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Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services -- Case Study Two: The Case of the Temperamental Bibliographer.

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Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services

Case Study Two: The Case of the Temperamental Bibliographer.

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Brad was a little peeved. Right before the holiday break he had his performance review meeting with his supervisor, **Jorge**, who was the head of the monographic searching unit. The problem was not that he had gotten a bad review. In fact, **Brad** had gotten glowing remarks from not only **Jorge**, but also one of his fellow searchers, **Therese**, had seen fit to write a letter to **Jorge** describing what a terrific teacher **Brad** had been when she had been hired on six months ago. No, **Brad** was mad because **Jorge** had assigned him to be the main searcher for **Boris**, known in the monographic searching unit as "the problem." **Problem Boris** was the bibliographer for many subjects in the social sciences, and had worked at the library for years, and he had tenure so it was well known he would not be leaving anytime soon. He also taught classes on selection and collection development at the library school, and was well respected by those who never had to work with, or under him. He was known in the searching unit to be temperamental, sensitive, and perpetually late; but the worst part was that **Boris** had proven to be uncommunicative and even downright slippery, especially when it came to interacting with all of his many previous searchers. **Jorge** had assigned **Boris** to **Brad**, explaining that he thought **Brad** had excellent communication skills, and had built up strong rapport with the other bibliographers for whom he worked.

Brad knew that his success in the coming year would ride primarily on how he handled his new problem. What to do? How could he possibly communicate with **Boris**? Especially, **Brad** wanted to avoid having **Boris** march into the unit and yell at **Brad** in front of all the other searchers, as he had been known to do over the years.

The experts speak:

From a birds-eye view, **Boris** is not really **Brad's** problem. Whomever **Boris** reports to ought to have a long time ago worked with **Boris** to help him improve his communication skills, learn about working in a diverse work environment

and how to respect the work of others/underlings. His behavior ought not to have been tolerated all these long years. It is clear that among his many problems, **Boris** probably has self-image issues, particularly doesn't see himself as on the same level as a mere monographic searcher. **Boris** doesn't recognize searching as an important part of the selection and acquisition process. However, knowing the big picture, or having a little insight into **Boris's** personality, doesn't sort out **Brad's** predicament. What concrete things can **Brad** do to build a strong working relationship with **Boris**? Because building a strong working relationship is the goal. And the key in that statement is the word working. **Brad** does not need to be **Boris's** new best friend; he just needs to be able to work with **Boris**. So, what is the plan?

First, **Brad** needs to do some background checking on **Boris**. The goal here is to find out more about **Boris** from a non-work related point-of-view. He needs to find out why **Boris** is the bibliographer for those specific areas, where did **Boris** get his degree? Does **Boris** socialize with anyone that works in the library? What does **Boris** do with his spare time? Once **Brad** has a fuller understanding of **Boris** the person, he can then go about getting to know **Boris** better on his own.

Second, **Brad** needs to call (not email — he is trying to build a relationship, not just share information) **Boris** and introduce himself on the phone as **Boris's** new searcher. The goal of this phone call is to set-up a meeting with **Boris**, in **Boris's** office. Why not meet in a neutral space, you may ask? **Brad** needs to show **Boris** that he respects the work that **Boris** does, and to **Boris** he can explain that he, **Brad**, would like to have a better understanding of how **Boris** works, so that he can support **Boris's** work in the best way possible. It is very important for **Brad** to focus on what **Boris** does, not on what he does. He needs to show **Boris** that he respects and is interested in the work that **Boris** does.

Third, when they meet **Brad's** goal is to get **Boris** to talk. Talk about his job,

his goals for selecting, who his favorite professors are, and basically pay lots of attention to **Boris**. **Brad** needs to keep in mind that **Boris** likes attention, and probably doesn't get enough of it, so keep the focus on **Boris**. **Brad** also needs to ask **Boris** how he would like **Brad** to communicate with him on his orders. **Brad** needs to continually ask **Boris** what would work best for **Boris**. **Brad** needs to show that he can be accommodating to **Boris's** needs and that he is enthusiastic about being **Boris's** searcher.

Fourth, **Brad** needs to be attentive and responsive to **Boris's** needs, especially during their first few interactions. He needs to show **Boris** that without a doubt he will be a supportive and responsive searcher. He needs to be unflinchingly positive and helpful, even if **Boris**, under the onslaught of all **Brad's** professional customer service, is still snippy and spiteful. Unfailing patience, and a positive attitude are what **Brad** must focus on right now. If **Boris** doesn't respond to **Brad's** communications, even though **Brad** is using the ways that **Boris** specifically told **Brad** that he prefers, then **Brad** needs to call **Boris** and ask if there are other ways he would like to have **Brad** communicate with him.

And finally, **Brad** needs to keep **Jorge** apprised of his plan and long-term goals for working with **Boris**. Perhaps **Jorge** will have some insights, or even could look into getting some funding for **Brad** to take some customer service courses, or even something about dealing with difficult people. **Brad** could make his personal goal that of establishing such a good working relationship with **Boris**, that **Boris** would never have another searcher as long as **Brad** worked there. And perhaps, if **Brad** decided later on to get his library degree, he would work so well with **Boris**, that he could ask him for a recommendation. 🌿

If you have any ideas for future case studies, or a topic you would like explored in this column, please contact me, Anne Langley (Duke University) <anne.langley@duke.edu>.

Rumors

from page 82

the *Grain*, November, 2005 is posted on the SPARC Website. www.arl.org/sparc/

And speaking of trains. I'm running out of steam. HAPPY NEW YEAR and see you in February!

Yr. Ed. 🌿

The Charleston Conference and all of us have recently lost two of our most valuable and long-time friends and colleagues — **Deana Astle** and **Lyman Newlin**. A Memorial Service will be held in their memory at the San Fernando Cathedral, 115 Main Plaza, San Antonio, Texas on Friday, January 20, from 3-4 PM. Please contact **Katina Strauch** at <kstrauch@comcast.net> by Monday, January 16, if you would like to say something about one or both of our dear colleagues. 🌿