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# Balancing individuals' expectations and organisational requirements for continuing professional development

Organisational  
requirements for  
CPD

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to analyse the differing views on and needs of librarians and their managers for continuing professional development (CPD).

**Design/methodology/approach** – This article draws on the findings of a survey conducted by the authors in 2005. The survey was an assessment of the CPD needs of New Zealand's librarians and library assistants.

**Findings** – There is a significant gap between the CPD that individuals want, and that which their managers think they should have. Organisations overall need a greater strategic focus on CPD to ensure that budgets are spent well, staff are appropriately skilled, and the impact of CPD on both individuals and the organisation is tangible. Individuals need to take more responsibility for ensuring their needs are met.

**Originality/value** – Highlights a dual focus on CPD across the profession, in the light of the decision by the Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa to adopt professional registration.

**Keywords** Continuing professional development, Librarians, New Zealand, Employers

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Much has been written about continuing professional development (CPD) for the Library and Information sector as a whole, but little about the specific expectations of individuals in contrast to the requirements of their employers. This study aims to draw out some information about these two groups and to identify the areas where there is close correlation or agreement between library staff and their managers over CPD, and where the main areas of difference lie.

The issue of developing good CPD choices and good use of CPD budgets is now coming to the fore in New Zealand, and the differing viewpoints of individual library staff and their managers need to be considered in this context. CPD budgets and opportunities must be strategically used to meet the wider needs of the organisation, as well as develop individual staff in terms of their personal, current employment, and future employment needs. This article attempts to identify both viewpoints and bring them together, to identify the general patterns of individuals' expectations and organisational requirements for CPD and show how CPD can be selected and used for the greatest benefit to both the individual and the organisation.

## Previous studies

There are few studies conducted into this particular aspect of CPD. Most relevant articles and publications focus on areas of needs assessments for CPD, CPD programmes, delivery options, the value of such programmes, and a raft of issues surrounding various CPD schemes. Doney (1998) noted that "despite the general



perception that CPD is a 'good thing' there is a scarcity of literature examining the attitudes of individual ILS workers to the concept".

The two main studies looking at CPD in terms of the individual's needs and the manager's or organisational requirements are Doney's study (1998) on the attitudes of library staff to CPD, and Pat Heynes' study (1994) looking at the problems of pursuing CPD as perceived both by library assistants and their management. Doney's study was based on interviews with a small number of library staff workers in the academic and corporate sectors in the UK, together with interviews with their respective training/development staff. Heynes' study was based on discussions with both library assistants and their managers in the UK, looking at the training they received from their authorities, in both public and academic libraries.

Freeman's (1994) examination of CPD in librarianship is a more general report, and considers "some basic problems in CPD planning and provision, notably the terminological difficulty embedded in the concept of 'professional' in the label 'CPD'."

### **CPD Needs Assessment in New Zealand**

In 2005, a major survey was undertaken to determine the CPD needs of librarians in New Zealand. This CPD Needs Assessment (Cossham and Fields, 2006; Fields and Cossham, 2006) was conducted by the current researchers in association with (Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa LIANZA). "Continuing professional development" was defined in the broadest sense to include training courses (both in-house and externally provided), further education, conferences, seminars, workshops, professional association meetings, electronic mailing lists, networking, and so forth. Its mission was to identify the CPD needs of librarians in New Zealand. "Librarian" was defined for convenience as any staff working in a library, whether qualified, unqualified, or partly qualified.

At that time three main factors influenced the content of the survey questions and the use of the results. Firstly, there was no current overview of the CPD needs of librarians in New Zealand, and so a gap in the knowledge of this area had been identified. Secondly, investigations were being made by The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand into areas additional to the teaching of their core programmes in Information and Library Studies, and CPD was identified as a possible area for development. Thirdly, it came on the eve of LIANZA's investigation into a professional registration scheme (to be introduced in 2007), and as such provided a solid base of information on CPD prior to ongoing registration requirements being defined (LIANZA Taskforce on Professional Registration, 2005, 2006).

The Needs Assessment was widely distributed, and amongst the nearly 600 responses received were representatives of all types of library staff: professional, qualified, and unqualified, full-time, part-time, and casual (The term "paraprofessional" has not been used as a designation within the New Zealand library profession.). Fifty-six percentage of respondents belong to LIANZA; this is about 25 per cent of the personal membership of LIANZA, which is a very positive response (Cossham and Fields, 2006).

The reported findings of this Needs Assessment provide details of the CPD needs in terms of desired subject areas, delivery methods, support and incentives given for CPD, perceived benefits, and other factors (Cossham and Fields, 2006; Fields and Cossham, 2006). It also provided comparative data for choice of topics and factors in CPD provision between individuals and managers. Preselected choices along with open questions in this area have provided both quantitative and qualitative data, and this is

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being drawn upon for this article. A review of the literature has also been useful in identifying factors in the differences between individuals' expectations and organisational requirements for CPD.

### **The New Zealand context**

In addition to the development of the LIANZA professional registration scheme, there are factors specific to the New Zealand environment that need to be noted.

The population of New Zealand is just over four million. Numbers of people currently working within information management are difficult to quantify precisely. 2001 census figures show that there were 6,027 people working in libraries: 3,627 classified as Librarians and 2,400 as Library Assistants (New Zealand librarian labour market, 2005). Whether this includes all special librarians who may have other job titles (information manager, knowledge manager, etc.), or specialists in libraries, is not known. There are 1,244 individual and 459 institutional members of LIANZA (LIANZA, 2005), although there are other professional associations (in particular, Te Roopu Whakahau (the Maori library and information workers network), SLANZA (school librarians) and NZLLG (law librarians)) whose members may or may not belong to LIANZA.

Formal education for librarians is available through Victoria University of Wellington (postgraduate, contact, and distance), The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (undergraduate, distance) and Te Wananga-O-Raukawa (undergraduate, specialist qualification in Maori information management).

There are a variety of CPD offerings available to librarians in New Zealand, but these have tended to be supplier rather than market driven, offered in a piecemeal fashion, and differing from year to year and from region to region.

Prior to 2007 there has been no formal requirement by the professional librarian associations for librarians to undertake CPD in order to achieve or maintain professional status. This is changing with the introduction of the LIANZA professional registration scheme in 2007. It means the landscape around CPD for the profession will undergo some form of reshuffling, restructuring or resurgence in response to the new scheme and its emphasis on maintaining professional knowledge and skills.

### **Individual needs and organisational requirements**

It is hardly surprising that there is a gap between an individual's needs or wants for CPD and a manager's or employer's requirements for their staff. The manager's focus is on the need to achieve the work of the library unit and the need to develop capability across all their staff to ensure that work can be done with the staff and resources available, as much as it is on the need to develop the skills and capabilities of each individual. Individuals focus on what they need to enhance and further their career, as well as what they need to do their existing jobs. This also presumes that both individuals and managers are interested in CPD in the first place; unfortunately, evidence from here and other areas supports findings that that many are not, while others are interested but do not have the time, money, or motivation to do anything. Doney reports that

... training and development staff mentioned provision of a better service, a more efficient service, and happier staff who are not bored or stagnating. At the business information service it was also noted that provision for CPD might help attract new staff to the organisation. Other staff responses to this question were similar, but their most popular perceived gain was "more competent/skilled/knowledgeable staff". "A better service" was rated second, and "happier staff" was also mentioned. (Doney, 1998).

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Also noted in the report is that “on an individual level, CPD is definitely considered important by ILS professionals for career progression – ‘better job prospects’ was the second most cited gain which respondents said they obtained from CPD activities” (Doney, 1998). These sentiments are echoed also in Heynes (1994) study.”

In the 2005 Needs Assessment, individual respondents answered questions on what they saw to be the advantages of attending CPD programmes, what would motivate them to attend, and whether they are being actively encouraged to attend by their employers to attend. Library managers were asked questions about how they assess the effectiveness of CPD programmes, what form of support they provide for staff to attend, and what would be the wider benefits of an individual’s CPD.

CPD was clearly seen to be “A Good Thing”, although this did not necessarily mean that individuals considered it a good thing for them personally. The individual’s attitude seems to be a key factor in participation (unless the library is large and has an established culture of (and funding for) CPD, as is the case in many academic libraries in New Zealand). Some individuals were very willing to look for new knowledge, to attend professional events, to extend their skills in new areas – regardless of how supportive their organisation is. More than three quarters of the survey respondents listed “personal satisfaction” as a motivating factor for participating in CPD; while “salary increase” and “desire to prepare yourself for another position” were each selected by just over half. Other reasons listed focused on doing the job well or improving performance, keeping up to date, new knowledge or skills. These individuals are more likely to be members of professional associations; to contribute their own time and money; to seeking out CPD opportunities wherever they may be found (generic professional courses, those offered to other professional groups, university courses run as continuing education, for example), and to think laterally about what is available and what they need.

For others, there is an expectation that CPD will come nicely packaged, easily accessible, just in time, cheap, targeting their needs precisely, paid for by the employer, and not impinging on their life outside of work. While many employers do offer incentives to staff to participate, the above expectations are somewhat unrealistic. A desire for courses on niche or specialised topics is understandable, but is simply not feasible given the population – or feasible only in main centres as the practicalities of offering CPD equitably across the country are complex. There is a failure by these individuals to look beyond what is offered to the profession – to the generic courses on management, leadership, customer service and so on. A New Zealand librarian needs to be active, rather than reactive, in seeking suitable CPD.

While this may be stating the obvious, in a small country with somewhat restricted CPD opportunities, where professional registration is only now being established, the motivation for participating in CPD has rested very much with the individual rather than being externally generated by the requirements of the profession.

It may be that this should be the case anyway, as individuals will always consider their own needs, even if not necessarily at the expense of the employer. Smethers (1995) argues that CPD is the individual’s own responsibility, and not ultimately the employer’s. The appropriate role of the employer in CPD is addressed, along with the issue of compulsory vs voluntary CPD. Heynes (1994) takes a more moderate view, concluding that “to be successful, CPD, like any form of training, needs a balanced input from trainer and trainee alike”.

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## Support and assistance for CPD

Some 2005 Needs Assessment participants noted with frustration the lack of support from their employer. Although 82.5 per cent were encouraged by their employer to participate in CPD, one respondent commented: "Employer reluctance is the biggest factor in not attending. Also the employer and I differ in what training we think I need." This type of comment was repeated by other respondents. Others found the pressure of work and family did not allow for any commitment beyond the working day, or simply "did not see why they should do anything". The following comment reflects the realities of life for many individuals in a profession that is greying:

I am a sole charge librarian. I cannot be away from my desk for long periods, so short face to face courses or independent study suits me best. I am also getting older, so doing a full day's work, going home and making a meal then going out to evening meetings is getting quite taxing, particularly when you have a partner and boomerang kids who think its mum's job to feed them and keep the house going. I'm really looking for something that keeps me current without having to invest huge amounts of time or money.

Most managers indicated that incentives were offered to staff to participate in CPD. These incentives focused on the payment of fees (67 per cent), paid time to attend (70 per cent), or paid travel and allowances, but at the same time individuals noted that the sharing of limited money between large numbers of staff was also an issue. Promotion and salary increase were incentives offered by fewer than ten respondents, with public libraries making the most use of these. Managers' comments showed that CPD attendance was taken into consideration when performance reviews were being conducted, and that it made staff more likely to be considered for other positions.

The New Zealand situation differs from those overseas in that the primary responsibility for CPD rests on the individual in most instances. An example from Canada notes that

While libraries are positioned to take primary responsibility for the continuing education of librarians, associations and library schools should also play a role. Of course, librarian themselves must also be responsible for exploiting the continuing education opportunities provided by their employers. But these opportunities can be offered in such a way as to increase the likelihood of participation. As the results from a Quebec study suggest librarians are most likely to pursue training opportunities when they can defer costs to their employer and when they are provided sufficient time to participate in training activities, especially when they are offered during working hours (Bergeron *et al.*, 1998, cited in The 8Rs Research Team, 2005, p. 129).

## CPD topics and delivery

The Needs Assessment uncovered much information about what CPD choices and options were wanted by the profession in terms of topic, content, level, delivery method, and other practical factors. As the Needs Assessment was divided into sections for individuals and for managers, some comparative data were able to be easily extracted. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used for the comparison here.

Individuals were asked which CPD topics would be of most relevance to them, and managers were given an identical list of topics and asked which ones would be of most relevance to their staff. The results of this question are given in Table I, showing strong correlation between many topics, and a surprising difference in others.

Topic	Ranked as very important by:	
	Individuals (%)	Managers (%)
Information literacy	53	42
Services for special user groups	20	19
Developing programmes for ESOL customers <sup>a</sup>	6	4
Children's and young adults' services	24	31
User education	44	55
Reference	55	66
Research	49	42
Collection development and acquisitions	29	30
Serials	11	9
Cataloguing	18	21
Indexing and abstracting	13	6
Interlibrary loan services	8	11
Electronic resources	71	75
Information technology	66	66
Digitisation	39	36
Archives/records	20	16
Bicultural issues	20	25
Management	38	20
Effective communication	44	62
Stress management	24	30
Assertiveness techniques	21	21
Time management	23	30
Customer service skills	34	66

**Table I.**CPD topics: individuals  
vs managers' preferences**Note:** <sup>a</sup>ESOL – English for speakers of other languages

The great similarity between many of the percentages is encouraging, as this shows that in some areas (mostly the technical areas) both managers and staff share a perceived need for training. But it is in the other areas of personal growth and development that individuals and managers vary greatly. Particularly notable is that while individuals want to learn about Management, their managers are more interested in them learning about Customer Service Skills and Effective Communication. This may highlight the basic difference in viewpoint between these two groups: individuals want to do their current jobs better, but they also want to improve themselves in preparation for career advancement; in contrast, managers focused more on their staff doing the best job they can in the position they currently have.

Managers and their staff both expressed a preference for short, contact courses and presentations, with “workshops” featuring as highly desirable, in contrast to conferences, online programmes, long-term study, and so on. Some acknowledged that staff working in remote geographical areas, sole charge librarians, and specialists often found it difficult to attend such courses because time away from work was impractical.

### Factors affecting choices of CPD topics and delivery

Doney (1998) also found that position within the library structure played some part in the choice of CPD activities “Junior staff often said they usually waited to be asked to attend activities by more senior staff; senior staff said they usually asked to attend training directly”. The concerns raised about CPD were in the areas of relevance for external courses which may not be pitched at the appropriate level as well as the

quality of all courses, and the ever-present deterrents of time and funding for attending CPD. Heynes (1994) also reported that many library assistants were found to be “reliant on their immediate line manager for CPD opportunities, either for access or even for opportunities being drawn to their attention”.

A number of reports have identified the greying of the profession as a significant issue facing libraries worldwide in the next few years (for example, Rosa *et al.*, 2004, Library landscape: Staffing). This greying means that there is likely to be a gap in senior management, and as such, leadership and management training become more important. With New Zealand library managers focusing less on management and more on other skills needed by their staff, either the greying is not an issue, or the practicalities of day to day running of a library mean that a long-term strategic focus is missing.

As well, the largest number of graduates in the New Zealand is generated by The Open Polytechnic which teaches undergraduate diplomas and degrees by distance. This means that it is easier for individuals to study in their own time and they do not need to give up work or move cities to obtain a qualification. This makes the courses very accessible, and the consequence is a greater percentage of middle-aged students, already in employment in a library, or taking up librarianship as a second career.

Thus, while the profession is greying, the new graduates are also more likely to have considerable experience in other industries and to be “older” themselves. This may be another reason why many library staff have aspirations towards management.

### **The manager’s dilemma**

In practice, the choice of what CPD an individual needs and wants has to take into consideration the requirements of their current position and current employer, their own development and growth needs, plus the changing nature of the profession around them. Managers have some flexibility in what range of CPD is supported and what form that support takes, but balancing the needs of the organisation with an often limited CPD budget also requires some consideration.

Much can be deduced from managers’ comments about the use and value of CPD. Around 120 managers (not all answered every question) provided details in the Needs Assessment, giving a good basis on which to make overall comments. These comments are grouped together into several distinct categories:

- 31.5 per cent of managers require staff to give a written or oral report to colleagues on CPD attended.
- Over 50 per cent of managers focused on the impact of CPD on the employee, looking for changes in new skills or knowledge, improved performance, or altered behaviour.
- Other benefits managers were looking for include improved attitude, new ideas, motivation, and enthusiasm, and staff being “inspired and invigorated”. One manager described this as looking for “The individual response; i.e. their attitude to their work, increased confidence, enthusiasm, and skill levels, desire to put into practice what has been learn” and another said CPD is “Very important for intangibles – networking, personal challenge, time away from normal environment and tasks”.
- Managers used CPD to improve the staff member’s overall knowledge of the “big picture” to increase their contribution to the organisation as a whole. One



described this as “Increased depth of understanding of librarianship and the key issues that currently impact on it. Increased effectiveness in terms of contribution to the team and the library’s services as a whole”.

- Managers’ concerns were on the quality, availability, and appropriate focus of CPD in Information and Library Science.
- A proportion of managers also commented that training for non-professional skills such as communication, time management, and the like, were readily available and that it was harder to find relevant CPD to cover the professional information skills.

Of the 120 managers, only 50 or 42 per cent stated that their libraries had a well-defined policy relating to CPD. A representative sample of comments from both those with policies and those without is given:

Clear policy about support for initial library qualification and similar training but not on CPD. Needs are identified through annual performance development but training budget not always matched to that. Includes conference attendance, too.

No strong encouragement to study nor easily available information on study options.

There is so little budget for this activity that a policy is not needed.

[The policy] encourages participation through the provision of paid leave and course fees but policy isn’t particularly well defined.

Professional development is not specifically mentioned in the library’s policy document. Staff are encouraged to consider professional development opportunities when setting annual goals. Other than this, professional development occurs on an ad hoc basis, when suitable courses are available.

In contrast:

The Library is committed to spending 2 per cent of its staffing budget on cpd. We support staff by paying course fees, travel and accommodation, and providing paid leave. We run an in-house staff development programme, as well as supplementing with University run courses. We send staff to a wide range of courses.

The organisation does have a policy which encompasses library staff. Minimum of 20 hours professional development per person per year.

The question about CPD budgets also drew some interesting responses from library managers. 107 libraries, or parent bodies, had a budget to fund CPD – which is both encouraging (that there are so many) and a little alarming (given that only 50 of these libraries have CPD policies providing direction on how it should be spent). There does not seem to be any correlation between the existence of a policy and the level of funding available. It is worth noting, however, that eight of the 12 managers with a CPD budget in excess of NZ\$20,000 annually (the highest category) have a policy in place.

### **Measuring the effectiveness of CPD**

In the 8Rs Canadian Library Human Resource institutional survey, it was noted that:

Only 30 per cent of libraries reported having a routine method for determining training needs for professional librarians, with even fewer (13 per cent) having a routine method for evaluating the outcomes of professional librarian training. Given that under two thirds of

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librarians taking any kind of training believe it has improved their job performance, libraries may consider exploring training evaluation and applicability at the institutional level (The 8Rs Research Team, 2005, p. 136).

In New Zealand there seem to be few effective and consistently applied ways of assessing the effectiveness of the CPD that staff undertake. Even those who have well-developed policies frequently measure effectiveness in an *ad hoc* manner:

Talk to people on their return/completion See what ideas come forward for different or better services/ways of delivery.

Improved staff performance when a whole system training eg in new library software is undertaken. Individual improved performance is not always tracked back to the training that has occurred.

For those in more senior roles, any attendance at PD courses need to be relevant to their current or future roles. There is no formal assessment process, but participants are expected to come away with some hands on knowledge.

The balance of this is a reasonably strong link to annual (or more frequent) performance assessment, although expressed more in qualitative terms:

... changes in performance determined during performance review  
meeting goals set in performance evaluation

Another notable measure of effectiveness was the individual's attitude:

... increase in skills, confidence displayed.

... how they communicate what they learnt from course to other staff; outcomes and changes implemented after course; individual's motivation and enthusiasm

... how enthusiastic the staff are on their return from attending PD. How long it lasts and any changes that result from the PD

One manager from a special library noted that their CPD policy "follows company policy which is very generous in terms of negotiating a personal career development path for each employee and funding appropriate professional development courses" while their assessment of feedback was "I expect a written report outlining course content and an evaluation of how useful it was and what the participant expects to use what they have learnt in improving both themselves and the service".

There is little concern demonstrated for the overall improvement of a library's staff collectively. That is, while CPD is "done", and there are policies, the immediate rewards to staff are in the areas of personal satisfaction, reporting back to immediate colleagues, and a general improvement in attitude of the individual who has completed the CPD. Few libraries linked CPD to the long-term strategies and requirements of the library – although of course, there were notable exceptions:

The library has a policy of developing the skills and competencies in employees which will enable the library to deliver on its strategic plan and annual business plans. The library places as much value on competencies and attitudes as it does on qualifications, although it does of course recognise the value of professional qualifications. (That is, the library does not assume that qualifications=skills and attitude) ... It should be noted that professional development is viewed as much more widely achievable than attending courses; in particular mentoring, secondments, buddying, attendance at conferences and

cross-sectoral events and exchanges are used in our library to achieve professional development aims.

This particular library noted that they measured effectiveness of training in the following ways:

We meet with staff before they undertake the training and ask them to document their goals from undertaking the training, and how the benefits of the PD will be demonstrated to the organisation. We follow this up and check on outcomes after the PD.

Another library that stands out noted:

The library is very supportive of staff involved in prof develop. A plan is part of each staff member's annual review. Staff are assisted financially if pursuing relevant qualifications and a generous budget exists for attendance of a variety of opportunities during the year including workshops and domestic and overseas conferences. Ensuring CPD meets the library's ongoing requirements as well as those of individual staff members is a focus.

This library measured effectiveness through:

Improvement in staff performance. A better understanding of their roles, how they fit in the organisation, willingness to try out new initiatives as a result of the programmes. Increased depth of understanding of librarianship and the key issues that currently impact on it. Increased effectiveness in terms of contribution to the team and the library's services as a whole.

Given the breadth of the issues facing libraries in the 21st century, the budgetary restraints that most libraries and especially small public, non-corporate special and school libraries, face, and the problems associated with the range and availability of CPD offerings, far more attention needs to be given to developing library-wide strategies that ensure the overall upskilling and ongoing currency of staff.

### Conclusions

CPD then, is in a state of flux in New Zealand. Individuals receive some incentive to participate, but they have motives and incentives for participating beyond that of their employer's requirements. Many wait for it to be delivered to them, rather than taking upon themselves the responsibility that all professionals should have of keeping their knowledge and skills up to date. Employers do not always have clearly articulated needs for their staff's CPD, and in most cases lack a strategic focus. The general impression is of a lack of planning for the specific requirements of the organisation, with no overall plan for the staff collectively, and CPD being attended if it is available, rather than because it is needed.

Balancing a library's needs with individuals' needs can be a complicated process, especially when budgets are restricted, or when the library is "just another service" offered by a wider organisation such as a local body. Needs as perceived by individuals vary from those perceived by their managers, and there is an overall lack of understanding across the profession about who should be responsible for what aspects of CPD, what should be offered, and who should be taking the initiative.

There is scope for closing the gap, and the writers have hopes that there will be a raised consciousness of CPD generated by LIANZA's professional registration scheme and the discussion surrounding it. There has been a push by LIANZA over the last

year to make more CPD available, more widely and consistently, through a contract with a private training provider (Know Where Consulting) and the continuing presence of CAVAL (an Australian training provider that also offers CPD for librarians in Australia). The professional registration scheme will require CPD as part of the ongoing registration requirements and professional responsibilities, and this in turn will encourage both individuals and managers to plan for and engage with CPD in a considered and sustained manner.

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**Further reading**

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