

ALCTS Leadership Development Committee Professional Development Gap Analysis White Paper July 2017

Rationale:

The charge of this group was to identify gaps in professional development opportunities that may exist for ALCTS members to improve their leadership skills. Because the focus was on leadership, this group chose to focus on skills that current open positions are requiring in the areas related to leadership or management.

Methods used:

1. We created a list of all professional development opportunities related to management that were offered by ALA divisions from 2013 through 2015.
 - a. Divisions included: ALCTS, AASL, ALSC, ACRL, ASCLA, LITA, LLAMA, PLA, RUSA, YALSA, ANMIG
 - b. Program types included: E-forums, webinars, online courses, mentoring programs, blog posts, online discussions, conference programs, seminars, & symposia
2. We reviewed 37 job descriptions of current openings in academic, public, and special libraries for managers with technical services responsibilities and created a list of the skills mentioned and the frequency in which the skills were mentioned within the job descriptions.
3. We then created overarching topics for the skills listed and separated them by hard skills (e.g., budget, assessment, cataloging, etc.) vs. soft skills (e.g., communication, project management, leadership, etc.).
4. Finally, we compared our list of professional development opportunities offered by ALA divisions from 2013 - 2015 with our list of the skills requested in current job descriptions for Technical Services Managers to identify gaps within the professional development offerings of ALA divisions

Analysis:

Our comparison of professional development opportunities and current job skills brought to light a number of areas where ALCTS programming and training opportunities could best serve the library community. As described above in our methods, we were concerned with identifying both hard skills (e.g., cataloging or budgeting) and soft skills (e.g., problem solving and supervisory skills). Our analysis revealed some important trends that could help ALCTS focus its programming as well as diversifying its means of sharing this materials in person and virtually.

As expected, though we normalized the variety of hard skills presented in the job descriptions, we were left with 18 final categories. This reflects the range of specific job tasks that falls under

the category of technical services. The technical services community is wide ranging, representing a variety of specialties and roles within libraries. This range is especially true of managerial positions, where a familiarity with a variety of operations is often needed. Our analysis revealed that, perhaps unsurprisingly, cataloging skills remains the most requested hard skill and represents an area where ALCTS has already made great strides in training. The continual representation of cataloging programming at conferences and the continual selling out of the “Fundamentals of Cataloging” course demonstrates that this area is and will continue to be a priority for ALCTS.

Our analysis revealed three categories of “hard skills” where there is a significant gap in the training market and which ALCTS could provide support. The first area is budget and financial skills. Seen in both academic and public library positions, these skills are often required to help librarians advance to more managerial positions. The required skills range from basic budget creation, to managing departmental budgets, fiscal year close, and confidence with specific software. ALCTS could offer a series on these skills that would not only appeal to a wide range of librarians in terms of experience, but also librarians from all types of libraries in all types of positions.

A second set of hard skills where ALCTS could focus is software. This includes providing training on specific types of software common among librarians (i.e., web content management system) as well as software development. Technology skills are increasingly important in libraries, both in terms of the tools we use to manage our collections and the collections themselves. Technology evolves and changes at a rapid pace. The technology training that librarians received as part of their degree will not be enough to take them through the totality of their career. There is also an increasing demand for librarians to be able to not only be excellent technology users, but also technology developers. In order to better leverage the data and resources we manage, librarians will need to be increasingly comfortable with more complex tasks that involve scripts, basic programming etc. This area could also provide a point of collaboration between ALCTS and LITA.

Finally, our analysis demonstrated a demand for assessment skills. This call is far more prevalent in academic libraries, as libraries are increasingly called up to use data to demonstrate their value as well as their impact on student success and learning. Our review revealed only two ALCTS programs that addressed assessment - a free webinar and a preconference. As the literature in academic libraries and the growth of assessment librarian positions shows, this is a growing area of librarianship where ALCTS could have a significant impact and an area where ALCTS could attract attendees from both public and technical services.

Though technical services soft skills are also incredibly important in terms of preparing libraries and leaders. In normalizing soft skills, they collapsed into into six general categories: project management and problem solving skills; communication skills; leadership skills, relationship and people-based skills; and research skills. It's significant to note that most of these skills are interpersonal and speak to the service-oriented nature of librarianship. If presented broadly

enough, soft-skill programming could be of interest to librarians of all types and experiences. Out of the six categories, the three that provide the most opportunity for ALCTS programming growth are management skills, project management, and leadership.

Management skills encompass supervising, managing, and evaluating staff, training staff, and promoting collaboration and professional growth. As librarians progress in their careers, they will often be called upon to manage or supervise others. Training and professional development in this area could range from very hands on almost hard skills (how to hire, how to write an annual review) to broader and more general interpersonal skills (what to look for in a potential employee, how to foster cross-departmental collaboration). Project management is another area that has the potential for this range of harder to softer skills. There are specific project management techniques and technologies that librarians could learn to leverage, such as workflow assessment and development, as well as broader topics such as managing change or problem solving. As above, such programming can be either tailored for the ALCTS community or expanded to encompass librarians from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

Finally, as perhaps of greatest interest to this committee, is the demand for leadership skills. This includes strategic planning and visioning, as well as the ability to lead during times of change. ALCTS and ALA provides a considerable amount of leadership training. However, the majority of this training occurs during on-site conference (18 examples compared to 7 webinars). With this and all other topics presented in this report, ALCTS would best serve the library community by diversifying their online or virtual training opportunities. Attending conferences involves a considerable outlay of time and money, both of which can be difficult to come by. The success of the virtual “Fundamentals of...” courses and e-forums, as well as the growth of virtual training opportunities through either library schools or organizations such as Library Juice Academy, shows that this is a viable and necessary way of delivering materials and support to the library community.

As mentioned above, we also investigated offerings by other ALA Division to identify these gaps and training opportunities for ALCTS. Following this section are some recommendations for possible partnerships or places that ALCTS may be able to refer members for continued training in some areas. It should be noted that training is normally, but not always open to all ALA members and/or discounts are offered to division members.

In the areas of hard skills where we identified significant gaps: budget and finance skills, software skills, and assessment skills there exist some possibilities for collaboration with other ALA Divisions. LLAMA identifies “budget creation and presentation” among its [leadership competencies](#). Although they have not offered training solely focused on this topic in the past few years, they may have resources or be able to recommend trainers for this area of expertise. Detailed information about LITA’s online education offerings were not available to us for this analysis. A search on their website reveals that there have been 8 Elearning programs focused on the use of specific software in libraries and 12 Elearning programs on programming or software development since 2011. Assessment is a topic that has been covered by many other ALA divisions, but a division does not stand out more than any others in this area.

Management and leadership are two strong areas of focus for LLAMA. Leadership focused training is also seen in many other ALA Divisions most notably PLA and ACRL. ALA also offers the Leadership institute which is an intensive in person training available to all members. ALCTS has also offered at least 2 leadership focused conference programs. Even though there is coverage of these two areas in other divisions of ALA, ALCTS members could possibly benefit from management and leadership training focused on our areas of work.

Conclusion:

Our analysis of recent professional development offerings across ALA and recent technical services job postings has identified opportunities for training in the areas of management and leadership skills, budget and finance, and software development and programming, all with a specific focus on technical services. We also identified an opportunity for ALCTS to expand virtual training opportunities to support more ALCTS members who cannot travel to conferences for training. Members of the Leadership Development Committee look forward to engaging with other ALCTS groups as we continue to monitor leadership development opportunities available to ALCTS members.

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