



**Chapter Council Presents
Sharing Roundtables
MLA Annual Meeting
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Table 26A: Survival Strategies for Hospital Librarians/Libraries

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Recorder: Candace Walker

Additional Participants: Julie Carroll Davis, Raphael Euppah, Laura Mueller, Michael Schott, Valerie Rankow

Defining problem

- Downsizing vs. closing – different issues
- If you didn't see a downsizing or closing coming, you weren't paying attention

Contributing factors

- Hospital budgets are under stress
- Library does not generate revenue
- Administrators who supported the library being laid off too
- Perception that everything or “enough” is free on the internet
- Physical library/librarian not required by JCAHO plus new tracer method does not include library as directly as old process
- Direct marketing by companies to hospital administrators and medical staff
- Physicians buying own resources
- Administrators think they can use resources of other geographically close facilities
- Electronic delivery enables some delivery of resources without needing proximity of requestors and resources

Solutions/Strategies

Customer Service

- End-user training (though downside may be that if you do too well could work yourself out of a job – but new people come on staff and there are new products to teach)
- Make sure customers not saying “I didn't want to bother you”
- Don't ever be “too busy” to stop to interact with someone
- Stand up and greet people who enter the library
- Eat lunch in the library since that is a time is when many users stop by

- Deliver information by the time needed – or before
- Make sure all library staff and volunteers deliver good customer service; good attitude
- Know your users' interests and proactively provide relevant, timely information to make them look good
- Forward relevant MEDLIB-L postings
- Have search request and ILL request forms on the library web site

Diversification

- Serve everyone – nurses, therapists, pharmacists, and administrators in addition to physicians
- Be willing to take on new subject areas – e.g., adding nursing to broaden a library's focus
- Provide resources to meet diverse subject interests of all user groups – e.g., statistics, business/management, computer software manuals, etc.
- Track staff articles or other publications (display, have authors sign)

Communication

- Helps to have good “intelligence” or “gossip” about what is going on in the hospital
- Remind physicians and staff that the librarian is trained to do high quality, efficient searches and to do complex searches
- Include copy of search strategy so users see how complex a good search can be
- Get included in orientation of new staff (presentations, building tours)
- Get library mentioned in hospital or medical staff newsletters
- Continually reach out to new staff so they are aware of the library and its services

Collaboration

- Develop good relationship with IT department
- Be flexible
- Get on committees – e.g., CME, IRB, Quality, Patient Education, Patient Safety
- Attend meetings – self-invite yourself if necessary – and speak up
- Get involved in special programs like disaster drills
- Sponsor or participate in book fairs

Professional Development

- Learn IT and management vocabulary
- Understand issues of importance to hospital administrators
- Improve clinical knowledge
- Be a life-long learner
- Get a mentor

Miscellaneous

- Try to report to a supportive and powerful person
- Apply for grants
- Leverage power of MEDLIB-L for getting suggestions and, when appropriate, for help in answering challenging reference questions in a timely manner.