

Continuing Education: How to Pursue It

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Let's start our discussion with a fable.

Once upon a time a Sea Horse gathered up his seven pieces of eight and cantered out to find his fortune. Before he had traveled very far he met an Eel, who said, "Psst. Hey, bud. Where 'ya goin'?"

"I'm going out to find my fortune," replied the Sea Horse proudly.

"You're in luck," said the Eel. "For four pieces of eight you can have this speedy flipper, and then you'll be able to get there a lot faster."

"Gee, that's swell," said the Sea Horse, and he paid the money and put on the flipper and slithered off at twice the speed.

Soon he came upon a Sponge, who said, "Psst. Hey, bud. Where 'ya goin'?"

"I'm going out to find my fortune," replied the Sea Horse.

"You're in luck," said the Sponge. "For a small fee, I will let you have this jet-propelled scooter so that you will be able to travel a lot faster."

So the Sea Horse bought the scooter with his remaining money and went zooming through the sea five times as fast.

Soon he came upon a Shark, who said, "Psst. Hey, bud. Where 'ya goin'?"

"I'm going out to find my fortune," replied the Sea Horse.

"You're in luck. If you'll take this short cut," said the Shark, pointing to his open mouth, "you'll save yourself a lot of time."

"Gee, thanks," said the Sea Horse, and zoomed off into the interior of the Shark,

there to be devoured.

The moral of this fable is that if you're not sure where you're going, you're liable to end up someplace else—and not even known it. (Mager, p. 1)

Is this Sea Horse representative of you? Many of us treat our continuing education very casually. If we happen to hear of something that sounds good, we take it. This passive pursuit of CE is no better for the library profession in general than it is for individual practitioners. Assuming responsibility for one's continuing education is the obligation of each professional. Every librarian should take time to have a well-thought-out approach to her or his professional development so that she or he doesn't end up like the Sea Horse in the fable—somewhere else.

Assuming responsibility for one's professional development involves assessment, goal setting, achievement, and evaluation. This may sound involved; and compared to what we usually do, it is. However, this approach is more likely to get better over-all results, and there is great satisfaction in the experience of having taken control over the direction of one's life. The remainder of this article is devoted to suggestions

for how individuals can plan and direct their own CE experiences.

Step One: Long Range Goals

The first step in formulating a CE plan is a critical self-examination of where you are professionally and where you want to go. Step One on the work sheet at the end of this article asks you to think ahead to what position you would like to have in five or ten years. This may be a difficult question for you to answer, especially if you have never thought that far ahead before. Even if you can't answer the question, the process of thinking about it will help you begin to take charge of directing your professional future.

Don't feel that your goals are set in concrete once you have them written down. Goals can always be modified or even changed completely, but you must have goals before you can change them. This is a critical first step. As with the little Sea Horse, if you don't know where you are going, it will be difficult to get anywhere except by luck. And Lady Luck is not the best mistress to entrust with your future!

So set some direction or goal for yourself. Some examples of goals are listed below for those who need inspiration: these will vary depending on what stage you are already at in your career.

In 5 Years

1. to be well versed in all aspects of cataloging
2. to acquire a second Master's degree
3. to stay where I am but be better at my job & remain up-to-date

In 10 Years

1. to head a Cataloging Department
2. head a departmental library in a large academic library
3. to have a more responsible position

Step Two: Self-Assessment

After setting your goals, you must assess your skills and your ability to move towards those goals. What weaknesses do you have? In what areas do you need initial, additional or refresher training?

To help you in doing this, you can share your goals with colleagues and supervisors and ask what areas they feel you should work on. You should also examine your present and future job functions critically to see where educational efforts might make a difference. "Log activities which are part of the job . . . Record issues and problems which might be influenced by skill training or some other kind of learning." (Keeney, p. 18) The areas that you discover to work on may be related to knowledge in specific job arenas, problem-solving skills, administrative skills, or attitudinal changes. List those areas on the work sheet under Step Two.

Step Three: Short Range Goals

Looking at the areas where you need more education and training, you should now set several short range goals or learning objectives—things that can be achieved in six months or a year. Prioritize your areas of need and set a timetable as to when each will be started and completed. It is helpful to do this in one-year cycles, looking ahead each summer or spring, for example, to what you wish to accomplish in the next academic year. You may not be able to set exact times until step 4 where you investigate your learning resources in more detail.

Examples of short range goals (related to the sample long range goals in Step One) are:

1. to become familiar with AACR II cataloging rules
2. to take a (Chemistry) course
3. to learn to better manage my time

Step Four: Specify Performance Criteria

In order to monitor your progress and determine when you have achieved the desired results, you should decide up front what results you want—as specifically as you can in terms that you can measure. Use words that show action to describe your criteria, words such as those underlined below (produce, modify, identify, change).

Some criteria related to our last examples follow:

Learning Objective

1. to be come familiar with AACR II Cataloging Rule
2. to take a (Chemistry) course
3. to lean to better manage my time

Criteria

1. to be able to *produce*/ write original descriptive catalog copy for books using AACR II rules— or to be able to *modify* existing catalog copy to agree with specified AACR II rules
2. to complete the course by Spring, 1984 with a C or better grade
3. to be able to *identify* three specific ways I waste time and *change* them

Step Five: Select Learning Methods and Identify Resources

Now you must decide how you will learn the things you have selected. Consider your own learning style as well as all the possible ways you could learn. Don't choose an independent reading project if you learn better in a classroom situation. It may take some experimenting to become aware of your learning style. There are tests to help you determine this, but your own experience and instincts will probably serve you well if you look at the results of your experience and decide in what ways you learn best. If you haven't tried many different ways, experiment with some new ap-

proaches. Consider the various ways adults can learn and decide which are appropriate to your subject, adaptable to your learning style, and available to you in terms of cost, time, proximity, materials and people resources. Following are excerpts from the 'Taxonomy of Continuing Education models by Marvin Parrish (p. 81), which should give you some idea of the breadth of approaches.

Taxonomy of Continuing Education Models

A. Teacher Oriented Models: Teacher controlled educational process, typically classroom based with content coverage as a primary goal.

1. College/University curricula
2. Workshops, short courses and extension curricula
3. Programmed instruction/ Computer-assisted instruction
4. Study tours

B. Context Oriented Models: Agency controlled educational process, typically work setting based with work competence improvement as a primary goal.

1. In-service training
2. Apprenticeships
3. Residencies, internships, externships
4. Staff exchange

C. Learner Oriented Models: Learner controlled educational process, typically nonclassroom or work setting based with personal/professional development as a primary goal.

1. Independent study
2. Self-directed study

Looking at these approaches, remember that independent learning is better in an area where you already have some knowledge.

Now check your local library(!) to determine the resources available to you— courses, workshops, books, journals, people, AV materials, Computer assisted Instruction (CAI)

CE Planning Workshop

Step 1: Goal Setting
Current position:

What do I want to do in 5 years:

What do I want to do in 10 years:

Step 2: Self Assessment
Areas where I need more education/training are:

Step 3-6: Short Range Goals

Learning Objectives (Prioritized)	Time Line Start—Finish	Measurable Criteria	Resources	Actual Completion Date	Evaluation

programs, etc. Examine every opportunity carefully to be sure it meets your needs. Courses and workshops should have clearly stated goals and a statement of how they will be achieved (Martin, p. 32-33). Look at both the trainer and the presenting institution for reputation and experience. In Indiana the Council for Approval of Providers has been established under the auspices of the State Library to examine local CE offerings and providers and give its approval of quality. The ICAP seal appears on all publicity for approved events.

Be on the lookout for appropriate library resources and schedule them into your plans as you discover them. Don't just take whatever workshop comes your way—aggressively seek out ways to learn.

As you launch into a project, enlist the support of co-workers and supervisors. This technique has several benefits. Not only might they be potential teachers for some projects, but their awareness of your project will strengthen your resolve and help you keep on track to completion. Also, having a supervisor aware can allow that person to help you stay in tune with organizational objectives, as well as your own personal ones.

Step Six: Evaluate

The final step in the ongoing CE process is to evaluate the results of your efforts in terms of the criteria you set at the beginning and in view of any factors discovered during the course of the learning project. Instructors will do this in formal courses. You will have to do it for the less formal projects. You may establish the outside help of co-workers and supervisors in informal projects.

In your own informal and self-directed projects, keep your evaluation simple but specific. After your project,

can you do what you set out to do in your learning objective and did you meet the criteria you set up in your short term goals? Yes, no, partly, what part?

There are some questions to ask yourself as you evaluate;

1. Are my objectives and learning projects personally significant?
2. Do they fit with my long-term career anchors and direction?
3. Have I defined reasonably sized learning projects?
4. Are my learning projects specific enough to be measurable?
5. Have I located adequate people and resources to assist me in the project?
6. Has a key specific action been blocked by external forces?
7. Have I received any rewards for work completed?
8. Has time management/self discipline been a problem?
9. Has money been a problem?
(Keeney, p. 5)

If you find that you have learned what you set out to learn, you are ready to set or pick up a new goal and begin the process again. If you did not learn what you set out to, decide why (again with outside help if necessary) and either continue, change methods, or abort the attempt and try something else.

Step Seven: Document

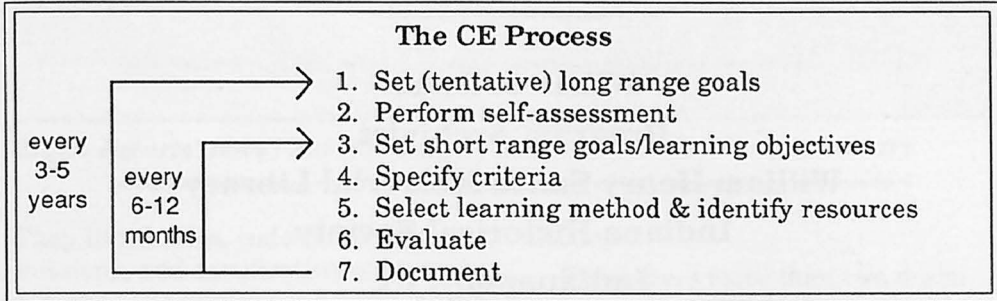
It is wise to keep a record of the CE experiences you have completed through the years. It can be an impressive indicator of your competence and a guide in helping you plan your future. This record can be your own personal resume file or something more. You can opt to pay for Continuing Education Units (CEU's) which are offered for some workshops and seminars, and are recorded in Indiana by Indiana University. This will provide you with outside documenta-

tion of certain types of CE experiences.

A source of outside documentation at the national level which allows you to record all types of CE is the CLENE

Registry.

This completes the CE process, which has a cyclical as well as a linear progression. The chart below pictures the steps we have discussed.



Summary

While libraries and library organizations support and encourage continuing education efforts of library staff, no formal recertification process exists which formalizes the process. It is up to each individual to take on the responsibility for her or his own professionalism. "At the core of professional development is the commitment to life-long learning, to self-evaluation and to continual upgrading of one's level of practice. The promise of continuing education can only be achieved if it is self-directed: Each professional must be the ultimate monitor of his or her own learning, controlling the stable or shifting design of its continuity." (Houle, p. 13, in Rosenfeld, p. 492)

The library community has from time to time looked at itself to determine in what ways it is a "profession". To be sure, there is one way to tell—a recognition that learning can never stop and that its course must be tended to.

Librarians—tend to your CE!

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