Against the Grain

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People Profile: Stephanie McConnell

Editor

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meet the needs of their users, in *Staffing the Modern Library*, authors **Cohn** and **Kelsey** propose that the library of the electronic age should address these four functions:

> 1. "Providing access to the content of local resources…either hard copy or as electronic files.
> 2. Offering gateway or portal access to remote resources.
> 3. Facilitating off-site electronic access to local and remote resources from users' homes, offices, and schools.
> 4. Providing access to human assistance in locating information."[4]

Library managers should be preparing their staff to have the skills to be able to provide this environment to the users. Training can be done one-on-one between staff members or in small groups if it makes sense. Vendors are usually willing to come and train staff in their processes and services. The use of interactive and Web-based meetings has been a boon to training of employees as it requires little financial outlay and no travel. Often there are self-paced training modules and tutorials that are available through associations or freely available on the Internet.

The need for communication between units and between staff members can not be understated. **Steve Casburn** of *Gen X Bites Back* says "I think another great thing that one generation can do for the next is for older, experienced librarians to listen to the ideas of younger librarians and not dismiss them out of hand."[5] He continues to state that sometimes older librarians get so caught up in their personal agendas that they forget the library must work as a team.

Re-energize — Communicate and Motivate

In today's budgetary environment, it is unusual to add new personnel, so it is essential that the organization is retaining and motivating staff and using their skills in the most advantageous manner. **Singer** and **Goodrich** state that employees stay with an employer because:

- "They feel valued: their concerns, ideas, and suggestions are genuinely sought and listened to.
- They enjoy a feeling of connection and that they make a difference.
- They have opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- The work environment promotes continuous learning."[6]

The way organizations treat and train their employees is a big part of employee motivation to learn and grow with the organization. Staff members should be invested in the process to making their organizations better and more adaptable to change. Respecting the needs of the differing groups of employees is one key to making sure that the library can adapt well to the changes it will be facing.

Stephanie McConnell

EBSCO Information Services
Phone: (847) 927-3416   <smcconnell@ebsco.com>

BORN & LIVED: Wadena, Minnesota/Minnesota.

EARLY LIFE: Moved around a lot. Finally ended up in Scandia, MN, when I was eight. Went to **Scandia Elementary** and then **Forest Lake Senior High**. No businesses in the area, so I put ads in the local store window and worked for people in the area doing odd jobs and gardening. I worked in the library at the senior high school once I was in senior high.

FAMILY: Father: **Delbert McConnell**, born and raised in Wadena, MN. Mother: **Mary (Williams) McConnell**, born and raised in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, England. Brothers: **Danny**, **Kevin** and **Robin**. Sisters: **Victoria**, **Roselyn** and **Alicia**.

EDUCATION: BA & MA in History from the **University of Wisconsin** — River Falls. MLIS from the **University of Wisconsin** — Milwaukee.

FIRST JOB: **Dakota County Library System** in Castle Rock, Colorado.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Dakota County Libraries, **Minnesota Department of Education — Food and Nutrition Library**, **Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU)**, **Thermo King Library**, **Bemidji State University Library** and **EBSCO**. **ALA** and the **Minnesota Library Association**. Board member of the **Association of Research Libraries Division of MLA (ARLD)**. **Medical Library Association** and **Wisconsin Library Association**. Presentations at the **Minnesota Library Association** (2006) and **ARLD Day** (2007).

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Read, travel, spend time with my nieces and nephews.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *Stones from the River* (**Hedgi**), *Pride and Prejudice* and the *Well of Loneliness* (**Radcliff Hall**).

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Bad grammar.

PHILOSOPHY: I think we should all live our own lives and not judge one another. I think we should help others as much as we can.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Helping to arrange **ARLD Day**.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Be more involved in national library committees.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I think we will see increasing amounts of electronic resources in libraries as time goes on and I think we will have to find other ways to evaluate the usefulness of libraries than the number of bodies that come into a library. The use of libraries is up, but since users don't always come to the library, it can be hard to make administrations see that. I think library spaces will change a great deal, with more and more space given over to computers and laptop stations.

I also believe that the need for training and retraining of libraries will continue to grow and change, and be based heavily around technology. 🐾

But what about staff members who do *not* want to adapt to the new technologies? **Mayo** and **Goodrich** in *Staffing: A Guide to Working Smarter*[7] stress the importance of showing the need for the change, creating a "clear, compelling vision," demonstrating improvements quickly, and most importantly, continuously communicating about the changes. Support from top management also needs to be prominent in the communication and in the change process.

When I first became a supervisor, one of my employees gave me the book, *Winnie-the-Pooh on Management*, by **Roger E. Allen**. In talking with Pooh and Owl, the Stranger says:

> "Above all, she should leave them alone. Get out of the way and let them get on with the job. Guide then, help them, but don't sit on them or smother them." Pooh responds: "I sat on Piglet once,…By accident. He didn't much care for it." The Stranger responds: "Few of us like to be hovered over… Not everyone will respond to that [a manager letting the person alone unless they request help], but enough of any manager's people will react favorably so that a very effective operation will be possible. Remember that the manager's objective is for each individual to achieve excellence within the limits of his or her talents and abilities. Once the manager makes it plain that excellence