

University of Kentucky

UKnowledge

---

Library Faculty and Staff Publications

University of Kentucky Libraries

---

Spring 1998

## Investing in People Resources: Ways and Means of Training

Kate Seago

University of Kentucky, kseago@email.uky.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://uknowledge.uky.edu/libraries\\_facpub](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/libraries_facpub)



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

[Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.](#)

---

### Repository Citation

Seago, Kate, "Investing in People Resources: Ways and Means of Training" (1998). *Library Faculty and Staff Publications*. 26.

[https://uknowledge.uky.edu/libraries\\_facpub/26](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/libraries_facpub/26)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Kentucky Libraries at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty and Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact [UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu](mailto:UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu).

---

## Investing in People Resources: Ways and Means of Training

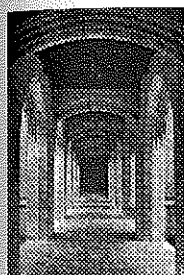
### Notes/Citation Information

Published in *Kentucky Libraries*, v. 62, no. 2, p. 15-17.

Kate Seago received the journal's permission to post this article online.

# INVESTING IN PEOPLE RESOURCES: WAYS AND MEANS OF TRAINING

BY KATE SEAGO  
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY



By performing regular maintenance on machines, we extend the life expectancy of those machines and keep their performance at peak capacity. By investing both time and money in training, library managers can develop the skills and resources among their staff so they can meet the challenges facing libraries today and in the future.

Training often conjures up images of offsite seminars, workshops and conferences. These can be costly – registration fees, travel expenses, and backup for tasks that need to be done while the librarian or staff member is away. The expense is often hard to justify to library boards and others who control the budget. They may be looking for a direct correspondence such as learning how to search a new database rather than the more intangible benefits of being stimulated by new ideas and networking with colleagues. These intangible benefits may last longer and be more useful in the long run than the simple mastery of a new piece of software. Exposure to new ideas, products and vendors are vital for a librarian when the monies finally become available for programs and projects. The well-trained librarian is already acquainted with what is available and what its capabilities are so that decisions on which products or services to use can be made more efficiently and intelligently.

Networking is another intangible that results from regular attendance at conferences and workshops. It rarely affects the daily operations in an obvious manner. Learning who your colleagues are, their expertise, strengths and weaknesses, however, can be a help when there is a problem or a new challenge. Do people respond more favorably to those they know and respect or to a complete stranger? Would you rather waste half a day trying to find the right person or be able to determine who can best answer your needs in a single phone call or e-mail message? Networking can

also assist in identifying a pool of experts, consultants and trainers who can be called on when an outside expert is required.

Using an outside expert to train staff on a new system, procedure or idea can be as expensive in terms of fees and staff time spent away from service desks or processing duties as attendance at events held away from the worksite. However, this is sometimes the best method for training with new technology when there is no in-house expertise and there is a need for a lot of staff to know the information quickly. This is true especially where the outside trainer appears to have more authority on a particular subject.

Investing in library staff by ensuring that they are well-trained and have opportunities for networking and exposure to new ideas may take financial resources that are not readily available. That does not mean that we should not continue to be advocates for sending staff, importing experts, or being creative about meeting training needs. Examples of ways to make training opportunities more cost effective are creating a local user group, using distance learning, or pooling resources with other libraries in an area to sponsor an event.

There is also a variety of training that can take place within the library itself that can better prepare librarians and staff to meet the challenges of providing services. Librarians might think that they have no background or time for training. Since most librarians and library staff have had some experience in doing bibliographic instruction with users, or at least in explaining how to use the online catalog, microfilm reader or the copier, most then have some training experience. In essence, training is passing onto another person what one has learned. Time is an important consideration. How many of us feel that we can not find that one extra hour or even 5

minutes to explain to someone else how to do something? It is often faster in the short run to do it ourselves rather than explain it to others. However expedient this seems in the short term, in the long term it is not very productive or smart. If the librarian is the only one who can run the new CD-ROM player or search that new database, does this mean the librarian should always be available in case someone needs to use them? If there is one who does a certain task, how can he or she be promoted to take on new responsibilities? Will he or she simply continue to add responsibilities? The tasks must be done and so eventually librarians will not be able to take on new challenges. Some people feel that making sure that no one else can do your job ensures security. Training and encouraging all staff to attempt new responsibilities will ensure that the library will be better equipped to face new challenges. Furthermore, cross-training staff to handle responsibilities in other areas of the library can provide benefits such as better communication, more understanding of how all areas of the library contribute to the library's mission, and a ready pool of talent in a crisis.

So how do you train staff on a small or non-existent budget and with limited time to commit to training? Start with the current resources and build up slowly. A simple checklist of everything that a person in a department should know how to use or know about might be a good start. A checklist could include skills such as searching OCLC, the local online catalog and other resources. Does the trainee know where the OCLC *Bibliographic Format Manual* is kept and what information it is likely to provide them? Do they know where other useful manuals are and who to call for help? A supervisor can use a checklist to review expectations and basic skills with staff members and identify areas for improvement or training.

Another tool that may be underestimated during the training process and after are cheatsheets. They can be used regularly for remembering details like certain MARC codes and seldom used search strategies. Cheatsheets, or short one page instruction sheets, give trainees confidence that not everything has to be memorized at once. They also allow trainees to attempt procedures demonstrated only once or twice to them. They have something to consult that will bring success as they attempt the process alone. This is a definite confidence booster.

In addition, take advantage of the tutorials that accompany many PC programs. These canned tutorials may not cover the particular application you need for your library, but they will give a person new to that software a basic understanding of how it functions. After someone has mastered the basic functions by using the tutorial, then you can step in and provide instruction in applying the skills to the specific library task. In addition, the trainee has not only learned one set of key-strokes to accomplish a particular task, but an understanding of the software which can lead to trying to use it for other tasks.

Encourage experimentation on the part of the trainee. Maggie Foote and Jan Mayo outlined in their article, "Introducing Advanced Technology in the Cataloging Department," how they encouraged their staff to first play with new technology and then introduce it into their work processes. For example, encourage staff to learn how to search databases or the online catalog by searching their favorite topics as well as the prepared searches; or encourage someone mastering the infamous computer mouse to play Solitaire or another computer game to gain some skill before trying it for "real."

Experimentation is one of the ways learning takes place for both adults and children. However, adult learners are different from children. They tend to be more interested in something that will have a direct and fairly immediate effect on their work. Training six months in advance of a new system will probably not take well. But train them the week before they go live and they will be paying much closer attention. Learning styles can also affect training. Some people learn visually, some learn best with constant encouragement and some by experimenting on their own. Adult learners have been documented as more likely to need hands-on training and the perception what they are learning will have value to them.<sup>1</sup>

Having procedures documented and using that documentation while training staff can be very important for several reasons. First and foremost, documentation can ensure consistency by making sure that everyone knows the policies and has the procedure outlined the same way. It is also useful in the event that the expert/trainer is not readily available. It seems to be a human trait that we would rather ask another human being about how to do something even if they are likely not to

know anymore than we do, than stoop to read the manual! However, the manual, that black and white document, is likely to be more accurate on all the steps of a complicated process than our memories are. This is true particularly if the process is not done on a regular basis. Documenting policies and procedures is like training in that it is something that is apt to be put off. Consideration should be given to combining the tasks of documentation and training. A careful review of the policies and procedures manual with a trainee may reveal where the manual needs to be updated to reflect current practice. It can also emphasize to the trainee that the manual is a reliable source of information when the trainer is not present.

Training can be done one on one, in small groups or in large groups. Large group settings are best with something that is more informational in nature like a change in policy. Having small groups, particularly where everyone has a chance at some hands-on activity, is effective for technology training; such as how to edit a record in the online catalog, or how to checkout a book. One on one training can be particularly useful when the task is highly complex or time intensive such as original cataloging. It can be useful sometimes for very simple tasks. If you are the identified expert in an area and someone brings you a problem, sometimes a little one on one instruction can help that person solve the problem themselves the next time. It may take just a little more time than doing it yourself, but it has benefits.

Group training takes time to set up and to do, but it does allow the training of more than one person at a time. Therefore, it can be more cost effective than one on one training. However, it will take some thought. A plan

needs to be developed to ensure that the goals for the training sessions will be met. A checklist for a successful training session might include:

- Clear objectives of the content of the session so both trainee and trainer know why they are there.
- A plan to create an environment conducive to learning. Icebreakers & introductions sometimes seem like time wasters, but do break down barriers and help create an atmosphere in which learning can take place.
- Some understanding of the level of expertise of the participants. A poll at the beginning of a session can help a trainer determine whether he or she is dealing with novices or a more advanced group.
- A comfortable and appropriate setting with some consideration for breaks for the trainees, particularly if the training is more than an hour long.
- A trainer knowledgeable in the subject matter and in how adults learn.
- A trainer with a sense of humor and the ability to improvise. Something will not go as planned during the session – Plan on it!
- Trainees interested in learning what is being covered. It is difficult to teach something to an unreceptive audience.
- Appropriate handouts.
- An evaluation of the session so that the trainer can ensure that the trainees needs are being met.

Training is one of the best ways to keep the most valuable resource, people, up-to-date and able to cope with the demands that libraries are asked to meet today and in the future.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dunn, Rita and Kenneth Dunn. Teaching Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles : a practical approach. New York : Prentice-Hall, 1978.

Freeman, Gretchen and Russell Clement. "Critical Issues in Library Automation Staff Training", Electronic Library, v. 7, no. 2 (April 1989) p. 76-81.

Glogoff, Stuart and James P. Flynn. "Developing a Systematic In-house Training Program for Integrated Library Systems", College & Research Libraries, v. 48, no. 6 (1987) p. 528-535.

Gyeszly, Suzanne D. and John B. Harer. "Replacement of Automated Systems: Organizational and Staff Training Considerations", Journal of Library Administration, v. 14, no. 1 (1991) p. 87-105.

Knowles, Malcolm S. The Adult Learner: a neglected species. 2nd ed. Houston: Gulf, 1978.

Lipow, Anne Grodzins. "Why Training Doesn't Stick: Who Is to Blame?", Library Trends, v. 38, no. 1 (Summer 1989) p. 62-72.

Mayo, Jan and Margaret Foote. "Introducing Advanced Technology in the Cataloging Department", Kentucky Libraries, v. 61, no. 4 (Fall 1997) p. 10-12.

<sup>1</sup> Glogoff, Stuart and James P. Flynn, "Developing a Systematic In-house Training Program for Integrated Library Systems", College & Research Libraries, v. 48, no. 6 (1987) p. 530.