
MANAGING LIBRARY EMPLOYEES

A How-To-Do-It Manual®

MARY J. STANLEY

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PREFACE

Most libraries do not have a human resources professional on staff. In small and many medium-sized libraries, librarians with little or no training in managing employees hire, evaluate, discipline, and terminate employees as part of their regular duties as an information professional.

Managing human resources without having a background in the field can be challenging and scary. I once fell into this category myself. I have met many others in the same boat in the human resources workshops I run. Invariably, workshop attendees have many questions. How can an institution attract good candidates for an open position in an atmosphere of librarian shortages? What are the legal implications of disciplining or terminating a problematic employee? Should the organization monitor employees' Internet activity? Librarians are searching for answers—more specifically, answers that apply to libraries rather than to large institutions or for-profit corporations. In *Managing Library Employees: A How-To-Do-It Manual*, I try to provide answers to the most common and the most confusing library human resources questions.

Managing Library Employees covers the practical side of human resources, the everyday situations that come up sooner or later in most organizations. It explores the range of essential HR functions from basic employment practices such as hiring, compensation, and benefits to timely topics such as workplace violence, Internet misuse, and human resources software programs. Legal issues are also a primary focus; in addition to the chapter on employment law, other chapters touch on topics such as sexual harassment, designing a lawful and properly documented disciplinary procedure, and identifying potential problem spots before they turn into a lawsuit.

The aim of *Managing Library Employees* is to provide a basic orientation in human resources management for librarians. While the information will be helpful to readers in libraries of all types and sizes, the focus is on the concerns of small- to medium-sized organizations, since individuals in these settings are most likely to have little background in human resources. Where applicable, *Managing Library Employees* discusses how budgetary and staffing limits affect human resources practices and how to work around these problems.

Being a successful human resources manager requires a change in perspective. Coworkers and employees become the manager's internal customers, and need to be treated like other customers: with respect, care, fairness, and objectivity. *Managing Library Employees* aims to help the reader cultivate this new outlook and handle challenges with confidence.

ORGANIZATION

The chapters are arranged roughly in the order in which the topics might be encountered. Though a librarian just starting to take responsibility for human resources tasks or wishing to get an overall view of the field will want to read the book in order, the question-and-answer format also makes it easy to flip between topics as a question comes up.

Chapter 1, “Library Human Resources Management: Introduction and History,” defines basic HR terms and provides a general overview of the current state of both the human resources field in general and library human resources in particular. It describes the demographic makeup of today’s librarians and investigates possible solutions to anticipated staffing shortages.

Chapter 2, “Laws Affecting the Management of Library Personnel,” covers key human resources–related legislation: Title VII, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), HIPAA, and others. It outlines steps that libraries should take to ensure that they are in compliance with these regulations.

Chapter 3, “Recruitment and Selection of Library Staff,” focuses on hiring employees, whether professional librarians, student workers, or volunteers. In this chapter, you will also find advice on creating a job description and interviewing, including what interview questions are considered unlawful.

Chapter 4, “Training, Retention, and Professional Development,” discusses ways to support new and longtime employees, from orientation to mentoring. Chapter 5, “Compensation and Benefits,” examines salary systems and the range of benefits that your institution might consider offering. Even those libraries whose salaries and benefits are determined by city, state, or university systems will profit from being aware of other options. This chapter also touches on unions and collective bargaining.

Chapter 6, “Evaluation and Performance Appraisal,” introduces different methods of evaluation, including how to evaluate individuals in team-based organizations. Chapter 7, “Problem Employees and Marginal Employees,” clarifies the difference between these two groups and advises readers on how to diplomatically and effectively address performance issues. Absenteeism and bullying are also covered here.

Chapter 8, “Conflict Resolution/Management, Progressive Discipline, and RIF,” delves into the most difficult HR tasks. Suggested steps in discipline, handling conflict, and termination are outlined in order to ease these processes.

Chapter 9, “Communication: Verbal, Written, and Electronic,” covers the three primary types of communication and how they operate in the workplace environment. Communication with management is often the

number one concern for employees. Chapter 10, “The Role of Technology in Human Resources Management,” considers the impact of technology in the library environment, especially human resources information systems (HRIS).

Chapter 11, “Managing Change,” offers strategies for dealing with a society where change is constant and unavoidable, and touches on technostress, a collection of symptoms that show the effect of change and technology on workers.

At times, even those of us with both experience and education in human resources may feel that we are simply muddling along. People are unpredictable, relationships change, and today’s diverse workforce creates an even greater number of opportunities for both positive developments and interpersonal problems. During tough periods, a solid base of human resources knowledge can guide your decisions and restore your professional confidence. I hope this book will be one of the touchstones that helps you through the sometimes perplexing but equally rewarding world of human resources management.