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HELIN Professional Development Task Force
Final Report

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Task Force Charge

HELIN's Professional Development Task Force was established in October 2010 with the goal of recommending strategies for "***resourcefully delivering professional development opportunities to library staff to meet the changing demands of the information age."*** The group's official charge is to ***"use strategic initiatives to proactively identify professional development opportunities."*** The Task Force is also charged with exploring HELIN's role in providing professional development to the consortium.

Background

Professional development and training exists in many forms and the Task Force discussed a variety of options for providing free, local, relevant, and accessible learning opportunities for HELIN members. A model of ongoing continuing education is critical to HELIN's future and to its continued success. Learning opportunities and idea sharing forums are beneficial to individual participants, member libraries, and the consortium as a whole. A HELIN-wide program would facilitate the sharing of expertise, encourage peer to peer learning, and promote networking. Offerings would evolve as needs change and trends emerge, but it is essential that a program would include a menu of options aimed at all HELIN staff, regardless of area of focus, job title, or physical library location. The overall goal is to have HELIN members engaging in activities to upgrade skills and learn new competencies to ensure a healthy, dynamic organization.

Investigation

The Task Force considered various perceptions and definitions of professional development. To build on this concept and deliver on the original directives, the Task Force researched and reviewed existing professional development opportunities in the area, gathered feedback from Task Force members and library directors to identify needs, and explored existing professional development models.

The Task Force discussed the need for continued development of library staff in the 21st century. As libraries are forced to do more with less in today's economic climate, it is important to include opportunities for all staff to sharpen skills, network, and keep pace with trends. This is not limited to degreed librarians, but is necessary for all library staff.

Four main areas of focus informed the Task Force recommendations:

1. **Environmental Scan:** An environmental scan was conducted to identify existing professional development opportunities offered both regionally and online (see p.8).

2. **Task Force Survey**: Task Force members answered an informal survey to provide information on development opportunities at individual HELIN institutions and to clarify the staff development objectives of library directors. Results showed:

   - Many HELIN libraries do not offer regular in-house training/development sessions.
   - Libraries that do hold in-house trainings are willing to invite other HELIN members to these sessions.
   - A need exists for consortial-level Millennium training for new employees and shifting job responsibilities within HELIN institutions.
   - Opportunities should be provided for HELIN members to gather and learn outside of the Annual Conference.
   - Topics of interest include communication, customer service, library trends, leadership, and technology.

3. **Consortium Models**: An investigation of other professional development initiatives revealed the depth and breadth of existing programs, including:

   - **Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN):** Through SEFLIN's Community of Learning Program, members can participate in online workshops, special events, and leadership institutes. http://www.seflin.org/

   - **Utah Academic Library Consortium:** Offers a Library Staff Sharing Program with the purpose of "sharing expertise between member libraries" where library staff presenters submit a program proposal in advance. http://www.ualc.net/committees/Library_Staff_Sharing_Application_March_14_2008.pdf

- **North West Academic Libraries (NOWAL):** Their Staff Development Group includes representatives from each member library and they maintain a Staff Development blog. They also offer a formal Job Shadowing program. http://www.nowal.ac.uk/index.php

- **Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC):** A multitype consortium with over 75 online, in person, and on demand classes on a variety of topics, including library management, technical services, public services, resource sharing, strategic planning, communication, and technology trends. http://www.tblc.org/ws_classes.php#firstMatch

4. **Selected Readings**: ***Staff Development: A Practical Guide*** is a key text for building professional development initiatives. Additional readings are included in the report bibliography.

Recommendations

The Task Force approached the charge as "step one" in establishing an effective consortium-wide program, focusing on an initial investigation of what a HELIN professional development program could become. These recommendations will serve as a framework for next step activities, which involve creating content and maintaining ongoing initiatives.

Mission

The overall program should deliver on a mission that ties professional development goals to HELIN's organizational goals. The mission should focus on advancing staff development through learning opportunities that provide fresh perspectives or serve as skill building forums.

Umbrella Initiative

The Task Force believes that a 'menu' of opportunities will best suit the needs of HELIN members, offering a balance of possible options that attract a wide audience. Opportunities should range from one time training to larger scale development initiatives. Formats and concepts could include local library sharing events, vendor trainings, workshops, outside speakers, online offerings, and leadership institutes. This type of program would be more structured than the roundtable discussions of HELIN Affinity Groups, but could build on ideas generated in group meetings.

The Task Force recommends an alternative to the usual professional development label in order to design and promote a program with broad appeal. An all encompassing title that reflects the diversity of programs on offer would eliminate potential negative associations with "continuing

education," where people might think these programs will add to their already busy workloads or that they might only be geared to certain segments of library staff.

Target Audience

The intent is that offerings would be of interest and benefit to all HELIN member staff, including:

- Full-time staff
- Part-time staff
- Paraprofessionals
- Professional librarians
- Administrators/Directors
- Employees with nontraditional schedules (evenings & weekends)
- Distance learners - Library staff outside of local HELIN area (ex: J&W Denver, etc.)

Needs Assessment & Internal Resources

A needs assessment should be conducted as a prelude to identifying program content. Needs assessments are done to determine whether there is a gap between what staff members need to perform their jobs more effectively and what exists to help them do so. The assessment would also identify areas of interest and assist in formulating the best approach for establishing a program. ***Staff Development: A Practical Guide*** offers examples of needs assessments, which can inform the type of development programs most useful to the target audience.

The needs assessment could be conducted from within HELIN or by a non-HELIN affiliate, such as a consultant. A consultant would provide clear, unbiased perspectives to help develop the program. Alternatively, HELIN members could participate in surveys or individual interviews as part of a formal assessment. A needs assessment would be a primary guide in strategic planning for HELIN's professional development activities. This will determine not only the content of programs offered but the format and scheduling of program delivery. It would also allow an opportunity to align programs with wider consortial planning and initiatives. Results will also help determine budgetary requirements, as planners can then establish the most efficient ways to administer and deliver programs.

There are valuable internal resources within the consortium in the form of HELIN members. Knowledge sharing benefits both individual institutions and the wider HELIN organization. The Task Force suggests identifying HELIN members who would be willing to present on their areas of expertise to small groups.

Implementation

The structured professional development program must address the varying needs of the target audiences listed above, and should therefore include career-related, position-related, and programmatic development opportunities. In consideration of financial and logistical issues faced by staff, virtual, in-person and hybrid development offerings should be part of the menu.

Program topics can be divided into categories such as:

1. **Programs that cultivate awareness of today's issues**, which might address items such as budgetary and fiscal planning, space design, the changing workforce, copyright, change management, diversity in the workplace, and learning styles.

2. **Programs that improve staff skills, change their performance, or retrain**, including topics such as ILS training, technology sandboxes, time management, effective communication skills, interviewing techniques for hiring, training new employees, redesigning jobs, and instruction techniques.

3. **Programs that broaden perspectives,** such as those addressing job rotation, working in a multicultural or multi-generational environment, telecommuting, and scholarly communication.

Coordination and Oversight

It is clear that in order for a HELIN-wide professional development program to succeed, ongoing responsibility for program coordination and oversight is needed.

Research in best practices in staff development indicates that successful programs have a formal administrator. Therefore it is recommended that HELIN either identify an individual to coordinate program offerings, or create a standing Professional Development Committee to perform this function. If HELIN chooses a committee structure to organize and manage this initiative, appointees must be selected based on their demonstrated commitment to professional development endeavors in order to guarantee the necessary follow through.

Among the potential responsibilities for an Administrator or Committee are:

1. **Select and coordinate programs,** including designing a process for evaluating and approving proposals and creating new programs in response to needs identified by HELIN members or brought to light through a needs assessment. It is recommended that program proposals be solicited from HELIN staff members and directors, as well as from

professional consultants or non-HELIN speakers. Also, a bibliography of relevant sources for self-directed learning should be developed and housed on HELIN's website.

2. **Choose and support appropriate technology** to ensure that programs are accessible to the entire target audience. A virtual learning component is necessary and provisions (equipment/software) should be made to capture and share physical sessions virtually through webinars, online tutorials, and video recording for synchronous and asynchronous participation.

3. **Promote internal and external development offerings** through various marketing strategies and by maintaining a calendar of upcoming opportunities on the HELIN website, including appropriate programs available through other regional organizations. Enabling an RSS feed, and requiring all HELIN members to join the HELIN listserv, would be among potential effective promotional strategies.

4. **Capture organizational knowledge and provide discussion space** by establishing an online professional development library and virtual learning program. HELIN's new website could offer a blog/wiki forum for off-list discussions, questions, and program suggestions.

5. **Organize and administer financial aspects,** from establishing budgets and distributing funds to pursuing available grant opportunities.

6. **Define goals and develop assessment strategies** for the overall professional development structure and for individual offerings. Assessment methods should include attendance statistics, participant feedback, surveys, focus groups, and learning outcomes.

Budget

The HELIN Executive Board should establish a budget line item to address costs associated with setting up and growing a consortium-wide development program.

Possible costs include:

- Needs assessment fees (consultant).
- Infrastructure, equipment and software for distance learning and program archive.
- Program fees: speaker fees, workshop costs, travel expenses, etc.
- Stipends for internal HELIN presenters.
- Funding for event refreshments and/or supplies.

Goals: Years 1-2

In addition to the Annual Conference, HELIN should offer a minimum of three events for the first two years of this program. Assessment will be key to shaping future programs and ramping up efforts in subsequent years.

Possible options for years 1 & 2:

- Database training & search seminars (ex: URI Search Savvy Seminars)
- Millennium module training (ERM, Acquisitions, Event Booking)
- ACRL/NEC & HELIN partnerships – Leadership programs
- Vendor workshops (ex: Successful Repository Building/BePress)
- Guest speakers

Keys to success

HELIN member institutions must encourage attendance and offer flexible scheduling to facilitate staff participation and guarantee program sustainability. Creating supportive work environments will allow program attendees to apply what they learn within their library environments. Another option for practical success would be to incorporate HELIN's professional development program into institutional employee reviews or annual goals. Regardless of the avenues pursued based on the Task Force recommendations, it is essential that the HELIN Executive Board support, advocate, and budget for professional development for the consortium.

In conclusion, HELIN should play a strategic role in developing and providing access to professional development opportunities for its membership. A programmatic approach to continued development of the staff in HELIN member libraries is critical to addressing the ever-changing competencies required in order to provide excellent service for our clients. Additionally, these opportunities will engage members in teambuilding skills that can create a stronger and more vital work environment. We urge the HELIN Executive Director and Executive Board to support the endeavors outlined in this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

An initial Task Force (TF) activity was to ***identify*** professional development opportunities already available in the region. The following organizations offer online and in-person programs, workshops and classes:

1. ***Lyrasis***: classes, consultants and trainers. Institutional membership.
2. ***Northeast Regional Computing Program (NERCOMP)***: Affiliate of EDUCAUSE. Membership is institutional; focus on information technology. Offers workshops (SIGs) and conferences.
3. ***Oshean: "…***dedicated to providing innovative Internet-based technology solutions for its member institutions and the communities they serve." Institutional membership; occasional programs.
4. ***Simmons College GSLIS Continuing Ed:*** In-person and online workshops and classes. Classes range in price from $80 for an individual program to $250 for online courses.
5. ***URIGSLIS:*** Offers certification (teacher and information literacy) programs only.
6. ***Association of College & Research Libraries/New England Chapter:*** Free and low-cost conferences and workshops across the New England Region. Most programming is offered through the Special Interest Groups: Access Services, Collection Development, Instruction, Information Technology, Scholarly Communication and Women's Studies. Information for programming is available on the website's calendar (http://www.acrlnec.org/), Facebook and Twitter. Membership is $15 and is individual.
7. ***OCLC:*** Product Training, online access to conference presentations, access to WebJunction (see below.
8. ***American Society for Information Science & Technology/New England:*** Programs.
9. ***North East Document Conservation Center (NEDCC):*** Workshops, presentations and conferences, online and in person.
10. ***RI Office of Training & Development:*** Individual courses offered in interpersonal (writing and communication) and skills (computer technology).
11. ***Library Learning Network*** (teleconferences) Program cost, $750.
12. ***State of RI Office of Library & Information Services***: Monthly programs for RI library staff.
13. ***RI WebJunction*** (webinars and online courses)
14. ***ALA and ACRL Online Courses***
15. ***American Library Association*** Learning Roundtable offers programs and pre-conference sessions at the ALA Annual Convention, ALA Midwinter Convention, and PLA National Convention.
16. ***TechSoup*** (webinars for libraries and other non-profits)

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