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OLA QUARTERLY

A Focus on Staff Development

This issue of the *OLA Quarterly* examines the topic of staff development. Its basic premise is that by emphasizing systematic and diverse staff development activities, a library may have a direct impact on the quality of service it offers its customers.

In the past, staff development tended to be task-oriented, focusing on "how" something was done rather than "why." Recently libraries have made significant changes in the ways information is accessed, requiring parallel changes in the ways in which we provide services. As a result, an expanded approach to training and staff development has evolved. More than ever, those of us who work in and love libraries need to convey to our customers the ways in which libraries of all types enrich the quality of life in our society. Library staff at all levels must be prepared to exercise judgment and initiative, use creative approaches to solving problems, and "sell" the mission of the library both on the job and in the community.

The methods used to provide continuing education and training for library staff are as varied as the people who provide them. At McMinnville Public Library, staff development occurs in many forms. Twice a year we close the library for "staff development days" featuring such topics as team-building via the *Myers-Briggs Personality Type Inventory*, strategic planning exercises, technology development, and stress management. All staff members are also encouraged to attend at least one external workshop or conference annually.

Staff development occurs less formally in the course of our daily work. A copy of an interesting article about quality library service will be circulated to employees who are then asked to formulate and share a personal opinion. Staff at all levels are involved in the analysis of policies and procedures, strategic planning, mentoring, and program development. Sometimes we do something just to have fun and boost morale, or to make the library more visible. In all of these exercises, the emphasis is on finding ways in which we, as a staff, can find joy and excitement in our work and share that joy with the public.

Each of the authors sharing their thoughts about staff development in this issue of the *Quarterly* has a different perspective. This diversity is not only appropriate, but vital to the concept that is the foundation of all staff development. The extent to which each member of a library staff is encouraged to develop his/her full potential as an employee and as a human being is a strong reflection of the value that library will provide to its users and the community it serves.

Anne Van Sickle, *Guest Editor*
McMinnville Public Library

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