THE TWO WAY STREET OF LEARNING

HOW THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOLO LIBRARIANS INFLUENCES THEIR ROLE AS INFORMATION LITERACY GUIDES

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Why this research project?

- One-person librarians (OPLs) have been rarely studied, yet one in three librarians in the world is a OPL (Siess, 2003)

- Continuing professional development (CPD) is central to our role as information literacy (IL) providers

- Little research into CPD for OPLs, none on their own perceptions of this concept
Data collection

• Research questions and interview schedule

• 30 OPLs across the Republic of Ireland took part in the main study

• They worked in public, academic, special libraries (profit/non-for-profit)

• Main source of data collection were semi-structured interviews (ranging from about 35 to over 100 minutes)
Some demographic details

- Rural setting
- Urban setting
- 0-2 years experience
- 2+ years experience

- Female
- Male
- Total
Phenomenography

- Background of Phenomenography, a qualitative research approach
- Maximum variation sampling widely used
- Variation in perception of a phenomenon
- Outcome space: categories of descriptions and dimensions of variation
Categories of description

CPD is...

Category 1: Upskilling for the sake of the organisation/library service (service orientation)

Category 2: Developing as a professional librarian (LIS profession orientation)

Category 3: Helping you to do all the jobs an OPL does (OPL orientation)

Category 4: When you have learned something and you want to do things in a better way when you come back (personal orientation)

Category 5: Your development as a human being (lifelong learning orientation)

Dimensions of Variation

Dimension ‘role’ – responsibility, motivation and support

Dimension ‘time’ – current job or career or life in general

Dimension ‘style’ – formal or informal with examples

Dimension ‘networking’ – types of networking, reasons for doing it
Types of CPD pursued

For example in category 1:

Both formal and informal; formal strong

Examples: Training courses (both in the organisation and outside), seminars, academic degrees; being involved in work committees; Internet (email lists, online tutorials, free resources); on the job learning
Two-way street of IL and CPD

IL and CPD are intrinsically linked -

OPLs provide IL to their patrons (through CPD) and get IL skills through their own CPD

Depending on the category they do this by different means
OPL as IL providers

“That's, it's a role, that's what I love about my job, it's the part of my job that I really like is giving training and I kind of think if I'm not giving training I don't know what I would be doing with that time, because it's so important for me. We spent a lot of money on databases and online resources and you're dealing with different generations of staff. Some people who just have a block about computers and who've never sat down and are coming to the realisation that maybe they've got another twenty years to work and they're gonna have to get to grips with computers at some stage...”

Interviewee 21 (00:26:03)
IL skills for OPLs’ careers

“Why I think CPD is extremely important? Just to get me involved in areas that I may not already have been involved in, I suppose, updating me on what’s happening out there in terms [of] how technology’s affecting libraries, trends in, I suppose user interaction with libraries and so on, particularly now that we’re dealing with the digital natives. Yeah, it would be absolutely crucial that I’d continue with CPD. I just don’t think an employer would look at me [laughs], you know, if I turned around in a year’s time “I haven’t done anything!” It’s very important, yeah, yeah. And I think for promotional prospects as well, you know, if you’re just doing the same job day in, day out, then you can expect to stay in the same job forever!” Interviewee 18 (00:14:33)
How to learn about IL as an OPL

“... I used to go to the [mentions library organisation] based in England, just to see what they were doing over there and I think it was there that I learned most about information literacy, because they were on the ball sooner than we were and about virtual learning environments and all of that sort of stuff. So at least when they were talking here in [mentions own organisation] then about e-learning, at least I knew what they were talking about [laughs], you know, and I was able to through in my few little bits that I had learned...”

Interviewee 5 (00:17:13)
“[...] It's clearly good for you to compare with your peers as to what kind of things are interesting people and exercising their kind of energies at that time. Also with the last group of [mentions subject area] librarians, that I met with before, about September last year. And just to kind of test the levels or what are you doing in terms of your information literacy or the range of subjects, where everybody is, you know. Am I very far behind or am I doing o.k. [laughs] considering all the usual difficulties?...”

Interviewee 23 (00:24:07)
Where to next?

- Formal IL courses for OPLs need to happen online
- OPLs need to use all available channels to develop professionally, including networking opportunities
- In a modern workplace environment, “becoming information literate has more to do with complex outcomes such as developing a workplace identity, learning to work collaboratively, learning about work performance, or understanding how to participate in a collaborative setting, than it does about learning a set of generic skills.” (Lloyd, 2011).
References


THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!

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