

CLENEExchange

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“School ends, but education doesn’t.”

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Enabling Learning:

Proposing a Collaborative Framework for Library Staff Development

by Jennifer Lee Peterson, MLIS Candidate, University of Washington (jenpeter@u.washington.edu)

Last fall I began researching the role of mentoring in library staff development. Working with Mary Ross and others at Seattle Public Library, I assembled a list of resources and began to survey members of the greater library community who have experience with mentoring programs. In addition, I felt I also needed to step back and consider a broader scope in addressing the development needs of individuals within library organizations.

LeAne Rutherford (1999) presents us with the myth of Proteus as an analogy for librarians in our ever-changing careers. Proteus was able to see into the future, change his shape to adapt his appearance and blend in with the changed environment to avoid being captured.

We all have seen or experienced the changing roles of libraries and library staff. We recognize how imperative it is that we learn how to adapt to the changing needs of our users by changing ourselves and our organizations—especially to avoid being “captured” in stagnancy.

Our library culture is required to look to the future, appraise the approaching scenarios then be prepared to re-form and recreate ourselves and our organizations. But how do we serve the changing needs of both institution and self? First we must recognize what these needs are before we can determine how they can be aligned.

Needs

The needs of library staff include finding ways to develop careers through new and improved skills and to remain satisfied in current jobs. Early career librarians, Newhouse and Spisak (2004)



addressed job satisfaction in their analysis of data collected from a survey of first year library professionals. They found that these librarians felt overwhelmed, unappreciated and disillusioned in their new profession. While there is general acknowledgement that librarianship is changing, new librarians sometimes find the field to be “virtually unchangeable” (Newhouse and Spisak). These sentiments indicate fundamental needs not being met. These needs can be compared to the universal needs identified by McClelland (1961) as noted by Small (1998): 1) The need for achievement, 2) the need for affiliation, and 3) the need for power, or in this case, more specifically, the need to affect change. While individuals can work to develop skills to assess and adapt their professional outlook, there are few comprehensive outcomes without the collaboration of the organization and its leadership.

The organizational needs of libraries today are often related to recruitment, retention, and building leadership—organizational needs not normally

See Learning continued on page 4

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Editor: Gail McGovern

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Lorelle Swader
ALA/CLENERT
50 E. Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
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Questions regarding CLENEExchange **CONTENT** should be sent to:

Gail McGovern
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Upcoming Conferences

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January 19-24, 2007 - Seattle

January 11-16, 2008 - Philadelphia

January 23-28, 2009 - Denver

January 15-20, 2010 - Boston

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Member Profile: Jennifer Sharkey

by Mary Stillwell, Seattle Public Library, (mary@catts.us)

Name: Jennifer Sharkey

Organization and Position: Assistant Professor of Library Science and Information Integration Librarian, Purdue University Libraries

How long have you had that job: 2 ½ years

Describe your typical work responsibilities:

I serve as the instructional liaison to the Digital Learning Collaboratory, a student-focused collaborative, active learning facility where technology and information literacy are merged into course projects and curriculum. I partner with faculty to help them incorporate information literacy into their courses and enhance their course projects with multimedia components. I also lecture for numerous courses focusing on the research process, credible electronic resources, and selected multimedia applications. Additionally, I lead the Libraries Web Site Team as well as work at the Undergraduate Library reference desk. I am in a tenure-track position, so I focus my research area in the application of graphic design, instructional design, and web design principles for course development as well as creative incorporation of information literacy and technology into curricula

What was your most interesting library-related job before your present position? Why? Before I moved into this position I worked here at the Libraries as a Technology Training Specialist. It was a new position so I had quite a bit of flexibility in determining the types of training sessions I wanted to develop and teach. The team I worked with had great synergy, and we were able to bring the training program to a new level as far as quality and the number and variety of sessions provided.

What was your most interesting non-library related job? Why? My most interesting non-library job was working at Yellowstone National Park for a summer. I worked for a hospitality company first doing housekeeping and then working in the gift shop. It was amazing being out West in an incredibly beautiful area. The mornings were quiet and serene. Many times I would

walk out of the employee living quarters and see a moose or bison standing 20 feet away. Actually working in the park allowed me to see a side of the national park that visitors don't see.

Where did you earn your MLS? University of Wisconsin - Madison

How did you become a training/CE librarian? What special training did you take to prepare for that position? I am no longer involved in the Libraries staff development program. However, I recently developed a workshop series for students. The series, called Researching with Technology, covers researching effectively, finding quality digital images, creating a web, and working with digital video. We offer these sessions through out the semester.

How long have you been a CLENE Member?

What prompted you to join? I have been a member since 2001. My work as the technology training specialist here in the Libraries prompted me to get involved.

What is a helpful piece of career advice that you would like to share with CLENE members?

My career really has been serendipitous; there was never a set path or plan. However, every career-related experience I have had created or influenced each opportunity that came next. I am always open to these opportunities and I believe that is why I am where I am today.

What is the most helpful training resource that you use on a regular basis? My colleagues are the most helpful resource for either staff training or course instruction. I gain more from their experience and expertise than any other type of resource I use.

Describe your best training idea to share with CLENE members. This isn't really an idea but more so a methodology—I firmly believe in active learning and peer-to-peer learning. It may take me longer to develop but the end result is always better.

See Profile continued on page 6

associated with staff development needs. In light of organizational challenges surrounding funding and community support, advocacy should become an organizational need aligned with our staff needs. The need for achievement, affiliation, and change can be considered both as needs of the individual and of the library organization. Advocacy can become aligned with that sense of purpose we often long for in our lives, and with that sense of service that draws many of us to the profession.

So while it is possible to identify the needs of both individuals and organizations, why is it that we encounter so many obstacles in creating a motivated and collaborative learning environment? Why do many of our staff become “captured” or jaded, resigning themselves to dissatisfaction in their jobs? While changes affect both the needs and the skills of our Protean profession and while there is evidence of organizational recognition of change, many obstacles, still hinder the development and implementation of tools to address these needs.

Obstacles

Time and money, of course, top the list of obstacles. Library staff at all levels have less time resulting from changes in funding (e.g. hiring freezes) and changes in our roles (e.g. more time assisting patrons with technology needs). Needs assessment and training often require us to stop doing our jobs, to leave the desk or even to leave the library, and without adequate funding, we can't always hire a replacement. In addition, staff are often unaware of training funds available to them and assume it is their personal responsibility to find funding for attending conference or training events.

Training or needs assessment are often perceived by staff as unnecessary additional information to their already overloaded list of tasks. There are huge variations in levels of motivation and equally diverse learning styles. Some staff resist taking on the Protean role of today's librarian and others are motivated but susceptible to negative “group think.” Still others get stuck or “captured” in the muck of everyday survival, in the lower levels of Maslow's Hierarchy (see model on page 7).

The process of aligning the needs of individuals and of organizations serves to help people in the organization move to the higher levels in an almost exponential manner, pulling up those who tend to dwell in the lower levels. I recently saw Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, speak about how we as a culture need to seek out ways to create social capital by playing and interacting in life with others. He has begun to focus his research on the workplace and I wouldn't be surprised if he affirms what we all witness that a healthy and supported person makes for a satisfied and effective staff member.

If we recognize the changing needs of our users, our colleagues and our institutions, we will be able to respond as life-long learners, with collaboratively built solutions. While most librarians or library staff acknowledge their commitment to sustaining the presence of libraries and library services in their community, few perceive their passions to be aligned with the presumed bureaucracy they perceive in institutional leadership. Through the power of collaboration and communication, we can develop solutions and build a strong learning organization.

One Solution: Portal for a Learning Organization

Reserving the rights of an idealistic student, I propose a solution. To align the needs of the organization and the individual, and to overcome the noted obstacles to addressing these needs, I propose a Protean website to serve as a portal for creating a learning organization.

- Self-guided Assessment Tools for staff to assess and align their own needs in relation to those of the organization
- Online focus groups and surveys for staff to provide input from where they are, perhaps anonymously, to help determine the perceived needs of both the individual and of the organization
- Online discussion groups or blogs for staff at all levels to share stories and resources

- “Menu for Mentoring”: a means of matching willing “experts” of identified competencies and skills with eager “learners”.
- Calendar of more traditionally structured learning opportunities both within the organization and elsewhere.
- Links to other tools and networks
- Evaluation Module

Consider how the components of this Protean website can begin to overcome the obstacles highlighted earlier.

- **Time:** These resources are available to staff at any time, and with a network connection, theoretically any place. Off-desk time needs to be provided or set aside by the organization, but this resource will take considerably less time than off-site trainings, and can be accessed in shorter segments of time, adaptable to different levels of motivation and learning styles.
- **Expense:** Once the structure is in place, a web portal can function with little added cost to the organization and can be used to highlight staff-development funds available to individuals for off-site trainings or conferences
- **Information overload:** The premise of this portal is that it serves as an aid in dealing with information overload, to highlight tools to make jobs both easier and more satisfying
- **Varying levels of motivation:** People can choose how involved they want to become and hopefully realize the benefits of greater involvement in the network.
- **Varying learning styles:** The Protean website can serve these various levels and styles of learning, and in turn create new components to recognize and serve our changing needs

We can get stuck in the muck of everyday survival; however, information professionals love information, and these Protean tools may keep them from sinking. Efficient and effective means of communicating our experiences and building social

capital will be the end result. Even though there is still a chance for negative group think, enthusiasm is equally as infectious!!

I’d like to highlight the “Menu for Mentoring” element of the Portal and give special thanks to the members of the SPL committee for their collaboration in creating the concept! This concept arose in an early discussion about traditional mentoring relationships and the presumption that they are always between someone with more experience (the mentor) and someone with less experience (the mentee). As our Protean profession moves and changes in a myriad of ways, we see that the relationship is not so cut and dried. The menu for mentoring will serve as a database of skills and competencies and the people who like teaching those skills or competencies. After the staff and the organization have had the opportunity to identify their own needs and skills through online assessment, surveys or focus groups, they can use the “Menu for Mentoring” database to match their needs with the skills provided by others and/or their own skills to the needs of others. “Menu for Mentoring” recognizes the varying levels of needs and is an excellent way for people to address their wish list, either as learners or as teachers in the learning organization.

Kathy Kram provided an early body of benchmark research on mentoring, and alternatives to mentoring, in the mid-eighties. Kram (1988) highlights the obstacles that result from the assumptions and attitudes of both individuals and organizational cultures which indicate an overall lack of awareness of the important role relationships play in career development. To avoid sometimes negative connotations associated with “mentoring,” Kram, like many of us today, recommends introducing new concepts which move outside of these conventional assumptions to address the developmental needs of individuals and organizations. Concepts like Kram’s “developmental networks” and “relationship constellations,” or Conway’s “learning universe” can be used to encourage relationships that can meet the needs of both individuals

What is your favorite place that you have traveled and why? I lived in Australia for a year as a Rotary exchange student. It shaped my life on multiple levels. The experience was exhilarating and mind opening. I traveled around the country and did things like climbed Ayers Rock, snorkeled in the Great Barrier Reef, and toured an opal mine. The people I met were just as interesting, unique, and fascinating; I remain in contact with some of them to this day.

What is your favorite thing to do when you attend library conferences? My favorite thing to do at conferences, apart from the peer learning, is to catch up with friends, explore new bars and restaurants, and actually do some site seeing.

What is the biggest training disaster you have ever experienced? And what did you learn from it? It isn't really a disaster but the worst thing for me is not being ready when I walk into the classroom. There is nothing worse then trying to photocopy handouts or finalize a PowerPoint presentation 3 minutes before the class starts. Now that I am more experienced, I have a good sense of how long it takes me to prep for a class and I make sure I have scheduled that time into my calendar.

What do you do for fun? For me, traveling with friends is the best way to relax and "get away from it all." If none of us can get away then we hang out by going to the symphony, a play, a concert, or a movie.

New Online Resources

Check out Don Clark's concept map of the learning process (shown below) and keyword list of terms—both let you click on the terms of your choice. His website is at <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/learning/learning.html>



and organizations. (Kram & Isabella, 1985) and (Conway, 1998)

If you are interested in more information about the Mentoring Project research and development, please visit my Mentoring webpage at <http://students.washington.edu/jenpeter/Mentoring/mindex.shtml>

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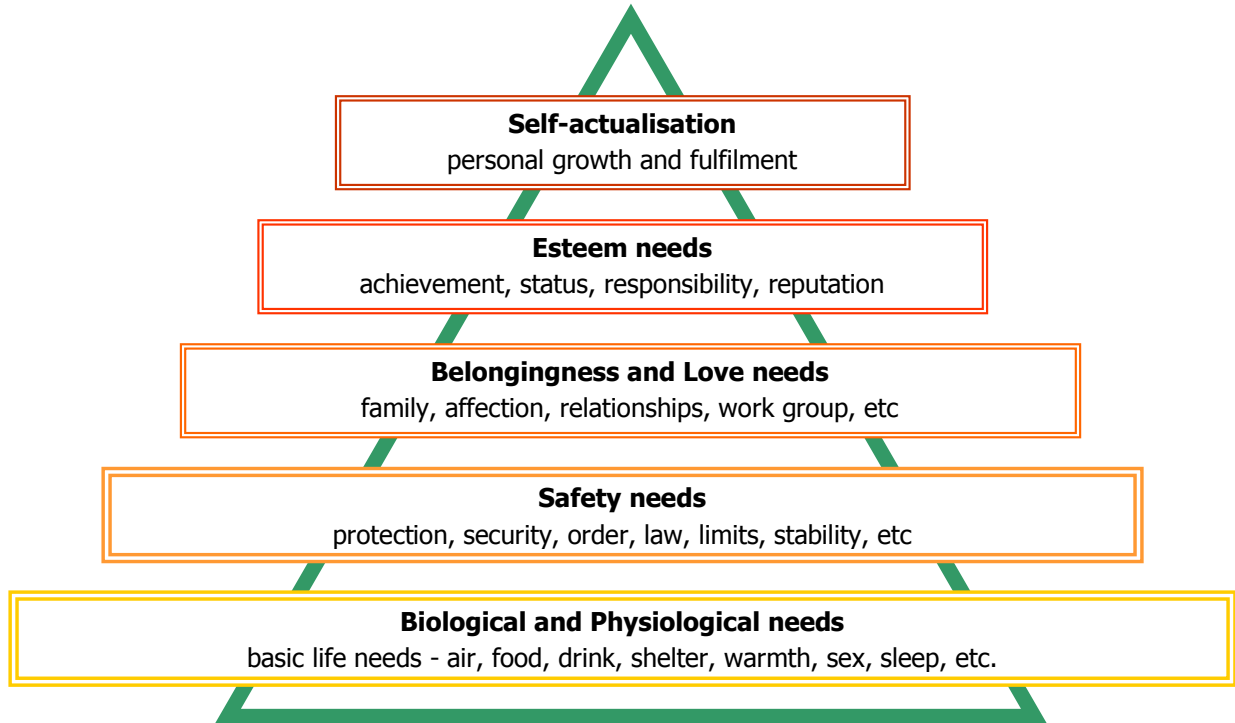
Free-choice Learning

The Institute for Learning Innovation defines free-choice learning as "the type of learning guided by a person's needs and interests – learning people engage in throughout their lives to find out more about what is useful, compelling or just plain interesting to them."

"Free-choice learning is amazingly efficient and effective learning. This is because people have control over what and how they learn, and because they can choose to learn in appropriate and supportive contexts. For example, if they want to learn about art, they can go to an art museum or borrow a book on art from the library. If they want to learn about nature, they can go to a state, regional or national park."

The Urban Institute and the Urban Libraries Council report published in 2003 brought the concept to the forefront of library literature. If you haven't seen their report, *Partnerships for Free Choice Learning*, you can download a PDF at www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=410661

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (original five-stage model)



© alan chapman 2001-4, based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

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Editor's note:

The model above is reprinted with the permission of Alan Chapman, a speaker, coach and advisor, specializing in the ethical and innovative development of people and organizations in Leicester, England. Be sure to visit his website, <http://www.businessballs.com/> You will find a wealth of free online development resources including articles on a variety of topics including mentoring, training games, quizzes, templates and more. The five key points he stresses (shown below) are well worth remembering.

*Focus on **learning**, not training.*

*Focus also on **emotional maturity**, **integrity**, **compassion** - these are the characteristics which really count.*

*Develop the **person**, not just the skills and knowledge.*

*Give people **choice** in what, and how and when to learn and develop - there is a world of choice out there, and so many ways to access it all.*

*Talk about **learning**, not training, and offer relevant learning in as many ways as you can.*

2005 Training Showcase

Date: Saturday, June 25th

Time: 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Annual Conference - Chicago

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