

Favorable Library/Organization Support of Job-Related Training at University Libraries: Perceptions from Support Staff

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Abstract

Purpose - This paper studies the perceptions of support staff at university libraries regarding important library/organizational support to their training and examines the statistical differences between such perceptions and the respondents' general characteristics, i.e., educational attainment, library work experience, work units, level of job responsibilities, rank, and age range.

Methodology/approach - This study uses a survey instrument to collect data from close-ended and open-ended questions. The instrument was administered to the entire support staff (non-MLS degree holders) at the six Kansas university libraries. 139 complete and useful responses were received, achieving a returning rate of 83 percent. The data were analyzed through quantitative and qualitative measures.

Findings - The findings of the statistical analyses indicate that support staff value library/organizational support to their training. Their perceptions were influenced by their total years working in the library field and by their age range.

Practical implications- The findings from this study will provide library administration with empirical data on allocating required library resources to support staff training.

Originality/value – The paper provides empirical data that identify important library/organizational support to staff training, and offer insight of perceptions of support staff and influencing factors of their perceptions. The findings from this research project will also help fill gap on library literature on issues related to staff training.

Key words – training, continuing education, library administration, support staff, life-long learning, library and information science research

Introduction

Technology has become a driving force for many changes in colleges and universities. In her article, "Ahead of the curve: the future in higher education," Shirley Ann Jackson (2004), President of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in U.S., elaborates the challenges brought forth by technology that have profoundly impacted higher education:

In higher education, the pedagogical, research, and administrative changes necessitated by new technological capabilities and methodologies are profoundly affecting the work and methods of scientists, engineers, administrators. Colleges and universities *must* evolve to meet the new challenges (p. 11).

Institutions of higher education have entered into a period of significant change as they attempt to respond to new challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities. The forces driving change are many and varied; globalization, increasing and diverse educational needs of citizens, and growth of new knowledge and disciplines are some (Duderstadt, Atkins, and Houweling, 2002).

In an era of technology-driven higher education, libraries within these colleges and universities have to rethink their role in the changing environment to “increase ease of effectiveness, efficiency, access, coordination, and responsiveness in all aspects of our work - academic, curricular, ancillary, and support” across higher education (Ruben, 2004, p. 355).

The library has always been the intellectual heart of the university, acquiring and providing access to the recorded documents that represent the knowledge and wisdom of millenia of civilization. Nonetheless, the impact of technology advancement on the library has been both compelling and challenging. Aire (2004) elaborates the role of academic libraries in this transformation:

Academic libraries have been the driving forces in providing our users with state-of-the art electronic services and resources, not because it is the cool thing to do, but because we continually look for better ways to serve our users. Our users expect their libraries to be technology rich, especially as our institutions are providing more extended learning opportunities (p. 87).

In this rapidly changing environment, the catch phrase, "do more with less," has forced library administrators to re-examine how they can maintain and improve staff morale

and productivity with few real dollars. These and other compelling reasons require libraries to place a higher priority on the continual growth and development of library staff. This paper presents the findings of an empirical research project that collected data and studied how library support staff view library/organizational support to their job-related training and if their perceptions were influenced by their general characteristics, i.e., their educational attainment, work experience, work units, level of job responsibilities, rank, and age range. The data were collected in spring 2004 and the study was completed in early 2005. The findings of this study will provide needed data for library administration to allocated library resources to support staff's training needs.

Literature review

Research literature on library support staff's perception of library/organization support of their job-related training is very limited. The literature of other fields, however, does offer insight into the issues.

Noe and Schmitt (1986) states that a favorable learning environment directly influenced the motivation to learn. This includes the opportunities to practice skills or use knowledge acquired in the training program, being able to receive reinforcement and feedback from supervisors and co-workers, and being able to receive technological support. In other words, proper tools, equipment, materials, supplies, and monetary support are needed in a quality training program. Dakshinamurti (1985) asserts that the effects of technology on library personnel can be both positive and negative. Ultimately, what will prevail will depend on managerial decisions and the staff training provided. Notwithstanding the difference in the educational levels of library support staff,

technology has blurred the roles and responsibilities between the professional librarians and the support staff. Much of the training in libraries has to be of an incremental nature. Fleishman and Mumford (1989) point out that it is becoming more important for administrators to understand why and how trainees build on earlier learning so that transfer of learning will positively impact performance of new tasks. More than a decade ago, Knowles (1990) advocates that the adult learner in the changing work environment needs to view learning as a life-long pursuit. No longer is the premise valid that stresses training and education are designed only for youth. The new applications of technology being introduced in libraries illustrate that earlier skills learned by the staff are constantly in need of update.

Shaughnessy (1988) recognizes the influence of organizational culture on library staff development efforts. For learning to be effective, staff receiving training and the institution's leaders need to be prepared and ready to accommodate each other. Oberg (1992) and other researchers conducted a nationwide survey on the role, status, and working conditions of paraprofessionals. The majority of sampled libraries offer the support staff such incentives as new employee orientation, workshops and other in-house training, release time, and funding for attending offsite meetings at local, state, regional, and national levels. Jones and Jordan (1987) list accommodation, equipment, expertise, and funds as general resource needs in training. Maurer and Traudi (1994) agree that the company's facilitative policies, which encourage employee learning, may be significant environmental concerns in development in non-engineering contexts.

Several decades ago, Conroy (1977) wrote a monograph on human resources development for library personnel. In this book, the author stated that staff development

was based on the belief that individual learning and growth were important keys to strengthening an organization. Staff development programs encourage and guide personnel in acquiring skills and knowledge that are related to library needs. More than two decades later, this concept still holds true. It is very important that the entire organization – particularly management at all level – supports the library staff's development goals and commit to this effort. In their nationwide survey (Oberg, et al. 1992), the data indicated that member libraries of the Association of Research Libraries in U.S. were more likely than the Carnegie sample libraries to offer certain staff development incentives, although the differences were not great.

Adult learning is different from the learning of children (Rogers, 2002). An Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report (2003) also points out that “an adult nonetheless exhibits special qualities in terms of willingness, maturity, motivation or interest, and it is essential that they are taken into account” (p. 162). Support staff at university libraries bears many similar characteristics to adult learners in the context of learning and training. Their educational attainment varies widely; their job titles are based on the nature of their work and there is no uniform job title among them; many of them have worked in the library field for more than 10 years (Kao, 1998); their salaries are between \$21,677 to \$47,017 according to a 2003 survey (Roney and Fox, 2003), and they have continuing education needs in “Internet searching, computer trouble shooting, reference services, cataloging and classification, supervisory skills, customer service, and other skills” (Kao, 1998, p. 59).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to learn the important library/organizational support perceived by support staff to their job-related training in the six Kansas Board of Regents university libraries in U.S. and to examine the statistical differences between their perception and their general characteristics, i.e., their educational attainment, library work experience, work units, level of job responsibilities, rank, and age range. This study may help increase the understanding of the differences among support staff's needs for library/organizational resources regarding their training. The findings of this study will provide library administrators with empirical data on allocating required resources to support staff training.

Population of the study

University libraries in the U.S. employ two groups of people who provide a variety of services to library users: professional librarians with a master's degree in library and information science (MLS holders) and the non-professional employees who are not required to hold the advanced degrees for their positions. In many university libraries, the second group of employees is often called "support staff" or "paraprofessionals." While professional librarians receive their formal training from the library schools accredited by the American Library Association (ALA), support staff often obtains their training by working in libraries. In the classic report by Charles C. Williamson on differentiating the concept of professional and clerical duties in libraries, he recommended: "Library schools should confine themselves to training of the professional type. Training of the clerical type will be provided through so-called

training classes conducted by libraries” (1971, p. 136). In this study, the term “support staff” was used to distinguish those staff from MLS degree holders.

The subjects in this study were the entire support staff in the six Kansas Board of Regents university libraries in U. S. The six Kansas Board of Regents universities are Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, Kansas State University, Pittsburg State University, the University of Kansas, and Wichita State University. Professional librarians (MLS holders) and clerical personnel were excluded from the population of this study.

The commonality of the support staff in the six Kansas Board of Regents university libraries constituted an important justification for using this study group. All subjects fell under the policies and guidelines established by the State of Kansas. These support staff perform the functions and activities defined by Kansas State regulations. All libraries within the Kansas Board of Regents universities followed the same hiring requirements of support staff for Library Assistant I, Library Assistant II, and Library Assistant III. Among them, the Library Assistant III is the highest rank, while the Library Assistant I is an entry level rank. In the Kansas Board of Regents’ university libraries, support staff move up from a lower rank to a higher rank by having increased responsibilities and performing more complex daily routines, and by applying for a higher-rank position when there is an opening within the system. The support staff falling under the purview of the Kansas Board of Regents constituted a population that offered more control, greater reliability, and fewer indeterminable variables. The parameters of this study could be replicated in other similar environments.

Research question and null hypotheses

The research question for this study was: What kinds of library/organizational support are perceived as important by support staff to participate in job-related training?

The following 11 questionnaire items concerning useful tools and resources for staff training were constructed to provide answers to the research question:

- Enable me to practice new skills learned from training
- Provide me with technical support
- Offer in-house expertise when I need it
- Link my training to a pay increase
- Acknowledge my training on my evaluation
- Provide me with release time for training
- Allocate funding for my training goals
- Provide me with training materials
- Supply me with appropriate software
- Arrange on-site training sessions
- Suggest relevant training topics to me

The *null* hypothesis for this study was: There are no statistically significant differences in the library/organizational support perceived by the respondents as a function of their general characteristics. The subjects' general characteristics are their educational attainment, total years in the library field, total years at current positions, work units, level of responsibilities, rank, and age range. Specifically, each null hypothesis is as follows:

Ho a. There are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of favorable library/organizational support as a function of their educational attainment.

Ho b. There are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of favorable library/organizational support as a function of their total years working in the library field.

Ho c. There are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of favorable library/organizational support as a function of their total years working at their current position.

Ho d. There are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of favorable library/organizational support as a function of their work units.

Ho e. There are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of favorable library/organizational support as a function of their level of job responsibilities.

Ho f. There are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of favorable library/organizational support as a function of their rank.

Ho g. There are no statistically significant differences in the respondents' perceptions of favorable library/organizational support as a function of their age range.

The above research question and null hypotheses were intended to discover the perceived library/organizational support by support staff that encouraged them to actively participate in training for skills, knowledge development, and other educational activities. A supportive organizational environment often plays an important role in staff training.

The concept of a training session may hinge on a “good but impossible idea” if the necessary training resources are not available. Technology training normally requires the latest brand of equipment; however, online training may save money and is more convenient. In the online training environment, learners are able to proceed at their own pace and may learn better (Barkley and Bianco, 2002). Some training necessitates expensive instructional materials. Release time from regular daily duties may be necessary before one can engage in particular training sessions. Training sessions often occur at regional/national conferences; travel funds may not be available for these conferences. Policy issues may have a detrimental effect on training if the library does not have a policy for funding travel for support staff to attend training held offsite. The findings from responses to the research question and null hypotheses offered valuable insights into current and future policy issues to university libraries on support staff training.

Research Design

A survey instrument was used in this study because “a questionnaire gathers large amount of data from many respondents” (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 361). Through extensive literature search, this researcher concluded that there was no existing questionnaire instrument surveying the important library/organizational support perceived by support staff in university libraries in general, and in Kansas’ four-year public university libraries in particular. Therefore, the researcher designed the questionnaire for the study.

Patton (2002) asserts that “validity in quantitative research depends on careful instrument construction to ensure that the instrument measures what it is supposed to

measure” (p. 14). To ensure validity of the questionnaire, the researcher carefully matched each questionnaire item in the survey with the research question so that data collected from each questionnaire item provided answers to the research question. The questionnaire items concentrated on library/organizational support that encouraged support staff to participate in job-related training. The last section of the questionnaire collected the data of the participants’ general characteristics. Maurer and Truilli (1994) observe that previous research tended to indicate that some demographic variables may influence individual perceptions, thus affecting their interest in continuous learning. Through analysis of these demographic data, the researcher discovered the influencing factors on the respondents’ perceptions of library/organizational support.

In designing the questionnaire, each questionnaire item was measured by a Likert rating scale with four choices: “Not at All Important,” “Somewhat Important,” “Important,” and “Very Important.” Among the four choices, 1 was for “Not at all Important” and 4 for “Very Important.” The four-point Likert scale of choice was chosen in this study to avoid neutral responses from the respondents and forced them to choose in one direction or the other (Miller (1994). According to McMillan and Schumacher (1997), “Likert-type scales provide great flexibility since the descriptors on the scale can vary to fit the nature of the question or statement” (p. 257). At the end of the close-ended questionnaire items, space for open-ended questions was provided for the subjects to offer additional comments and opinions related to the research question. Gay and Airasian (2003) deem it “desirable to include an open-ended question for respondents to provide additional information” (p. 284).

Data collection methods

The data collection of this study followed carefully designed procedures to ensure that all needed data were collected as the study intended. A pilot study was conducted among 75 support staff at a mid-western large-sized university library (outside the Kansas Board of Regents university system) in the U.S. Through mailing, the subjects were asked to fill out a close-ended questionnaire survey and offer additional open-ended comments in space provided. With a return rate of 72 percent (54 complete and usable responses), the data of the pilot study were collected, reviewed, and analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 12.0, the latest version of the package in early 2004. The reliability of the survey instrument developed by the researcher was tested using Cronbach's alpha level. The overall testing result of the reliability for the instrument was at the alpha level = .781. In addition to answers from the questionnaire, the researcher interviewed six support staff and their supervisors for follow-ups and comments on the questionnaire items during the pilot study. The feedback from returned questionnaires and from records on interviews helped the researcher fine tune the survey instrument before it was finally administrated to the entire support staff in the six Kansas Board of Regents university libraries.

The finalized questionnaire was sent via mail to the 167 individual support staff in the six Kansas Board of Regents university libraries. Though there were some reliable internet survey tools on the market at that time, considering that not every support staff would be able to access the Web during their work time and may not have internet access at home, the researcher used conventional mailing to collect responses. In the personal letter, it stated that it only took about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the

two questionnaire mailings with self-addressed and postage-paid envelopes and the two postcard reminders, the useful responses included 139 completed questionnaires. Therefore, a return rate of 83 percent was achieved. The quantitative data were coded and entered into a SPSS database. The results/findings of the statistical analysis were tabulated and analyzed. Statistically significant differences of the various training variables were also reported. The researcher performed a reliability test for the answers to the close-ended questions. The overall testing result of the reliability for the final survey instrument was at the alpha level = .881, higher than that of the pilot study (alpha level = .781). The improvement was also made among the questionnaire items in the final instrument.

The qualitative data collected from the open-ended questions on the instrument provided additional information and points of view that were not able to be obtained from the close-ended items. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) conclude that “one of the principal strengths of qualitative research remains its blend of strategy and unexpected discovery” (p. 210). The comments and suggestions from open-ended questions were first transcribed into MS WORD documents. The recurrent words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from the WORD documents were assembled into units to let the themes emerge. Last, the researcher analyzed and organized these comments according to their themes.

Data analyses and research findings

Data analyses in the study included analyzing data collected from the answers to close-ended questions and from the written comments to open-ended questions.

Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative measures were applied in data analyses.

Quantitative measures

Quantitative research requires the study and measurement of variables. For the purposes of this study, these two types of variables were studied: the independent variable and the dependent variable. Independent variables in this study were: support staff's educational attainment, library work experience, work units, level of job responsibilities, rank, and age range. Dependent variables were the participants' views on organizational/library support that help their job-related training.

Data gleaned from the questionnaires (e.g., close-ended questions) were analyzed by descriptive statistics using measures of central tendency to obtain an average of all scores for each questionnaire item. The data was also analyzed by inferential statistics measuring the statistical differences on participants' perceptions based on their educational attainment, library work experience, work units, level of job responsibilities, rank, and age range.

General characteristics of the respondents

Table I shows the general characteristics of the respondents who completed the questionnaire, including their educational attainment, total years in the library field, total years on the current positions, work units, level of job responsibilities, rank, age range, and gender. Because the respondents were overwhelmingly female, the gender was not used in the subsequent analyses to avoid obvious biases.

Table I. The respondents' general characteristics

Educational Attainment	N	Percentage
High school diplomas or some college courses	50	36
Bachelor's degrees	67	48.2
Advanced degrees	22	15.8
Total	139	100
Total years in the library field		
1-5years	28	20.1
6-10 years	18	13.0
11-15 years	26	18.7
16 and more years	67	48.2
Total	139	100.0
Total years on the current positions		
1-5years	68	48.9
6-10 years	21	15.1
11-15 years	23	16.6
16 and more years	27	19.4
Total	139	100.0
Work units		
Acquisitions	25	18.0
Online Cataloging	40	29.0
Collection/user services	26	19.0
Access Services	48	34.0
Total	139	100.0
Level of job responsibilities		
Non-supervisors	53	38.1
Supervising students	59	42.5
Supervising staff and students	27	19.4
Total	139	100.0
Rank		
Library Assistant I	27	19.4
Library Assistant II	65	46.8
Library Assistant III	47	33.8
Total	139	100
Age range		
35 or younger	28	20.0
36-45	25	18.0
46-55	64	46.0
56 or older	22	16.0
Total	139	100.0
Gender		

Female	114	82.0
Male	25	18.0
Total	139	100.0

Support staff of this study, as a group, have advanced knowledge and degrees beyond their job qualifications. The respondents in this study possessed a high level of educational attainment: 64 percent of the respondents reported having a Bachelor’s degree or an advanced degree. This finding concurred with that of Kao’s study (1998), in which the author studied educational attainment, workplace, and job satisfaction of library technicians in academic libraries in Connecticut. In Kao’s study, 63 percent of the respondents had a Bachelor’s degree or a Master’s degree. Similarly, in Jones’ study (1999) on support staff’s perceptions of technology in the workplace, 78 percent of the 109 respondents from three university libraries had an undergraduate or graduate-level degree. There is no doubt that well-educated support staff will continue to play an important role in helping shape library services and functions at university libraries. The chief benefit that this group of knowledgeable support staff provided for libraries is “highly skilled labor at a bargain cost” (Letarte, Pennel, and Hamlett, 2004, p. 290). As valuable assets in university libraries, they should be allowed “to take on responsibilities that befit their education to benefit the entire academic community” (Jones and Stivers, 2004, p. 91).

It should be also noted that, the library support staff is an aging population. In this study, 62 percent of the respondents reported to be 46 years or older. This finding is similar to that of the Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) Ad Hoc Task Force on Recruitment and Retention Issues White Paper (2002). In this paper, it noted that more than 60 percent of librarians working at the libraries within the

Association of Research Libraries (ARL) were due to retirement in the next decade (ACRL Adhoc Task Force White Paper, 2002). Additionally, the statistics from ARL mirrored the fact of “massive retirement of current women librarians over next twenty years” (Deyrup, 2004, p. 245).

In recent years, attention on an aging library profession has mainly focused on recruitment and retention of professional librarians. Because support staff will continue to perform tasks that professional librarians had done in the past, attention and efforts in recruiting, retaining, and training library support staff should be made. This issue is as equally important as that of professional librarians.

Descriptive statistics

The purpose of the descriptive approach is “to describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, factually and accurately... in the literal sense of describing situations” (Issac and Michael, 1981, p. 46). The answers from the respondents to close-ended questions were coded into the SPSS database. The data were analyzed by using such measures of descriptive statistics as means and standard deviation for the central tendency measures.

The subjects of this study were asked to rate the importance of the 11 questionnaire items on library/organizational support that they viewed to be important for their training. Table II summarizes the mean values of the responses to 11 questionnaire items, with the highest mean on the top of the list. On this list, “Supply me with appropriate software” earned the highest mean of 3.47 on a 1 to 4 Likert rating scale as an important library/organizational support that would help the respondents’ training. In addition, “Provide me with release time for training” and “Provide me with technical support”

were also rated highly by the respondents, with means of 3.43 and 3.34, respectively.

Though “Link my training to a pay increase” had the lowest mean (M=2.88) out of all 11 questionnaire items on the list, on a rate of 1 to 4 Likert scale, it was an above-average score.

Table II. Means and standard deviations of dependent variables

Topic	N	Mini.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supply me with appropriate software	139	1	4	3.47	0.77
Provide me with release time for training	139	1	4	3.43	0.73
Provide me with technical support	139	1	4	3.34	0.73
Enable me to practice new skills learned from training	139	1	4	3.33	0.73
Allocate funding for training goals	139	1	4	3.32	0.79
Provide me with training materials	139	1	4	3.27	0.81
Offer in-house expertise when I need it	139	1	4	3.27	0.79
Acknowledge my training on my evaluation	139	1	4	3.24	0.81
Arrange on-site training sessions	139	1	4	3.01	0.90
Suggest relevant training topics to me	139	1	4	2.90	0.82
Link my training to a pay increase	139	1	4	2.88	1.06

Inferential statistics

For inferential analyses, first, a series of one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were performed. Multivariate tests “are those that involve more than one dependent variable. ... Multivariate tests look at all dependent variables at once, in much the same way that analysis of variance (ANOVA) looks at all levels of an independent variable at once” (Cronk, 1999, p. 80). For instance, if ANOVA tests were to be conducted for each of the 11 questionnaire items, it would have caused a Type I error inflation (Cronk, 1999). To avoid the Type I error inflations, a multivariate analysis was

used to analyze the data. When statistically significant differences were found, a series of ANOVA tests were followed to identify the value of significance. Finally, if significant differences were found at the .05 alpha level, then a series of Scheffe post hoc tests were conducted to determine where these differences occurred. Haslam and McGarty (2003) regarded the Scheffe test as “one of the best known” methods of doing multiple comparisons (p. 293).

The seven null hypotheses were tested to determine if there were statistically significant differences in the respondents’ perceptions on important library/organizational support for their training as a function of the respondents’ general characteristics, i.e., educational attainment, library work experience, work units, level of job responsibilities, rank, and age range. Table III presents summaries of the Wilk’s Lambda test results of one-way MANOVA on library/organizational support. The test results (Lambda (33, 369) = .691, $p < .05$) established that there was a statistically significant difference in the respondents’ perceived favorable library/organizational support for training as a function of their total years working in the library field. The significant value of the Lambda test results was .043, smaller than .05 at the alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis $H_0 b$ was rejected.

Also in Table III, one-way MANOVA from the Lambda test results (Lambda (33, 369) = .68, $p < .05$) reported that there was a statistically significant difference in the respondents’ perceived library/organizational support for their training as a function of their age range. The significant value of the Lambda MANOVA test was .027, smaller than .05 at the alpha level. Thus, the null hypothesis $H_0 g$ was rejected.

Table III. One-way MANOVA test results

Independent variables	Value	Multivariate tests			Sig.
		F	Hypothesis df	Error df	
Educational attainment	0.81	1.30	22	252	0.17
Total years working in the library field	0.69	1.492	33	369	0.04
Total years at current positions	0.79	0.926	33	369	0.59
Work units	0.86	0.85	33	369	0.712
Responsibilities	0.82	1.214	22	252	0.24
Rank	0.77	1.567	22	252	0.54
Age range	0.68	1.57	33	369	0.03

Analysis on respondents' total years in the library field

Subsequently, a series of analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to identify values of significance related to the respondents' total years of experience. Table IV reports the follow-up ANOVA test results of the significant value under the column "Sig."

Table IV. ANOVA tests of between-subjects effects by total years in the library field

Dependent variables	Type III of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
Enable me to practice new skills learned from training	7.87	3	2.62	5.46	0.001
Provide me with technical support	6.52	3	2.17	4.41	0.005
Allocate funding for my training goals	6.87	3	2.29	3.89	0.011
Provide me with training materials	5.34	3	1.78	2.80	0.042
Arrange on-site training sessions	6.92	3	2.31	2.96	0.034
Suggest relevant training topics to me	5.19	3	1.73	2.67	0.050

Then follow-up Scheffe post hoc contrasts were performed to determine where statistically significant differences existed among the four groups of the respondents who had worked in the library field between 1 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years and 16 or more years regarding the following questionnaire items:

Enable me to practice new skills learned from training. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who worked in the library field between 6 to 10 years and the other three groups of the respondents. The respondents who had worked 1 to 5 years, 11 to 15 years, and 16 or more years in the library field viewed the opportunities of being able to use new skills learned from training as being more important than the respondents who had worked between 6 to 10 years in the library field.

Provide me with technical support. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who had worked in the library field between 6 to 10 years and the respondents who had 16 or more years of experience in the library field. The respondents with 16 or more years in the library field considered technical support being more important for their training than those who had worked 6 to 10 years in the library field.

Allocate funding for my training goals. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who had worked in the library field between 6 to 10 years and the other two groups of the respondents: those who had worked 1 to 5 years and those who had worked for 16 or more years in the library field. These two groups of respondents viewed having funding for training as being more important for them than those who had worked between 6 to 10 years in the library field.

Provide me with training materials. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who had worked between 6 to 10 years and the respondents who had worked

16 or more years in the library field. The respondents with 16 or more years of experience in the library field viewed having training materials as being a more important library/organizational support tool than those who had worked 6 to 10 years in the library field.

Arrange on-site training sessions. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who had worked between 6 to 10 years and those who had worked 16 or more years in the library field. The respondents with 16 or more years of experience in the library field viewed on-site training sessions being more important for their training than those who worked between 6 to 10 years in the library field.

Suggest relevant training topics to me. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who had worked between 1 to 5 years and the respondents who had worked between 6 to 10 years in the library field. The respondents who had worked between 1 to 5 years in the library field viewed “Suggest relevant training topics to me” as being more important support for their training than those who had worked between 6 to 10 years in the library field.

Analysis of respondents’ age range

Based on follow-up ANOVA test results, Table V lists significant values of the following questionnaire items on library/organizational support under the column of “Sig.”:

Table V. ANOVA tests of between-subjects effects by age range

Dependent variables	Type III of squares	df	Mean squares	F	Sig.
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Acknowledge my training on my evaluation	5.51	3	1.69	2.69	0.049
Provide me with release time for training	5.39	3	1.80	3.53	0.017
Allocate funding for my training goals	7.57	3	2.52	4.32	0.006
Arrange on-site training sessions	11.67	3	3.89	5.24	0.002

Follow-up Scheffe post hoc contrasts were performed. Statistically significant differences existed among the following questionnaire items:

Provide me with release time for training. At the alpha = .05 level, the respondents' perceptions on "Provide me with release time for training" as library/organizational support were influenced by their age range. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who were 35 or younger and who were 36 to 45 years old. The respondents who were 35 or younger viewed having release time for training as being more important than those who were in the age range of 36 to 45 years old.

Allocate funding for my training goals. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who were 36 to 45 years old and the respondents who were 46 to 55 years old. The respondents who were between 46 to 55 years old viewed having funding for training as being more important than those who were in the age range of 36 to 45 years old.

Arrange on-site training sessions. The statistical difference existed between the respondents who were 36 to 45 years old and the respondents who were 46 to 55 years old. The respondents who were 46 to 55 years old viewed "Arrange on-site training

sessions” as being more important for their training than those who were in the age range of 36 to 45 years old.

Table VI provides a summary of null hypotheses on library/organizational support corresponding to the respondents’ general characteristics. At the alpha = .05 level, the respondents’ perceptions on library/organizational support for their training were not influenced by their educational attainment, total years at current positions, work units, level of job responsibilities, and rank. The null hypotheses *Ho a*, *Ho c*, *Ho d*, *Ho e*, and *Ho f* were accepted. That is, regardless of their educational attainment, total years working at their current positions, their work units, level of job responsibilities, and rank, the respondents viewed all 11 types of library/organizational support important for their training.

Table VI. Null hypothesis summaries

Independent variables	Value	Multivariate tests			Sig.	Reject hypothesis?
		F	Hypothesis df	Error df		Y/N (Alpha = .05)
Educational attainment	0.81	1.30	22	252	0.17	N
Total years working in the library field	0.69	1.49	33	369	0.04	Y
Total years at current positions	0.79	0.93	33	369	0.59	N
Work units	0.86	0.85	33	369	0.712	N
Responsibilities	0.82	1.21	22	252	0.24	N
Rank	0.77	1.57	22	252	0.54	N
Age range	0.68	1.57	33	369	0.03	Y

The hypotheses *Ho b* and *H -g* were rejected at the alpha = .05 level. The respondents’ perceptions on library/organizational support for their training were influenced by their total years working in the library field. The respondents’ age range also influenced their perceptions of library/organizational support for their training.

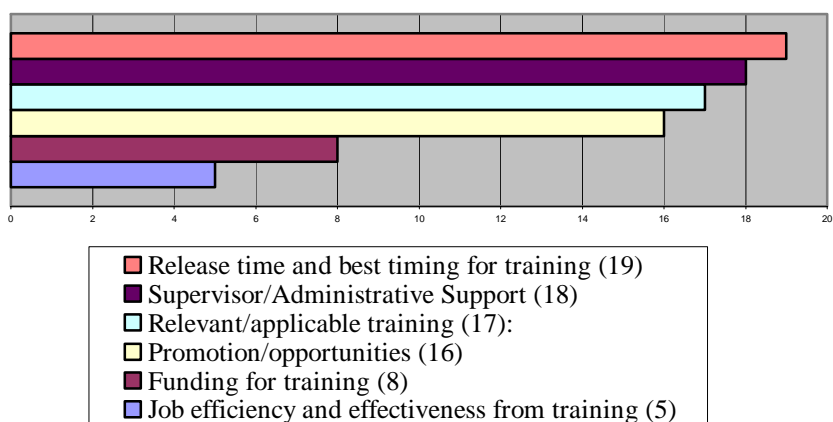
Qualitative Measures

The information sought in this study was realized from a complex, multidimensional, and dynamic process. Even though most of the data for this study were collected through quantitative methods, that is, the data were collected through close-ended questions, the components of the qualitative measures in the questionnaire provided in-depth analysis to supplement the quantitative measures, because “open-ended question probes yield in-depth responses about people’s experiences perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (Patton, 2002, p. 4).

The advantage of using the mail questionnaire to collect qualitative data was that the subjects’ anonymity was maintained, enabling free expression of opinions. This is particularly necessary in the academic library community in U. S. because the number of the subjects is small when compared to the K-12 school systems or higher education communities. Additionally, certain work units in the university libraries may contain only one or fewer support staff. Therefore, maintaining confidentiality is important.

In expressing their opinions and suggestions on the library/organizational support that supports training, the respondents provided 83 units of information in six main themes: “Release time and best timing for training,” “Supervision/ administrative support,” “Relevant/applicable training,” “Promotion/opportunities,” “Funding for training,” and “Job efficiency and effectiveness from training.” Figure 1 presents the six themes from answers to open-ended questions.

Figure 1. Additional comments and suggestions on library/organizational support



Theme 1: Release time and best timing for training (19 units)

Respondents provided 19 units of information that identified the theme of needing “Release time and best timing for training.” One respondent offered an insightful observation on needed time for training: “Time to get training would be nice. We are running as fast as we can just to stay even.” Overall, finding time for training and getting release time for training were the two most cited reasons that would help the support staff to participate in training, including time provided to be away from the office, time to travel to and from the training locations, and time to support self-paced learning at support staff’s desks. One respondent was concerned about time away from the desk or office: “The biggest problem related to attending any kind of training is, who does my work when I am not there?” Another respondent made a similar statement: “Due to budget cuts our unit is short-staffed. The remaining staff are required to take on more and more complicated duties, and yet we have less time available for training.”

With more online training available that support staff can access from their workstations, time also needs to be provided to accommodate the staff who take

advantage of online training opportunities. In that aspect, one respondent wrote that “any type of self-paced learning must be supported by (time) at work. Without this support the work suffers.” Another respondent stated a similar viewpoint, writing that “I would like to stress that devoted time to training without interruptions is vital for topic flow and learned development.”

Regarding the best timing for training, the respondents offered several suggestions: “maximum of one and a half hours or less if out of office;” “afternoon training best vs. morning session,” and the training sessions “should not be longer than an hour.”

Theme 2: Supervisor/administrative support (18 units)

Eighteen units of information were collected as part of the theme of “Supervision/administrative support.” The respondents cited support from library administration or their supervisors as being the most important reasons to help their participation in training. The words “support” and “supervisors” were mentioned frequently in answers to the open-ended questions in this section. One respondent stated that “training is very important, but along with the training you must have support from your supervisor to use what you have learned and to be supported if you succeed or fail.” In one case, the respondent attributed success to her or his immediate supervisor: “I have a supportive supervisor who has encouraged me to attend training sessions on specialized subjects and technology pertinent to my work and job details. I feel fortunate in this respect.” However, when staff failed to keep up with learning new skills, they also attributed it to the supervisor. One respondent remarked: “supervisor/administrative support would go a long way. If they don’t care, then I definitely don’t care.” Another

respondent expressed the expectations from the supervisor in training: “the supervisor is responsible to assist in staff development. The use of suggested course work and future use is important to guide and train not only one person but an entire team.” According to another respondent, “I believe the single most critical component of a successful work experience is to have and be a good, well – trained supervisor.”

Theme 3: Relevant/applicable training (17 units)

Seventeen units of information emerged on the theme of “Relevant/applicable training.” When time and funding at the library become tight, it makes sense to make training sessions job-specific and applicable. “Make it applicable to the job I do or help to prepare me for promotion,” one respondent cited as a reason for participating in training. Another respondent wrote that “this kind of specialized, job-specific knowledge is the most valuable that we have.” The value of training may diminish if it is not relevant, as one respondent stated: “a good rule of thumb would be: if it is not job specific and position specific and if it takes longer than an hour, it is probably of dubious value.”

Other comments from the answers to open-ended questions were related to immediate use of the learned skills and application of the new skills to their job. One respondent suggested that training sessions should lead to “fairly immediate use of learned skills (i.e., relevance of training).” A second respondent commented that “pay is important, but it is usually important to be able to use the new skill and be recognized for above and beyond the norm.”

Theme 4: Promotion/opportunities (16 units)

The respondents provided 16 units of information on the theme of “Promotion/ opportunities” through training. Topics such as “Promotion,” “new job opportunities,” and “pay increase” gained through training were commonly used throughout this theme. One respondent commented that “training should be a means to promotion within a system.” Regarding a pay increase, one respondent wrote that “salary concerns are vital to retention of well trained workers.”

However, some respondents recognized that the current state-wide employment system may not be able to offer a pay increase tied to training. One respondent referred to a question on the survey, “Link my training to a pay increase” and wrote that “it is not possible within current system.”

Theme 5: Funding for training (8 units)

The respondents identified “Funding for training” as a theme with eight units of information to support it. Several respondents repeated the close-ended choice of “Allocate funding for my training goals” on the questionnaire in their answers to open-ended question. Providing funding for on-site training opportunities was welcomed by the respondents. For instance, one respondent suggested “the need to encourage more people to attend on-site training when provided.” On-site training can also accommodate the special needs of the support staff. One respondent explained that the reason that she or he preferred on-site training was, “I have children at home and cannot travel and stay overnight.”

Allocating funding for training may also include the provision of travel expenses for off-campus training. One respondent stated the need for such funding: “I have only been to one out of state conference in the seven years I have worked here.” Another

respondent suggested “a visit to other workplaces” as a training/learning opportunity that also required off-campus travel expenses.

Theme 6: Job efficiency and effectiveness from training (5 units)

Five units of information were collected on the theme of “Job efficiency and effectiveness from training” from responses to open-ended questions. “I generally attend training to help work better, not to get better work,” wrote one respondent. A second respondent expressed a similar viewpoint: “the more knowledgeable I am about chemistry, the more efficient I can be (in the Chemistry Library).” The respondents also viewed training as a way of developing effective staff. One respondent wrote that training “not only keeps processes smoothly flowing during absences or with unfilled positions but also develops effective staff.”

Conclusions

Library/organizational support plays a vital role in encouraging support staff to participate in training. In this study, the top three library/organizational support that the respondents considered important were “Supply me with appropriate software” (M=3.47), “Provide me with release time for training” (M=3.43), and “Provide me with technical support” (M=3.34). These responses reflected that in a rapidly changing workplace, library/organizational support to staff training should be technology-oriented because “adequate staff training requires a firm commitment from the library administration” (Tennant, 1995, p. 46). In their 2005 study, the authors (Devaney and Outhwaite, 2005) found that “better range of books relating to my leaning need,” “wider reading materials,” and “protected time for study” (p. 259) were top three choices that

support staff at UK's National Health Service would like to have to meet their learning resource needs. The setting is different. However, the needs for organizational support are quite similar, especially, in terms of providing release time for learning among support staff in the two groups. Additionally, regardless of the respondents' educational attainment, total years working at their current positions, their work units, level of job responsibilities, and rank, they viewed all 11 types of library/organizational support important for their training.

There are many creative ways that university libraries can help with support staff training, such as arranging on-site training, suggesting relative training topics to support staff, encouraging support staff to practice newly learned skills, etc. Others may need resources like purchasing software, funding for travel, and providing training materials. For libraries facing limited funding for staff training, Tennant (1995) suggested that "although a financial commitment is important, what is essential is allowing and encouraging staff to take the time to learn and utilize new methods" (p. 46).

It is very interesting to note that, when the subjects were asked to rate the importance of a close-ended questionnaire item on "Link my training to a pay increase," this item was not a top-rated one by the respondents. The response from open-ended questions provided a clue to the reason, "it is not possible within current system." The state-wide classification system in Kansas is based on the nature of the job itself, not training sessions attended. Therefore, support staff have to be promoted from a lower rank to a higher rank in order to get a pay increase, not through training itself. In theory, training helps employees acquire needed skills and therefore prepare them for a promotion. In practice, it is not clear how often each library is able to promote support

staff based on the new skills they have acquired. In a study of the motivation of professional librarians and paraprofessional staff for participating in continuing education program, Smith and Burgin (1991) found that the reason rated least highly by the respondents was “To increase the likelihood of personal financial gain” (p. 408). Leonhardt (1996) also concluded that “compensation is important, but it is not the only important reward” valued by support staff (p. 214). To what degree will a pay increase motivate support staff’s participation in training? This could be a fruitful area for further investigation.

Recommendations for further study

The population of this study was the entire support staff at the libraries of the six Kansas Board of Regents universities. However, the similar or replicate studies can be conducted in other types of library settings, such as public libraries or community college libraries.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is specifically recommended that further studies be conducted on why the support staff’s views of library/organizational support were different based on the total years working in the library field and age range. In this study, the respondents who worked in the library field between 6 to 10 years appeared to be able to keep pace with their responsibilities and changing environment. However, the respondents in other groups may need more resources to enable them to participate in job related training. Regarding the respondents’ age range, those who were 36 years or younger and who were between 46 to 55 needed more release time, funding, and on-site training sessions. When the resources for training

become limited, understanding these differences will help libraries better plan training programs and distribute resources.

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