



Continuing Professional Development: Principles and Best Practices

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Introduction

The quality of service provided to the public by library and information science institutions depends on the expertise of their staff. Constant flux in the needs of societies, changing technologies, and growth in professional knowledge demand that information workers must expand their understanding and update their skills on an ongoing basis. As stated in the IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994

<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s8/unesco/eng.htm>:

The librarian is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services.

Because adequate service depends on staff who are well prepared and continuously learning, the quality of ongoing educational opportunities is of vital concern. This document sets forth principles that should assure high quality continuing professional development for library staff. It has been developed on behalf of IFLA's Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning Section (CPDWL), with input from its members and small project funding from IFLA.

The basic principles

The responsibility for continuing education and professional development is shared by individuals, their employing institutions, professional associations, and library/information science education programs. Human resources and professional ethics statements should recognize the obligation to ensure that library/information service staff have access to and take advantage of continuous learning opportunities.

Best practice requires that there be:

1. Regular learning needs assessment
2. Broad range of learning opportunities, both formal and informal; formal offerings in a choice of formats, designed to meet identified needs, in modules structured to cover topics from introductory through advanced.
3. Organizational commitment and leadership from staff development and continuing education administrators with expertise in adult continuing education
4. Widely disseminated information about continuing education and resources, accurately described
5. CE activities design that includes learning objectives aligned with identified needs; follows principles of instructional design and learning theory; selects course instructors on the basis of both subject knowledge and teaching ability; attends to transfer of training and feedback
6. Consistent documentation of individuals' participation in learning and recognition of continuing learning in hiring and promotion decisions
7. A minimum of 0.5 to 1.0 % of institutional budget earmarked for staff development, as stated in *The public library service: IFLA/UNESCO guidelines for development* <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s8/proj/publ97.pdf>

8. About 10 % of work hours provided for attendance at workshops, conferences, in-service training, and other educational activities, and for informal learning projects
9. Evaluation of continuing education and staff development offerings and programs
10. Research that assesses the state of CPD and examines the efficacy and outcomes of continuing education and staff development programs

Below are the summary statements following the literature review and discussions in the full paper of each of the principles

1. Best practice... calls for regular, performance-related learning needs assessment that involves individual employees and management, in concert with organizational goals and objectives. Professional development also has to be enabled for both personal and profession-wide growth and improvement, if the field is to achieve its potential for service to society. Therefore, individuals, institutions, and professional associations all bear responsibility for periodic assessment of learning needs.
2. Best practice requires that those responsible for providing CE programs or in-service training and development create and/or make available a wide range of activities and products designed to meet identified learning needs. Formats and levels of sophistication must be varied enough to suit various learning styles and beginner to advanced needs. Cultural and linguistic differences and time-place constraints must be taken into account. Learning resources--such as professional collections, mentoring, and coaching--should be available in the workplace, and individuals should have access to guidance for planning and implementing personal professional development agendas.
3. Best practice requires administrative commitment; formal policies that spell out what is expected of both staff and the organization in regard to CPDWL; staff development coordinators who have the support of the administration and the expertise to plan and implement programs
4. Best practice requires that there be guides to learning portals, CE clearinghouses, electronic discussion lists, and other sources of information about courses, educational products, conferences, and other learning opportunities that can be easily and widely disseminated, using a variety of channels. Learners and appropriate resources should be able to connect through an international network of clearinghouse and advisory functions. Educational activities must be accurately described in terms of pre-requisite knowledge required; access to information and communication technology, if applicable; expected outcomes; costs; etc.
5. Best practice requires that formal CE offerings be presented by experts in the topic who are also good instructors. Systems of CPD should provide train-the-trainer opportunities. Employers should strive to create a supportive environment in which staff are encouraged to apply what they have learned.
6. Best practice assures consumers of formal CE that their participation will be verified and recorded (using the IACET's Continuing Education Units, for example; <http://www.iacet.org>). Individuals should be encouraged to create portfolios to document their pursuit of learning, both formal and informal. Employers should take employees' efforts to develop skills and knowledge into account when making personnel decisions.
7. Best practice requires that an adequate percentage of an institution's personnel budget be allocated to staff development. How "adequate" is defined will vary depending on the extent of needs and circumstances in a given situation. Two percent of the personnel budget seems a reasonable goal in cases where staff development expenditure has not been consistently itemized.
8. Best practice requires that employers give staff paid time off to attend conferences and workshops relevant to their jobs, and also allow for part of their work time to be spent on learning. Ten percent of working hours may need to be allocated as a minimum.

9. Best practice requires that CE providers gather feedback from their learners not only at the conclusion of CE events, but also conduct at least periodic follow-up evaluations to determine what effect the CE has had on practice. The results of evaluation should be used to improve future CE offerings and should also be factored into needs assessments. CPD programs within institutions and organizations also require periodic evaluation of their administration and effectiveness.
10. Best practice requires that there be regular benchmarking studies of best practices in staff development, matched with quality assessment of the participating institutions. Such studies should advance understanding of and implementation of effective CPD and would justify resources expended on it. The conduct of such studies must have cooperation and support from a cross-section of international institutions, and the results have to be broadly shared.

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<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s43/index.htm>