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The Library of Parliament's Competency-Based New-Librarian Development Program
Le programme de développement de nouveaux bibliothécaires axé sur les compétences de la Bibliothèque du Parlement

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Abstract / Résumé

Employee orientation and development are essential organizational processes. This paper examines a competency-based new-librarian development program in a legislative library setting, emphasizing program redesign and continuous improvement. The new-librarian development program was originally introduced in 2012 and was revised in 2018 in response to changes in the organization's structure, the introduction of a revised competency framework and feedback from stakeholders. The new-librarian development program uses recommended practices from the employee development literature as a frame. The process of developing and redesigning the program offers insights into how librarians can develop customized development programs. A copy of the competency profile for research librarians is included in the appendix.

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Keywords / Mots-clés

library staff training, employee development, new employee orientation

formation du personnel des bibliothèques, développement des employés, orientation des nouveaux employés

Introduction

This article describes the redesign of a new-employee development program for research librarians at Canada's Library of Parliament (the Library). The research librarian development program is a year-long program that was initiated in the Library in 2012 to offer consistent training and development opportunities to all new research librarians and to assist in employee retention by providing a path for promotion. The program was redesigned in 2017–2018 to shift its focus from tasks toward competencies, following a competency-based management model. The program redesign included the creation of a competency-based assessment grid, refinement of shared training plans, and the establishment of program milestones. The article describes program changes, provides an overview of the development program, with an emphasis on the types of learning activities undertaken by new employees over the course of their first year, and offers lessons learned from reference services managers to guide the creation or modification of a new-employee development program. This legislative library employee development program serves as a practice case that illustrates how recommendations on development and orientation program design can be incorporated into library workplaces.

New-employee development programs are the vehicle through which organizations assist new employees in transitioning into their roles and the organizational culture (Snyder & Crane, 2016; Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016; Cable et al., 2013). New-employee development activities have been captured under the categories of mentoring, socialization, orientation, induction, training, and onboarding (Snyder & Crane, 2016). These concepts are related, but distinct. For example, an orientation program offered to employees immediately after their arrival in an organization may include training and mentoring to promote socialization (Wanous & Reichers, 2000).

Orientation programs introduce new employees to the institution while offering clarifications about the organization, their team, employment conditions, and performance expectations (Tabvuma et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015; Clinefelter, 2012; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Attracting talent and managing employee development are key to an organization's success and are particularly important in the knowledge economy, in which employers compete to attract highly skilled employees (Nankervis et al., 2017; Dawn & Biswas, 2013). Successful employee development programs, beginning with a strong induction or orientation program, have been associated with improved employee performance, engagement, job satisfaction and retention (Tabvuma et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2012; Slattery et al., 2006). A poor or missing onboarding and talent management program will have the opposite effect, making it more difficult for employees to master their new roles and increasing their likelihood of leaving the organization (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016; Cable et al., 2013; Rollag et al., 2005).

Literature Review

The theoretical foundations of new-employee orientation and development can help librarians determine how to best integrate librarian-specific offerings into their organization's larger new-employee development programs. New-employee orientation and development programs have two objectives: socialization (the process through which new employees become integrated into their workplace culture) and training (the mechanisms through which employees acquire the skills and competencies required to complete their workplace tasks) (Herrington, 1998; Holton, 1996).

Socialization is a key concept in new-employee development and orientation. It refers to the processes through which employees become members of their new organization by understanding and incorporating the behaviours, attitudes and attributes that make up the organization's culture (Lewis et al., 2012). This socialization process involves sense-making activities as new employees develop an understanding of the work organization culture and their role in it (Tabvuma et al., 2015; Dunn & Jasinski, 2009; Simmons-Welburn & Welburn, 2003; Klein & Weaver, 2000). While skill and competency development are required for employees to perform their work roles, socialization has been linked to higher satisfaction and better employee retention rates (Lewis et al., 2012; Rocchetti, 2006; Holton, 1996).

A body of research and practitioner literature provides guidance on how to structure and deliver employee orientation and development programs. This literature includes recommended practices on program design in several areas: duration, scope, scheduling, content, structure, emotional considerations, mentorship, and evaluation.

The timing and duration of orientation activities have been discussed in the literature. There is broad belief that orientation and onboarding activities should begin either immediately after an employee starts (i.e., day one) or immediately after the offer of employment has been accepted but before the employee has joined the team (Wanous & Reichers, 2000). The duration of orientation activities has been debated. There is a risk of information overload, so some authors have suggested that the orientation process should be spaced out to allow new employees time to process the information they receive (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016).

The approach selected differs based on whether an organization is focusing exclusively on new-employee orientation or whether they are incorporating orientation into a new-employee development program. An orientation program provides a new employee with the information they need to begin working within the organization, whereas a development program includes training and guidance to assist them in mastering their new role, and potentially developing competencies for their career with the organization. Several authors have argued in favour of a longer and fuller new-employee development program rather than a brief orientation program that offers information about an organization (Krasman, 2015; Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Some authors recommend an onboarding period lasting up to three months (Snyder & Crane, 2016), while others take a career perspective and emphasize an induction period lasting between one to four years (King et al., 2018).

Although the content of an orientation and development program will differ from organization to organization, certain elements should be included in every program. These include clarity on the organization's mission and vision and clear expectations for employee performance (Rocchetti, 2006). Ensuring employees receive all the information they need to perform their work effectively is vital to the orientation process. This includes not only access to written documentation, but also to networks and connections with colleagues who may assist employees in completing tasks and navigating the work environment (Rollag et al., 2005). Wanous and Reichers (2000) advise that orientation programs include "realistic information" about the challenges employees may experience on the job (p. 442). The information that is presented to new employees needs to be complete and well organized (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016). Creating a checklist or new-employee handbook (which should be offered in electronic format to facilitate the updating process) has been identified as a useful way to ensure that employees receive all necessary information in a timely manner (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016; Krasman, 2015; Clinefelter, 2012).

The structure of orientation programs has also been discussed. Structures are highly varied and range in formality (Kim et al., 2015). Delivery methods include group sessions, job shadowing, independent reading, the completion of online training modules, and opportunities to interact and socialize with colleagues (Kim et al., 2015; Clinefelter, 2012; Rollag et al., 2005; Klein & Weaver, 2000). Strong communication is an essential component of employee development programs. New employees require strong communication from their managers and colleagues to assist them in navigating their new roles and work environment (King et al., 2018). Adding structure to the development program helps to ensure that all necessary information is provided.

Ensuring that new employees have a clear understanding of the competencies needed to succeed in their roles is key not only to their success in completing work tasks, but also in navigating the organizational culture (Bauer, 2016). Although no single universally accepted definition of competencies exists in the literature (Delamare le Deist & Winterton, 2005; Athey & Orth, 1999), definitions of competencies have shared elements. The first is that competencies are the characteristics that are needed for an individual to be successful in a role or to exhibit superior performance (Ennis, 2008; Ley

& Albert, 2003; Athey & Orth, 1999). A second characteristic of competencies is that they must be observable and measurable to be of value (Athey & Orth, 1999). This emphasis on observability has led to a focus on behavioural competencies, particularly in the North American context (Gruppen et al., 2012; Delamare le Deist & Winterton, 2005), as these are the most easily seen and evaluated.

Significant research has been devoted to understanding and defining competencies in various professions and work environments (Alonso-García et al., 2021; Fierro et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2021; Gordon et al., 2021; Swank et al., 2021; Harper & Benson, 2020; Horváth, 2019). Competency models generally include behaviours, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and attributes (Kang & Ritzhaupt, 2015; Ley & Albert, 2003). Competency frameworks have been used within the human resources domain to facilitate employee recruitment and development (Ennis, 2008; Dainty et al., 2005; Ley & Albert, 2003; Athey & Orth, 1999). Several competency frameworks containing both transferable and domain-specific competencies have been developed specifically for library and information service professionals (e.g., Library of Congress, 2011; Canadian Association of Research Libraries, 2020; American Library Association, 2021; Special Libraries Association, 2003; American Association of Law Libraries, 2022).

Starting a new job can be both exciting and stressful. New employees are experiencing a period of adjustment as they learn new roles, navigate a new workplace culture, and develop new professional relationships. Significant learning is required for every new job role, regardless of whether the employee is a recent graduate entering their first post-graduation role or an experienced worker changing jobs. Orientation and development programs should include elements aimed at offering emotional support to new employees (Wanous & Reichers, 2000). Employers can deploy several strategies to reduce newcomer stress. One is to acknowledge the stress and to provide resources for stress relief, such as offering information about employee wellness programs (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016). Another, discussed earlier, is to space out informational sessions to avoid information overload. A third is to provide new employees with opportunities to build professional relationships with colleagues through either socialization/networking opportunities or mentorship/buddy programs (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016; Cable et al., 2013; Rollag et al., 2005; Simmons-Welburn & Welburn, 2003; Wanous & Reichers, 2000).

Mentorship has been identified as an important component in new-employee development programs (Nwabueze & Anike, 2016; Clinefelter, 2012). Mentoring can be used as a means of professional socialization, as a mentor helps a new employee to navigate the work environment and its culture, assists in the achievement of professional goals, and aids in the development of skills and competencies (Nwabueze & Anike, 2016; Rollag et al., 2005). Providing new employees with a mentor or "buddy" as an alternative organizational guide to their manager offers the new employee a contact from whom they may feel more comfortable seeking help and advice (Rollag et al., 2005).

Evaluation and feedback are the final key components that should be included in every new-employee development program. New employees should have a clear understanding of performance expectations and should receive regular feedback on their performance as they adjust to their new roles (Clinefelter, 2012). The feedback that employees receive should be personalized. It should focus not only on identifying areas for improvement, but also on finding ways for new employees to build on their strengths (Cable et al., 2013).

The literature on new-employee development and orientation programs cited above was taken from general management literature and other professional contexts, such as hospitals and universities. There was a considerable body of literature on competencies for library, information science, and information management professionals (Le, 2019; Low et al., 2019; Fraser-Arnott, 2016). There was also a body of literature concerning leadership and management programs developed to help library and information science (LIS) professionals advance in their careers, offered either by employers or professional associations (Hirsh et al., 2020; Parker, 2009). Literature on professional development for new librarians in general, however, was missing, revealing a gap in research on the initial orientation and development of library staff.

Literature on orientation sessions in the library and information services sector has tended to focus on orientations provided to library users rather than library staff. Academic library orientation literature has described the impact of participation in library orientation sessions on students' information literacy skills (Goldman et al., 2016; Lei Hsieh & Holden, 2010); how libraries have partnered with other academic units in orientation program delivery (Goldman et al., 2016; Mills & Mitchell, 2009; Rhoades & Hartsell, 2008; Rust & Brown, 2018; Dhawan & Chen, 2014); and library orientation redesign initiatives (Diekema et al., 2019; Witek & Spirito Dalgin, 2019; Lange, 2015). Articles on client or library-user orientations in special libraries, including legislative and government libraries, are rare (Fraser-Arnott, 2020). A few articles discuss the delivery or development of employee development programs in libraries. Curry et al. (2022) describe the process of recruiting, hiring, and onboarding liaison librarians without master's degrees in library science. The emphasis in the orientation program described by Curry et al. (2022) was introducing new employees in an academic library without a background in librarianship to the techniques, philosophies, and terminology of the profession. Jantti and Greenhalgh (2012) describe the foundational work undertaken at the University of Wollongong Library to create a leadership development program to support succession management. Their objective was to create a channel by which current library employees could develop the competencies needed to advance to senior management positions.

Most of the library literature on employee development either outlines competencies for all library workers or describes development programs for employees moving into leadership and management roles. This article fills a gap in the literature by presenting an employee orientation and development program in a special library setting along with employee development research from multiple disciplines.

Methodology

This article examines the new-librarian development program at the Library of Parliament, emphasizing program redesign and continuous improvement. A case study approach illustrates the application of employee orientation and development practices to a real-life context.

A single-case study format offers an in-depth exploration of the processes around the creation, revision, delivery, and evaluation of the development program. The single-case study allows access to a situation that is often inaccessible due to the lack of literature on the topic (Tellis, 1997) – in this case, employee orientation and development practices in a special library environment. The authors were responsible for the revision and delivery of the development program and used organizational documentation and observational data to describe these processes. Data were collected about the program's evolution through an examination of corporate documentation on the development program's history and discussions with those involved in developing and delivering the program. A focus group and survey of program participants provided program evaluation information.

There are several limitations of the case study approach. Difficulties in generalizing findings is a common criticism (Johansson, 2003). This case serves as an example to explore how themes identified in employee orientation and development literature apply in a particular organizational setting. While the specific context, which is provided to allow for the assessment of validity (Baxter & Jack, 2008), is unique and institution-specific, the lessons learned are generalizable.

Background

Research librarians at the Library of Parliament either work in library branches or are embedded in teams of analysts. Analysts provide information, research and analysis to parliamentarians, parliamentary committees and interparliamentary associations. They include lawyers, scientists, economists, and other subject-matter experts (Library of Parliament, 2022). Research librarians share generic job descriptions, with one job description for librarians at the Library Science 1 (LS-1) and Library Science 2 (LS-2) classification levels and a second generic job description for senior research librarians at the LS-3 classification level. LS-1 and LS-2 research librarians' responsibilities include interacting with clients (in person, by email, or over the phone), preparing written reference responses, assisting in the preparation of research publications, and offering tours of, and orientation to, branch spaces and library resources. Senior research librarians at the LS-3 level are responsible for assigning and reviewing as well as responding directly to research requests from parliamentarians. They also serve as mentors for research librarians, orienting them to reference policies and procedures, offering advice on constructing and executing search strategies, and guiding them through training.

The Research Librarian Development Program

The Library's research librarian development program was launched in 2012 with the objectives of facilitating the transition of new librarians into the Library and removing the need for librarians to participate in competitive processes to move from LS-1 to LS-2 librarian positions. The creation of a clear promotion path and accompanying pay increase was a talent-management initiative designed to improve employee retention. The program included quarterly evaluations, at three months, six months, nine months, and one year after beginning in their roles. New librarians who successfully completed the program would be promoted from the LS-1 to the LS-2 classification level. Experienced librarians who were hired at the LS-2 classification level also participated in the research librarian development program and this was used as a probation period.

Several key changes occurred following the introduction of the research librarian development program that led to a need to reexamine and revise the program. First, there were changes to the organizational structure that impacted reference services teams. Second, operational needs and space limitations made it difficult to co-locate all new research librarians in a single branch for an extended training period. Third, when the program was first developed, all research librarians shared a generic research librarian job description that focused largely on tasks and knowledge, rather than on responsibilities. The way this job description was written changed to highlight responsibilities and competencies over tasks, requiring concomitant changes to the program.

The program was reviewed in 2018, with two main objectives. The first was to ensure that the program covered all the training that librarians would need to perform their jobs, whether they were working in a branch or were embedded in a team of analysts. To achieve this first goal, reference service managers reviewed the existing research librarian training program and surveyed all senior research librarians to determine if there were additional training items that should be added. Managers and senior research librarians both examined the training and orientation materials and made modifications based on changes to their work environment and available information resources.

The second objective was to respond to the creation of a new competency framework at the Library. Competency-based management (CBM) systems are those in which employee competencies serve as the basis for talent management functions, including workplace planning, recruitment, learning, performance management, and career development (Tripathi & Agrawal, 2014; Draganidis & Mentzas, 2006). The Library adopted a CBM framework in 2009, which was renewed in 2018. The renewal involved the development of specific competency profiles based on employee roles for staff across the Library. The Human Resources team conducted interviews and focus groups with managers across the Library and offered information sessions for employees to prepare for the implementation of this revised framework. The CBM framework offered progressive levels of competencies from junior to senior roles.

The research librarian development program had previously used an assessment grid that was based on tasks in the research librarian job description rather than competencies. Aligning with the new competency framework would ensure that new employees were familiar with these competencies, which would be used for performance evaluations and staffing processes throughout their career with the Library. The reference services managers therefore revised the program's assessment grid to align it with the Library's new competency framework.

So, for instance, one task in the original research librarian development program assessment grid was:

> Provides orientation/instruction on and promotes Library of Parliament resources, products and services; conducts tours/presentations; assists in training/mentoring new employees; contributes expertise to and participates in training/professional development activities, [institutional] seminars, working groups or committees.

An issue with this format was that task completion was being assessed, yet few details were included about the competencies that would be needed to succeed in the completion of these tasks. Because desired behaviours were strongly linked to specific job tasks, there was little room to describe cases where employees displayed desirable competencies in different situations. For these reasons, the reference services managers agreed that the assessment grid should focus on competencies rather than tasks. The competencies for research staff were adaptability, client focus, exemplifying integrity, organizational awareness, data/information retrieval and analysis, quality focus, communication, teamwork, and analytical thinking.

The reference services managers hoped to achieve several goals with these changes to the development program. The program redesign goals were as follows:

- Ensure that the content in the training program was current and complete for research librarians, regardless of whether they worked in branches or were embedded in teams of analysts.
- Distribute training responsibilities by moving training away from a centralized delivery model run by one senior research librarian to a model in which multiple senior research librarians would be responsible for training and orienting librarians. In this way, managers hoped to encourage knowledge transfer.
- Shift orientation training from a two-week intensive training period toward a more flexible program in which training would be scheduled across new employees' first three months on the job, thereby reducing information overload and giving new employees more time to absorb information.
- Allow new employees to engage in real work tasks sooner, which was believed to be of benefit to both the new employees and the team.
- Introduce the new assessment grid focusing on competencies rather than job tasks. This grid was meant to be more flexible in its ability to describe and promote employee strengths across situations.

- Use the Library's new competency framework rather than assessment criteria specifically related to current tasks. This was believed to be beneficial to employees' longer-term professional development: mastering these organizational competencies would allow new employees to succeed in completing the research librarian development program but would also prepare them for post-program performance reviews and promotional opportunities.

The reference services managers prioritized the involvement of stakeholder groups in the program's redesign. The two key stakeholder groups were research librarians (who participate in the program) and senior research librarians (who deliver training and serve as mentors). Feedback from these two stakeholder groups was gathered informally throughout the process of updating the development program both through conversations about the program and observations of challenges that arose in implementing the new tools. For example, managers observed that some of the new librarians were surprised by the shift in expectations that occurred around the six-month point in the program. At this point, new employees were expected to begin working on a wider range of requests, including urgent requests with tight deadlines. This led to the development of a milestone document which outlined manager expectations for each quarter of the year-long development program, so participants were not surprised when the types of requests that they were expected to complete changed. Additionally, a formal program evaluation process was implemented in which research librarians responded to a survey about the orientation and development program, and senior research librarians participated in focus groups to discuss their experiences.

Although the delivery of the research librarian development program will vary slightly for each new employee depending on whether they work in branches or are embedded in an analyst team, the program structure is the same. All new research librarians receive copies of the Library's new-employee training plan, its research librarian competency profile (see Appendix A), and a milestone document explaining levels of competency development expected in each quarter of their first year at the Library based on their job description. They meet with their new manager, who provides them with an overview of the development program and assists them with administrative issues. They are also matched with a senior research librarian who will serve as their mentor.

The new-employee training plan offers a list of learning areas and links for new employees. The training plan serves both as a training checklist and as a reference, as it contains links to key information resources. The training covered in the plan can be divided into several key areas: administrative resources, organizational background, information resources and training sessions.

The administrative resources cover advice on basic office set-up, amongst other matters. This area includes guidance on how to set up voice mail and email messages and signatures, how to use the Library's online internal chat and web conferencing tools, organizational-level policies, and obtaining supplies and an identification card.

The organizational background elements in the training plan provide new employees with an understanding of the overall structure, mission, and goals of the organization. These elements include an overview of the organizational structure and team functions. Meetings are set up between the new librarian and members of teams with whom they will have regular contact. New employees are also provided with links to the Library's annual reports, strategic plan, and operational-level policies and procedures.

The training program also details some of the key information resources that new research librarians will often encounter during their work and includes training sessions on the use of several key databases and internal research tools. The plan allows flexibility for research librarians who will be developing subject specializations to engage in targeted training sessions that focus on resources unique to their area(s) of specialization. The senior research librarian mentors play a key role in this resource identification phase, as they are highly familiar with the types of questions librarians receive and the most current and relevant resources needed to answer these questions.

The final section of the training plan includes training sessions on research librarian job responsibilities. Research librarians have three main duty areas at the Library: the completion of written reference responses, reference desk duty, and telephone reference duty. Quality control and assurance practices are built into these processes and are incorporated into the training program. New librarians are taught to perform these duties through a combination of shadowing, mentoring, peer-review, and practice. A peer-review process is embedded in the written reference service at the Library. For new librarians, peer review is intensive, as senior research librarians offer feedback on preferred information resources as well as response structure and style. As librarians build their subject-specific knowledge and become familiar with the template and style conventions, they require less guidance on these elements, but reviews are still conducted for quality assurance. New librarians progress from observing or shadowing more experienced colleagues on desk or phone reference shifts to offering services with an experienced colleague available for support as needed.

Formal and informal reviews and feedback are an essential element of the development program. Research librarians receive daily feedback from a senior research librarian, who offers mentorship, assigns tasks, and reviews work. New research librarians participate in four formal development reviews over the course of the research librarian development program. These reviews occur quarterly over the new employee's first year at the Library. Prior to the review, the manager and senior research librarian mentor(s) meet to discuss the new librarian's progress and the assessment grid is filled in with indicators of competencies achieved and comments detailing progress and additional training needs. The new librarian receives the completed assessment grid prior to the review meeting to allow them time to read over the comments. The manager, senior research librarian mentor(s), and new librarian all participate in the review meeting and each competency, as well as future training and development foci, are discussed. The quarterly scheduling allows ample time in the development year to plan for tailored training to ensure that all competencies are practiced and that learning opportunities are customized to the new employee's unique needs, interests, and strengths.

The program has been modified several times since its launch in 2012 to respond to changes in the work done by librarians and feedback from librarians. The program continues to be reviewed and refined.

Results

The research librarian development program was updated with the objectives of reflecting the Library's competency framework, clarifying expectations for employees and supervisors, and modifying training resources to enhance learning and competency development. The management team evaluated the new-librarian development program through a consultation process with research librarians and senior research librarians. Senior research librarians, who serve as mentors and play a key role in training delivery, participated in a focus group. Research librarians received an electronic survey.

The electronic survey included six questions:

1. How did you find the support documentation for the new employee orientation and development program? [Likert scale: 1 – Very unsatisfied to 5 – Very Satisfied]
2. How did you find the pacing of learning in the LS development program? [Likert scale: 1 – Very unsatisfied to 5 – Very Satisfied]
3. How did you find the feedback offered in the new-employee development program? [Likert scale: 1 – Very unsatisfied to 5 – Very Satisfied]
4. How well did the LS development program prepare you to work at the Library? [Likert scale: 1 – Did not prepare me at all to 5 – Completely prepared me]
5. What was your overall impression of the LS development program? [Likert scale: 1 – Very unsatisfied to 5 – Very Satisfied]
6. What suggestions would you offer for improving the new-employee development program? [Free text response]

Overall, the results of the consultation were positive, with no ratings below the "neutral" level for any of the Likert scale questions about support documentation, pacing, feedback, or preparation for the work environment. The comments offered by employees suggested specific areas for improvement. For example, respondents identified inconsistencies in the ways in which feedback was provided and noted that some of the competencies were being interpreted differently. The conclusions from the survey and focus group were shared with the management team and efforts were undertaken to incorporate changes into the program. The management team developed clearer definitions of competencies for reviewers in a guidance document on the use of the competency framework.

The 2018 program review results suggested that the changes made to the program based on recommendations in the literature concerning orientation and talent management program design were well received by employees. First, employees echoed the importance of timing the delivery of orientation and training materials to new employees to avoid overwhelming them with too much information during their first weeks at work (Caldwell & Caldwell, 2016). Second, they said they greatly valued the mentoring relationship at work, echoing the importance of this practice in the development literature (Wong, 2017; Smith, 2013; Feldmann et al., 2012). Finally, they emphasized the importance of clarity and consistency in both expectations and feedback for new employees. Documentation to support the employee development program and create consistency in program implementation was developed to address informal feedback received during program delivery and formally during the program's review. The key lessons learned during the process of designing and testing the program are outlined below.

Lessons Learned

The process of designing and testing the research librarian development program provided a learning opportunity for library managers and staff. The reference services managers identified several lessons from this process that are applicable to new-employee development programs in other library settings.

Lesson One: Develop a consistent approach

Consistency is central to the research librarian development program. The program is designed to ensure that all new research librarians have the same orientation activities, the same opportunities for training and mentoring, and the same criteria for evaluation and promotion, regardless of whether they work as branch or embedded research librarians.

Lesson Two: Think about competencies instead of tasks

Managers discovered that the key weakness of the task-based development program was that it linked specific behaviours with specific tasks in specific contexts. This level of specificity made it more difficult to evaluate employees fairly, because it only looked for displays of desired behaviours within those specific contexts.

Lesson Three: Be clear about expectations

The process of developing the program documentation helped the managers to agree on expectations and to communicate those expectations to employees. Library managers developed the milestone document to help new employees be ready for the leaps in workload and responsibilities that occur at different points in their training year.

Lesson Four: Mentoring matters

The heart of program is the mentor relationship between the new employee and the senior research librarian who is their mentor. The senior research librarians communicate with new librarians daily and see every written reference response they produce. They constantly provide feedback and help the new employees to navigate the Library's information resources and culture.

Lesson Five: Be flexible

The management team recognized the need to design the program with opportunities for adaptation based on employee and management feedback and observations in order to adjust to new employees' individual needs. Employees joined the Library with different levels of experience, different learning styles, and different information needs depending on the type of tasks that they were completing at a given time in their training process. Knowing what employees need to master to complete the development program and being willing to try different approaches helped employees to work with their managers and peers to achieve their learning objectives.

The Library is continuing to improve its approach to new-employee training. The management team undertook a review and evaluation with surveys of participants and a focus group interview with senior research librarians who delivered training and orientation. It also adjusted training delivery during the COVID pandemic to support teleworking and hybrid work. The Library is working to determine how inclusive our processes are for employees with diverse backgrounds, including people with different learning styles and preferences. While the current program allows flexibility to accommodate different learning styles, senior research librarians have not been formally trained on accessible training and communication techniques. This may become a key feature in any future revisions of the research librarian development program, along with other talent management strategies.

Conclusion

The implementation of a research librarian development program is an ongoing and iterative process. The program itself should be based on best practices identified for new-employee training and orientation from both human resources and library literature. These practices include guidance on timing and structure, as well as program elements such as the inclusion of socialization activities to help new employees build relationships with colleagues and establish the network they will need to be successful in the job. The program also needs to be customized to the work environment. It should incorporate the competencies that the employer has identified as important for employees to be successful in their current roles and future careers. Programs should be flexible enough to support a new employee's individual training needs and goals, but structured enough to ensure that all necessary materials are covered for new employees to be able to perform their full range of job tasks and understand their new work culture. Achieving these goals is a challenge that requires ongoing feedback from employees. Each group of employees that completes the program will have insights that can be used to improve the process for the next group.

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Appendix A: Research Librarian (Information Dissemination) Competency Profile

This is the competency profile for a Research Librarian (LS-2) at the Library of Parliament. The competency profile is part of a competency framework developed by Human Resource Systems Group (HRSG).

ADAPTABILITY

Definition: Adapting in order to work effectively in ambiguous or changing situations, and with diverse individuals and groups

Level 3: Adapts to widely varying needs.

- Adapts to new ideas and initiatives across a wide variety of issues or situations.
- Supports major changes that challenge traditional ways of operating.
- Adapts interpersonal style to highly diverse individuals and groups in a range of situations.
- Adapts own plans and priorities in anticipation of change.

CLIENT FOCUS

Definition: Providing service excellence to internal and/or external clients, addressing immediate and evolving client needs

Level 3: Provides added value.

- Looks for ways to add value beyond clients' immediate requests.
- Addresses underlying and long-term client needs.
- Enhances client service delivery systems and processes.
- Anticipates clients' upcoming needs and concerns.

EXEMPLIFYING INTEGRITY

Definition: Treating others fairly, honestly and respectfully, furthering the integrity of the organization and its relationships of trust within the work environment and in the broader community

Level 1: Acts in fair and ethical manner toward others.

- Treats everyone equally with fairness, honesty and respect all the time.
- Refrains from behaviour or language that is exclusionary or offensive.
- Focuses on organizational success rather than personal gain.
- Follows through consistently on promises and commitments made to others.
- Presents facts and circumstances transparently, no matter how difficult the facts may be.
- Guards confidential and sensitive information, passing it on only to those that need to know.
- Maintains ethical principles even in the most challenging circumstances.

ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS

Definition: Understanding the workings, structure, culture and distribution of power within and beyond the organization and for Parliament as a whole, and applying this understanding to solve problems and achieve desired outcomes

Level 2: Understands and applies informal organizational structures and processes.

- Identifies the unwritten, informal structures, culture, rules, power dynamics and decision-making processes.
- Builds an informal network of relationships to facilitate progress toward objectives.
- Positions arguments based on an understanding of informal communities of shared interest.
- Recognizes unspoken organizational constraints – what is and is not possible at certain times or at certain levels.
- Applies both formal and informal channels or networks for acquiring information and assistance and for accomplishing work goals.

DATA / INFORMATION RETRIEVAL AND ANALYSIS

Definition: Locating and retrieving data/information from a wide variety of sources and analyzing it to extract insights and meaning

Level 4: Demonstrates advanced knowledge and ability, and applies the competency in new or complex situations. Guides other professionals.

- Performs complex and difficult data/information retrieval and analysis tasks.
- Synthesizes data from multiple sources.
- Interprets complex information to reach conclusions and/or identify significant trends or patterns, using data, logic, general background knowledge and contextual information.
- Probes with tact and diplomacy to clarify the nature and scope of vague requests for information needs.
- Assists others in discerning and comparing critical information.
- Interprets dense and complex texts that require the use of specialized knowledge and ability to focus over a long period of time.
- Uses a complex mix of data, information and knowledge in all formats.

QUALITY FOCUS

Definition: Implementing procedures and standards to ensure high-quality results, and taking action to identify or manage quality issues, as appropriate

Level 3: Reviews and coaches others on quality standards.

- Explains the organizational policies and procedures for quality assurance.

- Works at a level that consistently meets and models the quality standards set by the organization.
- Reviews the work of others to ensure that organizational quality standards are met.
- Advises management when quality issues and challenges are apparent.

COMMUNICATION

Definition: Communicating clearly and respectfully with different audiences, both orally and in writing

Level 3: Adapts communication.
- Tailors communication (e.g., content, style, tone and medium) to diverse audiences and readerships.
- Reads cues from diverse audiences to assess when and how to change planned communication approach to deliver message effectively.
- Communicates with varying organizational levels, sometimes on the spot.
- Recognizes others' complex or underlying needs, motivations or concerns, communicating effectively despite the sensitivity of the situation.
- Conveys important nuances and context to facilitate understanding of the message or material.

TEAMWORK

Definition: Working collaboratively with others to achieve organizational goals

Level 2: Proactively assists and involves others.
- Initiates collaboration with others.
- Assumes additional responsibilities to facilitate the achievement of team goals.
- Seeks input from other team members on matters that affect them.
- Provides input to other team members as needed.

ANALYTICAL THINKING

Definition: Analyzing and synthesizing information to understand issues, identify options and support sound decision-making

Level 3: Analyzes complex situations.
- Analyzes complex situations, breaking each into its constituent parts.
- Evaluates alternative causes or ways of interpreting complex information.
- Identifies connections between situations that are not obviously related.
- Identifies gaps in information and makes assumptions to continue the analysis and/or take action.