The Leadership Development Forum of the Virginia Library Association is sponsoring the 3rd Virginia Library Leadership Academy (VALLA), facilitated by nationally recognized speaker, Dr. Robert Burgin, who will discuss leadership in the library environment. Registration opened in November for interested library staff and faculty in Virginia, and membership in the Virginia Library Association (VLA) is not required. VALLA will be held May 5–6, 2014, at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center in Staunton. The cost for each participant is $350, which includes registration for the workshop, one night’s lodging, meals, and workshop materials. Conference rates at the hotel are available for two nights prior and two nights following the workshop.

Following the “on-site” portion of the experience, participants are also required to complete a project that will benefit the library profession and their communities. They are matched with mentors (library directors and faculty from around the Commonwealth) who will offer support and guidance throughout the process. Projects have run the gamut: a public library collaborating with a local Best Buy to train staff in the use of various e-readers and mobile devices; an analysis of library staff pay and the creation of a statewide salary structure, with recommendations presented to the VLA Council; volunteering with the VLA Scholarship Committee, and creating a podcast to explain the work of the committee; and creation of a mystery shopping team to be used to assess service at various desks in an academic library, in collaboration with faculty in the marketing, sociology, and human resources departments. Achieving intended outcomes or not, leadership projects demonstrate that we can all have an impact in our libraries and our communities through VALLA participation.

Past participants in VALLA report increased confidence in their leadership abilities and many have seen promotion in their careers. I encourage current library leaders and library staff who are interested in becoming leaders to apply for this wonderful development opportunity. Participants in previous VALLA cohorts, in 2010 and 2012, came from a variety of libraries—academic, public, special, and school—and from differing leadership roles, including paraprofessionals, faculty, and administrators. We were actively engaged in group activities and discussions that encouraged us to think of ourselves as leaders in the libraries of the future. The networking and camaraderie have been outstanding.

If you are interested in taking advantage of this professional development contact me [Teresa Doherty] directly at mtdoherty@vcu.edu. The call for applications will be announced through the VLA mailing list and Facebook site, with a link to the online application. The deadline for applications is January 2014.

Teresa Doherty is the Head of Information Services (Assistant Professor) at the James Branch Cabell Library, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Doherty was a participant in the first Virginia Library Leadership Academy and is now the coordinator for VALLA 2014.