

**People Matters - #1, 2010 [Manuscript copy for LINK magazine, submitted January 2010]**

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Canadian attention is increasingly focusing on human resources and the challenges our research libraries face. As I wrote in the December 2009 issue of *LINK* (issue 8) a major issue is identifying and preparing new leaders for the profession. But beyond Canada a global conversation is also emerging.

“People matters” have been of interest to many of us throughout our careers. But it is interesting to see that special conferences and meetings are now not only being held, but are attracting sufficient numbers to make them viable in economically challenging times. This firmly points towards the growing salience of the issues.

Australian colleagues held the inaugural *People in the Information Profession* conference ([www.caval.edu.au/hrconference.html](http://www.caval.edu.au/hrconference.html)) in Melbourne last October. For a specialist conference, and with Australian domestic airfares high by international standards, it was encouraging that it attracted over 100 participants, with representatives from most Australian states. There were also some international attendees from Indonesia, the UK, the US and Canada.

The two days of presentations and conversations were organized around four interrelated themes at the heart of reinvigorating the profession: Seek and Keep (recruitment and retention); GPS to the Future (planning and forecasting); Got what it takes? (competencies, career and talent management); and Leadership Development.

We heard about several innovative approaches. The CAVAL initiative for executive leadership training through the Horizon program ([www.caval.edu.au/horizon\\_blog.html](http://www.caval.edu.au/horizon_blog.html)), highlighted such innovation at the national level. There was an excellent mix of senior library leaders, specialist practitioners, early career librarians and educators – essential to developing a clear idea of ways forward for the profession. The mood was uplifting with quick, lively chatter across all streams, and with the expert facilitation from a professional conference facilitator, this was one of the most positive conferences experiences I have had in a long time.

The major conclusions drawn from the two days of stimulating presentations and engaging discussion were that people issues, although sometimes impacted by local circumstances, are nevertheless global issues, and that innovative approaches to address these issues and challenges are emerging at various levels of the profession. Some are local in nature (such as the Library Leadership Development Program at the University of Saskatchewan– see *LINK* issue 8); while others are national (such as the Horizon program). All of these have implications for the future of our profession.

Emerald Publishing, one of the conference sponsors, has published many of the conference presentations in *Library Management* (vol. 30, issue 8/9) so that you can follow the growing conversation. Another installment will take place in Hong Kong in March 2010, at the second conference on the future of the academic librarian. With the intriguing subtitle of *Singing in the Rain* ([www.lib.polyu.edu.hk/ALSR2010](http://www.lib.polyu.edu.hk/ALSR2010)), this conference will build on the inaugural conference held in Hong Kong in 2007 ([www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/conference/aldp2007/info/index.htm](http://www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/conference/aldp2007/info/index.htm)).