Chapter 11

The Human Resources Functions in the Library

Overview

Terry had great luck in her job search. She applied for 20 positions and had 4 on-site interviews. Just before graduation, she was offered a position in her top-choice institution, and two weeks after receiving her MLIS degree, she began work as an adult services librarian in a growing public library system in the Southwest. Terry went through a day-long orientation her first day on the job and then was trained in the procedures and activities of her specific position. Over the first few months, she was given a chance to learn more about the library and was socialized into its norms and expectations. Recently, after six months on the job, her probationary period came to an end, and she had her first performance appraisal. She was told that she was performing up to expectations and, as a result, was given a small increase in her salary. As part of the appraisal, her supervisor helped her develop a list of objectives to be met during the next year. Together, Terry and her supervisor outlined the additional training and experience that would be needed to allow Terry to be successful in meeting these goals. Terry is now planning to attend a day-long workshop in readers' advisory at an upcoming conference, and she is scheduled to be trained on a new computer system that will be installed soon. She is also receiving cross-training from Bill, a colleague who is an expert in business reference, so that she can fill in for him on his days off. After less than a year in the position, Terry feels as though she is contributing a great deal to the organization, and she looks forward to continuing her professional growth and development, with the hope of being promoted within the library system in a few years.

The previous chapter discussed staffing, one of the key responsibilities in human resources (HR) management, but staffing the organization is just the beginning. All employees need to be oriented, trained, evaluated, and compensated. Occasionally there is a need to discipline or even terminate a problem employee. This chapter will discuss these HR functions and give examples of how they are implemented in libraries.

Hiring an employee is just the first step. The new employee arrives at the library for the first day of work, and immediately there is a need for the orientation and training of this new worker. There has to be a compensation and benefits package already in place. And, for as long as the employee remains on the job, there is a need for various other HR functions to be performed. In this era of rapid change, there are always demands for training and staff development. At least once a year, an employee's performance needs to be evaluated and possibly considered for a salary increase. Sometimes an employee has to be disciplined or wishes to file a grievance, and occasionally an employee needs to be terminated. All of these activities are an integral part of the HR responsibilities of managers. This chapter will provide an overview of the major HR functions from an employee's initial day on the job until he or she leaves the organization.

TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Training is a never-ending process. There are always new employees that need training or new systems that need to be taught. In a library, there are many levels of training, some of which are received by everyone and some of which are more individualized. Although training can be expensive, it is false economy to try to minimize these expenses. Over a period of time, the cost to the institution is returned in quality performance.

Orientation

The first type of training typically received is an orientation. After an employee has been hired, he or she needs a general orientation to the organization. Usually, if a number of new employees come in at about the same time, a general orientation session is held to provide information that all new employees need, regardless of level or area of employment. Even if some of the information was transmitted during the selection process, it is wise to reinforce that knowledge.

An orientation usually includes both general information and information about the goals, objectives, and philosophies of the organization. The general information part of the orientation covers rules and policies applicable to all employees, including information concerning pay periods, how vacation and sick leave are accumulated and used, requirements for reporting illness, and the use of time sheets. Units, such as the HR office, the public information office, and various subject or functional departments, are described, so that employees see their role within the total organization. Using visual presentations and permitting extensive discussion and questions makes such sessions more productive. Many libraries have specific ways of doing things, and the reasons for these procedures are explained.

The second purpose of orientation is to help the new employee become familiar with the culture of their new organization. All new employees, regardless of level or place in the organization, need to be socialized into the institution's culture and understand its history, traditions, and norms.[1] To begin this socialization, orientation meetings often include presentations by the director or another top manager, which allow new employees to get a feel for the organization's culture and what will be expected of them.

Although some libraries still treat orientation sessions in a casual manner, most now give careful thought to what should be included. For instance, figure 11.1 illustrates the checklist used by Kent State University in its orientation for new employees. This form asks for the signatures of all the individuals involved to ensure accountability.[2] More orientation forms and links can be found on this book's Web page (http://www.lu.com/management).

Initial Job Training

As soon as a new employee reports for work, the immediate supervisor begins training him or her in the specific tasks of the job. Occasionally, this training is given by the person leaving the job, but this is a risky practice. Having the departing employee train a new one perpetuates the work habits and patterns of the former employee and frequently establishes attitudes and opinions toward the supervisor, the department, and the organization. For these reasons, it is recommended that the immediate supervisor be in charge of training new employees.

There are many ways of training. The worst way is to describe briefly the tasks to be performed and then let the employee figure out the rest. The new employee, already uneasy from being in a new environment with new responsibilities, will absorb little of the supervisor's remarks. Some employees are able to observe co-workers, figure out the job from the job description, or learn the job on their own, in spite of the supervisor. Others fail, and their failure is the fault of the supervisor for not providing appropriate training.

Training must be carefully planned. Table 11.1 contains principles to guide a trainer.

A library's responsibility for training and education does not end when a new employee is properly trained for his or her position. It takes a long time for a new employee to become socialized into the organization's culture, with its norms for acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Experienced staff play a vital role in helping new employees make an effective transition to a new setting.[3] New employees will look to more senior staff members to serve as role models. When they are faced with a gap in knowledge, they usually will turn to these more senior employees to act as their teachers or coaches.

Figure 11.1—Orientation Checklist for New Employees

What Every New Libraries/Media Services Employee Should Know
CHECKLIST

√ DIRECTOR OF STAFF SERVICES discusses:

I. Introduction to Kent State University and Libraries/Media Services

	DATE
• University ID card	______
• Parking permit	______
• Map of campus; tour of especially relevant offices, such as Personnel	______
• Tours: department, main library, branch libraries, regional libraries as appropriate	______
• Introductions to staff	______
• Promotional materials about University services and organizations (e.g., Wellness Center, physical fitness facilities, Audio Visual Services, Professional Women of Kent State University)	______
• Copies of undergraduate and/or graduate catalogs	______
• Community information: what does Kent offer ... Portage and Summit Counties ... greater Akron/ Cleveland metropolitan areas ... Ohio	______
• Library circulation policies	______
• When the library operates	______
• List of University paid holidays	______
• Keys and getting into the building outside of normal work schedule	______
• Completion of *Confidential Vital Information Record*	______
• Safety manual	______
• University/corporate perks (e.g., Sea World, Sam's Club, American Express card)	______

II. Personnel Policies and Procedures

	DATE
• Breaks: length, frequency, where allowed physically, coordination with co-workers, etc.	______
• Lunch/dinner, including bringing food into the library	______
• Flextime availability	______
• Calling supervisor, forms to fill out for sick leave, vacation, leave of absence	______
• Court leave	______
• Use of radios and radio/headphones on the job	______
• Making/receiving personal telephone calls	______
• Dress codes	______
• Attending classes, completing class assignments	______
• Changing one's regular schedule	______
• Attendance at University and library functions and meetings, such as May 4 Remembrance, Women's Day events, etc.	______
• Timecards	______
• Professional development: meetings, conferences, seminars: travel reimbursement	______
• Pay raises	______
• Promotions	______
• Exiting the University	______
• Faculty issues: reappointment, tenure, sabbatical, faculty committees, mentors, library liaison program, use of research leave, exit interviews	______

III. Information About the Job and the Organization

	DATE
• Information about the relationship with the supervisor, including: chain of command; administering discipline/ rewards; performance evaluations; communicating with supervisor, including what supervisor needs to know and what is confidential	______
• Information about relationships with co-workers: when and how to discuss mutual interests and concerns; what to tell the supervisor	______
• Information about relationships with supervisees: policies as for supervisors above	______
• L/MS personnel structure: organizational charts, personnel rosters, descriptions of committees, how to become involved	______
• L/MS communication methods: memo writing protocol, telephone protocol, availability of committee reports, *Local Data Record, Inside, Matrix, Connect*, other publications and reports, communicating with others	______
• List of L/MS telephone numbers	______
• List of radio stations to tune in if snow might close down University operations	______

Director of Staff Services sign-off:	New Employee sign-off:
______________________	______________________

continued

Figure 11.1a—Orientation Checklist for New Employees

√ SUPERVISOR discusses:

	DATE
• Training information: how long is training period, when reviewed, who reviews performance, when is a decision about employment binding, implications with respect to layoffs	________
• Job description/outline of job responsibilities	________
• Procedures manuals: personal copy or knowledge of ready availability	________
• When the department operates	________
• Work schedules of co-workers and supervisor	________
• Personal schedule: regular working hours, timeliness	________
• Getting into the department outside of regular working hours	________
• Relationship with supervisor: the chain of command, expectations of the supervisor, departmental meetings, how to request other meetings, when and how to discuss issues and concerns	________
• If new employee supervises others, the supervisor may make recommendations on how the new employee should relate with supervisees	________
• Word processing: availability of computers and software for on and off the job	________
• Supplies and equipment: when and how to request	________

Supervisor sign-off: ______________________ New Employee sign-off: ______________________

√ PERSONNEL – STAFF BENEFITS OFFICE discusses:

	DATE
• Benefits: tuition waiver, insurance (life, medical, dental), retirement, travel reimbursement	________
• Explanation of Benefits Fest	________

Personnel Office sign-off: ______________________ New Employee sign-off: ______________________

Source: From Shelley L. Rogers, "Orientation for New Library Employees: A Checklist," *Library Administration and Management* 8 (Fall 1994): 213–17. Use by permission of the American Library Association.

TABLE 11.1 Training Principles

• Teach the simple tasks first.
• Break down the task into its basic components.
• Teach only the correct procedures.
• Keep teaching cycles short and reinforce them with practice.
• Develop skills through repetition.
• Do not train too far in advance to avoid the employee forgetting what was learned.
• Motivate the trainee by emphasizing the relationship between the training and good job performance.

Training and Staff Development for Established Employees

It is not only new employees who need training. Any staff member who works in a library needs continuous updating to stay current. The rapid changes taking place in all types of libraries compel library managers to attach new importance to training and staff development. Although the terms *training* and *staff development* often are used synonymously, a distinction is sometimes made. Training frequently refers to learning skills or knowledge that are to be used on the present job, whereas staff development involves learning of a larger scope that goes beyond the present job and looks toward the future. But because it is often difficult to make a distinction between these two types of continuing learning, this book will treat them together. Another related function, career development, will be covered in chapter 12.

Training and staff development can be offered in various ways. On a recurring basis as specific training needs are identified, selected groups of employees might receive training in specific topics, such as how to conduct good performance evaluation interviews, how to prepare performance evaluation reports, how to prepare departmental budget recommendations, or how to do task analysis for job description revisions. These training sessions, which concern all units of the organization, may be conducted by a specialist within the institution or by an expert brought into the institution for this purpose.

The training programs described so far are developed and presented by the institution. In addition, many training and educational programs exist outside the institution; these also should be available to employees. Attendance at local, regional, and national conferences and workshops provides opportunities for employee development and growth. In addition, more and more training is being offered by means of online courses or teleconferences. The need to take courses beyond the first professional degree increases as library operations become more complex. Many institutions provide tuition funding for employees who take formal courses that are job related.

Some libraries are attempting to transform themselves into so-called learning organizations. These are organizations in which "people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of things are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together."[4] More information about learning organizations is available in chapter 2, but, in general, the learning organization is marked by a team-based culture, open flows of information, empowered employees, and decentralized decision making.[5] As a result, the learning organization is able to grow and change in response to environmental changes. These learning organizations attempt to formalize exchanges of information. Managers in learning organizations must be open to suggestions, be able to admit mistakes without fear of reprisal, and be willing to make changes. Learning organizations have become adept at translating new knowledge into new ways of behaving.[6] The move toward learning organizations brings with it an emphasis on continuous growth and training.

Another change in attitude toward training comes from the newly adopted practice in many libraries to view managers and supervisors as coaches for the employees that they supervise. Like a good coach, a supervisor should act as a role model, help the employee set realistic goals, give feedback on performance, supply suggestions on how to improve that performance, and provide reinforcement and encouragement. The supervisor and the employee should not view themselves as adversaries. Instead, they are on the same team, each trying to improve the overall performance of the organization. A commitment to coaching "sends the message that continuous learning is the accepted practice. By coaching, we model how we must interact with each other if we are to achieve our best individual and organizational performance."[7] More information about coaching is contained in chapter 17.

No library is exempt from change, and at times it seems that the pace of change becomes more rapid each year. If librarians are to remain up-to-date, they have no choice but to continue to learn. Every library, regardless of size or type, needs a planned staff development program. Such activities are not haphazardly scheduled but are organized on a structured continuum. Such programs provide the means by which employees can grow on the job and prepare to advance as opportunities become available. Good staff development programs contribute to employees' career development. Also, through such programs, employers can identify potential supervisors and prepare them for that responsibility. Human resources are too valuable for any institution to fail to invest in the training programs needed to develop employees to their full potential.[8]

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

A performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of an individual employee's job-related strengths and weaknesses. In all types of organizations, employees have to be evaluated. Some workers are better than others at specific jobs. Some workers take the initiative and carry through an assignment with little supervision, while others may be unreliable or must be closely supervised to ensure the successful completion of a project. When decisions have to be made about pay increases or promotions, the supervisor must have a way to distinguish the excellent performers from the mediocre ones. Before systematic performance appraisals were developed, such decisions often were made on the basis of subjective, spur-of-the-moment impressions. A systematic, written appraisal system provides a sounder method of distinguishing among the performances of employees.

There has been a shift, in some organizations, in the focus of evaluations as a result of other changes in the organization. Especially in team-based organizations, there has been, as we have seen, a move to see the supervisor as more of a coach than a boss. If the supervisor is functioning as a coach, the feedback to the employee is continuous, even though formal performance assessments may still be done only once a year.

Learning theory suggests that immediate feedback helps learners increase their performance. Regardless of the type of organization, all employees need feedback more than once a year, and good supervisors provide it. Usually, the frequent feedback is done in a more informal, spontaneous fashion, whereas the annual evaluation is done in a more formal, structured manner.

Judging another's performance is difficult, and often both supervisors and subordinates feel ambivalent about performance appraisals. Some writers have likened appraisals to paying taxes. They are something that managers are obligated to do but would prefer to avoid. And, although most employees want feedback on how they are doing, they would prefer feedback that is consistent with their image of themselves as good performers needing no improvement.[9]

What Do You Think?

Personnel Appraisal (pers'-n-el a-pra'zel) noun: given by someone who does *not want to give it to someone who does not want to get it.*

This definition is an accurate description of what happens in many organizations. What makes personnel appraisals so difficult for both the supervisors doing them and the employees being appraised? How can organizations improve this process?

From James S. Bowman, "Performance Appraisal: Verisimilitude Trumps Veracity," *Public Personnel Management* 28 (Winter 1999): 557.

Why Appraisals Are Done

Formal performance assessments have two main objectives. The first is to determine how well an employee performs on the job. The second objective is to help an employee understand how well he or she is doing. This way, if improvement needs to be made, the employee knows where his or her deficiencies lie. To achieve this second objective, the findings of the evaluation must be communicated to the employee. Without this transfer of information and the subsequent development of a remedial process or plan, the employee cannot be expected to achieve improvement or redirection in performance.

The results of performance appraisals are used as the basis for making important HR decisions relating to promotion, demotion, and termination of employees. A good performance appraisal system facilitates the promotion of outstanding workers and the weeding out or transfer of poor performers. Systematic, written assessment of a worker by a number of raters over a period of time helps make these decisions reasonable and sound. Performance appraisal also can serve as the basis for setting wages or salaries. Many organizations relate at least some decisions about pay increases to an employee's performance appraisal rating. The appraisal process also can facilitate understanding between supervisors and employees. Performance appraisal provides concrete feedback to employees that allows them to improve their performance. The performance appraisal process should help employees establish personal goals that will enable them to grow and develop and that, in turn, will further the goals of the institution. Finally, performance appraisals can serve as information-gathering tools that provide data to be used in determining both organizational and individual training needs.

Good performance appraisal systems are careful to make a distinction between the variations of employee performance caused by shortcomings on the part of the employee and those caused by the inadequacies of the organization. For instance, the best employee cannot be productive if there is a problem with getting materials—a cataloger cannot catalog if there is a backlog in acquisitions that prevents the books getting to the cataloging department. An appraiser must be careful never to blame the deficiencies of the organization on the individual employee, because such improperly done appraisals "can jeopardize morale, adversely affect teamwork, and leave an individual feeling unfairly criticized."[10]

When to Do Appraisals

Each organization has to decide when performance appraisals will be administered, although often the schedule is mandated by external authorities such as a state government. But there always should be a definite schedule, and this schedule should be public knowledge. Performance appraisals are most commonly done on a yearly basis. Ideally, though, performance appraisals should be done frequently enough to let employees know if their performance is satisfactory and, if not, the steps that need to be taken for improvement. For some employees, an annual performance appraisal is not frequent enough. As mentioned previously, it is recommended that informal performance appraisals be done several times a year to supplement the formal annual appraisal.

New employees need more frequent appraisals than do long-established workers. In most organizations, new staff members serve a probationary period before permanent appointment is made. A performance rating should be administered at the end of the probationary period, but a good supervisor will review the job description and the quality of job performance with the new employee several times during the probationary period.

After the probationary period, performance appraisals are administered on a recurring basis. Some institutions schedule all of these evaluations at the same time. This practice permits the supervisor to compare the performance of all subordinates. But grouping all the appraisals also presents drawbacks. Supervisors with a large number of appraisals to complete can be overwhelmed, resulting in poorly prepared performance evaluations. To avoid overload, some institutions do performance evaluations on each anniversary of an employee's appointment to permanent status. This timetable distributes the workload over the entire year and thus permits careful judgments to be made.

Who Does the Appraisals?

By far, the most common practice in libraries, as in other institutions, is to have the immediate supervisors evaluate the performance of their subordinates. This is because supervisors have the greatest opportunity to observe the work performance of these employees. Because supervisors are accountable for the successful operation of their units, it is appropriate that they have authority over HR functions affecting that unit.

Although the custom of having the immediate supervisor evaluate subordinates is most common, other types of evaluations replace or supplement this practice in some institutions.

Peer Appraisals. Peer ratings are used to evaluate some professional librarians, primarily academic ones. Because many academic librarians have faculty status, they have adopted the same type of peer review of performance that is used for most faculty members in institutions of higher education. Professional librarians interact with one another and are usually familiar with one another's work. In addition, many elements of the librarian's work, particularly at the departmental level, require cooperative work. Thus, they should be good judges of one another's performance.[11]

Appraising Superiors. In some organizations, subordinates are allowed to appraise the performance of their immediate supervisor. Considerable trust and openness are necessary to make this type of appraisal successful, and, in most cases, subordinates do not assess their bosses without guaranteed anonymity. When subordinates do evaluate their superiors, the appraisals are not seen by anyone but the managers, and they serve primarily as tools for the guided self-development of the supervisor and as a way of giving employees a chance to express their opinions. Upward evaluations provide supervisors with information that can be very useful. But, because inaccurate and inadequate information gathered about a supervisor could lead to a distorted view of the supervisor's performance and thus potentially could lead to legal challenges, it is important that a formal process be developed and a valid and reliable instrument used.[12]

Three-Hundred-Sixty-Degree Appraisals. A growing number of organizations are using what is termed *360-degree* or *multirater* feedback, a process in which an employee's performance is assessed through confidential feedback from a variety of sources, including direct reports, managers, peers, internal and external customers, and the individual employee. The reviews from each of these sources are anonymous, and usually the HR department collects and compiles the reviews into a report to be given to the employee. This 360-degree feedback allows an employee to get feedback on facets of his or her performance that often are overlooked in a traditional top-down performance assessment. Another reason for its growing use is the number of organizations that have eliminated layers of middle managers, leaving managers with wider spans of control. Thus, it has become more difficult for managers to provide accurate assessments of the larger number of employees under their supervision. The increasing number of organizations using self-directed teams is another impetus for the adoption of 360-degree feedback. In this situation, the members of the team are in the best position to know the performance of other team members.

This type of evaluation yields valuable data, but it can be very threatening to individual managers.[13] It also can be very time consuming. If a library had 30 employees and decided to institute this type of performance appraisal, and on average each employee was to be evaluated by six other employees using an appraisal instrument that took 45 minutes to complete, it is easy to see how this appraisal would become expensive in terms of time and effort expended.

If a library decides to institute 360-degree appraisals, the process it uses to develop them should be planned carefully. It will take time to implement a well-designed system. As with all other appraisal systems, there needs to be support from top management, and because employees know their jobs best, they should be involved in the development of the appraisal criteria. Training in both giving and receiving 360-degree feedback should be given to everyone participating in the process. If employees are given feedback without being told what to do with the results, they do not know what actions to take. As one expert states, "There is often too much focus on getting the feedback and mining the data and too little focus on using the feedback for job-related or behavior change."[14] As with any new system, the procedure probably should be pilot tested in one area before being adopted library-wide, and managers should monitor the system to be sure it is performing as designed and be ready to modify it if it is not.

Self-Appraisals. Some organizations permit employee self-evaluation. If an employee is accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses, the supervisor only has to confirm this information and then help the employees set goals to improve the weaknesses. Individuals are much less defensive if they themselves have pointed out their shortcomings, instead of having those shortcomings pointed out by their manager. Unfortunately, however, not all employees are able to evaluate themselves accurately, and there is often little agreement between the employee's evaluation and that of the supervisor.[15] If self-appraisal is used as part of evaluation, it is almost always used in conjunction with another type of appraisal.

Whatever type of performance appraisal program is instituted, it must be supported by senior managers, and these managers must orient and train supervisors. Unless the upper echelons of management indicate support, the program likely will be ineffective. Management also must give supervisors sufficient time to carry out the appraisals. Most supervisors dislike the process of evaluating their employees and, in particular, try to avoid discussing deficiencies with them. One of the major challenges of performance appraisal is establishing the standards of performance against which an employee's work is judged. Standards that need to be established usually fall clearly into three categories:

1. **Quality-Quantity Standards.** How well does the employee perform the various tasks in the job description, and how much of each task is actually accomplished?
2. **Desired Effect Standards.** Is work complete, accurate, and performed on time, benefiting the goals and objectives of the institution and users? Are sound data gathered as a basis for judgment and decisions?
3. **Manner of Performance Standards.** Is the work accomplished in cooperation with others, without friction? Can the employee adapt to new programs or processes?

Because no two supervisors interpret these standards in exactly the same way, top management must define the standards. If supervisors interpret standards differently or give greater weight to one standard over the others, inequity in evaluation from department to department will result. To avoid this, many organization provide supervisors with a performance evaluation manual to help in defining standards.

Problems in Rating

Because appraisals are carried out by humans, they are subject to a number of weaknesses and errors. The most common errors found in performance appraisal can be seen in table 11.2

A number of techniques can reduce errors in performance appraisal. As mentioned previously, training can reduce errors. Some errors can be lessened by keeping good records of employee performance. Errors also can be reduced if supervisors have input into the type of appraisal system that is used. If raters have participated in developing the system, they will use it more effectively. Finally, errors can be minimized if the organization's top management makes it clearly understood that all supervisors are to take performance appraisal very seriously. Not only should good appraisals be expected, they should be rewarded. When the organization not only expects good appraisals but also systematically rewards supervisors who carefully and conscientiously perform those appraisals, it lays the foundation for an effective system of performance evaluation.

Methods of Performance Appraisal

There are no standard methods of performance appraisal and no method that works best in all settings. Instead, there are a number of effective methods that can be used. Although institutions do not have to select a single method, one method or combination of methods is still generally agreed upon for the entire institution. The method used may be that used by the parent institution, as in the case of a library that is part of a larger municipal or academic

TABLE 11.2 Errors Made in Performance Appraisals

1. The *halo effect*. Letting the rating assigned to one characteristic unduly influence rating on all factors. For example, if a supervisor thinks an employee is outstanding in one area, he or she gives that individual high ratings on all the factors being evaluated.
2. *Prejudice and partiality*. Letting personal feelings about a subordinate affect the rating given to that subordinate. It is a serious error for a supervisor to let personal likes and dislikes affect performance appraisals. In addition, it is illegal to consider race, creed, color, religion, politics, nationality, or gender in evaluating work performance.
3. *Leniency or strictness*. Supervisors using different standards for evaluation, thus resulting in employees receiving vastly different ratings. Some supervisors give all their subordinates high ratings because they do not want to face the resentment or disappointment resulting from low ones. Equally damaging is giving low ratings to all employees because supervisors have set artificially high standards that few subordinates can ever achieve.
4. *Central tendency*. Reluctance to use either the high or low extremes of the rating scale, resulting in all ratings clustering about the center. On a normal distribution curve, more people will be rated closer to the mean than to any other point. However, when all ratings are clustered at the center, most of the value of the performance appraisal is lost.
5. *Contrast*. Not measuring the work the employee has actually done but the work the supervisor thinks the employee has the potential to achieve.
6. *Association*. Supervisors with a large number of evaluations to complete rating factors at the same level merely because they follow each other on the page. Often occurs when the supervisor is tired and tries to make hurried judgments without all the facts.
7. *Recency*. A supervisor appraising only the work the employee has done in the recent past, rather than the work done over the entire period of time covered by the appraisal.

system. Some examples of performance appraisal forms are available on this book's Web site (http://www.lu.com/management).

If the library is free to select its own method, staff committees may have input into this decision. In larger libraries, the HR office often plays a key role in the selection and development of the method used. The performance appraisal methods most commonly used are essays, ranking, forced distribution, graphic ratings scales, and the behaviorally anchored rating scale. Management by objectives also provides a means of performance appraisal (for more information, see chapter 4). Regardless of the type of instrument used, all factors being assessed should be job related.

In the essay method, the rater describes an individual's performance in a written narrative. The essay can be unstructured, but usually the rater is asked to respond to general questions relating to the employee's job knowledge, strengths and weaknesses, and promotion potential. The major drawback of essays is that their length and content may vary, and consistency is therefore hard to achieve. The rater's writing ability also may affect the appraisal. An employee might receive a comparatively poor rating because the rater does not write well. Essays are most effective when they are combined with some other appraisal technique.

Several ranking systems are used in employee appraisal. Using the simple ranking method, the supervisor ranks the employees from highest to lowest—from best employee to worst. In alternative ranking, the supervisor first chooses the best and the poorest performers. Then the next-best and the next-poorest performers are chosen, alternating from top to bottom, until all employees have been ranked. The paired comparison method is an organized way of comparing each employee with every other employee, one at a time. The advantage of the ranking systems is their simplicity. The major disadvantages are that they do not reveal the degree of difference between persons in adjacent ranks, and individuals with the same performance rating must be given separate ranks. In addition, it is difficult to compare various groups of employees, because the ones ranked highest in one unit may not be as good as those ranked highest in another unit.

A common problem with rating scales is that too many people are rated on the high end of the scale. The forced distribution rating system is designed to prevent this clustering. Forced distribution requires the rater to place a certain percentage of employees at various performance intervals. Usually, a supervisor must allocate 10 percent to the highest category and 10 percent to the lowest, with the other employees proportionately assigned. This process results in a distribution identical to that found in the normal bell-shaped curve (figure 11.2).

The forced distribution method assumes that performance in a group of employees is distributed according to a normal curve. In many units, this assumption may be untrue. This method is most difficult to use when evaluating a small number of people.

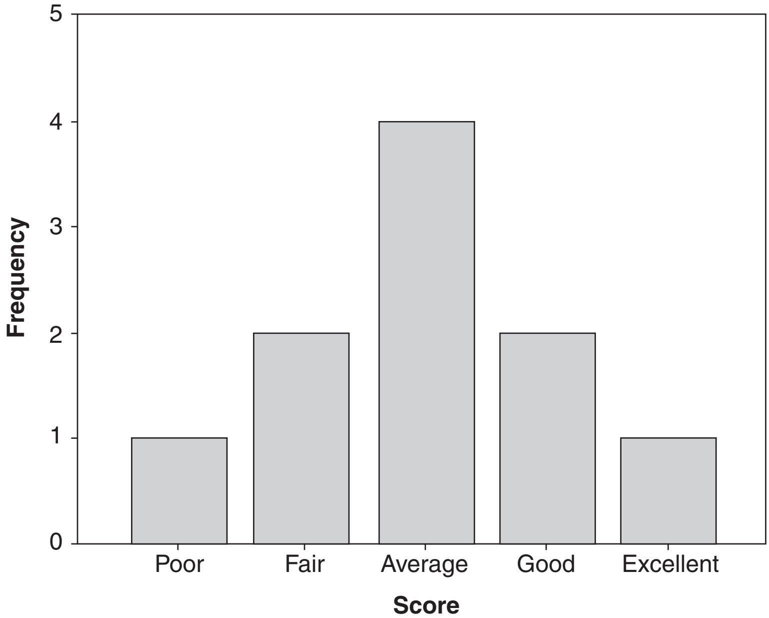
The graphic rating scale is the most commonly used method of performance appraisal in libraries and information centers. The rater evaluates the employee on such factors as quantity of work, dependability, initiative, job knowledge, and accuracy. Some organizations use a very simple form, with the factor being evaluated listed and defined, followed by a multiple-choice format for the rating. The supervisor indicates the rating of the employee for each factor by placing a mark on the horizontal line.

Accuracy Is the Correctness of Work Performed

Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent

One problem with the graphic rating scale has been that it is very difficult for supervisors to agree on the meaning of terms such as *average* or *good.* No matter how much training supervisors receive, individuals will interpret these terms differently. In recent years, most institutions have improved the graphic rating scale by eliminating these terms. In their place, a short phrase is used to describe the different levels of performance. The most difficult part of developing these new scales is to provide a short phrase that cannot be misinterpreted, thus assuring comparable interpretations by different supervisors. In this type of form, accuracy might be evaluated as follows:

Figure 11.2—Performance Rankings in a Forced Distribution Rating System



Accuracy Is the Correctness of Work Performed

Makes frequent errors	Careless, often makes errors	Usually accurate; only makes average number of errors	Requires little supervision; is exact and precise most of the time	Requires absolute minimum of supervision; is almost always accurate

The fact that graphic rating scales require relatively little time to construct and administer doubtlessly contributes to their popularity. They also force an evaluator to consider several dimensions of performance, and they are standardized and comparable across individuals. Their biggest drawback is that they are susceptible to errors such as halo, central tendency, or leniency. In addition, all rating scales tend to look backward, judging an employee's performance over the period of time being assessed, instead of helping the employee set goals for improvement. An example of a graphic rating scale may be seen in figure 11.3.

Behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS) were created to correct some of the deficiencies of the graphic rating scale. In developing BARS, the active participation of jobholders and supervisors helps to identify key job dimensions and areas of responsibility. Each job is likely to have several job dimensions and separate scales for each. The anchors are specific, written descriptions of actual job behaviors that supervisors agree represent specific levels of performance. To carry out a performance appraisal using BARS requires the rater to read through the list of anchors on each scale (i.e., for each job behavior) until the anchor that best describes the employee's job behavior is identified.

Figure 11.3—A Graphic Rating Scale

Parkville Public Library

Employee Performance Evaluation

Employee's Name ______________________ Classification________________

Evaluation Period: From ________ To______ Department _________________

PLACE CHECK MARK IN BOX THAT MOST APPROPRIATELY INDICATES YOUR JUDGMENT ON EACH FACTOR BEING APPRAISED. COMPLETE ALL ITEMS FOR ALL EMPLOYEES.				
Job Knowledge				
1 Serious gaps in knowledge of essentials of job	2 Satisfactory knowledge of essentials of job	3 Adequately informed on most phases of job	4 Good knowledge of all phases of job	5 Excellent understanding of job
Attitude				
1 Uncooperative, resents suggestions, no enthusiasm	2 Often cooperates and accepts suggestions	3 Satisfactory cooperation; accepts new ideas	4 Responsive, cooperates well; helpful to others	5 Excellent in cooperation and enthusiasm; welcomes new ideas; very helpful
Judgment				
1 Decisions often wrong or ineffective	2 Judgment usually sound but makes some errors	3 Good decision resulting from sound analysis of factors	4 Sound, logical thinker	5 Consistently makes sound judgments
Quantity of Work				
1 Falls below minimum requirements	2 Usually meets minimum requirements	3 Satisfactory quantity	4 Usually well exceeds minimum	5 Consistently produces high quantity
Quality of Work				
1 Poor quality, many errors	2 Quality usually all right, some errors	3 Satisfactory quality	4 Quality exceeds standards	5 Consistently high quality

The scale value corresponding to this anchor is checked. The evaluation is a combination of the rankings on the scale values for each job dimension. BARS take more time to develop than graphic rating scales, and a separate form must be developed for each job. The use of BARS can help reduce errors if good behavioral statements are provided as anchors. Also, because BARS are developed with the participation of managers and jobholders, the likelihood is higher that this appraisal method will be accepted. Figure 11.4 shows a scale that might be used to evaluate the job dimensions of program promotion and public relations. A BARS such as this could be used to evaluate librarians who have responsibility for program promotion in a public library.

BARS are often impractical because each job requires its own scale, and often in smaller organizations there are not enough employees in each specific job to use them.[16] Because of the difficulties of implementing this system, it is not widely used in libraries.[17]

Figure 11.4—A Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale

Job Dimension: Program Promotion and Public Relations

This section includes standards for evaluating behaviors in promoting programs and using the mass media

Scale Values	**Anchors**
7 Excellent	Conducts one of the best PR progr ams in the state. Always gets extensive media coverage for library programs.
6 Very Good	Constantly works on developing good public relations. Is willing to work with all groups and organizations for promotion of programs. Communicates effectively with the mass media.
5 Good	Has developed a city wide mailing list of interested individuals. Makes some original use of mass media. Has adapted some of the promotional material supplied by the American Library Association for local use. Makes reports to advisory groups and public officials on request or as opportunities arise.
4 Average	Maintains communication with some local leaders, organizations, and groups.
3 Below Average	Assists with planning and implementing public relations programs even though efforts may lack consistency. Does not make sufficient use of one or more of the mass media.
2 Poor	Makes no effort to speak to community clubs or organizations. Continually mentions media that should be contacted to increase potential audiences, but does nothing about it. Is not interested in certain parts of the library's program and does not publicize them.
1 Unacceptable	Shows disrespect for local values and customs. Fails to communicate events and activities to those interested.

The Performance Appraisal Review Process

Institutions structure their performance appraisal process in various ways, but some elements are common to almost all of them. First, someone from the office responsible for appraisals (probably either HR or the library director's office) distributes the appropriate forms. Information is provided about the individual whose performance is to be evaluated, the name of the person responsible for completing the form, and the date the form is due back in the initiating office. In an increasing number of organizations, computer software is used in performance appraisals as a means of making the process more efficient and standardized.

The person who receives the form then needs to evaluate the employee's performance. It is the rater's responsibility to complete the form thoughtfully and carefully. Usually, it is wise for the rater to base judgments on notes or a diary kept over a period of time. The rater must have proof of the evaluations given, particularly negative evaluations. The rater must consider the employee's work from the last period of rating to the current time; evaluation should not be based solely on what happened recently.

The rater must not be afraid to give a negative rating. With today's emphasis on accountability, it is the rater's responsibility to be accurate and truthful in the evaluation of an employee's performance. If the performance is bad, the evaluation should reflect it, but there also should be evidence to show why such an evaluation was justified.

In order to make sure that no prejudice or bias influences an evaluation, the rating should be reviewed by the supervisor's supervisor. Together, the rater and his or her supervisor should review the proposed performance evaluation and come to a consensus on its accuracy.

The Performance Appraisal Interview

After the evaluation form is complete, the rater must share the results with the employee. This information is usually provided in a performance appraisal interview. Conducting the performance appraisal interview is probably the most difficult part of the process—at least, it is the part most dreaded by employees and supervisors. Both the employee and the supervisor need to prepare for the interview. The supervisor should make an appointment with the employee and make the purpose of the appointment clear. Before the meeting is held, the supervisor should give the employee the completed performance appraisal form. The employee should have at least twenty-four hours to review the evaluation and to consider its fairness and appropriateness. In addition, the supervisor must prepare for the meeting. The supervisor might examine previous performance appraisals to review the employee's progress. Certainly, the supervisor will plan the meeting's structure. Most employees are apprehensive about these performance appraisal interviews. Once an interview time has been established, the supervisor should make every effort to hold to the schedule because postponements or other schedule changes increase the employee's worry and concern. Because of the sensitivity of this interview, the supervisor must establish as informal an atmosphere as possible. Frequently, supervisors move away from their desks to an area with more informal furniture because the supervisor's desk, a symbol of authority, functions as a barrier and a psychological obstacle to many workers. Supervisors should ensure that there will be no telephone calls or other interruptions during the interview.

What Would You Do?

At 9:05 A.M., Jeanne Leforte was walking briskly toward the entrance of the Deuxville Public Library, one of the nation's largest urban libraries. Despite the heaviness of the air, she felt happy, almost light-headed. Why? Last evening, her doctor had given her the news she had been eagerly hoping for: She was going to have a baby. She and her husband, John, had wanted a baby for a long time, and this exciting development helped offset the unfortunate reality of John's predicament: He had been seriously injured several months ago in a car accident and would be unable to work for some time. But there was also another reason why she felt happy. This feeling of happiness was based on the belief that her salary shortly would be increased by 15 percent. Every year at this time, the library requires performance evaluations for all employees. In the years she had worked at the Deuxville Public Library, her annual evaluations had been superior in each of the categories on the library personnel office's evaluation form; the comments sections also contained warm words of praise for her and her work. Consequently, she always had received the city's maximum possible raise. So, although her husband could not resume work for a while, they would be able to get by on her salary—that is, as long as she got the raise she expected. She was to have her appraisal interview with her supervisor, Marshall Edmonds, at 9:30. She looked at her watch and mounted the long flight of stairs leading to the offices on the first floor.

Her first hint that all was not well was the sudden appearance of Consuelo Feng. As Feng swept by with an almost inaudible "Good morning, Jeanne" escaping from her lips, Leforte thought she detected the telltale indications of crying on her face: the red, swollen eyes, the puffiness.

Performance appraisal interviews can be threatening to both employer and employee. What steps can be taken to ensure that these interviews proceed as smoothly as possible?

(For the rest of this case study, see http://lu.com/management.)

The supervisor should not lecture the employee but should ask questions or make comments that encourage the employee to talk. If the employee is encouraged to talk, the discussion naturally will center on the performance appraisal. The employee has the opportunity to express concerns about, or approval of, the appraisal, and the supervisor can explain why certain elements were rated as they were.

In this interview, the supervisor's objectives are to identify problems that the employee has in performing any assigned tasks; to plan methods or procedures by which these problems might be resolved; to determine the employee's general level of satisfaction with the job, the institution, and the working environment; and to help the employee plan personal programs and activities that will improve job effectiveness or help in preparation for advancement. The last objective is particularly important. Together, the employee and the supervisor establish current and long-range goals for the employee. After mutual agreement, the goals are recorded on the performance evaluation form; at the next evaluation interview, progress toward the goals is measured. By signing the form, the employee indicates acceptance of the evaluation and proposed goals.

Of course, not all interviews go smoothly. Sometimes supervisors have to tell employees they are not working up to the library's standards. In some cases, the supervisor may have to demote or terminate an employee. The supervisor should be able to anticipate when such action might be necessary and be prepared. Previous and current performance appraisals, as well as the known attitude and behavior of the employee, provide indications that difficulty might be encountered. The wise supervisor is seldom caught unprepared for any direction the interview takes.

Performance appraisal is a necessary though difficult part of HR administration. Good performance appraisal systems help employees understand how well they are doing and provide an opportunity for employee growth and development.

DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCES

At one time or another, almost every manager has to deal with an employee who fails to comply with the requirements of the job or the organization. That employee's supervisor may need to invoke some sort of disciplinary procedure to resolve the issue. Conversely, sometimes an employee has a complaint about the organization or its management. In that case, the employee may need to use the organization's grievance procedure to resolve the problem.

Discipline is the action taken by an organization against an employee when that employee's performance has deteriorated to the point where action is necessary or when that employee has violated an institutional rule. Discipline is a method of communicating to employees that they need to change their behavior to meet established standards. Discipline may need to be administered for reasons ranging from excessive absenteeism to theft. Supervisors must be aware of the dual objectives of discipline: preserving the interests of the organization and protecting the rights of the individual.

Most organizations have formal policies and procedures for handling discipline. It has been estimated that only about 5 percent of employees ever need discipline; the vast majority are good workers who want to do the right thing.[18] But policies and procedures relating to discipline must be in place to deal with the few who need them. Before establishing disciplinary procedures, each institution must develop rules and regulations governing employee performance and must take measures to ensure that these rules and regulations are clearly understood by each employee. If an employee violates a rule or work standard, disciplinary action is taken. Before this is done, however, it should be established that the poor performance is not caused by external factors, such as poor training, insufficient supervision, or inadequate equipment.

Role-Play a Situation

You are head of reference in an academic library. One of the student workers who is scheduled to work 20 hours per week is late again. The student has been showing up for work at least 20 minutes late since the new semester began three weeks ago. This is causing a great deal of inconvenience to all the other staff and has resulted in gaps in coverage at the desk. You have scheduled an appointment to speak with the student tomorrow. How will you structure the interview? What points will you want to make? What do you hope the outcome of the interview will be?

Ask a friend or fellow student to play the role of the student worker in this scenario.

Disciplinary actions take various forms, depending on the nature and frequency of the offending behavior. Most organizations employ what is known as progressive discipline, which provides for a series of steps before dismissal so that an employee will have the opportunity to correct the undesirable behavior. The mildest disciplinary action is the simple oral warning. After this, the penalties escalate to an oral warning noted in the employee's personnel record, then to a written warning, then to suspension without pay for varying lengths of time, and, finally, to the harshest penalty, discharge from the job. However, in the case of gross misconduct, such as assault on a supervisor or theft, an employee can be dismissed without going through all these steps. To prevent litigation, documentation should be kept at each step of the process.

To administer discipline effectively, the penalties must be imposed in the right manner. Many HR experts refer to the so-called red-hot-stove method of administering discipline. When someone touches a red-hot stove, the punishment is immediate, given with warning, consistent, and impersonal. The best disciplinary systems have these characteristics. Discipline should be carried out impersonally, without a feeling that there is any animosity on the part of the supervisor. A supervisor should never hesitate to use discipline when necessary but should always remember that discipline is not intended to humiliate an employee but to correct a problem or to modify job behavior. Discipline should be administered privately and in a calm manner. The supervisor should encourage two-way communication and allow the employee to speak. A follow-up plan for improving behavior should be agreed upon. If possible, the interview should end on a positive note, leaving the employee with the belief that both the supervisor and organization want him or her to succeed.[19]

No one likes to administer discipline, but, if handled properly, a disciplinary system can be an effective tool in handling job-related employee problems. In addition to the individual being disciplined, discipline may prevent others from acting in a similar fashion, assure others that inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated, and communicate the manager's commitment to a high standard of conduct.[20]

Firing or Termination

When none of these disciplinary procedures are effective, a manager may have to discharge an employee. *Firing* is the term that is usually used for a for-cause dismissal. An employee who has committed a major transgression, such as stealing, gross insubordination, or the like, would be fired. Termination results from an employee's failure to meet job expectations after a reasonable amount of time. Discharging an employee is never easy, but the process must be handled correctly because the mishandling of terminations is a major cause of employee lawsuits. Documentation is important in all HR decisions, but it is especially important in the case of terminations. All evidence supporting the need for termination should be available in case of litigation.[21] Managers should treat the employee with respect and understand how traumatic it is to lose a job for whatever reason. At the same time, however, it is the duty of a manager to remove poorly performing employees before they affect the morale of other workers and impede the work being done in the unit.

Grievance Systems

Discipline is concerned with the problems organizations have with employees. A grievance system, on the other hand, provides a method for employees to deal with the problems they have with supervisors or with the organization. A grievance is any dissatisfaction relating to one's employment that is brought to the attention of an organization's management. Grievance procedures are found in both unionized and nonunionized organizations, but the procedure is apt to be more formal and well defined in unionized situations.

In many nonunionized institutions, the open-door policy is used to solve employee grievances in an informal manner. This policy is based on the assumption that, when supervisors encourage employees to come to their office voluntarily at any time to discuss problems and complaints, they will feel free to do so. The open-door policy works only when the supervisor has been able to instill in employees a feeling of trust. Employees must feel that any problem or complaint will be objectively heard and fairly resolved and that the supervisor will not hold it against them or consider them troublemakers. The open-door policy is successful when the supervisor is skilled in human relations and is sensitive to employee needs and feelings. The open-door policy gives the supervisor an opportunity to explain why a certain action was taken and to resolve the complaint or grievance through direct communication. Factual problems are probably the easiest to resolve, because they involve easily verified situations such as working conditions, hours of work, or changes in the procedures of a job. Problems involving feelings or emotions are often much more difficult to handle.

In a unionized institution, the collective-bargaining agreement establishes the procedures to be used for handling grievances. These procedures proceed through certain steps outlined in the union contract. In general, the first step is for the aggrieved employee to meet with the union steward, who is the union representative for that employee's unit. The employee and the union steward discuss the grievance and together bring the grievance to the grievant's supervisor. If a mutually satisfactory solution cannot be reached, the grievance is put in writing, and the process is continued with the next level of management. If the problem is still unresolved, higher management and the HR department usually become involved. If a solution to the grievance cannot be arrived at within the organization, the grievant can request arbitration, a process by which both the employer and the union representing the employee agree to settle the dispute through an outside, neutral third party. The decision made by the arbitrator is binding for all parties involved.

It is best for all organizations to have formal grievance procedures. In a unionized organization, this procedure is part of the union contract. In a nonunionized organization, management must see that such procedures are established. A grievance procedure defines the manner in which grievances are filed (written or oral), to whom the grievance is submitted, how the grievance proceeds through the organization's hierarchy, where decisions about the grievance can be made, and the final point of decision. Usually, the procedures identify actions that aggrieved employees can take if they are not satisfied with the final decision.

Grievance procedures are ways of removing the employee from the direct and complete control of his or her immediate supervisor. Grievance procedures may discipline supervisors and act as guarantees to employees. They exist to assure employees that justice is available when they have a legitimate complaint against the organization.

EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

The ultimate aim of salary administration is to arrive at an equitable system of compensating employees for the work they perform. Most libraries offer employees only salaries and benefits, unlike for-profit corporations, which often provide annual bonuses, stock options, or other special incentives to reward employees. HR specialists differentiate between wages and salaries. Wages refers to the compensation of employees whose pay is calculated according to the number of hours worked each week, and salary refers to compensation that is uniform from one pay period to the next. Wages are usually reported by the hour; salaries by the year.

Two other terms are used to differentiate between these types of employees. Wage-earning employees are often referred to as *nonexempt* personnel. Generally, nonexempt employees work in nonsupervisory positions and are covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Nonexempt employees must be paid time-and-one-half (the hourly wage multiplied by 1.5) for overtime work. Salaried workers are often referred to as *exempt* personnel. Exempt employees are usually managerial or professional employees who are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act. Employers are not required to pay such employees overtime, regardless of the number of hours worked.

Most libraries receive the bulk of their salary funding from their parent institution. In addition, a few libraries receive a smaller amount of personnel funds from endowments, federal or foundation grants, or, occasionally, from earned income. Funds received from federal or foundation grants are allocated to specific projects or programs on a temporary basis; such funding is often called *soft* money.

Private businesses and institutions are not required to make public the wages or salaries of any individual employee or group of employees. Indeed, in many industries, salary information is a closely kept secret. The justification for salary secrecy is that it prevents discontent among employees. Most public institutions, on the other hand, are required to make salary information available. In many states, the salaries of state employees are considered a public record and are available in personnel offices and/or in newspapers.

Some employees dislike having salaries disclosed because they feel that the disclosure violates their privacy. Sometimes, public disclosure of salaries may lead to envy and a loss of morale. On the other hand, open disclosure of salaries is thought to curb favoritism and to lessen pay discrimination among employees. Many HR specialists feel that, if possible, a compromise between the two positions is best. An organization should disclose the pay ranges for various jobs within the organization but not reveal what any particular individual is earning.

In libraries as in other organizations, a salary administration program consists of three parts: the determination of what salary to pay, the development of a salary scale, and the process of awarding salary increases.

Determination of Salary

All institutions that pay personnel for services rendered must determine what is fair and equitable compensation for the education, experience, and responsibility required for the job. The determination of the salary associated with any job should be directly related to the requirements for that job; the higher the job requirements, the higher the salary.

Institutions must provide competitive salaries in order to attract and retain good employees. Individuals who have specialized education, a demonstrated capability resulting from successful work experience, and a willingness to accept responsibility are always in demand. Thus, the compensation must be adequate to attract them. Although money may not be the most important motivator for some people, it is still very important to most. Institutions that strive to obtain and retain the best people usually will offer salaries higher than institutions that will accept lower performance and higher turnover.

In the private sector, more and more companies are paying employees on the basis of some sort of performance measure.[22] This pay for performance can range from the piece-rate method of paying factory workers to the lump-sum bonuses given to employees who are considered to have contributed to a company's productivity or profits. These programs differ from the usual compensation systems because they link pay directly to productivity or performance, not just to the time spent at a job. This type of compensation system is rarely found in publicly funded libraries.

The question of fair pay generally involves two general issues: (1) internal equity, or what the employee is paid compared to what other employees in the same organization are paid, and (2) external equity, or what the employee is paid compared to what employees in other organizations are paid for performing similar jobs. Pay dissatisfaction can have a negative influence on the employee's work. If organizations are to avoid this dissatisfaction, employees must be convinced that both internal and external equity exist.

In general, the salaries of professional librarians are competitive nationally, although there are sometimes regional and local conditions that affect them. In large metropolitan centers, such as New York City or San Francisco, the cost of living is greater than in smaller communities. Factors of this nature affect the level of salary offered. The annual report of professional salaries received by current graduates of accredited schools of library and information science, usually published in an October issue of *Library Journal*,[23] shows the regional variation of beginning salaries as well as the national average and median salaries.

In addition to the *Library Journal* survey, there are several ways to gather information on entry-level salaries as well as on the salaries of other professional levels. Periodically, the Special Libraries Association conducts an in-depth survey of its members.[24] The American Library Association periodically reports information about salaries in *American Libraries*.[25] The Association of Research Libraries publishes an annual salary survey.[26] Some state libraries issue salary data for all libraries in that state. An institution may wish to gather these data by conducting a salary survey or by simply evaluating salaries offered in advertisements in professional periodicals. Regardless of the method used, great care must be taken to assure that all the data gathered apply to positions that have the same job requirements.

Salaries for library positions other than those held by professional librarians usually are determined by the going rate of pay in the community in which the library is located. The Allied Professional Association and Office for Research and Statistics of the American Library Association now provide a national overview of salaries for library support staff.[27] Information concerning local salaries can be obtained from institutions such as the school system, local government, employment agencies, or Chamber of Commerce. Some Internet sites, such as http://www.salary.com, provide information about salaries for specific jobs in various geographic locations.

Information technology has altered the jobs of most librarians, and often the job classifications and the pay scales have lagged in recognizing these changes. In many organizations, the tasks that librarians perform are similar to those performed by computer or systems workers, but, because they are classified differently, they are paid less.

If libraries and information centers wish to attract the most talented employees, efforts must be made to be sure that the salary offered to their employees is as attractive as that offered to employees performing similar functions working elsewhere. The disparity in salaries of technologically proficient workers in libraries and in the corporate world is one of the reasons that libraries today are having problems in recruiting new employees.

Development of a Salary Scale

A salary scale establishes the amount of money that will be paid for the accomplishment of the duties designated in the job description. The scale has a minimum and a maximum amount that will be paid for that job. The minimum represents the beginning or entry-level salary, and the maximum amount should indicate the value of the job to the institution when it is performed with maximum efficiency and thoroughness. The difference between the minimum and the maximum are steps on the salary scale that designate salary increases awarded to the employee as proficiency increases or as experience is gained. After an employee has reached the top step of a grade, the only way he or she can receive a pay increase is by moving to a higher range.

Each library has to develop its own salary scale, but such scales are influenced by many external factors. For instance, there are numerous constraints on how these scales can be developed. Federal and state laws concerning the minimum wage put a floor under the compensation of the lowest-paid employees. In early 2007, the federal minimum wage remained at $5.15 per hour although bills have been introduced into the U.S. Congress that will likely increase the federal minimum wage in the near future. Already some states and cities require a higher minimum wage.[28] The existence of a union contract may affect how employees are paid. The salaries paid in competing institutions also influence the salary scale. Finally, the law of supply and demand plays a part; employees in high-demand specialties may have to be paid more than other employees with more commonly available expertise.

The establishment of the salary scale is closely linked to the process of job evaluation. Regardless of which method of job evaluation has been used (e.g., the factor method or the classification method), the ultimate objective is to ascertain the correct rate of pay for all jobs in the organization and the relationship in terms of salary between them. Although some institutions have salary scales that do not overlap, it is much more common for the ranges of adjacent pay grades to do so. The use of an overlapping pay scale allows an outstanding performer in a lower grade to make a higher salary than a below-average worker in a higher grade. In a like fashion, an experienced worker in a lower grade would make a higher salary than a beginning worker in a higher grade.

In administering a salary scale, some commonsense principles should be kept in mind. First, there should be equal pay for equal work. If two jobs have equal requirements in terms of education, experience, and responsibility, the pay should be the same. Of course, this does not prevent having a salary range with individuals at different steps within the range. Second, employees are not required to enter a salary scale at the first step. Most institutions recognize previous related work experience and allow a new employee to enter higher on the scale. Third, if an employee is promoted from one rank to another, for instance, from Librarian I to Librarian II, the employee should not be forced to take a pay cut if the beginning salary of Librarian II is lower than the salary the employee earned as Librarian I. Instead, the employee should be given a somewhat higher salary to compensate him or her for assuming more responsibility.

Salary Increases

Three common methods of determining salary increases in libraries and information centers are length of service, merit, or some combination of these two factors. Length of service equates increased pay with seniority. The underlying assumption is that an organization should recognize the fact that an experienced worker is more valuable than an inexperienced one. Librarians working in public schools usually have pay schedules with predetermined steps; with each year of experience, the librarians advance a step on the salary scale. Sometimes, government employees receive a uniform salary increase (e.g., a 5% increase), and all employees receive the same percentage increase to reward increasing seniority. The automatic increase, though easy to administer, does not allow the organization to reward exceptional performers.

The merit system is based on the concept that salary increases should be awarded only for quality performance. In any organization, some workers contribute more than others. Merit pay allows the organization to reward the employees who work the hardest and who are the most valuable. It is assumed that a merit-based system will encourage all employees to work better in the hopes of receiving a larger pay increase. It is almost impossible to construct a plan of merit increases that will please all employees. Supervisors are often accused of using merit systems to reward their favorite employees. The merit system also presents problems when employees receive no pay increase at all. During periods of high inflation, employees who are given no salary increase are seriously affected by a loss of spending power and thus will not be able to maintain the same standard of living from year to year. If a merit system is used, it should be carefully designed, well publicized, and closely related to the employees' performance appraisals.

Most libraries use some combination of merit and seniority to award pay increases. All employees may be awarded an increase of a certain monetary amount or percentage if their job performance is meritorious. This approach allows all employees to receive some pay increase when raises are awarded.

The use of teams has complicated the awarding of salary increases. Traditionally, employees have been compensated based on their individual performance, but in team-based organizations, many employees are being evaluated and paid according to the performance of their teams. Obviously, if an organization wants to reinforce the value and importance of teams, it is important to reinforce team behavior. Rewarding team performance, not individual performance, achieves that goal. But the team-based reward only works well when all team members contribute equitably. Team-based pay has the potential of giving free riders as great a pay increase as those who have worked much harder. Determining equitable pay for team members is difficult, but libraries need to continue to find a way to provide equitable ways of administering team-based rewards.[29] Whatever compensation system is used, it should be one that can be communicated easily and that is felt to be fair by the employees.

Recognition and Rewards

Individuals working in libraries rarely receive the monetary rewards, such as stock options or bonuses, that are available to employees in the private sector. Nonetheless, many libraries have tried to structure some no-cost or low-cost way to reward and express appreciation for employees. Employee recognition programs usually are successful because employees are motivated by recognition. People who feel appreciated identify with the organization and are more productive. Managers of reward systems must be sure that rewards are tied to the organization's needs, that the reward system is flexible and fair, and that rewards are publicized and, if appropriate, presented in a public forum. It is best to schedule frequent reward presentations so employees receive the reward soon after the achievement is recognized.[30] Celebrations and awards can be effective morale boosters and can increase productivity and quality. They also contribute to building a strong organizational culture.

Try This!

Work with a group of other people. Try to think of as many ways as you can that a library could provide nonmonetary rewards or recognition to employees. What are the advantages and disadvantages or these types of rewards?

Employee Benefits

A major portion of employees' compensation packages consists of benefits. The number and variety of benefits provided by libraries and information centers has grown over the years to the point where benefits constitute a major factor in total compensation. The package of benefits offered to employees is determined by the individual library or by the library's parent institution. Some benefits are required by federal or state law, and, in unionized institutions, some are mandated as part of a collective-bargaining agreement. Federal and state regulations apply to almost all workers in the United States. Among the benefits required by these laws are Social Security, unemployment insurance, and workers' compensation. Unemployment insurance and workers' compensation are financed solely by employer contributions. Social Security is financed by equal contributions from employer and employee. The amount of Social Security tax has increased rapidly over the years. In 1937, the combined employer-employee tax rate was 2 percent on a maximum of $3,000 in earnings. In 2006, the combined rate was 12.4 percent on a maximum of $94,200.[31] For many low-paid employees, contributions to Social Security are larger than their federal income tax.

In addition to benefits mandated by federal or state law, organizations provide other types of benefits. For some, the employer pays the full cost, and for others, the employee pays a portion of the cost. In private industry, a recent trend is the use of flexible, or cafeteria, plans, which allow employees some discretion in choosing the specific elements of their benefit program from a range of options. This approach allows employees to tailor a program to fit their needs. For example, an employee who is covered by a spouse's health insurance plan might forgo the health insurance option and instead select a larger amount of life insurance. To date, however, few public institutions provide such cafeteria plans.

Most libraries offer several types of group insurance plans. Medical insurance, often including major medical coverage of catastrophic illness, is commonly provided. The cost of medical insurance has escalated in the past few years, and, as a result, many organizations have shifted more of the cost of this insurance onto the employee and have increased his or her deductibles. In addition to health insurance, many organizations provide both group life insurance and disability insurance; the latter tides employees over during periods of disability caused by sickness or accident. Dental insurance is provided by some libraries. The payment for these types of insurance varies; some institutions pay the full cost, but more commonly, the employee pays a portion, especially for the coverage of dependents.

Paid time off includes holidays, vacations, and various types of leave. It is also standard practice in many organizations to pay employees for rest periods and lunch breaks.

Employee retirement plans are pension or retirement plans that offer an addition to the retirement coverage offered by Social Security. Commonly, both the employer and employee make contributions to these plans.

Many employees are offered access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), which provide assessment and referral for employees who have problems with depression, family dissension, substance abuse, and financial or legal matters. At one time, employees with personal problems were fired if these problems got in the way of work performance. EAPs help employees work through these problems and stay on the job.

Librarians may be offered a wide variety of other benefits, depending on where they work. Some of these monetary benefits include travel and moving expenses, tuition refunds, and access to subsidized day care.

Some of the benefits offered by libraries are related to the rise in the number of two-career families. Especially when couples in a two-career marriage have children, benefits that allow them flexibility in order to meet family responsibilities are among the most valuable that an organization can provide.

A nonmonetary benefit found more and more in libraries and information centers is the alternative work schedule. Instead of requiring all employees to work the same hours, alternative work schedules, such as flextime or the compressed workweek, allow employees some freedom in choosing the hours and days they work. This flexibility, of course, can be granted only if appropriate provision is made to cover service to users and supervisory and training responsibilities. Before instituting any type of alternative work schedule, administrators should develop clear plans of action, with targeted jobs tested in advance to determine the likely effects of the new schedule.

What Do You Think?

For the vast majority of working families, Ozzie and Harriet are demographic dinosaurs. For others, they were always a myth. Today, Harriet usually does not stay home. Nearly three out of four women with children are in the workforce. Often, neither Ozzie nor Harriet gets home by 5:00 P.M. The time that married women with children spend working outside the home nearly doubled in 30 years—translating into 22 fewer hours per week families can spend with their children.

Most employees in libraries are women, and many of them have children and other family responsibilities. What can employers do to help women (and men) balance the responsibilities of work and family? Do you think that employees with children should get any special benefits or consideration?

U.S. Department of Labor, *Futurework: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Department of Labor, 1999): 10; excerpt also available in U.S. Department of Labor, "Futurework: Trends and Challenges for Work in the 21st Century," *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* (Summer 2000): 31–37, http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2000/Summer/art04.pdf.

Telecommuting refers to working away from the office, on a full-time or part-time basis, often at home, usually using an Internet connection, telephone, and/or fax machine as a way to keep in touch with the office. Telecommuting has advantages for both employer and employee. The employer does not have to provide a place for the employee to work. The employee benefits from a more flexible job schedule, lack of interruptions, lack of a commute, and the maximum amount of freedom in terms of structuring the work environment. Although telecommuting is becoming increasingly popular in the for-profit sector, it is not used as frequently in libraries. Where it is used, it is usually on a temporary or part-time basis. However, some librarians are allowed to work out of their homes at least part-time for such tasks as Web site design, online reference, and writing projects. To be a successful telecommuter, it is important "to be self-motivated, focused, and organized, and to have a family life that won't create frequent work interruptions."[32] Telecommuting provides ultimate flexibility for people holding the type of job that lends itself to being done off-site.

A few libraries have instituted the practice of job sharing. Job sharing splits one job between two individuals. Usually, the salary is shared; benefits, such as medical insurance, are sometimes prorated, but, in the best cases, both employees receive benefits. Flextime, telecommuting, and job sharing are attractive to employees with small children because these alternative approaches to work enable them to spend more time with their children. Other employees also find these options beneficial; their existence sometimes allows organizations to keep valuable employees they otherwise would lose.

Many employees take their benefits for granted, not realizing that benefits are a sizable part of the total labor cost of any organization. Benefits add significantly to the salary of an employee because of the contributions made by the employer. On a percentage basis, the cost of benefits has increased substantially in recent years. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that, for all domestic industries in 2006, the total cost of all benefits was almost 30 percent of total annual wages.[33]

Both employers and employees gain from a well-designed and well-administered benefits program, despite its cost. In considering a benefits program, a manager must carefully study each element of the program to determine its future financial impact on the institution. After determining that the program is needed and desired by the employees, the manager must carefully define the program and establish the policies and procedures necessary to assure its fair and equitable implementation. Finally, the manager should communicate information about the benefits package to all employees to inform them what is available, when they are eligible, and what procedures are involved in obtaining the benefits. Supervisors should be able to speak knowledgeably about the entire benefits package because many employees turn to their immediate supervisors for information of this type.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has covered the primary functions related to maintaining the HR of a library. The next chapter looks at some of the general issues affecting HR management. That chapter will cover topics such as personnel procedures and policies, career development, mentoring, external regulations, and unionization.

NOTES

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