au.ey.com](mailto:naomi.doessel@au.ey.com)

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