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Case Studies in Collection and Technical Services -- Case Study Six: Run with the Meeting

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Case Study Six: Run with the Meeting

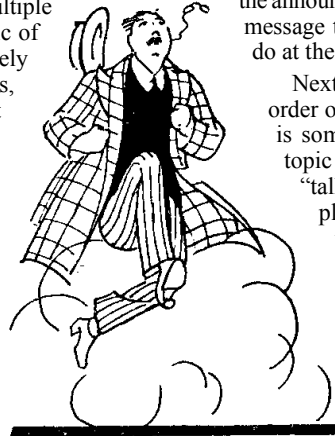
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Finally, **Meghan** was going to be in charge of a meeting. She had been waiting for this opportunity for months, and **Lila**, her boss, was going out of town and had assigned **Meghan** the duty of running the weekly technical services department meeting. **Meghan** was excited, but also nervous. There was a lot riding on her doing a good job; performance evaluations were not that far off in the future, and as well, she knew that if she handled this meeting correctly, the possibility that she would be assigned to be the chair of a committee would be much higher. So now, she needs to know how to make sure it all goes well.

Meghan is concerned because she knows that there are some curmudgeons in the department who might give her a hard time and could possibly obstruct her efforts at doing a good job. She has not been at the library as long as some of these possibly difficult people, and as well, a few of them are much older than she is. She realizes that she will have to be especially careful to include and appreciate the input from these colleagues. However, she is uncertain how to ensure their positive input.

The Experts Speak:

Running meetings well takes planning, initiative, facilitation skills, time management skills, people skills, and follow-through. There are tons of resources **Meghan** can use to help her make this meeting a success, there are many books, especially business or management books, as well as multiple Websites devoted to the topic of meetings. While she will surely avail herself of these resources, below we impart a quick list of practical planning tips to get her through the process, but we suggest that a more in-depth study on the topic will serve her well in the long run. And finally, during the process we will provide a few ideas on how to gain the willing involvement of the possible stick-in-the mud colleagues.



First, **Meghan** needs to find out from **Lila** exactly what she would like to be covered at the meeting, and what possible outcomes, if any, need to come from the meeting. At this point, in a face-to-face, phone, or email encounter, **Meghan** can also ask if **Lila** has any special advice in how to make sure the meeting goes well. **Lila** will appreciate **Meghan's** quick follow-through, and will enjoy being asked for advice. Many bosses like having the opportunity to share their expertise, and by asking, **Meghan** will have initiated an opportunity to learn something that will most likely be quite useful.

Once **Meghan** has picked **Lila's** brain, she will need to make sure that the space for the meeting is reserved, and that it has the necessary set-up for the meeting.

Next, she will need to send an email to the rest of the department asking for agenda topics, announcements, etc. In this email she will want to remind everyone about the time and place of the meeting, and perhaps give them a head's up about the items that are already on the agenda. As well, she will need to give them a deadline for getting back to her. This may not alleviate late responders, but it will give her the opportunity to say no to people who respond too late, especially if the agenda would be too long with the addition of the late submissions. If people do respond too late, **Meghan** can just assure them that she will pass the items on to **Lila** when she returns. By sending this email she is also telling the department that she is on top of her duty as chair, and that she has crossed her t's and dotted her i's.

Third, **Meghan** will need to plan out the agenda. It is always good to put announcements

at the beginning, but to make sure that these don't take over the whole meeting, she may want to call them "Brief Announcements" on the agenda. Because the boss is away, some may want to turn this into a gripe session, and that is the last thing **Meghan** wants to have happen. By having a clear agenda, and keeping the announcements brief, this will send the message that they have a lot of work to do at the meeting.

Next she needs to plan carefully the order of items on the agenda. If there is someone who wants to present a topic at the meeting who is a known "talker", it may be a good idea to place that person's item last on the agenda, so that the entire meeting does not linger on this topic. Finally, once the agenda is set, **Meghan** needs to send it out to all, and cc: **Lila** (who may have last minute thoughts and can send them to **Meghan** after reading the agenda in her email), in plenty of time before the meeting we suggest that best case is at least a week in advance. Make sure that any documents that may be talked about at the meeting are attached to the agenda email, and again, that the time, date and place of the meeting are included at the top. As well, **Meghan** will want to send out a meeting reminder at least 24 hours before the time and day of the meeting, and if it is on a Monday morning, a brief reminder email that morning with the place and time. Subject lines are a good place for dates, places and times.

Before the meeting begins, **Meghan** needs to make paper copies of the agenda and any documents or handouts for all meeting attendees. She needs to be a few minutes early to make sure the room is unlocked, available and set up in the way she wants it. She also needs to probably not sit at the head of the table (if there is one), but near the head, or, at least make sure that she is not sitting with her back facing the room entrance.

At the beginning of the meeting she will want to make sure she starts on time, no matter if everyone is there or not, as this will show respect to those who showed up on time. She will want to welcome everyone, and ask for their help in making this a productive meeting as this is her first time running one. This will get the participants on her side, and perhaps give them incentive to make it go well. And she will want, at this point, to pass out agendas, documents and handouts if people need them. At this point, if there is not already a designated minute taker, **Meghan** needs to ask for a volunteer or designate a minute taker, so that she can focus on running the meeting.

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day responsibilities in the context of the organisation as a whole, and emphasise the interdependence of all departments, then individual departments will never understand the wider context in which they work.

- **Create communication.** Get different groups and functions together. Get their input on what works well, and what creates problems. A problem shared is a problem on the way to being solved.
- **Convene and chair regular meetings** to promote shared goals and ownership of agreed solutions. It is always better to confront issues with an open debate than to let issues fester. No successful leader is ever the expert on everything, so involve the team, and get them to take ownership of decisions. They will appreciate the opportunity.
- **Use customer feedback.** Customers, whether they are library patrons or publishers' customers, are very sensitive to the impact of tribal problems within the organisation. Their point of view represents an important measure of the efficiency of the organisation.

Understanding our tribal nature, and evolving strategies and processes to shape and direct the energy that it releases, is the key to a smooth and efficient organisation. 🌱

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During the meeting **Meghan** will need to call on her facilitation skills to keep the group moving through the agenda, while also allowing for everyone to have reasonable input and response time. If there seems to be heated discussion over any particular subject **Meghan** can suggest that a deeper discussion needs to happen when there is more time, and that she will include in the minutes that this needs to happen, and then, firmly move on to the next topic. Keeping your wristwatch on the table in front of you, or sitting directly across from a clock can be a good way to keep an eye on the time. Good meeting facilitation skills will help those uncertain of **Meghan** as a leader gain respect for her abilities. If she keeps the meeting productive and on-going, they will more than likely not heckle her or impede the meeting's progress.

Meghan will want to end the meeting on-time, or better yet, a bit early if at all possible. Last steps are to review any action items, making it clear who is responsible for follow-up, and then by thanking everyone for their input and help in making the meeting go so smoothly.

After the meeting, **Meghan** will want to get with the minute-taker, and agree upon a deadline for when the minutes will be complete, preferably before **Lila's** return. If needs be, **Meghan** may want to offer to take the person to lunch, or do them a favor, in return for timely turn-around on the minutes. As well, **Meghan** will want to write a follow-up email just to **Lila**, letting her know how the meeting went, alerting her to any areas for concern, and reporting on any action items that **Lila** will need to know about on her return.

Whew! Now, finally, **Meghan** needs to congratulate herself on a job well done. If she follows our advice, she will most likely be hitting the closest ice cream parlor and having a banana split to celebrate her successful first meeting! 🍌

Rumors
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Well, more friends from the past! Here's the latest on **Eamon Fennessy** <efennessy@att.net> and what he's been up to. **Eamon** has retired as **Founder and CEO of The Copyright Group, Inc.** of Beverly Farms, MA after seventeen years. He says he recalls the early days of the **Charleston Conference**. Do you remember his column, "On the Street" in early issues of **ATG**? **Eamon** says he's now dabbling in politics in Massachusetts.

www.TheCopyrightGroup.net

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The Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers

Lost in Austin — My School Books

by **Thomas W. Leonhardt** (St. Edward's University, Austin, Texas; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8737) <thomasl@stedwards.edu>

For many years, I have owned a small book called *My School Books* by **Hendrik Willem van Loon**, a Dutchman born in 1882. He migrated to the United States in 1903 and became a best-selling author and illustrator of children's books, the most famous of which is *The Story of Mankind* for which he was awarded the very first **Newbery Award** in 1922.

My School Books is only 24 pages long, from frontispiece to the final page and was printed by the **T.W. and C.B. Sheridan Company** for the **E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co., Inc.**, "Fabrikoid" (*"Fabrikoid" is **DuPont's** Registered Trademark designating its pyroxylin coated and impregnated fabrics) Division for distribution as a memento at the **DuPont** "Wonder World of Chemistry" Exhibit at the New York World's Fair, 1939. The book is bound in PX Cloth — a pyroxylin impregnated cloth which is distinguished for its cleanability, its durability and its functional beauty."

My copy, in very good condition (no wonder, being bound in pyroxylin), once belonged to **Edward deWitt Taylor** (1871-1962), a San Francisco printer of fine books. He would have had more than a passing interest in the design, typography, and binding of the book. As for the subject matter, if **Taylor** bothered to read the book, as I have just recently done after owning the book for more than thirty years, he must have been as disappointed as I was.

van Loon tells of three illustrated volumes, in Dutch, that he inherited from his grandmother and how dull his school books were by comparison. I had been expecting a bibliography of sorts, a list of his favorite childhood books at the very least.

If I were writing about my school books, it would be an even shorter book unless I included those books that accompanied me throughout my school days spent in eleven different schools as we moved from place to place, wherever the Department of the Army saw fit to send my father. And when I say accompanied me, I don't mean that I possessed many books, even in high school when I began reading at a higher level and an increased pace. What I mean is that books other than textbooks were my companions whom I visited in the post libraries wherever we went.

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