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People Profile: Stephanie McConnell

Editor
meet the needs of their users, in Staffing the Modern Library, authors Cohn and Kelsey propose that the library of the electronic age shall 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.”

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.” 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 “...once,…By accident. He didn’t much want to adapt to the new technologies? Mayo and Goodrich in Staffing: A Guide to Working Smarter” 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.

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.

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 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 them, 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...