New Directions Snapshot
“Support and Training Needed for Staff to Better Pursue New Directions”

I. OVERVIEW

Hiring, keeping, and nurturing creative and talented people are integral to the Library’s current and future success. Library staff will need support and training, the specifics of which will depend upon the new directions we choose to take. There are, however, many aspects of support and training that we can foresee staff needing as we move forward, particularly in the areas of technology and other specialized skills.

II. NATIONAL TRENDS

- Trends in academic library staff training include information technology/computers/Web 2.0 technologies, user services/quality/evaluation, marketing/promoting library services, and leadership/management/supervision (WebJunction)
- eLearning training programs - both in-house and externally outsourced (WebJunction)
- Growth of hybrid employees, with combinations of skills and expertise, and staff in jobs not historically associated with librarianship (Wilder, Neal)
- Ability to manage and preserve shifting and copious amounts of digital information (ALA Roundtable)
- Holistic approach to training based on skills assessment, library priorities, and resource allocation (Wilson)

III. LOCAL ISSUES

- Currently available training does not necessarily meet present needs, unclear which options are available and who delivers them
- Library does not know enough about its own institutional needs and capabilities, where staff skills are in surplus/deficit, and what skills will be needed
- Lack of time for staff to learn new skills and keep abreast of emerging technologies and other developments in their fields
- Lack of support and encouragement of innovation, creativity, and experimentation
- Bifurcated professional development system combined with the increasing use of nontraditional staff professionals make system insufficient to support nontraditional yet valued skills, and funding levels are not adequate in either case
- Organizational structure and culture are impediments to change and to staff collaborations, both internal and external
- Training and support efforts not (apparently) informed or coordinated with Library succession planning

IV. OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW DIRECTIONS

**SKILLS ASSESSMENT AND RESOURCE ANALYSIS:** Before we endeavor to train staff for
skills identified by the new direction discovery process, we must understand our institutional
deficit or surplus in these skills. We encourage, as part of the New Directions implementation
plan, that the Library engage in a some measurable methodology to better understand what skills
and capabilities staff currently possess. This will aid and inform both a new training program and
future recruitment efforts.

**ESTABLISH LIBRARY-WIDE TRAINING PROGRAM:** Establish a library-wide program to
identify topics and curricula, design courses, coordinate, and manage staff training. This
program should, ideally, be a team with members whose expertise represents skills prioritized by
the New Directions Initiative. The program should also:

- Serve as a clearinghouse for all training activities regardless of offering organization
  (e.g., CalPact, bSpace, self-paced online or in person, etc.)
- Manage, enhance, and improve current staff career development programs, increase
  funding for staff career development and administrative job-related training, make
  distinction between career development and job-related funding clearer and more
  seamless to the user.
- Explore the use of multiple methods: in-house in-person (one-on-one and class oriented)
  and e-learning (in-house and external purchased) approaches.

**ESTABLISH SYSTEMATIC TECHNOLOGY TRAINING:** All staff must learn skills to
successfully use current and emerging technologies (e.g., blogs, wikis, data management,
geospatial data, bSpace). Training should be continuous and range from broad to specialized
skills.

- **Computer Skills and Competencies** - All staff should know certain baseline computer
  skills and competencies.
- **Emerging Technologies (Web2.0)** - All staff should have a basic understanding of
  important emerging technologies and externally hosted software
- **Library and/or Business Systems** - Appropriate staff will need training for Library and/
or campus supported software (e.g., the ILS, article databases, Blu, Word, Dreamweaver).
- **Technology Development, Design, Implementation Skills** - Teams that deal with local
  IT application development should have an array of diversified skills, including
  programming, front-end engineering, system administration, database management,
  usability analysis, user research skills, interaction design, information architecture,
  information design, and technical project management skills.
- **Digital Assets** - Certain staff will need training in areas such as digital preservation,
digital collection development, and strategic planning for mass digitization.

**USE EXPERT NONTRADITIONAL EMPLOYEES:** Take advantage of current staff with
specialized skills and expand hiring of nontraditional non-library professionals and hybrid
employees who possess needed specialized skills.

- **Hybrid Employees** - A hybrid employee is an employee who possesses a composite of
desirable skills (e.g., someone who combines traditional technical processing skills with
a programming language and project management skills).
**Nontraditional Professionals** (James Neal calls them "feral professionals") - staff who work in jobs that do not require a background in library education, bringing a different set of values, outlooks, styles, and expectations (e.g., job categories include systems, human resources, fund-raising, publishing, instructional technology, and facilities management).

**Domain Experts** - Innovative and willing staff who are assigned certain projects and can become our experts in those areas. These experts are better positioned to understand more complex issues, such as copyright or technological infrastructure and tools. They would act as resources and regularly report on developments to the rest of the Library staff. If special offices of the Library are created for intellectual property and research and development, these expert employees should be included.

**Enable and Support Continuous Renewal:** Target specific, prioritized skills and encourage and reward employees to gain these skills. Examples include:

- Evaluation and assessment
- User research and experience - including usability analysis
- Intellectual property, privacy, and other legal issues
- User (a.k.a. customer) service
- User instruction
- Marketing and branding
- Development and grant-writing
- Management and preservation of digital assets
- Primary source materials
- Publishing
- Leadership and management
- Change management

**Encourage Innovative and Entrepreneurial Thinking:** Innovation should be part of the job and included in job descriptions. Staff should be able to devote a certain amount of work time to learning new skills (e.g., 20% employee time for innovation at Google), keeping abreast of research and other developments in their sub-fields, and identifying gaps in services that the Library can fill. Library staff should be able to rethink everything, including long-standing assumptions, and be comfortable expressing their ideas. All staff should be allowed and encouraged to brainstorm, present, and discuss their ideas, and have the ideas fully considered by decision-makers. In addition, staff should be rewarded for renewing their skills. Incentives need not be solely monetary, but those who learn new skills or obtain certificates or degrees appropriate to Library needs should ideally be rewarded with additional compensation and responsibility in the appropriate area. This would enable the Library to be more agile in recognizing and rewarding innovating staff members.

**Provide Time for Training:** Support staff training by providing work time for staff to learn and develop skills and conduct research.

**Mentor Staff:** Staff should be mentoring each other at all levels and within a variety of contexts, both formally and informally, to promote cooperation and organizational success.

**Succession Planning:** Leadership training for staff and a systematic succession plan are needed to ensure the long-term success of the Library.
Bibliography


Farkas, Meredith. *Building Academic Library 2.0* (Nov. 2, 2007).


WebJunction. *Trends in E-Learning for Library Staff*.
