We're on each other's team: Removing the barriers to librarian and library technician collaborations

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Outline

- Warm up activity
- Literature review
- Successful collaborations
- Scenarios
We hold each other up

Ice Breaker

Spaghetti Marshmallow Challenge

Build a tower using only the tools provided:
- Plasticine/modelling clay
- 20 pieces of raw spaghetti
- 1 marshmallow

Allotted Time: 10 minutes
Follow-Up

- What was the hardest part of the challenge?
- Easiest?

https://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_build_a_tower

Literature review

1990’s literature pointed to:

- lack of recognition of technician contributions
- tension between librarians and library technicians due to increasing overlap between roles
Key Articles - overlap

...both librarians and library technicians perceive their roles as growing in scope and complexity and that the lines of responsibility are blurring. (James, Shamchuck, & Koch, 2015)

Key Articles - tension

- Librarians exhibit some ingroup bias (Fragola, 2009)
- Librarians underutilize classified staff as collaborators (Perini, 2015)
- Isolation of technicians due to hours (Fragola, 2009)
Why is it worth it?

Libraries should be using every skill at their disposal, whether or not that skill comes from a degree librarian....Libraries will suffer when they let talent wither simply because it was sitting in the wrong silo or traditional library position. (Kowalski, 2017, p. 5)

Key Articles - solutions

- Addressing tension and overlap is going to lead to greater productivity and retention
- Solicit input from all staff regarding decisions
- Library technicians who upgrade their skills have largest toolboxes
Key Articles - what helps

- Training opportunities for all staff (intergroup contact)
- Openness to new ideas from library administration
- Greater scope for advancement for technicians
- Job rotation, cross training, teams that include librarians and library technicians
- Encourage questions and suggestions from all staff

Reflective Activity

THINK. PAIR. SHARE

one successful partnership you have had with a technician/librarian - what made it a success?

one partnership you have had with a technician/librarian that was not successful - why didn’t it work?
Successful Collaboration

1. Everyday workflow solutions
2. Professional development
3. Major projects

Barriers to Collaboration

1. Isolation
2. Exclusion
3. Lack of support
Scenario 1. You are a technician in a working group developing a set of instructional videos. The group has three librarians and two technicians and is in the scripting stage.

The Chair suggests that each video should have one or two learning outcomes before writing the script. Each team member is asked to develop learning outcomes for one video. One of the librarians immediately says that setting learning outcomes should only be the job of a librarian.
Scenario 2. Two library staff, one a librarian and one a library technician, have been collaborating on a project and are keen to present their experiences at a library conference. They are both excited about being able to work together on this conference session, since neither of them has presented at a conference before and they like the idea of having a supportive co-worker with them. An outline is developed and presented to the library director for approval. The library technician is told that they will not be able to participate because of their responsibilities on the circulation desk.
Trust & Respect

One change you will make in your workplace
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Thank you!