Ten Lessons for New Professional Librarians and Those That Train Them

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First Day on the Job

Stay Cool
What will be discussed today

• How to be a horrible library professional

• 10 lessons containing everything I know now that I wished I knew when I was new professional
  ▫ Action steps for training new professionals
  ▫ Action steps for new professionals

• Suggested Readings
How can I be a horrible library professional?

- Be consistently late to work and meetings
- Assume you already know how to do things best
- Only communicate with others in the way that is best for you
- Never take responsibility for your own mistakes
- Force immediate rapid changes before building trust in your work community
- Never listen to instruction from others
- Hold others to standards they can observe you not following yourself
Lesson #1

• In which meetings you can, and more importantly, in which meetings you cannot eat the food
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  ▫ When a person is new to an organization they need to know all of the little things that everyone else already knows
    • Unwritten policies
  • Practices found only in emails
  • Common knowledge and expectations
Lesson #1 In Action

• Trainer:
  ▫ Write down the unwritten policies
  ▫ Collect the practices only found in emails
  ▫ Share the common knowledge and expectations

• New professional:
  ▫ Ask those training you about any unwritten practices and about your employer’s expectations
  ▫ If everyone else seems to know what is going on, don’t just play along - ask
Lesson #2

• Communication is key
Lesson #2

• **Communication is key**
  ▫ Find appropriate ways to communicate with your staff, peers, and boss
  • Communication richness
    • Text<Chat<Email<Phone<Skype<In Person

• One management team with one voice
Lesson #2 In Action

• Trainer
  ▫ Give communication guidance
    • When to email, when to call, when to talk in person

• New professional
  ▫ Do not assume you already know the best way to do something
Lesson #3

- Mix in experiential learning opportunities
Lesson #3

• **Mix in experiential learning opportunities**
  ▫ **Telling**
    • Review a written procedure and talk about the practical effects it has upon a job

  ▫ **Showing**
    • Working through a customer service situation with the new professional present

  ▫ **Doing**
    • Have the new professional shadow staff or handle a customer service situation with supervision
Lesson #3 In Action

- **Trainer**
  - Create a training plan that intermixes telling with showing and doing

- **New professional**
  - If the person training you is only telling and showing, ask for the opportunity to try out what is being discussed
Lesson #4

- Listen and observe
Lesson #4

- **Listen and observe**
  - Ask a lot of questions!
  - Watch how your peers, supervisor and staff go about their business
  - What is the culture like at your location?
  - What is the organizational culture like?
Lesson #4 In Action

• Trainer
  ▫ Find out about the department the person you are training is going to be working

• New professional
  ▫ If your boss isn’t the person training you, know that you will need to repeat this process again once you start in your new position
  ▫ Listening and observing does not mean “be passive”
Lesson #5

• Find appropriate ways to take initiative
Lesson #5

• **Find appropriate ways to take initiative**
  ▫ Balance projects given by manager with projects you want to create yourself
  ▫ Willingness to communicate with staff and other departments
Lesson #5 In Action

• Trainer
  ▫ Discuss goal setting

• New professional
  ▫ Try to acquire clearly defined expectations

  ▫ Set personal goals
    • Immediate, short term, long term
Lesson #6

• Set appropriate boundaries
Lesson #6

• **Set appropriate boundaries**
  ▫ First inclination is to say “Yes” to everything
  ▫ You cannot say “Yes” to everything
Lesson #6 In Action

• Trainer
  ▫ Talk honestly about home/life balance expectations of the organization
  ▫ Talk to new professionals about setting reasonable boundaries

• New professional
  ▫ If you are receiving too much or not enough work, address that issue with your boss
  ▫ There are appropriate times and ways to say “No” to work matters
Lesson #7

- Facilitate networking opportunities between new professionals and other professionals
Lesson #7

- Facilitate networking opportunities between new professionals and other professionals
  - Committee participation
  - Mentoring
  - Work Lunches
  - Happy hours
Lesson #7 In Action

• **Trainer**
  ▫ Help connect new professionals to their work community
  ▫ Introduce trainee to key people in person whenever possible

• **New professional**
  ▫ Seek out networking opportunities
  ▫ Offer to buy people coffee or lunch and in return, ask for a *reasonable* amount of their time
Lesson #8

- Own the intangibles
Lesson #8

• Own the intangibles
  ▫ Show up to work early
  ▫ Prepare for meetings
  ▫ Be a positive force in your department
  ▫ Dress appropriately
  ▫ Employ self-discipline
  ▫ Exhibit your creativity
  ▫ Show appreciation
Lesson #8 In Action

• Trainer
  ▫ Model professionalism
  ▫ If you can’t give practical advice on a topic, find another trainer who can

• New professional
  ▫ Observe how peers dress in different work situations
    • Normal day, jeans Friday, board meeting, meeting with administration, outreach events
  ▫ Dress and act professionally
    • Helps with staff interactions, customer interactions and administration interactions
Lesson #9

- Embrace change
Lesson #9

- **Embrace change**
  - Departments and organizations *will* change
  - Change can be sudden
  - Change can be painful
  - Change is often frustrating
Lesson #9 In Action

• Trainer
  ▫ Give new professionals coping mechanisms for change

• New professional
  ▫ Constantly be building a support system
    • Work allies
    • Allies outside of work
Lesson #10

• Give people freedom to make mistakes
Lesson #10

• **Give people freedom to make mistakes**
  ▫ You will make mistakes

  ▫ It is okay to make mistakes

  ▫ Learn from your mistakes

  ▫ Do not create a pattern of the same mistakes
Lesson #10 In Action

• Trainer
  ▫ Discuss the consequences for mistakes

• New professional
  ▫ When you make mistakes:
    • learn from them
    • move on
Suggested Readings:

• The Art of Asking
  ▫ by Amanda Palmer

• A Passion for Leadership
  ▫ by Robert Gates

• The Leadership Gap
  ▫ By Lolly Daskal
Questions?