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Becoming an inspirational leader in your chosen field

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"Seek first to understand, then to be understood" (Stephen Covey).

Studying leadership

In 2015, I completed a Diploma in Academic Practice at City University London. I took a module called Developing Leadership and your Reflective Practice. During the course, I learned that leaders need followers, you can't lead in isolation and that with the right skills, it's possible to lead in different ways depending on the situation in which you work. For example, you can be a practitioner leader in your field and lead through your work, your research, conference presentations, projects, writing books etc. It is encouraging to think you can acquire leadership skills at other levels and be inspirational to others.

Habits

I am quite partial to gurus and am enjoying reading the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey. The book argues that leadership is driven by personality (attitudes, behaviours, image) and that the world is based on our inner perceptions so to change, we have to adjust our thought processes. To be successful, you may well face your own internal and external challenges but you can visualise your goals, alter your perceptions and the way you respond to situations. There is a picture in the book which has 2 different ways of looking at it, initially you see it one way and you have to train yourself to see it the opposite way. Habits 1-3 involve self-knowledge and personal effectiveness; habits 4-6 involve team work, communication and creative collaboration, habit 7 entails continuous self-renewal and improvement.

Staff development

At City University London, our Library Services Director, Louise Doolan and the Library Leadership Team are very committed to staff training and development. I am a member of our Library Staff Development Group. Every 3 months, we organise a staff development symposium where we share our experiences of CPD, training and development. I presented a talk and practical exercise about leadership at our most recent symposium. It's also good to take opportunities to lead others on projects and through mentoring others for example. Last year, I led a project to create resources and enhance Library Services support for employability. I have also had the great pleasure of working with colleagues and mentoring some of the students from our internationally renowned MA/MSc Library & Information Science course #citylis.

Reflections on the CILIP Leadership Programme

Last summer, our Library Leadership Team offered funding to staff to participate in the CILIP Leadership Programme 2015. I applied for the opportunity as I had recently studied leadership and it was a chance to gain some new experience (and I also like completing application forms).

Some opportunities have been:

- Participating in workshops around the country (Liverpool, London, Newcastle and Brighton). I enjoyed a recent workshop about managing your inner chimp (based on the bestselling book *The Chimp Paradox*). This involves managing your thoughts and emotions to be more successful in the workplace.

- The chance to attend the CILIP Conference for the first time in Liverpool. I found the conference very professional and the keynote speakers were inspiring. We observed a recent CILIP board meeting and some of us attended a CILIP future strategy focus group.

- Making new friends from different parts of the UK. It is great meeting up, having discussions and feasting together. We also have different CILIP projects to complete; my group is concentrating on continuing professional development (CPD) and we are finding ways of collaborating with colleagues from different sectors around the country.

My advice is to be yourself, be professional, be passionate about your work, hone your skills, take opportunities, grow and develop and ultimately find yourself a leadership opportunity and some followers in the context in which you work.

References

1. Covey, Stephen (1999) *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. London: Simon & Schuster.
2. Peters, Steve (2012) *The Chimp Paradox: the Mind Management Programme to Help You Achieve Success, Confidence and Happiness*. London: Vermilion.