

Topic: Best Practices for Implementing Change with your Staff

"To pursue bright spots is to ask the question "What's working, and how can we do more of it?"

-Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard by Chip Heath & Dan Heath, 2010

Library Services in the Digital Age Part 5: The present and future of libraries By Kathryn Zickuhr, Lee Rainie and Kristen Purcell | Released: January 22, 2013



Things to change

We also asked library staff about what things libraries should change going forward. Many spoke of a need to be more flexible, to adapt to new technologies and open the library to more activities. Others felt that some libraries were chasing new technology trends and

programming at the expense of their core competencies.

"[We need to stop] holding on to collections trying to have the breadth and depth that we had in the '80s. What people want now is different, and how they access it is different. We have to give up on being the 'archival public library' and move toward instant services."

"We are at a crossroads in our area where we are dealing with an older generation who doesn't mind change as long as they can still check out the books they want and the new generation who wants and needs updates which we cannot afford."

"As our population ages, focus of special services to seniors—hearing devices, viewing devices, help services like carrying books to their cars, grabbers to get books off shelves, computer classes directed to seniors, programming specific to seniors, have walkers and wheelchairs available."

"It seems that many libraries are struggling with an identity crisis, the next and newest thing to offer patrons around the corner. Our staff sometimes feels pushed and prodded to offer so many services with limited staff, space and time."

"I am concerned about the constant demand to 'keep up with technology' when information is where I place my emphasis. There will always be another device, another way to access the information, and I am now in a position where I am like a salesman, not a librarian."

"Stop trying to be all things to all people. Find out what communities want from us and provide that service."

Another thread was making libraries more accessible and welcoming to more members of the community:

"We need to change the concept of the library as a restricted, quiet space—we bustle, we rock, we engage, but so many people in the community do not know this."



“Library workers should look for more ways to seek patrons out. Everyone needs help but no one wants to ask, myself included. I have been impressed by the reference training I have seen at my library in order to better help people access information. More of this would be great.”

“Engage the digital natives. Promote online services more. Promote [libraries’] place as a neutral space. Promote the added value of professional.”

Many librarians also said that public libraries should partner more with other organizations and go out into the community to engage with new audiences:

“Some libraries believe that customers should come to the library—we can’t [wait] for folks to come in to our buildings. We have to be extremely proactive and get out into our communities to show all the services we offer to support our communities.”

“Public librarians should reach out to school librarians, academic librarians, special librarians in the community as all libraries and library personnel in many ways have a common goals of providing unbiased information, promoting reading, promoting learning, promoting community, etc. We can do all of this better together rather than trying to do it separately.”

“Libraries need to be more in the face of the public. There are thousands of people out there who have never been encouraged to use the library, who think it is just for scholars and computer users.”

“Libraries are not good at marketing their resources and services. People don’t know what the library offers. The library is not on many people’s radar. That is one of the biggest problems at my library.”

Along the same lines, several library staff members said that they felt the current layout of most libraries was an impediment to patrons, who are often confused by the Dewey Decimal system and may have difficulty finding or browsing for books:

“Libraries should explore other ways to organize our materials (Deweyless? bookstore model?). Our goal is to make our resources easy to find. Libraries need to look at modern ways to do that. Libraries should look at what barriers (rules) we have that impede the use of our resources.”

“We are losing the concept of browsing and the new bookstore model adopted by some libraries is not the answer. I have worked in a library with it and when it was new patrons thought it was a good thing. The more they had to use it the less they liked it and it was eventually changed back.”

“Allow for straying from the Dewey Decimal system and even [alphabetize] by author. I know a lot of libraries have done this but ours hasn’t. As a librarian, I love [the Dewey Decimal system] because I can find most any particular item right where it is supposed to be! But as a patron and a mom I find it cumbersome.”

“We need to be more focused on user experience. Users don’t care about Dewey numbers, they want to be able to find things themselves easily and our online catalogs, building layouts and database vendors need to help patrons easily. We as library professionals need to focus on user experience as well.”



The MHLS **Marketing Advisory Committee** has identified the need to build the capacity of our libraries as one of the keystones to future success. Building capacity regularly calls for change.

Your peers want to know: what works with your staff
when you have implemented changes?

Type(s) of Change	What Worked