

Transforming Professional Development for Librarians – More than Meets the Eye (or Robots in Disguise?)

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Abstract:

In many OECD countries, falling birth-rates, historically low levels of unemployment and changing attitudes to life and work are combining to cause a “talent squeeze” in the labour market. Both business and public sector organizations are finding it harder to attract and keep talented workers; in particular, younger, highly skilled staff. As a result, generational change and professional development have become critical issues for organizations forced to compete for increasingly scarce human resources. Since 2003, CAVAL has conducted an annual Training Needs Survey for library and information workers in Australia and New Zealand. The survey provides an invaluable annual ‘health check’ on the professional development of library and information workers in this region. In 2005, 2006 and 2007 the survey was expanded to include Asia. This paper examines selected findings of the 2007 survey and assesses their implications for libraries in the context of the talent squeeze and generational change. If for Generation X “the more they learn the more they stay” and for Generation Y “continuous learning is a way of life”, what are the consequences for libraries if talented staff are to be recruited and retained? CAVAL’s 2007 findings will be compared with previous surveys and the results used to inform a range of simple strategies to ensure that libraries in Australasia can successfully leverage professional development to transform their workplaces– from X to Y!

Introduction

As libraries and library workers hurtle headlong towards the second decade of the 21st century, it is appropriate that this 2007 LIANZA conference should focus on the issue of transformation, and the many challenges it presents our profession. At work, as in life, the word 'challenge' is often used euphemistically to mean the practice of exercising (or avoiding) 'choice'. On one hand for example, the choice to seize the initiative and influence our world with energy and determination (sometimes successfully, other times not); and on the other, the decision to hang back and react as best we can as issues and events inexorably over-run us. This paper addresses three immediate challenges for our profession: the growing "talent squeeze" in many western economies; the related impact of generational change on libraries and library workers; and, finally, the role of professional development in helping to address these challenges by facilitating critical transformations within our workplaces. We will refer in this paper to "transforming (n) professional development" not transforming (v) professional development. The distinction is significant.

Background

In many OECD countries, falling birth-rates, historically low levels of unemployment and changing attitudes to life and work are combining to cause a "talent squeeze" in the labour market (Cooper, 2005). Both business and public sector organizations are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and keep talented workers; in particular, younger, highly skilled staff - variously called Generations X and Y, or Xers and Nexters. Universities and colleges in the United States are representative of organizations across the OECD bracing for progressively more competitive recruitment practices over the next two decades:

The baby-boom generation [those 78.2 million Americans alive today who were born between 1946 and 1964], larger than those directly before or after it, has fueled the U.S. labor force for decades. But as the boomers age and begin to retire in the coming years, they will leave a sizable hole in the labor market. An estimated 6,000 jobs in postsecondary-education administration will have to be filled annually between 2004 and 2014, the result of the field's growth and the retirement of current workers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. (Leubsdorf, 2006, p. A51)

As a result of the squeeze, workforce planning and generational change have become critical issues for organizations forced to compete for increasingly scarce human resources. The growing concern felt by many executives has been reflected in the large volume of social research undertaken and published since the appearance of Strauss and Howe's groundbreaking study *Generations* in 1991.

Since 2003, CAVAL has conducted an annual Training Needs Survey for library and information workers in Australia and New Zealand. The survey provides a valuable annual 'health check' on the professional development of library and information workers in this region. In 2005, 2006 and 2007 the survey was expanded to include Asia. This paper examines selected findings of the 2007 survey and assesses their implications for libraries in the context of the talent squeeze and generational change. If for Generation X "the more they learn the more they stay" and for Generation Y "continuous learning is a way of life", what are the consequences for libraries if talented staff are to be recruited and retained? CAVAL's 2007 findings will be compared with previous surveys and the results used to inform a range of simple strategies to ensure that libraries in Australasia can successfully leverage professional development to transform their workplaces– from X to Y!

The Challenge of Generational Change

In demographic terms, a generation or cohort covers a period of about twenty years – the period of time within which a particular population was born, sometimes called 'birth years'. Most cohorts take approximately 20 years to reach full economic maturity, so a child born in New Zealand in 1968 was expected to enter the economy as a worker and fully fledged consumer around 1988. Assuming a fairly normal working life by OECD standards, that same child will soon reach the approximate mid point of their career in 2008, and retire to the beach or lawn bowls club around 2028.

In the real world however, discrete generations are not always so easy to identify or categorise. Outside the laboratory, each generation has a tendency to blur at the edges where they interface with neighbouring cohorts. Studies of population demography aside, each generation is ultimately defined in social and cultural terms by the commonality of "its times and tastes" (Zemke et al, 2000, p. 16). In other words, what historical events, economic trends and social upheavals have impacted and shaped that generation and created a shared sense of identity? Within cohorts too, blanket distinctions based on birth years are sometimes hard to make; individual exceptions are common, particularly in relation to Generation X – a comparatively small yet highly complex transition cohort wedged between self-absorbed Baby Boomers and self-aware Nexters. Generation Y commentator and author Peter Sheahan sums up the challenge of labelling and describing generations this way: "it's not about chronology, it's about mindset. I've met 45 year-olds who have got the Gen[eration] Y mindset. They get it." (Cooper, 2005, p. 21)

Generational change and the friction that often arises at the interface between generations are not new phenomena. Generational change and its attendant issues have been part of human society forever. It is after all, a lucky (or

possibly unlucky) parent who has not experienced the frustration of trying to reason, from the parent's perspective, with a "know all" teenager. As humans, our progression to maturity involves building up a bank of life experiences and learning how and when to carry-on on the work of those that have preceded us. To do this, we must explore and make sense of our world and this often means testing assumptions (about life, society, the workplace), and pushing against social and cultural boundaries. In essence, it is this process of exploring, testing and pushing that typifies all generational change. Historically, however, the process has been limited in the workplace to interactions between two generations of working age: one older generation effectively exiting the workforce and another younger generation entering it, albeit in a planned progression over a period of years. Zemke et al note that until the early to mid 1990s, "contacts were primarily horizontal" within defined organizational hierarchies and "generational mixing was rare and then significantly influenced by formality and protocol" (2000, p. 10).

Since the early 1990s however, various social and economic factors have combined to create for the first time yet recorded a workplace where at least three, and sometimes four, generations are represented. These generations have been broadly labelled Veteran (1922-1943), Baby Boomer (1943-1960), Generation X (1960-1980) and Generation Y: 1980-2000. (Zemke et al, 2000) Furthermore, the rules of succession planning have changed markedly too. Merit selection and the "talent squeeze" are increasingly causing later generations to leap ahead of earlier generations in terms of responsibilities and remuneration. Seniority as a concept has almost ceased to have meaning in many contemporary work settings. The tension thus created is identified in Australia by Peter Sheahan:

For the 40-plus age group, this [Generation Y] attitude does not always sit well. They have done the hard slog and are now seeing 22 year-old upstarts blow in demanding the world, a pay rise... oh, and an overseas posting, now! (Cooper, 2005, p. 20)

Significantly, Baby Boomers for whom the adage "live to work" was a mantra in the 1970s and 1980s are increasingly finding themselves reporting to and at odds with Generation X and Y colleagues who typically want, and will require of employers, greater give and take between their professional and personal lives. The generations reaching economic maturity now want to "work to live" and generally speaking, they have the skills and opportunities in the present labour market to get what they want!

Generational Change and Libraries

Australian and New Zealand workplaces have not been spared the impacts of wider demographic and attitudinal changes in society. Returning to higher

education, in a 2005 response to the Australian Government's Research Quality Framework for universities, the Australian Association for Research in Education noted:

The large scale generational change that will occur over the coming decade must be considered in many aspects of the development and implementation of a research quality framework... 60 per cent of education academic staff are aged over 50, and 45 per cent of all academic staff are aged over 50... Most of these academics will retire over the coming decade and need to be replaced. (AARE, 2005)

Many university executives in Australia are now asking the question: in an increasingly competitive labour market, what bearing will generational change have on attracting, recruiting and ultimately retaining the right staff for our organizations?

For academic libraries in Australia, the situation is no less acute. In fact, given the rate of technological change to which academic libraries generally are exposed (most recently, social networking and Web 2.0), and demographic changes already impacting the sector in Australasia, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, it can be argued that academic libraries are potentially at very great risk of marginalization if generational change is not managed effectively now.

The primary challenge for all libraries in Australia, not just those in the academic sector, is to ensure that there will actually be a new generation of library professionals entering and remaining in the workplace over the next decade. Their existence is not a given but they are critical if the profession is to replace the 40 to 60 percent of colleagues expected to retire within the next 10 to 15 years (Hutley and Solomons, 2004, p. 3). The profession is aging, and comparatively quickly relative to other professions. Sobering ALA statistics collected in 1999 showed that just 26% of librarians in the United States were between the ages of 20 and 39 (Gordon, 2006, p 8). Even if a significant proportion of Baby Boomers are forced by economics or government policy to push their retirements back another 5-10 years, the skills and leadership gaps created by normal generational change are still likely to be very large. In the background too, exacerbating the problem of replacement for libraries, is a constant slow trickle of library professionals leaving libraries for more attractive prospects in allied fields such as Knowledge Management and Records Administration. Recruiting new and retaining existing library workers are both thus critical processes if our profession is to secure the future of libraries; in this country and elsewhere.

In Australia, to use that country as a convenient case study, a number of factors have contributed to recruitment and retention problems within the library profession:

- Nearly a decade of record low levels of unemployment;
- Inability to sell the library profession generally as a dynamic and attractive career alternative in the 21st century;
- Increased competition from allied information professions, principally Records Management;
- Additional competition from a range of new and higher paying technology-based careers not imagined a decade ago;
- Ongoing 'casual-isation' of the workforce, leading to greater flexibility and mobility, and the attitude that new positions are 'opportunities' for more experience;
- Technological change – the need to know more and more (and quickly!) in order to stay competitive; and related to this final point,
- Internet and social networking applications have created opportunities for home-working and 21st century cottage industries that are slowly drawing professional people away from mainstream employment.

Due to the degree of their influence, the first four factors merit further examination.

Firstly, in line with many other OECD countries, Australia is experiencing its lowest levels of unemployment in decades and employers generally are finding it difficult to source both skilled and unskilled labour. It is now not uncommon for unskilled workers employed within the mining industry to be earning six figure salaries. Clearly, recruiters acting for industries not experiencing boom times must look beyond salaries to new and innovative means of attracting and remunerating staff. Changing demographics are also fuelling trends towards low unemployment and looming skills crises within many western economies. Australia now has one of the world's lowest birth-rates; caused in large part by a growing tendency for parents to have children later in life, thereby effectively limiting their reproductive capacity to a steady state demographers call 'replacement' (two children, one for each parent), or below.

The latest unemployment figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, released in January 2007, paint a picture of consistently falling unemployment over ten years (from 8.4% in January 1997 to 4.6% in January 2007), and rapidly increasing employment rates for both males and females aged 20 years and over (ABS, 2007). In this context, salaries and conditions of employment – for example, flexible working hours – become important bargaining points as employers try to attract and hold onto suitable staff. Typically, libraries in Australia are not resourced to bargain competitively with prospective staff and so find themselves at an immediate disadvantage in a scarce labour market. To attract and keep a new generation of library professionals, libraries will therefore need to consider a range of other enticements that align directly with the core values and characteristics of Generations X and Y. As this paper will seek to demonstrate using data from CAVAL's 2006 Training Needs Survey, professional

development and the subsequent opportunities it provides are identifiable attractors to workers born after the early 1960s. To Generation X in particular, sometimes called the “options generation” (Huntley, 2006, p. 7), access to professional development can be a significant lure.

Within this wider context of greater economic and social competition for labour, it may also be argued that the library profession in Australia has not sold itself effectively to potential recruits. Observed outcomes include not only a smaller (and shrinking) talent pool from which to select staff, but one that does not always include individuals particularly well suited to the demands of the contemporary library workplace – an environment that places greater emphasis on external engagement through networking, teaching (information literacy), marketing and promotion. This is not to say that promotional efforts have not been made, particularly in the last decade, only that the strategies employed have not noticeably altered public perceptions of libraries as “nice to have” but not necessarily “nice to work in”: think for example of the heavily stereotyped librarian doll with “amazing push-button shushing action” released in 2003. When coupled with low salaries and inflexible working conditions relative to other professions, this lack of promotion can only exacerbate observed recruitment and retention problems within libraries. Factor in geographic ‘isolation’ if the library is located in a regional area and problems are magnified tenfold!

Also impacting, as we have already noted, is increased competition for graduates and mid-career library professionals from allied information professions: principally Records Management. Additional competition for graduates is provided by a range of new technology-based occupations and careers not imagined a decade ago. In Australia this year, the Queensland University of Technology has admitted students to the first year of a Bachelor of Games and Interactive Entertainment. QUT anticipates that graduates will in three years pursue careers as diverse as “games or digital media programmer, game designer, industry entrepreneur, animator, film and television special effects developer, quality assurance tester, games/digital media reviewer, sound designer, mobile entertainment developer, web developer or digital product strategist” (QUT, 2007). Think for a moment - how many Generation X colleagues working in libraries today received career guidance at school that included “Electronic Information Services Librarian” or “Knowledge Manager”?

This latest development at QUT, mirrored in other new courses across the Australian higher education sector, poses a significant question for libraries: can they offer their staff a similar variety of work and opportunities to grow professionally? This paper argues that libraries are actually uniquely placed to provide staff with attractive opportunities for professional growth and development, but that any hope of medium to long-term success will almost certainly mean a fundamental shift in strategic priorities and managerial mindsets within parent organizations.

Developing Generations X and Y

In their seminal study *Generations at Work*, Zemke et al (2000) identified four cohorts present in the late 1990s workplace, with Baby Boomers born in the period 1943-1960 still pre-eminent: refer Figure 2.

Figure 1:

Veterans	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
1922-1943	1943-1960	1960-1980	1980-2000
<i>Traditionalists</i>	<i>Boomers</i>	<i>Xers</i>	<i>Millennials</i>
<i>Seniors</i>		<i>Thirty-somethings</i>	<i>Nexters</i>
<i>Builders</i>		<i>Post-Boomers</i>	<i>Net Generation</i>
		<i>Me Generation</i>	<i>Dot coms</i>

The population born prior to World War Two and shaped by that conflict and the events of the Great Depression.

A population 'spike' created in reaction to World War Two and influenced by an extended period of economic prosperity, progressive social change and resulting optimism about the future.

The first population to grow up with personal computers and the information age, but impacted heavily by social and economic upheaval and thus less optimistic but more self-reliant than generations before.

The last population to enter the current workforce and arguably the most educated, connected, confident and independent generation in recent history.

This paper does not propose to recapitulate the work of Zemke and others, but instead focuses on the two generations – popularly styled X and Y – that have risen to prominence in the intervening decade, and who will have carriage of workplaces over the next two to three decades. Recruiting and retaining these generations will be critical to the future success or otherwise of libraries. Training needs data obtained in Australasia by CAVAL suggests that professional development will play a critical role in recruitment and retention efforts.

Generation X employees (born 1960-1980) are renowned for thinking and planning one or two jobs ahead of their current employment. Like chess masters sizing up a new board, their motivation is less about naked ambition and more about pragmatic competitiveness: what moves will be required to win this game? They are the “options” or “me generation”, conditioned by adverse social and economic trends in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s to rely on their own skills and trust in their own judgement. Self-reliance and cynicism are hallmark values or indicators of Generation X and figure prominently in its work psyche.

Generation X is also considered to be the first cohort in recent history to successfully embrace change in the workplace – rapid and profound change at that – and feel comfortable with it; anticipating change and adapting to it proactively rather than reactively. It is not unreasonable, for example, to expect “the current 25-40 year olds will transform themselves through as many as six career changes before they collect their superannuation [retire].” (Neat, 2005, p. 22) This process of career transformation does not take into account discrete jobs or positions within organisations, which may number in high double figures by retirement. Thus, the flexibility and pragmatism this acceptance of change requires are also defining values of Generation X (Huntley, 2006).

It should come as no surprise then that the Generation X learning style is typically motivated by a desire to enhance professional skills and thus marketability to future employers. Their thinking is clear: how will this learning opportunity position me for the future and help to keep my options open - what is in this experience for me? For many Generation X staff working across a range of professions, access to professional development has become an important component of their overall remuneration package, and thus their decision to remain with an organization longer term. In IT related professions for example, many Generation X'ers are happy to forgo traditional perks such as company cars in favour of attendance at expensive industry conferences; where they can acquire new skills and network with old and new contacts. Access to professional development also figures highly in any decision to join a new organization. To counter this, libraries must be prepared to identify ways to help Generation X employees see the bigger picture and “not give in to their impatience to move on quickly to other organizations or other careers” (Hutley and Solomons, 2004, p. 4).

Now, as of the early 2000s, we have a new Millennials or Nexters generation entering the workforce: Generation Y, born 1980 – 2000. Like their Generation X colleagues, and possibly parents (remember, this issue relates to mindset as much as chronology), early Generation Y'ers are also looking for portable careers. However, their needs extend to even greater degrees of personal flexibility, professional satisfaction and immediacy – the latter born, many argue, of increased exposure to gaming and networking technology. And with the identified “talent squeeze” in many professions including librarianship, Generation Y can afford to be fussy in their choice of employment and employer. If organizations find they cannot adapt in time, Generation Y professionals may find it attractive to ride the wave of ‘casual-isation’ in the labour market and opt out of institutionalized employment altogether; returning on their own terms as outsourced consultants. As social networking technologies become more pervasive, many are joining their Generation X colleagues in embracing a trend towards “smaller, entrepreneurial operations and independent home-based knowledge workers” (Zemke et al, 2000, p. 146). As early as 1998, Donald Tapscott warned employers in his book *Growing Up Digital* that Generation Y (N-Geners as he called them) would be more inclined to strike out on their own;

abandoning the workplace status quo. For Generation Y, the majority of whom have been born since the advent of the Internet, self employment is a very real alternative; providing the career challenges, opportunities for skills development and personal flexibility that they crave.

For Generation Y then, change is a given and continuous learning a way of life; it is expected as part of any employment package, not something to be negotiated. In *The World According to Y*, Australian sociologist Rebecca Huntley (2006) notes that Generation Y'ers are typically "highly educated and value institutionalized learning" (p. 89). Whether they join the growing ranks of independent knowledge workers or remain within the orbit of institutionalized workplaces, it is certain nonetheless that Generation Y wants and needs to learn. They have no choice.

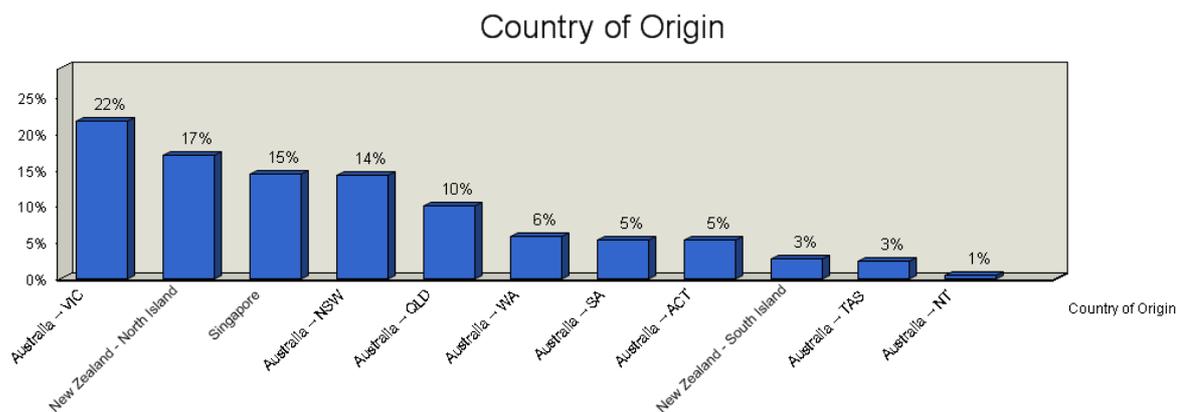
The 2007 CAVAL Training Needs Survey

Operation

Since 2003, CAVAL has undertaken an annual Training Needs Survey for library and information workers in Australia and New Zealand. In 2005, the survey was expanded to include Asia. Each year the survey is conducted online using Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) and is promoted across Australasia, South East Asia and East Asia using professional lists and networks. Support from the iGroup's Aardvark service and the Library Association of Singapore has been particularly valuable in promoting the survey to colleagues in Asia. In 2007 for the first time, a data analyst was engaged to provide more detailed interpretative analysis.

The 2007 survey was conducted over four weeks in July and August and concluded with 358 responses; a significantly lower response rate than 2006 (n=613) and 2005 (n=776). The lower than expected result may be indicative of survey fatigue in some library and information sectors, and the decreasing 'immediacy' of email as a means of communication. Coverage was still comprehensive however, with responses received from all Australian states and territories (235) and both the North and South islands of New Zealand (71). The profession in Singapore was also well represented with 52 responses. Vietnam and India each provided one response.

Figure 1: Country or region of primary residence/work



As in past years, the 2007 survey had two primary objectives:

- To provide feedback on professional development needs and trends to inform the 2008 training program; and,
- To diagnose current and emerging issues in the delivery and administration of the training program.

To address these issues, four datasets within the survey are examined with particular interest each year: geographic representation of responses (country of residence or work), library and information sector representation, type of training preferred, and emerging training topics and themes.

Generational Change in Context

In 2007, the survey included two important new demographic questions regarding ‘career stage’ and level of responsibility; both necessary to track and correlate the training needs of specific generations. The first new question asked respondents to identify their career stage from four categories based on those used in the seminal *8Rs Canadian Library Human Resource Study* (<http://www.ls.ualberta.ca/8rs/home.html>).

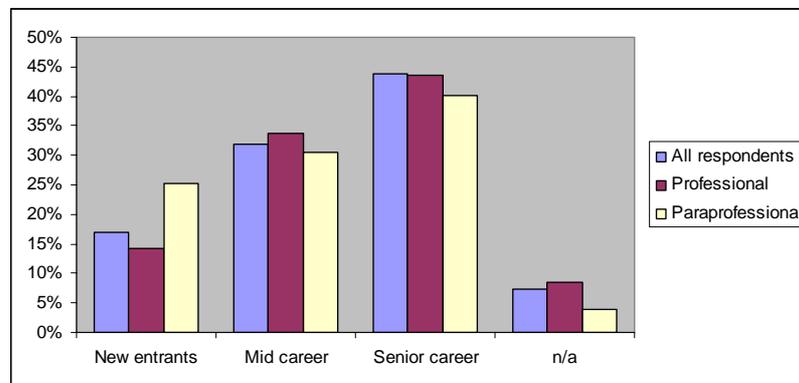
Figure 2: Identified career stage

Senior professional (more than 15 years experience)	147	41.5%
Mid-career professional (6-15 years experience)	96	27.1%
Recent professional (less than 6 years experience)	87	24.6%
Not yet graduated	24	6.8%

The highest proportion of survey respondents identified themselves as senior professionals with more than 15 years experience (41.5%). Mid-career professionals – typically but not exclusively Generation X – formed the next largest cohort (27.1%) while recent or ‘entrant’ professionals accounted for nearly one quarter of responses (24.6%). Those respondents identifying as not-yet-

graduated formed the smallest cohort with less than 7% of the total. It is interesting to note that the total proportion of recent and mid career professionals who responded to the survey (51.7%) is not significantly higher than the proportion of senior professionals who responded (41.5%). In the context of generation change, this finding appears to support other analyses in North America and Australia that suggest anywhere from 40% to 60% of the profession may be lost within the next ten to twenty years. Recent research within the Australian library and information sector undertaken by Associate Professor Gillian Hallam of QUT shows roughly similar proportions to the 2007 CAVAL survey:

Figure 3: Career stages of respondents by professional/paraprofessional qualifications

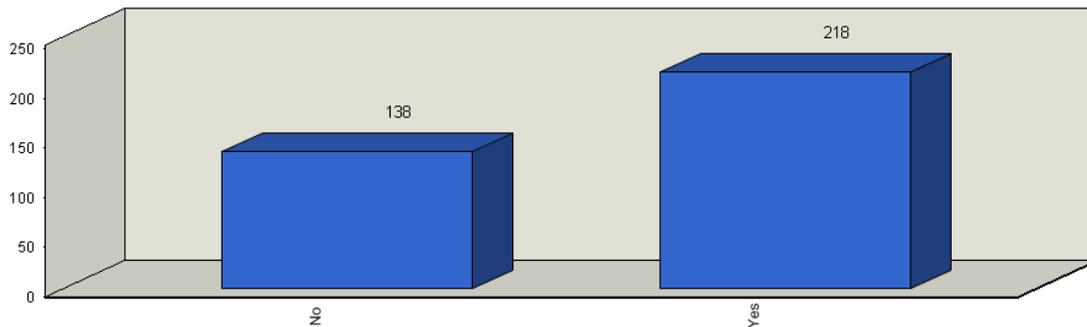


Although data analysis of the 2007 survey results is not yet complete at time of writing, initial correlations of identified career stage with library or information sector employed suggest some interesting employment trends. Notable among these is the observation that university, public and special libraries (government, health and law) appear to be recruiting more recent professionals than other industry sectors; with national/state, TAFE/polytechnic and school libraries lagging some way behind. As to the question of which sectors are likely to be most affected by retirements over the next few decades, public and government libraries figure prominently, with university and national/state libraries not far behind.

The second new 'demographic' question asked respondents to identify if their professional responsibilities include management of a team or service – refer Figure 4. In past surveys, it has been difficult to assess whether stated training needs have simply constituted an amalgam of wish-lists submitted by individuals, or been representative of wider organizational or sector-based needs. Research theory extrapolated from the business world suggests a direct correlation between the proportion of decision-makers (managers) responding to a survey and the validity of any resulting needs analysis. As the former increases, generally so does the latter. In the 2007 survey, a significant proportion of

respondents (61%) indicated that their positions entailed management responsibilities. This result hopefully indicates that training needs expressed elsewhere in the survey are more closely aligned with real training needs in the workplace.

Figure 4: Responsibilities include management of a team or service



Early correlation of this data with career stages – refer Figure 5 – also confirms (fortunately) an obvious hypothesis that senior professionals have a much higher level of management responsibility than mid-career and recent professionals.

Figure 5: Management responsibilities and career stage

05 Do your responsibilities include management of a team or service?	Senior professional (more than 15 years experience)	Mid-career professional (6-15 years experience)	Recent professional (less than 6 years experience)	Not yet graduated
Yes	112	56	43	4
No	33	40	44	20
-	2	-	-	-

It is interesting to note though that many recent professionals and even a few not-yet-graduated consider themselves to have management responsibility. This in turn supports a significant finding of the Canadian 8Rs study that effective management and leadership training will be critical to the future success of the profession:

...perhaps one of the most recurring and reliable themes uncovered in this study is that of the need for librarians to perform managerial functions and to assume leadership roles. In Section K, the shifting demand towards managing was clearly demonstrated as was the need for training in these areas, and the lack of interest among librarians in performing some of these roles. (8Rs, 2005, p. 195)

In addition to the supervision and management training programs already presented by CAVAL, the organization is currently scoping the development of an Executive Leadership Program for library and information services managers; commencing in 2008 or 2009.

Library and Information Sectors

All library and information sectors were again represented in the 2007 survey with responses from university, public and government libraries dominating – refer Figure 6. The university library sector contributed 19% of responses – down from 27% in 2006 and 20% in 2005 – while public libraries contributed 15% (up from 9% in 2006 and 13% in 2005). Historically, CAVAL’s strongest market for professional development has been special libraries and this sector again dominated survey results; contributing 111 responses (31%) overall. However, seeking greater granularity in 2007, the survey sought to differentiate between government special libraries and corporate, health and law libraries. The results show 15% of responses coming from government special libraries (equal second with public libraries), 9% from health and law libraries, and 7% from other special libraries.

The significance of special libraries in survey data is mirrored by the number of special library staff attending CAVAL courses. In 2006, special libraries contributed over one third of all participants attending CAVAL courses in Australia and New Zealand; followed closely by the university sector. Anecdotal feedback, course evaluations and in-house training enquiries received in 2006 and to date in 2007 also indicate a robust market for professional development in special libraries. The challenge however is to ensure that a sector comprising many small, disparate and geographically dispersed services can act collectively and thereby leverage their combined purchasing power. CAVAL has already facilitated the formation of several successful special library training consortia in Australia and more are expected in 2008. Thus, as the talent squeeze begins to bite in other library sectors, special libraries may become a fertile recruiting ground for organizations seeking talented library staff with current skills and a commitment to professional development.

Figure 6: Library or information sector in which currently employed

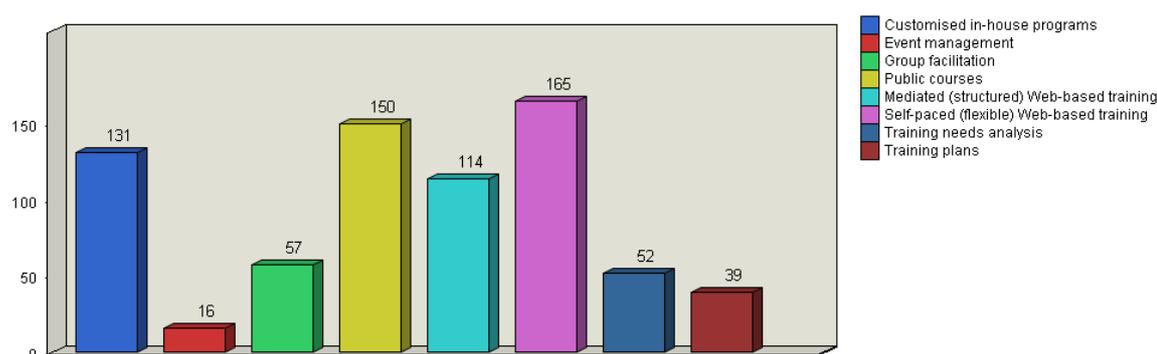
	2005		2006		2007	
Special Libraries	201	36	152	29	111	31
University Libraries	113	20	139	27	68	19
Public Libraries	70	13	44	9	54	15
National / State Libraries	26	5	50	10	29	8
Polytechnic / TAFE Libraries	59	11	42	8	27	7

Archives, Records Management	0	0	30	6	20	6
Other Sector, including KM	86	15	27	5	20	6
School Libraries	0	0	18	3	14	4
Self/Un-employed, Students	0	0	18	3	15	4
Total (= n)	555	100	520	100	358	100

Training Needs

As in 2005 and 2006, the 2007 survey again asked respondents to identify which types of training would be of interest to them and their organizations. Eight categories of training services were listed: customised in-house (onsite) programs; public courses, seminars and workshops; mediated web-based training; unmediated (self paced) web-based training; group facilitation; event management; training needs analysis; and, training plans.

Figure 7: Training services of interest to individuals and organisations



Data obtained in 2005 showed strong interest in web-based training (71% of responses) and this trend was supported by 2006 figures: mediated web-based training, 39%, and unmediated (self paced) web-based training, 32%. For 2007, total web-based training increased to 78%, with a reversed preference for unmediated (self paced) web-based training (46%) over mediated web-based training (32%). These results are not unexpected given the proportionately higher representation of Generations X and Y in the contemporary library workplace and our knowledge of their values, motivations and preferences for development. Both generations – Y in particular – want the flexibility and freedom to access professional development on their terms; when and where they require it – at home at 3 am if necessary. Structured web-based training using an e-learning system such as WebCT or Moodle, whether courses are mediated or unmediated, is one obvious solution. However, increasingly popular social networking (Web 2.0) applications such as blogs, wikis, podcasts and more recently Second Life are also providing new opportunities for less structured training.

An important adjunct to the issue of what types of training are preferred is the question “what factors are important to you and your organization when selecting a training course?” - refer Figure 8. Again, when responses are examined in the context of generational change (Baby Boomer to Generations X and Y), strong preferences for relevant course content, convenience and expertise are in line with expectations. It is also interesting to note that the same top six factors appear in the 2006 and 2007 surveys, with relevance heading the list in both surveys and convenience jumping to number two in 2007 (up from fourth in 2006).

Figure 8: Factors important to you and your organization when selecting a training course

Top 6 factors	2006	
		%
Relevance of course content	510	99
Expertise of trainer	400	77
Value for money	334	65
Convenience	314	61
Price	311	60
Quality of materials	304	59
Total (= n)	518	
Top 6 factors	2007	
		%
Relevance of course content	327	91%
Convenience	269	75%
Expertise of trainer/facilitator	252	70%
Price	237	66%
Value for money	217	61%
Quality of training materials	187	52%
Total (= n)	358	

For anyone identifying with Generation X thinking (how will this learning experience position me for the future?) it makes sense that the relevance of course content will be at the top of their list. There is little spare time or money in the contemporary workplace for professional development that is “nice to have”. While the old adage that extra skills are “no burden to carry” is still true to some extent, younger professionals are becoming more discriminating about the composition of their load.

This selectivity applies also to the knowledge and experience of the trainer. With the growing popularity of web-based education and training has also come the phenomenon of 'brand name' providers. To ensure maximum impact in the workplace, Generations X and Y are generally more careful about choosing recognised brands or 'names' than their older colleagues. The most appealing brands are those that are immediately recognisable across a range of contexts, and that are held in high regard by current and future employers. Convenience also figures prominently and aligns with key Generation X and Y values such as flexibility, choice and immediacy.

First in 2006 and then again in 2007, the CAVAL Training Needs Survey introduced a new style of question – one that asked respondents to clarify their own hopes and fears for the library profession in the decade ahead. Respondents were asked to nominate what they believed to be the top three issues or challenges facing libraries and information services through to 2010. By posing this question, CAVAL Training sought to use the qualitative data obtained to test a range of assumptions about emerging training topics and themes: for example, to what extent are new and emerging technologies actually of interest to library workers? A total of 219 responses were received, representing over half (61%) of those who answered the survey. Using a simple technique of keyword analysis, it was possible to identify at least 50 separate issues or challenges and rank them highest to lowest by counting the number of individual mentions in responses. Interestingly, the picture that emerges from this analysis suggests a library and information profession that is proactively looking for the means to resolve, or at the very least adapt to, some very significant challenges; of which, generational change is but one.

Looking ahead to 2010 then, the top 14 challenges (10 mentions or higher) identified by library workers in 2007 include:

- New and emerging technologies impacting libraries, focusing on Web 2.0 and Library 2.0 applications such as blogs, wikis and podcasts (44);
- Managing budgets and seeking new funding sources for libraries (44);
- Marketing and promoting libraries and information services (32);
- Workforce and succession planning (30);
- Managing e-resources (22);
- Demonstrating the value, relevance and return on investment of libraries (20);
- Library design and space planning – making the most of what we have (14);
- Copyright compliance (12);
- Google! – specifically, staying one step ahead of clients (11);
- Information and digital literacy (11);
- Outsourcing library services (11);
- Understanding users' needs - needs analysis (11);
- Digital Rights Management (10); and,
- Institutional repositories – linked in several responses to changes in scholarly publishing (10).

It is interesting to compare this list with the “sixteen characteristics of the successful 21st century information professional” penned by Dennie Heye in 2006:

1. Creative and keen to innovate
2. Search engine guru
3. Sees the big picture
4. Maintains a healthy work-life balance
5. Shows leadership
6. Can persuade others
7. An effective networker
8. Knows how to add value
9. An effective presenter (communicator) – of ideas and information
10. Knows how to measure (and demonstrate) value
11. Manages time effectively and says “no”
12. Knows the basics of information architecture
13. Speaks fluent geek (technical jargon)
14. Can manage projects
15. Knows how to market – the information professional and their services
16. Always up to date!

(Adapted from Heye, 2006, p v)

Strategies for Transforming Professional Development

In seeking to highlight the connections and correlations between generational change and professional development, this paper argues that despite a fluid “buyers’ market” in many western economies, it is still possible for libraries to recruit and retain talented staff. The solution begins in large part with a detailed understanding of the generations present in the workplace today; specifically, their underlying values, motivations, and aspirations for the future. It continues with the application by libraries of three simple strategies that will enable them to leverage professional development to successfully transform their workplaces—from X to Y!

1. Value the individual – in word and deed!

Sheahan (2005) and others remind us that by 2007, concepts such as flexible workplaces and work-life balance should be part of the nuts and bolts of the workplace, along with fair if not – for the library profession at least – generous remuneration. If these ‘basics’ are not present, talented staff will compare and contrast elsewhere. Assuming they are present though, prospective Generation X and Y staff are then likely to look to other factors such as the degree to which they will be respected as individuals and colleagues in the workplace, if and how

their ideas will be valued, how they will be developed professionally, and for many the critical issue, how they will be supervised. For Generation X in particular, rigid hierarchies and micromanagement are definitely out! Sheahan however urges caution before organizations start radically altering work spaces or team structures:

Don't think that building a funky workspace is going to solve your problem. And don't think promising a really great work-life balance program is going to solve your problem. What is required is an underlying commitment to change from management – a philosophy that is preached and practiced. (Cooper, 2005, p. 21)

There is no value, for example, in offering flexible work hours at an organizational level if supervisors or outdated work practices make their application problematic at the operational level. Speaking in the context of business organizations in the late 1990s, Zemke et al nevertheless make a similar observation that “American companies have, for years, given lip service to the concept of treating employees as customers. With the advent of this generation [Y], that concept must move from pure dogma to literal, active practice.” (2000, p. 146) The same point might also be made in relation to libraries.

2. Provide plentiful access to meaningful professional development opportunities

For this author, the underlying message of CAVAL's 2007 Training Needs Survey is that the professional development preferences of the library workforce are moving inexorably away from higher level conceptual matters towards vocational, work-based skills. While not wishing to enter into debate here about whether or not librarians belong to a profession, it may be argued that the nature of our 'professional development' needs define to a large degree our occupational status in the workplace. The 2006 and 2007 surveys suggest an Australasian library workforce seeking professional development that is directly relevant to immediate needs, credible, convenient, good value for money, and above all, practical: related to outcomes and outputs. We might argue that the 'how' is now more critical for library and information workers from a professional development perspective than the 'why'. Professional development must have relevance to the everyday.

Again though, if we revisit our profiles of Generations X and Y, these findings should come as no surprise. In *Generation Y: Thriving and Surviving with Generation Y at Work* (2005), Peter Sheahan provides arguably the definitive guide to training Generation Y in the workplace. His approach may be summarised very simply in four points. For training to be effective, he argues, it must be relevant, interactive, personalised, and entertaining. The similarities between Sheahan's work and the outcomes of the 2006 and 2007 surveys are uncanny but not unexpected. Sheahan goes on to say:

Generation Y [and X too] will embrace training, providing it is relevant, interactive, personalised and entertaining. And most of all, providing it is effective and practical... You will need to be very diligent in who you choose to do that training, and as always, will need to make sure the workplace is open and conducive to the application of skills transferred in the training room. (Sheahan, 2005, p. 156)

3. Provide rich and varied access to mentors and other living career guides

Despite an outward confidence and independence, Generations X and Y do not have all the answers. Like generations before them, they still require guidance from more experienced and hopefully wiser colleagues. In New Zealand and Australia however, two decades of structural change in the workplace have left many mid-career – Generation X – managers to fend for themselves. Gary Neat, National President of the Australian Institute of Management in 2005, writes that “the informal mentoring processes so valued and enjoyed by their parents’ generation are largely gone thanks to 15 years of downsizing, restructuring and the sad loss of much corporate memory and goodwill.” (2005, p. 22)

Perhaps in response to this loss, many Generation X managers and other professionals are now actively seeking access to mentors, and not simply in the context of the work they do. The plethora of life coaches currently advertising in business magazines on both sides of the Tasman suggest that Generations X and Y are looking for candid perspectives and genuine support from people they can trust and respect; even if those insights and encouragement have to be purchased! Remember the rule of thumb: what is in this for me? Which is another point raised by Neat (2005): he observes that in the 2000s the mentor has become “a career enhancement tool just like the value-added degree [MBA] or well-timed interstate or overseas move” (p. 22). In short then, libraries looking to attract and retain staff into the future would do well to consider providing access to a mentor or coach as part of any employment package.

Conclusion

Drawing on recent research regarding generations in the workplace and training needs data obtained in Australasia by CAVAL, this paper has argued that a better understanding of generational change and sincere commitment to professional development combine to play a critical role in the recruitment and retention efforts of libraries. In stepping forward to embrace this future, libraries might consider the words of American writer Eric Hoffer - a Veteran who died in 1983 but who could have been describing Generations X and Y:

In times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.

Which brings us by way of conclusion to the subtitle of this paper, “More than Meets the Eye (or Robots in Disguise?”); an unsubtle homage to the robot Transformers of popular culture. As a parting thought, let us consider whether the traditional Veteran and Baby Boomer library environment – dare we say, robots in disguise – possesses the means in the 21st century to address acute workplace and generational change. There is strong evidence to suggest it does not. Instead, we should look to new strategies such as transforming professional development to envision a profession post 2010 that is truly more than meets the eye!

As Optimus Prime would say, if he were a librarian: “Autobots, transform and rollout!”

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