

Designing a Library for the Future

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This presentation is based on the following article:

Higa ML, Bunnett B, Maina B, Perkins J, Ramos T, Thompson L, et al. Redesigning a library's organizational structure. *Coll Res Lib.* 2005;66(1):41-58.

The goal of the reorganization of the Library at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, as described in this article was to "have the right people in the right number of jobs (allocated to the right tasks) to best support our current environment and the Library's stated vision for the future." One of the outcomes of the reorganization was the formation of the Organizational Efficacy Council, which is dedicated to continuous evaluation of the Library in light of the original goal. A year after the reorganization, the first Council conducted an assessment of the changes that had been made to determine if the goals of the reorganization had been met.

A survey was completed by all staff, answering the following four questions about individual job responsibilities, unit responsibilities, team/task force responsibilities, and the Library as a whole:

- 1) What is going well? What's working?
- 2) What is not going well? What's not working?
- 3) What would you like to be different and how would you change it?
- 4) Does your unit have the right number of people doing the right tasks to accomplish the charge of the unit (rate from 1 [poor] to 4[excellent])?

The responses were analyzed by the members of the Council and additional changes to the organization were recommended.

Findings of the survey

The comments on the survey showed widespread satisfaction with the changes that had been made the previous year. A few of the comments include:

The recent reorganization and distribution of responsibilities properly addresses our mission and our goals. I feel as though we have a common purpose, we are all working toward that purpose and that this reflects in our service to our clients (and they can see it).

Region meetings really do facilitate communications among units and provides more natural work-related alliances. Yes, it means more meetings, but the meetings are productive or informative and allow like managers to discuss issues or concerns and share opinions or advice.

The new team/task force structure operates much more effectively than the previous one. Minimizing the number of teams/task forces and increasing the effectiveness of the remaining ones seems to be the key.

I am loving my job more than before the reorganization. I hadn't realized how much more fun and satisfaction I could have until the re-org. The library as a whole seems to be running smoother also, less team messiness, etc.

However, not all was perfect. The survey revealed that there were still some misalignments: ILL was overstaffed; the Information Desk, Digital Access and Information Systems were still understaffed. Some inter-departmental cooperation was still problematic. Finally, cataloging activities were not operating as effectively or efficiently as they should.

Changes Made

Several personnel shifts were made to respond to the problems revealed in the assessment surveys. An employee in ILL with Web editing and design skills was moved to Digital Access to assist with those activities. Cataloging was moved out of Digital Access into Resource Management and Optimization, to maintain continuity in materials processing. The reduction in print acquisitions meant that two catalogers were no longer needed. One cataloger was shifted to the Information Desk, where she had worked previously. The employee who had split her time between the Information Desk and Information Systems was moved full time to IS.

Other issues identified in the survey, such as inter-departmental cooperation, were discussed during general staff meetings. All departments were encouraged to acknowledge problems and work toward solutions.

Current Status

The Library has just completed its second annual assessment of the organization, using the same survey. As before, there are still some problems to be resolved. The Collection Development department needs assistance with licensing and electronic resources. Widely acknowledged problems in another department reveal an ineffective manager whose skills could be better used elsewhere. However, despite these problems, there is still universal satisfaction with the new organizational structure. The majority of the issues identified in the survey will best be resolved in individual departments.

The survey itself has been a success. It has served to effectively identify problem areas in need of attention. It has confirmed satisfaction with changes. The Organizational

Effectiveness Council has also been successful. Its members have learned to work well together and have gained a better appreciation of the complexities of the management of an academic library.