

OLAQ

Volume 5 , Number 4
A Focus on Staff Development (Winter 2000) | Pages

July 2014

Volume 5, Issue 4

(2014). Volume 5, Issue 4. *OLA Quarterly*, 5(4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1688>

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OLA Quarterly is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

OLA

Quarterly

A Focus on Staff Development



Staff development as fun!
McMinnville Public Library's *Grape Expectations* entry in the local Wine Country Harvest Festival bed races. (left to right) Nola Olmsted, Jill Poyer, Karen Davis, Rebecca Heffernan, and Teleda Rodman as the "grape cluster."

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Staff Development Day

... and more

*Winter 2000
Vol 5 • No 4
Oregon Library
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OLA QUARTERLY

A Focus on Staff Development

This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* examines the topic of staff development. Its basic premise is that by emphasizing systematic and diverse staff development activities, a library may have a direct impact on the quality of service it offers its customers.

In the past, staff development tended to be task-oriented, focusing on "how" something was done rather than "why." Recently libraries have made significant changes in the ways information is accessed, requiring parallel changes in the ways in which we provide services. As a result, an expanded approach to training and staff development has evolved. More than ever, those of us who work in and love libraries need to convey to our customers the ways in which libraries of all types enrich the quality of life in our society. Library staff at all levels must be prepared to exercise judgment and initiative, use creative approaches to solving problems, and "sell" the mission of the library both on the job and in the community.

The methods used to provide continuing education and training for library staff are as varied as the people who provide them. At McMinnville Public Library, staff development occurs in many forms. Twice a year we close the library for "staff development days" featuring such topics as team-building via the *Myers-Briggs Personality Type Inventory*, strategic planning exercises, technology development, and stress management. All staff members are also encouraged to attend at least one external workshop or conference annually.

Staff development occurs less formally in the course of our daily work. A copy of an interesting article about quality library service will be circulated to employees who are then asked to formulate and share a personal opinion. Staff at all levels are involved in the analysis of policies and procedures, strategic planning, mentoring, and program development. Sometimes we do something just to have fun and boost morale, or to make the library more visible. In all of these exercises, the emphasis is on finding ways in which we, as a staff, can find joy and excitement in our work and share that joy with the public.

Each of the authors sharing their thoughts about staff development in this issue of the *Quarterly* has a different perspective. This diversity is not only appropriate, but vital to the concept that is the foundation of all staff development. The extent to which each member of a library staff is encouraged to develop his/her full potential as an employee and as a human being is a strong reflection of the value that library will provide to its users and the community it serves.

Anne Van Sickle, *Guest Editor*
McMinnville Public Library

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Winter 2000
Vol 5 • No 4
Oregon Library
Association
ISSN 1093-7374

Capturing the Teachable Moment: In-House Staff Development

by *Connie J. Bennett*
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To seize the “teachable moment” in on-the-job training, like grasping a carousel’s brass ring, brings a sense of triumph and the delightful euphoria of accomplishment. But such an achievement is not merely serendipity. A library can improve the odds for multiple in-house staff development successes by intentionally constructing an organization and culture that support effective methods of adult education.¹

What do I mean by the “teachable moment?” I mean the moment when required information is provided to an employee precisely when it is needed to accomplish a job task. The children’s librarian who urgently needs a colorful flier—tomorrow—is highly motivated to try a new computer graphics package. If the library can seize this opportunity and provide a trainer—which in a small library usually means a more knowledgeable colleague—the results are remarkably effective.

Funding training in smaller public libraries is especially challenging. But sparse dollars can be stretched by the thoughtful design of an in-house training plan which minimizes the costs of travel, release time, and tuition. Such a strategy can, often in only moments, convey information that is timely, focused, personalized, and in context. Thirty minutes of collaborative work producing a flier with the new graphics program can be a far more effective learning experience than a day long workshop off-site two months later.

The first step to capturing the “teachable moment” concept for your library is to create an environment that will encourage employees to search for new ideas and solutions. Adult learners tend to avoid activities that they believe will result in failure. Therefore, questions should be encouraged. It needs to be okay in your library not to know something. The deeper understanding that comes with questioning and discussing the underlying concepts of the library’s mission, circulation policies, or Internet access procedures encourages the employee to align with the library’s goals. This employee is then better prepared not only to explain these policies to the public, but to make informed exceptions in appropriate situations.

A second step is to define clear training objectives. Adults want to know what they will be expected to

learn in order to be successful. One way the Silver Falls Library District clarifies job expectations is by using individualized job standards, which each new employee receives within their first few weeks on the job. We also provide each new employee with a training plan which lists the specific skills they will be expected to master during the probationary period. An ideal opportunity for in-house training occurs when you hire a new employee. Our training plan is designed to sustain initial motivation by providing a challenging list of skills, each broken down into achievable elements. Employees are given the responsibility for their learning and performance. Addressing job standards as the initial step of the performance evaluation process creates a clear connection between training achievements and tangible rewards.

On-the-job training is an ideal way to provide opportunities to rehearse the skills necessary for job mastery. Knowing that the best learning occurs in a social context similar to that in which the skills and knowledge will be used, professional trainers and education facilities spend considerable money and effort trying to simulate what you have already—your work site. Studies suggest that new material is forgotten at a remarkable rate without immediate practice. Providing training when an employee’s need for a new skill is imminent, so that practice occurs within the process, is crucial to defining the “teachable moment.”

The trainer/coworker plays an integral part in this process as well. The trainer must analyze the task, consider pace and learning style in presenting information, and provide specific feedback to the students to guide them toward mastery. The trainer must also recognize that the adult learner brings many life experiences into the workplace which should be acknowledged, tapped and used. An additional advantage of cooperative study with a respected peer is that the achievement level of the trainer is also raised during the process. Such training, particularly across departments within a library, can enhance respect, build the work team, and improve understanding of the whole organization, in addition to the more direct goals of easing scheduling conflicts and improving public service. Studies show cooperative learning promotes positive feelings of personal worth and positive attitudes toward the skills being taught.

Learning is a process in which students take information, interpret it, connect it to what they already know, and if necessary, reorganize their view of the functionality of the work environment. An accurate mental model develops from the way events flow on-the-job, how devices function and can malfunction, and serves as the map to guide personal action when problems are encountered. By using the concept of the “teachable moment,” staff in even a small public library can move toward the ideal of excellence.

¹A good summary of adult training research can be found at www.nprdc.navy.mil/wworks/cover.htm. References to research mentioned in that article are cited here.

The LINCC Conference: Continuing Education in Clackamas County

by Joanna Rood

*Director, Library Information Network
of Clackamas County*

Continuing education for library support staff and librarians has been a priority in Clackamas County since the early 1980s. Budgets were very tight in those days and many public libraries realized that they could not afford to send many of their staff to the Oregon Library Association conferences, but the need for ongoing staff education was there. We are proud of the fact that in the year 2000 we will be holding the 20th annual Clackamas continuing education conference!

In May of 1980 the first Clackamas County continuing education conference was held at the West Linn Inn with between 75 and 100 people attending. The conference was intended to be a one day, affordable continuing education opportunity for support staff of public and school libraries in Clackamas County. By the fifth annual conference in 1984, concerns arose in program evaluations about the "record number of folks attending from out of region" (mostly from Washington County). Organizers discussed whether non-Clackamas County libraries should be charged a higher rate to attend, but this step has never been taken.

In fiscal year 1984-85 Clackamas County hired a contract "Network Coordinator" to manage various tasks for the cooperative Network. Among the coordinator's responsibilities was the organization and administration of the annual conference. The growing conference moved to the Monarch Motor Hotel that year and remained there until the political involvement of its owner in causes unfriendly to public employees made the hotel an unpopular choice. In 1995 the conference moved to the Wilsonville Holiday Inn. Under the management of the Network Coordinator, attendance grew to about 300 as libraries from throughout the state began to send their employees.

In 1989, Clackamas County separated the Library Network functions from the Clackamas County Library and created two separate departments. The Library Network department took over the centralized automation, cataloging and courier functions that served the city and county-managed public libraries in the county, and also took over the management of the annual conference in 1990. Official support and rec-

ognition for the Clackamas Conference has been included as part of the approved mission statement and plan for the Network department since the mid-1990s.

In 1997 the conference had to be cancelled, a casualty of Measure 47 and budget cuts. At that same time the new, and excellent, annual Support Staff Division Conference emerged, setting up yet another regional continuing education program.

The tips below describe some of the most important things we have learned over the last ten years. Please feel free to contact LINCC at 503-723-4888 and we will gladly share our experiences. The gratitude we have received from staff over the years has been very rewarding and more than makes up for the stress of planning a "party" for 250 to 300 people every year.

What we have learned

Decide who your audience is and stick to it.

From the beginning, our audience has been the support staff and librarians who work in public libraries in Clackamas County. This has not included library directors, although they are welcome to attend. In the early years we tried to plan programs for school librarians, but have dropped them as interest and attendance has decreased over the years. We once got into trouble with a program when we put in too many "planning" oriented programs that were seen as more suitable for decision-makers or library directors.

Attract a good volunteer committee from different libraries and make program development their mission.

On one or two occasions when support staff at the Network office were in short supply, volunteer library staff have assisted with brochure design and preparation, local arrangements, and registration, and have done a wonderful job. But we recommend that if staffing permits, it is much more efficient for the sponsor to handle these administrative details. It is also easier to attract a volunteer committee if members know that all they will have to do is devise program ideas and find speakers—and that LINCC will handle the rest of the details! It is important that a few new people serve on the program committee each year so that fresh ideas are contributed. Staff who are enrolled in the Emporia MLS program have been a good source of new ideas and speakers for us in recent years.

Ensure that at least one member of the program committee is from the support staff you are programming for.
Enough said.

Don't expect staff to get real training from workshops—just overviews.

One of the hardest lessons we learned is that it is quite difficult to teach a room full of people specific database searching techniques or to give them real training on any topic.

See LINCC Conference page 19

The Library of the 21st Century: Creative Approaches to Staffing and Organization

by *Larry R. Oberg*
*University Librarian,
Mark O. Hatfield Library,
Willamette University, Salem*

In this brief article I recount a couple of hopefully amusing, perhaps even bittersweet, anecdotes from my past life as a library assistant; trace a brief history of support staff in American libraries; and comment on our changing organizational structures and the roles of both support staff and librarians. My conclusion includes a few suggestions for how we can construct continuing education programs that will contribute to the success of all staff in the library of tomorrow.

The Past as Prelude

My first post-high school job in the early 1960s was a support staff position in the cataloging department of a state library somewhere to the south of Oregon. In those days, the work that a member of the support staff might be allowed to do was limited and repetitive. It would have been quite uncommon, for example, that I or any of my peers would have been given the time or money required to attend a library conference or even a job-related workshop.

To be fair, a few hand-selected members of the support staff were occasionally sent across town for some form of "training." You may or may not remember that in those days we "educated" librarians and "trained" support staff. Librarians attended conferences and, upon their return, passed along to the support staff any information deemed relevant. Plainly put, our organizational and behavioral patterns trivialized support staff and the roles they played.

In college libraries in those days—and I'm sorry to say that this practice still occurs in some schools—there was an implicit understanding that no member of the support staff, no matter how long or how hard he or she worked, would ever make a salary higher than that of the lowest paid librarian. Support staff positions were not considered by administrators or personnel officers to be career positions. They were jobs, and jobs were something you worked at until you got a better one, got a profession, or no longer needed to supplement your spouse's income.

While working at that state library—and it was no better or worse than any other library of the period—I came

to know that something was wrong, but never felt that there was anything I could do about it. Until, that is, I met a young librarian, a newly minted MLS from UC-Berkeley, with whom I found common cause. She and I took to spending our coffee breaks together. Until, that is, someone pointed out that there was an administrative memo posted in the staff lounge that stated that librarians and support staff were not permitted to take their breaks at the same table.

I'm not making this up, these things actually happened!

Of course, she and I protested that memo, but to no avail. How long it remained posted and whether or not it was ever really enforced, I have no idea. Nonetheless, it symbolized the attitudes and prejudices of the period. Even though we did not succeed in getting the memo taken down and the policy rescinded, our protest was a bonding experience and we married a few months later. Thus, all was not lost.

Two other anecdotes illustrate our historic insensitivity as a profession. For many years, in liberal arts colleges at least, library support staff positions were routinely awarded to the spouses of new faculty and administrative hires as a perquisite of the position. Regardless of the competencies of the individuals involved, noncompetitive hiring practices further trivialized the importance of support staff.

Librarians have a long history of filling support staff positions with candidates whose qualifications exceed what we require in our position advertisements. We often employ individuals with graduate or even terminal library school degrees. And we do not shy away from assigning them tasks that are in accord with their educational level, but not necessarily with their written position descriptions.

Now, these stories from yesterday's libraries and my own personal experiences of the period are not, I trust, merely self-indulgence, although they are fun to tell! They serve to emphasize that, indeed, things have changed since that by now rather distant time.

In many libraries today, paraprofessionals work at reference desks, do original cataloging and perform a variety of systems tasks. This is work that they would not necessarily have been allowed to perform in the past. In other libraries however, competent, willing and hard-working folk are still held back from performing these same tasks, often for no reasons other than that to do so would pose a threat to the librarians and the library administration. This results in an uneven pattern of task assignment in libraries around the country and an equally uneven pattern of support staff compensation and continuing education opportunities.

The Emergence of Dichotomized Staffing Models

Personnel problems, of course, are not new to our libraries. How we deploy and utilize staff, how we

distinguish between the roles and status of librarians and support staff, and how librarians and support staff interact with each other have all been difficult and divisive issues within the profession for most of this century. These are nagging concerns that remain largely unresolved today. Our historic inability as a profession to come to grips with such issues as terminal degree and certification requirements, not to mention who it is that we are and what it is that we ought to be doing, remain with us today. And they pose ever greater problems as we attempt to secure our niche in the new information environment.

As early as 1923, Charles C. Williamson challenged the profession to distinguish clearly and unambiguously between what he referred to as professional and non-professional tasks. His ambitious publication, *Training for Library Service*, is commonly referred to as the Williamson Report. Williamson's caveat was heeded and in 1927 the American Library Association (ALA) released another report entitled *A Proposed Classification and Compensation Plan for Library Positions*. This document marked the beginning of a long series of efforts to separate library tasks into two discrete streams: tasks deemed appropriate for "professionals" and tasks deemed appropriate for "nonprofessionals." The aim, of course, was to eliminate overlap and ensure that the two groups were not performing the same tasks.

In 1939, the ALA released a classification and pay plan for public libraries that advocated a three-tiered approach to staffing. The three classification levels the plan proposed were called professional, subprofessional, and clerical. By 1970, the ALA Council had approved something now known as the Library Education and Personnel Utilization document, generally referred to as LEPU. LEPU is still in effect today and was revised only a few years ago. This policy document proposes formal educational requirements for all library staff and three distinct levels of employment for support personnel: library associates, library technical assistants, and clerks.

Meanwhile, it has become clear that the task list approach to work assignments, at best an idealistic effort to create unambiguous staffing categories, has failed to gain any significant degree of acceptance at the grass roots level. The idea that one can draw up one list of tasks appropriate to support staff and another appropriate to librarians no longer works in a world that has changed dramatically from what it was only a short while ago.

Change as a Way of Life

The changes that have occurred over the past few decades have created a dramatic redistribution of the library workload. This redistribution, in turn, has created a distinctly new category of library employee whom we generally refer to as the paraprofessional. It is not uncommon today for paraprofessionals to perform many of the tasks that were once performed exclusively by librarians. And paraprofessionals in-

creasingly are assigned new tasks that have been necessitated by automation and change in the organizational structure of the workplace.

In my 1992 survey of the role, status, and working conditions of support staff, I found that few traditional or newly created tasks were still off limits to paraprofessionals. Today, paraprofessionals commonly administer such major functional areas within our libraries as circulation, interlibrary lending, acquisitions, and cataloging. They work more hours at our reference and information desks and have assumed greater responsibility in our systems departments as well.

Paraprofessionals have had a particularly dramatic impact upon technical services. In the historically brief period since the advent of OCLC some thirty years ago, they have come to dominate this workforce. For example, I found that 92 percent of the large research libraries in the United States assign copy cataloging responsibilities to paraprofessionals. Over 30 percent assign original cataloging responsibilities, including classification and subject analysis, as well. In a 1997 follow-up, Mohr and Schuneman demonstrate that the use of paraprofessionals in cataloging departments nationally has grown considerably since my earlier survey results were reported.

It seems likely that a similar increase in the utilization of support staff is going to occur in public services as well. For example, a growing movement toward tiered, or differentiated, reference and a past record of successful performance at reference and information desks is ensuring paraprofessionals a larger role in the direct provision of information to our patrons.

By now, most of us who work in libraries accept the need for, or at least the inevitability of, change, although we differ considerably on how rapid and how profound we believe that change should be. Some of us have adopted an evolutionary approach that presumes the basic soundness of our current policies, practices, and structures. Others actively encourage a radical rethinking of our basic assumptions and processes. This latter group—to which I belong—believes that if we are to remain viable players in an increasingly volatile information environment, we must create new services, new collections, new organizational structures, new information access tools, and new relationships, not only amongst ourselves, but with our allies and competitors alike.

The Library Staff of the Future

In the library of the next millennium we will retain and expand many of our traditional core activities, even as we create new services and new roles for all staff. It is clear that we will continue to select, purchase, organize, preserve and provide access to information resources in print and electronic formats. The rapid expansion of what someone has called "dematerialized" publications will require close attention as we access, filter, archive and attempt to preserve them.

In the new academic library world, increased emphasis will be placed upon teaching the fundamental structure of information, how to evaluate sources and resources critically, and the retrieval techniques necessary to navigate the considerably enlarged resource base we now make available.

Our libraries will be staffed by creative, flexible, increasingly specialized staff, individuals who are comfortable living with ambiguity and committed to experimentation, collaboration, and the accelerated development of new services. Less emphasis will be placed upon specific skills—what the old task lists emphasized—and more emphasis will be placed upon personal traits. Roy Tennant suggests that we would be well advised “to choose staff who can evolve as the needs of the organization change.” Here is Tennant’s list of traits that he feels are better indicators of success than, for example, the number of application skills an individual might list on a vita:

- The capacity to learn constantly and quickly
- Flexibility
- An innate skepticism
- A propensity to take risks
- An abiding public service perspective
- The capacity and desire to work independently

Increasingly, librarians will be preoccupied with the creation of new services and the design and development of the tools needed to access electronic and networked information effectively. These tools include web pages, workstations, and intuitive, even didactic, interfaces that highlight the structure of information and aid patrons in developing a clear conceptual model of the types of resources available.

We will need to learn to deal effectively with polarized public perceptions. In the short run, at least, we will see an “either-or” world composed of traditionalists who view web surfing as an adolescent waste of time, and radicals who view the traditional library as a marginalized warehouse filled with obsolete and increasingly irrelevant information.

Academic librarians, I believe, will abandon their traditionally passive public service stance and spend more time outside the library, working with faculty, researchers, and their computing center colleagues on web-based services and the integration of technology into the classroom. They also will design new instructional programs and teach more classes, often in collaboration with the faculty and the academic computing center staff. A major challenge will be the successful integration of computer technology and electronic resources with the traditional print formats.

As we have seen, tasks traditionally associated with librarians are being performed increasingly by support staff. This trend will only accelerate. As librarians turn their attention to the design, the evaluation, and the teaching of new resources and services, support staff will become increasingly accountable for service delivery, or in other words, for the day-to-day operation of the library. They will also assume complex tasks and fill key positions newly demanded by automation and the reconfiguration of library services.

New Roles for Support Staff

Although the position descriptions of support staff have changed radically in years past, it is only relatively recently that, as a profession, we have begun to take an interest in ensuring that their status, compensation, and preparation are in accord with the level of work they perform. Carla Stoffle, of the University of Arizona, believes that librarians must place an even higher value on the contribution of support staff, examining their ideas and suggestions on an equal basis with those of librarians. She feels that libraries should move away from staffs that perform narrow tasks within tightly defined job descriptions, and toward staffs empowered to make decisions about the work they do and how they do it in ways that, in her words, “result in delighted customers.”

Of course, we all know from experience that the existing library culture can be quite resistant to change. The norms and values that form the culture of a given library vary widely and create differing, often contradictory, perspectives. Change is resisted by some and welcomed by others. Given the new roles and responsibilities being assumed by paraprofessionals and support staff generally, staff training and continuing education take on an ever-greater importance. All staff have a right to expect to receive the preparation that will ensure their success in the new roles that they are being assigned.

It is critical, I think, that continuing education efforts for support staff receive explicit administrative support if they are to be successful. Continuing education must be expected and supported, and positive incentives—linking continuing education to merit and promotion, for example—must be offered. The key to developing effective continuing education programs is, in fact, top-down support, but it is also critical that support staff make their own needs known. They must take the initiative to seek out appropriate continuing education opportunities and justify their participation.

All support staff need to develop solid technological, management and communication skills. Appropriate involvement in consortia and professional associations at the local, regional and even the national level should be encouraged and funded. Developing excellent continuing education programs is an essential first step toward greater support staff involvement and contribution.

See 21st Century page 19

Support Staff Professional Development:

Issues for the Coming Millennium

by *Donetta Sheffold*

Valley Library, Oregon State University

Many positive changes have taken place for library support staff here in Oregon during the past five to seven years. Support staff have earned their own division in the Oregon Library Association. The Support Staff Division (SSD) sponsors an annual conference and other continuing education opportunities, and also provides scholarships so that support staff may attend the annual SSD conference or other library conferences and training. Often the largest obstacle support staff encounter is the fact that they are not librarians. For many years there was no real presence of support staff in the Oregon Library Association, no feeling that they belonged, or for that matter that they were included. Sometimes the biggest obstacles stem from exclusion rather than inclusion.

When I was asked to write an article for the *OLA Quarterly* my first inclination was to say, "Sorry, I can't do that—I don't have time, my writing skills aren't good enough, and what do I have to say that people would want to hear?" I did the same thing to myself that hundreds of support staff do every time they hear the words "professional development." They immediately exclude themselves from the conversation because they are not librarians; everyone knows that librarians are the professionals who receive the development opportunities. For many people, the experience of professional development is similar to the old adage, "the rich get richer." Think about that for a moment—how the majority of professional development funding often goes to the librarians. In academic libraries, the librarians need professional development for "promotion and tenure." In public libraries, the librarians are the people who are the most visible in the community and need to keep up on what is happening in the library field.

In libraries all across Oregon and the United States, professional development of any kind is one of the first items to be cut as budgets are reduced. And typically the funding allocated for support staff development is cut before reducing funding for librarian de-

velopment. Have you ever thought, as I have, that although support staff are the least able to pick up their own tab for professional development, they are usually the first to have their funding cut? Aside from the issue of receiving less funding, support staff often are the ones selected to make sure the library is staffed while others are out of the library attending meetings, workshops, seminars and conferences. (Please note: this is a major reason the Support Staff Division elects to hold their conference in July rather than at the OLA Annual Conference. Many support staff would be unable to attend in April.) Possibly one of the most difficult issues to address is providing development training to support staff in the face of the multitude of levels of experience and expectations represented throughout the support staff community. It occurs to me that while support staff have a vast range of educational levels (high school through college and beyond) which makes development training a special challenge, librarians have a common ground, the MLS.

A wide range of responsibility levels, as well as skill levels, exists in support staff throughout the various types of libraries. Some support staff work in extremely small libraries where staff consists of only one or two people. I realize this scenario creates a special situation for librarians as well but it seems it is usually the support staff who suffer from the inability to "get away" for professional activities. I also realize that within the last five years the situation has improved in many libraries throughout Oregon. The Oregon Library Association's Support Staff Division continues to provide an annual conference where all those who work in libraries are welcome!

What Support Staff Can Do

1. Take the initiative by requesting professional development, and when you do be prepared to provide your administrator with an explanation of how it will help you and others.
2. Apply for grants and scholarships to assist with the costs of professional development opportunities, especially if your library budget doesn't provide staff development funds.
3. Talk with others about development opportunities and expand your horizon regarding how to get things done. There may be only one pot of gold but there are several different paths to find it.
4. Be interested in library-wide topics as well as your own field of expertise.
5. Care about your entire library and staff.
6. If you are not interested in getting more training and networking with others, do not feel slighted because someone else does. Harboring ill will doesn't do you, your peers, or your library any good.

See Professional Development page 20

Unlocking Potential Staff Development at Deschutes Public Library District

by *Michael Gaston*
Library Director,
Deschutes Public Library District

If you can imagine it, you can do it. That old axiom takes on a new meaning in this sea of changing technology that we call the information age. But the rapid gains in technological capability will have no direct benefit to our clients at Deschutes Public Library unless we have the vision to perceive the possibilities and opportunities made available by lightning fast bandwidth and CPUs.

In a nutshell, we perceive that the key to library evolution, in this period of rapid change, is staff development.

Staff Development Goals

The purpose of our staff development program is to unlock the potential of our employees, and then focus all that energy and creativity upon the mission, goals, and objectives of our library system. To that end, we are seeking to develop a corporate culture with the following characteristics:

- Each staff member understands and “owns” the mission, goals, objectives, and structure of the library system.
- Each staff member has mastered the knowledge, skills, and techniques relevant to his/her area of responsibility.
- Each staff member understands the significance and importance of his/her duties in the context of the “bigger picture.”
- Each professional and management level staff member is aware of regional and national developments relevant to his/her assigned duties, and is engaged in an ongoing review of local operations.
- Each staff member actively shares information with fellow employees.

Getting There

The Deschutes Public Library System has only just begun to develop the comprehensive staff development system that will be necessary to achieve the type of program described above. Our first steps include the following strategies:

1. **Hire good staff.** We shoot for the best. We look for candidates for professional positions who have demonstrated an ability to innovate, and who have been community/professional leaders. We offer a competitive salary, and we make a commitment to support professional involvement.
2. **Supervise/evaluate in context of the mission, goals, and objectives.** Every department is developing goals and objectives in the context of our mission. Each department manager will meet with individual staff members to develop personal goals that fit within this structure. Biweekly meetings will be held with individual staff members to track progress.
3. **Reduce bureaucracy.** We are working to eliminate unnecessary rules. We want to create a more relaxed environment that conveys that performance is the bottom line.
4. **Encourage peer contacts by management and professional staff.** Management and professional staff are encouraged to “get out of the building.” Staff are encouraged to join committees, visit similar systems, and attend conferences. Each management and professional staff member is assigned a personal travel budget.
5. **Encourage department level training.** Each department is assigned a budget for training, which can be used for internal or external workshops.
6. **Encourage communication across department boundaries.** Every staff member has an email address, and every department is in the process of developing new applications on our Intranet. Every employee attends the annual “Staff Day” team building and training program. Ongoing internal training is designed to cut across departments and branches.

See *Unlocking Potential page 20*



Bob McWhorter, Network Administrator.

The Learning Systems Approach to Staff Development and Training at Multnomah County Library

by Janet Kinney
*Learning Systems Manager,
Multnomah County Library*

Multnomah County Library, with a history that reaches back to 1864, consists of a central library, 14 branch libraries and a collection of almost 2 million books and other library materials. As Oregon's largest public library, we serve over one-fifth of the state's population. Today our staff numbers 301 full-time, 201 part-time and 128 on-call employees.

The library has a long tradition of supporting staff training and development. In early 1998, the library had many elements of a "learning infrastructure" in place. The system had technology trainers who offered formal and informal instruction on technology topics; several committees were responsible for presenting training (the Reference Committee, for example); Multnomah County offered classes for staff; and outside vendors provided network training. Staff also participated as presenters and attendees at local, regional and national conferences and workshops, and supported each other through on-the-job training. But it was never enough, and with all of the changes happening in our work environment the challenges of keeping up to date were daunting.

One such change in our environment was the passage of a \$37 million levy in 1997 and the funding of an extensive program of branch renovation. This new funding dramatically increased the number of public service hours and the number of public access computers and staff computer work stations. Public services hours increased 64 percent, including open hours every Sunday at Central and all branch libraries, and the computer count went from 604 to 1,008.

To help cope with this change, library management and staff identified training as one of the top organizational priorities and began to establish a more so-

phisticated, integrated approach to staff training and development. In early 1998, we decided to create the Learning Systems group to strengthen the learning environment and to help develop the processes and tools that would be required to distribute training and development throughout the library, and integrate learning into all library initiatives.

The Library, as a unit of county government, had also begun to integrate a quality program known as RESULTS (Reaching Excellent Service Using Leadership and Team Strategies) and was participating in the Oregon Quality Assessment process. A quality improvement council had been formed and the organization was beginning to move toward team-based initiatives.

The theoretical background supporting this decision was the work on learning organizations and chaos theory. For a useful mediagraphy on learning organizations see: www.albany.edu/~k17686/learnorg.html. For information on Dr. Peter Senge's work see: www.fieldbook.com, and for a quick overview of the publication *Why Learning Organizations?* see: world.std.com/~lo/WhyLO.html.

This article reports on some of the first year's activities as we began implementation of the learning systems approach. Although these activities have been developed in the context of a large metropolitan library, we think the approach and some of the specific activities could be beneficial to libraries of all sizes and types.

The New MCL Approach

The learning systems approach was formally begun in July of 1998 and is just now beginning to emerge. This new kind of thinking and acting requires risk-taking and patience. It requires dialogue and discussion; revision and redesign.

Management

One of the first steps was to hire a Learning Systems Manager at the senior management level. This position was created to provide a "choreographer" to help direct the many already existing training activities toward the accomplishment of broader organizational initiatives, to help identify and fill in any missing pieces in the system's infrastructure, to reallocate resources as needed, and to help pace and prioritize the many training opportunities available to staff.

Staffing

Decisions regarding staffing have proven to be among the most difficult. The vision is to have a small number of positions allocated to learning systems, and to integrate learning and teaching into virtually every job description. Within this vision, learning systems staff are the coordinators and communicators, while staff from throughout the system are called on to help create curriculum and deliver the training.

In the first year the Learning Systems staff included a full time senior manager, a supervisor (expanded from

.5 to 1 FTE), a senior support staff (expanded from .5 to 1 FTE) and a trainer at the Librarian II level (decreased from 2 FTE to .5). In addition, over 100 staff participated in the direct delivery of staff training during the year.

We are currently reviewing the level of staff assigned to the group. Consideration is being given to establishing an adult learning specialist position to bring more expertise to curriculum development and design. The definition of this role will be a high priority in the next year.



Central Library Director Cindy Gibbon, reacting to staff comments during new staff orientation.

Budget

A first-year imperative was to begin to assess the budget implications of distributed training. Each department has begun to analyze the cost of staff time spent developing, delivering and taking training as well as out-of-pocket expenses such as registration and travel costs. The Learning Systems budget included funds for unexpected training opportunities and team travel. Data collected this year will be used to improve our budgeting methods and to establish annual goals expressed as a percentage of total personnel budget.

Communication

Trying to keep everyone informed about the new learning approach presents a real challenge. An already existing intranet site and newsletter have been expanded to include broad coverage of learning opportunities. The *Learning Center* is the intranet site that attempts to provide one-stop access to a wide variety of learning related resources including lists of classes for staff, classes for the public, conference and workshop information and registration, independent learning resources (online tutorials, online learning opportunities), and professional development links.

Learning Systems also publishes the *Learning Link*, a newsletter of learning opportunities for MCL staff members. Published about every six weeks, this online newsletter announces forthcoming classes, features a

popular column by the NT Server Manager, and generally tries to keep staff informed.

Individual Learning Plans

With so much going on in the organization, we needed to focus on the individual and his/her own learning needs. Adopting the "individual development planning" model often cited in human resources literature, we are deploying Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for all staff. Prototyped by supervisors, managers and by staff at three branches, the ILP is now being rolled out to all staff. The ILP includes a self-assessment tool that allows staff members the opportunity to examine their own training/learning needs and to decide how to integrate this learning into day-to-day responsibilities. This emphasis on the responsibility of the individual to take charge of their own learning is an important component of learning organization approach.

Currently over 150 staff have begun to develop ILPs. The deployment of the plans is being staggered to help the system develop the capacity to provide the type of training and development activities that staff identify during this process.

New Staff Survival Training

On July 1, 1998, the MCL libraries increased public service hours by 60 percent. This called for a bold approach to training the new pages, clerks and library assistants that were being hired in large numbers.



Small group activities are a key component to staff learning sessions.

Circulation Staff

We calculated that approximately 40 new circulation employees would have to be trained and ready to take their places at circulation desks throughout the system on July 1. Traditionally, such training would take place in each library or section one-on-one between the supervisor and the new employee. To integrate the large number of new staff, we needed a different approach.

In a bold new initiative, six clerks who had demonstrated the skills to be good trainers (and knew how

to figure out the details to accomplish this) were selected from various branches to create a peer-based training program. As described by the supervisor who helped put this program together: "Some came willingly, some not so willingly; some had concrete ideas of how this could be accomplished; some didn't have a clue. Their charge was short: 'Go forth... train these new clerks not to work at the branch they are assigned to, but to work for Multnomah County Library.'"

This team created a five-day program that addressed various learning styles and used a variety of training techniques, including lectures and hands-on experiences. This intensive training was supplemented by updated training manuals and the establishment of a mentor program. The mentors developed a time line and checklist of tasks to be learned over the first three months of employment.

The program has been very successful and very well received by both trainees and supervisors. It has also established the precedent for peer-based training. Unfortunately, we seriously underestimated the number of people who would need the training. The original program, or a condensed version, has now been presented to over 185 people, including new clerks, library assistants, librarians, supervisors and on-call staff. The training is now being offered once a month and all new circulation staff must take this training before being assigned to a branch or section.

Library Assistants

The library assistant curriculum was prepared collaboratively by over 25 library staff members and delivered in an intensive two-week time frame. The training included an overview of the library system, basic reference skills training, technology training (including equipment troubleshooting), introduction to the Library's online catalog *Dyna*, and an introduction to Multnomah County Library's electronic reference environment. This last component has proven to be the most challenging, as its complex and ever-changing, ever updated nature requires ongoing retraining of library staff.

Although the course was very intense and only covered the materials at an introductory level, course evaluations were generally very favorable and supervisors reported a high level of performance from the new staff. The course has been offered four times in the past 13 months to 89 reference staff. Incorporating the "Plan, Do, Check, Act" model of quality improvement, many adaptations and modifications have been incorporated into this model of quality improvement.

We have now packaged the core curriculum that was established for the group presentations so that individuals or small groups can do most of their learning in a self-directed format. The Library does not expect to be hiring enough LA's at any one time to make it economical to offer the two-week classroom model of training, so we are now moving to individualized learning modules.

New Staff Orientation

Having the opportunity to welcome over 150 new staff members and to help many existing staff prepare for promotions and new assignments in the organization is an enviable situation, but it also presented a challenge to provide adequate learning in a timely manner. Beyond the specific skills training offered by the "survival training" described above, we have revised and refreshed two in-service programs that had long been offered at Multnomah County Library.

All new staff are now invited to attend a four-hour welcome and orientation hosted by the Library's management team. This session outlines the mission of the Library, its history, and gives insight into current programs and initiatives. The orientation includes small group discussions with the executive team and representatives from the library's Quality Council.



Deputy Director Ruth Metz, architect of Learning Systems structure.

Intellectual Freedom Training

The Intellectual Freedom course covers the basics of the importance of free and open access to ideas and the role of the public library. In recent years this has become the forum for training new staff to interact in a positive way with the community and the media on such topics as internet filtering, censorship, and the public library's concern for the safety of children. Trainers from all areas of library service, from youth services to materials selectors to associate directors, take part in directing this training. This course is required for all new staff and all employees are encouraged to take this class at least once every three years.

Technology Training

When MCL first implemented the Microsoft Office Suite (1996 to 1997), a full-time staff member was assigned to technology training. Multnomah County contracted with an outside vendor to provide a series of classes on Word, Access, Excel, PowerPoint, and the NT environment. We also purchased online tutorials and made them available for individualized training.

These classes are still available to all staff, but they are generally all-day sessions that are difficult to schedule and sometimes too general to be helpful. We are now looking for shorter classes and desktop tutorials that can be customized for library purposes.

In the meantime, an important part of our technology training approach is the TechnoMentors. This group was developed when staff computers were first upgraded with email capabilities. The need for training was urgent and widespread. A staff member from each branch and section was selected to learn the software and became responsible for teaching others in their work group. The roles and responsibilities of TechnoMentors continue to evolve, but they are key to the continuing learning that occurs as new staff join a work group and as technology tools are deployed.

System Initiatives

Beyond survival training, orientation, and technology training, Multnomah County Library has several system initiatives that include staff learning objectives, and we have begun to develop training programs to address these issues.



Ellen Fader, Youth Service Coordinator, leads a staff discussion.

The first example is called "Everyone Serves Youth" and was launched in March of this year. This comprehensive curriculum provides staff with the information and skills necessary to serve all young library users at an excellent level of service.

The curriculum consists of six half-day workshops. The introductory workshop has two versions, one for reference staff and one for all other library staff. This course examines the Library's services to youth from prebirth through high school age, exploring stages of youth behavior and giving staff the opportunity to explore successful approaches to helping kids in library situations. This introductory course is now required for all new staff and strongly recommended for continuing staff.

Other courses cover reference services, reader advisory topics, and a course on working with the very young child. These courses are optional but highly

recommended. As each course is scheduled twice a year, staff are able to include these sessions as learning objectives in their individual learning plans.

The process developed to put this curriculum together was an important learning experience for the organization. The Learning Systems Manager and the Youth Services Coordinator met to outline the breadth and scope of the curriculum. A youth services librarian was selected to be the project manager. Then teams of youth services librarians and library assistants were created to develop and deliver the individual courses. This was a significant allocation of time and energy. The teams had relatively short deadlines and for many staff this was a new way of working together. The teams were asked to evaluate their process as well as its product. These evaluations indicate that while working in teams can be challenging and even difficult, the results are worth it. Evaluations by the attendees indicate that the new approach resulted in excellent learning opportunities.

A second example of a system initiative is the "Branch Staff Readiness" program. As we plan for each branch renovation, we also plan a staff readiness program. Beginning with the development of an individual learning plan, staff members of a branch about to be renovated identify what they would like to learn before the branch reopens. This process is still under development, but some examples of learning activities include branch reference staff working at Central Library; circulation and page staff taking computer classes and working in branches that already have the new electronic capabilities in place; and branch leaders taking on special system-wide projects to develop project management skills.

About one month before the scheduled reopening, the staff comes together for a one day workshop on team building and communication. During this day together, the staff writes the branch mission, establishes ground rules for working together, and does several team exercises to increase communication.

About 10 days before the branch reopens, the staff begins an intensive period of training combined with the physical work of getting a branch ready for the public. This training gives staff the opportunity to gain some comfort with the electronic resources that will be available in the branch, as well as providing some practice time using library computer applications. Throughout this time, the staff is using team building skills and establishing working relationships that will help them deliver outstanding public service.

So far, 78 staff have participated in these training programs. Each branch staff member has made very useful suggestions for continuously improving the quality and quantity of this training. The best improvement so far is the addition of a brunch—prepared by the staff of the most recently renovated branch for the weary staff of the about-to-be reopened branch!

A third system initiative is to be responsive to learning opportunities as they arise. The budget for conference and travel has been significantly increased and targeted to fund team attendance at workshops or conferences on strategic topics. As part of this conference travel, each team is charged to return to the library and apply the new learning. As a result of this initiative, three staff members from different areas of the library attended a national conference on adaptive technology in Bloomington, Minnesota; four circulation staff members attended the circulation conference at the University of Wisconsin; and three people attended the Internet Librarian '98 Conference in Monterey, California. They brought back many exciting ideas that are now being incorporated into the operations of the library.

Staff Day

Multnomah County Library sponsored its seventh all-day staff in-service day this year. This event features a variety of classes and workshops and the chance for all staff to be together. A staff team representing a variety of job classifications and locations plans and produces the day's events. This year's theme *Back to the Basics* emphasized books and reading. The event was highlighted by the annual State of the Library address by library director Ginnie Cooper, and included 44 break-out sessions which included sessions on book making, author presentations, a slide show on canoeing, and a session on "Everything You Didn't Want to Know About Menopause."

Results

Our measures for success are primarily anecdotal but we are working on data gathering methodologies. Every training session includes written evaluation and feedback mechanisms and this information is an important part of our improvement process.

We have also been tracking the public's response. The patron feedback mechanism in our library is known as "Ginnie Coupons." We encourage the public to send comments or suggestions on coupons that are available at all public service points. Coupons that include an address receive a written response from Library Director Ginnie Cooper. We have tracked the number and type of concerns while we have been incorporating this large number of new staff and were happy to find no significant increase in the number of complaints. And we were pleased by the number of compliments about great public service that we received from the public.


There are also downsides to any new program, and here are a few we experienced. This approach takes considerable time and energy. It is not a quick fix. It is difficult and challenging to be continually adapting and retraining. It is difficult to keep everyone informed. It is very hard to incorporate this much staff development into work schedules, and hard to incorporate new learning into day-to-day work. Dilbert cartoons often appear on staff bulletin boards, and it some-

times feels like we are caught in jargon and the management theme of the day.

Next Steps

The activities outlined here are only representative of the learning that is going on at Multnomah County Library. Every day, teams and committees meet and work to solve issues and complete projects. Staff help each other learn new skills by coaching and in over-the-shoulder training. Often these "just in time" learning opportunities are the most helpful way to assimilate new skills. We continue to work on developing team skills and implementing performance planning for all staff.

We also have several additional system initiatives that need curriculum development including reference, circulation, question handling for everyone and leadership development. We need to continue to fine tune and improve on programs in place and we need to continue talking about what works and what doesn't.

The learning organization literature emphasizes the amount of time, energy and resources it really takes to make change permanent. We are finding this to be true. But, we believe the challenge of providing excellent public service in an evolving information environment requires us to create a workplace that dedicates the required resources to staff development and training and learning. 

Many people helped in the preparation of this article. Much of the theoretical thinking about the learning systems approach is being done by Deputy Director Ruth Metz. The Learning Systems staff has included Jane Mackinnon, Marilyn Shayegi, Lise Brackbill, Serena Gomez, Eva Miller, and Patricia Welch. Sharon Klemp and Jan Thenell assisted in compiling and editing.



Deputy Director Jeanne Goodrich presenting on intellectual freedom issues.

Staff Development Day

by Anne Billeter
Jackson County Library System

*A day to love, a day to hate; a day to prepare for;
a day to relax, listen, and visit; a day to learn.*

For many years Staff Development Day, or SDD, has meant many things to many people in Jackson County. For a library system with 15 branch libraries, a staff of 100, a cadre of substitutes, and a flourish of volunteers, SDD has provided the opportunity to bring everyone together, to provide workshop opportunities for a great many staff members simultaneously, and to develop a sense of vision, purpose, and pride.

Prior to 1985 we enjoyed cooperative Staff Development Days with the Josephine County Library System. The synergy of meeting counterparts from another library system, of taking workshops from and presenting workshops to non-Jackson County staff, created an energy and excitement that is still remembered. Those SDDs were discontinued when budgets were severely cut due to a reduction in county revenue.

When the first of four Jackson County Library System serial levies began in 1985, planning for staff development was an integral part of the new era. Two days per year were designated as SDDs, with the entire library system closed for staff training. Planning for the next SDD began as soon as the previous one was over. October and May, and Wednesdays, were selected for a great many, often interactive, reasons, with the least inconvenience to library patrons as the major consideration. A committee was formed to plan each SDD. Sometimes people were appointed to the committee, sometimes they volunteered, and sometimes they were urged. During the first years an effort was made to include representatives of all types of services and locations. For example, it was believed that Medford and Ashland should always be represented, that at least one if not two Branch Supervisors should be on the committee, and that Circulation, Reference, Children's Services, Young Adult Services, and the Processing Center should all have representatives. Over the years the size of the committee was reduced, with the understanding that the first two meetings, where the concept for the next SDD was developed, would be open to any who wished to attend or to send suggestions to the committee. Committee members generally were expected to serve for two SDDs, although some continued for many more.

Four goals were developed for Staff Development Day:

1. To develop a common purpose or vision regarding our work
2. To provide social interaction so we can get to know one another better
3. To instill a sense of pride and inspiration
4. To provide an opportunity for learning

Each SDD was given a name that suggested a theme for the day. Some examples are:

All in the Family
Building a Bridge
It's Still Changing
Greater Expectations
Back to Books
Libraries for Lifelong Learning
Book Love
The Tough Stuff
Spring Festival of Learning
Jackson County: Building the Future Together

For many years SDD was eight hours long, beginning at 8 a.m. and ending at 5 p.m. In later years, this was reduced to six or six and one half hours. There were many reasons for the reduction, including: eight hours of staff training was exhausting—it was especially hard on the committee, who had to arrive at least an hour early in order to do setup, and stay after to do take-down; and it was hard on workshop presenters, who had to squeeze their workshop setup into a very full day of activities in which they were expected to participate. In addition, many of the staff are part-time, with commitments which conflicted with their required attendance at this full eight hour day.

The schedule for the day has varied considerably over the years, with each committee trying to respond to suggestions and reactions to previous SDDs. There were usually from one to three workshop sessions, several speakers or panel presentations, an update from the Library Director, and door prizes (donated by generous staff members). Several times we included brainstorming sessions.

There have been some notable deviations. One SDD was devoted to learning about Jackson County government. The day included a tour of the departments housed in the courthouse, presentations to the whole group by department directors from outlying departments, and a large packet of handouts from the departments. We devoted another SDD to an "Open Space" format: A whole group meeting at the beginning of the day created the list of issues to be discussed. Each issue was then addressed by a small group of those interested in the issue. The immediate result was a 41 page document including the recorder's notes for each of the discussion groups. The long range re-

sults were many, including the development of a vision statement, the availability of Spanish language brush-up classes, more emphasis on recycling, distribution of the weekly staff newsletter by mail to substitutes, and many more.

There have also been some days that required flexibility to make last minute changes. One of the most successful days was Caroline B. Cooney's last minute availability as a speaker. She more than achieved our objectives: she talked about books (she fired up many to read the books), she gave us the sense of being a unified group of people with a common vision, she entertained, she enthralled.


There have been many high points: when Kitty Griffiths shared with us her feelings and experiences with her outreach patrons; when Anne Guevara and Walt Wright booktalked us into an immediate need to read those books and find out what happened; when Jim Schepke gave us a vision of public library service to children in the twenty-first century; when Mari Brabbin showed us that change, both good and bad, is something we can prepare for; the naming of our Employee of the Year; the skit in which a real Medford police officer discovered part way through the skit that he was the bad guy (as directed by the script, he asked who had checked out a library book).

There have been some low points: the poorly lighted, acoustically and chair-challenged church basement where we held one SDD is a notable one. However the most notable low point may well be the SDD we didn't have. When we were automating our catalog and circulation system, closing a branch at a time in order to barcode all of the books, planning to close the Medford Headquarters Library for a week for barcoding in the spring, we all agreed that it was too much: too much for the library patrons to have the library closed ANOTHER day, too much for the staff to have to prepare and attend the usual spring SDD, so we canceled it. It was a good decision, for all of the above reasons. It was a bad decision, we discovered, because by the next fall SDD we had many morale problems, a sense of division into splinter groups, an "us versus them" frame of mind. The consensus of the management team was that NOT having the spring SDD had fragmented the staff, had in some non-measurable way lost us our sense of common vision, purpose, and pride. We promised ourselves to schedule two SDDs a year. The loss, we felt, was more than the gain. That worked for many years, but not forever. Nothing does.

SDD waxed, and now it has waned. Faced with the massive training requirements of migration from a homegrown automated system to Polaris and with the intensive planning and preparation for rebuilding 15 library buildings, we agreed to cancel the fall, 1999 SDD, and to decide later whether or not to have one in spring, 2000.

Although many Jackson County Library staff members consider Staff Development Day and staff training to be synonymous, they are not. SDD has always been only one of many ways in which JCLS staff receive training. Many staff members attend state and national conferences, some are presenters at state and regional conferences and workshops, and many staff members attend in-house training opportunities.

The strength of Staff Development Day is the impact of seeing all 150 of us together in one room, and of realizing we are all working together for the same goal: to provide the best possible library service to the people of Jackson County.

The challenge of Staff Development Day is to achieve the goals of SDD for every single one of the 150 people who attend. 

Anne Billeter is the Collection Development Manager of Jackson County Library System. She served on the SDD Committee for many years, while wearing her "staff development" hat.

Common Ground Rules for Open Space Discussion Groups

The Law of Two Feet

An open space meeting has four guidelines:

1. Whoever comes are the right people.
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time. Creativity and innovation never run by the clock.
4. When it's over, it's over.

The one overarching law, the Law of Two Feet: If at any time during our time together you are neither learning nor contributing, use them to go elsewhere.

Continuing Education Stakeholders Meeting Report

by *Mary Ginnane*
Oregon State Library
Chair, OLA Continuing Education Committee

On October 21, 1999, representatives of over 28 library education providers, library organizations, and Oregon Library Association units participated in the OLA Continuing Education Committee's meeting of library continuing education stakeholders. The goal of the meeting was to establish dialogue between the OLA Continuing Education Committee and the education provider community for planning and communication purposes. After a keynote address by Dr. Gary Jensen, Director of the Western Oregon University library and past president of the Oregon Library Association, the agenda included the following planning activities:

- 1) reports from each organization about what works in providing library educational opportunities;
- 2) brainstorming about the challenges in providing continuing education;
- 3) developing solutions for the association and the CE committee, for libraries, and for education providers; and
- 4) prioritizing the solutions.

What Works

More than an hour was spent hearing reports about what works in providing library continuing education. Patterns were noticeable in the reports. Highlights and recommendations included:

- Vendors providing functionality training
- Opportunity for development through committee work
- Opening up of in-house training to other libraries
- Electronic advertising reaches people
- Geography makes a difference in opportunities; advantage of being local to certain areas/groups
- Success with taking training to established groups as a method of delivery
- Improvement over last 15 years: there is now an MLS program; many groups sponsor education opportunities
- Some libraries budgeting for staff development
- Cultivate local talent for teaching CE workshops (peer teachers)
- Consortium cooperation provides development opportunities through CE components and shared funding
- CE supported through the association annual conference and committee structure: committee work and workshops sponsored by committees
- Regional association's meetings are a development opportunity with guest speakers
- Scholarship program for support staff
- Focus on direct service in training topics
- Try for geographic equity by holding workshops at least once a year in Central Oregon, Coast, etc.
- Low cost, one-day conference for support staff provides alternative to OLA conference attendance
- Focus on varying levels of expertise
- Mix focus on practical with vision/principles education
- Internet-based distance learning advantages are: flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and access even for rural libraries
- Oregon good at year-round training, gives all staff opportunities to attend
- Experience shows that continuing education needs to be convenient, affordable, relevant, and to use a variety of marketing techniques
- MLS program means increasing demand for CE to complement formal education, and provide networking for students
- Teleconference downlinks are convenient
- Committees plan specific, focused instruction for members
- Providing CE at local point of need

- Right topic at right time
- Improved communication opportunities: electronic mailing list, bi-monthly Hotline, CE web page
- CE driven by resource sharing in recent years

The Challenges

The challenges in providing library continuing education were categorized under broad headings of technology, publicity, time, costs, geography, content, and coordination of opportunities. A catch-all category for other comments was also created. A sampling of challenges from this "other" category follows. The complete listing of the challenges will be posted on the Continuing Education page on the OLA web site.

- Securing informative, dynamic instructors
- Determining the most appropriate structure and/or format for a presentation
- Finding locations to accommodate large groups and multiple sessions
- Identifying local talent
- Repeat sessions/stagger so all staff can attend
- Finding locations to provide hands-on computer training
- Leadership to inspire unmotivated staff to want CE
- Establish standards for effective CE
- Prioritize CE needs
- Follow-up for participants: reinforcement on the job
- Folks working toward a degree program cannot transfer the credits from institution to institution
- Accreditation from private providers

Prioritized Solutions

Ideas for solutions to the identified challenges were individually developed by the participants. Similar ideas were then clustered under broad headings of solutions for OLA and the CE Committee, solutions for libraries, and solutions for education providers. Participants used the "dot prioritization method" to identify which solutions they thought were most important to accomplish. The prioritized solutions list follows. The number in brackets preceding each item represents the number of dot votes that solution received. The reference in parentheses following each item represents which group should implement the solution:

[23] Establish core competencies and CE standards, and an educational program to support achievement; communicate education needs to achieve competencies to providers (OLA; libraries)

[19] Develop a "one stop shopping" web site for all CE with links to online registration, and course descriptions (OLA/CE Committee; education providers)

[15] Create and maintain a central calendar of CE Events (OLA /CE Committee)

[14] Establish a speakers bureau and a local experts database (OLA/CE Committee; libraries)

[13] Support CE through budget, time off, substitutes etc. (libraries)

[13] Share resources: faculty, facilities, programs, marketing, names of good presenters, and hot topics (education providers)

[7] Structure advancement based on education; make CE a job requirement (libraries)

[7] Consider "Summer Institutes" (week-long intensive training (education providers)

[6] Develop structures for libraries to share cost and planning efforts to benefit groups of libraries; communicate planned events (libraries)

[6] Develop sequences of CE programs which can be repeated, including programs for library technicians (education providers)

[5] Offer combination of workshops and distance education; make commitment to distance education (education providers)

[5] Exploit vendors (education providers)

[4] Take sessions to all parts of state (education providers)

[4] Create a liaison network for disseminating information (OLA; education providers)

[4] Improve communication and publicity efforts (OLA /CE Committee)

[3] Make sure technology allows cross-library sharing, and receipt of education (libraries)

[3] Open MLS program classes for CE credit (education providers)

[3] Convene a formal summit of educational institutions to work out transfer of credit issues (education providers)

[2] Work with regional partners in Washington and Idaho (OLA /CE Committee)


[2] Explore sources of grant funding to develop and send workshops to each region (education providers)

[1] Hire a CE Coordinator (OLA /CE Committee)

[1] Plan in-service days and coordinate so others can attend; close library to avoid conflicts (libraries)

[1] Look for diverse sources of CE beyond traditional such as vendors, out-of-state, distance education (libraries)

Next Steps

The participation of all who attended provided valuable perspectives and ideas to the OLA Continuing Education Committee. The committee's next steps include sharing information from the CE stakeholders meeting, gathering more input, deciding which ideas for solutions are most achievable, and incorporating the solutions into a plan of action. The Continuing Education page of the OLA web site will contain the full transcription of the information collected at the meeting, and will be used to communicate action plans and progress reports. The address is www.olaweb.org/con-ed.shtml. 

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Organizational Participants in the CE Stakeholders Meeting

ALBANY PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGE AND RESEARCH LIBRARIES

EASTERN OREGON LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF LIBRARY
AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

MARYLHURST UNIVERSITY, LIBRARY INFORMATION
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

MULTNOMAH COUNTY LIBRARY

NET ASSETS

OCLC

ORBIS

OREGON LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

OLA CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE

OLA INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM COMMITTEE

OLA LIBRARY INSTRUCTION ROUND TABLE

OLA PUBLIC LIBRARY DIVISION

OLA PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

OLA REFERENCE ROUNDTABLE

OLA SUPPORT STAFF DIVISION

OLA TECHNICAL SERVICES ROUND TABLE

OLA VISION 2010 COMMITTEE

OREGON STATE LIBRARY

OREGON UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

PORTALS

PORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY

PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SOUTHERN OREGON LIBRARY FEDERATION

SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON,
SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

VALLEY LINK

WASHINGTON COUNTY COOPERATIVE LIBRARY SERVICES

WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY,
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY,
DIVISION OF EXTENDED AND SUMMER STUDIES

*Thanks to Becky Beter, Oregon State Library,
for transcribing the meeting flipchart notes.*

LINCC Conference

(Continued from page 3)

The rooms are too large and the screens are too difficult to see from the back of the room. We now plan our programs to be introductions to topics or overviews, and there have been fewer complaints from disappointed staff.

Minimize the administrative work by simplification.

At LINCC we have tried to simplify one or two things each year to reduce the amount of time spent on details. For example, we used to spend at least one Conference Committee meeting every year trying to think of a theme and catchy name for the conference, and then we had to buy or beg a graphic design to represent the new theme. Last year we came up with the theme *LINCC to Learning* and we liked it so much that from now on we will stick to with it and call each conference *LINCC to Learning [YEAR]*. We have found that the "theme" really didn't have much impact on program development and a consistent name/design will build name recognition over time.

A number of other details have been streamlined over time: we have eliminated printed name-tags (folks who want them can make up their own on site) and we give a default (vegetarian) meal to those who don't select a lunch choice to cut down on follow-up phone calls. We don't track or enforce attendance at individual sessions. We set up each room for 90 chairs and let people decide on the spot which session to attend. If a room is full, they can bring in another chair, stand or attend a different session. We do ask people to mark their workshop choices when they fill out the registration card so we can plan for numbers of handouts to copy—and we find that some speakers really want to know how many folks they will be addressing—but we stress that these numbers are only approximations.

21st Century

(Continued from page 6)

Finally, librarians and support staff alike will need to demonstrate greater flexibility if we are to compete successfully in today's volatile information environment. To achieve flexibility, we must maximize creative potential. And this we do by jettisoning the rigid hierarchical structures that defined our libraries in the past and replacing them with structures that create new opportunities for librarians and support staff to work together collaboratively and responsibly.

By working together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust librarians and support staff alike will

Set up a template for the program brochure and then reuse it each year.

One of the significant overhead costs of the LINCC conference has been the design, preparation and printing of the program and registration card. This year we created a standard template which we hope to be able to reuse easily next year with minimal editing (facilitated by the decision to keep the same name/graphic identity as mentioned above). We also decided to photocopy the registration card in-house and saved those printing costs. Once we decided that black ink would work for this card, the decision was easy.

Investigate new technologies for advertising and registration.

This year for the first time we set up a link from the LINCC web site to the conference program and registration card, and then advertised the link on *LIBS-OR*. We are not yet able to take online registrations, but a significant number of folks have printed out the form from the web site and registered this way. It is our hope that eventually this will allow us to print and mail fewer registration forms.

Set up a sample budget using a spreadsheet program.

Last year we set up a sample budget for the conference with several variables allowing us to adjust each variable and see how the outcome affected the price of registration. We modeled attendance at 250 and 300 and then used several different registration fees to see how much revenue would be raised at each attendance level. We could then subtract different costs for food (also set up as a variable) and other expenses and thus determine the amount we could afford to spend on speakers. We have learned to plan for the smallest likely number of attendees in terms of revenue, adjust the attendance fee to cover basic expenses, and then manage speaker costs accordingly. ☐

forge exciting new careers, build new models of information delivery, and ensure that the library continues to play a central role in the information environment of the next century. ☐

An earlier version of this article appeared as Support Staff in an Age of Change: The Challenges of Tomorrow in the January/February 1999 issue of Library Mosaics.

Professional Development

(Continued from page 7)

What Librarians and Library Administrators Can Do

1. Budget for support staff development.
2. Encourage and motivate your staff to expand their professional views.
3. Provide new training opportunities for those who are interested.
4. Assist support staff who want to participate in organizations like OLA/SSD.
5. Provide opportunities for support staff who have attended professional development to “give back” to

their peers through brown bag lunches or in other creative ways.

6. Reward those who show initiative. Think about how you treat staff who are challenging the boundaries of support staff/librarians.
7. Evaluate how you recognize your staff—both librarians and support staff.
8. Remember, support staff are professionals too! **Q**

Unlocking Potential

(Continued from page 8)

It's Not Easy and It's Not Cheap

“No pain, no gain” is another old axiom that seems apropos to an aggressive staff development program. To date, we have encountered the following challenges:

- Meetings, conferences, and field trips impact scheduling, and can compete with direct service to our clients. For instance, it's clear that we will have to increase the budget for substitutes in the reference department.
- Transitioning to a goal-directed organization that encourages creativity and innovation can be difficult for some management styles. It's a lot easier to just tell someone what to do!
- Communication takes both time and commitment.

If You Can Imagine It, You Can Do It

We have all seen great library programs that lack adequate funding, and we have seen well funded library

programs that are missing some critical ingredient. Funding doesn't seem to be the primary problem. I am convinced that the critical component is an ongoing commitment to development and innovation.

I am concerned that the library landscape is changing much too rapidly for any library to simply embrace yesterday's approach to our profession... or even today's approach. I believe that the institutions that will do best in the coming years are those that seek change, rather than those that react to change.

At Deschutes Public Library we are convinced that the best method to anticipate and adapt to this changing world of technology is through staff development. We are convinced that, now more than ever, a library is only as good as its staff.

Providing the necessary level of staff support is much more than a fringe benefit, it is the heart of library development in these turbulent times. **Q**



Bend Public Library