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CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WORKPLACE EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, FINLAND

The presentation describes our experiences on the continuous professional development and workplace education program in the National Library of Health Sciences, Finland. The presentation consists of three parts:

1. Background and description of the program
2. Evaluation of the program - results of the survey among the library's personnel
3. the future of the program – ideas and plans

Background – working environment of the personnel

The National Library of Health Sciences - Terkko is the research library of the Medical Faculty of the University of Helsinki. It also functions as the scientific library for the Helsinki University Central Hospital. Terkko is the national resource library in medicine and health sciences and has been designated as the WHO Information Service Centre in Finland. Terkko's workforce is approximately 40 man-years.

The library's main customers are medical students and researchers, faculty members, physicians, nurses and nursing students, but the library is also open to the general public, to anyone needing health information.

Description of the continuous professional development and workplace education program – development, content and participation

Workplace education for the personnel has always been arranged in our library, but since 2005 we started to organize the education more systematically. The education team – which is open to everyone interested – first planned a few personnel training sessions for the coming autumn term. Personnel members were invited to participate in the training sessions through the library's intranet and the sessions were organized during the workday in the library premises.

Gradually, the training became an established part of the library's activities. During the academic terms from autumn 2005 to spring 2007, 23 training sessions - approximately 1 training session per 1½ months – were organized, and today we can say that what started small has evolved into something that can truly be called a continuous professional development and workplace education program.

The education concentrated strictly on issues concerning medical librarianship and issues that we are coming up against in our daily work. Training sessions topics dealt with **a)** services and information sources that the library buys for customer use e.g. Ovid Medline, ISI Web of Knowledge and RefWorks, **b)** services and information sources that the library produces to customer use – e.g. the Medic database, the FeedNavigator current awareness service and the Terkko Document Space open access repository, and **c)** some specific topic and the information resources related to that topic, e.g. evidence-based medicine, health information sources for laymen, health statistics information sources, and health care classifications and nomenclatures. Yet another type of training is **d)** the library's journal club, which started to gather during spring 2007.

Table I. Training sessions 2005—2007

2005
Ovid Medline
RefWorks
Journal Navigator and BookNavigator (the library's interface for the access to the electronic journals and books)
ISI Web of Knowledge
Health Statistics Information Sources
Terkko SearchNet (the library's link collection)
Evidence Based Medicine
Ovid Medline
Legislation databases
2006
Drug information resources
Mobile services
PubMed
Medic and MeSH (Medic is a Finnish health science database, produced by Terkko)
Health Care Classifications and Nomenclatures
FeedNavigator (A current awareness service produced by Terkko)
Health Information Sources for Laymen
2007
Terkko Document Space (An open access repository produced by Terkko)
Journal Club (subject: Evidence-Based Librarianship)
PsycInfo
SciFinder Scholar (Chemical Abstracts)
Journal Club (subject: Systematic information retrieval)

Personnel members with special skills in the subject at hand acted as trainers in the sessions. Trainers were from the information service, the research and development department and from the customer service department. To some sessions, a specialist from another organization was invited. For example, education on law information resources was given by a specialist from the Library of Parliament, and for the session on Chemical Abstracts we invited a specialist from the Kumpula Science Library (Library of the Faculty of Science, University of Helsinki).

Altogether 216 participants attended the sessions in 2005—2007. On an average 10 participants attended each session (ranging from 4 to 21). This means that an average of ¼ of Terkko's whole personel attended each session.

Training sessions on services produced in Terkko were most popular (e.g. Terkko Document Space, 21 participants and Medic database, 20 participants). One reason could be that education on these services was given for the first time in those sessions. Training sessions on essential and most frequently used services (such as Ovid Medline, ISI Web of Knowledge, Refworks) were also constantly popular.

Evaluation of the program - results from the survey on personnel's experiences

In Spring 2007, it was time to evaluate the program. The personnel's opinions were collected with a questionnaire. Questions concerned 1) subjects covered, 2) participant's thoughts about the quality of the sessions and 3) suggestions for future sessions. 33 questionnaires were distributed. 30 questionnaires were completed, so the response rate was high: 91 %. 23 of the respondents had taken part in the training sessions and seven hadn't.

Generally, the program received positive response and comments, but we also received valuable suggestions on how to do things differently.

We got positive reviews on many areas.

Firstly: 86 % of the respondents considered the sessions useful.

Secondly: it seems that expectations regarding training sessions were fulfilled. The prevailing expectation was to get knowledge and skills useful in ones own work (18 of 23 respondents that participated in the sessions expected this, 19 felt that they could use the received knowledge and skills directly in their work). The courses' innermost purpose is to add work related knowledge, so it was essentially important that the training program met this expectation. Another common expectation was to get information that would help to understand the library's functions as a whole (expected 13/ fulfilled 15). The third common expectation was that the sessions would be an inspiring and refreshing occasion (expected 10 / fulfilled 11). In practice, this appeared as eager discussions during the sessions: courses also functioned as discussion forums on subjects related to their work.

We also gave participants a possibility to make comments about the courses. Based on ten comments, courses and trainers succeeded in the following areas:

1. Courses were well planned
2. Teaching methods were considered suitable
3. Topics were considered versatile

Most respondents also felt that they were well informed about the training program timetable and content, as well as the aim of the separate courses.

We also asked the respondents to list things that could have been done differently. The answers revealed that teaching methods could be developed in the following ways:
1. More teaching material could be given out before and during the sessions
2. The tempo of the sessions could be slower

Seven of the 30 respondents didn't participate in the sessions. The most frequent answer to the question why they didn't participate was that topics were not related to their responsibilities. So even though many respondents were satisfied with the versatility of the topics, there is a group of colleagues whose needs the courses did not meet.

Future of training program – new subject matters

An important part of the questionnaire was to map the kind of courses our colleagues would consider useful in the future.

We asked what subject matters or individual topics they would like to be included in the training program. The amount and creativeness of the ideas implicitly tells us that the library's personnel is enthusiastic about our continuing education program. And that is very motivating for us.

Ideas were related to the following subject matters:
1. the library's electronic services
   Introduction to the new electronic services should be arranged every time a new service is launched. In addition, there should be an annually organized session on the most used services.
2. General subjects relating to the library profession and information environment
   The following subjects were suggested: customer service, data security, copyright issues, library legislation, new concepts, trends and instruments in information society and libraries (for example functional cataloging, Web 2.0).
3. Subjects related to medicine
   Respondents also wished for sessions relating to medical subjects, for example introductions to the medical publishing process and medical research methods.

The future of the training program is planned on the basis of the responses and reflections of our own experiences. In the future we will broaden our topic selection to include the above-mentioned subjects.

Summa summarum

Continuous professional development and workplace education program is a good way to put different personnel members' expertise to use. By using personnel members as trainers, an education program is a relatively cost effective way to offer easy, effortless and fast knowledge update to library personnel.

Because the program is meant to meet the professional needs of our library personnel, it was very important to ask what participants and non-participants thought of the training sessions held. We received valuable and useful material for the future and motivation to continue the program.

Table II. Presentation in figures

- Terkko's work contribution is approximately 40 man-years

Held sessions
- Autumn 2005 - spring 2007: 23 training sessions

Amount of participants:
- Altogether 216 participants
- average 10 participants each session = ¼ of Terkko's whole personnel
- number of participants per session ranged from 4 to 21

Results from the survey on personnel's experiences
- distributed questionnaires 33
- completed questionnaires 30
- 23 of respondents had taken part to training sessions
- 7 of respondents hadn't taken part to training sessions

Respondents who had taken part to training sessions
- 86 % of the considered the sessions useful
- Figure: expectations regarding training sessions, numbers on bars signify number of respondents

Participants' expectations regarding training sessions

- 78% of participants were satisfied with advance information about the training programs timetable, content and aim of separate sessions.

Reasons not to take part to sessions
- 57% of non-participants felt that topics were not related to their responsibilities