Get ready to use your expertise creatively

It’s both exciting and daunting to witness the rapidly changing roles of LIS staff. Sheila Corral casts her expert eye over what the future holds for workforce development, ahead of her seminar at the annual conference of the Society of College, National and University Libraries.

LAST YEAR JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee) launched its Libraries of the Future Campaign to encourage debate about the future of the academic library. The people who work in library and information services (LIS) are central to this debate. When we talk about what libraries will look like and how they will operate, we have to think about the future roles of LIS staff, the competencies they need and how they can be acquired. It is hard to plan among service users has forced LIS managers – as in other sectors – to rethink staff roles and ask how they can create value, in an era where everyone looks to Google for information. The present economic downturn brings all this into sharper focus. Info pros in the commercial sector face particular pressure as they constantly search for ways to ‘move up the value chain’ and add more value to the business. This is part of a wider trend, evident since the 1990s.

Specialists in all sectors have had to perform at higher levels and get more involved in the core work of their organisations. This means getting better at networking and gaining a deeper understanding of business issues to complement their specialist expertise and professional know-how. The professional development challenge is significant. Professionals face continual upskilling, more specialisation in an already specialised field, an ever-expanding knowledge base and the need to acquire cross-functional skills and competencies reflecting the shifting boundaries of their jobs.

We have seen this happening in the academic sector. Subject liaison librarians have recognised the need to engage with the core activities of their institutions – the processes of teaching, learning and research – at a progressively deeper level, to work out where their expertise can be used and target their interventions effectively.

Many librarians have acquired skills in teaching and an understanding of learning styles. Some have added higher-level technological know-how and taken on specialist roles in digital libraries, e-learning, institutional repositories and research datasets. All sectors now need hybrid specialists and ‘blended professionals’ to deal with the complexities of the networked world.

Another related trend is the upskilling of library and information assistants, who

continued on page 2

‘The shift towards self-service and self-sufficiency among service users has forced LIS managers – as in other sectors – to rethink staff roles and ask how they can create value.’

ahead in an environment subject to powerful, but unpredictable, political, economic, sociological and technological forces but, even though we don’t know exactly what the future holds, we can look for signals, and we may spot trends that will help us prepare for whatever is in store.

Technology has been a key driver of change in libraries for the past two decades, having an impact on services, structures, staffing and skill sets. The shift towards self-service and self-sufficiency

The new arts & social science library at the University of Bristol, designed by Nomad research & design consultancy www.nomad-rr.com/
Find out what your rights are

There are four main types of intellectual property:

1. patents
2. trade and service marks
3. designs
4. copyright

Patents

Patents are for inventions, new and improved products and processes that are capable of industrial application and which involve an inventive step. Patents have to be applied for. Their maximum lifetime is 20 years from their filing date.

Trade marks

Trade and service marks are for brand identity of goods and services allowing distinctions to be made between them. Trade marks fall into two types – registered and unregistered. In the case of unregistered trade mark it is possible to take out an action using the common law of passing off. However, in order to be successful in such an action you would have to prove that:

1. the mark is yours;
2. that you have built up a reputation in the mark;
3. that you have been harmed in some way by the other person’s use of the mark.

Designs

Designs are for product appearance of either the whole or part of a product resulting from the features of, the lines, contours, colour, shape, texture and/or materials of the product itself and/or its ornamentation.

Copyright

There is copyright for literary, dramatic, musical and artistic material, sound recordings, films and broadcasts.

Within copyright there are a series of rights:

- economic rights
- moral rights
- database right which augments copyright: a property right that subsists in a database if there has been a substantial investment in obtaining, verifying or presenting the contents of the database
- publication right which is the right to issue copies of the work to the public
- performers’ rights, namely the rights to perform, show or play the work in public. This would include delivery of a lecture, speech or sermon as well as a visual or acoustic presentation using a sound recording, film or broadcast
- rental and lending right which controls the hiring or lending of a work or a copy of the work to the public
- Copyright should not be thought of as a single entity, but should instead be viewed as a ‘bundle’ of rights. Each one of the restricted acts can be handled separately. The owner may choose to sell some rights without selling them all – for example this could involve the author retaining all rights to his or her work in electronic format, while assigning the other rights to a commercial publisher.

In addition to the four main types of intellectual property (patents, trade marks, designs, and copyright) there are also a couple of other areas of law which are relevant here:

- the law of confidence, which can be used to protect trade secrets, government secrets and also personal secrets
- the law of passing off.

Continuing our series of exclusive articles from Facet Publishing’s Keeping Within the Law online intelligence service, Paul Pedley takes another look at intellectual property, following on from last issue.

For instant access to KWTL’s continually growing database, packed with useful resources on all aspects of copyright and information law, you need to become a subscriber. Call 020 7255 0590 or visit www.kwtl.co.uk

Get ready to use your expertise...

Continued from front page

have moved into roles undertaken before by professionally qualified staff. The last major forward look at human resource development in academic libraries, the Fielden Report of 1993, forecast that ‘the main burden of change’ would fall on library assistants, along with subject librarians and senior managers. This prediction has proved largely correct, although the implications for their skills and development needs have often received less attention than they deserve.

Fielden noted that para-professional and clerical grade staff were taking over both backroom technical tasks (cataloguing and classification) and frontline enquiry work. He also suggested roles for assistants in subject-based teams, seeing this as a way to enrich the job for a mainly graduate-level workforce.

Information assistant posts advertised in Gauzea confirms that several academic libraries have moved in this direction. But other changes that he didn’t predict have also happened. Some of these will gather pace in the next decade, as selfservice issue and return becomes the signal, technical, organisational, managerial, interpersonal and personal skills and knowledge. Learning through work-based activities can be highly effective in many cases, but giving staff time out for reflection enhances their learning. LIS practitioners are recognising that more formal approaches to reflection can contribute significantly to meet the professional knowledge requirements for moving from Certification to Chartership within CILIP’s Framework of Qualifications.

So, whether you see the future for libraries as daunting or exciting, the key message is to look ahead, keep learning and get ready to use your expertise creatively.

Shelia Corrall is Professor of Librarianship & Information Management and Head of the Department of Information Studies at the University of Sheffield. Sheila is speaking on 10 June at ‘Picking the Winners’, the Scoula Conference and ACM, 10-12 June, Bournemouth (see p5).

www.scoula.ac.uk/events/ agm2009/.

References
1 www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/campaigns/ librariesofthefuture.aspx

‘The key message is to look ahead, keep learning and get ready to use your expertise creatively.’