Something to Think About -- Doubling Up?

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Something to Think About — Doubling Up?!

Having a little time to think about the present and future of librarianship, I looked at new job vacancies to see what the demands of the field are. We are still facing drastic cuts in operating funds, cutbacks on numbers of positions, and demands to reformat our functioning organizational structure. We have to sit down and figure out what services are more necessary than others and reallocate our workforce to take care of those changes. Granted, new technology has caused us to re-evaluate how we operate for our patrons. How can we begin to make some sense of it? Perhaps we should consider encouraging our staff to further their education by acquiring other certifications and/or degrees to add to their abilities. We are used to having a few librarians increase the number of their credentials in specific areas, such as Music, Engineering, or some other appropriate field. We are now assessing jobs and coupling some of the tasks in order to make things work. The problem becomes the fact that people are being asked to do jobs that they are not exactly trained to do. You may have training to catalog monographs, but you may need more training to catalog serials or media or documents. Libraries will have to put some of their monies into retraining and furthering education for their present staff. But we must also re-evaluate those needs properly and get the best bang for our bucks. Sending staff to conferences, training workshops, and virtual sessions to update their credentials has become essential — not a luxury. In our small institution alone, we have found a 95% increase in those staff who are now engaged in advanced training or retraining activities. I have been impressed by this increase and hopeful that these staff members will be the ones to retrain others on our staff.

Increased knowledge will have to be obtained in preservation techniques and digital preservation to maintain the viability of our collections and rare materials. That process has begun and soon there will be grants formulated to accomplish many of the dreams we have had. The library has invited me back in the future to see their results on one of my basic passions I fought to establish over the six years I worked there. I am excited to still be a part of this.

I guess the doubling up I speak about reminds us to keep improving our knowledge in many areas, but it also insinuates that we should be backing up our positions with others who also understand the needs and tasks and can operate on them when the primary person is not there. I have seen too many cases, in both small and large libraries, where only one person knows the tasks and has been out on extended family leave, personal illnesses, or accidents. We can barely function on the reduced staff now, so cross-training is essential.

I think doubling up is indeed something to think about? What say you? Get involved in your library to help that change occur!