

Core Technology Competencies for All Staff

SPOTLIGHT *on* COMPETENCIES

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Providing the right training for library staff is not easy, especially when:

1. Training is just one of your many responsibilities in a small-midsize library, and you don't have a trainer on staff, much less a department;
2. Many staffers are part time, making scheduling and communication challenging;
3. There are a plethora of learning styles and knowledge gaps to match with a wide array of training methods and opportunities.

Technology training is the most challenging of all. We know that nobody can be an expert on everything, but there is a growing list of standard skills that staff needs to be able to do and the pace of change continues to accelerate. Experts aren't always available to help and with staff and patron expectations high, it can be demoralizing for some to feel "unarmed" when faced with a technological challenge.

When I arrived at Avon Lake Public Library, we fortunately had a Technology Training Team consisting of technology and reference staff in place. Working together we prioritized and facilitated training, in-house and elsewhere. In Fall 2006 we surveyed staff, asking them what kind of training they needed and wanted. Based on the feedback, we continued our work and tried a lot of new things: working with state and regional consortia and other libraries; creating our own hands-on and demo sessions (held before hours, during hours, and at staff meetings); even starting a club that met regularly to share tips and tricks.

Some methods were more successful than others, but what was most helpful was hands-on personalized training.

By Fall 2007, the most pressing staff training needs were still changing technology, including the arrival of new PCs and AV equipment, Microsoft Office 2007, changing online databases and services and the increasing use of "Web 2.0" social networking tools. Before leaping into our own "23 Things" program, a valid question came up: "Is everyone here OK with Web 1.0 first?" Is staff confident enough with the basics before moving forward and how can we train a lot of people, in a reasonable span, without closing the library?

Using OLC's **Core Technology Competencies for All Library Staff** as a template, (<http://www.ollc.org/CoreCompetencies.asp>) we constructed a checklist of technology knowledge and skills for staff to indicate whether they felt comfortable or needed more training. We made it clear that this would not affect performance reviews, that it was just a tool to pinpoint what training was needed. We encouraged staff to ask for help and work with colleagues to check off skills before submitting the questionnaire. Our Technology Training Team then divided up the returned checklists and met individually with staff to provide hands-on, individualized training.

OLC's Library Education Committee, with input from a wide variety of sources in Ohio and elsewhere, includes Technology Competencies among their many Competencies on the OLC web site. Why not use it as we did, to ensure a standard for technology literacy, and a way to get there? Your staff and patrons will appreciate it.

The complete collection of library competencies developed by the Library Education Committee is available online (www.ollc.org/CoreCompetencies.asp). If you have a question or need more information, please contact Astrid Olfenbittel (aolfenbittel@worthingtonlibraries.org), Chair of the 2008 OLC Library Education Committee.