



## Review

### ***Staff Development on a Shoestring: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians***

*Marcia Trotta. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2011. 175 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55570-730-9. \$70.00.*

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Staff development frequently underlies a successful implementation of innovative library services and systems. As Marcia Trotta emphasizes in her book, *Staff Development on a Shoestring*, ongoing staff training and growth is critical to delivering first-rate library services, achieving optimal performance levels, implementing change, and preparing for the future. A program of continuing education is critical for preventing library stagnation and staff burn-out. Employees that are motivated to learn and are given opportunities for personal growth are central to a library which is implementing innovative new services and changing workflows.

Financial support for staff training and development is rarely adequate, despite the central role that a well-trained, creative, and flexible staff plays in delivering a high level of service to library users. Libraries either don't include all staff or do not have funding to sustain an ongoing program. Training classes are frequently perceived by library managers as a luxury. When budgets are tight, staff development is often the budget line item which is decreased or eliminated. *Staff Development on a Shoestring* is a helpful

guide to any library manager who is faced with the challenge of initiating or maintaining a staff development program while juggling library budget cuts.

A new title in the Neal-Schuman series How-To-Do-It series, this book provides a practical guide for maintaining staff development either using resources already on hand or with a minimum of financial expenditure. For the busy manager, this book does not need to be read sequentially. Each chapter describes a specific activity or aspect of staff development and provides examples of programs. Consequently, the book serves as a procedures manual; each chapter can be read independently. Summaries and lists in the margins, as well as ready-made worksheets, forms and graphs all enhance the book's usefulness for the manager searching for quick suggestions on a specific topic. Ideas are presented without jargon and are oriented towards resolving library issues. Links to online resources, including organizations, library and university programs as well as various websites which provide assistance with staff development, expand on the information provided by Trotta. The extensive Resources Directory at the end includes a bibliography of publications, tools, organizations, and online sources which expands the scope of the book beyond just librarianship and into the disciplines of management and business.

The book's focus on low- or no-cost staff development techniques provides innovative ways of resolving the manager's dilemma: how to promote ongoing staff learning when a library budget cannot support formal training or travel opportunities. Trotta broadens the definition of staff development beyond the conventional understanding of training as a structured one-time session to include an understanding of staff development as an ongoing daily process which systematically and continuously updates staff skills. These techniques include creating your own development program, developing trainer skills in existing staff, mentoring, leveraging performance evaluations as opportunities for developing staff, as well as incorporating strategies for recognition, motivation and reward into daily work routines. Costs associated with staff development are minimized by her emphasis on those activities which can be accomplished with few or no expenditures or which are already part of the library's routines.

In this vision of ongoing staff development, the library manager plays a central role. Trotta outlines the responsibilities of a manager to include selling a staff development plan to library decision-makers or library boards, planning a staff development program, modeling the program's activities for other staff, and ensuring that staff development is an ongoing process within the library's daily activities. Trotta devotes a chapter to defining good leadership, providing tips for successful supervision, and emphasizing the importance of good management skills. Unless the supervisor or manager is able to model behavior which supports continual learning for everyone and an environment of creativity and flexibility, staff will not feel motivated to take on new skills or responsibilities. The emphasis on good management and leadership as a catalyst for inspiring growth and change among staff defines a strength of this book.

Although Trotta writes from the perspective of a professional trainer working in a large public library setting and emphasizes public library hierarchical structures as well as the

needs of public library customers, the ideas presented are applicable to any type of library. A reader working in a small library with a one or two-person staff can be initially discouraged by the concepts presented in the beginning chapters; they may not have the number of employees from which to select and groom in-house trainers, and the informal setting of a small organization may not require formal needs audits or surveys. Regardless, Trotta's approach can be scaled to suit any size or type of library situation. Her ideas about rewards and recognition are applicable to any staff member regardless of position, library type, or staff size.

By defining staff development as an ongoing process which can be incorporated into existing library practices with existing personnel, Trotta demonstrates how a creative manager can find opportunities for staff growth despite a lack of financial resources. Not only can staff development improve existing skills or teach new tasks, but staff development can be used to promote a new library vision and fulfill new library goals. When staff development is prioritized, carefully planned, and incorporated into a library's daily activities, it can become a powerful vehicle for inspiring change and innovation throughout the library.

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