2021 03 15 Library staff

Ute, thanks for the Dortmund perspective. HR development seems to be very well anchored at the TU library already. Great. I'm learning a lot of new terms right now. Thanks for that, too!
- You're welcome ☺

What do you do against the shortage of applications?
1. Short-term: Extend the deadline of the job ad or wait and publish again (maybe it's the wrong time)
2. Long-term: develop employees and do another job posting with other tasks and skills
3. Longest-term: improve the image of libraries and emphasize on the value of libraries instead of tasks (e.g. freedom of information, open discourse, connecting media and people of all kind, enabling discovery …) (UE)

How do you deal with the raising numbers of library science students and sinking job posts?
- In Germany it's the opposite: The labor market can hardly be covered by the number of graduates (UE)

Do you have any data librarians?
- We have academic librarians and librarians with data skills with a different focus, depends on the tasks, and we have "it-staff" with different skills in coding who are part of workings groups (UE)

Hi, Ute thanks for your presentation! Do you also have a scheme for international internships ? How do your staff learn from other countries?
- Unfortunately we don't offer trainings like this, but we're glad about the "Librarian in residence", a scholarship for a residence program for German librarians in cooperation with the Goethe-Institute. https://www.bi-international.de/en_EN/programm-lir (UE)

What are the required skils for a modern librarian? What do you train the trainees to do?
- Skills for librarians: (some depend on type of library) (a selection)
    - communication skills (information desks and advice)
    - research skills
    - data literacy; cataloguing
    - management, marketing (how to run a library)
    - basic know-how in law (copyright, licensing, labor..)
    - basic know-how in information ethics
    - IT skills, digital literacy
    - "meta"-skills like educational skills (explaining things), being able and motivated to lifelong learning, self-motivation, networking skills, project management, teamwork… have an internal mindset about why libraries are necessary for society
- Trainees: basics in acquisition, indexing and user services (and take a look at "skills for librarians" ☺) (UE)

How do you deal with the blurring of what FAMIs are 'supposed' to do and what trained librarians are supposed to do, and the continued underpayment of FAMIs doing librarians tasks?
- Last year there was a good chance that employees could be promoted because the pay scale of the federal states has changed. Finally, employees are no longer paid according to the number of volumes in the library, but according to their work. We already had new regulations for the municipalities, then last year for the states. This offers better pay, more salary, especially for employees. We hope, it makes the job more interesting. Librarians with a BA often are responsible for managing services or higher quality tasks. (UE)

You have to understand that you work with people first and foremost - only then come books, media, data!
- Exactly (UE)

How are arranged exams or something like that to make sure that a person has reached the level?
- In personal interviews a supervisor gives feedback to new employees and vice versa (UE)

Hi Matthijs, what is YOUR talent???
- My talent is that I tend to see the beauty in people, rather than their deficits. I find it easy to trust my colleagues and I enjoy supporting them to nourish their talents and helping them grow to their full potential. In return, they reward this trust by accomplishing great things for the library. They help me to learn as well, which is why I like to be a library manager.

How do you engage subject librarians/Fachreferentinnen in the overall library goals?
- Every employee can take part in the discussions and the subject librarians are represented in our governing / executive committee, like other departments and staff positions, too (UE)

How do you deal with the blurring of what FAMIs are 'supposed' to do and what trained librarians are supposed to do, and the continued underpayment of FAMIs doing librarians tasks?

How do you discover the talent of the applicants?

How do you do your job interviews or do you do longer assessements?
- Once you have determined what you really need, this should be the topic of the job interview. During the conversation, you can find out in several ways whether you're on track. Personally, I like the STAR method to explore a situation in which the candidate used her/his talent. Furthermore, I am interested in what energizes a candidate (and what not).

What budget you have to develop this talent?
- In Dutch universities, 2% of the general wages is spent on staff development.

It is important to be able to make connections, between people, but also between a variety of subjects, topics, and (new) (technological) developments.
- MvO: I totally agree.

Some basic librarian skills still needed + knowledge of library networks, etc.? - do you offer a "basic course" then?
- MvO: at my library we offer a basic introduction program to get to know the library and your colleagues. After that, training will be mostly peer to peer and job specific.

Why is it that you can walk into any Dutch library - no matter where - and meet these motivated, modern, even "cool" people? In Germany, there are still so many introverted book-loving colleagues who are almost shy of people. How do you get these amazing people into our profession?
- Thank you for this kind feedback, yet I believe the same can be said of many German libraries. Most people love libraries, regardless whether they are introvert/extravert. However, at the front desk it helps to hire people who love people rather than books.
- Note from Germany: we definitely have cool people, too (U.E.)

Can you please reflect on the added value of library science schools on the level of a master (university). In Flanders we do not have this type of education anymore.
- MvO: in the Netherlands we do not have it either anymore.
- In short a few important tasks
    o educating in management and methods
    o educating on special tasks (data, law, ethics, education…)
    o doing research for our profession, for developing libraries and information institutions/providers
    o offering continuing education for employees with BA degree (or comparable) (UE)

In Germany it is difficult to switch the teams
- MvO: in the Netherlands, it is also difficult to change the organizational structure. It takes a lengthy formal procedure. Yet, a team is something you can start in an informal way. Because you want to do a project, or because you share the same interest and think it is useful to get together. I strongly believe that structure follows change, rather than the other way round. Nobody will change when the structure changes, but the structure will change if people change.
- Another context: In (HR) management it should be a part of employee development to enable employees working in different teams or offer task switching (UE)

I think hierarchy, or lack thereof, matters a lot. If you give people freedom, they will use it to everyone's advantage.
- Yes! (and yes, I was born in the seventies…)
- So let's give it a try ☺ (UE)

Recognizing, accepting and promoting talent is essential. An important approach for leadership and HR development.

If you have very small team, you can´t afford it...
- MvO: I would say, if you have a small team you need the best everybody can give. You cannot afford a single member to underperform.

- A special challenge, indeed! Important is cooperation with other institutions, departments, communities (UE)

Agree. I feel like in Germany in most libraries, hierarchical structures and the amount of bureaucracy often hinder being so open about bringing talented staff into the library that are passionated about their jobs and giving them the freedom to focus on their talent.
- MvO: Unfortunately, one can see examples of it everywhere. Yet, I know of some outstanding German examples where people are stimulated to grow.
- Unfortunatly there are black sheep. But on the long hand these libraries (these leaders) will have an even harder time. At the moment trainees and graduates can nearly choose where to work, so a good working atmosphere is an important factor to get applicants. (UE)

The last recruitment I did for our front-office desk is a young employee who studied tourism and worked in hotels. Probably it's easier to teach someone to be a librarian than to learn to smile even when in difficulty with users.
- MvO: Thank you for this remark, it is spot on. Some things are very hard to learn indeed. I admire your decision to hire someone with a talent for hospitality at your front desk.
- Everyone can learn. Even librarians ;-) It is important to explain and embrace the values of the library (work), if a training on values takes too long, maybe you have to consider whether there are other tasks for those who can't smile. (UE)

I really don't want to spoil the positive spirit, but let's talk about money. Many libraries are looking for computer specialists because many "cool" ideas and services are IT-based. Salary in the public sector can't keep up with the private sector. And, in my opinion, there are not so many "idealists" who want to work for the library to "do something good". And the ones we qualify: sooner or later they leave us.
- MvO: indeed, it can be hard to hire people for which there is a high demand in the private sector: project leads, IT, and law. In my experience though, there a quite a lot of people also in these areas that would like to leave the private sector to do something they feel is meaningful. They are not in it for the money, but they need something else: room for personal growth, autonomy, creativity. If you cannot give that – because the organization is quite hierarchical and bureaucratic – they will leave again sooner than later.
- I know very good computer specialists working in libraries who didn't quit because of interesting projects, a creative atmosphere, a safe job in public service with flexitime. (UE)

How do you define job positions within library, if all open/fluid?
- MvO: everybody has a job description. It is obligatory (collective labour agreement) and it provides clarity for everyone. Yet, one could make these descriptions quite generic. For instance, in my library cataloguers and front desk staff have the same job description: library service employee.

How do yu deal with social issues then/also reason to leave?
- MvO: this is a tough question without a context. In general, I would say that it helps to have a simple and short code of conduct: this is how we deal with each other in the workspace. You do not need to become BFF, but one should treat each other respectfully within an explicit social framework.

Ute, you mentioned that it is difficult to attract talented staff, what are you strategies to prevent walk out of talented staff?
- Interesting tasks, fair payment, participation, transparence, autonomy, and an atmosphere full of appreciation and confidence. (UE)

@matthijs what are your strategies to offer perspective for talented staff to continue their development?
- MvO: once you've had the dialogue about which talents one has and how to develop these, the next step would be to explore where to exercise these talents best. This could be at my library, it could be within the university, and it could be somewhere else. If it is not within the library, I offer to use my network to help my colleague connect to people that might support the next step.

You can motivate your team with: new challenges, current training and more salary
- MvO: possibly, depending on what makes your team tick. Research has shown that more salary only works out in the short term: after three months the effect has worn off. Suppose, your team is already motivated… what could you do (or not do) to keep it this way?

Smuggle librarians into IT:-)!
- And vice versa…:-)!

Matthijs, sometimes you have to go. That's the only way to develop both personally and professionally. That is what you have to be clear about. One should not have the expectation of being in the same institution for decades!
- Couldn't agree more!

The idea of letting employees go is wonderful, but the thing in my library is: if you want to go - we wish you all the best, but don't ask for support.
- MvO: I am sorry to read this. If the library would offer support, these colleagues could be ambassadors for your organization forever.

It's not just a matter of finding new employees. It is also becoming increasingly difficult to fill management positions. Does no one want to take on more responsibility? More cash no longer seems to be convincing.
- Maybe we should ask our young colleagues (UE)

Shame on you for not having library schools anymore...
- MvO: *blush*

Thank you for the presentations! Not all the (science) libraries in the Netherlands are the same. I can say from experience that freedom to expore and expand your own talent matters a lot!
- Indeed, it is an enlightening experience to visit other libraries - not only in the Netherlands.

Thanks a lot for both great presentations! If we have the time, a question to Matthijs: How are leaders chosen in the Netherlands? :)

- MvO: managers are selected by a standard recruitment process (job advertisement, interviews etc). The results vary greatly depending on the organizational culture: if you do what you always did, you get what you always had.

Ute, do you think our focus here in Germany on what education you have, and restricting people to what is on their degree paper hinders libraries from hiring talented people, and shifts the focus towards hiring people with a good degree?
- I hope not. In my opinion, a degree is important, of course, but if a skill just fits the need, then you should hire these talents ;-) (like in the Netherlands) It depends on the whole picture, besides degrees and certificates (for needed tasks) also experience in projects or even in voluntary work could be important (for needed skills). (UE)

Do we also need to redefine what librarians do, with regard to supporting educators and education?
- I think so. In Germany, a discussion has just begun the broad topic of educational action ("library pedagogy") (UE)

Self-motivated is the must-have talent!

My best data librarian graduated in American literature!

Isn't there lack of higher-level, modular training programmes? CAS courses in systematic searching, RDM, clinical librarianship... Courses that would both train career librarians for specialist tasks, and prepare scholars with no library background for a library role?
- MvO: actually, there are quite some options out there. I would like to mention LIBER, the European Associaton for Research Libraries. They offer lots of training activities in the areas mentioned here.

I think, the German focus on library education is also based of the labor agreements, which does not necessarily allow to pay a talent from another discipline the same wage as a person who has a library education.
- It is difficult, but not impossible. The collective agreement has changed, it is quite possible to be classified accordingly even with similar qualifications and experience. (UE)

Would you do that as first step of hiring - or final round?
- <mark>Lost context</mark>

But what if you work in a university library and the university needs to save a lot of money. Currently, savings are being made in service, although there are already far too few staff. Then the employees lose their passion and their motivation... The talent is then no longer shown and not seen, although there are many great and dedicated employees.
- MvO: Lack of money can be a destructive force. If you face a budget cut of 20% or more, the only thing you can do is to let go staff and start mending the pieces left of your services afterwards. In any organization you will have a competition for more money, so better be transparent about how you spend it: you can show what you could deliver if you had more, or

show what services will terminate if you receive less. Indeed, trying to do the same with less money is really demotivating.

@Matthijs! Unfortunately, there can be non-talent as well! Don't you think , too? And in Germany it is quite complicated to have non-talent go... Any experience from you?

- MvO: I cannot recall experiencing non-talent, but I see quite often people doing something they do not like and are not particularly good at. I believe though they do have a talent. Certainly, they cannot use it in the work they currently have or maybe they are not even aware of their real talent. Whatever may be the case, it is highly probable that this person is unhappy and her/his manager is unhappy about the performance too. Both in Germany and the Netherlands collective labour agreements make it nearly impossible to send someone off. Fortunately, I would say, because I do not think this is the right solution. To me, it feels disrespectful to only see the underperformance on the task level and not the entire person - including qualities you might not be aware of as a manager. Without downplaying the underperformance, one could still have a respectful dialogue how one could move on to job that matches the qualities someone has and which ultimately will give more joy. And how you can support your employee on this journey.

I think here in Germany we could easily use the FAMIs we already have in our institution as brilliant and talented librarians, but since we require a bachelors degree, they are often stuck doing librarians jobs without getting properly payed for it or getting the proper recognition for it.

- I think if someone is motivated to develop and wants to take on more responsibility, you should find a way. We have all couple of years highly motivated employees who want to complet further training for bachelor's degree. And I know many libraries that have been able to give their "FaMIs" much higher wages due to the new pay scale, in some cases the salary is close to that of librarians. But I know some library directors (and/or staff councils), who still have to fight for fair payment of their staff. (UE)

Have you ever thought of hiring people from abroad?

- MvO: Yes, not as a goal but it is the result of publishing job announcements in English and introduce anonymous hiring. The last five hires at Erasmus University Rotterdam have their roots in at least three different continents.

Is speaking the native language Dutch/German important?

- MvO: yes it is, as it helps you to communicate with your colleagues. Erasmus University has a bilingual policy, so you can manage if you have only a command of English. Still we ask from every applicant the willingness to learn Dutch (or English).

As a relatively recent Library Science graduate currently looking for a job, this discussion is extremely helpful and informative!

Netherlands colleagues: would you recommend the Germans to shut down Library Schools? (serious question)

- **NO I would recommend keeping them open !!**
- **No i would not recommend it**

- MvO: no, I would not, on the contrary, I envy Germany having the Library Schools. It would be helpful though if libraries were granted more freedom in hiring people without a Library School certificate.

Are libraries in the Netherland bounded by collective payment agreements or have you possiblities to determine the salary of the employee yourself?
- MvO: Like in Germany, we have a collective labour agreement, which prescribes what payment goes with each position.

Why were they closed?

humor?

For people looking at a formal bachelor's or master's in LIS: there are English language distance courses and programmes available in Sweden, free for EU citizens

You have to do it with passion - and humor!

Humor is very important for a leader in my opinion

Yes, especially for a leader! :D

Many thanks for interesting and informative presentations and discussion! As an LIS educator, it is important to understand what we should focus on when training students to work in libraries. The idea of talent is interesting - how can we seek to foster talent in LIS training? Lots to think about, thank you!