

Training Needs Analysis - In the South West

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At a SWEHSLinC study day in April 1993, Pam Kitch presented her findings from a survey of the health library staff in the SW region.

The aims of the survey were :

1. Ascertain our training needs (and comment on these could be supplied)
2. Find out how many staff would like mentors for their professional development
3. Find out how many staff were willing to be mentors

Computer applications ranked first overall in training needs, a result that is hardly surprising given the rate of change in information technology. Homing in the type of computer applications ranked important showed that both librarians and library assistants were keen to develop awareness of "general applications".

Librarians ranked computer applications, teaching skills and leadership skills/teambuilding as joint number one priorities. The library assistants rated "Using CD-ROM" as the next priority. It became clear from the discussion during the day that some librarians could possibly practise their teaching skills and teambuilding by showing their library assistants the basics of CD-ROM. I wasn't aware that using the CD-ROM was the prerogative of the librarian and the user (hopefully!) - but not the library assistant. Shades of restrictive practices?

The next priority for the library assistant group was the reference interview, perhaps another skill traditionally associated with librarians? Perhaps librarians should be thankful that the library staff do realise that enquiries are often not as they appear - otherwise we would never have the opportunity to practise our skills as we would never be called on for further help. We can measure what we supply, but the number of enquiries that users might have, but don't choose to convey, is inestimable.

How did we wish to obtain the training? Everyone, it seemed, wanted courses on specific subjects as a first option, but librarians preferred SWEHSLinC meetings, and library assistants informal library visits, as a second option.

The least popular learning styles were large professional meetings, distance learning and use of mentors. The latter contrasted somewhat with the number of people wishing a mentor and those willing to be a mentor, but possibly we associated mentorship with general professional development rather than learning about a specific topic in detail. A poster session provided an opportunity for each library to give details about staff and recent developments and achievements. This gave us all ideas for informal library visits and should have helped towards the development of mentoring arrangements.

Our thanks are due to the staff of the medical and nursing libraries in Truro, particularly Pam Kitch and Fiona Lewis, for their work on the training needs survey.