

Influences on the professional development choices of library staff

by

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Abstract

A small scale qualitative study was undertaken to identify factors which influence the choice of professional development activities by information services staff working at public libraries in New Zealand. Current issues including the recent global financial crisis and uncertainty about the future of public libraries, and continuing rapid changes in technology, meant that research into this area was appropriate. Also, the professional registration for librarians introduced by LIANZA had been operating for four years so it was appropriate to see how this was affecting PD choices. The main findings were that intrinsic rewards, such as personal interest, are more important motivators than extrinsic ones, such as possible financial benefit. Barriers to participating in PD activities include cost, time, and travel. Age of participant, and uncertainty about the future of public libraries were not found to be factors. The requirements of the professional registration scheme affects staff members' choice of PD activities, and the recent global financial crisis and rapid changes in technology were also found to be influences. These findings can help library managers and training providers to plan PD so that it aids library staff in the best possible way.

Table of contents

Introduction.....	5
Definitions.....	5
Literature review	5
Background articles.....	6
International studies	6
New Zealand library studies	9
Themes.....	10
How literature has informed the research	10
Need for the study	11
Research questions	11
Methodology.....	12
Population and sample	12
Data collection procedures.....	12
Ethical considerations.....	12
Approach to data analysis.....	13
Triangulation.....	13
Results.....	13
The respondents.....	13
Position	13
Qualifications.....	14
PD involvement	14
Findings and Discussion	14
Extrinsic rewards:	14
Promotion.....	14
Rise in status/Financial benefit.....	14
Intrinsic rewards:.....	15
Personal interest	15
Improved competence	15
Thirst for knowledge	15
Analysis - extrinsic and intrinsic rewards	15
Possible influences	16
Age.....	16
Cost.....	16
Travel	16
Time	17
Global Financial Crisis (GFC).....	17
Rapid changes in technology.....	17
Long term future of libraries.....	17
Managers' attitude towards PD.....	18
Professional registration requirements	18
Other influences	19

Opinions from a PD coordinator	19
Quantitative Data	20
Limitations	20
Conclusion.....	20
Suggestions for future research	21
References	22
Appendices.....	25
Appendix A: Interview guide	25
Appendix B: Participant information sheet	26
Appendix C: Participant consent form.....	27
Appendix D: Data showing numbers of PD participants	28

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify factors which influence the choice of professional development (PD) programmes by information services staff working at public libraries in New Zealand. Current issues including the recent global financial crisis and uncertainty about the future of public libraries, and continuing rapid changes in technology, meant that research into this area was appropriate. Also, the professional registration for librarians introduced by LIANZA had been operating for four years so it was appropriate to see how this was affecting PD choices. This paper reports on the findings from interviews held with library staff.

The outcomes of this research could benefit library management and providers of professional development programmes by providing an insight into what factors influence an individual's decision to pursue professional development. This could be of assistance when courses are being constructed or modified, or when managers are selecting in-house professional development courses.

Definitions

- Professional development is generally defined as ‘... study (that may accumulate to whole programmes with awards) designed to upgrade knowledge and skills of practitioners in the professions.’ (Analytic Quality Glossary). Note: Because varying definitions are used within previous research an independent source was selected.
- Formal learning is defined as ‘planned learning that derives from activities within a structured learning setting.’ This study will consider professional development to include formal learning only, but will also cover informal learning as a side topic.
- Information services staff includes both librarians and library assistants.
- The intrinsic value of something is defined as "the value that that thing has 'in itself, ' or 'for its own sake,' or 'as such,' or 'in its own right.'" (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Literature review

The purpose of this review was to discover the influences that have been found on motivating information managers to engage in professional development. As the review is wide-ranging in scope, a range of literature has been selected to be evaluated. These range from general (a background paper on the history of professional development of information managers) to more specific (studies of New Zealand library staff). Although previous research has used varying terms, 'professional development', or PD, will be used throughout this review.

Previous research studies and other relevant articles were found in several ways. A search of the library databases at Victoria University of Wellington found research studies. Reading through the references in some of those articles led to other promising papers.

Searching was carried out for four types of literature:

- background to the topic, including a selection of opinion pieces
- international studies, covering PD in various sectors

- international studies, covering PD in information management settings
- New Zealand studies

Background articles

Maslow (1970) produced a hierarchy of needs which forms one of the most widely-known theories used in management since it was first presented in the 1950s. His hierarchy of the five needs of every individual (i.e. physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualisation needs) argues that once the lower levels are satisfied the higher levels can be worked towards being realised. The desire for PD can be a key to a person achieving their potential and satisfying the needs for self-respect and recognition. Herzberg's two-factor theory (Robbins et al., p. 601) classified factors as motivators or hygiene factors. He found that if motivators including opportunities for advancement and growth were met then workers felt greater job satisfaction. These theories are still extensively cited; this suggests that theories about human motivation have remained fairly constant.

Research has been done over many years into the changing roles of information managers and the need for PD. The topic of PD has been a source of discussion over a long period of time. Woolls (2005) wrote an opinion piece given as the Inaugural Elizabeth W. Stone Lecture. Woolls examined the history of PD for librarians in the United States. She also examined the situation for PD of librarians in 2005, including both the challenges and the opportunities. She discussed the importance of extrinsic motivators such as promotions (status) and financial incentives. Woolls also described time, cost, and travel as three factors which discourage participation.

Weingand (1986) recommended a 'carrot' (rewards for participation including salary increases and promotion) and 'stick' (requirement for participation as a requirement for professional registration) approach in her opinion piece about continuing PD for librarians.

Rowley (1996) discussed "the view that all staff have differing motivators, hygiene factors and levels of inherent motivation in relation to their job". She asserted that self-motivation of library staff had become more important with time and that management needed to determine what an individual's motivators were.

In another opinion piece Tucker (2008) recommended that staff take responsibility for their own PD by individually taking stock of their situation and learning needs.

These background articles demonstrate the differences between extrinsic and intrinsic factors, and show that they can both positively and negatively influence PD selection by library staff.

International studies

Non-library sectors

Many international studies have been undertaken involving PD of staff in non-library sectors.

Noe and Wilk (1993) conducted a quantitative study of staff in health, finance and engineering sectors. They found that a person's perception of benefits, beliefs about their work environment (e.g. support from employer), and motivation to learn were key influences on participation in PD.

Henry and Basile (1994) conducted a quantitative survey of people regarding adult education classes offered by a university in America. They concluded that cost of a course, choosing 'general interest' as the reason for an enquiry, and major life changes were negative motivational factors.

Livneh and Livneh (1999) surveyed 500 American educators and compared the results with previous studies of pharmacists and social service providers. They found that the best predictors of the amount of time an individual would spend on PD were having a lower educational level, their inner motivation for learning (e.g. thirst for knowledge), and being externally motivated (e.g. possibility for advancement).

Library sector

Library staff members work in a fast-changing environment and face the challenge of "keeping up" (Mitchell and Watstein (2008), Smith (1999, as cited in Chan and Auster, 2003, p226)).

It is also clear that managers want their staff to learn new skills and update their knowledge regularly. Goulding, Bromham, Hannabuss, & Cramer (1999) used questionnaires to collect data from more than 400 chief librarians in the United Kingdom about the skills they wanted their staff to possess. Being inquisitive (love of learning) was listed as one of the most important.

Some international studies have been undertaken to determine the influences on the motivation of information services staff to participate in PD.

Stone (1969) surveyed librarians about their motivation to participate in PD. She concluded that they participated because they wanted new ideas and knowledge. The quality of the PD activity was also an important influence on participation. That is, '... sources of encouragement were mainly related to ...content. Sources of deterrent generally involved ... context.'(p130). Stone also stated that '... the findings ... indicated that many library managers need to be made aware of their own importance to the professional development of their staff'. (p226). Bruce and Pepitone (1999, as cited in Blakiston, 2011, p8) also stated that managers were key influences on the involvement of their staff in PD.

Plate and Stone (1974) surveyed 300 American and Canadian librarians concerning their job satisfaction in relation to both hygiene (job environment) and motivational (job content) factors (as devised by Herzberg). Professional or personal growth was considered a motivational factor leading to high job satisfaction. The researchers concluded that 'motivation comes only from within the individual' (p198) and that job enrichment opportunities may not motivate workers who are still hygiene-seekers. Neal (1980, as cited in Smith & Burgin, 1991, p. 406) also found that extrinsic motivators were less important influences than intrinsic motivators in his study of academic librarians in New York. The most important influences on participation were 'exposure to new ideas, the opportunity to update skills and knowledge, and assistance in providing better service.' More recently, Boon (2005) conducted a qualitative study of 17 non-MLS female library directors in Texas to discover what factors they believed affected their PD. She found that the motivations for engaging in PD were '... the need to learn basic library procedures and ... a desire to gain organizational and management skills.' (p. 254).

Smith and Burgin (1991) undertook research using a quantitative methodology to survey more than 700 librarians in North Carolina during 1988 and 1989. The research objective was to analyse the motivations of the participants in PD programmes run by the North Carolina Library Staff Development Program. The Participations Reasons Scale (attributed to Groteleuschen, 1985) was used to collect responses from participants to 30 statements; each statement had a seven point

Likert Scale. The study found that the most highly rated reasons were associated with improving provision of services and updating skills. The lowest rated reasons concerned personal gain and professional advancement. That is, extrinsic motivators were less important influences than intrinsic motivators.

The research also found differences between influences by professional status, with paraprofessional staff rating improving skills more highly as a motivator for PD. Differences by the type of library that staff worked in were also found; public library staff rated professional competence and patron service as more important factors than did staff from other types of libraries. The number of years a respondent had been in their present position also seemed to have an effect on results; staff who had been in their present position for seven or more years rated 'personal concerns' reasons more highly than participants who had been in a position for a shorter period.

Varlejs (1999) studied more than 500 American librarians' attitudes towards informal, self-directed learning using questionnaires. It was found that the respondents spent three times as long on this sort of learning compared to formal PD activities. Varlejs also concluded that the policies and resources of the library regarding PD did not have much influence on amount of time spent on self-directed learning.

Broady-Preston and Bell (2001) found that a person's motivation may change as a qualification is pursued. In their study of participants in the MLIS distance-learning programme at a Welsh university professional gains and personal satisfaction were the two original motivators. However, personal satisfaction sometimes became the motivator to finishing the qualification.

Chan and Auster (2001) conducted a pilot survey of 15 reference librarians in a large public library in urban Ontario. Using interviews and questionnaires they found that the respondents were participating actively in PD. Participants identified lack of time, lack of quality of PD, inconvenient timing and/or location and lack of extrinsic rewards as negative influences. The age of the respondent was not found to be an influence. 'For these respondents both intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes were highly valued, although the expectations of receiving extrinsic rewards were very low'. (p. 7).

Chan and Auster (2005) conducted research using a quantitative methodology in 2001. The research objective was to explore influences on the participation of librarians in PD. Questionnaires were used to elicit data from 553 reference librarians in public libraries in Ontario. Statistical tests, including multiple regression analysis, t-tests, and Spearman's rank correlation were used. Chan and Auster found that motivation was the key factor in participation in PD. Like Smith and Burgin (1991) they were interested in analysing participants' ideas about extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. They concluded information managers believed that extrinsic rewards for participating in PD were more difficult to gain than intrinsic rewards.

Using the research described above Chan and Auster (2005) also formed a model which describes the factors affecting librarians' participation in PD activities. They found that a supportive manager was a positive influence (whereas negative influences included working part-time, situational barriers and feeling 'old'). Leong (2008) also asserted that participative management was helpful in staff motivation towards PD. This contrasts with Guthro (2005) who concluded from research of Ohio librarians that 'support is only mildly significant in predicting levels of participation and satisfaction. Other factors, yet to be determined are more salient.'

Jones and Oppenheim (2002) used questionnaires to survey staff in British libraries about the existence of a glass ceiling. Part of their conclusions concerned PD opportunities; the authors found that the respondents were interested in attending courses to update the skills of those returning after a career break, or which included assertiveness training, and did not disadvantage part-time workers.

Sayers (2007) analysed the data from the 2006 CAVAL Training Needs Survey to examine the attitudes towards PD of Generation X and Y academic library staff in Australia, New Zealand and Asia. He stated that "... Generation X ... is typically motivated by a desire to enhance professional skills and thus marketability to future employers. Their thinking is clear: how will this learning position me for the future and help to keep my options open - what is in this experience for me?"

New Zealand library studies

Within New Zealand, research has been done to examine the availability of PD and the needs of staff.

Cossham, Fields and Oliver (2005) evaluated the continuing PD for New Zealand librarians and other information management professionals. They examined the history of formal education of these groups, and discussed the professional associations. The authors noted the lack of a professional level of membership within Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA). Their research discussed two studies (which were carried out in 2001¹ and 2002²) that surveyed information managers about their PD needs. They concluded that a wide range of opportunities for PD were available but were of varying availability and quality. The authors also found that the changes in technology and the government's 2004 National Digital Strategy had caused many staff to realise the need to improve their skills.

Fields and Cossham (2005) conducted a mixed methods survey to evaluate the differing views librarians and their managers hold concerning continuing PD. Nearly 600 librarians and library assistants completed the survey, including 120 library managers. The researchers concluded that there are discrepancies between the needs and the expectations of the two groups, and that both groups need to give more emphasis to PD. They believed that was important because LIANZA had recently decided to introduce professional registration. The researchers found that the individual's attitude or motivation was the key influence on participation. Other influences included both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Cossham and Fields (2007) wrote a paper which built on the research discussed previously. The researchers discussed the factors causing changes in the way PD was being offered in New Zealand at that time. Fields and Cossham also addressed the importance of an individual taking responsibility for their own PD. This included the individual realising a particular need exists and finding relevant PD to meet it.

Recently Broady-Preston and Cossham (2011) compared and contrasted the professional registration schemes and the requirements for PD for librarians in the UK and New Zealand. The authors concluded that the schemes '... may be viewed as an attempt to reinforce concepts of professional identity in the context of rapid change...' (p9) They found that the NZ scheme has formal learning, and third party confirmation of learning, at its foundations. In contrast, the UK schemes emphasise individual-employer partnerships, and have individual responsibility for PD as a core principle.

¹ Fields A

² Cossham A

Themes

There has been a reasonable amount of research done in various countries over the last 50 years, and some themes have emerged.

The type of motivator is a recurring theme in the literature. Extrinsic motivators were found to be significant influences (Sayers, 2007). However, most other research concluded that intrinsic motivators were of much more importance. (Examples include Broady-Preston & Bell, 2001; Smith & Burgin, 1991; Stone, 1969.)

Negative influences on engaging in PD included education level of staff member, staff position, cost, time needed, travel issues and perceptions of age. (Examples include Chan & Auster, 2005; Livneh & Livneh, 1999; Smith & Burgin, 1991.)

The concept of individual responsibility has been examined and found to be of more value than institutionalised PD requirements (Fields & Cossham, 2005; Tucker, 2008; Varlejs, 1999).

Some studies have examined whether formal learning as opposed to informal learning opportunities are of more value. Informal learning is more difficult to measure, but can be more effective. (Broady-Preston & Cossham, 2011; Varlejs, 1999.)

The perception of management's attitude toward PD is another recurring theme. Some studies found it to be a key influence on an individual's participation in PD. (Examples are Chan & Auster, 2005; Leong, 2008; Noe & Wilk, 1993.) In contrast, other studies played down the importance of management (Guthro 2005; Varlejs, 1999).

The research is not conclusive concerning some of the motivating factors for PD. Some studies have conflicting results regarding the importance of extrinsic or intrinsic factors, and the attitude of management. The previous research has agreed that individual responsibility and informal learning opportunities are very important, and highlighted cost, time, travel and perceptions of age as being negative influences on PD involvement.

How literature has informed the research

Findings from the literature have informed the research in a number of ways.

The definitions of the concepts used have differed in the various studies. Some included both formal and informal learning in the definition of professional development, whereas others classified PD as being only post-graduate. Some included only qualified librarians whereas others also included non-qualified staff in the definition of library staff.

Maslow's hierarchy was often used in the research to identify self-actualisation needs and intrinsic or extrinsic categories in the data. These research studies have classified the benefits of engaging in PD as extrinsic or intrinsic, and there are differing views as to which type is more influential.

Some studies found that an individual's inner motivation was the key influence on engaging in PD. There is evidence in some studies that management has an important role in encouraging staff to take part in PD.

The studied research included both quantitative and qualitative methodologies with the emphasis on the former. Both methodologies have been successfully used to explore influences on PD participation. This research shows that a qualitative methodology using interviews was appropriate for the research project.

Searching for literature has shown that there are a wide range of existing research projects and opinion pieces. This research project will add to this body of knowledge by bringing earlier New Zealand research up-to-date.

Need for the study

This project will build on the previous research discussed in the literature review. Several factors have caused a need for current research about the New Zealand situation.

The recent recession has wrought changes in the New Zealand economic landscape. Unemployment levels have risen (3.6% in 2006 to 6.3% in 2011 to 6.7% in 2012³) and this can affect the way that people view their job security. This may influence some people to want to improve their qualifications to increase their chances of employment and advancement. Conversely the recession has caused 'belt tightening' and therefore may have prevented some people from engaging in PD due to the costs involved.

The massive changes that technology innovations are bringing to libraries mean a greater need for library staff to continually update their skills. Worldwide concerns about the long-term future of libraries have been in the public arena for a few years now.

Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) introduced new requirements⁴ for professional registration, and subsequent revalidation, in July 2007. As part of this scheme participants are required to keep a record of PD they have taken part in, and PD is required for each of the 11 Body of Knowledge areas.

Research was needed to examine these and other current influences on staff decisions to pursue formal learning.

Research questions

Main research question:

What influences New Zealand library staff to participate in professional development?

Sub-questions:

What motivates library staff to engage in professional development?

How does the nature of a reward (intrinsic or extrinsic) influence PD choice?

To what extent do the poor economic climate, rapid technological innovations, and uncertainty about public library futures influence PD choices?

³ Statistics New Zealand http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/income-and-work/employment_and_unemployment/HouseholdLabourForceSurvey_HOTPMar12qtr.aspx

⁴ LIANZA <http://www.lianza.org.nz/registration>

Methodology

A post-positivist methodology whereby individuals' differing views are acknowledged has been chosen for this research. The study has interpretivism as its underlying epistemology, that is, studying and interpreting what different individuals think about, their ideas, and the particular meanings that they attach to them.

The research uses a constructivist ontological orientation ('arising out of education and sociology, in which individuals are seen as actively constructing an understanding of their worlds, heavily influenced by the social world(s) in which they are operating' (Bates, 2005).

A qualitative study using semi-structured interviews was carried out to discover the different experiences of individuals because it was a good match with the research questions. "(The) emphasis must be on ... what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns, and forms of behaviour" (Bryman, p438). The perspectives of the participants were used to identify any trends. These will hopefully add to existing theory.

The interview process and subsequent analysis method was detailed enough to be considered a 'thick description' (because it has given both context and meaning to the findings) and to ensure that the research could be replicated. The writing aims for clarity; it can be easily understood and terms and ideas have been explained.

Population and sample

The population is the set of information service staff at New Zealand public libraries. To fit with the interpretivist epistemology a purposive sample of twelve respondents has been used; age, level of qualification, library position, and amount of PD recently undertaken were the four characteristics used in selecting people to be interviewed. Nevertheless, it is not the aim of this project to represent the population in the sample. Considerable effort was put into finding respondents who have different experiences so that a wide range of data has been collected, and comparisons can be made.

Data collection procedures

An email inviting people to volunteer to be interviewed was posted on the NZ-Libs email discussion list. In addition, library workers known to the researcher were also asked to pass on the invitation to prospective interviewees. Finally, the management of selected Auckland libraries was asked to allow the researcher to advertise for participants among their staff.

Each face to face interview was recorded, took between 30-60 minutes, and followed a semi-structured format. An interview guide listing the main questions was used, with unstructured questions used to follow-up some answers. A copy of the interview guide is included as Appendix A.

Email was used where a face to face interview was not possible. The participants were sent the main interview questions to answer. After their responses were analysed further questions were asked to clarify their ideas where needed.

A small gift of a petrol voucher was given to participants in recognition of the time they had given up to be interviewed.

Ethical considerations

Human Ethics approval was granted by the School of Information Management Human Ethics

Committee at Victoria University. The information sheet and consent form given to participants are included in the Appendices.

Approach to data analysis

An iterative approach was used when collecting and analysing data. Selection of a respondent, interviewing and interpreting data, and writing up of findings was a cycle. Each face to face interview was transcribed. The data were examined to identify any pieces that were relevant to each of the research questions, and to look for overall themes and patterns.

Thematic analysis (Bryman, p. 554) was utilised to order and synthesise the data. A matrix was used to categorise aspects of the data including any similarities and differences in respondents' answers. Initial categories, such as the perceived possible financial benefits of PD, were chosen as a result of reading previous research. Other categories, such as the reputation of training provider, were added as they become apparent in the transcripts. Different concepts and their relationships were identified, and through this amalgamation value and meaning were added to the data.

Triangulation

To add an extra dimension to the results numerical data were sought from organisations offering pertinent training. The numbers of students enrolling for Information Studies courses at Open Polytechnic, the numbers of Information Studies graduates at Victoria University of Wellington over time, and the numbers of librarians attending LIANZA PD activities were requested. Any trends noted in the quantitative data were analysed to see how they meshed with the qualitative results. This triangulation, using quantitative data, broadened the scope of the project and added some validity to the qualitative findings. However, because some data were unavailable this analysis did not broaden the study as much as had been intended.

Results

The respondents

The respondents, all women, were from a range of public libraries, from small rural libraries to large urban branches. Two were from the South Island; ten were from the North Island. The respondents ranged in age from the 20-29 years old bracket to the 50-59 years old bracket.

Position

The twelve respondents have varied roles within their public library. Their job titles were:

Children's and Young Person's Librarian
Generalist Librarian (Local History)
Librarian/Website Administrator/IT Support
Director Libraries
Library Manager (2)
Archivist/ Librarian
Reference Librarian
Content Specialist - Fiction
Collections Services Librarian
Casual Library Assistant
Librarian

Qualifications

Eight of the twelve interviewees have professional registration with LIANZA. Two do not have a degree and so do not meet registration requirements. One is almost finished a degree through Open Polytechnic and will then seek registration. The other is looking at becoming registered through a mentoring scheme. One respondent was professionally registered from 2008-2011 but has not renewed this because she wanted to save paying the cost of her annual registration fee. (\$115 p.a. at present).

PD involvement

The amount of PD each interviewee had been involved in over the last two to three years, and is planning to engage in over the next year, varied enormously. All participated in informal in-house PD, and the majority have participated in more than one external activity. One respondent, as mentioned in the previous section, has been engaged in formal study towards a degree. Some have undertaken PD as part of the revalidation process. One respondent is a presenter at workshops and conferences and discussed how she had previously seen a lack of PD opportunities regarding technology:

'... a lot of the IT PD I do I cannot find within the library community because it is not advanced enough or relevant enoughHence I started giving PD rather than receiving it.'

Findings and Discussion

Extrinsic rewards:

Participating in PD may lead to extrinsic rewards; gaining new qualifications such as a MIS (Masters in Information Studies) or becoming professionally registered can help with promotion to a more senior role, leading to a rise in pay and an increase in status.

Promotion

Five respondents indicated that the increased chance of promotion was an influence on choosing PD activities. Librarians with professional registration felt that that engaging in PD would enhance their prospects of gaining a more senior position. Another staff member stated that she started university study because of the increased opportunities a qualification would bring her:

"...if you stay as a library assistant, you don't get many opportunities...you don't get any added responsibilities".

This extrinsic reward was acknowledged as having a bearing on PD choices.

Rise in status/Financial benefit

A possible rise in status or financial benefit was not listed by any of the respondents as incentives to take part in PD. However, it is unclear whether they were not discussed because it could look as though the respondent was contemplating PD for selfish reasons. Librarians, like teachers, nurses and others, are often portrayed as viewing their work as a vocation.

Intrinsic rewards:

Intrinsic rewards including personal interest, improved competence, and satisfying a thirst for new knowledge were mentioned by all of the respondents as being influences. One participant explained how she felt that undertaking PD was personally fulfilling:

"And you do get a lot of rewards for it whether it helps you get a better job at some stage or just helps you do your own job better... even if it's not immediately related to what you do on a daily basis it just expands everything you learn."

Personal interest

This was identified by eight respondents as an influence when selecting PD. They mentioned that they tended to choose activities that they thought would be interesting and stimulating. One participant felt this strongly enough that it superseded registration requirements when she made PD choices:

"For me personally I tend to always follow my interests – if they fit with what the establishment wants, all well and good but if not, then I would drop my registration."

Improved competence

The perception that a particular PD opportunity would help the respondent to perform their current job was referred to by eight of the interviewees. The idea of improving job competence appears to be a strong influence on the choice of PD activities. One respondent described how she decides whether to attend an activity based on how it could aid her in performing her job:

"(I think about how) how it can benefit my library and community ... how it can help my current position".

Thirst for knowledge

The desire to learn new information and skills was mentioned by seven respondents as a positive influence when it came to selecting PD. When one person was asked what she thought about when she heard about a PD opportunity she replied:

"Excitement – learning new tools or information"

Analysis - extrinsic and intrinsic rewards

In summary the extrinsic reward of promotion was regarded as an influence; increased pay and status were not. Intrinsic rewards were referred to more often than extrinsic rewards as being influences on PD choices. Library staff members in this sample are more likely to consider PD based on their personal interest, love of learning, or how it will help them to perform their present role better. They are less likely to consider the possibility of rewards such as promotion, financial benefit or increases in status if the PD is undertaken.

Possible influences

Age

None of the respondents mentioned their age as having any influence on how much PD they did. For example no-one seemed to think that they were too young or too old to study or learn. Age did not seem to have any influence on how much PD a respondent had been engaged in over the last few years, or on how much they planned to do over the next year or so. However, one of the youngest respondents (20-29 bracket) did describe how she sometimes felt less experienced and younger than other PD participants:

"I can even feel a bit bullied sometimes if we have to complete group tasks".

Cost

Nine of the respondents described financial cost as an influence on their PD choices. It appears that many of the councils subsidise relevant study and PD and so library managers have a budget for PD activities. Quite a few respondents commented that the budgets are often somewhat constrained and so opportunities to attend PD are limited.

Some individuals are expected to contribute towards the cost. This was a negative influence for some interviewees because the cost of some activities is a deterrent:

"If there is a cost (whether it is a large or a small cost) in attending a PD event then that would be a barrier to my attending that event."

However, one participant was quite adamant that the opposite was true in her case, stating that the cost of an activity was of no consequence:

"... cost is not a factor that I consider very often, it's the opportunity, I grab whatever comes my way without considering work funding it for a second."

Travel

Three respondents suggested travel as influencing their PD choices. Sometimes this concerned personal life and how travel can impact on family and home responsibilities.

For others costs and not being paid were issues. One respondent discussed the details of travelling to PD which concerned her:

"If I participate in PD opportunities on one of my two days off then I would have to cover the costs of travel and car parking. If my manager approves my attendance at a PD event outside my normal working hours then I will get paid for the hours of the event only."

One respondent described the advantages, not only in terms of time and cost but also environmentally, of online PD that can be accessed from home or office. She was enthusiastic about not having to spend time travelling to some of the PD activities that she engaged in.

Time

Only four respondents mentioned the time needed for PD activities as an influence. Comments were made about PD affecting time for both personal life and job. One participant talked about the impact undertaking PD would have on both her personal life and library work in terms of detracting from the time she has available:

"So, I probably should be considering it but I wouldn't like it to detract from my personal life any more than it should do.... that's more time commitment and so, if I was busy doing PD, particularly if it was, say, external study at Poly, I would have even less time to do my job."

Global Financial Crisis (GFC)

Four respondents described the Global Financial Crisis as having a negative influence on their PD choices because it meant finances were tighter.

Some respondents stated that this was about their personal finances being tightened. One respondent described how the GFC had affected her career prospects and personal financial position, as well as her PD choices:

"The economic recession is making it hard for me to find another position in the library world and pay my mortgage. I am reluctant to borrow money to fund courses...when jobs are so hard to find."

Other respondents described the recession having affected their libraries' budgets. Cutbacks to expenditure have affected the amount of money available for training and so fewer opportunities for PD can be utilised.

Rapid changes in technology

Most respondents (eight) stated that the rapid changes in technology affect their PD choices. One mentioned that being able to study her MLIS online as a positive influence on her PD involvement, and that it would not have been possible otherwise.

All of the other participants described how technology changes positively influenced them to undertake PD which would keep their learning and skill set current. One respondent detailed the importance she placed on technology PD:

"The need to keep up with the increase in technology innovation is a motivation to attend PD. Only by keeping current with the latest technologies can library staff provide a professional service to the customer."

Long term future of libraries

It appears as though issues regarding the long-term future of libraries are not a major influence on PD choices. Commentators, including Thomas Frey and Seth Godin, have mused about how libraries will 'look' in the future if e- books gain precedence and information is mainly accessed digitally. (For example, Encyclopaedia Britannica will only be available in digital format soon).

Godin (2011) described how skilled librarians will be needed in this new, leaner scenario in his blog:

'We need librarians more than we ever did. What we don't need are mere clerks who guard dead paper. Librarians are too important to be a dwindling voice in our culture. For the right librarian, this is the chance of a lifetime.'

I had predicted that library staff would feel that this uncertainty was a prompt to engage in more PD. However, this does not seem to be a concern of the study respondents. Most of them did not feel threatened by this insecurity. One participant commented that she felt very positive about the future of libraries:

"I feel the media has a lot to answer for in regard to gloom and doom predictions. Libraries in NZ are, in the main, evolving to meet the needs of their patrons."

However, two of the respondents did describe this issue as having considerable bearing on PD choices. One respondent related how she thought she and her library would probably need to be prepared for change:

"Both personally and as the Manager of an organisation likely to be affected by external change, I think it's important that we (the library and myself) have the resources to be flexible enough to cope (as much as possible) with whatever is thrown at us!"

Managers' attitude towards PD

All twelve respondents described their manager as having a positive attitude towards PD. However, there were differing views about how that actually worked in practice. Comments ranged from the very favourable:

"Oh, she's very supportive. Anything you want to go to she says "that's great, go"."

to the not so positive:

"...only a favoured few get to go to courses."

Professional registration requirements

Seven respondents felt that the professional registration requirements influenced PD choices. Some felt that the system was a positive influence because it demands a wide range of areas of knowledge. They commented that this made them keep their understanding current in areas which may not have received much attention otherwise.

Others felt that the requirements had a negative effect on their choice of PD.

Statements made by some respondents demonstrated the importance of having a wide range of PD available. They felt frustrated when finding it difficult to locate opportunities to cover particular areas they needed to fulfil the revalidation requirements.

Some of the other respondents revealed that the revalidation requirements were directing their PD involvement. One respondent stated how important the revalidation requirements had become:

" ... I am now targeting my investment in my development (time and money) to meeting the requirements of continuing my professional registration whereas prior to that I was wider in scope in my learning interests, more eclectic and serendipitous and more engaged with what I was learning because I was studying/learning for interest rather than because there was a requirement to do so."

One respondent felt that she needed more guidance about which PD activities she should engage in, and described her disappointment at not receiving more feedback about her registration application:

"... when I was denied registration, there was no explanation as to why I wasn't acceptable. ... (There) were no guidelines to say if you were able to do this ... if you were in a position to... There was no opportunity to rectify that."

It appears that most respondents agreed that the professional registration requirements affect their PD participation, but there is disagreement about whether they are a positive or negative influence. It is interesting to note that LIANZA has very recently (May 2012) conducted a short survey called 'Have your say on LIANZA Continuing Professional Development events' which asks members for their feedback and suggestions.

Other influences

Some other influences on PD choices were referred to by the respondents. These included:

- the reputation of the training company and/or the presenter,
- the idea that the PD on offer might be more relevant to others within the organisation
- one respondent commented that "I have also found that my PD has "aged" as my children have aged"

Opinions from a PD coordinator

Opinions from a PD coordinator in a large city library cast another viewpoint on the issue. She used the term 'training junkies' to describe staff members who love doing PD. She felt that the motivations are different depending upon the type of PD being offered, and that staff members pursuing a professional qualification were generally doing so for reasons of career advancement. She was not sure whether it was for financial or status increase.

She has found that cost and time were important considerations. Interestingly, she commented that PD which involves **paid** travel time and a hotel stay was viewed very favourably!

She felt that 'there is a definite sense of individuals wanting to "future proof" their skills'. She also noted the importance of the manager's attitude towards PD and commented that:

"Some... will bend over backwards for all their staff to make the most of every opportunity – even if they have to issue books themselves all day."

Quantitative Data

The number of librarians who took part in LIANZA PD across all library sectors in 2011 has decreased by 24% compared to 2009. (See details in Appendix D). Eleven percent of the 'approximately 6000 people employed in library and information services in New Zealand' (LIANZA, 2012) participated in LIANZA PD in 2011. Also, the range in the numbers of graduates in the Victoria University of Wellington Information Studies courses has not altered significantly over the last few years. (Appendix D). It is difficult to isolate just one factor to explain this. These data reinforce the finding from the interviews that the long-term future of libraries, and subsequent concerns about job security, is not a significant concern for most staff members. However, because the GFC (Global Financial Crisis) occurred at approximately the same time it may be that financial constraints, both organisational and personal, were the main reason.

Limitations

The study is on a small scale with only twelve interviews carried out. This is a small sample of the thousands of people working in New Zealand public libraries.

The partial self-selecting nature of the study means that it is unlikely to be representative of the total population of library professionals. People who are generally happy with their present situation may not have felt as though they needed to express their opinion and so did not volunteer.

Some of the volunteers who answered the invitation to participate on the NZ-Libs email list did not complete the interview questions, despite a reminder email. Again this may be because they did not have strong opinions about any of the subject material.

All the respondents were women. As part of the study design only staff working in public libraries were interviewed, so this study cannot be used to make conclusions about staff working in other library sectors.

Conclusion

This paper has presented the results from a small study of public library staff in New Zealand. Libraries have at their core the promotion of the love of learning and encouragement of the exchange of information. However, there are some barriers to staff taking full advantage of PD opportunities including cost, time, and travel. The age of the participant was not found to be an influence, nor was uncertainty about the future of public libraries. The professional registration scheme does affect staff members' PD choices, and the recent global financial crisis and rapid changes in technology were also found to be factors. It was discovered that intrinsic rewards are more important motivators than extrinsic ones. The results showed that the staff members are enthusiastic about maintaining their competence and knowledge, both in formal and informal contexts.

The outcomes of this research have implications for the various groups involved with PD of public library staff. These findings could benefit library management and providers of professional development programmes by supplying an insight into the influences on an individual's decision to engage in professional development. This could be of assistance when courses are being planned or modified, or when managers are selecting in-house professional development activities.

Library managers can be encouraged that their opinions about PD do matter to their staff! An affirmative, encouraging attitude has a positive influence on staff PD choices. Cost, time, travel and the requirements of professional registration can be important considerations for staff, and so it is helpful for both library managers and training providers to be mindful of these influences when

planning PD.

Suggestions for future research

A quantitative study would give a different perspective because it could combine the ideas of many more staff.

Interviewing a different group e.g. only those who identify themselves as ambitious, or PD providers, would give some ideas from another viewpoint.

Separating out formal and informal PD would enable more specific research to be carried out. Other influences on PD choices including the length of the activity could also be studied.

Another suggestion for future research would be to compile some other relevant statistics. Other facts of interest could include the numbers of attendees at LIANZA Conferences over time, the number of applications for professional registration through LIANZA, and the numbers of library staff studying through Open Polytechnic.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide

"What is your current position at the library?"

"Tell me about your background of working in libraries"

"Tell me about your experience of professional development over the last 2-3 years"

"How have you made decisions about participating in professional development activities?"

"What sorts of things do you think about when you hear about opportunities for professional development?"

"What types of PD, if any, do you think you may participate in over the next 12 months or so?"

More specific questions:

"How would you describe the attitude your manager has towards PD?"

"How does that affect your PD?"

"What do you know about the LIANZA scheme for professional registration?"

"How has that affected your decision to take part in PD?"

"Has the GFC (global financial crisis) affected your decision to take part in PD?"

"If so, then in what ways does it affect your decision?"

"How has the increase in technology innovations affected your decision to take part in PD?"

"If so, then in what ways does it affect your decision?"

"Have concerns about the long-term futures of libraries affected your decision to take part in PD?"

"If so, then in what ways do they affect your decision?"

"Are there any other aspects of your recent professional development you'd like to discuss now?"

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Influences on the professional development choices of library staff

Researcher: Marion Roser: School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington

I am a Masters student at Victoria University of Wellington. As part of this degree I am undertaking a research project. The topic I am undertaking will examine factors that influence professional development choices of library staff. The School of Information Management Human Ethics Committee has granted this project ethical approval.

If you accept the invitation to participate, you will be asked to meet for an interview which will be recorded. You will be asked approximately ten questions about your recent professional development, and the interview may last up to an hour. Alternatively, you can complete the research questions by phone call or email.

If you would like to withdraw from the project, you may do so without question at any time until I begin to analyse the data on 26 March. The data you provide will form the basis of my research project and will be put into a written report on a confidential basis. No individuals or organizations will be identified in this report, or in any publications resulting from the result.

All recordings and transcripts will be stored securely. No other person besides me and my supervisor, Dr Brenda Chawner, will see the information. The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Information Management and deposited in the University Library. It is intended that one or more articles will be submitted for publication in scholarly journals. Recordings, transcriptions and interview notes will be destroyed two years after the project is finished.

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the project, please contact me by email at rosemari@myvuw.ac.nz, phone 09 4765577 or 02102601992, or my supervisor, Dr Brenda Chawner, at the School of Information Management at Victoria University, P O Box 600, Wellington, phone 04 463 5780, email brenda.chawner@vuw.ac.nz.

Marion Roser

Appendix C: Participant consent form

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON CONSENT TO PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

Title of project:

Influences on the professional development of library staff

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided) from this project (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons or without penalty of any sort. I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, the supervisor and the person who transcribes the recording of our interview, the published results will not use my name, and that no opinions will be attributed to me in any way that will identify me. I understand that the recording of interviews will be electronically wiped at the end of the project.

Please insert an x below in the spaces:

..... I understand that I will have an opportunity to check the transcripts of the interview before publication.

..... I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without my written consent.

..... I would like to receive a summary of the results of this research when it is completed.

I agree to take part in this research.

Name of participant:

Date:

Appendix D: Data showing numbers of PD participants

1. Victoria University of Wellington Information Studies Graduates

Year	Masters	Diploma	Certificate	Total
1998	88	4	0	92
1999	79	1	0	80
2000	72	1	0	73
2001	46	0	0	46
2002	52	0	0	52
2003	48	0	0	48
2004	54	0	0	54
2005	44	0	0	44
2006	89	0	0	89
2007	47	0	0	47
2008	78	0	0	78
2009	54	0	0	54
2010	44	9	1	54
2011	43	7	4	54
Total	838	22	5	865

Notes: These numbers includes graduates in the formerly named Library & Information Studies qualifications. This information was found in the Victoria University of Wellington Information Studies Roll of Graduates.

(<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/viclife/events/graduation/rollofgraduates.aspx>)

2. Number of librarians who have undertaken LIANZA PD

Year	Number
2009	860
2010	606
2011	653

Notes: Information was provided by Maree Kibblewhite, Professional Development Manager, Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa by email on 09/02/12. This is a total only and not broken down into library sectors – public, academic, school and special. More specific or longer term information was unavailable.

Data was requested from Open Polytechnic regarding the numbers of students in their Library courses. However, this was unavailable.

Marion Roser
Word count
7608