Expanding the Impact of the Conference of Academic Library Management: Identifying Gaps and Opportunities in Professional Development Support for Managers

Project Justification

The Conference of Academic Library Management (CALM), institutionally and fiscally sponsored by the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Library, requests $109,121 for *Expanding the Impact of the Conference of Academic Library Management: Identifying Gaps and Opportunities in Professional Development Support for Managers*. This two-year planning grant will bring together management researchers, practitioners, and existing formal and informal organizations to inform how CALM can scale its impact and better serve the academic library field. This proposal aligns with the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Goal 2, Objectives 2.1 and 2.2.

CALM began during the pandemic as a grassroots organization of academic library managers who felt that there was a need for a practice-oriented conference on management. Within two years, we have grown from two co-founders to an organization with a 1,700-person mailing list, "selling out" of our 1,000 conference seats in 9 hours, and receiving ongoing feedback about the need for organized spaces to connect and develop as managers. As noted in the 2017 IMLS Positioning Library and Information Science Graduate Programs for 21st Century Practice report, leadership and management skills are both critical for librarianship and under-taught in MLIS programs.[1] Additionally, there is a growing body of literature, as exemplified by Kaetrena Davis Kendrick's work on low morale,[2] that points to the significant downstream effects of poorly skilled library managers. While there are numerous programs aimed at developing leadership skills for librarians, such as the Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians and a variety of statewide leadership programs, very few focus on the practical skills of management, such as how to run a productive meeting or write an annual review. CALM has created an annual forum for conversations about practical and person-centered management, but there is a clear need for deeper, more sustained, and ongoing professional development around management.

CALM seeks funding for a planning grant to precisely define the professional development needs related to management for academic librarians, including aspects such as scalability, accessibility (in terms of cost, geography, and disability), and sustainability. With planning support over two years, CALM will produce a white paper that outlines next steps for expanding management education and professional development beyond the annual conference, as well as develop a sustainability plan for ensuring that the conference remains an annual part of the national academic library landscape.

Project Work Plan

Phase One (Months 1-12): During the first year of the project, the project team will identify key practitioners, researchers, and professional groups in academic libraries for potential partnership. Additionally, we will conduct a review of management professional development in adjacent fields, such as other areas in higher education and museums. We will initially engage with these partners virtually,

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[1] https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/imlspositioningreport.pdf
[2] Kendrick, K.D. (2017). The low-morale experience of academic librarians: A phenomenological study. Journal of Library Administration, 57(8): 846-878.

conducting semi-structured interviews to identify specific current gaps in management education and training, as well as opportunities for building on previously existing work. Additionally, we plan to field a survey to academic library managers and aspiring managers to gather information about their educational and practical experiences related to management. We will then synthesize these results, for discussion at an in-person forum.

Phase Two (Months 13-14): Approximately 12 months into the grant (directly following the CALM 2024 conference), we will convene an in-person forum with approximately 40 participants to participate in a structured design process to develop a preliminary plan for a meaningful and unique national program focused on developing management skills and a management community of practice.

Phase Three (Months 15-24): The final phase will produce a synthesis of the previous phases, including production of a white paper, a sustainability plan for CALM as a library organization, and preparation for an implementation grant.

Diversity Plan

CALM has centered diversity since the very beginning, ensuring that our planning committees represent a broad range of racial/ethnic backgrounds, library specialties, gender identities, geographic locations, and institution types. We intend to bring this same intentionality to identifying our list of experts, as well as the attendees at the in-person forum. As a group, CALM believes that person-centered management cannot exist without a deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and we model that through our programming and organizational structures.

There is a truism that "people don't leave jobs, they leave bad managers." Our project seeks to increase the skills of library managers in order to foster fewer "bad managers," who often impact the experiences of minortized library workers the most.

Project Results
- A white paper that overviews the current state of management training in academic libraries, identifies themes and gaps, and suggests potential remedies
- An implementation plan for a multi-faceted, national approach to management professional development and community building
- A sustainability plan for the CALM organization

Budget Summary $50,000-$150,000
CALM requests $109,121 in financial support. This includes $19,702 in wages for a part-time graduate student project manager. Travel and meal costs are estimated at $48,780 for a two-day in-person forum for 40 attendees. $5,000 is requested for research participant incentives. This totals $73,482, and the negotiated indirect cost rate for UCSD is 48.5% or $35,639.