



The Impacts of Muslim Journeys: Summary Final Report

Project: **Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys**

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Executive Summary

Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys was developed as a partnership between the American Library Association Public Programs Office (ALA PPO) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to address the need of the American public for substantive resources about Muslim beliefs and practices and about rich cultural heritage associated with Islamic civilizations, by providing libraries and state humanities councils with a core collection of related materials (entitled "Bookshelf") and funding to support scholar-led discussions of those materials as part of ALA's Let's Talk About It (LTAI) program series. ALA PPO invited New Knowledge Organization Ltd. (NewKnowledge) to evaluate the impacts of program during its final year. To complete this work, we undertook a series of qualitative and quantitative surveys, post-hoc analysis of the ALA PPO program database, and observations of 10 LTAI programs of the project. This report outlines results from the *Survey of Project Directors*, *Survey of LTAI Scholars*, *Survey of Public Program Attendees*, and *Project Director Discussion Forums*. The report concludes with a summary of the observed impacts that accrued for libraries and audiences as a result of the program, and offers a series of recommendations that emerged from these data to support ALA's future program evaluation. In particular, we recommend implementing continuous data gathering timed to coincide with program delivery rather than retrospective studies that may limit recall by Project Directors.

Overview and Summary Results

Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys set out to *address the need of the American public for substantive resources about Muslim beliefs and practices and about the rich cultural heritage associated with Islamic civilizations, by providing libraries and state humanities councils with a core collection of related materials (entitled “Bookshelf”), and funding to support scholar-led discussions (entitled “Let’s Talk About It”) of those materials.* This summative evaluation reports on the outcomes of that investment.

Circulation statistics from the Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journey’s Bookshelf effort, as well as attendance figures and observations from the Let’s Talk About It (LTAI) events, demonstrated high desirability for library program staff and a core audience of primarily older adult lifelong learners.

Bookshelf Outcomes

- Libraries seek reliable scholarly recommendations for new humanities resources, reading, and discussion programs to support active learners;
- Attendance at events and discussions drew audiences of similar scale to other discussion groups in both academic settings and public libraries;
- Project Directors felt the Bookshelf collections offered intellectual depth, introduced new content that was engaging for readers, addressed key cultural issues, and helped deepen conversations in many communities.
- Some libraries used the materials to start cultural collaborations with Islamic, Middle Eastern, and North African community organizations and developed strategies for reaching other cultural groups based on this new model.
- Academic libraries report that faculty found the collections useful for expanding use of libraries’ resources for coursework and helped students and student cultural groups to expand their engagement with their library.
- All libraries felt that ALA and NEH sponsorship and scholarship gave their own efforts credibility, which in some cases dispelled criticism that emerged in several communities.

Let’s Talk About It Outcomes

The LTAI program involved groups reading a common selection of titles from the Bookshelf, and discussing them in the context of an overarching framework related to historical context, literature, philosophy, and ethical considerations. This study revealed four major impacts:

- Core learning groups were small contingents of highly involved lifelong learners with active interest in exploring new ideas and camaraderie. Their reported actions demonstrated that they were most likely to be actively involved in advancing cultural understanding and tolerance in their communities, particularly in places without a lot of diversity.

- LTAI events sparked institutional collaborations with community organizations already working on topics integral to the program mission. These partner organizations added value through supplementary resources, venues, and support – efforts that library staff anticipate will persist beyond the program.
- Some libraries expanded LTAI resources to include hands-on events focused on Muslim cultures' visual art, craft-making, music, poetry, food, and clothing. This experiential programming tended to focus on multicultural communities and successfully introduced the library to new users from the local Muslim community.
- No two programs followed the same strategy. Most were tailored to known community interest, with each Project Director working with the visiting scholar to develop strategies for engagement around the basic program structure.

Evaluation Strategy Recommendations

This evaluation suggested some ways that ALA PPO might refine their evaluation strategies for future programs:

- Most libraries employ post-event surveys for evaluation, which may limit data. Some question's structure may also elicit only positive responses. We recommend a two-part process including a brief shared group reflection facilitated by LTAI Scholars or Project Directors followed by a simple two-question survey. This survey would ask about two aspects of the program, describing how the program worked best and how it might be improved.
- Rather than rely on recollection by Project Directors, we recommend gathering frequent short observations after each program to increase dataset accuracy and range of outcomes.

Program Recommendations

- Project Directors requested greater detail on the background of the project, clarification about why specific deliverables were sought, and detail on the scholarly decision-making that led to the selections. They felt this information would help them attract potential audiences and address challenges from detractors.
- Leaders would like an online forum to share new ideas and adaptations to help them discuss local conditions, such as tactics for delivery or methods for engaging with new local partnerships.
- Scholars felt a shared set of program guiding questions would support participants in placing their own cultural story in relation to the program readings.

Overall Program Value

We conclude that the Muslim Journeys program fulfilled the intention of NEH's Bridging Cultures initiative and illustrated possible new directions for assessing the impact of humanities programs on communities. In particular, engaged program attendees were actively promoting principles of cultural inclusion in their communities. At a professional level, programming staff, educators, and humanities academics were most likely to advance their own practice when offered carefully curated resources as a point of departure. For library staff and community members, these resources provided valuable assets to launch new collaborations, while disciplinary scholars used the resources to help learners and stimulate new areas of study.

Project Background

Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys was jointly produced by the [National Endowment for the Humanities \(NEH\)](#), in cooperation with the [Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies](#) at [George Mason University](#) and the [American Library Association Public Programs Office \(ALA PPO\)](#), with support provided by a grant from [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#). The [Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art](#) provided additional support for the arts and media components. The program ran from 2009 through 2014. The Bookshelf's scholarly vetted materials served as a backbone program and were distributed to 953 public, academic, and community college libraries and state humanities councils across the US. As a second initiative, five LTAI themes were developed for 125 of the Bookshelf sites through a supplementary grant supported program. The program was available to all libraries and humanities councils in 56 states and territories.

As the project was reaching its conclusion during the second phase of LTAI, New Knowledge Organization Ltd. (NewKnowledge) undertook a summative evaluation with a focus on assessing the project's impact on professional practice, institutional work, and the public. The evaluation used data collected by ALA PPO, delayed-post program surveys of library administrators, site Project Directors, scholars, and 10 observational case studies at select LTAI venues. This report summarizes results of the surveys and includes a small amount of anecdotal data to offer a perspective on the post-program survey data.

The following survey results are reported here:

- ALA Final Reports from Project Directors
- Survey of Project Directors
- Survey of LTAI Scholars
- Survey of Public Program Attendees
- Results from Project Director Discussion Forums

The surveys employed both quantitative rating scales and qualitative questions to explore more deep reasoning across all programs. These data reflect an overall review of aggregate results and do not necessarily reflect extreme results or anomalous conditions at any site. For reference, please see a companion document for more detailed information: [Evaluating the Impact of Muslim Journeys Topline Survey Data, NewKnowledge Publication #NEH.074.199.07](#).

Results for Project Directors

There were four sources of data from Muslim Journey’s Project Directors represented in our survey results reported here: three datasets collected and provided to NewKnowledge by ALA PPO and one survey distributed by NewKnowledge to all Project Directors at the conclusion of the project. Of the 125 host sites for LTAI programs, the final dataset included responses from 106 libraries that provided data to ALA after the first phase of the program and 14 libraries that provided data to ALA after the second phase of the program. Community colleges ($n = 12$) are included in the category for academic libraries ($n = 47$) for a total of 59 libraries in academic settings. The NewKnowledge survey had valid responses from 78 Project Directors, a 62.4% response rate that was sufficient to undertake quantitative statistical analysis.

As Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, types of libraries significantly influence promotional strategies and communications vectors. Of these types, social media/websites and affinity groups were most likely ways to reach audiences, while in-library communications were more likely to be targeted media with flyers rather than displays that were part of the original program.

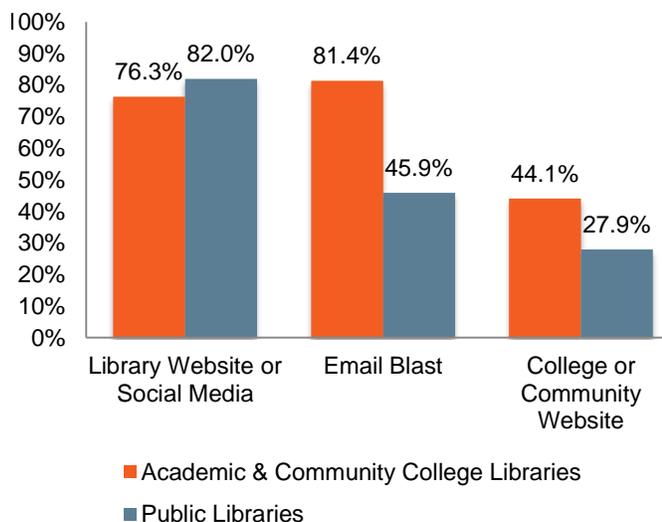


Figure 2. Percent use of online promotion strategies by library type (academic & community college $n = 59$; public $n = 61$).

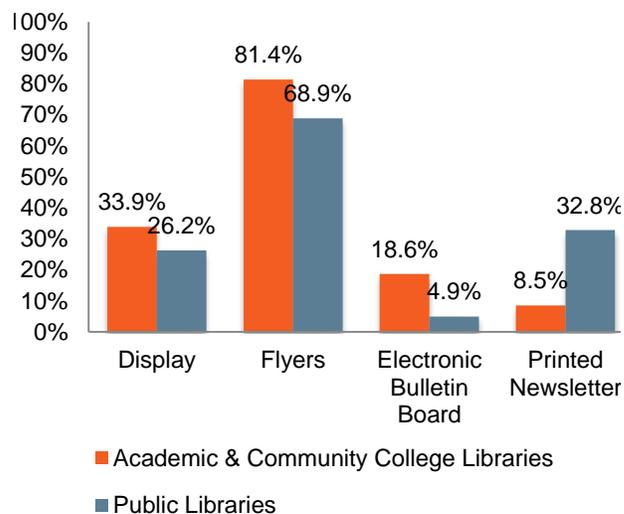


Figure 1. Percent use of onsite promotion strategies by library type (academic & community college $n = 59$; public $n = 61$).

While many institutions reported in qualitative interviews that they had engaged with new community groups or partners—when considering the entire Bookshelf group—it appears that less than half used these tools to create outreach through partners and partner promotion strategies. As Figure 3 illustrates, library type significantly influences types of partnerships but still indicates that local media is the most likely partnership.

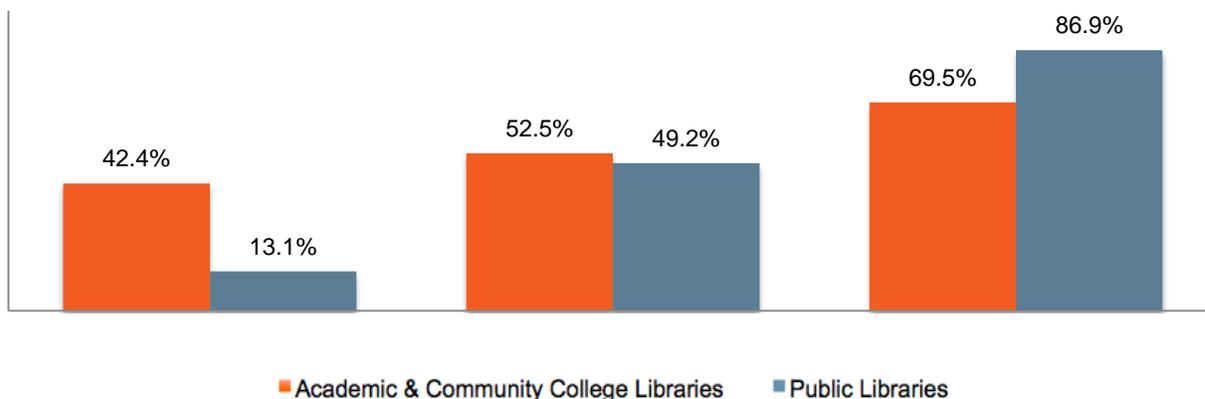


Figure 3. Percent use of partnered promotion strategies by library type (academic & community college $n = 59$; public $n = 61$).

Beyond the life of the program, 15% of respondents claimed they would not pursue further use of the provided resources, and 10% claimed they would not run programs related to Muslim cultures, whereas 32% were likely to agree the resources would be used in future and 48% claimed they would continue to pursue programming for Muslim cultures. This finding suggests that the resources themselves were valuable starting points that have helped expand programming. Slightly over half of our respondents were unsure of their future plans for the materials. When considering programs, 50% felt attendance at Muslim Journeys programs was lower than expected and 35% felt they achieved higher than expected attendance.

These data also revealed that the Oxford Islamic Studies Online (OISO) access was well received by all, but public libraries did not support staff investment due to the one-year subscription and low anticipated usership, while academic libraries achieved higher usership than expected and were pleased with the resource. In contrast, public libraries were also more likely to experiment with a broader range of programs than academic libraries (Figure 4).

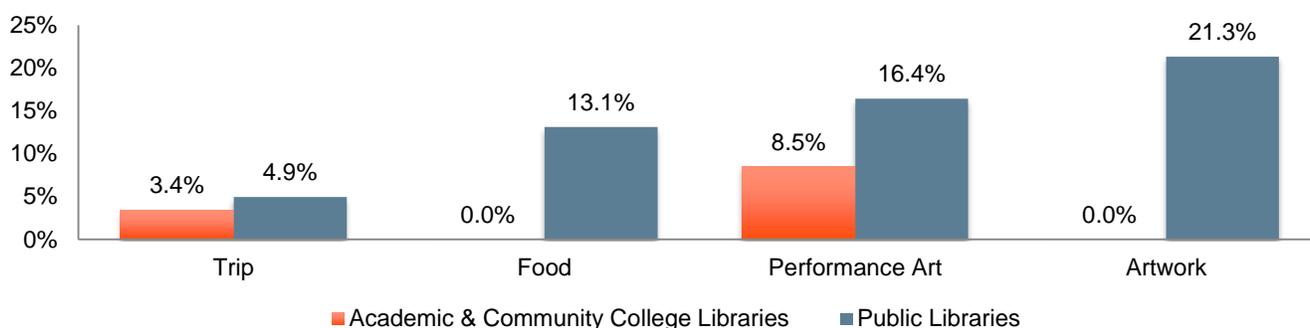


Figure 4. Percent use of hands-on programs per library by library type (academic & community college $n = 59$; public $n = 61$).

For those responding institutions that hosted LTAI events, 88% felt they reached new audiences, while only 3% disagreed. When considering programs in detail, either LTAI or resource-based programs developed by the institution, 48% felt

attendance was lower than expected, 38% felt they achieved their goals, and 14% felt they had higher attendance than expected. As Figure 4 illustrates, a small number of libraries experimented with more alternative program strategies.

Survey results revealed that out of 77 respondents, 80% of Program Directors were female and 49% were over 50 years of age. Only two (6%) claimed they were African American, one reported Hispanic heritage, and 69 (90%) were White. Three declined to offer information on race or ethnicity. Respondents' institutions were equally distributed between urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Of the 68 respondents who commented on the value of training in summer 2013, 49 felt that their experience helped increase their knowledge of how to conduct LTAI programs. Generally, we found the same general pattern as the overall Bookshelf program for continued use of resources and interest in pursuing further programming about Muslim cultures. Unexpectedly, libraries with smaller service populations seemed to engage larger audiences.

Table 1. Total attendance reported by service population size for both rounds of LTAI funding. (*n* = 120 total responses)

| Service Population | Total Reported Program Attendance (M±SD) | <i>n</i> |
|--------------------|--|----------|
| < 25,000 | 114±72 | 55 |
| 25,000 - 100,000 | 97±53 | 38 |
| 100,000 - 500,000 | 110±84 | 16 |
| > 500,000 | 98±79 | 11 |

Of the 69 respondents offering rating their reaction to the program and support: 91% felt that LTAI gave them a greater understanding of their communities interests; 81% fostered new local partnerships, and 83% felt that the program allowed them to reach new audiences.

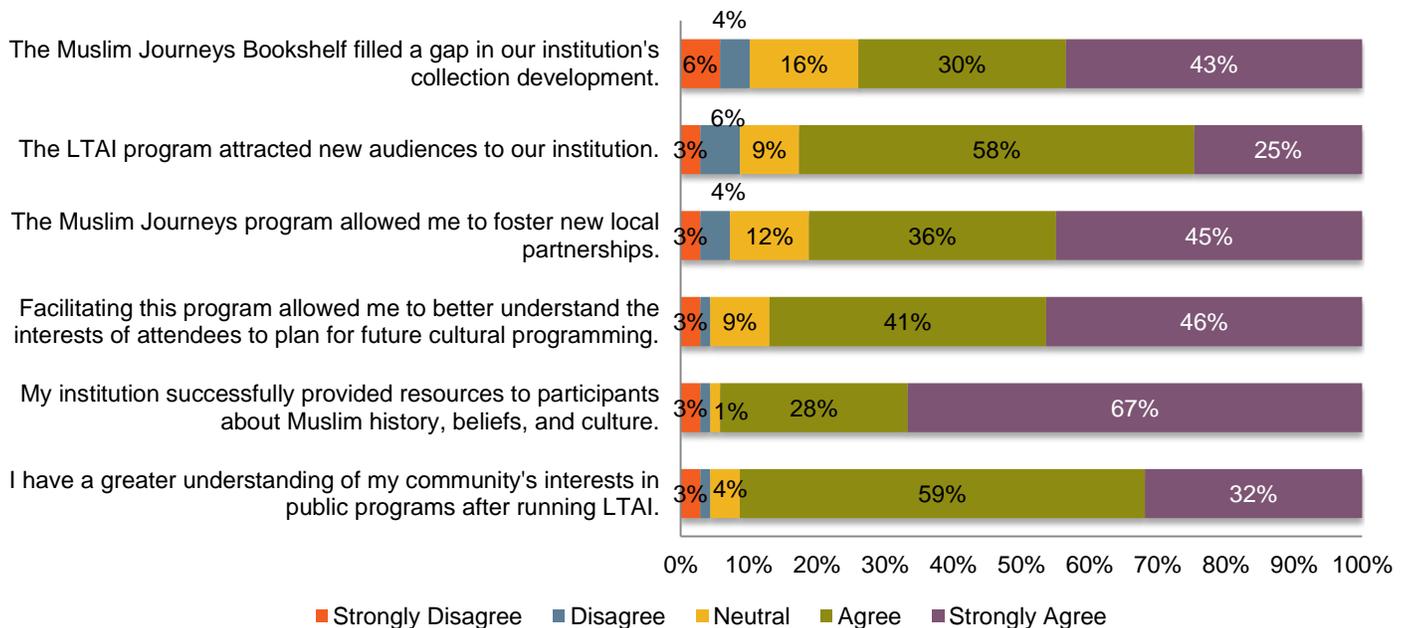


Figure 5. Rating the impact of LTAI on practice (*n* = 69), (values of 1% Disagree removed for readability).

Results for LTAI Scholars

In 2013, ALA PPO awarded two rounds of LTAI: Muslim Journeys grants to 125 libraries including 13 state humanities councils that had already received the Muslim Journeys Bookshelf. Participating institutions hosted at least five scholar-led discussions based on one of five themes: *American Stories*, *Connected Histories*, *Literary Reflections*, *Pathways of Faith*, and *Points of View*. Awardees were encouraged to use Bookshelf materials alongside other materials to support these discussions. Round 1 awardees received up to \$4,500 to purchase additional Bookshelf materials for their theme, honoraria for LTAI Scholars, and travel for grantee program directors to a national orientation workshop. Round 2 provided \$1,000 for honoraria for LTAI Scholar funding to 19 libraries and state humanities councils. Round 2 programs aimed to provide a small group of Round 1 awardees with the opportunity to build on their programming through a minimum of five additional scholar-led discussions around a different theme. Round 2 awardees were encouraged to share materials with another participating institution to maximizing their existing investment in resources.

The NewKnowledge survey of LTAI Scholars was analyzed to reflect conditions unique to each Round of LTAI as well as in aggregate to understand Scholars' experiences, and impacts on these Scholars' work in the humanities. Scholars may have participated in one or both rounds of LTAI.

Eighty-seven Scholars responded to our survey. The group was distributed by age from young adults under 30 ($n = 5$) through more experienced scholars over 60 years of age ($n = 25$). Most respondents were professors ($n = 56$), while others were retired, and three were graduate students. When considered together, the group was evenly split between male ($n = 41$) and female ($n = 42$), but we note that Round 1 had more men ($n = 19$) than women ($n = 12$). The group was mostly white ($n = 60$), while the rest included one African American, two Hispanic heritage participants, and seven Asian Americans. Fifteen self-identified as *other*.

When asked to rate their agreement with statements about their role in the program, 53 (61%) agreed or strongly agreed that their role was to interpret the books. Seven (8%) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that their role was to interpret the books. Sixty (69%) felt their role was to inform participants about Muslim history, beliefs, and culture.

Results demonstrated a preference for *Points of View*, ($n = 24$), *Connected Histories* ($n = 22$) and *Pathways of Faith* ($n = 19$), with lesser interest in *Literary Reflections* ($n = 15$), and *American Stories* ($n = 15$). As illustrated in Figure 6, most respondents felt fairly confident that they did not need to participate in the training program, feeling confident in their modification of discussion items based on their scholarship and expertise. More than two-thirds used the supplementary materials to support their work.

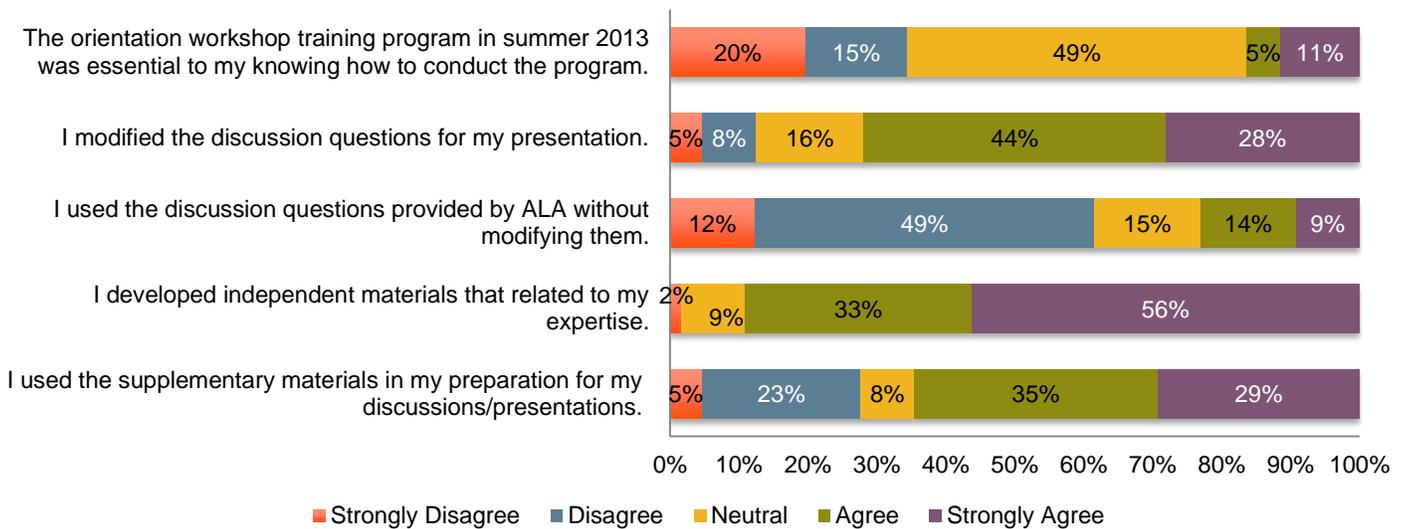


Figure 6. Scholar responses to questions about program preparation and implementation (Q1 $n = 61$; Q2 $n = 64$; Q3 $n = 65$; Q4 $n = 64$; Q5 $n = 65$).

Personal Impacts

When asked to consider their role in LTAI, most felt *teacher* ($n = 31$) and *facilitator* ($n = 32$) were the most apt descriptors, while six or fewer felt they were a *coordinator* or *provided perspective*. When asked to respond to an open-ended prompt to describe the personal impacts, responses were not strongly opinionated. Some described gaining more respect or personal understanding of general public knowledge than expected. Twenty-two felt there was little impact on their understanding of community engagement in the humanities, while others described slightly greater appreciation for public engagement. Forty-four respondents offered thoughts on what surprised them about the program (Table 2).

Table 2. Was there anything unexpected or surprising for you that emerged [from] this program?

| Code | n |
|---|-----------|
| Surprised by amount of interest and/or engagement from audience | 19 |
| No | 12 |
| Surprised by books chosen because of content of books | 6 |
| Surprised by who the participants were | 5 |
| Other | 2 |
| Total | 44 |

Scholar Recommendations

Forty-five Scholars responded to the open-ended question about what they might change about the LTAI program: six suggested other titles; five were interested in strategies for bringing the program to their home institution; two felt timing and the size of audiences could be improved; and one respondent each suggested more films or a focus on Persian culture.

More than half ($n = 11$ of 21) felt the online resources were the **most valuable materials** provided for their use, while four or fewer felt the discussion questions, books, and introductory essays were the **most useful assets**. Twenty-eight respondents offered thoughts on how they would use the materials and experiences in their teaching capacity as illustrated in Table 3.

Most Scholars felt that attendees had little familiarity with Muslim culture, which may account for why some Scholars were surprised by the level of knowledge in the attendee group (figure 7).

Forty of 61 responding Scholars felt the books were well-matched to the audience, 54 felt the books were well received, and all felt there was a strong fit to their own scholarly expertise. While they found these programs engaging, forty-one respondents felt there should be more programming beyond the two LTAI efforts, citing the opportunities such as more film screenings, poetry readings, or talks on art and food.

Table 3. *How will what you learned from your experience with Bridging Cultures: Muslim Journeys enable you to implement similar humanities programming in your classrooms?*

| Code | <i>n</i> |
|---|-----------|
| Use books in class | 15 |
| Learned about more resources | 4 |
| Learned about different discussions for different audiences | 3 |
| Learned more about Islam | 4 |
| Programs and class too different | 2 |
| Total | 28 |

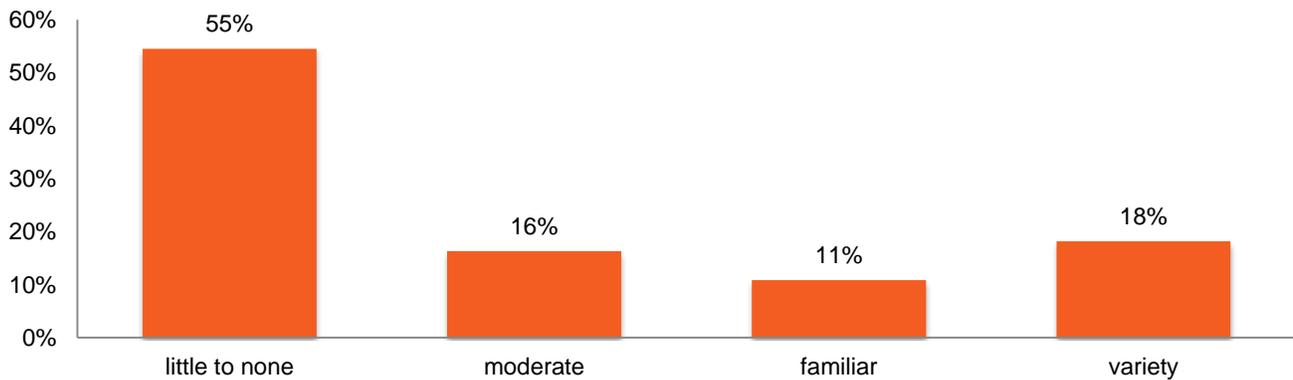


Figure 7. Scholars' perceptions of participant familiarity with Muslim culture ($n = 55$).

Results for Public Program Attendees

Following the completion of both rounds of the LTAI program, attendees were invited to complete an online survey about their experience. Respondents may have participated in one or both of the LTAI rounds. We received responses from 274 program participants. Based on attendance statistics provided by ALA, we estimate the maximum possible unique attendance would be 15,427. However, assuming that the majority of people only attended one program (while a few attended all programs), we generally estimate a conservative number of 8,519 possible unique participants. We suggest that respondents to our surveys are likely highly engaged regular attendees and supporters of their libraries and may not be representative of the full range of experiences, especially those with lower levels of engagement or disinterest in the topic. We include some insights from interviews with Project Directors when that detail clarifies a finding.

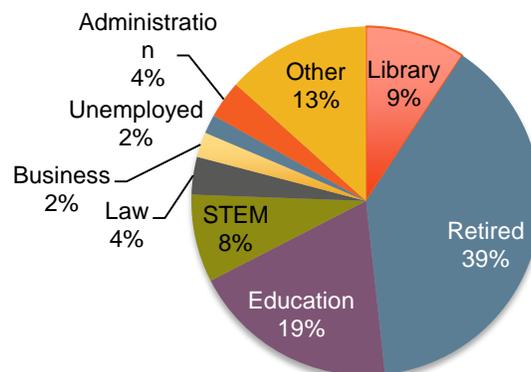


Figure 8. Participants' occupations (n = 172).

Demographic data indicated that program participants tended to be over the age of 61 (64%), with only 4% of respondents under 40 years of age, 11% between ages 41 and 50, and 15% between ages 51 and 60. These respondents were also primarily White (86%) and female (86%). During the case study interviews, about half of the Project Directors claimed that participants represented a range of backgrounds, suggesting that our sample may not have captured a full picture of attendance diversity.

Reactions to the Scholars

Of 194 participants who responded to the questions related to the Scholars' impact on their learning, most described positive impacts. About 56% felt the Scholar encouraged them to pursue study beyond the books and 81% felt the Scholar helped them deepen their understanding of the content covered in the books (Figure 9).

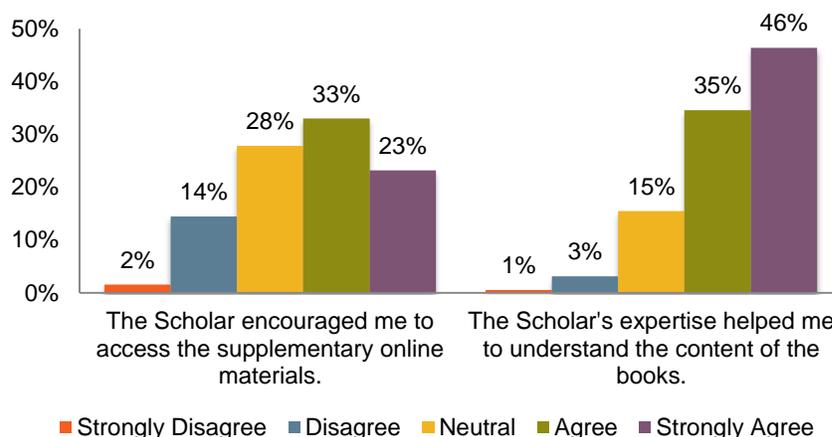


Figure 9. Participant responses to questions about scholar activities (n = 194).

The survey used two questions to understand if the books were suited to the audience, one positively worded (right level for me) and the other reverse worded (too academic). While there was minor variation between these questions, over 80% felt the books were well-suited to their reading level and less than 6% found the books challenging. These answers were consistent with how these participants described their confidence and preparedness. Ninety percent claimed they were confident sharing their opinion. Seventy percent also claimed that they read the thematic essay to prepare for the program, while only 13% claimed they did not read the essay. We caution that these results may be a function of those who frequently engage with programs of this type and support their library by responding to the survey.

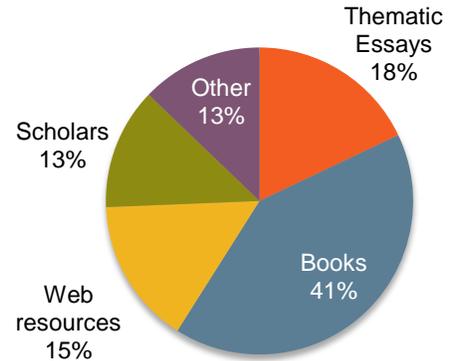


Figure 10. Participants' favorite resources (n = 78).

Seventy-eight respondents commented on their favorite part of the LTAI program, and not surprisingly, 41% of those respondents found the books engaging. The rest were evenly divided among all other types of resources (Figure 10). Consistent with this overall tone of positive feedback, 94% of participants said they would like to participate in another LTAI program with different content.

Not surprisingly, these participants were enthusiastic about their learning, reporting that they had increased their understanding about Muslim culture as a result of participation in the program (Figure 11). While not all respondents answered this question, the continuity in positive response seemed consistent with the interview feedback from Project Directors.

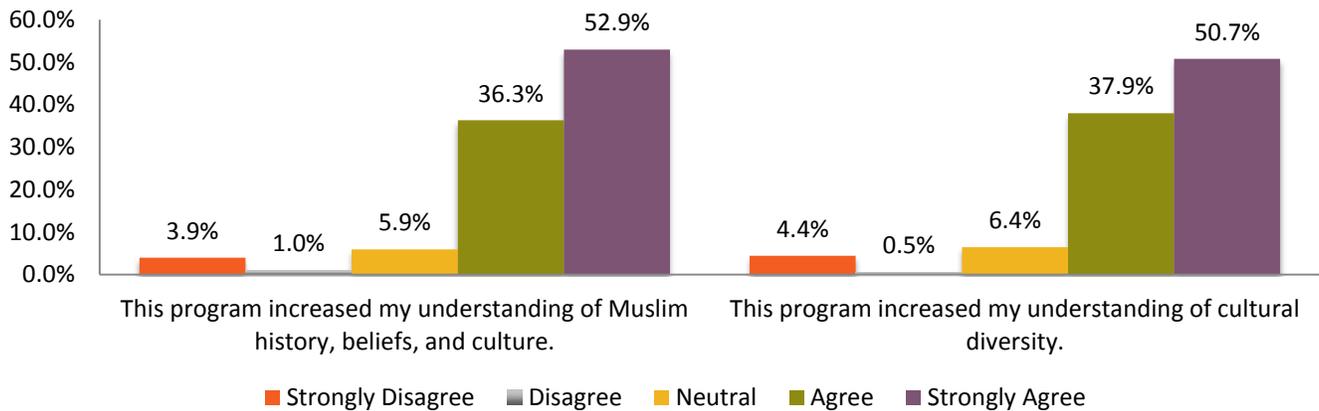


Figure 11. Participant responses to questions about what they learned during LTAI programming (Q1 n = 204, Q2 n = 203).

Results from Project Director Discussion Forums

NewKnowledge conducted a series of three online discussion forums between February 9-13, 2015 and one in-person discussion at the ALA 2015 Mid-year meeting with Project Directors. In total, 26 participants offered insights into programming and reporting. The forums were designed as a semi-structured discussion using prompts to initiate conversation about: their community and LTAI programs; reflections on attendance; their experience with reporting; and an opportunity to compare their experience with peers. These discussions offered a different perspective on the data reported in earlier sections. The results are summarized here based on themes that emerged in the conversations.

Experiences with Implementation

Many of the participants in these forums had convened LTAI programs in past. They explored the experience with this program, in part, based on experience, and noted where this effort might have had unique impacts. In particular, they focused on how this program varied from others because it introduced questions of faith and involved a cultural community that is subject to negative social stereotypes. The issues at hand and the engagement with regular LTAI participants led to a much more volatility in the attendance than many expected. As one participant noted: *We had people who were absolutely faithful, they drove 2.5 hours. They wanted to talk more about the religion, and that made it successful. We found we had too many people to have a good discussion, so it was a really great program but the idea of having small group discussions with 90 people doesn't work.* Many of these Project Directors said they had to be flexible, moving from space to space to accommodate variation.

The cultural engagement was also frequently mentioned as creating challenges for attracting diverse audiences. While some reported being embraced by their local Muslim community, others suggested that repeated experience with stereotypically negative portrayals limited attendance. There appeared to be no consensus on this point across the groups, with academic and public libraries all weighing in, but each had a local explanation for why members of the Muslim community chose to attend in large numbers or were not present.

Lastly, a number of participants noted that the quality and community familiarity with a beloved Scholar was as valuable as the programming. For these Project Directors, there was a suggestion that some Scholars can build their own audience and generate interest across a broad range of topics due to word of mouth rather than any specific program. And it was these repeated Scholars who were most successful at using the thematic content and guides provided by ALA to lead a successful program.

Fostering Cross-Institutional Dialogue During Implementation

The ALA listserv was noted by participants in Session 2 as a useful resource. They described it as a useful way to track anecdotal accounts of controversy related to the program. In the course of each discussion group, participants asked each other about nuances of their program, particularly related to adversity. In more than one forum, a participant described negative reactions from public that seemed to shock others in their forum. This negative reaction was described as contrary

to the positive feedback that others received. In general, most felt they faced little to no negativity, but that did not invalidate the finding that some institutions found themselves embroiled in controversy.

For those who encountered negativity, there was concern that ALA had not prepared them for dealing with this public pushback during the trainings in Denver, CO and Chicago, IL. We note that this comment is contrary to feedback ALA received after the training where attendees favorably rated the training about how to minimize and manage community challenges to content, speakers, and during discussion events. It was suggested in Session 3 that connecting Project Directors before they launch a program might allow those who were surprised by controversy to reconnect with their training colleagues and to revisit the lessons. This forum might afford those confronting a challenge an opportunity for collaborative problem solving once they understand the issue. Once this idea was introduced by the participants in the three forums where the topic arose, participants were quick to describe other advantages of group problem solving, including dealing with programming adaptation when numbers fluctuate, or using the opportunity for positive sharing of innovative programming ideas specific to a community.

Program Flexibility, Partnerships, Local Context, and Links to Festivals, Cultural Events, and Holidays

Many members of the discussion group described their new external institutional partnerships as very valuable to long-term goals of their organization. For example, Charlotte Knoche (Concordia University, St. Paul, MN) felt her institution garnered new opportunities through their collaboration with Islamic Cultural Center (ICC). In that case, the ICC also provided supplementary funding for speakers for their series, funding that might not have been secured without the LTAI program. Interfaith councils were also identified these as valuable community partners in a number of settings.

Across all four discussions, there was general consensus that the Muslim Journeys program in particular helped address a deficit in reaching diverse audiences in other programs and situating the library as part of the community rather than a separate resource. As evidence of this value, one Project Director described being invited by a large community of Saudi students to speak at a memorial following the passing of King Abdullah, an honor that she felt would not have been available to her had she not worked with the LTAI program to build a new relationship with their community. Members from Humanities Councils (Session 2) expressed needs to consider the cost and benefit of programming especially in rural communities. However, they still felt the main objective to *open minds to new perspectives* was a valuable attribute from the program and that it was a worthy investment to leverage local communities and groups that may not necessarily value other cultures.

Some participants noted that they now recognized a series of missed opportunities where some of the Bookshelf materials could have been better tied in with local film festival. One person in particular felt that they needed more time to work with the Scholar to develop something more tied to their expertise rather than the set of program themes already identified. That latter comment suggested that the overarching themes were useful points of departure but local context and scholarly skill could help expand opportunities for integrating local issues in their programs.

Sustainability of Future Programming

In general, all participants used the Muslim Journeys theme as a point of departure for instigating new dialogues. In the case of one academic library, the most valuable partnership was with a local public library that had higher Muslim usership. Through this partnership, the Project Director described the film program as generating interest among local Muslim politicians and a national scholar who invigorated a much longer discussion, lasting beyond the planned program time.

In talking through their experiences, participants in Session 3 and 4 felt it was *tough to get people to read the book*. While these results are contrary to the results reported in the surveys, these seem to represent a fuller picture of how the range of participants engaged with the books rather than those who might respond directly to a survey about the programs. As one participant noted: *We did literary reflections, and most of the participants read the Arabian nights reflection, but most didn't read all the way through*. Another participant noted: *I thought the level of difficulty was varied in the books. In several cases, for a general community reading program, it was too difficult. The Children of Abraham was difficult to read and convoluted. The discussion was really good, they talked about commonalities and what made them distinct*. From this finding, we suggest that the survey results might have suggested a more positive response from active readers, while the discussions with program leaders suggest that the content limits some participation from a more general audience. Despite this challenge with the Muslim Journeys reading, it appears that the LTAI format is well-supported and will generate future audiences from active learners. As one participant noted: *Three-quarters of our patrons have done a LTAI in the last five years, and they would have come for anything. The theme didn't attract them but the LTAI did*.

During Session 3, one participant noted that she was able to increased attendance at their university library programs *when faculty included students or asked students to attend, we have more participation*. This result was validated by a number of LTAI Scholars during the site visits, where they suggested that advertising programs to faculty earlier (before the beginning of a semester) would allow them to incorporate it into their course syllabus.

Iterative Reporting After Events

During Session 4, we offered a summary of the prior three session attendees' thoughts about evaluation. This group concluded that better scheduling was needed between reporting due dates and end of programming, especially for the LTAI programs. In terms of evaluation needs, Project Directors in particular stressed the need to measure levels of understanding both before and after programming. One participant pointed out that the current *evaluation form was more geared toward the whole series and not just each event*. This group agreed that the numbers reported were not necessarily a measurement of program outcomes or success in a community because they represented a *small but loyal* group of participants. Most participants in all the discussions admitted to procrastinating on filling in project reports until well after they completed all of their LTAI programs. Many suggested that they had forgotten the details and did their best to complete the reports but might have estimated some of the numbers or results.

After reviewing our notes and the comments from other discussion groups, we feel there was a general feeling among Project Directors that the current set of satisfaction surveys did not characterize the value of program. They seemed to desire more emphasis be placed on the overall impacts rather than impressions and number of participants. They also felt that if they were required to report dates for events, and were incentivized (one participant suggested penalties or withheld funding) to complete a report after each event, they would have more detail to review for their final report. One participant recommended a requirement for Project Directors to submit reports online the day after each event since he had difficulty summarizing all the information after he procrastinated on completing his report.

Conclusions

The Muslim Journeys humanities scholarship and support aimed to promote understanding and mutual respect for people with diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives within the US and abroad. These studies revealed a new understanding of how program design, execution, and sponsorship influenced public perceptions of funders and host institutions. In particular, we found a high demand for this type of scholarly humanities program to meet the needs of what library staff feel is an underserved community. The results also revealed some strategic ways ALA can modify current project tracking to advance more reliable outcome measures from their investments.

Content Outcomes

Muslim Journeys aimed to introduce a diverse set of Muslim voices across time and place using a diversity of content. Participating libraries demonstrated an actively engaged audience for this type of learning opportunity. Examination of Bookshelf circulation data, LTAI attendance figures, and site visit observations suggests that there is a dedicated community of lifelong learners interested in expanding their cultural understanding. The flexibility of these Muslim Journey tools, displays and programs were particularly well received by skilled program professionals who could tailor the program to their service populations.

Library staff reported that their audiences were primarily retiree educators and older frequent library users. Interestingly, the humanities scholars that engaged with these audiences also claimed that the program helped them develop new techniques for introducing their content to a more generalist audience.

Some programming professionals used Muslim Journeys to reach new identifiable cultural groups traditionally not engaged by their programming. This was particularly true for a small number of institutions that experimented with festival, food, or art events. The staff used the program, both books and LTAI to develop relationships that they anticipate will continue based on trust and respect, as well as what they described as new friendships.

Academic libraries were more likely to leverage the program to activate campus clubs, service organizations, and faculty with expertise related to the program or personal connections to Islam. These new library user communities were also more likely to value the books and speaker series because of the academic credentials and reasoning supporting the selections.

We conclude that the Muslim Journeys effort fulfilled the intention of the Bridging Cultures initiative by supporting lifelong learners and as a catalyst for building new connections to underserved community groups and existing users.

Impacts on Attitudes and Perspectives

These studies identified library or former library staff, educators/retired educators, and humanities scholars most likely to engage with the program to expand their understanding of the culture. Each group, however, described unique needs to help them use the content. Educators and retirees were more interested in understanding the scholarly back-story about how, what, and why the curated set of books was developed. For academics, the value was perceived more as a collegial exchange of ideas.

Many Library Directors felt that the ALA and NEH support helped increase their reach to new audiences. Many suggested that there are few other organizations supporting this effort to reach new audiences, whereas Muslim Journeys gave them an opportunity for new collegial relationships that are anticipated to endure. In the few cases where cultural bias might have challenged the library staff supporting the program, the ALA and NEH brand helped allay concerns, but this was not the typical experience at all libraries. Library program staff felt that without ALA and NEH, the local objections would have been insurmountable if they were acting alone. For those few librarians who felt attacked on account of the mere presence of the materials, they described how the project's national support helped them to identify an undocumented community need and strategies for overcoming systemic bias facing members of their community. Based on this experience, they sought a forum to help share tips and techniques for adapting to local challenges.

Recommendations from across the Studies

Analysis of attendance data was challenging, with some libraries reporting lower attendance than anticipated while others reported improbably high participation, suggesting that the reporting process might require revision. After reviewing for anomalies in the data, we conclude that a large part of this discrepancy was related to retrospective reporting bias that could be addressed by regular reporting.

Program staff expressed great interest in a web-based, shared, real-time strategy forum to support one another in their work. They felt the online forum would help them work with unclear or conflicting trends and adaptations for their unique institutional situation or criticism.

Revising the Surveys: How to Ask Juicy Questions

After reviewing responses to these surveys and data gathered by ALA, we suggest that new programs use a survey strategy anchored more directly to each event rather than aggregate data. The following strategies may provide more useful data:

- Create an online journaling platform with journal prompts to elicit and record outcomes, learning experiences, and reflections on adaptations after each program, to create a repository of information over the life of the project so Project Directors and External Evaluators can use for analysis at the project conclusion;
- Use a single more qualitative core question or two to guide reporting on the impact of local cultural issues on program delivery across libraries;
- Use anchoring statements or reference points in retrospective questions, i.e. ***Thinking about your first event...*** or alternatively, ***Reflecting on how you felt about the program in the two weeks following the last LTAI event...*** These point-in-time anchors help respondents to summarize the impact of related events, their own emotions, and more accurate cause and effect;
- Avoid aggregate data reporting, especially attendance statistics that might encourage program staff to rely only on their recollections rather than accurate records;
- Invite regular and early reflections that can input directly into an ALA database instead of retrospective surveys to capture more accurate reporting on each event, followed by a report back with data to each library to allow Project Directors and their staff to reflect on the aggregate data; and

- Create and use a real-time discussion forum as a source for active cross-institutional inquiry and support to establish both a useful tool for program leaders, and to create a data source that can be used in retrospective impact analysis.

Overall Outcomes and Impacts

The *LTAI scholar-led discussion format* provided a compelling platform for engaging lifelong learners in respectful and open dialogue. Participants valued the social camaraderie and intellectual challenges that brought them together with others in their community. These programs were perceived as collective experiences with members of the community, library professionals, and scholars learning together. Library professionals were able to use the base content as inspiration to develop programs that engaged local artists, food, fashion, and scholars that were popular in their community.

Implications for Practice

Humanities-based discussion programs that that formed *core learning groups* gave diverse groups the opportunity to interact with those they might not have met before. Program developers might consider how discussion-based programming promotes social bridging that helps build a sense of trust and reciprocity. This bridging could be a culturally valuable intervention that benefits the service population, over and above the actual content learning outcomes.

Finding strategies for capturing the *experimental and creative programming approaches* of resourceful library professionals who know their communities well will help others experiment in advancing their programming. Program designers might consider how to support the work of these library professionals to create innovative public programming.

Muslim Journeys programming helped library programming professionals launch *institutional partnerships* that were opportunistic and helped achieve outcomes that libraries could not achieve alone. We anticipate that these partnerships may outlive the life of a specific program and continue to serve the needs of both organizations. It may be valuable to explore how programming contributes to durable relationships and builds community cohesion. These connections can be measured if we gather feedback from these partner institutions as the partnership begins.



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