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Building Capability: Formulating the Staff Training and Development Agenda for Public Library Staff

Executive Summary & Recommendations

April 2000

(The Report of the *Branching Out* Staff Training and
Development Panel)

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The Staff Training and Development Panel

Terms of reference

1. to identify an order of priority for the implementation of recommendations;
2. to arrange for the setting up of any working groups that the Steering Group considers appropriate to advance individual recommendations or groups of recommendations;
3. to establish performance measures for the implementation of recommendations;
4. to prepare a progress report for the Minister at six monthly intervals.

Membership

Chair

- Norma McDermott, Director, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna

Members

- Noel Crowley, County Librarian, Clare County Council
- Brian Johnston, County Manager, Cavan County Council
- Gerry Rooney, Human Resource Officer, Local Government Management Services Board
- Michael Sands, Training Officer/Administrative Officer, Dublin Corporation
- Austin Vaughan, County Librarian, Mayo County Council

Researcher

- Joanne Kavanagh

The Panel met five times during the six month span of the project.

Executive Summary

*We believe that the one of the keys to realising the potential of public libraries in delivering an excellent service as outlined in **Branching Out** is through nurturing the talent and building upon the capability of our most important resource, which is our staff.*

Following on from the publication of **Branching Out** in November 1998, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government established a Steering Group to oversee the implementation of its recommendations. The Steering Group in turn established three panels to look into the implementation of specific recommendations. The remit of the staff training and development panel was to report to the Steering Group on how to make progress on implementing the recommendations of **Branching Out** relating to the training and development of public library staff.

As part of its task, the panel undertook a pilot survey of training needs for all staff in four library authorities. The results of the survey were analysed and reported at a national conference, held in February 2000, which was attended by 100 delegates, representative of the major stakeholders. At the conference workshops, delegates ratified the findings of the survey.

Our main recommendation relates to the establishment of a standing committee on staff training and development, representative of the main stakeholders including public library staff, to implement the recommendations of **Branching Out** through a partnership process and through the implementation of the enabling mechanisms identified in this report '**Building Capability: Formulating the Staff Training and Development Agenda for Public Library Staff**'.

The panel recommends that, as a matter of urgency, attention should be given to implementing a staff training and development programme, especially on the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for public library staff. Public library staff have several roles to play in the provision of ICT services to the public.

All of these need to be addressed if the public library service is to play its part in creating an inclusive society and ensuring access for all in this information age.

This is a central plank in government policy as outlined in the *Government's Action Plan for Implementing the Information Society* (1999), the ***Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*** (2000) and in the recent Information Society Commission document *'IT Access for All'* (2000). The Department of the Environment and Local Government and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna are examining this issue with local authorities and other partners participating in the ***Branching Out*** Steering Group.

We make other recommendations concerning the responsibilities of local authorities, library authorities, the Department of the Environment and Local Government, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, and the Local Government Management Services Board. These relate to the development and promotion of a staff training and development agenda which is at present under active consideration, and the resource implications of such an agenda. This agenda needs to be fully integrated with a general staff training and development programme for local government. We need to ensure that public library staff understand and participate fully in the development of local government services to local communities, and that ***Branching Out*** deliberations are advanced through the partnership process.

The panel examined in detail the recommendations in ***Branching Out*** relating to staff training and development. We identify enabling mechanisms which should be initiated to ensure the implementation of these recommendations. Given the cross-over in the roles of local and national bodies which relate to local governance, we address each enabling mechanism to either individual stakeholders or, in cases where co-operation will be the fundamental factor, to two or more stakeholders. The enabling mechanisms are intended to lead to convergence in the formulation of a structured agenda for the future of staff training and development in the public library service.

The panel commends An Chomhairle Leabharlanna on the establishment of a training and trainers database, and a placements database. These databases will assist library authorities in the provision of appropriate training courses and will assist library staff in availing of opportunities to learn new skills in other organisations.

We set out below and detail the main recommendations of this report as follows:

- That a Standing Committee on Staff Training and Development be established to implement the recommendations of ***Branching Out*** and the recommendations and enabling mechanisms identified by the panel.
- We recognise the importance of promoting and developing a staff training and development programme in the public library service, especially in relation to the use of ICT.
- Library authorities need to recognise the resource implications of the staff training and development agenda proposed in this report, ***Building Capability***.
- We recommend strongly the integration of policies and practice in the staff training and development programmes of both library authorities and local authorities
- The need for co-operative ventures in staff training and development in other library sectors and in allied sectors such as the arts, cultural and heritage sectors and other interested parties.

Recommendations

Recommendations of Branching Out

Recommendations made in *Branching Out* are detailed below in order of priority as identified by the staff training and development panel.

- 1. Library authorities should recognise the long term commitment of their staff in a concrete way, and devote the investment in human resources needed to take the library service into the new century. (*Branching Out*, p. 50.)**
- 2. The project team recommends that each library authority should formulate a staff training and development plan. It is recommended that the plan should initially cover a 3-year period. The local authority Training Officer should be involved at each stage of the Staff Development Plan. (*Branching Out*, p. 50.)**
- 3. The project team recommends that An Chomhairle Leabharlanna should assist in the design of Staff Development Plans in a three way partnership that also includes the local authority Training Officer. (*Branching Out*, p. 50.)**
- 4. The project team recommends that library authorities put in place a staff mobility policy aimed at extending public access to specialist knowledge throughout the library area of responsibility. This policy may include placements or staff exchanges with other cultural institutions such as museums or archives. (*Branching Out*, p. 95.)**
- 5. The project team recommends that each local authority ensures that appropriate library staff are included in the general local authority Staff Development Plan and its Programmes. (*Branching Out*, p. 52.)**

- 6. An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, in liaison with local authority training officers and library staff, should assess how open learning tools can be optimised for library staff. (*Branching Out*, p. 52.)**
- 7. The project team recommends that all library staff should have a detailed knowledge of cultural resources available. This should be developed as an integrated part of the Library Staff Development Plan. (*Branching Out*, p. 95.)**

Recommendations made by the Staff Training and Development Panel

Throughout *Building Capability*, the staff training and development panel has identified key issues and recommendations for the effective delivery of a staff training and development programme in the public library service. These have developed as a result of recommendations made in *Branching Out*. We have referred to these as *enabling mechanisms* which will allow the recommendations made in *Branching Out* to be implemented. For each recommendation, we have identified the appropriate body which will either influence the implementation of, or implement, the recommendation.

Enabling Mechanism No.1 – Standing Committee

To establish a Standing Committee on Staff Training and Development with the functions as listed below.

In order for the recommendations of *Branching Out* and the subsequent enabling mechanisms identified by the staff training and development panel to be facilitated, and assuming the acceptance of the findings of this report by the Minister of the Department of the Environment and Local Government, a Standing Committee on Staff Training and Development under the auspices of the Department of the Environment and Local Government should be set up.

We believe that this enabling mechanism is crucial to catalysing support for the successful formulation of a staff training and development agenda for public library staff.

This Standing Committee should be given the following terms of reference:

- 1.1 To ensure that progress is made in relation to recommendations made in *Branching Out* and the enabling mechanisms identified by the panel on staff training and development in *Building Capability*.

- 1.2 To identify the training needs of all public library staff through the development of the national pilot training needs analysis undertaken by the staff training and development panel and as outlined in *Building Capability*.
- 1.3 To integrate general training needs identified by public library staff in the local authority training and development programme in *Building Capability* as appropriate.
- 1.4 To identify methods of training and development including co-operative training, regional training, closed training days and to assess how open learning tools can be optimised by library staff.¹
- 1.5 To liaise with particular training and educational bodies for the purpose of designing and delivering courses appropriate for library staff.
- 1.6 To introduce a management development programme for senior library staff.
- 1.7 To ensure accreditation for staff training courses in association with the appropriate bodies.
- 1.8 To ensure appropriate evaluation methods are implemented for such courses and to ensure that appropriate changes are included in future course provision.
- 1.9 To ensure that public library staff understand and participate fully in the development of local government services to local communities and that *Branching Out* recommendations are advanced through the Partnership process.

¹ This form of learning involves students using material either in print or electronic form that does not necessitate attendance at either a school or university. Such learning can also be referred to as independent learning and can include the use of self-learning packages, computer based training and distance learning packages.

1.10 To facilitate and evaluate the expenditure of staff training and development budgets in library authorities at national, regional and local levels, as appropriate. This function of the Standing Committee will have financial implications including the provision of a national budget by the appropriate agencies for the purpose of staff training and development for all public library staff.

This committee should include representatives from appropriate stakeholders including:

- the County and City Managers' Association,
- County and City Librarians,
- Personnel/Training Officers in local authorities,
- appropriate staff representation from the public library service,
- the Department of the Environment and Local Government,
- An Chomhairle Leabharlanna,
- the Library Association of Ireland,
- the Local Government Management Services Board,
- the Academic and National Training Co-operative.

For implementation by the Minister of the Environment and Local Government.

Enabling Mechanism No.2 – resourcing and promotion

Enabling mechanism(s) for resourcing the training agenda and for the promotion of the Staff Training and Development Agenda.

The following enabling mechanisms for resourcing and promoting the staff training and development agenda should be implemented by the appropriate bodies which will include the following:

- Local Authorities,
- Library Authorities,
- the Department of the Environment and Local Government,
- An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

2.1 We recommend that a training needs analysis of all public library staff be implemented at a local level in each Library Authority, by using the pilot survey outlined in this report, *Building Capability*².

Implementation Body: Library Authorities.

2.2 Each Library Authority should have a dedicated annual training and development budget for all public library staff. The staff training and development panel endorses the recommendation made in the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (2000) in relation to the Civil Service that ‘a spend of 4 per cent of payroll on staff training and development by 2003 will be the aim’³.

We recommend that this should also be the norm for local government/local authorities.

Implementation Bodies: Library Authorities and the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

² This survey is available on the web at <http://www.iol.ie/~libcounc>

³ Ireland: Department of An Taoiseach, *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (2000), p.26.

- 2.3 Each Local Authority should have a dedicated training officer who would be responsible for carrying out a training needs analysis of all staff in the authority including public library staff, and would also provide a service to the Library Authority. Full account should be taken of the national pilot training needs analysis undertaken by the staff training and development panel and the staff training and development plan as outlined in this report ***‘Building Capability’***.

Implementation Bodies: Library Authorities, Local Authorities and the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

- 2.4 Each Library Authority should nominate a member of the public library staff who will deal with training matters in the library authority, and will liaise with the Training Officer and the County/City Librarian.

Implementation Body: Library Authorities.

- 2.5 Each Library Authority should ensure that dedicated time is allocated to all staff for training and development purposes.

Implementation Body: Library Authorities.

- 2.6 Each Library Authority should ensure that all public libraries are adequately resourced for the purposes of training and development. This will include ensuring that:

- staff members have access to a PC for the purpose of self directed learning;
- there are adequate staff numbers to release staff for the purposes of training and development.

Implementation Body: Library Authorities.

2.7 The panel fully endorses the recommendation in *Branching Out* that ‘An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, in liaison with local authority training officers and library staff, should assess how open learning tools can be optimised for library staff’. (*Branching Out*, p. 52.)

Implementation Body: An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

2.8 Each Library Authority should review the mechanisms in association with An Chomhairle Leabharlanna which would facilitate a staff mobility policy aimed at extending public access to specialist knowledge throughout the Library Authority.⁴

Implementation Body: Library Authorities and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna

Enabling Mechanism No.3 – integration of policies and practice

Enabling Mechanism to integrate policies and practice in staff training and development programmes.

We recommend that in order for policies and practices in Library Authorities to be integrated with the Local Authority, the following processes should be implemented by the appropriate bodies, which will include:

- Local Authorities,
- Library Authorities,
- the County and City Managers’ Association,
- An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and the Local Government Management Services Board.

⁴ An Chomhairle Leabharlanna has set up a placement and exchange database. This database provides a register of managers of libraries and information services in all sectors who are willing to accept both professional and non-professional staff on short/medium term placements.

3.1 The County and City Managers' Association, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and the Local Government Management Services Board should develop closer links with a view to incorporating policies and strategic issues in public libraries in the overall staff training and development programmes of each Library Authority.

Implementation Bodies: The County and City Managers' Association, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, the Local Government Management Services Board and Library Authorities.

3.2 The Minister for the Environment and Local Government and Local Authorities should ensure that the current partnership agenda includes the integration of the training needs of public library staff in the local authority training programme. Specific needs as identified by the staff training and development panel for public library staff in its pilot training needs analysis as outlined in this report ***Building Capability***, should be incorporated into such training programmes.

Implementation Bodies: The Minister of the Environment and Local Government and Local Authorities.

3.3 Each Local Authority should compile a directory of staff skills and competencies, including those of library staff, which could contribute to the overall development of the local authority staff and to the delivery of local authority services.

Implementation Body: Local Authorities.

3.4 We recognise the high level of expertise that exists in the public library service for staff training and development purposes. In order to maximise the resources available in each library authority, we recommend that local authorities should identify to An Chomhairle Leabharlanna members of staff who would be available to train as trainers in the wide range of competencies identified in this report, ***Building Capability***. Specific support mechanisms should be provided by local authorities in the form of appropriate incentives to encourage staff to exploit their talents for the benefit of library authorities.

The staff training and development panel was most impressed by the approach being taken by the Waterford Wedgwood Group in this respect and recommends that this matter be further investigated in a local authority context.

Implementation Bodies: Library Authorities, Local Authorities and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

- 3.5 An Chomhairle Leabharlanna in consultation with Local Authorities and Library Authorities should ensure that results from our training needs analysis of four library authorities, as outlined in *Building Capability*, should be incorporated in the forthcoming staff development programme created by the Local Government Management Services Board.

Implementation Bodies: Local Authorities, Library Authorities, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna and the Local Government Management Services Board.

Enabling Mechanism No.4 - ICTs

Enabling Mechanisms for the effective delivery of ICT by public library staff.

In order to optimise the applications of ICT by library staff, the prescribed enabling mechanisms should be enacted by the following bodies:

- Local Authorities,
- Library Authorities and
- the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

- 4.1 We recommend that, as a matter of urgency, initiatives in ICT for Library Authorities should incorporate appropriate training for public library staff which would be aimed at providing for present and future roles. These will include public library staff performing as:

- net navigators,
- information technology gatekeepers,

- information consultants,
- information managers,
- educators.⁵

Implementation Body: Library Authorities.

- 4.2 We strongly recommend that the Department of the Environment and Local Government should avail of the Information Society Fund administered by the Department of Finance, to ensure that all public library staff develop their skills and competencies in general IT literacy skills. The fund should be administered in the form of training grants to each Library Authority to provide courses on-site at either branch library, headquarters or mobile library level. This should be completed by December 2000.

Implementation Body: The Department of the Environment and Local Government and Library Authorities.

Enabling Mechanism No.5 – co-operation

Enabling mechanism for co-operation with library sectors in staff, training and development.

- 5.1 An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, given its function in library co-operation, should examine ways to develop co-operative ventures with other library and information services and/or other appropriate bodies such as:

- the Library Association of Ireland,
- the Academic and National Training Co-operative,
- arts, cultural and heritage bodies and
- other interested parties in the area of staff training and development in order to:
 - fill the current and future gaps in training provision;
 - provide appropriate training programmes through a national and/or

⁵ These roles were identified by the United Kingdom report *Building the New Library Network* (1998) available from <http://www.lic.gov.uk/publications/policyreports/building/index.html>.

cross-sectoral approach, a regional approach or at a local level;

- ensure that all library staff have a detailed knowledge of cultural resources available to them on a continuing basis.

Implementation Body: An Chomhairle Leabharlanna with the appropriate partners.

Enabling Mechanism No.6 – support staff

Enabling mechanism which would review the need for organisational and middle management roles for support staff.

6.1 There is a need for a position at Staff Officer level to provide a support service within the library authority. The workload could include areas such as a training liaison role, administrative, marketing and promotional services, information services using ICT applications and other supporting workloads⁶. We recommend that this issue be reviewed.

Implementation Body: Library Authorities.

⁶ While this recommendation is not specific to the terms of reference of the staff training and development panel, it was mentioned by respondents to our survey, and by a number of attendees at our Conference 'Branching Out: Formulating the Training Agenda held on 21st February, 2000.