Learning to Lead: an Online Collaborative Model Developed at the 2007 MPLA Leadership Institute

The Mountain Plains Library Association

Big Horizons, Close Community

www.mpla.us

- Regional library organization
- 12 member states (583 current members)
- Purpose-educational/networking opportunities for librarians
- Co-hosts an annual conference with each member state on a rotational basis
- http://www.mpla.us/

MPLA Leadership Institutes 2002 - 2007

- Total fellows = 178
- Total individuals who served as mentors = 20
- 12 states (some lived in two other states but worked in MPLA member states)
- Evaluations have consistently indicated extremely high marks for the experience, the content, and the location

MPLA Ghost Ranch
Leadership Institute Facilitator

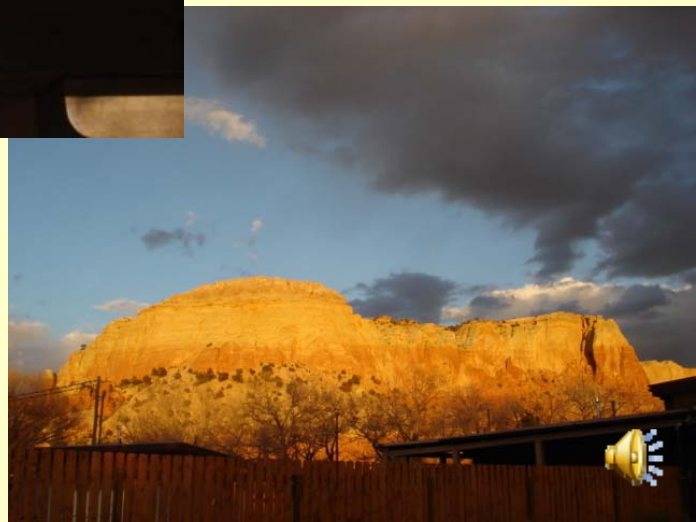
Maureen Sullivan

MPLA Ghost Ranch
Leadership Institute Coordinator

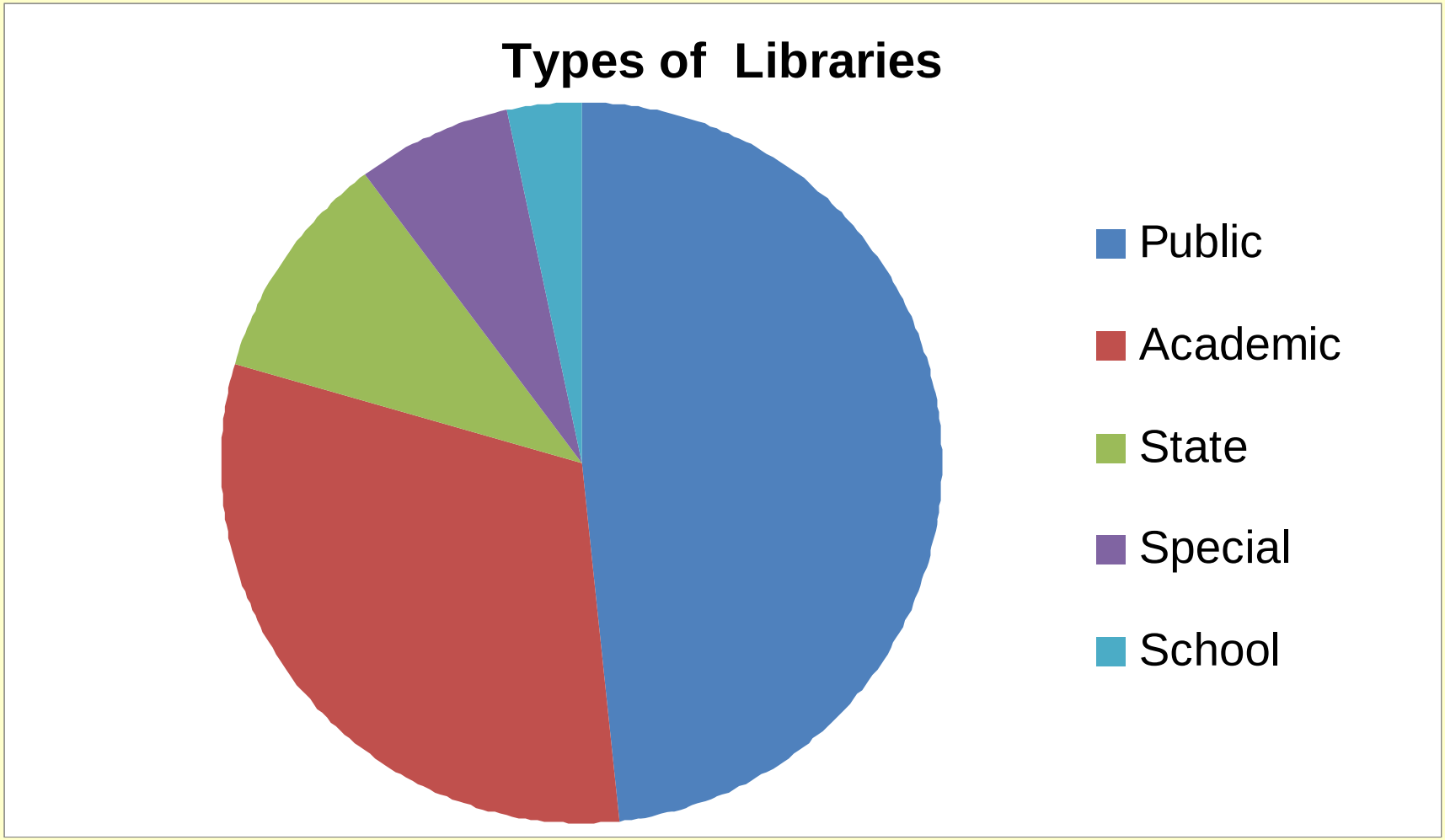
Dr. Mary Bushing

Dr. Mary Bushing,
“The goals of the MPLA Leadership Institute have been broader than many library organizational leadership efforts…

GHOST RANCH



Libraries Represented 2007 Institute



MPLA Academic
Cooperative Formation

MPLA Academic Cooperative Demographics

Institutional Demographics

- FTE
- Terminal Degree

Personal Demographics

- Experience
- Tenure
- Leadership Background

“Although we have different areas of expertise, we all work in academia and are benefited by the insight of our peers.”

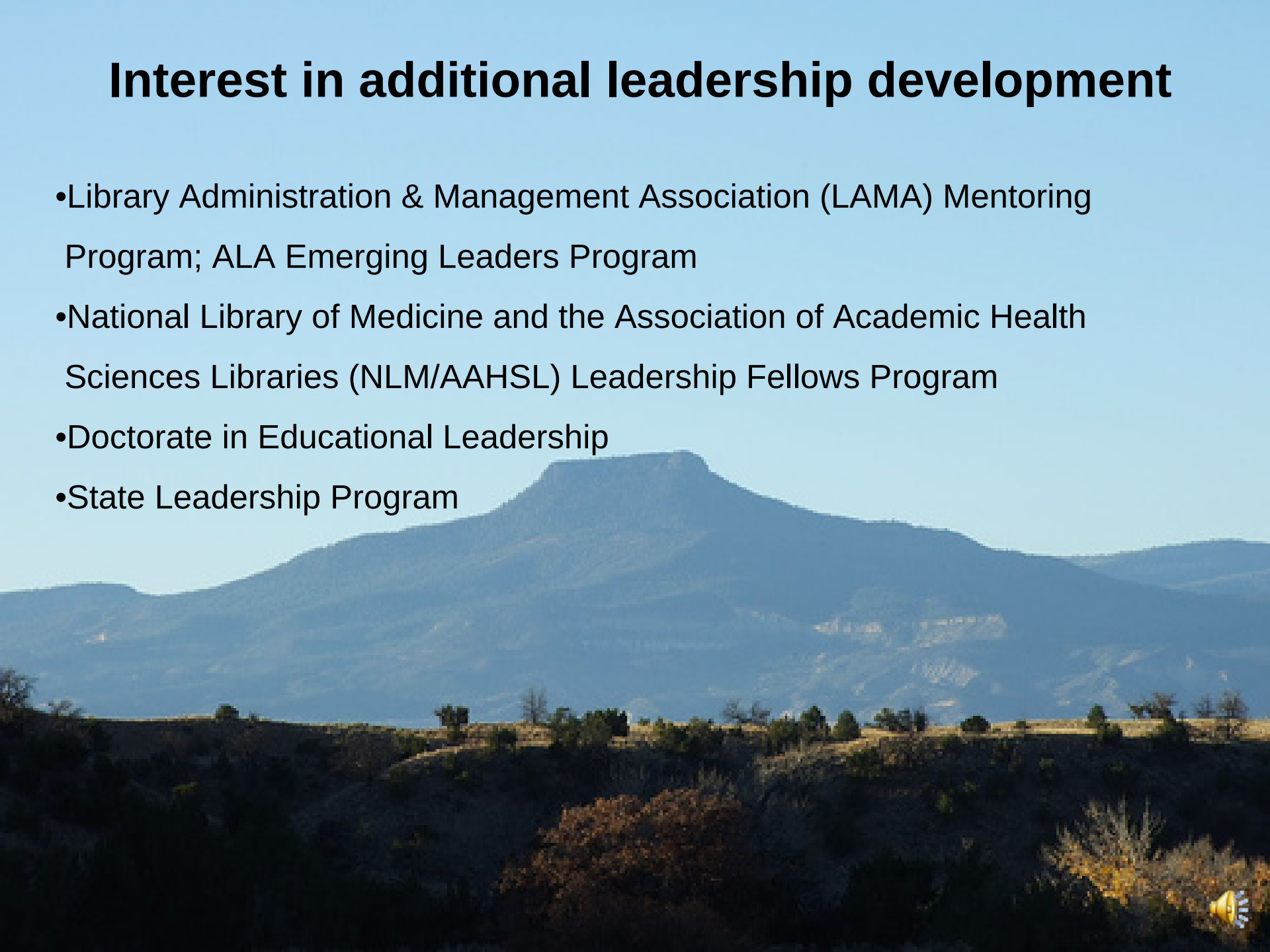
-Heather

“We have a great pool of expertise and experience to work with.”

-Jen

Interest in additional leadership development

- Library Administration & Management Association (LAMA) Mentoring Program; ALA Emerging Leaders Program
- National Library of Medicine and the Association of Academic Health Sciences Libraries (NLM/AAHSL) Leadership Fellows Program
- Doctorate in Educational Leadership
- State Leadership Program



Discussion Timeline

- November- Danielle
  Set up Google Groups
- December
  Holiday Break
- January- Erin & JaNae
  Topic: Teamwork in Libraries
- February- Robert Russell
  Topic: Academic Leadership
- March- Group
  Topic: Evaluation and Poster Presentation

Discussion Timeline

- April- Group

  Topic: Conferences, Highlights and Plans
- May- Karen

  Topic: Time Management
- June- Jen

  Topic: Mentoring
- July- Heather and Danielle

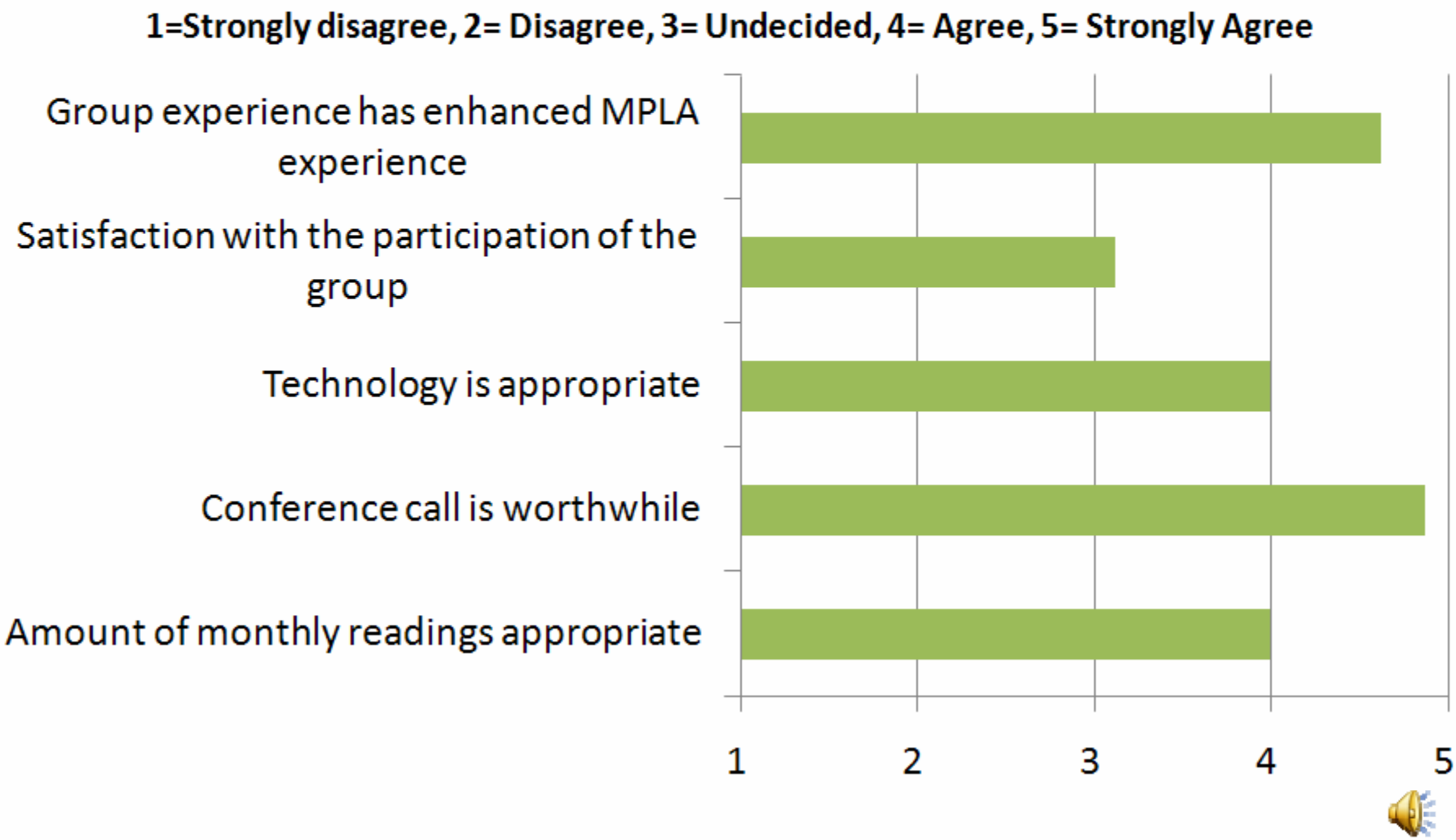
  Topic: Leading from the Middle

January Discussion: Teamwork in Libraries

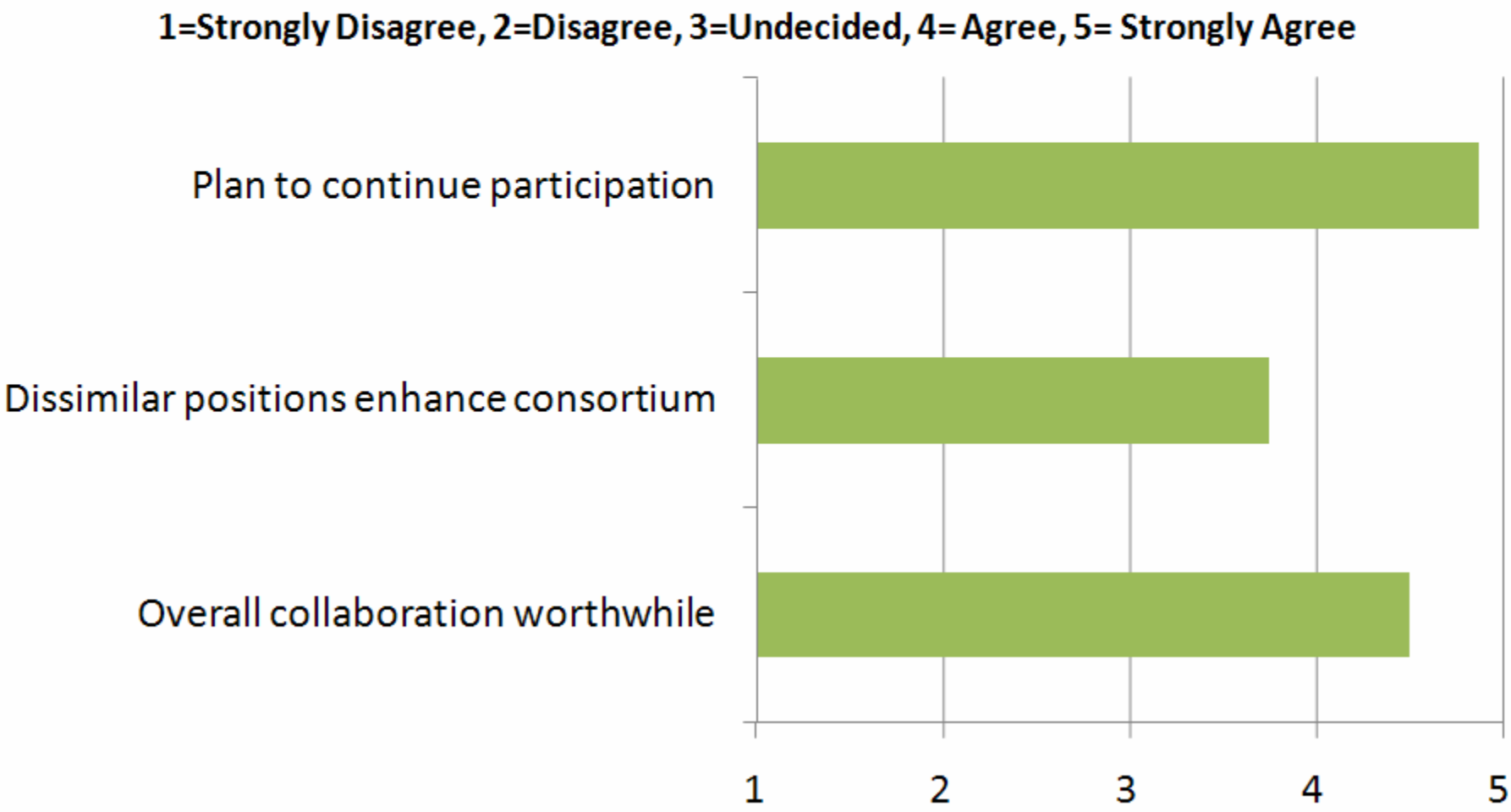
- Google Groups used to post discussion questions
- Team members wrote response to one question
- Skype used to conduct conference call
- Team members discussed their teamwork experiences

Challenges

Survey Findings



Survey Findings



“It has been difficult to develop leadership skills in my library because there is very little mentorship. Since attending the Leadership Institute, I have taken more individual initiative on different projects to develop my leadership skills.”

-JaNae

“Group collaboration is yet another leadership skill to master…

-Erin

Technology Used

- The countless collaborative technologies available allow for authentic partnerships across geographic and institutional barriers.

- We use:
  - Email
  - Google Groups
  - Skype
  - Doodle

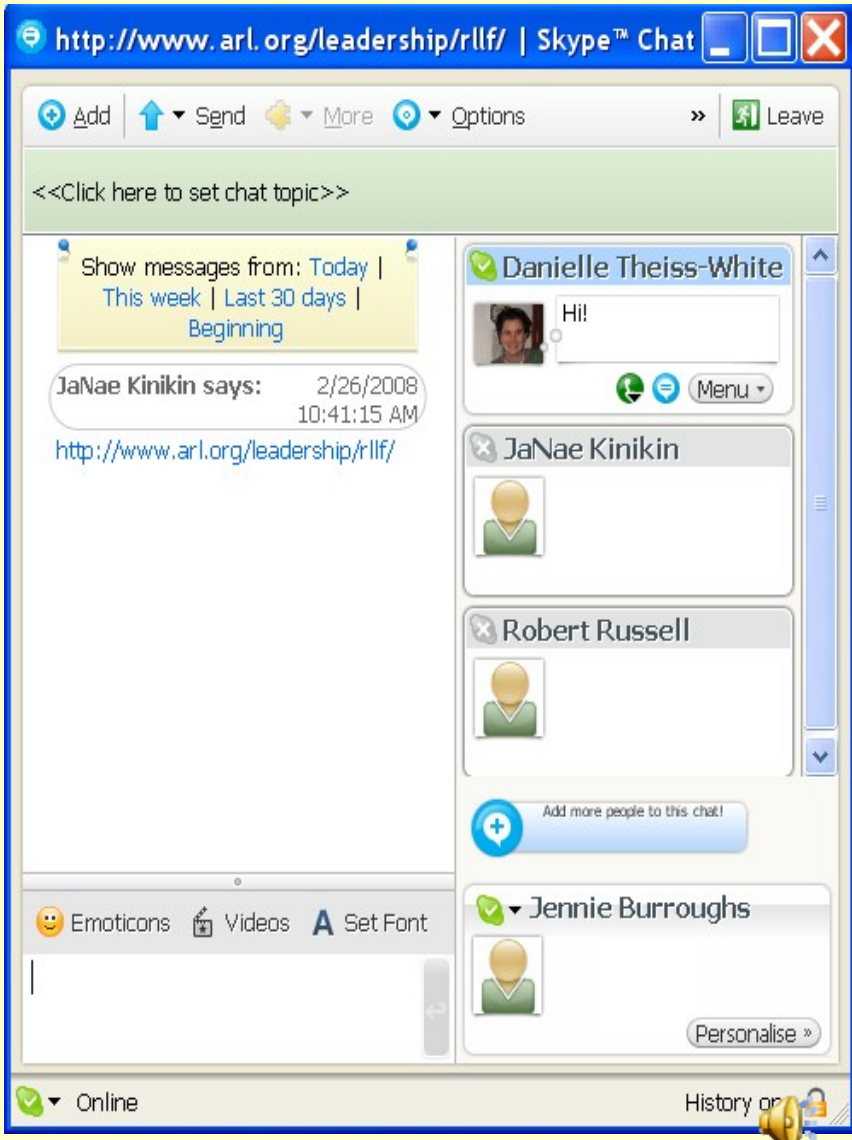
- Email
  - Asynchronous communication with groups and individuals
  - Used to coordinate projects and to receive change notifications

- Google Groups
  - Online space for discussions and file sharing with a preselected group
  - Easy to implement

http://groups.google.com/

Technology Used

- **Skype:**
  - Free telephone calls over the Internet (VOIP)
  - Calls to land lines or cell phones require a fee
  - Easy and free solution for conference calls
  - Live discussions compliment online discussions
  - Creates personal connection

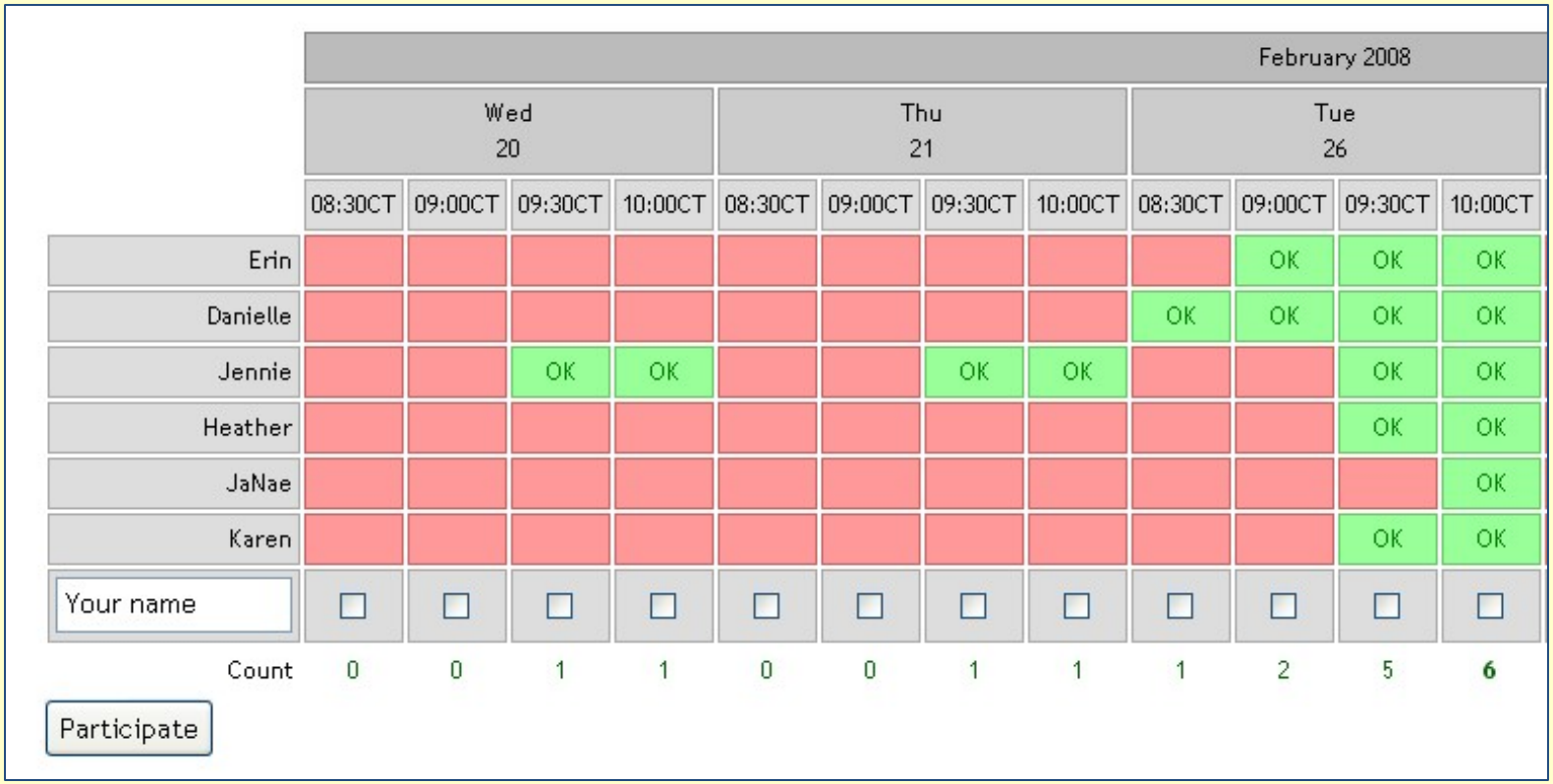


http://www.skype.com/welcomeback/

"The monthly conference call keeps our network connected on a personal level. There is a spontaneous and conversational approach to in-person communication that spurs creativity in a way that formal writing simply does not."

-Heather

- **Doodle**
  - An online event scheduling and polling software
  - Especially helpful for coordinating multiple schedules over different time zones!



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Erin										OK	OK	OK
Danielle									OK	OK	OK	OK
Jennie			OK	OK			OK	OK			OK	OK
Heather											OK	OK
JaNae												OK
Karen											OK	OK
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Participate

http://www.doodle.ch/main.html

“Learning about the various ways to communicate (for free!) using Skype, Google Groups, and Doodle has been beneficial for me as a library professional …

-Danielle

Areas for Improvement

- Articles
- Monthly conference call
- Technology
- Group participation
- Group enhancement of MPLA experience
- Presentation Collaboration
- Continued Participation

Our Future Activities

- Research and Publication
- Presentation- 2009 KLA/MPLA Joint Conference in Wichita, Kansas
- Conference reunions
- Conduct survey again at eighth and twelfth months

Want to Start Your Own Collaboration?

Here are some suggestions to get started:

1. Find a group of people with a shared interest and willingness to explore topics in virtual space.
2. Determine how often you want or need to meet.
3. Brainstorm on possible topics, ask for topic leaders and set up a schedule.

Want to Start Your Own Collaboration?

4. Choose a group leader who will shepherd the process if it starts to go astray.
5. Decide what technology you are going to use and set up user accounts.
6. Once you get the group up and running, meet several times then evaluate the technology and group cohesion.

“The size of our group is ideal because of our busy schedules. If it were smaller, those who aren’t as active from time to time would be more noticeable. If it were larger, it would be more difficult to coordinate our calls.”

-Karen

Successful Collaboration

There are two final elements of success for this type of virtual collaboration.

1. Set aside time to read articles, to discuss deeply, and to think about your shared topic.

2. Implement new ideas and best practices raised through discussion.

Benefits

"Working with the other academic librarians from the 2007 MPLA Leadership Institute over the past five months has been the professional highlight of this past year for me . . .

-Danielle

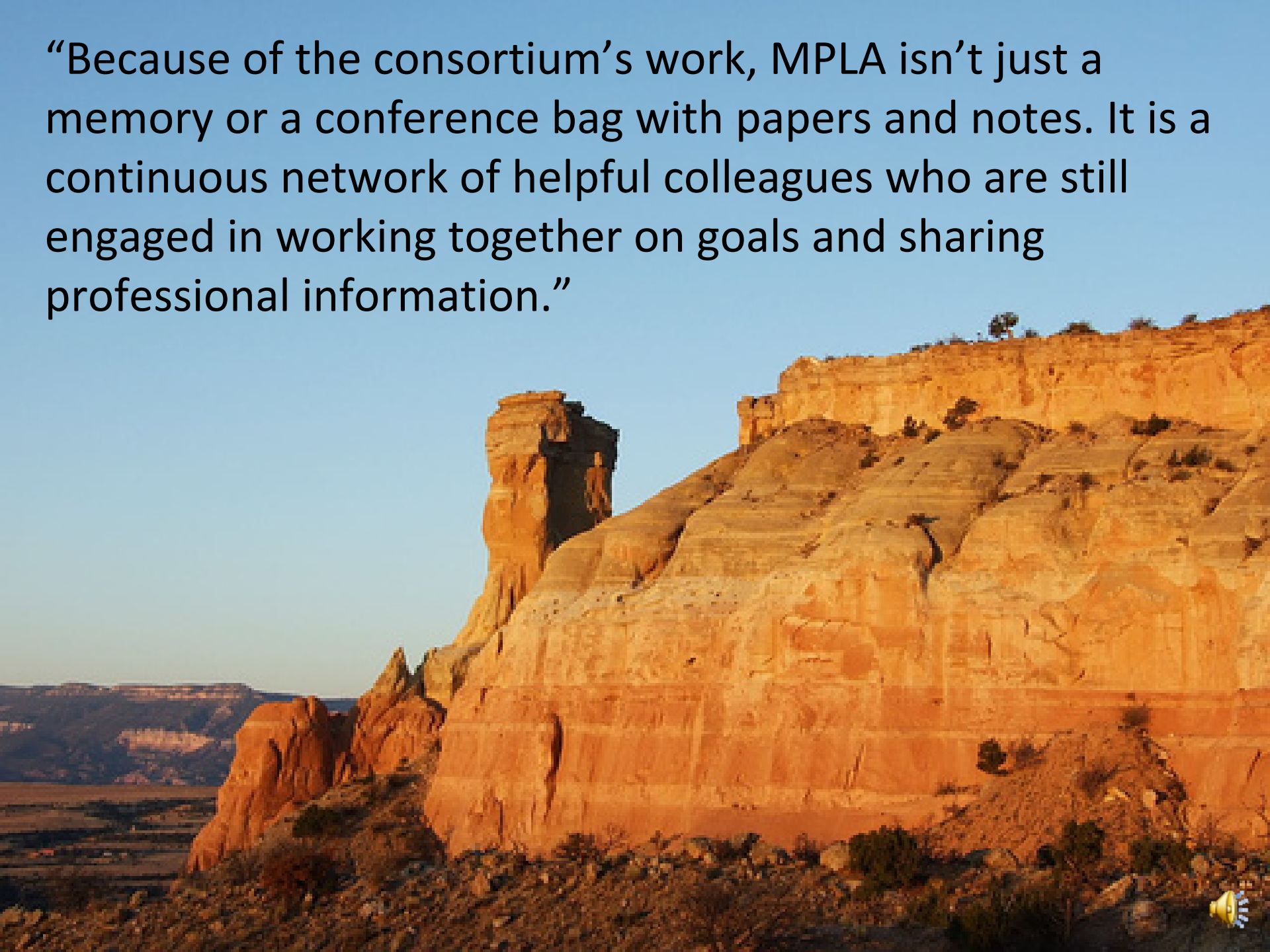
“Our group collaborative has definitely helped enhance the MPLA experience…
-Karen

“Too often librarians work in silos –
at work and especially by library type …

“This online, free activity provides many of the benefits of expensive travel and conferences . . .

-Robert

“Because of the consortium’s work, MPLA isn’t just a memory or a conference bag with papers and notes. It is a continuous network of helpful colleagues who are still engaged in working together on goals and sharing professional information.”



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- JaNae Kinikin
- Karen Neurohr
- Robert Russell
- Heather Smith-Collins
- Danielle Theiss-White
- Shawn White

Photos from the 2007 MPLA Leadership Institute were provided by:

- Jennie Burroughs
- Karen Neurohr
- Heather Smith-Collins

End
of
Presentation