Editorial

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My library is seeking to fill several professional positions, including two that fall within my division of Access Services. One is our director of Technical Services, and the other is a new position that we have titled collection management and preservation strategist. Like many libraries, we have not filled vacant positions for some time. As we look to hiring from outside the University of Minnesota Libraries, I have been giving thought to how we orient and welcome these new professionals. The human resources profession calls this onboarding and notes that effective onboarding is essential for long-term engagement and retention.

Fortunately, the University of Minnesota (UMN) Libraries have a tool kit to use when new employees join the organization. This resource has four components: a supervisor's checklist, plus lists of new employee resources (including a link to online definitions of our myriad acronyms), e-learning modules, and in-person training sessions (both required and recommended) offered by the UMN Libraries. I have been reviewing these tools as I prepare to orient these new professionals. While all are extremely valuable, they focus only on what an individual needs to do his or her job. They effectively orient the employee but pay little attention to what I would call integration or socialization. I want these people to leave at the end of the first day thinking "I am welcomed and I belong here." In addition to providing information about our business processes, how do we acculturate an individual to ensure that he or she feels comfortable as a member of the organization?

Some techniques for socialization are familiar and include scheduling lunches during the first day and first few weeks. Department employees might wear nametags the first few days. While these activities can start to introduce coworkers, additional ideas might have merit. One possibility might be entrees into the unofficial groups that all organizations have. Have several employees formed a softball team or bowling league? Do a few people routinely gather to go for a walk during the noon hour? Does an informal group gather monthly over lunch to talk about movies, theatre, or current professional literature? If a supervisor is aware of such groups, he or she can consider making these connections for the new employee.

As I look to hiring a new director of Technical Services, a department with forty-seven employees, I want to give this person as many resources as possible to be effective and engaged. I particularly want to make the new hire feel welcomed and comfortable from the first day on the job. One tool I think we will create is a photo album with pictures of all the Technical Services employees with brief descriptions of each person's responsibilities and where they fit into the department structure. I am hoping that each current employee will be willing to add a brief personal introduction to him- or herself. This seems more cordial than the typical organization chart, which I will, of course, provide.

My goal is to create a sense of connectedness with individuals, the Technical Services unit, and the University of Minnesota Libraries. We will use the valuable tools and resources developed by the UMN Libraries' Organization Development unit and do our best to supplement these in personal ways. I want to do everything I can to ensure a long, productive, and satisfying experience for our new librarians.