



**Fifty Ways to Conduct  
Continuing Professional Development and Workplace  
Learning: On a Shoestring**

**Blanche Woolls**  
San José State University  
San José, CA, USA

**Meeting:**

**125 — *Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as a strategy to build strong libraries and library associations* — Continuing Professional Development and Workplace Learning Section with Management of Library Associations**

**Abstract:**

*Planning continuing professional development when funding is meager can be an overwhelming challenge. This paper provides 50 suggestions for planning CPD programs when budgets are small and the need is great.*

Continuing professional development can occur using a great deal of creativity and initiative at minimal cost except the cost of staff time when they are planning or when they attend events others have planned. To ameliorate these costs, suggestions are made for expanding the original learning experiences and helping staff use their critical thinking skills to solve problems. Professional development for an audience is shortened to PD and personal professional development is shortened to PPD.

It is hoped that these can be applied to many situations in all types of libraries, even for those who work in schools or special libraries and work alone to manage those information centers. However, planning PD and finding PPD events cross all types of libraries. For those working in larger centers, these suggestions can be more easily applied. This paper moves from staff PD from the view of the responsibilities and possibilities offered by administrators and staff responsibilities. Using members of the community to share their expertise is another opportunity. Finally, new opportunities opening up with new technologies are described.

Administrators

Administrators planning PD and PPD events must pre-plan, holding the event, and then evaluating the experience with an expectation of future uses. One suggestion, orientation, overlaps starting with the first point in our list of 50, PD for new staff. Administrators review any outline or agenda previously used to make sure all that was

covered needed to be covered and finding anything missing. Because of the frequent changes in any situation, presenting new information is important yet keeping what has gone before because it will be new to those just joining the group.

Administrators ask their staff about what should happen during any orientation. This will help staff think about what they are presently doing that is new and different which can be used for PD throughout the agency. The new agenda is now presented. The culmination comes with asking these new staff members some time after the orientation what they remembered from orientation (sometimes an unpleasant surprise), what was covered well and what they wish had been covered.

Information and experiences presented in these sessions are then reinforced with new PD related to specific departments as new hires reach their assignment. Including staff in the original planning help limit items to reinforcement and provides time for expanded information about the actual department where they will work.

New librarians in some larger libraries are able to rotate among departments while in smaller libraries, most new hires replace someone in a specific position and a rotation is impossible. Orientation may be very short, but should cover what happens in each area of the library. This orientation plan can be used in preparing to host interns from library and information science programs in universities or for library volunteers.

PD happens when any staff member “shadows” another for one or two days to learn procedures that apply to a different department. Rotating any staff members provides both PD and PPD. Placing a librarian from cataloging to the reference desk and vice versa has long been considered an affirmative experience for persons in both positions.

Most professionals recognize the need to keep up with current literature describing to learn better ways to do things and new trends. Reading the new developments in technology and their applications to the information professions allows the anticipation of change. However, this is often neglected when the job itself is so taxing. Administrators can encourage sharing of professional literature by suggesting that staff bring an interesting article or a new book to the attention of others during a lunch break or staff can all read the same article or book and discuss what they think about it.

PPD occurs when staff are given the opportunity to visit another library. Staff is released based upon work flow and anticipated patron need, both the responsibility of a director. This requires some cost to the library being visited whose staff must plan for the visit and release persons involved in the tour. However, such visits allow for comparison of the ways things are being accomplished. If a similar visit is offered to the host library, it can serve as a payback for them. Any library with a new system or a new facility or a new addition is likely to be asked to host such visits, and even though there is no return invitation, a great deal is learned with the interchange of experiences from the visiting librarians. Their assessment of any new part of the library might bring out a simple change to improve things even though the original designs seemed perfect.

Inviting the top administrator such as the mayor or city council members or higher administrative positions in other types of libraries to discuss funding or other things can be PD for administrators as well as staff. It can offer an opportunity to show these top

administrators the new things that are going on in the library as well as to learn about the challenges facing the city, school district, corporation, or university because these persons have authority for budget.

Libraries fortunate enough to have Friends groups who work to raise money for the library can be invited to ask staff about what is needed. If they are planning a fund raiser, staff needs to be aware so they can urge their clients to support the fund raising event. Staff can then show the Friends a view of what is going on in the library.

For the director to plan a survey of any library service is an excellent PD experience. Staff members will be thinking about what they are currently doing that might need to be changed and how to go about this evaluation, what they need to ask, how they will ask the questions and how they will analyze the data.

Another PD learning experience comes with writing a proposal. Directors and anyone else who wishes to secure outside funding needs the help of staff members. Whether they are requesting funding from a government agency or a foundation, administrators need help from staff to gather the statistics and other information. Even if a fund writer is on staff, librarians must collect statistics and other information. Planning and writing the actual proposal becomes an excellent PD experience as the group fits together the needs of the library, writes goals and objectives for service, plans activities to meet objectives and then creates the evaluation piece is an excellent experience.

## **Staff**

Staff assumes leadership for training new staff (professional and clerical), teaching interns from a local university, and giving volunteers the experiences they need to be helpful. Preparing to teach is one of the best possible means to continue PD. Such experiences can be formal or informal depending upon the perceived needs of those being trained. When new staff members do not understand a process, they are shown how to do a task, and when the trainee indicates understanding, the session is ended. If a more formal session appears to be needed, this may expand to include others in both planning and attendance.

Library and information science education programs may include a period of time for students to work in a library. These experiences may or may not have a formal arrangement and students in these programs may have visits from their college professors to see what and if they are having a good experience. Others are assigned to a particular staff member in an institution. The number of hours they are onsite and the experiences they have vary widely, but if a staff member is given the responsibility for seeing that this student has a broad experience, it becomes a PPD assignment.

Another excellent way to PPD is to prepare a presentation to be given to a particular audience. This may be a service club or a conference session for other librarians or for others who want to learn about new trends in providing information. Usually preparing such a presentation requires research to make sure you are providing the best possible information for your audience. It may be that an artifact from the library's special collections will allow study of its origins and how it fits into today's world and will expand the audience's knowledge of the library collection. Preparing a book talk about best sellers or talking about

plans for summer reading programs requires gathering information to share an audience. This creation of the presentation, an excellent PPD project, increases the audience's learning.

Preparing a report of experiences while attending a conference and sharing it with those who could not attend allows the presenter to think about what was most important and to describe it so that the audience learns. Because many professional associations have been asking presenters for permission to tape the session, it is possible to use some of the presenters' actual words as well as providing a synopsis. Sharing the new technologies observed in the exhibit area as well as things learned from conversations in the hallways and over meals will help others learn about trends in the field.

Organizing an author/illustrator visit to the library, especially when this experience is shared with another library or another type of library or the local bookstore staff allows discussion about the visit with those involved in the planning. Learning how to host a speaker is a form of PD. When the author is onsite, learning occurs about the process of creating a book as well as the author's life as an author.

Another effective way to be involved in creative thinking for PPD is to serve on the local arrangements committee for a state, regional, national or international conference. Just choosing a theme can involve thinking of the audience matching it to the possibilities for program speakers and other activities.

Another way to gain new perspectives on a variety of technologies for providing information is to organize a holiday gift selection exhibition of new technologies. Library staff and patrons can try out these new technologies without going from store to store. Allowing vendors to make presentations to groups of staff is another effective way for PD, to learn about the uses of new technologies.

Having staff review websites from other libraries is useful to learn what is on the website and how it can be used. This is especially helpful if staff is going to be creating and maintaining a website for the library.

Meeting staff from other libraries and vendors always provides PD learning opportunities. Examples are having the school librarian or district director of school libraries attend a public library staff meeting and meeting academic and school librarians. These two have different clientele than the public library, and they use different means to get their clientele into the library. Sharing these ideas is PD. A staff member in one library who organizes very successful special programming can offer suggestions to staff in other libraries.

Staff members from the state or even a national library have a very different picture of library service for their audiences. They can also bring perspectives of the way things are done in other libraries that will help the staff assess what they are doing.

State Department of Education and state library personnel may arrange training sessions. In one state, these sessions were required to implement and maintain access to the statewide library databases provided to all libraries and all citizens of a state. Many state libraries offer week-long training to help persons update their educations when attending a national or even a state conference is impossible.

## **From the community**

Involving the community in providing PD for staff has a local architect come to talk about new ways to remodel. Members of service clubs can about the club's goals for the year while learning what the library can offer their members. Learning what is going on in the local museum whether shared by the director or a docent means library staff can create displays to attract patrons to both. School superintendents discuss the latest education trends and needs while the bookstore staff can explain what the best sellers are in their stores. The owners of local businesses, in explaining their products and services can help staff determine what they could do for those whose taxes help support libraries.

It is also helpful to learn as much as possible about local agencies in the community so that patrons can be directed to the correct agency rather than be sent from one to another. Local medical and hospital staff can also share their information needs.

## **New technologies**

Most participants in any number of workshops or conferences and even formal education courses find that they can learn a great deal from others at the meeting through conversations in the halls and at breaks in the programs. This type of sharing of information and experiences has become commonplace in many avenues available through new technologies.

Video programming has been around for almost a half-century, and it still has the possibility of seeing a conference presentation in real time. The presentation can also be saved and transferred to DVD to reviewing at a later time. While the equipment to make the broadcast and the means to send the picture to other audiences has some cost involved, people on the receiving end may be able to download and reuse the product later.

Using the email resources available on the Internet is a very old technology these days. However, the librarians may need to help patrons learn the use of databases in the library. Keeping up on databases is, in itself, PPD and helping other patrons learn is reinforcing.

Blogs offer individuals an opportunity to post brief essays on a topic of interest to the blogger. If the subject appeals to others, they may respond. Wikis are started by a group of like-minded individuals to discuss issues. They are open to anyone who can locate the wiki and participate in its discussions. Both of these encourage "conversations."

Virtual worlds allow for groups to communicate in real time. The one this author is most familiar with is the three-dimensional Second Life (<http://secondlife.com>) which allows the participant to create an avatar and then have both formal and informal experiences from social events to learning experiences. This feature has a beginning cost because one must purchase "land" and create a space for avatars to meet; however such meetings are far less expensive to set up than to bring participants to a central location in the real world. #

Facebook, twitter and tweets have added a more personal sharing of information although it is sometimes difficult to spend the time necessary to keep up with these. Learning the abbreviations for some words and phrases does not really cut down on much on keying

time. Youth seem to be able to text with great speed while others have to relearn a keying process.

Google Apps for Education via cloud computing is a new, inexpensive way to share learning. With this application, one does not store anything on a local computer, but somewhere “out there” in the “clouds.” When it is not essential to handle storage, local usage can be increased by accessibility and bandwidth. The tools available to users on Google Apps for Education allow for the creation and sharing of documents, spread sheets, videos, forms, presentations in a collaborative environment. A good how-to-do-it book is *Google Apps for Education: Building Knowledge in a safe and Free Environment*.

Online programming can provide the same type of experience that children had when they watched television broadcasting of storytelling and adults can have a PD experience when they attend a virtual conference, something many professional associations are implementing. While some online programming has a cost, much of it is free. Several of these either low cost or free experiences include programming from professional associations, Web Junction, and using websites for learning

Programming from professional associations is sometimes free to members of the association, and sometimes charges are made. If the programming is an output of the conference, it may be available as a virtual conference offering. If it is something created by the association membership, it might still have a fee attached. However, these offer up-to-date PD.

An online community addressing the training needs of librarians, Web Junction (<http://www.webjunction.org/>) began as a grant to OCLC from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to build an online community for librarians. They offer a variety of programs on library management issues. They have information available in Dutch, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Japanese, and Chinese as well as English. Their handouts, courses, and discussions are practical approaches for all. OCLC members can sign in through their account number, but others sign on as individuals.

Using websites for learning is demonstrated very well by *School Library Journal* (<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com>) a periodical for school and public librarians serving youth. Information is updated constantly, and this site often offers special webinars for a very low fee. In reviewing the site for this, their next webinar is an all-day event for \$29.95 (for subscribers or \$39.95 for non-subscribers).

Frederick calls webinars as the “new face of professional development.”# (2011, 40). These may be developed by professional associations, state libraries or other state groups. Some are developed for profit and some are a combination of associations but also with a fee attached.

Webinars developed by professional associations have much in common with the above paragraph about online programming. Some may be free especially those developed by state associations because their memberships anticipate such programming as a part of their membership. Many of these are focused on advocacy and how to become political rather than on learning a new skill. Those which are developed at the national level are both.

Webinars are developed by state libraries and other state groups. States with libraries managed by persons with little or no professional education need help understanding the challenges of maintaining an information agency, and these webinars are planned to see that they succeed. Other state groups such as departments of education develop webinars to introduce new regulations and legal issues applicable to schools in their state.

Webinars developed for profit can be very costly to the participant and they may not be as successful for the creator because so many opportunities are available at low cost or free. However, these are available and advertised to attract subscribers. If your area has few opportunities to attend webinars, providing one for a fee may provide the funding to plan another webinar.

For credit online training may be offered by a local college or university. Many library and information science degree programs are now partially if not totally online. This allows a person living in another area of the country or even potential students in other countries to get a degree. They are at the end of our list because of their cost, but it would be unwise to ignore their potential.

This paper has offered some suggestions for ways to provide continuing professional education for your staff or for yourself. It's up to the readers to add to the list, challenge any idea, pointing out the fallacies and coming up with a different approach or a solution to the suggestion. If these are sent to [blanche.woolls@sjsu.edu](mailto:blanche.woolls@sjsu.edu), they will be incorporated into an update and placed on the CPDWL website.