

# iLead: Preparing Tomorrow's Library Leaders

Anthony Chow<sup>a</sup>, Sanda Erdelez<sup>b</sup>, Susan Alman<sup>c</sup>, José Aguiñaga<sup>d</sup>,  
Rebecca Stallworth<sup>e</sup>, Martin Gómez<sup>f</sup>

<sup>acdf</sup>San José State University School of Information, USA

<sup>be</sup>Simmons University School of Library and Information Science, USA

a.chow@sjsu.edu, sanda.erdelez@simmons.edu, susan.alman@sjsu.edu,  
jose.aguinaga@sjsu.edu, rebecca.davis@simmons.edu, mjgomezassociates@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Dr. Anthony Chow, San José State University School of Information, in collaboration with Dr. Sanda Erdelez, Simmons University School of Library and Information Science, has been awarded an IMLS one-year planning grant to design an Information Leadership (iLead) development program. As a national collaboration between LIS educators, state libraries, and national library associations, iLead will identify curricular leadership core competencies for librarians and library staff, emphasizing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Libraries and information organizations face increasing and rapidly evolving expectations for supporting EDI priorities within their communities, and recent social and health issues (CBPP, 2022) have raised glaring evidence of gaps within accessibility and inclusion. iLead will help fill these gaps by convening a diverse group of practitioners, educators, and training experts to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and to identify core competencies, gaps in current leadership formation, and appropriate pathways for closing those gaps. We anticipate iLead will converge on at least two independent training and professional development learning opportunities – a free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) and a graduate certificate offered through the Web-based Information Science Education (WISE) consortium – with a third option for onsite training programs also in consideration. Ultimately, these planning activities will advance the three goals of iLead: 1) Cultivate an accessible, flexible, cost-effective, and impactful library leadership program that LIS-practitioner and educator experience inform; 2) Strengthen equity, diversity, and inclusion in both the LIS workforce and within the communities that workforce supports; and 3) Establish a better-prepared internal pipeline for tomorrow's library leaders.

As the world considers a post-pandemic future, library leaders face many complex challenges involving new life patterns, work, and information access. Such evolving dynamics increasingly demand new expectations for libraries and information organizations, and staff, especially as an increased focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is one of the central priorities within our rebuilding society. For example, the draft 2022 ALA accreditation standards prioritize EDI to ensure its significant presence in LIS professional education. As ALA states,

equity “takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair outcome” (ALA, 2022); diversity is “...recognizing, valuing, and embracing the uniqueness of each individual” (ALA, 2022); and inclusion is creating “an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully to the organization’s success” (ALA, 2022). While it is easy to support such ideals of EDI, it is much more difficult to apply these complex constructs, especially within the different personal and work contexts coinciding with ethnic and cultural differences and worldviews.

The project will be led by Co-PIs Drs. Anthony Chow and José Aguiñaga from San Jose State University’s School of Information and Dr. Sanda Erdelez and Dr. Rebecca Stallworth from Simmons University School of Library and Information Science – together will govern vision, collaboration, and deliverable objectives. To support day-to-day efforts, iLead will be managed by two co-directors, Dr. Sue Alman and Martín J Gómez, and will receive collaborative support from an operational steering committee composed of state libraries (with Nevada and Washington confirmed as of this Phase I proposal and California and Massachusetts likely to join) and national library associations – including the likely participation of the Association of LIS Educators (ALISE) Council of Deans, Directors, and Chairs (DDC) and the Association of Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL). The project will be guided by a national advisory board composed of representatives from various participating state and national library associations, including CLA, WLA, NLA, APALA, CALA, REFORMA, AILA, and BCALA. Current strategic library partners, who will assist with identifying leadership core competencies and recruitment, include the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL) in California and the King County Public Library (KCPL) in Washington. Other urban and rural library partners will also be identified in each state by the time of our Phase II proposal.

This project has been organized to build diversity at all levels. Firstly, our advisory-, PI-, and project director-level managers all represent different demographics and identities. Secondly, our steering and advisory teams involve national BIPOC organizations and library systems representing the unique perspectives of local and regional demographics. Thirdly, our recruited coaches and mentors will represent assorted demographics and identities while also possessing expertise in leadership and EDI, combinations that translate the conceptual to the personal. These built-in perspectives will ensure the diversity of the team we include and the diversity-emphasizing priorities of our entire curriculum and professional training program. With the success of this planning project, its implementation will enhance EDI throughout the current and future LIS workforce by focusing on the competencies of our country’s LIS leaders. Such a plan will yield EDI deliverables in the near and long term.

The project’s planning goals are to 1) Research and identify leadership and EDI core competencies; 2) Design a curriculum outline that specifies measurable learning outcomes; 3) Design a LIS practitioner- and educator-informed accessible, flexible, cost-effective, and impactful library leadership program focused on EDI; and 4) Design iLead MOOC shell. A national coalition will identify and design the iLead leadership development program to achieve

these goals. While we will allow for the efforts of the project to finalize our deliverables' forms based on the needs assessment, we envision delivering a MOOC - a free program that removes traditional barriers such as cost, access, and convenience - a graduate post-baccalaureate certificate, which represents a more traditional and formal professional development opportunity - and, potentially, an in-person program. All three expected programs (1) reflect a diverse and impactful set of learning opportunities that will advance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the LIS workforce and (2) are sustainable and will continue after the grant period. The benefit to society will be a better-prepared LIS workforce empowered with an EDI lens to serve their communities' diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and needs (IMLS RFP). This proposal links to the conference theme of bridging the gap.

### **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

administration; continuing education; curriculum; education; social justice.

### **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

leadership; collaboration; diversity; partnerships; socioeconomic.

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