

"It isn't simply a case of sending people on courses. There needs to be a fundamental shift."

Case Study Interviewee

Carefully designed staff training and continuous professional development can play a key role in successfully making the transition from the traditional model of libraries and archives to the digital or hybrid model. Ensuring all staff have adequate IT skills is only a part of the preparation required for equipping staff to maximise the potential of digital technology. A useful starting point for any organisation is to conduct a skills audit tailored to the needs of the specific institution. The following section is intended to prompt thought and discussion on the various factors which need to be considered before an effective training programme can be developed.

The current work environment is characterised by:

- Rapid and ongoing change.
- Blurring of boundaries within and between institutions.
- Uncertainty in terms of the ability confidently to predict future trends and requirements.
- Less clearly defined and/or changing roles and responsibilities.
- Increased emphasis on collaboration and team work.
- Increased emphasis on accountability.

Senior management are also subject to the same pressures of dealing with what often seems like a moving target and must simultaneously decide on the strategic way forward while ensuring their staff are able to come with them.

As well as threats there are of course huge opportunities and intelligent training and development can do much to minimise the former and unlock the latter. A creative approach to training and development (as opposed to just "sending people on courses") is likely to make a significant difference by:

- Effectively exploiting the technology to improve the overall quality of service.
- Enhancing the individual level of job satisfaction and commitment.
- Improving the strategic outlook for the organisation as a whole.

In terms of digital preservation, there are specific challenges which can be added to the general work environment list above:

- There is little in the way of formal guidance. A certain amount of "learning by doing" is needed, albeit within the context of much important ongoing research and practice in other institutions. Formal and informal co-operation with colleagues working in similar areas is also relevant here.

(See also [Collaboration](#)).

- Lack of training courses and professional development covering the full range of competencies, skills and knowledge required for digital preservation. A suite of skills and competencies are needed and it may be necessary either to commission tailor-made training packages and/or utilise off-the-shelf courses which consider individual issues of relevance to digital preservation, e.g. IT skills; copyright; project management; and metadata.

- Little empirical data on costs. This may need a combination of some educated guesses, based on current research, combined with specially designed workshops facilitated by experienced practitioners.

The success of training and development programmes will be affected by the degree to which various roles and responsibilities mesh.

Roles and responsibilities of the institution

- Developing an Information Strategy which integrates IT training with the overall mission of the institution.
- Identifying, in consultation with key staff, a skills audit, to determine what specific competencies are required to meet organisational objectives.
- Establishing a balance between recruiting specific skills and effectively developing existing talent.
- Providing adequate resources for training and development.
- Ensuring staff have access to appropriate equipment.
- Ensuring access to practical "hands on" training and practice.
- Encouraging networking between colleagues in other institutions.
- Considering strategies such as short-term secondment to an institution which may have more experience in a specific area.
- Involving staff in designing training and development programmes.
- Facilitating effective multi-disciplinary communication.
- Taking a broad view of what constitutes training and development (i.e. combination of formal courses, both generic and tailor-made, informal training within the organisation, skills transfer within the organisation, networking etc.).

Roles and responsibilities of professional associations

- Responsiveness to current training and development needs.
- Ability to work with institutions to develop training packages to meet their needs.

Roles and responsibilities of the individual

- Ability to tolerate frequent change.
- Ability to be flexible.
- Ability to work in teams.
- Ability actively to pursue personal professional development through a range of mechanisms.
- Ability to share skills and expertise.
- Ability to learn new skills.
- Ability to apply new skills.

[See Exemplars and Further Reading](#)