Editor's Note: North Carolina Libraries *presents this feature in recognition of the increase in excellent unsolicited manuscripts that merit publication, but are not necessarily related to each issue's specific theme.*

How Does North Carolina Prepare Library Leaders?

Editor's Note: This article is a collaborative effort of participants in NCLA's Leadership 2001 Institute and was edited by Linda Ramsey.

The North Carolina Library Association sponsors the NCLA Leadership Institute. The Leadership Institute's class of 2001 had a memorable experience.

One of the first steps toward becoming an effective leader is knowing yourself and understanding how and why you relate to others as you do. The NCLA Leadership Institute gave participants the opportunity to better understand our own personality types as well as identify other personality types present in the group. When we assemble teams and committees in the workplace, understanding the wide array of personality types and complementary leading/learning styles will have a positive influence upon group dynamics as well as individual performance. Understanding yourself is not only invaluable in interactions and relationship building with co-workers, being aware of differences in the ways in which people give and perceive information also allows for more productive interactions with library patrons. Since serving patrons — be it at the academic, public or school setting — is our ultimate goal, anything we can do to better accomplish this is extremely gainful and worthwhile.

Next, we assessed the environment by addressing the critical issues facing our profession, our individual libraries, North Carolina libraries, and libraries nationwide. We created small group statements about the North Carolina library environment and the national library environment. These statements were shared with the large groups and then mapped into an environmental scan for the entire group, creating the re-

alization that many issues transcend location, type of library, and type of librarian. We are all concerned about technology's changing role, budgets, training, diversity in the profession and diversity of our patrons, information literacy, low salaries, and patron perceptions of the library. From this assessment came SWOT analysis, an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. How can we improve? Where can we have the most impact? What can we do with what we have? We can proactively address our situation, both individually and as a team of committed professionals, with customer focus in mind.

As we all know, change is a key factor in the modern library. It affects academic, public, school, and special librar-

ies alike. During the NCLA Leadership Institute, we learned how different personality types view change and respond to it. The four main responses to change are those who don't support change, those who think about change, those who support any and all change, and those who want to take the first idea for change. All four responses can cause problems in an organization, but they can also be important factors in dealing with change, and a well-organized team will have elements of all four. No matter how you view change, most people go through a change cycle. The stages of the cycle are losing focus, minimizing impact, dwelling in the pit, letting go of the past, testing the limits, searching for meaning, and integrating. We must not let ourselves become "pit dwellers." We
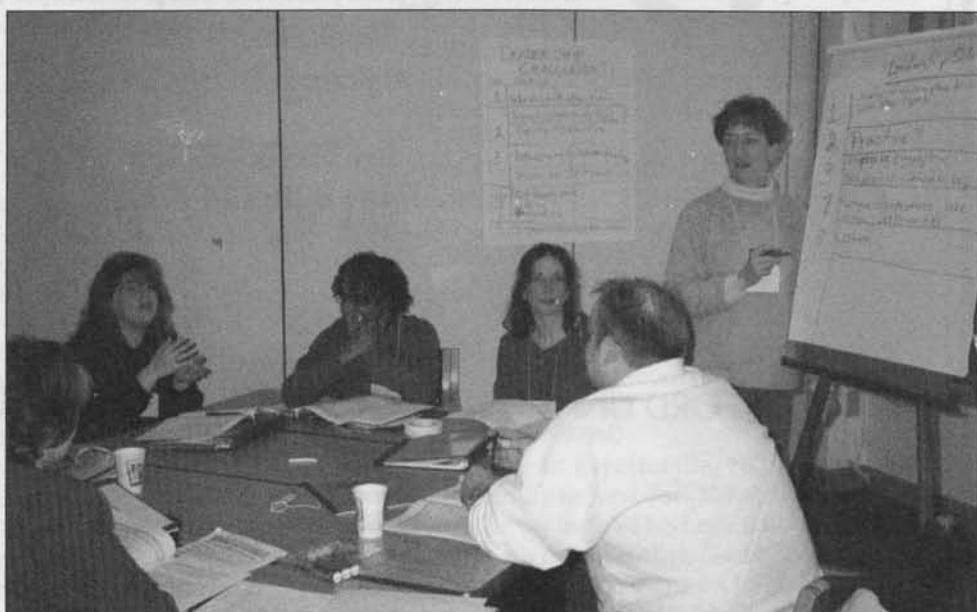
One of Leadership 2001 Institute's learning groups collaborate to solve problems and develop leadership skills.

must accept change, climb out of the pit and move on with our lives and jobs. As leaders, we need to help others move through these cycles and embrace change.

The NCLA Leadership Institute focused on collaborative spirit. All the institute's activities were structured on working together as learning groups. Through brainstorming, we were able to see that all libraries face the same issues and need to work collaboratively to reach solutions. As our instructors stated, Readiness X Resources X Plan = Chance of Success. This chance of success is greatly improved with collaborative efforts. Technology makes possible listservs and e-mail, enabling all libraries to work collaboratively throughout the entire world. We are no longer bound by time or distance. We were given a wonderful opportunity to practice collaboration, to experience the spirit of professional sharing, and to make contacts for future collaborative projects.

One of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of the NCLA Leadership Institute was the Lead-Out exercise. On our third day of the institute, it was time to apply what we had learned. This assignment was designed to promote collaborative problem resolution, encourage responsible risk taking, and enable the participants to learn how to position themselves within the group to enhance their influence. Divided into three teams, we had to assess a property's value for wine production. While every team's experiences were different, there were general lessons learned from the exercise. It was the most popular exercise of the institute because each participant learned valuable lessons.

During the Leadership Institute, we learned about bias for action, or personal action plans, which we must create so that we can see what needs to be done in order to reach the desired results. This will also allow us to see how we will pursue our leadership vision and make our libraries and the libraries of North Carolina the best they can be. The Leadership Institute's Class of 2001 worked together using the skills gained during this dynamic experience to create the following Vision Statement:

The North Carolina Libraries — Your Partner for the 21st Century:

• We are a customer-focused, dynamic community center that creates lifelong learners
• We employ a diverse, friendly, and performance-driven staff that welcomes people from all segments of society
• We proactively respond to an ever-changing environment by using technology as a tool to provide free access to the world of information and bridge the digital divide
• We teach people the skills to survive in today's information age
• We lead the way in sharing resources within local, regional, state, national, and international networks
• We weave library services into the fabric of the state through alliances and partnerships with individuals, businesses, and organizations, resulting in strong community pride and support

Through training and guidance, the NCLA Leadership Institute provides the opportunity for North Carolina librarians to become leaders. The Fall 2002 class is currently in the planning stages, and we hope that you will apply.