



Chapter Council Presents

Sharing Roundtables

MLA Annual Meeting

Chicago IL

Sunday, May 18, 2008

Final Report Form

Table 27. Strategies for Threatened Librarians/Libraries

What can we do to maintain our libraries and ensure their continued support? Bring strategies to share with your colleagues.

Participants :

Carol Crawford

Emily Glenn, recorder

Nora Hardy

Barbara Jones, facilitator

Why are we interested in strategies for threatened libraries or librarians? What are our stories?

Nora is a member of a consortium that serves 14 counties. There are no medical schools or library schools and only four MLS-trained librarians. Over the past six years there have been many library closures. There is still a need for the information that a medical librarian provides, though, and people need to know how to help make those services happen.

Carol has been in the hospital field for 20 years and experienced recent layoffs and a reduction in work hours. There are few opportunities for medical librarians in her county. She's pursuing her MLS now.

Library advocacy is central to Barbara's position and her region is the only one designated to look at library advocacy. Library advocates can't save libraries, but can help teach librarians strategies to demonstrate value.

Emily is a solo librarian and the first librarian at her organization. The administration is considering whether to create a permanent position for a librarian. Demonstrating value, providing services, and advocating for library and information services generally has been a multifaceted challenge.

Why are libraries or librarians threatened?

One type threat is economics and lack of knowledge, particularly a lack of qualified personnel management at the organization leadership level. Leaders are not convinced of the need for libraries or librarians. Another type of threat is the knowledgeable administration knowing what they need but not recognizing the value of the people who provide the services.

What strategies have we tried? What can librarians do in the face of threats?

What helps:

- Draw on other work experience. One person is using her sales and marketing experience to reach out to her users.
- Align with institutional missions. Get involved with task forces and take on challenges.
- Look for new partnerships within your organization.

- Integrate yourself with the Information Technology staff. So that you know what new technologies are coming on board. Let them know you can help with training, documentation, and licensing.
- Develop classes (or a standing curriculum) to address ongoing needs of your organization.
- Make yourself indispensable.
- Emphasize the expert nature of your knowledge.
- Sell your ability to save time and money.
- Document your services and keep statistics — the right statistics.

What to avoid:

- Don't each lunch at your desk. Make yourself visible.
- Don't become invisible by focusing solely on the library services.

What else do librarians needs help with regarding threats?

- Transition to more knowledge management responsibilities
- More business and marketing classes targeted toward librarians

Recommended resources

1. Librarian work-specific salary calculator to help us determine our professional value:
<http://nmlm.gov/mcr/evaluation/calculator.html>
2. *Medical Library Downsizing: Administrative, Professional and Personal Strategies for Coping with Change*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Information Press. 2005.
3. How to position yourself, how to get out, how to look for other options. See:
<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=1324780>.
4. Wagner, Pat. "Marketing as if Your Library Depended on It." See:
<http://www.pattern.com/libraryHistory.html>
5. NN/LM MidContinental Region's page of advocacy and marketing resources:
<http://nmlm.gov/mcr/advocacy/>
6. *Measuring Your Impact: Using Evaluation for Library Advocacy*. Instructors: Maryanne P. Blake and Susan Barnes, Outreach Evaluation Resource Center, NN/LM, Pacific Northwest Region, Seattle, WA. An MLA 2008 event.
7. *Connecting with Administrators to Show the Value of Libraries and Librarians*
Speakers: Betsy Kelly, MidContinental Regional Medical Library, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO; and Claire Hamasu, Associate MidContinental Regional Medical Library, Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT. An MLA 2008 event.
8. Laughlin, Sara, Denise Sisco Shockley, and Ray Wilson. *The Library's Continuous Improvement Fieldbook: 29 Ready-To-Use Tool*. Chicago: American Library Association. 2003.
9. Laughlin, Sara and Ray W. Wilson. *The Quality Library: A Guide to Staff-Driven Improvement, Better Efficiency, and Happier Customers*. Chicago: American Library Association. 2008.

Some last thoughts

Librarians need to continue pushing the envelop for the profession by looking forward and evolving to meet the different kinds of needs. Think of knowledge management and integration as one new area that librarians are involving themselves.

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