Approaches to Developing Competencies in Research Libraries

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ABSTRACT
This article reviews the competencies needed by librarians in view of the significant changes that are occurring within the research library environment. It then discusses some of the methods employed by research libraries to improve librarians' performance and effectiveness and gives particular attention to internships as a proven approach to staff development. Among the factors that place staff development high on the library's agenda are current emphases on quality and improved library services.

INTRODUCTION
No collection of articles on managing human resources in research libraries would be complete without a discussion of staff development. This has become a newsworthy subject in recent years as numerous articles appearing in newspapers and business journals have described the growing investments that corporations are making in staff training and development. Some have estimated corporate expenditures in this area at more than $30 billion annually (Rosow & Zager, 1988, p. 25).

The library profession's interest in staff development parallels the interest found in other professions and throughout higher education. As the mandatory retirement age for faculty has been lifted, many universities have sought—and in some cases created—programs to enable faculty to update their subject knowledge, to explore interdisciplinary linkages, and to learn new teaching methods.
past eras of mandatory retirement, many of these individuals would have probably been left to spend their remaining years in positions of far less consequence than is now the case.

Staff development and in-service training are, of course, activities that have a very long history within the library profession. Prior to the wide recognition of library science as a legitimate field of study, many librarians were trained and educated on the job. Indeed, a few of the training programs based in large urban public libraries became the bases of programs which were subsequently taught in library schools.

It should also be acknowledged that, for many years, library schools have attempted to meet the continuing education needs of the profession. Most schools offer short courses and workshops for practitioners, and some offer advanced certificate and even doctoral programs. The latter, however, are not practice oriented and, therefore, are not within the purview of this article.

Beyond the continuing education opportunities provided by library schools are a variety of programs offered by professional associations (e.g., the American Library Association [ALA], Special Libraries Association, Medical Library Association, and Association of Research Libraries [ARL]) and by corporations and consulting firms. Many of the field's major vendors now offer workshops for library staff. Several of these are provided for continuing education credits (CEUs). Preconference workshops, particularly those scheduled in relation to ALA and Association of College and Research Libraries meetings, have also become popular in recent years.

Strong interest in staff development and in-service training is also being reflected within the structure of some of the larger libraries. In many cases, library personnel officers now have the added responsibilities for training and staff development. In a few instances, additional professional staff have been hired for this purpose (Jurow & Webster, 1990, p. 143). Much of this activity has been fueled by the so-called technological imperative which seems to be driving librarianship and information science. The changes that have occurred and are occurring with respect to information technology are so dramatic and so rapid that many librarians and support staff are truly suffering from future shock. These individuals must have methods available through which they can first restore feelings of security and confidence and, second, discover ways by which they can become masters of at least a portion of the technologies available in research-oriented universities. Libraries that have invested in establishing such training and development programs are in a position to "grow their own" experts in the technology area, just as they are doing with respect to preservation. In fact, the success
of research libraries in developing, over a relatively short period of
time, staff expertise in paper preservation attests to the effectiveness
of library-based training and staff development.

A distinction needs to be made, however, between training and
professional development. There is considerable evidence that both
library schools and libraries are good at doing the former, but the
evidence of success is not as clear with respect to the latter. Most
librarians come into research library positions equipped with a variety
of important skills, with a commitment to certain professional values,
with some understanding of the role of libraries within the university,
and a more or less strong service orientation. One's first professional
position in a research library (and possibly the librarian's second
or third position) certainly provides the opportunity to sharpen one's
skills because these are typically exercised in the daily performance
of one's responsibilities. But it is not clear whether commensurate
development occurs with respect to value clarification, a stronger
service orientation, greater insight into the political context in which
the library operates on campus, or a keener understanding of the
nature of information and its importance to the university community.
To phrase the question differently, one might ask how should research
libraries provide comparable opportunities for professional
development with respect to competencies and abilities which are
not task oriented? How can we help our librarians become "assertive
risk-takers and synthesizers..., able to function in an atmosphere of
ambiguity and change" (Woodsworth & Lester, 1991, p. 207)?

How can we guarantee that all of our librarians are informed about
the issues of the information age—the structures for publication and
distribution, information economics, government information policy,
direct and indirect constraints on access to information, and the influence
of information technologies? (A Statement from the Research Library
Committee, 1990)

Research libraries have attempted to address such questions
through a variety of strategies and programs. These include sabbatical
leave programs, professional development leaves, release time (with
or without travel funds) to attend conferences and workshops,
regularly scheduled in-house seminars, visiting consultant and
lectureship programs, and internships. In addition, programs for staff
exchange, job rotation, and mentoring might also be included under
the rubric of human resource development. Of course, no one of these
initiatives would be sufficient to solve the professional development
riddle, but most library administrators might agree that, in
combination, these activities lead to a more informed and
professionally competent staff. If this objective is, in fact, achieved
in libraries, it is achieved more by accident than by design. Sheila
Creth (1990) stated in a recent article that if she were conducting
a performance evaluation for the library profession in staff development, she would give a grade of C minus, "with many libraries deserving a failing grade and a very few deserving an A" (p. 131).

Among the criticisms that could be leveled at professional development programs in research libraries are, first, their general lack of focus. It is assumed that, in offering a smorgasbord of staff development opportunities, staff development occurs. While there is considerable evidence that conference and workshop attendance promotes networking and the formation of interest groups, it is questionable whether the new knowledge and ideas gained at these sessions are imported into the library organization and contribute to desired organizational change. Second, there is even less evidence that staff who attend workshops (such as those sponsored by the Office of Management Services of ARL) become inspired and energized and are able to put these new ideas into practice upon their return to the real world of research librarianship. The results in these cases are similar to those experienced by individuals who take a very intensive foreign language course but who then have little opportunity to practice what they have learned: their fluency quickly degenerates and eventually is entirely lost.

**RATIONALE FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The rationale for professional staff development programs in libraries lies in the very nature of a profession. To the extent that all professions are based on a body of knowledge and research findings, the fact that this knowledge base is continuously expanding requires that organizations and individual practitioners seek ways of mastering this knowledge and applying it. Not to do so will eventually lead to professional obsolescence. According to Rosie Albritton (1990): "In order to function effectively as a professional, one must have continuing learning experiences to reinforce his or her formal education" (p. 238).

Betty Stone (1986) included under the rubric of continuing library education all learning activities, formal as well as informal, which individuals undertake to upgrade their knowledge, competencies, attitudes, and understanding to improve their performance as librarians and to enrich their careers. "Professional staff development" however, suggests a more focused approach, one that is bounded by the organizational context in which one finds oneself. It is much more directly tied, for example, to the organization's corporate strategy for dealing with change. This is a critical issue for research libraries in which large proportions of professional staff are tenured or hold continuous appointments and where staff turnover is limited. In these cases, it is difficult to import staff with new skills
and expertise. The so-called "graying of university faculty" is a university library problem as well.

This predicament is another compelling argument for professional staff development programs. Although professional development is, in the last analysis, a matter of individual choice, this choice is not made in a vacuum. Professionals are influenced by the organization's culture and peer group factors. It is in the library's interest, therefore, to create an environment in which staff development is valued and facilitated. Organizational commitment to this activity is measured not by the size of the library's travel budget, but by administrative support for, and recognition of, professional development.

**COMPETENCIES FOR RESEARCH LIBRARIANS**

If one accepts the view that master's degree programs in library and information science prepare individuals primarily for entrance into the field—that is to say, for entry level positions—it follows that the competencies needed for research libraries must be achieved through practice and by means of other developmental opportunities. These opportunities range from more formal course work in library/information science or other disciplines, participation in internships, and independent study and reflection, to working with an expert in the field who acts as a mentor. Those research libraries which are fortunate enough to have schools of library and information science on the campus are well positioned to take advantage of the school's faculty and resources in developing programs to meet the continuing education needs of research librarians. However, the recent decline in the number of accredited library schools and the even smaller number of schools able to offer the doctorate suggest that a very limited number of research libraries can avail themselves of this option. There is, furthermore, the perception, on the part of many research librarians, of a gap between the rapidly evolving educational and technological needs of practitioners and the ability of library school faculties and programs to meet these needs.

But what specific competencies are needed? Anne Woodsworth and June Lester (1991) recently reviewed the literature on the educational requirements of research library staff and found that requirements seem to fit more accurately the traditional research library than the library of the future. Rather than indicate new curricular directions, the literature about educational competencies tends to confirm the validity of existing programs and course offerings.

To a great extent, library school curricula reflect the types of jobs currently available in libraries—e.g., reference, cataloging, acquisitions, collection development, and database searching. How
can one fault the schools for playing to a market created by and for libraries? The positions that exist in libraries are invariably tied to their functional organizations and management's vision of their nature or purpose. Among the questions that research library administrators are wrestling with are the changing definition of what a research library is (what are the indicators of a library's "researchness"?), the impact of information technologies on the library's mission, and the changing system of scholarly communication. As tentative answers to these questions are developed, library administrators are projecting new or revised visions for their libraries. As campus administrators and library staff adopt this vision, new organizational structures will emerge and traditional positions in libraries will be redesigned to reflect the library's new role (or at least a somewhat different role).

Several writers have pointed out that much of the ambiguity surrounding the changing mission and role of research libraries is due precisely to the fact that they are in a major state of transition. They are trying to maintain traditional programs and services and invest in the preservation of extensive paper-based collections at the same time as they seek to become so-called electronic libraries or libraries without walls. To identify comprehensively all of the staff competencies needed in this environment is to attempt to hit a rapidly moving target. If library administrators are unable to state with some degree of certainty and conviction what these competencies are, how can they expect library schools to teach them to present and future research librarians?

One approach to answering this question is to break it down for closer analysis. If it is true that professional education consists of three elements: (1) the imparting of a body of knowledge based in part on research; (2) instruction in a defined set of skills (for example, problem solving, computer literacy, question negotiation); and (3) socialization with respect to the norms, values, and attitudes appropriate to a particular profession, it should be possible to construct a strategy for providing opportunities for lifelong professional development which defines the responsibilities of each of the players—librarian, educational agency, and library organization.

It might be hypothesized, for example, that the various career stages in the life of a librarian would determine the most appropriate agency to meet one's development needs. Assuming that a career can be segmented into five milestones—entry level, maturation/assimilation, mid-career achievement, reassessment plateau, and career fulfillment—it seems logical that the role of library schools and other graduate degree programs would eventually decline as a source of
professional/career development, whereas the responsibility of libraries themselves and other continuing education agencies (for example, sponsors of workshops, conferences, and similar offerings) would increase (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Professional development continuum](image)

Although formal education is an option throughout one's career, the diagram suggests a greater reliance on workshops, short courses, and library-sponsored events simply because of increasing job demands which typically occur later in one's career.

Just as time constraints and the nature of the librarian's need for professional development influence one's choice of development options, so also does the content (knowledge, skills, or attitudes) of one's learning objectives influence the selection of the best strategy for achieving them. For example, formal course work combined with personal study and research might be the best vehicles for acquiring or deepening knowledge of a discipline, for learning about information policy, bibliography, organizational psychology, and similar broad professional issues. With regard to skill development, however, workshops, short courses, mentoring, or internships might be the best approach. These would also appear to be effective methods for promoting attitudinal changes such as a heightened service orientation, entrepreneurship, and stronger professional values (see Figure 2).
### Strategies for Research Libraries

Because professional development is such a multifaceted activity and there are a variety of avenues available for development, what approaches are most appropriate for research libraries that seek to provide development for their professional staff? It is certainly not realistic for any library to assume full programmatic responsibility for development or continuing education. Libraries should seek partnerships with other educational agencies, foundations, professional associations, and scholarly societies to meet the educational/developmental needs of their staffs. Establishing such relationships, however, inevitably will require commitment by the library. It will need some sort of release time/developmental leave policy for staff, flexibility in scheduling work assignments, and other arrangements of a formal or informal nature with the agency providing the instruction. A form of "partnership" should also be established between the library administration and those librarians who wish to pursue developmental opportunities. To the extent that the library agrees to provide release time and possibly financial support, the librarian should agree to take full advantage of the opportunity in terms of his or her own growth and development and its ultimate impact on library performance.

There will be numerous occasions, however, when the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by library staff are such that existing
sources of development (packaged workshops, CE courses, conference programs, graduate course work, self study) are not sufficient to meet the library's need or the collective needs of individual librarians. In these cases, the library should have a strategy in place. This staff development plan should be structured around a needs assessment and the library's corporate vision. It should address both contemporary needs for staff development as well as the longer term human resource development needs of the library organization.

It is assumed that policies which provide opportunities for sabbaticals, development leave, or research leave already exist within the parent institution and that librarians qualify for most, if not all, of these privileges. Leaves of absence which are granted under this policy become the mechanism through which the library enables its librarians to acquire new knowledge or to deepen or refresh existing knowledge and those skills that are rapidly becoming part and parcel of the librarian's tool box—e.g., computer literacy, preservation techniques, instructional design, research methods, and financial management.

What is often not provided for in libraries, however, is the opportunity for staff to maintain the knowledge acquired through professional development programs or to practice the new skills which they have acquired. It is extremely frustrating for staff who are energized and intellectually refreshed through a continuing education experience to return to jobs which have not been redesigned in years and which offer little or no opportunity to practice what has been learned (Shaughnessy, 1988). Libraries waste considerable sums of money on staff development programs that lead to zero growth for the librarian and have virtually no impact on the organization.

In view of the dramatic changes that are taking place in research libraries—new paradigms which emphasize access over ownership, new technological imperatives, high speed networks, electronic publishing, multimedia transmission—these developments suggest that libraries may no longer afford to wait for relevant courses to be offered, for certain prepackaged programs to be developed, or for various professional and scholarly associations to offer workshops on these topics. To the extent that research libraries are on the cutting edge of these developments, they are positioned to exercise a leadership role that few others can match. Consequently, they are obliged, in many instances, to "grow their own" experts and get the most out of existing staff. To use an analogy with professional sports, successful library administrators should not waste time speculating about future draft choices but make championship players out of the team that's on the field.
Among the elements to be included in the library's staff development strategy are all of those that have already been mentioned—except for the weaknesses and problems that characterize many existing programs. Perhaps the overriding weakness in these programs is the lack of clear objectives. How will attendance at a particular workshop or enrollment in a particular course help the librarian or help the library? While one might argue that knowledge for the sake of knowledge is sufficient justification for the library's and the librarian's investment in a program, factors such as accountability, relevance, and "fit" with both individuals and organizational goals are also important considerations. By making professional staff development a key strategy leading to organizational change, library administrators can transform it from being viewed as a personal and sometimes whimsical entitlement to an important corporate program.

A second weakness in existing staff development programs is fragmentation and the lack of focus. Individual librarians are sometimes tempted to structure their professional growth around committee assignments in professional associations. Committee appointments, however, are sometimes based on factors such as convenience, nomination by a third party, or availability. None of them takes into account the librarian's longer term goals.

Many staff development programs also fail in the sense that, from an individual librarian's perspective, they are not cumulative in nature. They do not build in a step-by-step fashion on previous learning opportunities. The workshops offered by the ARL's Office of Management Services (OMS) offer a rare exception. Many advanced programs offered by the OMS do build on those offered at less advanced levels.

Finally, most of the programs available to librarians do not provide sufficient opportunity for self-assessment, for inquiry into one's personal value system, or for self discovery. It is very difficult to plan a direction for individual growth without knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses and without the base line from which growth will occur.

A library's staff development program, therefore, should seek to avoid these problems and attempt to provide a variety of learning opportunities. This is particularly important because an individual's learning objectives—knowledge, skills, or the development of different attitudes—may best be met by different types of programs.

According to Willis and Dubin (1990, pp. 308-09), a multidimensional approach to staff development is useful for several reasons. First, the professional's need for updating will vary depending on specific job-related domains. Second, depending on the stage of one's
career, certain development options will be more attractive and useful than others. Third, learning theory indicates that some instructional methodologies are more effective than others, depending on the outcomes to be achieved.

Given the range of opportunities available for continuing education on the one hand, and the diversity of ability levels, staff needs and interests, and the library's overall direction on the other, how can research libraries construct a coherent focused program for professional staff development? One answer to this question would be to set reasonable and realistic objectives and to begin with a small group of librarians who, over time, might become agents of organizational change. This group could constitute an institute within the library (similar to those found in academic departments) or could be placed in a structured internship or be given some other designation, depending on the nature of the group. Recent experiments in library internships at Michigan and Missouri have focused on promising members of the professional staff having just a few years' experience. Other internships have been oriented toward middle and senior library managers, with the best known of the latter being the highly selective internships sponsored and funded by the Council on Library Resources.

Obviously, the purposes of these staff development programs will vary with the level, experience, and competence of the staff involved. To illustrate, midcareer librarians will need opportunities that address issues relating to professional obsolescence, whereas librarians with few years of experience may need programs which can sharpen analytical skills, help them better understand political processes, or provide greater insight into the changing role of the library in a research oriented university. It is likely that a range of programs will be needed to address these issues, as well as the question of professional obsolescence which Fossum and Arvey (1990) have defined as occurring "when tasks, duties and responsibilities require change in magnitudes or directions beyond the job proficiencies of employees who perform them" (p. 61).

The most prevalent approach to professional development has been the "update" model proposed by Cyril Houle in 1983. This model suggests that professionals avoid obsolescence by taking responsibility for engaging in learning activities to keep pace with the growth of knowledge and new technologies. Others, however, have indicated that, although the update model continues to dominate continuing professional education, it is not sufficient to ensure professional competence. Whereas the acquisition of new knowledge does provide the foundation for enhanced practice, it is questionable whether new knowledge alone will guarantee adequate performance
Professional competence is typically action oriented and therefore is demonstrated by what professionals do, not simply by what they know (Queeney & Smutz, 1990).

**Program Elements**

Institutions that elect the institute or internship approach to staff development will be able to reach staff in a more systematic and structured fashion. There are also disadvantages to this approach, however, such as extended time commitments of trainers or administrators and staff disunity brought on by the selection process. The latter is less likely to occur if the selection criteria are publicized and if the entire plan for staff development is presented for review and comment. It is also important to emphasize that this will be an ongoing program and that, as some staff “graduate” from the internship/institute, others will be inducted.

If one of the (often unspoken) goals of all libraries is to improve the quality of their products and processes, then it follows that the mission of staff development programs should be to facilitate the processes of learning and understanding how to improve this quality. Achieving this objective will require the use of an integrated multidimensional model, one which encompasses the cognitive, affective, and skill domains. The model that was developed at the University of Missouri was built around five major components: self-assessment, self-development, team building, mentoring, and challenging assignments. These activities were supplemented by attendance at professional conferences and university courses (Albritton, 1987, pp. 9-18). Although not all professional staff development programs must necessarily include all of these components, programs that aspire to success will surely include most of them.

In retrospect, it appears that self-assessment was a critical factor in the success of Missouri’s program and, indeed, other developmental programs. Among the variety of methods available for self-assessment are the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Human Synergistic Level 1: Life Styles Inventory, and many of the personal values inventories found in *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students*. These and other devices designed to increase self-awareness and self-insight can be self-administered and self-scored. There is no need for the scores to be known by other staff or even by the staff development officer. Maintaining a high level of privacy acts to remove participant anxiety and stimulates very honest answers.

Self-assessment with respect to one’s tendencies, values, likes and dislikes, and motivation is important for personal as well as professional growth. “[Professionals] need to reflect critically on their
own behavior, identify the ways they often inadvertently contribute to the organization's problems, and then change how they act" (Argyris, 1991, p. 100). As reflective practitioners, librarians would include in this assessment an analysis of career goals and identification of possible obstacles to attaining those goals. The time spent in this phase of professional staff development is time well spent because subsequent program components rest heavily upon the individual's insights into self and as complete and accurate a self-assessment as possible.

The second program component is self-development. It is in this phase that participants begin to formulate strategies to address gaps or weaknesses identified during the self-assessment stage. According to Kouzes and Posner (1987): "The quest for leadership is first an inner quest to discover who you are. Through self-development comes the confidence needed to lead" (p. 298). The self-development component also provides an opportunity to reflect on the fact that, in the last analysis, each librarian must take responsibility for, and be committed to, his or her own personal and professional development. Librarianship, like everyday living, is a continuous state of becoming. Some have found that keeping a daily journal or log of activities and observations is useful in tracking progress. Others have contracted with themselves, so to speak, to spend a certain number of hours each week in study and reflection.

The third component of the internship program is team building. Although it is in the nature of a profession that its members are able to function autonomously, it must also be recognized that the success of large complex organizations, such as research libraries, depends on teamwork. In an article on future research library models, emphasis was placed on the need to educate existing staff, both attitudinally and technologically, "to work in a more collaborative manner..." (emphasis added) (Woodworth, et al., 1989, p. 138). Internships cannot only provide opportunities for real teamwork, but also opportunities for simulation exercises and the practice of techniques that build trust, improve communication and listening skills, and resolve conflict. One of the interesting outcomes of successful programs, such as the ARL's Consultants' Training Program and the CLR's Senior Fellows Program, is the strong group identification that remains among participants long after the event has ended. These and other internship programs sponsored by research libraries have often featured team building simulations such as the Desert Survival Exercise and the Sub-Arctic Survival Exercise. Both are illuminating with respect to the nature of teamwork, collaboration, and intra-group dynamics. These exercises, along with real-world projects for groups, provide important information to the
members. These reflected appraisals can be used to identify areas for individual and group improvement.

Another frequent element found in professional staff development programs is mentoring. A mentor is a seasoned professional who takes an active interest in the career development of a younger or less experienced professional (Burruss-Ballard, 1990, p. 189). Through mentoring, the goals, norms, culture, and prescriptions of the organization are transmitted to the new member not impersonally but by a friend (Zey, 1984, p. 95). Mentors serve not only as role models but also as sponsors, coaches, trainers, sounding boards, and counselors. Obviously, they can contribute significantly to the growth and development of research librarians. Most library leaders who have had mentors typically attribute a great deal to their support and guidance. Library administrators need to pay more attention to the importance of mentoring and build it into their staff development programs. Mentoring can be institutionalized by making it part of the organization's culture. New professionals can be paired with knowledgeable librarians who have interest in, and interpersonal skills necessary for, mentoring (Cargill, 1989, p. 13). It is important, however, as the process is formalized, that spontaneity is not lost for the comfort levels of participants.

The final component of an internship program is a challenging job assignment, that is, an opportunity to practice what one has learned. Assignments can take the form of a special project, participation on a project-oriented task force in which members have definite roles and responsibilities, or a redesigned job. The need for challenging assignments is based on the notion that the new competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that one has acquired focus less on what the librarian currently does and more on what needs to be done. As Herb White (1983) has pointed out, the former is an exercise in "retrofitting" (p. 519).

A challenging work assignment requires the professional to combine previously acquired knowledge and skill with newly developed proficiencies to solve a problem or complete a project (Willis & Dubin, 1990, p. 310). Such assignments are also useful in helping librarians understand the difference between jobs which require the cumulation of knowledge and the progressive development of skills and those which can be mastered fairly quickly. There is an important difference, therefore, between a librarian having five years of progressively more responsible experience and one year of experience multiplied by five.

One of the interesting aspects of the University of Missouri Library's CLR-funded internship program was that all of the special assignments given to the interns were outside of the library. These
assignments were designed by various deans, a vice president, a
director of an important campus program, and the provost in
consultation with the library administration. For the most part, this
proved to be a very successful approach and provided the interns
with far more insight into the nature of the university than they
would have attained in most positions within the library.

In view of the success of internships as a component of
professional staff development in research libraries, the lessons
learned in these and similar ventures need to be incorporated and
extended throughout the library organization. Certainly research
libraries need to capitalize on innovative ideas and entrepreneurial
behaviors wherever they are found. They also stimulate creativity
and risk taking if these qualities are absent in the organization. The
enterprise required of innovative professionals "is not so much the
creative spark of genius that invents a new idea," but rather the
skill and ego strength which enable them to move beyond the formal
parameters of their job, "maneuvering through and around the
organization in sometimes risky, unique, and novel ways" (Kanter,
1983, p. 216). It is here that the library's environment or culture enters
the picture. All of the entrepreneurship, initiative, and creativity of
the librarian may go nowhere if he or she cannot get the power
to turn ideas into action. As Keith Cottam (1990) notes: "One can
be a fountain of intrapreneurial ideas, but without institutional
support there is small hope for achievement" (p. 147).

In contrast to these individuals, there are the nonentrepreneurs.
These employees tend to produce within a narrow range of
accomplishments and focus on activities clearly specified in their
job descriptions. "They stay within their identified segment and
define problems segmentally—as small, isolated, bounded pieces"
(Kanter, 1983, p. 214). It is obviously both in the organization's interest
as well as staff members' interest to break apart the boxes in which
staff, particularly professional staff, are placed and provide
opportunities for growth, for new challenges, and greater fulfillment
as librarians.

Staff Development for Improved Effectiveness

Tom Peters (1990) has repeatedly made the point that the work
force in any organization is its principal asset. "Each day its overall
level of useful skills (as well as its commitment and energy) is either
increasing or decreasing..." (p. 127). Peters goes on to recommend,
as do an increasing number of management experts, that training
must become a corporate obsession.

Most recent articles on training and staff development address
these subjects within the context of the quality of an organization's
services, products, and processes. One author has stated that quality is the most important strategic issue facing managers in the 1990s (Fortuna, 1990, p. 3). A number of universities have attempted to adopt some of the more successful corporate strategies used to improve quality, and typically these initiatives have been taken under the banner of Total Quality Management (TQM). But whatever system is used, there is no escaping the fact that improving the quality and effectiveness of organizations (including research libraries) demands an extraordinary investment in staff development. Huge (1990, p. 31) suggested that ten to fifteen hours per week for three to six months may be necessary for top management, and up to forty hours for members of project-oriented quality teams. While it is difficult to imagine any research library making such an intensive time commitment to the continuing education of its managers, there is no doubt that some commitment must be made. In the last analysis, the improvement of an organization's overall quality rests primarily on its management. Consequently, TQM or similar programs need to start with this group. Eventually, however, every member of the staff will need to be given the opportunity to upgrade his or her skills and to thereby contribute to making the library a more effective quality driven organization.

A commitment to improving the quality of library services, products, and processes is the ultimate reason for investing in staff development. It is impossible to conceive of research libraries improving their performance within the higher education environment without a well defined and focused staff development program.

REFERENCES


