

A PERSONAL VIEW OF ROUTE A TRAINING FOR ASSOCIATESHIP OF THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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The viewpoint taken is from the experience of undertaking 'Route A' training to associateship while working in a small subject specific site library with only one other member of staff which is part of a large university library.

Undertaking a Route A training programme allowed training and professional experience to be gained quickly. The training, by being structured and supervised, ensures that a wide range of professional work and skills are covered. The first hand experience on the job and with the employing organisation, along with the training programme, provides a good grounding in practical work and the relationship between theory and practice. This route, though, does not give experience of a variety of different jobs and organisations which would allow greater depth of knowledge and professional development and enable skills of comparison and evaluation to be gained. Over a year, the amount of professional development that could be gained, immediately post qualification, on your own would be limited but the official structured training counteracts the shortage of experience before completion of the Professional Development Report and aids learning and professional development. The shortage of experience is also overcome as all aspects of library and information work are covered and further guidance and training is given for those aspects which are not directly covered in the job description. There is an emphasis both on the specific core skills of librarianship as well as wider service, organisational and library and information issues, not necessarily within the scope of the job. This ensures that the work undertaken is put into a wider context. Professional development is also gained through external visits and training events, guidance and wider reading. This helps to broaden knowledge and overcome lack of first hand experience.

In working in a small library, isolation from other professionally qualified librarians and gaining experience of teamwork caused some problems personally during the training year. Lack of direct on site access to many information tools, such as directories and guides, was also frustrating. The major drawback was being unable to gain first hand experience and knowledge from experienced and qualified librarians. Meetings and special training had to be carefully planned. This was probably good experience though, as it encouraged self reliance and learning, especially in dealing with enquiries.

On a more positive note, the nature of the post was an advantage. A wide ranging job description covering many aspects of library and information work, from cataloguing, classification and book ordering to enquiry work and user education, ensured a wide range of experience linked directly to the Route A training programme.

Reflection is an important part of training and writing the professional development report. Reflecting on the what, how, why, and where things are done, both on a service and personal level, help in the acquisition of skills of

evaluation and critical appraisal. The completion of a log book allows experiences, mistakes, successes and thoughts to be noted down over the year and reflected on so that learning takes place. Self criticism of work and personal performance can lead to changes and improvements in the future.

Motivation is aided by the official and structured nature of the programme as part of the job. Overall I feel that undertaking this training route and writing the professional development report allows learning to occur and improvement in professional practice. There is also the realisation that this process is only the start of professional development and that there is still a long way to go and much to learn. The successful completion of the training and the Professional Development Report are the foundation for continued professional development and the skills needed to improve in knowledge, competence and practice.

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