Proposal to Establish a Library Technical Expert Program

Draft 1-18-90, Roy Tennant

Background and Justification

The Library operates in an increasingly technical environment. Frequently used reference sources are as likely to be on CD-ROM or online as they are in a book. Using these resources effectively requires a similar increase in the technical expertise of Library staff. Without knowledge about the relative merits of CD-ROM networks it is difficult to make an informed decision on the appropriate implementation of these systems. Without knowledge about downloading online catalog citations into a personal bibliographic database, it is difficult to advise faculty on this issue. There are many technical issues which require research, documentation, identification of issues requiring policy decisions, and specification of financial and staff impacts.

Because of these obvious needs, many librarians are struggling to keep abreast of advances in a variety of technical areas. By attempting to be technical jacks-of-all-trades we are quickly becoming masters of none. Clearly no single person can keep up on all the technical issues related to libraries. In this current atmosphere of rapid change, we need to create and utilize new techniques which will allow us to keep up with and even anticipate the critical technical issues of our profession.

Proposal

Establish a formal Library program to develop and support a cadre of "Library Technical Experts". Each technical expert would be responsible for supporting the Library in a particular technical area. Experts will receive a .25 appointment to the program, which would replace a similar amount of their previous responsibilities.

The Public Services Automated Systems Coordinator (PSASC) will coordinate the program. When required, the PSASC will convene the experts to compare techniques and methods for accomplishing the objectives of the program. The PSASC will facilitate communication as needed between the experts and Library staff (e.g., coordinating periodic attachments to CU NEWS on expert topics).

Library technical experts would be expected to:
* read current literature in the field, summarizing and routing to other Library staff as appropriate.
* draft position papers as required for Library policy advisory committees and/or Library administration
* give presentations to Library groups or staff at large
consult with peers at other institutions
serve on appropriate task forces or committees
draft documentation as required

Implementation

Suggested procedure/policy:
1) Identify areas/issues which require in-depth technical knowledge.
2) Advertise for persons interested in becoming a technical expert in one of the identified areas. Volunteers would be required to obtain the permission of their department head to participate in the program.
3) Library administration will decide an appropriate method of selecting volunteers. Volunteers who have already demonstrated knowledge and aptitude in the area they are applying for are preferred.
4) Whenever possible, the appointed volunteer's Library unit will be assisted/reimbursed for the time given to the program.
5) Appointments would be made for one year. There is no limit to the number of times a person could be appointed to a technical expert position.

Suggested issues for technical experts:
* CD-ROM
* Hypermedia
* Downloading from online catalogs or databases into personal bibliographic files
* Desktop publishing
* Internet issues/resources
* Expert systems
* Electronic mail
  + Electronic texts (full-text online)
Proposal to Establish a Library Technical Expert Program: Goals and Objectives
Draft 4-9-90, Roy Tennant

Program Goals

* Increase the technical knowledge and expertise of Library staff
* Optimize staff time devoted to learning about technical issues
* Monitor the changing electronic environment as it applies to Library systems and services
* Organize and recognize staff initiative in addressing the changing technical needs of the Library
* Encourage and support communication and cooperation between departments on technical issues

Program Objectives

* Create a monthly attachment to CU News instructing staff on a program topic on a rotating basis
* Offer periodic instructional workshops on program topics
* Prepare summaries of current literature for Library staff
* Write summary explanations of the program topic, its potential to serve Library needs, and identify issues needing resolution
* Serve as a resource to Library committees and task groups