staff development strategies that work!
stories and strategies from new librarians

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Editors
Dedication

To three leaders, my friends and mentors, Janice Simmons-Welburn, William Welburn, and M. Mueller

—Georgie

To my mentors and friends, Patricia Tarin and Patricia Glass Schuman, without whom nothing in this career would have been possible

—Miguel
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In recent years, we occasionally hear library administrators at the podium or in publications deplore the shortage of emerging leaders in the LIS field. This book deflates that myth. Here are the voices of the imminent new leaders. Their accomplishments make a strong case for the supervisor, the director, and the system to mentor, empower, and provide opportunities for new professionals to expand their knowledge, contribute to our professional organizations, and move into increasingly responsible positions.

Leaders, supervisors, and directors of libraries would do well to read and heed these stories. They are more than “It’s all about me.” They are the essence of what it takes to create a work environment for new library professionals that provides not only the tools and opportunities for individual development but also consistent support and acknowledgment of the worth of their efforts. Rosabeth Moss Kantor said, “Leaders are more powerful role models when they learn than when they teach.” This book is a compendium of advice from a new generation of professionals who appreciate their opportunities while also seeing the need for change. It’s not always convenient or easy to accept counsel, and even easier to dismiss opinions from those who lack depth of experience, but administrators who make the effort will learn much.

I feel a special interest, pride, and excitement in the publication of this book because both of the editors and five of the other contributors are former students. As noted earlier, they appreciate the special opportunities afforded them by such projects as the Spectrum Scholarships (ALA), the Knowledge River Institute at the University of Arizona (IMLS), and similar leadership initiatives. At Arizona, I observed from the first day they met Pat Tarin, Director of Knowledge River, and watched as they became library professionals and developed the self-confidence evident in these pages. For some, this is their first published effort. Others are accomplished editors and writers. All are making a significant contribution to our profession.

Every so often we read or hear about the reluctance of professional staff to move into leadership positions. Staff Development Strategies That Work! discredits that assumption. It also makes a strong case that current administrators have many options to use in the nourishment and growth of the leaders the library profession so urgently needs.

Brooke E. Sheldon
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How do libraries transform new or early-career librarians into the leaders of the future? They invest in engaging, encouraging, and effective staff development. *Staff Development Strategies That Work! Stories and Strategies from New Librarians* presents a wealth of ideas from a unique perspective—the new librarians who have benefited from effective supervisors’ practices.

In the pages that follow, 18 new librarians talk about what worked for them. Reading their stories reveals what was done to make them satisfied in their jobs; to build their leadership skills; to transform them into managers and supervisors; and to move them from novices to specialists in their respective areas. Each chapter has been written for a supervisor to read and consider. The lessons and practices are intended to be easily replicable and to involve little or no cost to the institution. This collection includes examples of well-designed and established programs administered by managers, simple attitudes or actions exerted by supervisors, and a few unique charges or responsibilities built into new librarians’ job descriptions. Because the chapters were written by the librarian experiencing the strategy, they will include both the good and the bad lessons learned as well as some warnings.

As this collection is written for supervisors and managers to glean ideas, we have chosen to use the term “staff development,” conceived as a regimen or program influenced by a manager or management team and prescribed for staff. We have avoided using the term “professional development,” which we consider to be an individual’s own plan for development or progression, or the term “career development,” which would emphasize each unique individual’s concept of how his or her career should advance. While staff, professional, and career development are related, we do recognize that they are slightly different. It is our hope that the ideas in this collection can be applied across broad ranks of staff to improve the general team.

Each of the new librarians writing in this collection was invited to contribute by the editors. These are new professionals—all within a decade of graduating from library school—who have made a strong impact in the few years they have been working. Many of us are friends, having worked together at various institutions or on association committees. Many have also achieved special distinction—Spectrum Scholars, *Library Journal* Movers and Shakers, American Library Association Emerging Leaders. Our sole criteria for inclusion were the ability and desire to share a successful strategy and personal story of staff development. The librarians included
here represent a diversity of perspectives and experience but share an appreciation of the development efforts that they have experienced.

Throughout the chapters, you will see “Quick Tips” that digest much of the narrative lessons into easy-to-understand statements. These tips are intended to focus your reading and make the stories shared even more illustrative and revealing.

Perhaps the most noticeable and impressionable element of this book will be the numerous stories that have been collected. It is certainly by design. We have encouraged authors to tell their stories so that supervisors can understand the unique circumstances of new librarians. Now more than ever, our profession is filled with a diversity of people who have come to librarianship for different reasons and through different routes. The practices that have proven effective often reflect an understanding or have been created specifically out of these circumstances. By framing each section within a story, supervisors can draw connections between the new librarians writing these chapters and the new librarians staffing their own libraries.

*Staff Development Strategies That Work!* is a guidebook to the best experiences of new librarians—experiences that have helped to bring new professionals into an organization and move them into new levels of leadership.

**Organization**

This book is organized into two large parts—“In the Library” and “Out of the Library.” Some contributors shared many ideas that were centered in the library and could easily be put into action at any time during the work year. Many other contributors focused on parts of our professional lives that happen outside of the library. These strategies may be unique to the professional calendar and may require more planning and coordination. Each of the chapter authors has worked to provide a new perspective on staff development. Some chapters discuss similar experiences but all provide a new piece of advice worthy of consideration.

Part I, “In the Library,” features nine chapters that include recommendations for management styles, formalized staff development programs, and options for allowing new librarians to participate in the professional process. In Chapter 1, “Staff Development Opportunities at Work: Building Leadership Skills,” Jennifer Rutner opens with an overview of her experiences at Columbia University Libraries. Her chapter includes initiatives laid out by her direct supervisor, those provided by the institution, and several initiatives of her own that might be encouraged by supervisors of new librarians. Chapter 2, “Guidelines for Knowing and Showing: From Good to Great Bosses,” helps managers build trust among new hires, manage time and schedules, and develop personal, but professional, relationships. Author Mary Evangeliste describes several tools for helping bosses make the leap from good to great. Chapter 3, Kim Leeder’s “The Power of Trust in Cultivating New Leaders,” explores the role of psychology in training new leaders. Through an analysis of her experiences, she illustrates how library leaders who express trust in their younger colleagues can inspire and develop new librarians’ leadership abilities.

Coaching is one of the buzzwords gaining momentum as the millennial generation moves into the workforce. In Chapter 4, “Coaching from the Ground Up:
Building Goal-Oriented Relationships,” Scott Collard introduces this tool through a firsthand account of his own experience in a coaching program and focuses particularly on its value in working with new employees. Readers will learn about the basics of the coaching approach, some tips for how to create a coaching program, and some of the outcomes that might be expected. In Chapter 5, Antonia Olivas takes on the much talked about and very tricky prospect of mentoring. “Mentoring New Librarians: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” looks at how mentoring can play a role in staff development and various ways to build these relationships—by assignment, encouragement, or organic development. For those who have pondered a mentorship program, this firsthand account—of both pros and cons—is worth time and consideration.

Stephen Brooks charts his course from student worker to manager in Chapter 6, “From Paraprofessional to Department Head: Lessons in Cultivating a New Professional.” Brooks draws on his experience as a staff member who became a department head to provide examples of effective staff development strategies. Chapter 7, “The Librarian as Researcher: Support for Research and Modeling a Research Mind-Set,” by Cat Saleeby McDowell, reveals the strong impact a manager can have in developing researchers in the profession. McDowell’s chapter shows how research can benefit not only the new professional’s skills, but also the library as a whole. Toni Anaya shares her experiences in governance in Chapter 8, “Getting the Big Picture Through Participating in Library-Shared Governance.” Anaya outlines the reasons for her selection and involvement, the discussions and topics she sat in on, and the impact her participation had on her leadership role in the library. Finally, in Chapter 9, Alanna Aiko Moore of the University of California, San Diego, discusses how her involvement on campus has made her a leader in her library. Her chapter, “Campus Connections: Building a Library and Campus Leader,” explains how she cultivated relationships on campus and conducted outreach to different organizations and student centers. The creation of a supportive campus community helped her succeed on a personal level, grow as a professional, and position the library as a visible and viable partner in campus activities.

Part II, “Out of the Library,” explores important aspects of staff development that occur outside of the library. These eight chapters explore formalized, external development programs, conference and association involvement, and community engagement. Mark A. Puente surveys the library landscape in Chapter 10, “Leadership Training Programs and Institutes: Models for Learning to Lead.” Tamika Barnes McCollough and Iyanna Sims share their personal stories of diversity and development in Chapter 11, “Tilling Fresh Ground: Cultivating Minority Librarians for Library Leadership Through Programs and Initiatives.” In Chapter 12, “Networking as Staff Development: Introductions, Invitations, and Associations,” Miguel A. Figueroa explores the value of networking for development and offers managers a process for getting the ball rolling with new employees. While networking is certainly a process that can happen outside of the library, by taking an active role and devoting work time to the process, managers can create a valuable and rewarding experience for both their employees and their institutions. Ida Z. daRoza guides us A to Z through
the experience of conferences for new librarians in Chapter 13. “Staff Development Through Association Conferences and Meetings; or, The Developing of a Latino Librarian,” takes readers from selecting first associations and conferences, to exploring local opportunities, finding community in conferences, and reinvesting in associations.

Where daRoza leaves off, Georgie L. Donovan picks up in Chapter 14, “Professional Service on National Library committees: Developing the Skills to Lead.” Donovan talks about her experiences working with the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) and the ways in which her library and supervisors encouraged and incorporated those efforts into her position. Joseph Nicholson moves out of the library world by looking at librarians’ participation in non-library conferences. Chapter 15, “Non-Library Conferences for Development,” draws on Nicholson’s experience in the American Public Health Association (APHA), the benefits his involvement brings to his professional work and his library, and the ways in which he has made inroads as a librarian in a non-library world. Chapter 16, “Supporting Active Conference Participation by New Staff,” shares Moncia Samuel’s experiences as a conference presenter. She discusses the value of conference presentation to the development of a new librarian, and the relative freedom that can be experienced in submitting a conference proposal. Annabelle Nuñez, in Chapter 17, “Community Engagement and Advocacy: Skills and Knowledge to Expand Library Services,” relates how her passion for her community was incorporated into her role as a librarian. Her unique contacts with local groups and organizations allowed her to take the lead on several library projects, and her ability to make connections has made her a go-to resource among her staff.

A last thought

When the editors were discussing the idea for _Staff Development Strategies That Work! Stories and Strategies from New Librarians_, one of the main goals was to turn the idea of staff development on its head. So often, ideas come only from the top down, from the established and experienced leaders who have built our libraries into great institutions. While their knowledge is incredibly valuable, and none of us could be where we are without them, we knew from personal experience that many new librarians have excellent ideas and lessons to share. It is our hope that these stories will present not only lessons learned from the best programs that were distributed from the top down, but also some bold new directions and ideas that will spring forth from the grassroots level. If reading these stories inspires you and your management team to take on a new challenge or initiate a new program, then perhaps it will also encourage you to sit down with your new librarians and hear their stories about what is working in your library, what they need, and what they want to contribute.