

ACTEA Librarians eNews, October 2002

Greetings fellow librarians/information workers,

It has been some time since we last got together. I trust that the year has gone well so far!

In this edition of ACTEA Librarians eNews:

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1. ACTEA Training Institute in Kenya a roaring success

Phyllis Masso writes from Nairobi, "Our ACTEA Library Staff Training Institute has ended, and God blessed us with two very successful weeks with 36 librarians attending each week at Daystar University's Athi River campus.

"We were facilitated through Daystar's short-course ICMT program. Some of the attendees stayed for both weeks, but there were a total of 53 different librarians attending from various African nations, including Rwanda, Zambia, Togo, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Africa. The ages ranged from early 20's to late 50's which gave a nice family feeling. All facilitators except me were Kenyans with degrees in Library Science, so we had an interesting turn-around in that Africans were teaching missionaries.

"The first week of sessions were based on 'The Librarian's Manual' in that the basics of library management, classification and cataloguing were taught with a very brief introduction to computers. We were challenged by our CALA (Christian Academic Librarian's Association) chairman, Priscilla Kioni, to realize the important position that God had given to us in our institutions and to work hard in seeing that library resources get the attention they deserve and that the librarian's voice be heard at the administrative level. We were able to borrow several copies of library classification reference books (compliments of Caroline Ndemaki of St Paul's), so attendees could have hand-on experience. Ephraim Mudave (a librarian at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology) addressed specific cataloguing issues in theological libraries as well as rules for filing. Daniel Ruheni taught basic processing techniques and showed us the Daystar library and how they do things there.

"The second week was nearly all computer and Information Technology related learning. This week was taught mostly in one of the new computer labs at Daystar University. Library automation programs and international standards were introduced by Daniel Rutto (from Scott Theological College) and me (Phyllis). Attendees were taught how to create a database in Access by Charles Nandain (from the Nairobi International School of Theology). Search strategies for online searching were taught by Daystar's Margaret Karanja. I guided hands-on experience in installing programs and using sample programs such as ResourceMate and ITS for Windows and gave a demonstration of Mandarin, an integrated library automation program.

"Many presenters had hand-outs, and some used PowerPoint presentations. Many of these were saved digitally along with free software, a sample library policy, etc. which we used to make our own CD which the attendees worked with in class and then took home with them.

"Overall the response of the attendees was that time and money was well spent in attending this workshop. Some of us have been asked to consider coming to Tanzania and South Africa to do similar presentations in the near future, and we are excited about this. There was unanimity that we must continue doing such things in the future, and we are already looking into various possibilities of either nearly repeating what we have done to a new audience or working together with one of the Nairobi library schools (Kenya Polytechnic) in presenting a custom-made course using their facilities and accreditation in the future."

Well done, Phyllis, and a BIG thank you from all of us. I saw Helen Scarlett (from Namibia Evangelical Theological Seminary) when she was here in Cape Town a few weeks ago, and she said that she learned much and that it was a very worthwhile experience.

2. The Solo Librarian - some views

What is a Solo Librarian? A librarian who never married? A Solo librarian is a librarian who manages a library very much on her/his own! Many of us are Solos! In her book, "The Solo Librarian's Sourcebook (Medford, NJ: Information Today Inc., 1997), Judith A Siess has many helpful things to say to those working on their own in a library.

Judith asks, "Why would anyone want to be a Solo librarian?" Some reasons given (responses to a questionnaire she sent out) are independence, variety, and an enhanced feeling of self-worth. Solos enjoy the ability to run their own show, set their own schedule, plan their own priorities, with a minimum

of supervision.... We can know exactly what is going on and the level of quality going out to customers. We value the close relationship we develop with our patrons...". As Christians we would add that the element of service, in often trying circumstances, is a strong motivating factor.

What are the drawbacks of the Solo life? Some mentioned by Judith are: professional isolation, lack of clerical support (don't we know!), the need for reporting to a non-librarian, and low pay, lack of management support, lack of time, frustration at not being able to "do it all", lack of status, and lack of control of policy, personnel, or budget (or all three).

Here is a sample of answers to questions asked by Judith:

What do you like most about being SOLO?

- *Ability to realize your own ideas, varied work
- *Responsibility, creativity in designing library management, and being able to see result of my work with the users directly
- *It is interesting to do all the things yourself
- *Possibility of conceptual work, self-responsibility, complexity of work
- *I think I can work more creatively than in a bigger library
- *I think it is very important to set up a network for SOLOS

What do you like least?

- *Too much work
- *Lack of acknowledgement, bad reputation (!!)
- *Lack of information network, it depends much on your own initiative whether you get the right/important information
- *Being isolated, the underestimation of the library within the organisation
- *The position not accepted in academic circles
- *Too little contact with other librarians
- *Lack of someone else in our staff to discuss specialist problems

I would like to interject here! ATTITUDE is often the problem when we think of the negatives of being a Solo. It is up to us to earn the respect of those in the institutions in which we work. Once one has earned the confidence of management in a college, the negatives associated with Solo librarianship can be turned around.

What are your ideas on being a Solo librarian? Become part of the larger community of librarians and write in giving your ideas and suggesting solutions to problems. How about us starting a column in eNews called "Librarians without walls"? In a way, eNews seeks to bring us all together into a larger professional community of librarians to share resources and ideas. Networking is really important if the SOLO is to remain relevant and

professional!

3. Solo Librarian's Listserve and other resources

If you are a Solo Librarian, be encouraged. There are some really exciting resources for you. If you have access to the web you can go the site for the Solo Librarians Division of the Special Library Association. This site exists to share ideas, problems, and solutions unique to the Solo Librarian. There are chat rooms and other sites to browse, as well as bibliographies, a newsletter, etc.

The web address is: <1. <http://www.sla.org/division/dsol>>

To review a copy of the book, "The OPL Sourcebook: A guide for solo and small libraries", contact Tom Hogan at <thoganjr@infotoday.com>. You may get a free copy of the book in exchange for some of your own ideas.

Happy surfing (if you have access to the web). Otherwise get a friend to surf for you and send you some information. You can even join the SOLO Librarian network - but don't desert ACTEA Librarian's eNews whatever you do!

4. Thoughts on time management

Time management is very important for solo librarians (and indeed for librarians generally). With so much to do and usually no one to whom to delegate, the solo librarian should be aware of the basic principles of time management. Judith Seiss (see her book above) suggests that too often the librarian seeks time management "tricks", things that will enable a job to be done more quickly. They seek EFFICIENCY, where they should be looking for EFFECTIVENESS.

Andrew Berner, editorial consultant to 'The One-Person Library: A Newsletter for Librarians & Management', talks about the "three Ps" of effective time management.

a. Planning. One needs a sense of where one wants to go. Without planning one moves from day to day through the operations of the library - pleased to get through the day - but never achieving the ultimate goal of the library. Long range planning gives direction needed for medium and short term planning and gives a sense of direction where there was none before. Instead

of merely "filling" one's day with tasks that seem to have no purpose, one finds oneself making decisions about the work one does (e.g., do I really need to do this?).

b. Priorities. Not everything done is of equal priority. One needs to be able to differentiate among various tasks and duties to be able to set priorities. Also, priorities are not constant; they may shift as new tasks and new developments come into play. It is important to recognize that whatever criteria you use for determining priority, you should always be working towards your main goal.

c. Procrastination. This can rob you of effectiveness in your job!

Alec Mackenzie, in 'The Time Trap' (1990), lists some time wasters.

1. Attempting too much - lack of priorities and planning. Yielding to the urgent, perfectionism, unrealistic time estimates.

2. Confused responsibility or authority - lack of job description, responsibility without authority, confused organizational chart, etc.

3. Inability to say "no" - desire to win approval, lack of objectives and priorities, thoughtless assumption by others that you will say yes.

4. Management by crisis.

5. Inadequate planning, crisis orientated, lack of job description, difficulty assigning priorities to tasks, assuming that since few days are typical it is futile to plan.

6. Telephone interruptions, ineffective screening, no one else available to answer phones, socializing to avoid dull tasks!

Some MYTHS about time management (Judith Seiss):

1. "Time can be managed." One manages one's activities, NOT time itself!

2. "The longer or harder you work the more you accomplish." No! You can only do so much before "fatigue diminishes all returns".

3. "If you want something done right, do it yourself." Delegate if you can. Playing "receptionist" is NOT your job - find someone else in the organisation whose job it really is.

4. "You cannot enjoy or are not supposed to enjoy work."

5. "Time management is the same as time and motion studies." Instead of just measuring how long it takes to do something, focus on effectiveness (doing the job right!).
6. "Other people have more time than you do." We all have the same amount of time; we just use it differently.
7. "Time management means keeping to strict rules." No! Any change in behavior must be personalized.
8. "We should take pride in working hard." No! Librarians should take pride in working smart (Cochran 1992).

Judith Seiss suggests a couple of ways to manage your time:

1. Plan your work the day before - if possible!
2. Do the least pleasant tasks first.
3. Postpone unimportant tasks and do not do low priority items if it will not make a difference.
4. Perfectionism is not the answer. You can't do it all. Do not say yes, then no. Give reasons for not being able to say yes.
5. Avoid being over-organized.
6. Don't complain - fix the problem.
7. Prioritize tasks into the essential, what can wait, and what would be nice but is not essential.
8. Say "no" to inappropriate requests.
9. Emphasize self-service (do YOU really have to stamp out books, etc?). Be proactive with bibliographic instruction and library instruction workshops, etc.
10. Leave your personal work at home!
11. If you are usually tired in the afternoons, try to schedule less demanding tasks for that time.

Well, readers, I hope this newsletter has given you some food for thought. Please discuss these issues with your supervisors, other members of staff and faculty, so that they can understand you more fully. It is really up to us to carve out our path in our various theological colleges. Let us help each other as we strive to do our best for the Kingdom whilst at the same time enjoying what we do!

FEEDBACK, PLEASE, fellow information workers!
God bless and happy times in your library/information center.

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