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### Charting a New Course: Smoothing the Transition for New Librarian Hires

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## Charting a New Course: Smoothing the Transition for New Librarian Hires

### Creator(s)

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## CHARTING A NEW COURSE: SMOOTHING THE TRANSITION FOR NEW LIBRARIAN HIRES

**Compiled by**

Bess Robinson and Perveen Rustomfram, University of Memphis

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Leah Allison, St. George's Independent School in Collierville  
Martha Earl, Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Theresa Liedtka, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga  
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**Conference Abstract:** If your library is fortunate enough to be hiring, how do you socialize new librarians into your organization? A panel from different types of libraries such as academic, public, and school will discuss ideas for helping new hires succeed by imparting, both formally and informally, the culture of the organization.

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Last Fall, as Perveen and I discussed “Partnerships”—the theme of the Tennessee Library Association’s 2011 Annual Conference—we got to thinking about our new librarian hires at the University of Memphis. We reminisced about our own first days and weeks on the job here, and how we learned about the culture of the University Libraries and how we’d fit into it. We began to wonder how new hires in general learn about the culture of a given library . . . how they learn to “partner” with their new institution. We started to explore the concept of organizational culture and whether socializing new hires mattered. We became curious about how other institutions impart their respective cultures to new librarians. Fortunately, Leah Allison, Martha Earl, Theresa Liedtka, and Rebecca Tolley-Stokes volunteered to speak about their experiences. Finally, we surveyed recent librarian hires about their experiences with being socialized.

## According to the Literature . . .

William Sannwald (2000) defines organizational culture as "the assumptions that people share about the values, beliefs, norms, symbols, language, rituals and myths of that organization" (as cited in Chapman, 2009, p. 128).

Organizational socialization, on the other hand, is succinctly described by Howard J. Klein and Natasha A. Weaver (2000) as "the process that employees go through to learn about their new jobs and adapt to the roles and culture of the workplace" (as cited in Chapman, 2009, p. 128). In other words, going beyond the mere duties of a position to acquiring a personal understanding of the political, social, and economic contexts that make an institution unique.

Is socialization important? The literature suggests that, among other things, effective socialization

- "diminish[es] feelings of social and emotional vulnerability, decreas[es] stress and allow[s] new employees to learn the interpersonal and ,operational skills necessary for success in the new position" (Kennedy and Berger, 1994, as cited in Chapman, 2009, p. 127),
- contributes to the success of new librarians by developing their understanding of their new work environment, appropriate behavior, and accepted ways of communicating within the organization (Schachter, 2006, p. 9),
- motivates and shows new employees that "they are valued and that their employer has invested in a relationship with them" (Chapman, 2009, p. 125), and
- improves retention by helping employees "develop a commitment to the organization" (Omidsharif and Young, 2001, as cited in Chapman, 2009, p. 124).

There are a million different ways of affirming and accepting cultural differences, and connecting the new with the established. It may be done formally or informally.

We're all familiar with "formal" orientations, where key information about the library is shared with new employees. Examples might include reading materials (such as the library's mission, values, and strategic plan), meetings, orientations, tours, and assigning a mentor.

Perhaps surprisingly, when Janice Simmons-Welburn and William Welburn (2003) surveyed human resource administrators at 16 academic libraries, they discovered that "the greatest effect on the socialization of the new employees was from the support of supervisors and peers through informal processes. This informal socialization had a greater impact on job satisfaction and professional commitment than did formal orientation" (as cited in Chapman, 2009, p. 128). Informal socialization might include welcome celebrations, gifts, and purposefully creating opportunities for new hires to meet and get to know their new colleagues.

## How Tennessee Libraries Impart Their Respective Cultures to New Librarians

### University of Memphis Libraries

At the University of Memphis, there's no "set" way of socializing new librarians, but typically,

- The new librarian's immediate supervisor will introduce him or her to other employees;
- The Search Committee takes the new librarian to lunch on or soon after his or her first day;
- While new librarians are "assigned" a mentor, they are encouraged to get insights from a variety of colleagues;
- New librarians are immediately assigned to Libraries committees;
- They are encouraged to participate in the Libraries Writing Group, which facilitates the professional writing required for tenure; and
- Singly and in groups, other librarians often include the "newbie" in get-togethers outside of work.

**St. George's Collierville**  
**Leah Allison, Director of Library Services**

St. George's Collierville is a co-educational institution serving 700 students, grades 6 through 12. The school centers itself around the social and academic well being of its students. New faculty members are brought on board through the use of professional listservs, email, word of mouth, and advertising in local and professional publications.

Upon hiring, a new employee is assigned a mentor to guide them through their first year at SGC. This is called the Virgil-Dante program. Mentors and new employees meet numerous times before the school year begins so that first year teachers might learn the culture and curriculum of our unique school. During these sessions, new teachers learn from their mentors about the physical layout of the Collierville campus, the student advising program, academics, advance placement courses, how to utilize the grading and attendance software, technology, and how to write academic and advisory comments. Mentors also help new faculty write lesson plans, design units of study, and answer any questions about instruction and policy and procedures. Meetings are held frequently throughout the school year. This close relationship is celebrated at the end of the year with a Virgil-Dante dinner.

New employees are also encouraged to utilize the open-door policy of SGC's school administrators. Division heads and the school President all work closely with the Virgil and Dante to make sure the transition of a new employee to the Collierville campus and culture as smooth as possible. New faculty members are advised to bring all questions and concerns to their administrator at any time. This open door policy and administrative support extends to all faculty members during their entire career at St. George's.

The Virgil-Dante mentoring program extends into the library. SGC only has two librarians on staff -- a library director and an assistant. A new librarian first meets with the director socially during the summer break for lunch or coffee. This is purely a social meeting to break the ice. Before the week of in-service, a day is set aside for a meeting between the new hire, the outgoing librarian, and the library director. During this session, a tour of the library and campus are given to the new hire. The new assistant is also shown how to use Alexandria, the library's online catalog, and how to access the library's other electronic resources. Further, they are instructed on all of the McClain Library's internal policies and procedures. The new librarian and director work closely together during their first year (literally-the library assistant and director share a small circulation desk). Such proximity breeds a close relationship, so it is not long before the new hire is as well versed in the library as the director. During in-service week, the director introduces her assistant to the entire faculty. They also attend all training sessions together, and they are given ample time to meet one-on-one so that all questions may be addressed. Any further library training may also be given during this week as well.

**University of Tennessee, Chattanooga**  
**Theresa Liedtka, Dean, Lupton Library**

I will describe the procedures and techniques used at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga (UTC) to orient newly hired librarians and welcome them to the Lupton Library team. The process is a mix of formal and informal opportunities. The topics covered include the hiring process, the job offer and move, the first day of work, and planned orientation events at the department, library-wide, and university levels. Lupton Library comprises 16 faculty librarians and 14 staff specialists, and has an annual operating budget of just over 2.7 million dollars.

*The Hiring Process*

At Lupton Library the interview process and subsequent engagements with a newly-hired librarian begin the orientation process. Search committees undertake a carefully planned and rigorous process that starts with a review of cover letters and curriculum vitas to assess the education, experience, skills, and potential fit with the organization. All candidates are measured against a carefully created rubric which documents the required minimum position requirements as well as the desired, but not essential, requirements. Lupton Library is a service-minded, transparent, innovative, and collaborative environment which exercises iterative idea development in formation of policies, procedures, and projects. These principles are exercised throughout the interview process.

Search committees are composed of librarians and staff members from across the Library, usually volunteers. Committee members spend time carefully reading submitted documents, listening to candidates' references, and conducting literature and internet searches on candidates. These activities take place prior to inviting candidates for phone interviews, then campus interviews. Library-wide aspects of the interview include a candidate's presentation and a library-wide meet and greet. All members of the Lupton Library faculty and staff are invited to participate and submit evaluations to the search committee. Structured sessions such as the presentation followed by questions and answers, interviewing with all members of the library faculty, meeting with all members of the home department, and one-on-one time with the Library Dean provide one view of the Library's organization and culture. Personal touches such as transporting candidates to and from the airport and food-related gatherings such as socials, breakfast, lunch, and dinner afford a candidate the opportunity to get to know the faculty and staff in a more informal manner. Candidates are also given a library tour, a campus tour, and if possible, a tour of the area.

In making hiring decisions search committees look closely at three areas: skills, experience, and fit. At the conclusion of a search, the committee will compile all input and meet to discuss and debate the strengths, weakness, and organizational fit of candidates. When confronted with equally wonderful candidates, the committee will look hardest at the fit and discuss a potential candidate's success in terms of our organizational culture. In the past when a candidate's skills were given more importance than fit, the experience has not always been positive. The axiom "fit is more important than skills" is true. Skills can be learned, but fit cannot.

#### *Making the Offer and Assisting with the Move*

Once a search committee makes a recommendation, the Dean of Lupton Library coordinates the job offer. The selected candidate is emailed in advanced to set up a time so as to not surprise or call at an inconvenient time. Five elements are negotiated in a candidate's offer including: salary, moving expenses, technology start-up funds, travel and professional development funds, and a start date. The Library works to put together the best package possible for each candidate, recognizing that salary and other increases can be more challenging to enact once a candidate is hired. The Library also strives to be flexible and work with the candidate's needs; for example, in one instance the Library agreed to wait five months for a new librarian to start work. In another instance the Dean of the Library has told a candidate they should not accept a first offer and worked them through actual negotiations.

Once official negotiations are concluded, the Library continues to stay in contact and assist the new librarian as much as possible. This includes scouting potential residences, touring visiting candidates around the area, and even assistance with moving into to a new place. Lupton Library expects all members of its faculty and staff to go the extra mile for patrons. This same philosophy is put into action for newly-hired librarians. In a nutshell, the Lupton Library believes that hiring the right candidate is the first essential step to ensuring a smooth transition to success for a new librarian.

#### *Day 1 on the New Job*

Members of the Library staff and faculty go to great lengths *before* a candidate arrives to ensure a successful first day. The new librarian's work environment, usually an office, is prepared in advance of their arrival. The office is cleaned and stocked full of supplies. A workstation and phone are set up. Every effort is made to ensure the office furniture is attractive and in good working order. Chotski or Lupton Library-logoed goodies are also in the office to welcome a new librarian, including a travel mug, highlighters, pens, a USB drive, a shirt, and even Lupton Library hot sauce. The immediate goal is to welcome new librarians and make them feel they are already members of the team.

Day 1 on a new job can be a stomach-churner. Where do I park, where is my office, and what should I do are just a few of the questions that can come to mind. Everyone has experienced the excitement and anxiety of that first day. Lupton Library's goal is to make day 1 on the job a pleasant, comfortable, and useful experience. As such the Library engages the new librarian in a mix of scheduled activities, such as a tour or getting an identification card, balanced with providing periods of down time when the new librarian can be alone and have time to process information and catch his or her breath.

Day 1 is primarily spent in and with the home department. Departmental colleagues will gather and take the new librarian to lunch. The department head will tour the new librarian through the building and introduce him or her to important locations. At the library level, in anticipation of a new librarian's arrival, an email is sent announcing the start date, office location, and phone number. Colleagues are encouraged to stop by to say hello and welcome the new librarian. In addition, all members of the faculty and staff are invited to an informal social meet and greet on day 1 or 2 of a new candidate's arrival. Cake or donuts are usually provided and served as a draw and icebreaker. This often is the first opportunity for new librarians to get reacquainted with colleagues they met during the interview.

### *Departmental Orientation*

Each department in the library has a local orientation plan for new librarians. These plans will vary in regards to the length of time it takes to introduce a new librarian to important department functions and features. For example, the orientation of a new, relatively junior librarian can take up to one month in the Instruction and Reference Department. This is due to the fact that the new librarian will meet one-on-one with colleagues to receive hands-on database training. Databases are divided by subject and taught by the subject specialists in that area. Reference desk and instruction session shadowing are employed so new librarians have the opportunity to work with and observe experienced colleagues until they, and the library, are confident in their ability to fly solo. Other topics covered will include, for example, how to use the ADA workstation, local OPAC tricks, the library's wiki, and more. Figure 1 shows a sample orientation calendar from the Instruction and Reference Department.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Notes:
<b>August 3rd</b> <b>Morning:</b> Get settled in offices <b>LUNCH with Va.</b> 3:00 pm , cake w/ staff	<b>August 4th</b> <b>New Faculty Orientation</b>	<b>August 5th</b> <b>New Faculty Orientation</b>	<b>August 6th</b> <b>New Faculty Orientation</b>	<b>August 7th</b> <b>Morning:</b> Intro meeting with VC <b>Afternoon:</b> Online calendars, blog, classrooms, S drive BS	<b>Office supplies:</b> Anna has tons in her closet. Get whatever you need to get settled. <b>UTCID:</b> Anna usually has this already set up for you. <b>Keys:</b> Pick them up from the Administrative services Building (just up Vine St.) <b>Parking:</b> Get parking pass from Administrative Services Building. Insist on Lot 12 or 13 (they will try to tell you the lots are "full") <b>Phone/VoiceMail:</b> Request form on UTC ITD website, setup instructions on your desk, call 5284 if you have problems. <b>Email:</b> Stephen sets this up once you have your UTCID. <b>MocsCard:</b> Office is in the basement of the UC.
<b>Monday</b> <b>August 10th</b> <b>Morning:</b> Printing, copying, , IT stuff, ref circ policies VC <b>Afternoon:</b>	<b>August 11th</b> <b>Morning:</b> OPAC, Dept. Statistics, SM <b>Afternoon:</b>	<b>August 12th</b> <b>Morning:</b> Get It @ UTC, Blackboard BS <b>Afternoon:</b> Special Collections	<b>August 13th</b> <b>Morning:</b> EN GL121 and 122 Orientation VC and BS <b>Afternoon:</b> Materials Processing	<b>August 14th</b> <b>Morning:</b> USTU101 iPods VC <b>Afternoon:</b> Library IT	
<b>Monday</b> <b>August 17th</b> <b>Morning:</b> Tutorials/ podcasts VC <b>Afternoon</b> Administration	<b>August 18st</b> <b>Morning:</b> Reserves / ILLiad BS <b>Lunch with Admin</b> Administration	<b>August 19th</b> Shadowing at Desk and Going Over Databases <b>Afternoon</b> Administration	<b>August 20th</b> Shadowing at Desk and Going Over Databases <b>Afternoon:</b> Access Services, ILL, Reserves	<b>August 24th</b> Shadowing at Desk and Going Over Databases Afternoon	
<b>Monday</b> <b>August 27th</b> Shadowing classes, desk, going over any databases that are left.	<b>August 28th</b>	<b>August 29th</b>	<b>August 30th</b>	<b>August 31st</b>	<b>Business Cards:</b> Anna orders these. Standard template, you give her your info.

Figure 1: Instruction and Reference Department Orientation



### Library-wide Orientation

The Lupton Library's Administrative Office coordinates a library-wide orientation for all new members of the faculty and staff. The orientation includes all library departments. Orientation for new hires is usually conducted the second or third week a new librarian is on the job. The intent in waiting is to allow the new hire time to familiarize themselves with local department operations prior to the introduction to the larger Library, and the University. The time spent with each department varies; in certain cases the orientation is completed in one day, while in other cases the new hire can spend up to 5 hours, over the course of three days. Each department organizes its local orientation. Some departments choose to tour the area and then meet as a group, others choose to have a new hire meet individually with departmental staff. While all departments put their unique touches on the orientation, each department is charged with ensuring that the new hire receives the following information: 1) an introduction to all members of the department staff and the roles of each staff member, 2) the mission of the department and its role in library-wide processes, 3) a physical tour of the department's work space with attention paid to areas a new hire will need to know, 4) common interactions that new hires can expect between themselves and the department, 5) an overview of departmental policies, procedures, and statistics. Figure 2 is a sample library-wide orientation schedule for a new employee, along with an example of the Administrative Departments' specific orientation schedules.

Tuesday	10:30-11:30	Materials Processing	Mike Bell
Monday	10:30-12:00	Administration	Theresa Liedtka
Tuesday	3:30-4:30	Administration	Anna Lane
Wednesday	11:45-1:45	Administration	Theresa Liedtka
Thursday	10:30-11:30	Special Collections	Steve Cox
Friday	1:00-2:00	Reference & Instruction	Virginia Cairns
Tuesday	9:00-10:00	Access - Circ and Reserves	Laird Leathers
Tuesday	3:00-4:00	Access - ILL	Melanie Dunn
<b>Administrative Office Orientation</b>			
<b>Topics</b>			
TL covers her job and philosophy, review of library mission, library-wide goals, budget, organizational structure, personnel, task forces/committees, statistics, etc..			
AL covers her job, and internal administrative processes and forms the new hire will need, time sheets, per 12, supplies, etc.			
AL and TL take the new librarian to lunch or dinner, cover any questions, and have fun.			

Figure 2. Library-Wide Orientation

### Mentoring and Committee Assignments

In addition to orientation, other activities are set in motion to help the new librarian get settled, including assigning new librarians a mentor and membership on existing library groups. Five years ago the Lupton Library created a Mentor Program. A task force of librarians devised a simple, yet productive plan. The goal of the Mentor Program is to provide for the personal and professional support and development of a new librarian. All new librarians are assigned a mentor. The mentor must not be a member of the new librarian's home department. Mentors maybe tenured, on the tenure-track, or full-time lecturers. Librarians eligible to serve in the role of mentor are sent a message asking if they are interested in participating. The hiring search committee is responsible for coordinating the match.

The mentoring program has no specific formula for mentoring, and it is up to the mentor, in conjunction with the mentees, to decide on the level of engagement. A positive aspect of this informality is that it provides flexibility. A negative aspect is that some new librarians have more attentive and engaged mentors. In certain cases some pairs have a monthly lunch. In other cases pairs have chosen for weekly

coffee and touch-base meetings. In yet other cases some mentors take a more formal approach and conduct a meeting or two with a new hire.

New librarians are also added to existing library teams. Due to the small workforce, the Library uses cross-departmental groups to conduct work that other organizations might assign to an individual. For example the Library has an Outreach Committee and a Staff Development Committee. Most library groups meet monthly or as needed depending on their responsibilities, the time of year, etc. Library groups and their membership are evaluated each year. New librarians are asked if they have an interest in any particular group. In certain cases, the nature of a librarian's job responsibilities will dictate membership in a specific group. Group work allows all members of the library staff and faculty to get to know other staff members outside of their department, develop new skills, and perform valuable functions.

### *Campus-wide Orientation*

UTC is fortunate to have in place specific procedures for campus-wide new faculty orientation, as well as new staff orientation. The orientations share common elements, but the new faculty orientation is much more robust. Librarians at UTC have faculty status and participate in New Faculty Orientation. The challenge for the library faculty is that new faculty orientation is conducted once a year, usually a week or two before the start of Fall classes. Unlike academic faculty, the Library hires all year round. However, even if a new library starts at a different time of year, he or she is invited to participate in the Fall event. New Faculty Orientation provides a unique opportunity for new librarians to get to know their faculty colleagues in both formal and informal sessions. Informal sessions include events such as an ice cream social, lunch with department heads and deans, and a lovely new faculty dinner held at a local museum or other unique venue. The formal sessions, while not always applicable to librarians, provide a necessary introduction to UTC classroom-related procedures and academic processes. The campus orientation for new faculty is three days in length. The Library is also a participant at New Faculty Orientation and an introduction to the Library is conducted for all new faculty on campus.

### **Charles C. Sherrod Library, ETSU Rebecca Tolley-Stokes, Faculty Outreach Librarian**

I was really excited about contributing to this panel because workplace culture and organizational culture are among my areas of interest; those dynamics fascinate me. But then when I started thinking about my experiences and questioning my colleagues about their experiences at Sherrod Library I realized that the informality of our workplace culture doesn't work for everyone; that our sink-or-swim environment is an apt Darwinian misappropriation.

First, our informality is historic and stems from a flattening of the organization. All librarians report to the Dean. There is no HR person and any matters of first-day orientation or tours are handled--or were handled--for the most part by the head of reference, who for twenty years, was Mark Ellis, because in the eleven years I've been at Sherrod library, all of the librarian positions we've hired were entry-level and in public services--except for one--which was our distance education librarian, who was physically located adjacent to the Dean's office and who was acculturated to the workplace by the Dean herself.

On their first day of work, public service librarians were introduced to everyone and toured the building. They worked through several pages of reference questions, grew accustomed to their new offices, computers, phones, etc. As tenure-track faculty, they also participated in a mandatory two-day university orientation, and because of that, it's likely that library administration determined that formal library orientation was unnecessary.

But that describes less than half of our public services librarians' career paths. Four of the seven public services librarians hired in the past decade started their careers as adjuncts, or temporary workers. They applied for permanent positions as they became vacant. And perhaps that explains the practice of informality pervading our workplace culture at Sherrod Library, at least from the standpoint of new hire orientation.

When directly asked what they remembered as positives and negatives about Sherrod's informal workplace culture, the colleagues I surveyed mentioned that not being taken to lunch on their first day of

work shocked them. Also the lack of training when taking on new responsibilities, which is part of the aforementioned “sink-or-swim” or “into-the-fire” aspects of the culture, was cited. For example, when our library instruction librarian left for another position, and someone wanted to assume her role, that person started from scratch as none of her handouts or statistics remained—her computer files were erased and she had not passed along any instructional materials. Nor was there any foresight or planning for continuity at the administrative level to make the new instruction librarian’s transition smooth.

True, for a self-starting individual, or for a mid-career librarian, this kind of independence can be liberating, but for a librarian in need of support and encouragement, or in need of close mentoring, the lack of training and concerted direction can be professionally detrimental, which we discovered at one point, and the Dean instituted a formal tenure and promotion mentoring relationship between junior and senior faculty to correct the situation.

When I started at Sherrod Library in 2000 there were fifteen librarians including myself. Now there are ten and our assistant dean works only thirty per cent of her time in the library. We hope to replace those vacant positions someday and realize that our informal workplace culture works for self-starters and entrepreneurial librarians when we screen for them during the hiring process. And in learning from our mistakes we’ll be certain to take our new hires to lunch, not laugh when they wear suits, and provide ample training in how to jump through the reporting hoops on for their tenure-track reporting documents such as the FAP/FAR/FAE.

One of the specific ways that I welcome new librarians to Sherrod Library is jump-starting their publications for their CV. As book review editor of *Tennessee Libraries*, I encourage them to select an available title. We look through the list until we arrive at one that meets their interests or areas of subject expertise. This eases them into their earliest and easiest publications and paves the way for them to segue into the more scholarly articles that are necessary for their tenure and promotion dossiers. I receive calls for writers from reference publishers like Salem Press, ABC-CLIO, and others. I write encyclopedia entries for many reference works, and I share these opportunities with both new librarians and well-established colleagues at Sherrod Library, as well as other librarians across the state.

**University of Tennessee Preston Medical Library  
Martha Earl, MSLIS, AHIP, Assistant Director**

Entering the culture of a medical library involves not only adjusting to the culture of a new library, but also learning the culture of health care. Clientele may include the public in their role as health consumers and patients, faculty, or students of the basic sciences or health professions, and the working health professionals and researchers. The new staff person finds himself needing to understand the unique needs of medical personnel, nurses, pharmacists, hospital administrators, allied health professionals, and patients.

Finding health information also means familiarization with the health sources. Some of those sources include rather graphic images of illnesses, disorders, and procedures. Many times a new employee might become alarmed that he or she could have some of those ailments. Part of socialization is helping the new staff person deal with those feelings.

Socialization means including the new staff person in staff meetings, assignment to a team, Myers Briggs familiarization, and his or her name plaque on the door. The new staff person’s contact information and photo join the other staff on the website. The new person is introduced to patrons and administrators relative to his or her area. Since our office is small, we work together as a team. We actively encourage questions and more questions.

At the Preston Medical Library, we use a standardized training procedure for new information desk staff. The new worker learns when to consult a librarian or more senior member of the team through Information Triage. She learns mission and values through our web site and departmental meetings. He reviews the procedures manual and the shared directory. She shadows more experienced desk workers as they assist users and learns to answer the phone and directional questions. She consults with the circulation supervisor and the interlibrary loan assistant to learn particular procedures.

As part of the formalized reference training, the new worker does a series of exercises. First, she reviews the databases available and completes an exercise using a topic of her choosing to describe how the databases differ in scope, interface, and most appropriate clientele. Next she completes a set of practice reference questions and practice consumer health questions. Then she works on bibliographic verification and document retrieval. This process takes 6-8 weeks. During this time the new person takes the driver's seat, so to speak, on the desk, with a designated back-up close by.

As the person learns about the library, he also learns about the organization. Medical libraries are special libraries. We serve a corporate clientele in addition to our academic patrons. Hospital staff move fast and expect others to do the same. The information retrieved assists them in making decisions that impact the health of patients. Medical librarianship involves a strong service ethic and an understanding of the role of medical librarians in meeting research and patient care needs. At the Preston Medical Library, we also provide a consumer health information service directly to lay clientele. We work with other public and academic libraries involved in serving our patrons.

In our role as academic librarians, library staff must understand the process of health sciences education. Most health professional students learn the basic life sciences first and then move on to clinical rotations through various departments of the hospital or clinic. A physician completes four years of medical school, an internship, and a residency. Among faculty, there are researchers who write grants and train students in the basic sciences. They also teach. Clinical faculty mentor students with hands-on patient care as well as lectures. Health care professionals value lifelong learning opportunities. The library supports and meets educational needs at all levels.

Patients and health consumers continue to grow more tech savvy, consulting the Internet before even their other family members, according to **the most recent Pew report**. Library staff can guide health consumers in finding the best sources. In our planned new Preston Medical Library facility, we will offer a separate area focused on the needs of health care consumers.

To accomplish all these things a new staff person must learn the language of medicine. We provide a medical terminology book and program to ease this transition into new vocabulary. Along with the vocabulary are specialized databases, journals, books, and electronic resources. One does not have to have a science background, though it can help.

Health science clientele want it now. They value information provision at point of care. Journal articles compose their primary information sources. Collection development focuses on materials needed for research and teaching, as well as clinical reference materials. Learning all of these new things can seem overwhelming at first to a new staff member.

Preston Medical Library continually trains new staff. We have UT School of Information Sciences practicum students, student assistants, a graduate assistant, an intern, and new library staff.

To mentor librarians and interested staff, we encourage involvement in professional associations at all levels. Organizations include the Medical Library Association (MLA), Southern Chapter/MLA, the Tennessee Library Association, the Tennessee Health Sciences Libraries Association, the Knoxville Area Health Sciences Libraries Consortium, and the Special Library Association. New staff are encouraged to participate in library research projects and conference presentations.

Mentoring of librarians includes setting faculty goals and objectives, faculty review, and mentoring into the Academy of Health Information Professionals, MLA's accreditation program. All staff are designated to specialized teams and encouraged to get involved in UT Medical Center committees and special projects. Along with our community and library involvement, we sometimes do workshops and retreats. We recently completed a book study of Stephen Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Every October the Preston Medical Library throws an open house party for UT Medical Center to celebrate National Medical Librarians Month. In 2010 we joined other Tennessee libraries to celebrate Library Snapshot Day. We involve our new staff at every level and are always on the look out to find new ways to celebrate our unique culture and enthusiastic team.

### **In conclusion, the socialization experiences of recently-hired librarians:**

Susan wrote, "Every day for the first two weeks of my new position, I was invited out to lunch by other librarians. It was friendly and welcoming, but more than that, it made me feel like I was going to be a colleague rather than just an employee."

A couple of librarians mentioned how nice it was to go to lunch with new colleagues . . . "because you are still learning how things are laid out and what the informal environment is like."

One librarian noted, "My decisions are informed by the treatment I received. I won't let that happen to anyone else." She described the "welcome" she received at a new position, including an office with broken furniture and a remarkably change-resistant attitude from other employees. As a result of her negative experience, she's seen that new hires since come in to find clean office space, working furniture, and the office supplies they are likely to need. In addition, they receive a library mug and tote bag, and are informed of and encouraged to take advantage of a variety of training opportunities. Her experience caused her to turn the situation around.

Another librarian wrote that he once worked at a library where employees wore special library shirts on casual Fridays. On his first day, in addition to a mug and a nice bookbag, he was given one of the shirts. As he put it, "I had the accessories right from the welcoming session and they weren't stupid, they were meaningful. I felt like I belonged and that I was worth spending 20 bucks on." He added, "The sooner you have business cards with your name on them (or logo sticky notes or stationery) the sooner you start to associate yourself with your environment. Having your name on the desk—even if printed from a laser jet—says that you belong there."

Steve wrote of his experience at the University of Memphis and with a previous employer. "At Memphis, kind people have extended their hand of friendship—which actually does a lot for me, but that's more personal than professional. I've been explicitly encouraged by upper management to volunteer for opportunities in professional organizations outside the University, which suggests they have a lot of confidence in me as a representative of the UofM."

Steve also wrote of his experience working with a major database vendor: "It really varied by manager. In my sales position, our manager would, several times a year, give us the afternoon off and take us out for bowling, drinks, a picnic. That actually did a lot for the sense of teamwork; it was the closest-knit group I ever worked in. We also had weekly meetings where we each talked about our plans for the week, and that allowed us to discover areas to pitch in and help each other. I'd really like to start doing that in my current position. She also did a lot of walking me around the building and introducing me to people."

He continued, "But in my marketing job there were no team-building afternoons. The marketing team was actually pretty disjointed; quite a few times work got duplicated because people sitting next to each other didn't know what their neighbors were doing. And in that position, my manager never once introduced me; not even at our first staff meeting. I just was there all of a sudden."

Pam observed that, "When the new hire has experience at another library, it is difficult for the new supervisor to know what to explain. The supervisor needs to remember that, while the librarian knows how to do things at the previous institution, s/he does not know how to do things at the new institution. A new librarian is much easier to train because the slate is completely empty. It is harder to know what the seasoned librarian needs when coming to a new library. My suggestion (after dealing with this as a supervisor) would be to tell the person everything and let that person let you know what is unnecessary instead of trying to second-guess at the risk of not giving enough information."

### **URL for PowerPoint:**

**[https://umdrive.memphis.edu/merobnsn/public/2011%20TLA%20Socialization%20Presentation%2032311\[1\].pptx](https://umdrive.memphis.edu/merobnsn/public/2011%20TLA%20Socialization%20Presentation%2032311[1].pptx)**

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