Contrasting Professional Development and Continuing Education Opportunities for Library Professionals: Offerings Both within and Outside the Profession

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Abstract:

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Keywords: Libraries | Librarianship | Continuing education | Professional development | Professional organizations

***Note: Full text of chapter below

Revolutionizing the Development of Library and Information Professionals:

Planning for the Future

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Chapter 10

Contrasting Professional Development and Continuing Education Opportunities for Library Professionals:
Offerings Both within and Outside the Profession

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ABSTRACT

By design or not, most librarians restrict their professional organization involvement to professional librarian organizations. Limiting professional involvement to only library related organizations will not provide the depth of professional knowledge that today's librarian needs to have in order to keep up with the requirements of the profession. Library budgets and funding have been slashed due to economic down-turns, and patrons are turning to libraries for assistance with a variety of concerns that libraries did not have to address in previous times. Reaching beyond the scope of the profession, librarians can broaden their knowledge base and use that broader knowledge base to benefit their patrons and communities.

INTRODUCTION

Librarians in all segments of the profession are being requested to assume a wider variety of tasks and roles within their jobs. As with other professions, technology has impacted the work librarians do, but so have economic and other external forces. Libraries of all types have faced a variety of budgetary challenges; in spite of budget cuts, libraries are still facing demands from their constituencies that have forced them to adapt to meet those demands. A variety of new skillsets are necessary to provide the services that patrons now demand. Most professionals rely on their respective professional organizations to provide professional development and continuing education opportunities. Librarian-focused professional organizations offer a large

variety of continuing education and professional development opportunities; however as librarians, we must ask ourselves several questions about professional development and continuing education. Should professional library/librarian-focused organizations be the sole source of all our needs for professional development? My answer to this question is "No" and say that librarians should look beyond librarianship for professional growth and development. There are several other questions that library professionals should ask concerning continuing education and professional development: How will our employers and constituencies benefit from our professional involvement outside the profession? Are the continuing education and professional development opportunities provided by library professional organizations sufficient to allow us to advance the profession? This chapter will look at continuing education and professional development opportunities provided by major professional library organizations. The chapter will then outline some of the roles and responsibilities that librarians are being asked to assume and compare those roles to the offerings by professional librarian organizations. Finally, this chapter will review the advantages of professional involvement outside of librarianship in fulfilling those roles and responsibilities.

BACKGROUND

Professional development and continuing education are crucial components to any profession. In academic libraries, librarians may have faculty status; and in fact may be tenured or tenure track faculty. Those librarians that are tenure track know that scholarship relating to the profession is a requirement for tenure attainment. In addition, there is the expectation that tenured and tenure track librarians will make meaningful contributions to the profession by professional writing, but also by presenting at conferences, and serving on professional association committees. Professional development is not limited to academic librarians. In order to meet the service needs of an ever changing patron base, professional development and continuing education are also important for all librarians, no matter the constituent base they serve. Many professionals, librarians included, obtain their continuing education and professional development through their respective professional organizations. Professional organizations frequently offer or sponsor specialized professional development and/or continuing education opportunities that are unavailable elsewhere. Like other forms of education, technology has had a large impact, so professional development and/or continuing education is now available virtually, using a variety of forms, such as webinars, online course offerings and teleconferences.

Bugher (1983) states the purpose of an association is to "serve its members. Associations are organized by people who voluntarily join together to achieve common goals and solve common problems." For purposes of this chapter, I will use the definition of "professional association" as provided by the Reference for Business *Encyclopedia for Business* (2013):

Professional and trade associations are membership organizations, usually nonprofit, which serve the interests of members who share a common field of activity. Professional organizations—also called professional societies—consist of individuals of a common profession, whereas trade associations consist of companies in a particular industry. Professional associations have the additional objectives of expanding the knowledge or skills of its members and providing professional standards. The definition of a profession is an occupation that requires considerable education and specialized training, such as medicine, law, accounting, and engineering. However, many use the term more loosely to encompass any coherent occupation class.

Library professionals have been discussing the importance of continuing education and professional development for decades. Almost 50 years ago Rothstein (1965) recommended that the American Library Association (ALA) assume responsibility for continuing education and professional development for librarians. One of his recommendations was for ALA to "sell and publish syllabi of 'guided reading'" and for state library associations to make continuing education their chief objective. (Rothstein, 1965, pp. 2226-2227) Elizabeth Stone seemed to be a pioneer in writing about the importance of continuing education for librarians. Stone (1974) looked at numerous other professional organizations (examples include the American Association for Respiratory Therapy, and the Ohio Society of Professional Engineers) and reviewed their practices for recognition of continuing education systems. Stone (1990) refers to the 1977 International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) Jubilee Conference held in Brussels in which she called for IFLA to assume a leading role in continuing education for librarians. Decades later after writings not only by Rothstein, Stone and others, it would appear that librarianship, unlike many other professions, still does not have universal or uniform standards for continuing education and professional development. Standards are important, as standards would address quantity, frequency, and quality of the content of the material. Standards would also be a way to assess if learning took place. A further way to assess the quality of the learning would be to determine if the learning transferred to the actual workplace and the impact on the external beneficiaries of that learning. Admittedly, this would be difficult to measure, but as professionals, we have an obligation to ensure that we have the appropriate measures concerning our professional growth and development in place to meet the needs of the people who come to us for assistance.

In 1999, the American Library Association held the first of three (thus far) "Congresses on Professional Education" which focused on the initial preparation for librarianship. A second Congress, which focused on continuing education, was held in 2000 (ALA, 2000). A third Congress was held in 2003, designed to focus on the needs of library support staff. The initial list (from the first Congress) contained seven items on which to focus, but there were three items that specifically mentioned continuing education and the role of ALA: developing a coordinated approach to continuing education for library professionals post MLS; to explore an independent center for continuing education for library professionals; and to work toward establishing professional conference programs towards a focus of continuing education that would have standards in place. (Varlejs, 2000.) Years after the initial ALA Congress, it is unclear that these recommendations have been implemented.

Varlejs (2003) is critical of the approach that has been taken for continuing education for librarians and points out the difficulty of comparing librarians to other professions that require certification or licensure. She is also critical of the institutions that offer professional development and continuing education opportunities for librarians that are sources of revenue for the sponsoring organization or professional association. This is also a criticism directed at other professions that require continuing education by their members, and obtain the continuing education from their sponsoring professional association. Varlejs also points out the difficulty in requiring continuing education where there is no state requirement, as with licensure. The problem of enforcement of standards is difficult, since employers are not required to hire only those with the certification, such as the MLA certification program.

Where and How Do Librarians Get Professional Development and/or Continuing Education?

Professional librarian organizations are available on the international, national, state and/or local

level. In "National Trade and Professional Associations in the United States" there are 72 professional associations categorized under the heading "Libraries." These listings do not include the state library association in each state, e.g., the North Carolina Library Association. In addition, within larger associations such as the Special Libraries Association (SLA), there may be more than one chapter within a state that has a large population or is spread out over a large geographical area, such as Ohio, which has three chapters: Cleveland, Central Ohio and Cincinnati. As a librarian who had a different career prior to becoming a librarian, I wanted to investigate the continuing education and professional development offerings from ALA and other large librarian professional association. Some of the organizations listed in the "National Trade and Professional Associations in the United States" are divisions of the largest librarian professional organization, ALA; such as the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL). ALA has eleven divisions, based upon professional segment (academic libraries or public libraries) or on professional specialty/focus or interest (technical services or management.) ALA membership is required to join a division.

According to the literature, many librarians seek professional involvement through a formal international or national professional library association, such as ALA. This chapter will focus on library organizations that are based in the United States; an international analysis would require a different focus and would result in a much longer chapter. The literature indicates that librarians often confine their professional associations to library related professional organizations. Restricting professional organizational membership to one's own profession is not unique; one of the primary purposes of a professional organization is to provide opportunities for the members that cannot be obtained elsewhere. In this chapter, I will use professional development in a broad sense,

since learning can take many forms; the results of informal learning are difficult to capture and measure, but still have a profound impact on a profession and its members. Examples of informal learning would be participating in professional list serves to learn about current professional activities: publications, upcoming events, participation in a professional network to get practical solutions for real-life issues conference attendance, participation in professional associations, and participating in a mentor-mentee relationship. For this writing, professional development and continuing education as defined by the Reference for Business *Encyclopedia for Business* (2013) will be used. Professional development is:

Process of improving and increasing capabilities of staff through access to education and training opportunities in the workplace, through outside organization or through watching others perform the job. Professional development helps build and maintain morale of staff members and is thought to attract higher quality staff to an organization.

Continuing education will be defined as:

Formal lectures, courses, seminars, webinars, or any other similar type of educational program designed to educate an individual and give him or her further skills or knowledge to be applied in his or her line of work. These programs are intended to educate persons on new advancements, or to build upon a person's expertise in a given field. These may be optional for some trades, but in other circumstances can be required to maintain status, certification or licensure.

I feel it is important to distinguish between the two because much of the professional literature regarding librarians refers to "professional development."

As other professional organizations do, ALA serves a multitude of functions, many of which are not related to professional development. ALA has

advocacy functions, and is also responsible for the accreditation of graduate library science programs throughout the United States and Canada. Other professional librarian organizations are devoted to a specific constituency within the profession, such as the Art Libraries Society of North Americas, the Medical Library Association, and the American Association of Law Librarians. Members of those organizations may or may not belong to ALA; membership in a job specific association may be more beneficial professionally.

Unlike many professions, librarians do not have continuing education or certification requirements in order to remain a working member of the profession after achieving the MLS. Many professions, including attorneys, certified public accounts, physicians and other professionals are required to attend continuing education classes and obtain a minimum of continuing education requirements in order to continuing practicing as a member of the profession. Librarians do not have certification or licensure requirements (School Media Specialists are the exception to this; each state determines its own requirements for certification of school media specialists, or if certification is even required). Law librarians may have a law degree, and be members of the state bar and continuing education may be required for them to continue to maintain their license to practice law. Continuing education for those librarians who have a law degree should be viewed separately from the requirements that would be necessary for the librarian to practice law.

There is no requirement that a librarian receive any additional education (formal or informal) in a defined time period after the completion of the MLS degree, although there are academic librarians that have a second master's degree. The value and need for a second master's degree is up for debate, and the requirement for a second master's degree can vary by employer (Mayer and Terrill, 2005). Lack of a continuing education requirement does not mean that professional librarians do not pursue professional development or continuing

education; it just means in the absence of a formal requirement, there are librarians that will chose not to update their skills at the expense of their own professional growth and at the expense of the constituencies that rely on librarians. In addition, the absence of a formal requirement will also mean that there is no objective way to measure the quality of the professional development delivered and few measures to determine the value of that professional development received when put into practice back on the job.

Certification for librarians has been discussed in the professional literature, and that is not the focus of this chapter. However, the absence of a requirement does not mean that librarians do not take advantage of opportunities to continually learn new skills and advance their knowledge of the profession. Learning may take a variety of forms, and much of the learning we do as adults may be considered informal and/or self-directed learning. Exceptions to what could be described as informal learning would include formal degree requirements or specific certification requirements. Reading current professional literature, participating in professional listservs, attending webinars, and attending professional association meetings are all examples of self-directed professional development in which a librarian can participate without belonging to a library professional organization. However, the problem with self-directed learning is that there is little in the way of objective measurements to determine if learning did take place, as well as the value of that learning. We have seen that many other professions have formal ways of providing and assessing continuing education and professional development, but librarians have not.

Reasons to Join a Professional Association

The reasons to join a librarian professional organization are varied. Frank (1997) gives the following reasons for joining a library related professional

organization: "relevant sources of information; contributors to effective leadership; opportunities for research and publication; facilitators of effective communication; and a sense of professional community." Glendenning and Gordon (1997) promote leadership as a reason for the importance of professional association, and cite several professional library organizations (American Library Association, the Medical Library Association and the Special Libraries Association) as examples of organizations that have developed leadership programs for their members. Burch (1999) also discussed the value of leadership opportunities. Zabel (2008) points out the value of mentoring that professional librarian associations provide, while Davidson and Middleton (2006) include retention of librarians (specifically of science librarians) as important for joining professional associations. Davidson and Middleton specifically point out the value of science liaison librarians joining professional organizations outside the library profession in order to obtain benefits that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Castro (2010) gives proficiency, leadership, and advocacy as reasons to join a professional association. Both Burch and Castro specifically mention memberships in state library associations. Thomas (2012) lists the following as reasons to join a professional association: educational opportunities; advocacy; networking opportunities; and leadership. The literature is not clear that formal professional development is a primary rationale for joining or continuing membership is of a professional library association; however this may be because there is not a universal definition of professional development for librarians. Davidson and Middleton (2006) cite networking as the rationale for joining a professional organization and mentoring (both formal and informal) as a reason for joining professional organizations; their study showed their participants consider networking to be an informal method of mentoring. Theirs is one of the few articles that makes mention of the professional development and continuing education needs of specific

librarians (science and technology) that librarian focused professional organizations do not address and asks the participants about membership benefits in discipline based professional organizations.

Just as librarians choose to join librarian professional organizations, there are those that elect not to join a professional association. The reasons for not joining also vary, but Kamm (1997) cites economic concerns (especially if the employer does not pay for the cost of memberships); personal dissatisfaction with the organization; too large of a time commitment (to serve on committees, etc.) and not feeling the value is justified by the price of membership. Cassner and Adams (2006) list lack of funding as barriers to obtaining professional development, specifically for distance learning librarians. However, the librarians in this study recognized the need for professional development in areas specific to the work they do, including instructional design and assessment skills, keeping current with technological changes, and the ability to attend industry specific conferences.

OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY MAJOR PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS

American Library Association

In preparation for writing this chapter, I wanted to learn the specifics about professional development that ALA and other librarian professional associations offer their members. I am a member of both ALA and SLA so I receive correspondence from them (print and electronic) about professional development opportunities. Much of correspondence I receive from ALA seems to center around offers to purchase ALA professional publications and opportunities to participate in various virtual professional development offerings, including webinars and online course offerings. However, ALA does give their members the opportunity to self-select some of the correspondence they

receive, which makes it difficult to understand their marketing attempts. When I began the research for this chapter, there was no link on the home page that would take a member directly to a section devoted specifically to professional development. As my work on the chapter progressed, ALA did update their site, and there is now a link on the home page that will connect the viewer directly to online learning offerings. The ALA site is a large portal, and from the site it appears that professional development offerings are the responsibility of the various divisions of ALA. While is it difficult to know the specific reason the site is organized in this manner, I suspect that the organization of professional development offerings may have been done in this manner because professional development is often specific in need: the professional development needs of a librarian who has responsibility for electronic purchasing may be very different than the needs of a librarian that has responsibility for public services. Since ALA is so large, I suspect many members confine their personal involvement to specific divisions or round tables in order to have access to targeted information about their specific interest. In addition, since ALA dues are based on the amount of divisions or round tables to which you belong, joining a group in which you have a minor interest or need to obtain some quick information about a new assignment at work may not be economically feasible.

I viewed the site to see what offerings that represented my professional interests and responsibilities were available. I am a member of ACRL, so I went to the ACRL elearning page. On the day of my access (March 3, 2013), there were three elearning course offerings under the ACRL page (see Table 1). ACRL holds a biennial conference; the literature review earlier in the chapter revealed that many librarians consider conferences to be a significant and important source of professional development and continuing education. ACRL offers institutes and workshops, but all the offerings I saw when I accessed the site were held previously. There were no current offerings. ACRL also offered various elearning opportunities, including webcasts. These offerings are available to non members. One of the elearning opportunities were "On Point Chats" which are live, unmoderated chat sessions on topics such

Table 1. ACRL E-learning course offerings March 3, 2013

Course Name	Course Type	Fees	Course Length	Learning Outcomes/ Objectives Listed
Embedded Librarians: Integrating Information Lieracy with Instructino at the Point of Need	Live Webcast	ACRL member: $ 50 ALA member: $75 Nonmember: $90 Student: $40 Group*: 295	90 Minutes	Yes
Implementing Online Teaching and Learning: Using Moddle and Other Web 2.0 Feature	This course was offered in September 2012. It was not clrea from the site if the course would be offered again.	ACRL member: $50 ALA member: $75 Nonmember: $195 Student: $60	Unknown; the course was offered in two phases. It was unclear from the description the frequency of the course offering.	Yes
Mobile Apps: What You Need to Know	This course was offerend in October-November 2012. It was not clrea from the site fi the course would be offered again.	ACRL member: $135 ALA member: $175 Nonmember $195 Student: $60	Unknown; the course was offered in two phases. It was unclear from the description the frequency of the course offering.	Yes

as "PhDs in Academic Libraries" and "Student Learning Outcomes." According to the site, the last chat was held in 2011, although chat archives are available.

I am also a member of the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA) so I went to the LLAMA elearning page to view their current offerings. There were none, although there were elearning offerings under "Management Issues for Library Leaders." Under that label, there were eight categories: Budgeting: Buildings & Facilities; Certification; Friends, Foundations, Trustees & Volunteers; Human Resources & Staff Development; Leadership & Management; Marketing & Public Relations; Technology. There were course offerings for all categories except for one: Certification. The Budget category had one offering: "Trustee Academy: The Library's Budget (United for Libraries.) The intended audience for this course was given as "Trustees." Since I am responsible for the human resources function within my library, I went to the "Human Resources & Staff Development" section to see what offerings were available. See Table 2.

As stated earlier, professional development and continuing education from ALA appears to be the responsibility of the Divisions. ALA is huge, and it has many divisions devoted to serving specific segments and interests within the profession, such as the Library Information and Technology Association (LITA) and the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS.)

To learn about the other professional development opportunities that ALA offers from divisions to which I do not belong, I viewed the continuing education opportunities from the Public Library Association (PLA) and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL.) Together with ACRL, those organizations are the largest Divisions within ALA. PLA holds its own biennial conference and in 2013 sponsored a pilot leadership academy. PLA sponsors the Certified Public Library Administrator ® Program. (PLA also sponsors a program for library support staff,

the Certified Library Support Staff Certification.) For the CPLA program, there is a core curriculum (Budget and Finance, Management of Technology, Organization and Personnel Administration, and Planning and Management of Buildings) and a series of electives, 3 out of the 5 electives are required. Recertification must be done every 5 years, and recertification is contingent upon the applicant obtaining the appropriate required number of continuing education credits. PLA also offers a series on on-demand webinars on a variety of topics, as well as online workbooks and online classes. They sponsor social media forums (using Facebook) which give members an opportunity to discuss topics of interest with a subject matter expert.

The final ALA division I reviewed for professional development and continuing education opportunities was the American Association of School Librarians (AASL.) AASL has an e-Academy that provides a variety of elearning opportunities. AASL offers eCollab, which is billed as AASL's elearning laboratory. eCollab is only available to AASL members, or by paid subscription. Since I am not a member of AASL, I was not able to see the eCollab offerings. AASL offers "Licensed Institutes" which as defined as "full day educational workshops." Topics include "School Library Advocacy;" "Reading and the Elementary School Librarian;" and "Collaborative Leadership."

Special Libraries Association

In order to learn how other library professional organizations promote professional development, I viewed the sites of two other librarian professional organizations to analyze their professional development offerings. In addition to being a member of ALA, I am also a member of the Special Libraries Association (SLA.) As a member, I was able to access the full site (http://www.sla.org/), not just the pages that are only available to non-members, so I had complete access to their

Table 2. Human resources and staff development: E-Learning course offering March 3, 2013

Course Name	Course Type	Fees	Course Length	Learning Outcomes/ Objectives Listed
How Diversity Matters: Micro-Practices that Keep Libraries Relevant	Recorded Webcast	ALA member: $20 Nonmember: $25 Group: $120*	55 minutes	No
PLA Customer Service/Staff Development On-Demand Webinars	Unknown- This link led to a page giving course offerings from the Public Library Association	N/A	N/A	N/A
Recruiting for Diversity	Recorded Webcast	ALA member: $20 Nonmember: $25 Group: $120	55 minutes	No
The Accidental Public Library Technology Trainer	Real time course (via Web Ex and Moodle) offered by the Public Library Association	PLA Personal Member: $129 ALA Personal Member:$159 Nonmember: $179	Four Week Course	Yes
The Diversity Committee: Your Library's Completive Advantage	Recorded Webcast	ALA member: $20 Nonmember: $25 Group: $120*	55 minutes	No
The Diversity Conversation: Why You Need to Have it and How to Start It	Recorded webcast	ALA member: $20 Nonmember: $25 Group: $120*	55 minutes	No
Valuing Diversity	Recorded webcast	ALA member: $20 Nonmember: $25 Group: $120*	55 minutes	No

professional development and continuing education offerings.

According to the Encyclopedia of Associations, SLA is described as an "international association of information professionals who work in special libraries serving business, research, government, universities, newspapers, museums and institutions that use or produce specialized information." As with ALA, there are local chapters of SLA, and well as divisions and caucuses that are devoted to specific interests within the larger group. I belong to the Academic, Leadership & Management and Insurance & Employee Benefits divisions. SLA's dues are charged on a sliding scale, according to the salary of the member.

As an SLA member I receive correspondence (print and electronic) about membership benefits, including professional development and continu-

ing education opportunities. A large variety of elearning opportunities are available through SLA. SLA offers elearning courses through its own Click University (Continuous Learning to Improve Career Knowledge) and SLA has created the Click University Consortium to partner with several ALA accredited Masters programs (including Drexel University and Kent State University) to offered discounted program tuition. Open only to SLA members, the Innovation Lab is supposed to provide a platform to experiment with a variety of technology applications for free. However, I found many of the links in the "Technology" section are not new (Facebook, Google, MySpace) but other links to web tools such as online survey building tools may be valuable to a librarian working in a small library and/or with a limited budget. Other professional development opportunities from SLA

include a resume review service, a podcast center and a searchable vendor database. SLA offers certificate programs in both Copyright Management and Knowledge Management through Click University as well as a leadership program, which is designed for those that want to assume a leadership role within SLA.

Medical Library Association

The home page of the Medical Library Association http://www.mlanet.org/) describes the organization as "a nonprofit, educational organization with more than 4,000 health sciences information professional members and partners worldwide. MLA provides lifelong educational opportunities, supports a knowledgebase of health information research, and works with a global network of partners to promote the importance of quality information for improved health to the health care community and the public." MLA's continuing education offerings are described on the home page of the site and at the time of site access, the organization was preparing for their upcoming annual meeting and exhibition. According to the site, "[t]he year 2013 will provide a unique opportunity to explore the global interdependency of health information at a federated international meeting incorporating the 2013 Annual Meeting and Exhibition of the Medical Library Association (MLA '13), the 11th International Congress on Medical Librarianship (ICML), the 7th International Conference of Animal Health Information Specialists (ICAHIS), and the 6th International Clinical Librarian Conference (ICLC)." The home page had a listing of continuing education course offerings that would be available at the meeting.

MLA is unusual within the profession, because they administer a credentialing program (which is not the same as certification or licensure) for those within the medial librarian profession. According the MLA site, "The Academy of Health Information Professionals (AHIP) is a professional development and career recognition program of MLA. Admission to and the level of academy membership (Provisional, Member, Senior, Distinguished and Emeritus) are based on three areas of achievement: academic preparation, professional experience, and professional accomplishment." According the site,

For the professional librarian, academy membership provides a structure for professional development. From the initial needs assessment and mentoring of provisional members to the recognition of professional accomplishments of distinguished members, the academy is here to support professional librarians. Membership in the academy recognizes and encourages professional activities, and the AHIP designation demonstrates this commitment to professional development.

While MLA has had a credentialing program since 1949, the latest credentialing program has been in effect since 1993. Members of the Academy must demonstrate continuing education requirements every five years. There are five levels of membership; members can be admitted without an ALA accredited MLS, but those without the degree must demonstrate successful completion of documented coursework aligned with the professional competencies as defined by MLA. Membership in MLA is not required for admittance into the Academy of Health Information Professionals. According to the MLA site, in 2014 the Provisional membership status will require applicants to demonstrate 5 professional accomplishments annually.

According to the website, becoming a member of the Academy not only benefits the employee, but the employer of the member as well. "Employing institutions view academy membership as proof that their librarians are committed to their own professional development and continuing education. Institutions who value academy membership recognize and reinforce the importance the health information professional plays in their organization." However, it is difficult to accurately

assess the employer value of certification, since certification is voluntary, and not required to be a medical librarian.

Application for membership in the academy is a multi-step process, the first of which is to provide documentation: evidence of educational credentials such as an MLS. Membership admittance is based on the point system in five categories: Continuing Education; Individual Accomplishments (divided into two sub categories: Part 1 includes teaching and publishing and Part 2 includes activities such as poster presentation, and meeting attendance); Professional Association Participation; and Other Activities. Level of membership is determined by number of years in the profession and the number of Professional Accomplishment Points. It is important to note that accomplishments that are considered job requirements are not considered towards the total. Those that wish to become a member of the Academy must complete an application documenting evidence of professional practice to the credentialing committee for review. Part of the credentialing process for Provisional members is submission of a "Self Review of Professional Competency" areas, by which an applicant completes a self-assessment of his/her "Level of Knowledge", "Importance to Career" and "Areas for Attention" to the mentor. In addition, the applicant is responsible for listing areas of professional development that must be reviewed annually by the applicant's mentor. Included in the professional development plan is documentation of success in achieving the objective. At the "Member" level of AHIP, documentation of completion of continuing education is required, although the definition of continuing education is broad, and can range from completion of a course to participation in a professional discussion group as well as self-directed learning.

MLA also offers two specialization programs, one for a specialization in Consumer Health and one for Disaster Information, as well as a variety of professional development and continuing education course offerings; some from MLA and some from other organizations, such as the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, the Institutes for Healthcare Advancement and the National Institutes of Health. Course offerings are searchable, and each course has a well-written description providing the course objectives, type of course (webinar, lecture, etc.) and the length of the course. What I was unable to determine as a non-member was the cost (if any) of the course offerings. MLA offers an online "boot camp" for new medical librarians, which is a series of elearning and self paced course offerings that are tied to MLA's professional competencies. The boot camp offerings are directed at recent MLS graduates or those experienced librarians that are transitioning to health library responsibilities. The offerings were varied, ranging from topics on health science information ("Making PubMed Work for You;" health sciences resource management ("Tips for Negotiating Electronic Licenses") information technology ("Geeks Bearing Gifts: Unwrapping New Technology Trends" and leadership ("Everyday Leadership for Medical Librarians.") There are even course offerings on instructional design and curriculum development.

Is Professional Conference Attendance Professional Development?

There are those in the profession that consider conference attendance a major source of professional development. (Miller, 1999; Lyons, 2007; Harrison, 2010) However, librarians should ask themselves, "Should professional conference attendance be considered professional development?" Since there are no uniform standards for what is considered continuing education and professional development, how do we determine that sessions attended at a conference will provide value and how can that value be assessed? The literature also indicates that there are library professionals that do not join librarian professional organizations. It would be safe to assume

that many of those same librarians do not attend annual conferences. How do those librarians get their professional development? Often the professional development offerings are only available to members; how do non-members get what they need to broaden their knowledge and skills?

There has been debate as to whether conference attendance may be considered professional development. I have seen comments on discussion lists about the value of conference attendance, both pro and con. As mentioned earlier, conference attendance is often expensive, and usually the larger professional organizations hold their conference in large metropolitan cities because those cities are the only places that can accommodate the size of the audience. While it would be more cost effective for conferences to be held in cites that do not have high lodging and transportation costs, it is not possible, given the limitations that many other conference hosting cities may have. In addition, difficult economic times have had an impact on everyone, including vendors who underwrite a portion of the conference costs.

Another problem that impacts conference attendance is justifying conference attendance as actual professional development. Justifying professional conference attendance as professional development may not be a large a problem for academic librarians, whose job is to support faculty and students. However, for public librarians or those academic librarians serving smaller institutions, in an era of decreasing budgets, travel budgets may be one of the first items to be reduced or eliminated. This happened at my institution—due to state budget reductions, our professional development budget, which included travel funds, was reduced. We were still permitted to travel to conferences, but staff members had to incur a greater personal share of the cost. There are institutions that do not have the funding to sponsor conference attendance. What is the impact of non-conference attendance on those librarians?

Return on Investment is a common term in the private sector, and it is a term not often used in academia or in the non-profit sector. However, librarians who work in public libraries or for state institutions face decreasing state or municipal support for funding. This means many librarians will face the possibility of having decreased employer support or not having employer support at all for conference attendance or other professional development opportunities.

I belong to a section of an online group directed at librarians (however, the larger group is not librarian-specific) and one of the members posed a question to the discussion board asking about how to develop a proposal to justify her attendance at ALA. She was a public librarian, and the library's budget was controlled by the city manager. In the opinion of the city manager, conference attendance did not count as professional development. While ALA does have a statement prepared that potential conference attendees can use in an attempt to justify conference attendance, it may be hard to make the case that spending $1000 or more is justified for professional development when the collections budget has been slashed, and that repairs to the physical facility have been delayed due to financial limitations. In addition to the financial concerns, library directors and managers may want to determine how is learning assessed and measured from attending a conference session? How do you measure the impact of conference session attendance on the employee, the additional beneficiaries (patron, student, client, etc.?) These are the questions that professional library organizations will need to address in a different manner than they have in the past.

The profession is becoming more responsive to those who do not have the resources (time and/or money) to travel to professional conferences. Virtual conferences and "unconferences" are offered by professional organizations, and can offer access to professional development or continuing education courses in a more cost effective manner, as there are no travel and lodging costs. However, in a virtual conference, interaction with other pro-

fessionals may be limited; and it is contact with other professionals that is seen as one of the most valuable components of professional development. Due to technology changes, professionals (along with others) are interacting with each other in a variety of ways virtually; librarians are no different. Virtual learning opportunities also have their own set of challenges such as immediate technical support for learners, appropriate hardware and software requirements, broadband access (not universally available within the U.S.) in addition to the concern about the quality of the instruction being delivered. I participated in a 60-minute webinar where the facilitators had technical difficulties and no on-site support to guide them. In addition, it appeared the facilitators were at best subject matter experts on the content being delivered, not experts at content delivery. It was obvious to me that the facilitators did not practice with the technology being used for the session prior to the live session. At the end of the session, I had such a poor impression of the course that I would not attend another session provided by this group. However, since there does not seem to be universal standards on the design, development and delivery of professional development opportunities for librarians; I am certain I am not the only librarian who has experienced this. Those professions that have defined standards about professional development and continuing education would have an easier time of not offering (or eliminating) course offerings that did not meet the defined standards.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE OF LIBRARIANSHIP

What about those subject liaison/subject specialist librarians--will they get the knowledge necessary to keep up with trends in their respective disciplines from a library professional organization? Lyons (2007) and Bennett (2010) argue that they will not. Both Lyons and Bennett point out that the literature surrounding librarians obtaining professional development from non library professional organizations is limited. Flatley and Weber (2004) directed their article to new academic librarians, and they specifically recommend ACRL and "at least one local or state library association." They make no mention of joining professional organizations outside librarianship, either not considering that many academic librarians have collection development and subject specialist responsibilities, or believing that librarian focused professional organizations would provide everything a librarian would need for professional development.

Tysick (2002) argues that librarians that only attend professional conferences directed at librarians overlook the professional development benefits that can be derived from attending specific disciple based conferences. She specifically cites her opportunity to meet an important author to the discipline she supported in her work as an academic librarian, as well as the opportunities to acquire skills that will be helpful to her patron base (faculty and students). Her attendance at a professional conference not related to librarianship gave her an opportunity to learn how to create a database for specific discipline-related data that are not available through librarian-related professional organizations. Tysick also points out another advantage of attending conferences outside librarianship; the opportunity to create a wider professional network.

As mentioned earlier, the literature makes little mention of professional development obtained by librarians outside the profession. Lyons (2007) does discuss academic librarians with collection development responsibilities deciding to attend discipline related conferences as opposed to annual ALA conference. Lyons specifically compares the various learning informal learning opportunities at the American Political Science Association (APSA) conference and an ALA annual conference. Lyons makes note of the difference in vendors at the APSA (more monograph publishers at ASPA, while ALA was dominated by electronic

vendors.) Lyons concludes that attendance at a professional conference not directed at librarians may be beneficial to librarians that have collection development responsibilities.

Bennett (2010) has one of the few studies that actually look at the impact of librarians belonging to non-librarian professional organizations, not just attending non-library-related professional conferences. While the sample size was small (10 librarians) the study did conclude that there are significant benefits (increased knowledge for collection development responsibilities, improved relationships with faculty for those involved in liaison work, increased knowledge of current trends within the field; possible positive impact on outreach activities.) The consideration of the impact for those academic librarians who are tenure track (specifically the issue of how to measure the professional and/or service contribution made outside of the librarian profession) must not be overlooked. For academic libraries that do not value professional contributions outside librarianship, this may pose a problem for evaluating tenure criteria.

SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I would argue that restricting professional involvement only to library-related organizations may limit professional growth for librarians of all types. Library patrons and users may also be impacted by these limitations. As librarians are asked to assume new and varied responsibilities, they should strongly consider the benefits of joining non-library-related professional organizations to take advantage of the professional development offerings that might not be available through library-related professional organizations. No matter the type of library in which a librarian is working, the benefits of belonging to a professional association can be many: expansion of your personal and professional network; the ability to find

opportunities for mentoring (both being a mentor and being a mentee); the potential for leadership roles; the opportunity for advocacy on behalf of the profession outside librarianship and the patrons you serve; availability of professional colleagues to provide and seek solutions to workplace and professional issues; opportunities to collaborate with colleagues to make meaningful contributions to the community you serve; and the chance to take advantage of continuing education on a formal or informal basis. Non-library-related professional associations can offer even more benefits. I will illustrate with an example from my own job.

At my institution, I am responsible for managing human resources functions. My responsibilities require that I keep current with specific human resources issues such as legislative changes and current best practices for recruitment. None of the professional library organizations to which I belong can give me the information I need to be effective in the work I do. As an example, the upcoming implementation (federal legislation) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPAC) will go into effective January 1, 2014. PPAC will require most employers to offer health insurance coverage to employees working 30 or more hours a week. As a member of a national human resources professional organization, including a local chapter, I have known about the potential impact for employers for some time now. Membership in the national human resources organization allows me to have access for human resources benefits information compiled by other human resources professionals that I would not have otherwise. My library is open 24 hours a day, 5 days a week and we employee a large number of students, including undergraduate, graduate LIS students, other graduate students working as graduate assistantsLibrary managers and supervisors need to be able to understand the impact of the legislation and the impact it will have on employee work scheduling.

Not only will my knowledge and expertise be useful within the library, but it will be helpful to

other departments on campus. As an academic institution, my expertise has an impact on a variety of employee types, including both undergraduate and graduate students, adjunct instructors, grant funded employees and contract and temporary employees. Not only am I responsible for interpreting the impact of this upcoming legislation on my library, I presently chair the University Benefits Committee at my institution. My local human resources chapter is sponsoring an upcoming meeting specifically designed to provide employers with information on upcoming healthcare reform changes. I will be working with other university employees (both faculty and non-faculty) in helping to communicate the impact of this legislation across the campus. In my role on the Benefits Committee, I will perform a service in working to communicate the impact of these changes on campus and provide guidance to departments to best manage the impact.

I have mentioned previously that librarians do not have licensure or certification requirements. The MLS is the terminal degree for a librarian; however other professions have formal continuing education requirements, even after the individual has been awarded the professional degree. Today, many professions have uniform standards for continuing education and formal professional development offerings that are standardized and offer their members the opportunity to benefit from those standardized options. For reasons that are unclear, librarianship seems to have not taken the direction that many other professions have when it comes to developing formalized and standardized continuing education.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

With the increased opportunities for technology-based learning, librarians have even more resources at their disposal to engage in professional development and continuing education. Distance learning opportunities are especially important for those librarians working in small libraries that have limited financial resources for professional development, or for those librarians that are located in geographical areas where traveling to a large conference in a large metropolitan area may be prohibitively expensive. Researching the impact of distance learning, including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), would be beneficial to the profession.

As an academic librarian, I am very familiar with the increased emphasis on assessment and its impact on the work that we do. I think the opportunities for assessing both the type and the impact of professional development and continuing education for our profession is huge. Other professions have formal methods of ensuring that members obtain continuing professional development and continuing education; librarians should also.

My participation in professional organizations outside librarianship has helped provide value to my institution, my library and the library employees. Future research opportunities would include a more exhaustive study about those librarians who do belong to other professional organizations outside librarianship and what they gain from that membership. We need to be able to assess the value of that learning and knowledge and its importance to the profession. Finally, since not all librarians belong or participate in library professional organizations, it would be beneficial to learn how those librarians obtain their professional development and continuing education.

CONCLUSION

If librarians are expected to assist those seeking knowledge and information for either professional or personal reasons, then expecting all professional development needs to come from library-related professional organizations is not realistic in today's rapidly expanding world of information. Confining professional development to only library related professional organizations risks overlooking op-

portunities that would assist librarians in gaining a wider base of professional knowledge and network that would benefit not only the librarian, but also benefit patrons.

Professional development and/or continuing education offered by professional associations may be generalized or determined by professional specialty. For example, a session on budgeting from a management association may be beneficial to librarians that wish to advance in their career from librarian to department head or a librarian who has recently assumed the position of library director. Such a session might also be helpful for a person on a professional association committee that will have responsibility for handling funds. The budgeting session does not have to be directed specifically to libraries, although a session directed specifically at librarians might provide informal networking opportunities from other librarians within the immediate geographical area. A public library director for a large library system may be asked to oversee a renovation project or a major funding raising campaign. Membership in non-library-related professional organizations such as project management associations or non-profit executive associations may be beneficial due to continuing education offerings that may not be readily available from library professional organizations. In addition, the opportunities to tap into a network of other professionals whose area of expertise is outside librarianship may be extremely beneficial.

Professional development comes in a variety of offerings. Like other professionals, librarians must make choices when making decisions about joining a professional association as well as which professional associations not to join. Limiting memberships may be a necessity due to financial considerations or other professional commitments. However, as part of a professional community, librarians are often expected to fill multiple roles in their libraries. Membership or activity in non-library related professional organizations is one

way of expanding professional knowledge, which not only benefits the individual librarian, but also the patrons they serve as well as the profession.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Continuing Education: Formal lectures, courses, seminars, webinars, or any other similar type of educational program designed to educate an individual and give him or her further skills or knowledge to be applied in his or her line of work. These programs are intended to educate persons on new advancements, or to build upon a person's expertise in a given field. These may be optional for some trades, but in other circumstances can be required to maintain status, certification or licensure (Reference for Business, 2013).

Librarian Education: The primary and continuing education for those in the profession of librarianship (Reference for Business, 2013).

Professional Associations: Professional and trade associations are membership organizations, usually nonprofit, which serve the interests of members who share a common field of activity. Professional organizations—also called professional societies—consist of individuals of a common profession, whereas trade associations consist of companies in a particular industry. Professional associations have the additional objectives of expanding the knowledge or skills of its members and providing professional standards. The definition of a profession is an occupation that requires considerable education and specialized training, such as medicine, law, accounting, and engineering. However, many use the term more loosely to encompass any coherent occupation class (Reference for Business, 2013).

Professional Development: Process of improving and increasing capabilities of staff through access to education and training opportunities in the workplace, through outside organization or through watching others perform the job. Professional development helps build and maintain morale of staff members and is thought to attract higher quality staff to an organization (Reference for Business, 2013).

Professional Membership: Those who belong to a professional association (Reference for Business, 2013).