Development Dollars & Sense  
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Change is here for the duration. There will be no new plateau of knowledge where we can rest. If libraries are to remain pertinent to Universities, their employees must continue to develop. This session discusses one specific step in supporting staff development at the University of Notre Dame Libraries -- the Development Dollars Program. This program annually offers staff 100 “dollars” to buy 100 hours of time for training and practice. The “sense” part of the program will highlight the relationship of development to an organization’s job designs, recruitment processes, recognition activities, and organizational structure.
Yeats had it right! Although he never used the phrase “paradigm shift,” he gave us an elegant preview of it in his poem, the Second Coming. In this poem, he describes the turmoil that occurs as the world shifts from one cycle of civilization with its rules, standards, and values to another, by the lines:

--- Things fall apart -- The center cannot hold -- Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

Looking at the dazed and confused faces of many librarians, I feel that the world of academic librarianship is in the throes of such a revolution. Librarians, who used to get a thrill out of ruffling through catalog cards and unindexed census reports -- only to extract exactly the bit of information that their patrons needed -- now must struggle to look composed as they stare at a screen full of freshly minted and barely discernible icons. Whether one is standing in reference, in cataloging (where someone is trying to apply fixed rules to fluid formats), or in an executive meeting where administrative ears are analyzing new strains of techie talk -- few can deny that librarians are struggling to hold onto their identity as information leaders. There is little doubt that librarianship is in the midst of massive change -- and that no one knows exactly who and what we will eventually be. We only know that our current organizations, procedures, policies, knowledge and work skills will not be the ones that are needed tomorrow.

In today's program, titled Development Dollars and Sense, I will briefly describe the Development Dollars program at the University of Notre Dame and will then talk about the Sense of change needed in the area of staff training and development. First I will start by describing a modest program called Development Dollars that we are currently testing at the University of Notre Dame.

DEVELOPMENT DOLLARS: Development Dollars is a rather harmless looking harbinger of change. Its title doesn't even refer to real lay-it-in-my-hand currency. It refers to a program started by the University of Notre Dame's Training and Development Committee on July 1, 1996. It was inspired by Andy Boze, the University Libraries Network Coordinator and Larry Rapagnani, the University Vice Provost for Computing. These two individuals stressed the need for a major commitment to staff development. How else, they asked, could staff succeed as information specialists.

How indeed! Looking at the literature, I discovered that computing centers are quite committed to upgrading the skills of their staff. Active too are major corporations both in the US and around the world. A 1991 ASTD (American Society for Training and Development) Benchmark Forum, which surveyed thirty-seven information dependent companies (such as IBM and AT&T), indicated that these leading companies allocated a median of 3.5% of their payroll for staff development.

The Development Dollars program represents a local effort to make a significant commitment to staff development without the benefit of new funding. The Program's
goals were to:

a) underscore the administration’s commitment to staff development by guaranteeing staff at least 5% of their time for development;

b) encourage staff to seek and attend training and development activities and to consider practice work as part of their job responsibilities;

c) offer individuals, managers, and administrators a way of quantifying the amount of time spent on development.

Because we did not have hard dollars available to distribute to staff, we gave each one a green folder with a certificate guaranteeing 100 hours for staff development. Staff could use these hours for programs offered by the Training Committee, workshops sponsored by the Office of Information Technology or the Human Resource Department, commercially sponsored programs (although there was no guarantee of funding), and for a wide array of training and development opportunities. They could also use their hours to cover practice time. This option was a crucial part of the program. It eased the conscious of overly conscientious staff who worried about spending some hours practicing new computer skills. It reminded supervisors of their need to support follow-up practice of newly gained skills.

At this point, it is not clear that the Development Dollars program has been a success. The first year’s statistics indicate that the average non-exempt staff member spent only 25.5 hours on training and development. This was far less time than the 100 hours offered. Comments also suggest that we have missed at least one other goal—securing full managerial support. Some staff have reported that their supervisors still discourage them from attending any training except that handpicked by the supervisor. In the years ahead, we hope to generate and publicize a broader array of developmental opportunities and to gain greater supervisory support.

The primary role of the Development Dollars Program was to raise internal awareness of the importance of staff training. It was like a whisper hinting at some enormous truth that managers were not yet ready to hear. A real commitment to staff development, however, will take more than symbolic money. Firm funding, time, professional expertise, and imagination will be needed to orchestrate a staff development scheme fit for a revolution.

SENSE:

Changing the Sense of staff development in an organization can help transform the very identity of the organization. It prepares staff to grasp the organizational vision and to direct learning toward a broad, but definable target. Its programs should spring from three simple questions:
Who do we want to be?

What must we know to achieve our vision?

How can we achieve this transformation?

Staff Development: Who do we want to be? Academic librarians have long yearned to be information leaders on campus. Modern library vision statements continue to voice this theme. They characterize the library as "the gateway to information resources in all formats throughout the world," staffed by "a collection of experts who provide intellectual and physical access to information," and who "identify and collaborate with strategic partners and allies in information delivery."

Each library must work with its parent organization to chart its vision. That vision should reflect and advance the overall mission of the University. Ideally, it will be part of a campus wide vision--created and shared by the computing center, faculty, and other information providers. Traditional or ground-breaking, limited or shared, all vision statements stress their library's desire to excel in the identification, collection, access and delivery of information resources regardless of source or format. Few libraries can hope to achieve these ambitions with current staff with current skills.

Staff Development: What must we know to achieve this vision?

As we look at our vision statements and goals, we need to determine what we must know to achieve them. Throughout the organization, we need to examine two questions: what is and what should be. On the broad scale, these questions are easy to ask. The fear-factor is fairly low when one asks what expertise is demanded for the organization to be first rate in assessing patron needs or in capitalizing on new technologies. Respondents can easily assume that the new skills will come from a new hire, a consultant, or someone else's department.

The fear-factor rises a bit as the assessment shifts closer to home. A strong level of organizational trust is essential before one can ask what new skills individual departments, units, or employees require now or will need for future success. In a trusting environment, however, self-assessment can offer reliable and clear insight into training and developmental needs and can help staff prepare for change.

In a trusting environment, one can use a self-assessment questionnaire to gather staff input. An excellent example of such a tool can be found in the Training Program Workbook and Kit by Carolyn Nilson. Her open-ended assessment tool asks each employee to identify the skills needed for their particular responsibilities, to rate themselves on each of these skills, and to comment on their rating for each item. This form can be adapted for individuals in positions at all levels. It can cover broad concepts as well as specific skills. Designed as a self-assessment tool, it can also be used to determine both supervisor goals for their staff and staff hopes for their supervisors.
Staff Development: How can we achieve this transformation?

No single program or series of workshops can transform an organization's corporate knowledge. Academic libraries cannot "grudgingly and creakily lurch from one stable state to the next as the world around it (us) changes." Revolutionary change is needed. Libraries must become the type of learning organizations touted by Peter Senge. We must adopt the features of a learning organization: a well-defined and overarching goal, the assumption that learning is a job responsibility, tolerance for risk-taking and mistakes, employee empowerment, and recognition and reward for learning. To me, two of these areas seem crucial in transforming libraries into organizations "constituted to learn and grow and change--." These two are: job design and recognition and reward.

Staff Development: Part of every job

Perhaps the way to most powerfully propel a library into becoming a learning organization is to incorporate learning into every job description. An OECD Working Paper titled "Sustainable Flexibility: A Perspective Study on Work, Family and Society in the Information Age" proclaims that "Technology changes the type of worker needed" and that "learning is the new focus of work". It further states that "In the information age, the worker is no longer defined in terms of a job, but in terms of cumulated learning and the capacity to apply that learning in a variety of situations..."

To recruit sustainably flexible workers, one must focus on these skills. To retain such talent, one must build time, focus, and flexibility into job descriptions.

Time:

In a cleverly titled article in the April 1997 issue of American Libraries, Jeanette Woodward discusses "Retraining the Profession, or Over the Hill at 40". In this article, she argues that all position descriptions must include appropriate computer qualifications --hands on know how for clerical positions and academic coursework or theoretical knowledge for all others. She recommends that time in the classroom become part of a normal library workday. This suggestion can be stretched even further.

In this age of turmoil, today's knowledge won't do for tomorrow. Position descriptions need explicit statements listing "enthusiasm for identifying and implementing new approaches to information access" as a requirement and "continuing education and development" as a job responsibility. Whether or not time estimates are specifically listed on the description, managers must make certain that the descriptions are realistic in their demands. They must allow individuals some time for ongoing development.

Teaching and research faculty have nine month contracts and limited classroom hours. This allows them time for research, reflection, and renewal in their areas of expertise. The same opportunity should be offered to professionals who are specializing in the explosively changing areas of library/information science. University administrators must be alerted to this need. While this goal may take decades to achieve,
library administrators must plan for more immediate relief. Time can be freed by streamlining internal procedures, report writing, and meetings, by modifying or eliminating outdated operations and services, and by clarifying the identity, authority, and accessibility of decision makers. Developmental leaves should become a viable option.

Focus:

Focus ties every individual's position to the organization's mission. From the outset individuals must understand how their work and that of their team (or unit) support the overall goals of the organization. Linking position responsibilities to the overall mission offers the employee a deeper sense of value. As Stephen Covey writes, "When people have a real sense of legacy, a sense of mattering, a sense of contribution, it seems to tap into the deepest part of their heart and soul. It brings out the best and subordinates the rest."14

Staff need to know that they are not employed to do a specific task in a specific way, but to work toward a society-supporting goal. Incorporating the institution's purpose into the individual position description offers the individual a foundation for self-development and can help sustain morale in tumultuous times of change.

Flexibility:

Position requirements are shifting from a set of established paper qualifications and activities to a set of attributes and responsibilities. For professional and nonprofessional positions alike, requirements stress flexibility. "Employees are moving from needing repetitive skills to knowing how to deal with surprises and exceptions, from depending on memory and facts to being spontaneous and creative, from risk avoidance to risk taking, from focusing on policies and procedures to building collaboration with people."15 Although technical expertise and academic credentials remain important at the time of recruitment, a demonstrated aptitude and commitment to continuing growth and the ability to adjust to change are at least as critical.

To encourage flexibility, libraries need to change the way they select personnel. They need to select first for the organization and its culture and secondly for a particular job. Jobs are changing too rapidly, and non job-related assignments (committees etc.) are too important to rely on chance. People selected should want to work in a team based learning organization focused on a particular vision.

Staff Development: Security in the midst of change

A strong staff development program links current professionals with future success. While it can’t incite truly lethargic souls, it offers staff at all levels the time, opportunity, and means to grow. A review of the 1997 OMS SPEC Kit 224 on Staff Training and Development suggests that many ARL libraries are investing in staff development. Some schools like Purdue and the University of Washington have
developed substantial, noteworthy programs. Nearly 25% of the programs now have at least one dedicated Training Coordinator position. Local Training and Development Committees, working with this position or independently, have begun devising systematic development programs for their institutions.

The End Notes list several excellent guides which can assist institutions in establishing such programs. Each manual offers its own suggestions and useful examples. The key elements stressed by these guides are:

- Tie the program to your institution's vision and goals.
- Cover topics raised by the staff.
- Communicate regularly the importance of development.
- Use a variety of approaches.
- Include both measurement and accountability.
- Tie development to rewards and recognition.

While each of these areas is important and rates at least one chapter in most training-related books, I’d like to focus on rewards and recognition. The cliche, “what gets rewarded gets done” is true. Asserting this does not deny that many individuals welcome time and support for staff development for its own sake. Indeed many make their own commitment -- taking evening courses, attending off site conferences, and independently studying. Driven by their own professionalism and intellectual excitement, these individuals enable their organization to excel. Successful knowledge-based organizations, however, must offer learners more than intrinsic rewards. They must make certain that staff who grow and develop receive tangible recognition and reward on a variety of levels.

For non-exempt positions, universities might look to Japan for a pay model which directly fosters learning. Japanese companies use a system of career ladders to enable employees to move from one pay level to another based on learning new skills. Annual evaluations focus on: the career ladder, the employee’s current skills, the employee’s growth in the past year, and developmental expectations for the next pay level. Pay is thus attached to the individual based on that person's growing experience and skill mastery. This seems to offer greater motivation for skill attainment than the US system, which generally attaches pay to jobs rather than to individuals. Narrow position classifications have tended to push talented staff into new jobs rather than to reward mastery within a given position.

University policies often disallow merit recognition for staff. In such settings,
managers must use alternate rewards --such as: personal notes, special job assignments, training and travel support, employee recognition awards, flextime, and public recognition. Staff must see that the learners among them receive rewards not given to those who fail even to try to learn.

THE REVOLUTION

This paper began with a quotation from Yeats. This last section returns to that quotation.

--- Things fall apart -- The center cannot hold -- Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

This poem continues with the line

-- The blood dimmed tide is loosed.

So where is the blood in this revolution? Development dollars, new job descriptions, and systematic training do not sound so terrifying. The danger is in the area of recognition and rewards, especially those aimed at professional staff. If recognition and rewards include the really alluring prizes, it counts greatly who gets them.

The alluring prizes are: superior salaries, research support, sabbatical leaves, decision-making authority, budget control, flexible schedules, and support for conference travel and participation. The biggest prize of all is getting to shape the library of tomorrow. That prize no longer belongs merely to the MLS professional.

In a 1992 issue of Library Trends, Tom Shaughnessy wrote, "If one accepts the view that the master's degree program in library and information science prepares individuals primarily for entrance into the field--that is to say, for entry level positions--it follows that the competence needed for research libraries must be achieved through practice and by means of other developmental opportunities." Shaughnessy was describing the need for particular attention to continuing development for librarians. His comment, however, holds a message for managers in this era of continuous change. "When it is no longer possible to assume that library school training (or any other training) will remain valid for very long, the origin of one's knowledge (becomes) less important than its cultivation. A total commitment to staff development and to the library as a learning organization would generate an organizational revolution. It would tie rewards and status to learning. The distinctions between MLS and non-MLS professionals would fade. Responsibility, decision-making, and rewards would be distributed on the basis of individual knowledge, ability, and accomplishment. Professional status would be awarded to those who possess current professional expertise. An inclusive, yet demanding criteria, would define the library professional as one who demonstrates:
mastery of a substantial body of theoretical concepts and practical knowledge in library science, information access, or a related area;

a commitment to continuing professional growth as evidenced by the achievement of some type of autonomous expertise in one or more pertinent areas, participation in advanced educational courses and workshops, and familiarity with current issues and the literature in his or her area of work;

dedication to the position which extends beyond the limits of the normal workday;

the ability and willingness to analyze information in depth and to identify and create solutions based on an appreciation of the library's role in the University.

This criteria for professional designation is both broader and stricter than current expectations: broader in order to recognize a wide range of alternatives for gaining one's initial expertise; stricter in insisting on achievements beyond any single year program.

The information revolution is on us. The transformation of work and employment has created the bases for reintegrating the individual into a highly productive, more egalitarian social structure. These bases are knowledge and information.  

Staff development will give each person the chance to strengthen his or her value to the organization. In a sense, it offers staff a new passport to professionalism. It offers the University the synergy of combined professional talents. And it offers patrons leading edge service from a corps of ever-learning leaders.
END NOTES


