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<u>Relevance</u>

The ALIA 2016 conference theme is ENGAGE, CREATE, LEAD. The Change Makers project set out to create practical tools for leaders in public libraries to use in recruitment. These tools aim to assist public libraries to transform their workforce for the 21st century and not only recruit staff who are change ready and change resilient, but who are curious, passionate and engaged.

Abstract

Change Makers - are you one too?

Recruitment practices. Sounds dull, doesn't it? If you had asked us six months ago, we would have thought so too.

As future library leaders, we are responsible for building dynamic, responsive libraries that are seen as relevant to our respective communities and stakeholders. Of course, that means dynamic and responsive people too.

Our paper builds on collaborative research we undertook as part of the State Library of Queensland's inaugural Library Leadership 2015 program. We didn't know each other well; we didn't know what we were doing at first; but we knew that there was often a mismatch between the flexible, resilient, change oriented workforce our libraries need in the 21st century, and some of the ways we attract, recruit and induct new staff. That's where the Change Makers project was conceived.

Transformation starts here...

Transforming the library workforce for the 21st century needs to start at the beginning. At least that's the conclusion we arrived at. Libraries need to recruit *for* change.

We looked closely at current public library recruitment practices, and what other contemporary organisations did differently or better. Our research included:

- ☐ Skills audit – to identify gaps in our current workforce

- ☐ Position Description review

- o Research - businesses like the Apple store, Google, JB Hi Fi, existing position descriptions from libraries, other customer service industries; the Local Government Award; Human Resources; State Library of Queensland guidelines

  - o Create - new selection criteria based on the gaps from the skills audit; addresses issues highlighted from other position descriptions; focus on change ready/resilient staff, digital curiosity, promotional and marketing skills as well as traditional selection criteria such as customer service and team work.

- Interview process – we explored a more flexible style with a focus on behaviours and attitudes, and helping candidates relax during the interview with open questions.

We were stretched over the six months of the leadership program; challenged to think differently, and able to experiment with tools and techniques that produced radically different solutions to ones we may have arrived at in the past.

Our paper will inspire libraries to think differently about recruitment, and we provide evidence-based tools and templates to help you **do** something differently. Our presentation will be playful, engaging, practical and interactive. If we have learnt one thing from the program, it was that nothing is too dull for reinvention - even recruitment.

Background

Early in 2015 State Library of Queensland (SLQ) invited staff from Queensland public libraries to participate in their Leadership Program. This program assisted emerging library leaders with identifying common issues within public libraries relevant both now and into the future. One issue identified was the ability of staff to cope with the necessary changes and trends that are affecting the Library and Information sector. As librarians from regional public libraries in Queensland including Gladstone Regional Council, Redland City Council, Sunshine Coast Regional Council, we all had a shared experience in our respective workplaces with respect to dealing with change. Against the backdrop of constant and inevitable change in the public library sector, it was our experience that many staff were resistant or lacked the skills to cope with change. Out of this shared experience "The Change Makers" group was formed and set about investigating this idea further with the view to creating practical tools for leaders in public libraries.

Whilst the focus initially was on our existing staff and their inability to cope with change, we soon shifted our focus to the recruitment stage. We identified that by focusing our project on recruitment of entry level library roles, this would create an opportunity to recruit change resilient staff and ensure that employees had clear and accurate expectations going into the role. The scope of this project was entry level library assistant roles in a public library setting. Focusing on library positions without mandatory qualifications would allow us to produce a recruitment framework with the broadest application and greatest impact at the ground level of public libraries. Our aim was to transform the library workforce of the 21st century and in order to achieve this, we had to review, adapt and rethink our current recruitment processes. We

needed to think differently about how we recruited and consequently who we recruited. We wanted to widen the field in order to attract a broad and diverse range of applicants with varied experiences and backgrounds.

<u>The Project</u>

Transforming the library workforce for the 21st century meant rethinking the way we recruit staff and more crucially who we recruit. It is not known what the library of the future will look like, but we know it will involve change and therefore require staff who are comfortable with and resilient to change.

In questioning our current recruitment processes in our respective organisations, we explored the following:

- Are there skills and/or behavioural shortages in our existing library teams?
- Are we attracting a broad range of candidates through our position descriptions and job ads in our recruitment process?
- Do our existing position descriptions and selection criteria line up with the reality of our expectations for these roles?
- Are we asking the right questions in the interview process to draw these candidates out?
- Are we focusing too heavily on the skills of candidates which could be taught, and not enough on their behaviours and attitudes which are inherent?

This helped to focus our project on three key areas of recruitment for entry level library assistants in a public library setting. These 3 key areas were:

- Skills audit
- Position description

- Interview process

Skills audit

A skills audit is an effective tool used both to identify existing skill sets and behaviours within a team, as well as highlight any skill shortages and gaps in a team. Hallam (2014) utilized a skills audit as part of the research into skill development requirements for future library staff in Victorian public libraries. There were three clearly defined areas in the skills audit; foundation skills; professional skills and behavioural skills. Hallam also identified that whilst it may be necessary to focus on technical skills there should also be room for social skills that are required for dealing with the variety of situations faced when working within community environments.

The recruitment process would begin with identifying skill and behavioural shortages by conducting a skills audit of existing staff in a library team and ensuring that the results were considered during the remainder of the recruitment process. The results of the skills audit would highlight any disparities in corresponding position descriptions and also inform what behaviors needed to be drawn out of candidates in the recruitment process. In essence, the skills audit would help identify gaps in a library team which could then be addressed and considered throughout the remainder of the recruitment process. For example, if the existing team lacked team members with change resilience and flexibility, this could then be sort out in applicants during the interview process.

For this project, the skills audit was the crucial first step and highlighted a number of inconsistencies that existed between our expectations for library roles and what we were asking for in recruitment. Consequently, this lead to a review of the selection criteria and informed the next stage of the project which focused on position

descriptions. The Skills Audit attached in Appendix 1 covers basic skills and behaviours that are necessary for entry level library positions. These can be amended to include specific areas if necessary.

<u>Position Description</u>

The next phase of our project involved reviewing and ultimately rethinking the way we approached selection criteria and position descriptions for entry level library assistants. We asked ourselves whether current position descriptions for entry level library assistant actually lined up with our expectations or aspirations for these roles in our respective organisations.

We explored other library position descriptions from outside our organisations, as well as looking outside the library profession. Other organisations we looked at included the Apple store, Google and JB Hi-Fi. In comparing these to our existing position descriptions, we identified issues to be addressed in creating a new position description:

- o Overall, library selection criteria contained little or no mention of change resilience or change of any kind
- o References to technology were usually focused on basic word processing, Microsoft office suite, with no mention of social media or digital curiosity
- o There was little mention of promotional/marketing skills. We expect our library assistants to promote and "sell" our services in their interactions with the community but this was not reflected in selection criteria
- o Previous library experience required or desired was a common trend in many entry level positions descriptions. We wanted to broaden the

scope for recruitment and invite candidates with diverse and varied backgrounds, not narrow it to internal and existing pools of library staff.

We found that there was a disparity between what we were asking for in the selection criteria of position descriptions, and the reality of what we were expecting from candidates in these roles. We are recruiting for the library of tomorrow and as service delivery in public libraries evolves and changes, so too must our recruitment practices. Whilst selection criteria such as customer service and teamwork skills would still need to be included, there were other criteria that needed to be updated, removed or added to position descriptions. We created sample selection criteria that provides a solid foundation for the position description of an entry level library role which could be easily adapted to suit the specific needs of individual organisations.

Change is inevitable and change is the new norm in libraries. The State Library of Queensland's Vision 2017 states "Libraries need to embrace new ways of doing business to respond to customers' needs and reach new audiences. This requires a profound reimagining of the mission of public libraries in new and relevant ways and the courage to experiment with new service models." (Vision 2017, 2014) Consequently, public libraries will need staff who can embrace and adapt to change and be resilient to the challenges that change brings. This therefore needs to be reflected in the position descriptions of library roles. We created the following sample selection criteria to reflect how change resilience can be addressed in a position description for an entry level library role:

> *Demonstrated ability **to engage and adapt to a changing work***
> ***environment**, including resilience, flexibility and innovation*

Technology is constantly evolving and so too are the ways that libraries interact with it. "21st century public libraries are community digital hubs – one stop destinations to test drive and learn about the latest technology. They are experiential, entrepreneurial, experimental spaces where access to technology enhances opportunities to learn, work and create" (Technology Trendsetters, 2015). Therefore, libraries need to recruit staff who are comfortable yet curious is this space and are proactive, willing to try, tinker and share their knowledge with others. The position description therefore needs to include this concept of digital curiosity. We created the following sample selection criteria to reflect this idea:

> ***Confident technology skills and digital curiosity*** *including a proactive approach to new technology, social media platforms, software and the ability to share knowledge and troubleshoot*

The ability to advocate the library and its services in the community is an essential role for all library staff. We need staff who are confident and articulate in promoting library services. The following sample was created to reflect this expectation:

> *High level verbal and written communication skills including the **ability to confidently promote and market library services** to clients with varying needs*

The other key area we wanted to address in creating the position description was statements around previous library experience being required or desired. By broadening the scope and appeal of entry level positions, this could potentially attract candidates with the skills and behaviours identified through the skills audit. We felt it was important not to deter potential applicants who have no previous library experience and we therefore created the following sample selection criteria:

Basic understanding of the role of public libraries

Creating relevant selection criteria for the position description was a crucial part of the project and formed a strong foundation for the final stage, the interview process. The full version of our sample position description can be found in Appendix 2.

<u>Interview Process</u>

The final stage of recruitment we looked at was the interview process, with a particular focus on the interview questions themselves. Based on the skills audit and selection criteria from the position description, the interview questions provide an opportunity to explore the behaviors and draw out the best candidate for the position.

It was important to develop questions that would allow candidates to showcase their behaviors and attitudes, not just their technical skills. Sample interview questions include:

> *Tell me about the most difficult change you have had to make in your professional career. How did you manage the change?*

> *Tell us about a time when you took responsibility for a mistake you made. What did you learn from this?*

In addition to addressing the selection criteria through the interview questions, by including criteria around team fit any further gaps in the existing team which were highlighted in the skills audit can be addressed. In this section, the interview panel will consider their current team make up and where the candidate fits with this.

*Refer to your team's **skills audit** and look at three areas where you are looking for some additional skills or contributions. Consider how each of the applicants might contribute to filling the gaps in your team.*

A full version of sample interview questions can be found in appendix 3.

Conclusions

Transforming the library workforce for the 21st century needs to start at the beginning. At least that's the conclusion we arrived at. Libraries need to recruit **for** change. By identifying skill shortages through the skills audit, crafting a position description that attracts a broad range of applicants and asking the right questions, we aim to recruit staff with the right attitudes and behaviors to be change resilient. The Change Makers project set out to create practical tools for leaders in public libraries to use in recruitment. These tools aim to assist public libraries to transform their workforce for the 21st century and not only recruit staff who are change ready and change resilient, but who are curious, passionate and engaged in the workplace.

Appendix 1 – The Skills Audit

Skill/Behaviour	Competent	Need training
Customer Service		
Positive customer interactions		
Dealing with difficult customers		
Tailor interactions to varying needs of a diverse range of clients		
Working under pressure		
Dealing with external clients (corporate bookings/ community groups)		
Team Skills		
Working with others		
Dealing with conflict		
Collaborating		
Including the contributions of others		
Motivation of self/team mates		
Change and Innovation		
Change resilience		
Adaptable/flexible		
Change champion		
Problem solving		
Open to new ideas		
Open to new opportunities		
Technical Skills		
Confident with new technology		
Digital curiosity		

Skill/Behaviour	Competent	Need training
Proactive approach to trends/innovation		
Social media		
Library applications		
Trouble shooting		
Microsoft suite		
Apple devices		
Android devices		
Windows/other devices		
Scanning/printing services		
Library specific		
Dewey system		
Library Management System		
Search strategies		
Escalating requests		
Online searching		
Digital collections		
Personal		
Confidence		
Time management		
Positive		
Empathetic		
Customer focused		
Promotes library services		

Appendix 2 –The Position Description

Position Description – Library Assistant

The library assistant position supports Council's direction and contributes to branch libraries by providing an effective and efficient public library service, meeting the needs of its members and promoting positive relationships and communication between Council and the community. This position provides high level customer service to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of a progressive library service that fosters and develops literacy in all its forms.

1	Achievement in the provision of customer service to ensure positive customer interactions with a diverse range of clients with varying needs
2	High level verbal and written communication skills including the ability to confidently promote and market library services to clients with varying needs
3	Demonstrated ability to engage and adapt to a changing work environment, including resilience, flexibility and innovation
4	Strong technology skills and digital curiosity including a proactive approach to new technology, social media platforms, software and the ability to share knowledge and troubleshoot
5	Proven track record in working as a positive team member in a customer focused and flexible environment, including working collaboratively to support and encourage others and proven time management and organisational skills.
6	Basic understanding of the role of public libraries

Appendix 3 – The Interview Questions

What key thing motivated you to apply for this position?

What key skills & attributes would you bring to this role? ie. why should you be chosen as the preferred candidate?

Question 1 – Customer Service

Option 1 - What have you done to promote great customer service?

Option 2 - Can you give me an example of a particularly difficult customer you had to deal with and how you used your skills to successfully overcome the problem they had?

Option 3 - How do you ensure you include the contributions of others? How do you ensure you have all the information you need before you commence an activity or task?

Option 4 - How do you work under pressure? Please provide an example and the outcome of the situation?

Question 2 – Communication

Option 1 – Please tell me about a situation where someone was performing badly in your team – what was the situation? how did you deal with it ? and what was the outcome?

Option 2 – Please explain what good team comradery means to you?

Option 3 – How do you deal with conflict? Please provide an example and what was the outcome?

Option 4 – Can you give me an example of a time when you had to motivate a colleague or team in a challenging work environment?

Question 3 – Change and Innovation

Option 1 – Tell me about the most difficult change you have had to make in your professional career. How did you manage the change?

Option 2 – Tell me about a difficult obstacle you had to overcome recently at work? How did you overcome this?

Option 3 – Describe how you have brought about business change through use of technology?

Option 4 - Tell me about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes/operations worked. How did you measure the success?

Option 5 – What are the key factors that make a successful Library?

Question 4 - People

Option 1 - What type of support do you offer to others in your team? Please provide an example of this.

Option 2 – How would your team describe you in 3 words?

Option 3 - How do you ensure that you always treat people with courtesy and respect?

Option 4 - Tell us a time when you took responsibility for a mistake you made. What did you learn from this?

Question 5 – Technology and Innovation

Option 1 - How do you prioritize tasks at work?

Option 2 – How do you stay calm under pressure? Please provide an example with the outcome.

Option 3 – How do you plan daily and weekly activities? How do you ensure they are actioned in a timely manner?

Option 4 – Scenario: A colleague criticizes you in front of others – you think they were being foolish rather than malicious. How do you react?

Organisational Fit

Consider how the applicant might fit into an organisation. This might be based on a combination of their past work experience, and their responses in their application. What could the person bring to the organisation that might be needed? How broad are their contributions likely to be? Do they have a global view if it is a requirement for their role - are they likely to see the big picture? How relevant is this to the advertised position? What might their point of difference be?

Team Fit

Consider the existing team. It is likely that you will have many of the same type of characters within your team. Are they similar to the manager/supervisor? People most often recruit people like themselves. What has your team got covered? What is it lacking? Refer to your team skills audit and look at three areas where you are looking for some additional skills or contributions.

Consider how each of the applicants might contribute to filling the gaps in your team. For example; do you have too many "bright ideas people" but maybe nothing ever gets finished. Do you have lots of "creative's" but no one who dots the i's and crosses the t's? A balance is what you are striving for. Consider how an applicant might add a missing piece to your teams puzzle.

Score how well this applicant fits into the team at this time.

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