

**Communication and Teamwork Competency Set
Portfolio Development Suggestions
May 9, 2011**

Library Support Staff need to communicate effectively with library users, library staff and others in a variety of situations to offer high-quality customer service. Library Support Staff are also required to make decisions that impact library services and serve as valued members of work teams. This set is divided into two parts: first communication and then team work and decision-making.

These Portfolio Development Suggestions (PDS) includes examples of possible activities you might use to demonstrate your achievements for each competency in this set. These activities or activities that you design yourself will be the primary documentation of your achievements for your online portfolio.

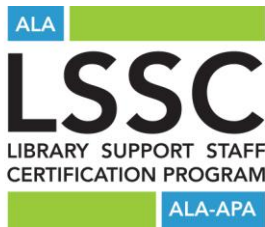
You might recognize some of these activities as experiences you have already had at work. You may also choose to use these as ideas for new self-directed learning projects and ways to demonstrate what you learned.

These are ONLY examples to help you get started thinking about both what experiences you already have related to specific competencies and what new learning you may want to pursue. While you may choose to use some of these suggestions for your Cataloging and Classification portfolio, you may also choose other relevant activities from your experience or new learning activities to demonstrate your proficiency in each competency.

The goal is to demonstrate that you have achieved the competencies. Your documentation may be a written narrative, a video, an audio recording or digitized copies of documents you have already prepared in your work experience. You may submit these documents in any format that can be uploaded into your online portfolio. Remember to make a clear link between the competency and the document so that evaluators will know what competency you are demonstrating. When appropriate, you may also apply documentation for one competency to another competency. If so, indicate that in your portfolio.

Helpful Hints

In order to complete some of the activities you may need to conduct research. This research may be from print resources, web resources, visits to and observations of other libraries and interviews with library staff or library users. If you need to conduct research to complete one of the activities listed below, be sure to cite the resources that you consulted and your personal opinion of what you learned.



Some of the PDSs ask for a bibliography. Usually a bibliography should include notations that are both descriptive and evaluative. Descriptive means your notation briefly describes what is relevant; evaluative means your opinion about what you read.

In some cases, we suggest that you compare and contrast what happens in at least two libraries or other settings. Compare and contrast means that you identify the similarities and differences between the way different libraries or other settings operate. If you currently work in a library, you may use that library as one of the examples. You may use the same type of library for comparison (public OR academic) or different types of libraries (public AND academic). Unless the suggested activity specifically indicates that you should look for examples in BOTH public and academic libraries, you may choose which types you would like to compare and contrast. You can discover how other libraries operate by conducting online research or by visiting another library and interviewing its staff.

You may also be asked to analyze or describe “your community.” Community is a broad term that could mean the community served by a public library or the higher education community served by an academic library.

In Summary

In summary, in order to submit this competency set as completed, you are expected to demonstrate that you have achieved each of the 18 individual competencies in the Communication and Teamwork competency set. However, you are NOT expected to complete all of the examples listed with each competency.

Good luck as you achieve this competency set.

COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES

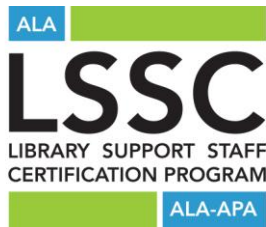
Library Support Staff will know:

Competency 1. Basic concepts of interpersonal relations, customer services and communication.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

1.1 List 20 key terms related to interpersonal relations, customer service and communication, with a brief definition of each term. Explain how and why you selected the terms and what sources you consulted. How could this list be used for training library employees? Were there conflicting definitions?

1.2 Locate a set of interview questions that could be used to judge the interpersonal, customer service, and communication skills of a job candidate in a library. Give examples of



answers that would indicate that the candidate had these skills. Design a follow-up question for each. Are there other questions you might add?

1.3 List five key principles or skills for each of these areas: interpersonal relations, customer service, and communication. Explain the importance of each principle or skill as it applies to libraries, using examples from your personal experience if possible. What resources did you use to compile these principles or skills? Were there conflicting principles or skills and why did you choose the ones you chose?

Competency 2. The importance of upholding policies and decisions and when to make exceptions.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

2.1 Explain the purpose of a specific library policy of your choice. Describe how at least two types of libraries address this same policy area. To whom does the policy apply? How is it enforced? Under what circumstances might exceptions be made? What would be the consequences if no such policy existed? How is this policy communicated to staff and the public?

2.2 List five library user groups served by two different libraries. Which policies of the libraries are applied equally to all user groups and in which policies are exceptions made for different groups? In which policies do the staff have the authority to make exceptions based on their own judgment?

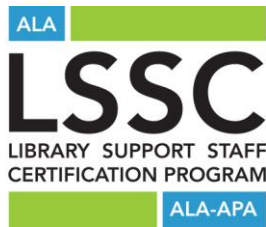
2.3 Compare the same policy in two different libraries. (An example might be visitor policies in academic libraries.) Select the policy you think is best and explain why. Is this policy up-to-date? If not, how would you update the policy to include current technologies, services, or changes in librarianship? What authority do the staff have to make exceptions to the policy?

Competency 3. Tools for resolving conflict.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

3.1 Describe a conflict that frequently arises between the library and its users or among staff. What methods can be used to resolve the conflict? What might be the different reactions of individuals on both sides? What communication and negotiation skills are needed to resolve this problem? Could the conflict be avoided or lessened by changes in policy or procedure?

3.2 Read three articles or book chapters on techniques for conflict resolution. Summarize the contents of each article and explain how it could be useful in a library setting. Relate what you have read to your own experience. How might you use these in the future? Cite the resources you use and indicate which of the approaches to conflict you think would be most successful.



3.3 Describe a conflict situation that you personally experienced either in a library or another setting. Was it successfully resolved? Analyze the communication that occurred. How might it have been handled differently? Submit a video or audio tape or provide a script for a role play of the situation showing different methods of resolution.

Library Support Staff will be able to:

Competency 4. Treat others with respect, fairness, and consistency.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

4.1 Collect examples from two libraries of library policies, guidelines, or other documents that address diversity, respect, and fairness in two of the following areas: access, circulation, privacy, collection management, or information services. Compare and contrast the policies. Based on your own reading, research, or experience, what would you suggest be added to the policies?

4.2 Describe a program that you attended on the topic of respect, fairness, or diversity. Describe how you used this information in your work (library or other work experience). Provide a video or audio tape or a script of a role play that shows what you learned and how you used it.

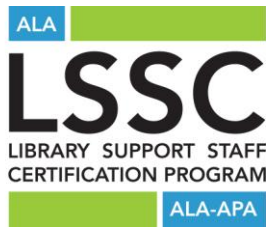
Competency 5. Seek, give and accept constructive feedback with coworkers, supervisors and users.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

5.1 Read three articles or book chapters on techniques for performance evaluations. Summarize the contents of each article and explain how it could be useful in a library setting. Relate what you have read to your own experience. How might you use these in the future? Cite the resources you use and indicate which of the approaches to performance evaluations you think would be most successful. Provide a video or audio tape or a script of a role play of a conversation where you discuss the feedback you receive.

5.2 Discuss at least three instances of formal or informal feedback on your job performance. How did you feel and respond to the feedback? Was the feedback constructive or destructive? If you would have liked to have received this feedback in a different way, explain what that might be. Describe the circumstances that led to the feedback, your response, and the changes that were made based on the feedback. Analyzing this experience, how does it impact how you might give feedback to others?

5.3 Obtain employee performance evaluation forms from at least two libraries. Read three articles or book chapters on employee evaluation and compare the library evaluation forms to



what you learn in your research. How might the library improve its evaluation based on your research?

Competency 6. Resolve conflict in a positive and productive manner and judge when situations should be referred to a supervisor.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

6.1 For one month maintain a log of conflicts that arise at your job including interpersonal conflicts, communication problems, or time-management conflicts. Note whether the conflict was resolved by front-line staff or referred to a supervisor, and why. What recommendations would you make for conflict resolution process at your job?

6.2 Interview three supervisors in a library and summarize their views on how to handle conflict in a positive and productive manner. Under what circumstances would they prefer that the problem be referred up the chain of command? Compare and contrast these methods.

Competency 7. Write clearly, logically and concisely.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

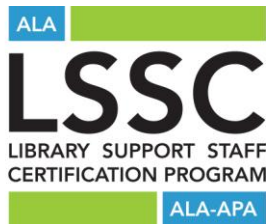
Your other work on this and other competencies will be used to demonstrate your ability to write clearly, logically, and concisely.

Competency 8. Select the most appropriate medium for communicating, based on the language, communication styles, and needs of the diverse receiver (user and staff.)

Portfolio Development Suggestions

8.1 Using your own experience or by doing research, identify at least four methods for staff to communicate with each other at a library. Include communication within a department, between library departments, and from a supervisor to staff. Include at least one technological method of communication. Analyze the effectiveness of each method of communicating either a major policy change, a controversial issue about the library, staff scheduling, upcoming events, or news about a library staff member.

8.2 Read five articles or chapters of books that describe the different communication styles and needs of different groups of library users: for example, children, teenagers, non-native speakers of English, people with visual or hearing impairment, or the elderly. Based on your research and your own experience, what techniques are helpful in communicating with these diverse users? Prepare a video or audio tape or a script of a role play with different audiences showing different styles of communication with different audiences.



8.3 Write two short news articles about a library service aimed at two different target groups of library users. Explain how you communicate differently with different audiences? For example, what is the difference in language? Where might you distribute these articles to reach the target audience?

Competency 9. Listen effectively and transmit information accurately and understandably.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

9.1 Read three articles or chapters on active listening and describe its key characteristics. Cite your sources. What situations in the library would require particular attention to active listening? Give three examples of situations in which failure to listen and transmit information accurately could lead to misunderstanding in a library setting. How might these situations have been handled differently?

9.2 Describe guidelines for effective communication during meetings. Take notes at three different meetings and comment on the information distributed quality of discussion, clear communication, respectful behavior, and other aspects of the meeting that you notice. You may provide a video or audio tape or a script of a role play of a meeting where effective and non-effective communication strategies were used. What techniques were used in successful meeting that were not used in the non-successful meeting?

9.3 Observe at least five “reference interviews” with the permission of the reference librarian. What is the connection between a reference librarian listening well and library user leaving with the information they wanted? Give specific examples of good communication and miscommunication in the reference interview.

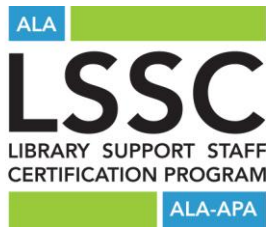
Competency 10. Use approachable and welcoming behavior with all users.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

10.1 Prepare a list of what constitutes approachable and welcoming behavior. Choose a library where you work or where you are a user. What aspects of that library may make it difficult for library users to feel welcome? Think about different groups of users: children, teens, seniors, or other groups served by the library. Are there aspects of the library that are less than welcoming?

10.2 Ask a friend who does not work in a library to visit a library and critique its signage and general welcoming atmosphere. Interview your friend and indicate what you might and might not do in response to the information in the interview. How would you reword negative or confusing signage? What changes might be made to provide a more welcoming atmosphere?

10.3 With a small group of staff, play out different scenarios with different groups of



differently enabled library users, such as non-English speakers or a hearing disabled client. What strategies could you use to deliver information to such diverse populations? How does the library facilitate access for these populations? Provide a video, audio recording, or written script of your scenarios.

Competency 11. Anticipate and maintain awareness of users' needs and wants in order to provide or improve services.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

11.1 Develop a list of ways to stay informed about users' needs. Describe how a library can solicit ongoing input on the library's services and collections. What other information sources already exist (for example, census data, course catalogs) that can give you clues about user needs? What information will you get from each of these resources?

11.2 Identify and briefly describe three research studies of different types of library users. How do these studies' findings compare with your own opinions or experiences with these user groups? Develop an example of a user study to learn more about a specific clientele.

11.3 Think of a particular new service you might like to implement in a library. Describe different ways could be used to ensure that all the stakeholders (those who can influence or who are impacted by a decision) are brought into the picture. Who are the stakeholders? List them and the role they play in this service. List three benefits of including stakeholders and three negative consequences of not including stakeholders. If you have already implemented a project, describe how you might have involved stakeholders differently.

TEAM WORK AND DECISION-MAKING

Library Support Staff will know:

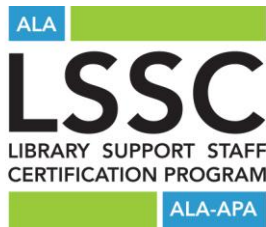
Competency 12. Basic concepts of team work.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

12.1 Develop a bibliography listing five to seven articles, books, or book chapters on team work. What are the essential aspects to developing effective teams? What are the major pitfalls that should be avoided? Compare and contrast what you learn to your own experiences working on a team.

12.2 Develop a set of interview questions to determine how a person would work as part of one department team in a library. Give examples of answers that would indicate that a person would be a good addition to that team.

12.3 Personality tests such as Meyers-Briggs are often used to build effective teams. Research



two such tests and discuss in what circumstances each might be used in the library to enhance working relationships.

Competency 13. Basic concepts of effective decision-making.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

13.1 Using at least three resources that describe the key elements or principles of effective decision-making, explain the importance of each principle as it applies to libraries. Give examples from your personal experience. Cite the resources you use and compare and contrast any differences among the information.

13.2 Define three groups' decision-making processes, such as consensus-based decision making. Develop a scenario and discuss how differences in opinion might be resolved using the different processes. Provide a video, audio recording, or written script of a group coming to a decision using the three models.

13.3 Develop a bibliography with notations both descriptive and evaluative on effective decision-making in the workplace. Try to find materials most relevant to libraries and other non-profit organizations. Analyze which decision-making principles would work best in which situations.

13.4 Write down three to five decisions, small or large, that were made recently in a library. How are decisions made in your library? Are different decisions made with different decision-making processes? Describe why specific decision making styles are or are not appropriate to the decisions being made.

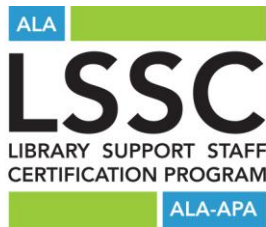
Library Support Staff will be able to:

Competency 14. Participate effectively on teams, commit to meeting agreed-upon goals and objectives, and support decisions made by the group.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

14.1 Describe a time when you were on a team or a committee. What were your contributions to these groups? Did you feel that all members contributed effectively? If not, why not? Were the goals of the team clear? What was successful about the team leadership? What might have been done differently?

14.2 Describe how you would plan, implement, and evaluate a project as a team leader. Using a hypothetical or actual project, describe how you would divide up the work of the team and the reasons why you would organize it that way. You may submit a video, audio recording, or written script of a role play of a first meeting of a new team and how the team is organized for its work.



14.3 Research and describe guidelines for effective communication during team meetings. Take notes at several meetings and document your role in reaching decisions, resolving problems, etc. Provide a video, audio recording, or written script of a role play of a meeting where effective communication was or was not used.

Competency 15. Promote communication and respect among team members.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

15.1 Research and describe general operating principles for effective team meetings. What methods should be employed to ensure good communication and respect among the team members or meeting participants? In a video or audio recording, illustrate the operating principles.

15.2 Think about a time when you were part of a group, team, or department where there was internal conflict, where communication fell apart, or members felt they could not work together. Describe methods that were employed or could have been employed to address the situation. Could the conflict have been lessened by changes in communication style or process?

Competency 16: Identify critical and sensitive library issues and choose appropriate strategies to communicate this information among the public, supervisors, team members, and peers as appropriate.

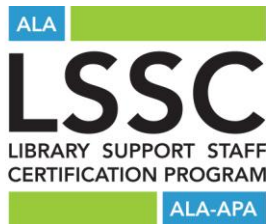
Portfolio Development Suggestions

16.1 Select three case studies from *Library Journal* or another source of case studies in libraries. Analyze the situation in each case study specifically from the point of view of communication problems and solutions. Compare and contrast what made the communication successful or not successful.

16.2 Describe three situations in your job (in a library or other workplace) where you need to communicate with your co-workers or supervisor. How do you decide when and what information to share with them? Give specific examples.

16.3 Prepare a detailed description of a complicated issue that has no simple solution in a library. Share this description with three people and document how they would solve the problem. Analyze how the problem was actually solved in the library where it occurred.

16.4 Describe three situations in your job (in a library or other workplace) where you need to communicate critical or sensitive issues with your co-workers or supervisor. How do you decide when and what information to share with them? Give specific examples.



Competency 17. Provide timely, accurate and candid information to supervisors and peers and identify to whom critical issues should be communicated.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

17.1 Describe three issues you have encountered or select three case studies from *Library Journal* or another publication. Analyze the situation in each case specifically from the point of view of communication problems and solutions. Who were the key people to whom information needed to be communicated? Did different pieces of information need to be communicated to different people?

17.2 What types of formal and informal strategies exist for communicating in your library (if you do not work in a library, use your current workplace as an example)? Think about a particular issue your library or organization has recently dealt with and develop a chart that documents the flow of information in your organization. How might communication have been improved?

17.3 Describe how you typically communicate with your peers; your supervisor; and your library users. Maintain a log for a week of your communication patterns. What types of issues do you communicate to whom? Are there better strategies you could use to facilitate your own communication? Are there means of communication you typically avoid and why?

Competency 18. Gather the best available information to support decisions.

Portfolio Development Suggestions

18.1 Imagine that you are the leader of a team of four people responsible for creating a new reading group/book club (or any other new service/program). Describe the types of information you would need to gather and from what sources to convince the library administration to expend resources on your project. Provide a video or audio tape or a script of your presentation to your supervisor.

18.2 Think about a program that has failed or been less successful than anticipated. Describe the information that was lacking that would have either contributed to the original decision or would have helped to make it more successful.