

Chapter 85

Providing Professional Development Opportunities to Staff in Tough Economic Times: A Guide for Administrators

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ABSTRACT

Libraries today have been feeling budget crunches due to decreases in funds and increases in materials costs and salaries of their employees. There are also pressures on libraries of all types to respond to new technologies and modes of knowledge acquisition. Because of these constant changes, library staff and administrators must work together to develop comprehensive, sustainable training programs that benefit both employees and the library as a whole. Administrators can foster this by developing their libraries into learning organizations. This chapter will outline how library administration can keep costs in check while providing a vibrant professional development program for their employees.

INTRODUCTION

Library administrators have pressures from various areas from both inside and outside the walls of the library. There are stresses on their organization due to new modes of knowledge acquisition, changes in technologies and standards in librarianship, and the expectations of the communities they belong

to. Library budgets are also shrinking, and this enhances these strains on the entire organization. Libraries, however, need to respond to the constant changes through staff education and professional development, or the library will not be successful. Library staff should always be dedicated to responding to new technologies and techniques in library science. How can they be productive, however, when library budgets do not always

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allow them to participate in the various forms of professional development and show growth?

It is extremely important that library administration is aware of and encourage professional development opportunities for their staff. Being aware of what is out there allows you to be able to provide professional development in a manner that encourages professional growth for your staff and gives you the opportunity to budget properly for learning. This chapter will provide you with the background information that you will need to foster, create, and sustain a budget-friendly professional development program for your staff.

ADMINISTRATORS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Responsibility of You, the Library Administrator, to Foster Employee Growth through Professional Development

Libraries have always had a need for highly efficient and trained staff that can effectively perform their job tasks. However, in an era of tighter budgets and more demands on the skills of your staff, there is less and less money for professional development in order to keep pace with the rapid changes in the library profession. There is actually MORE need for training of staff due to changes in technology, globalization of information, and changes in standards in libraries (Chan & Auser, 2006). Job descriptions are changing with the trends in the profession and will be very different five years or more from now and the pressure to keep up and stay relevant is greater than ever. Librarians need to be able to respond to these changes quickly and seamlessly in order to provide the best service to their patrons. Library patrons expect staff to be able to respond to most every need. And library staffs have an expectation for training in the newest technologies and trends

in library and information science. So how does an administrator react to these needs and help provide the best educational experience for their employees?

As a member of library administration, you can see the need for continuing professional development and the need for training of staff on a daily basis. There are obvious benefits to the organization, including an increase of the quality and quantity of work of the employee; the elimination of the need for close supervision, allowing for supervisors to make better use of their own time; the improvement of staff morale and job satisfaction by creating a more independent staff; and the greatest benefit – the increased efficiency of the organization by having a resourceful and flexible staff. Having your staff trained to the needs of the organization is important to the success of projects and the ability to meet a library's mission. If you are not on board to provide effective training and professional development opportunities for your staff, then you hazard the chance that your organization will not be successful (Callahan & Watson, 1995).

You, the director, manager, etc., are the catalyst for the success of your staff. As that leader, you need to challenge the skills of your employees and encourage and support them in their efforts to become lifelong learners. The better the staff, the better the services you provide. That being said, professional development should be an individual's own course of enlightenment. You need to be able to mentor your staff through the quagmire of opportunities so that the institution gets the benefits of their education and the employee benefits by furthering their career.

How do you foster this environment? Blakiston (2011) argues the need for libraries to transform into a "learning organization," that is, an organization in which "people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free,

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