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Best Practices for Staff Sharing

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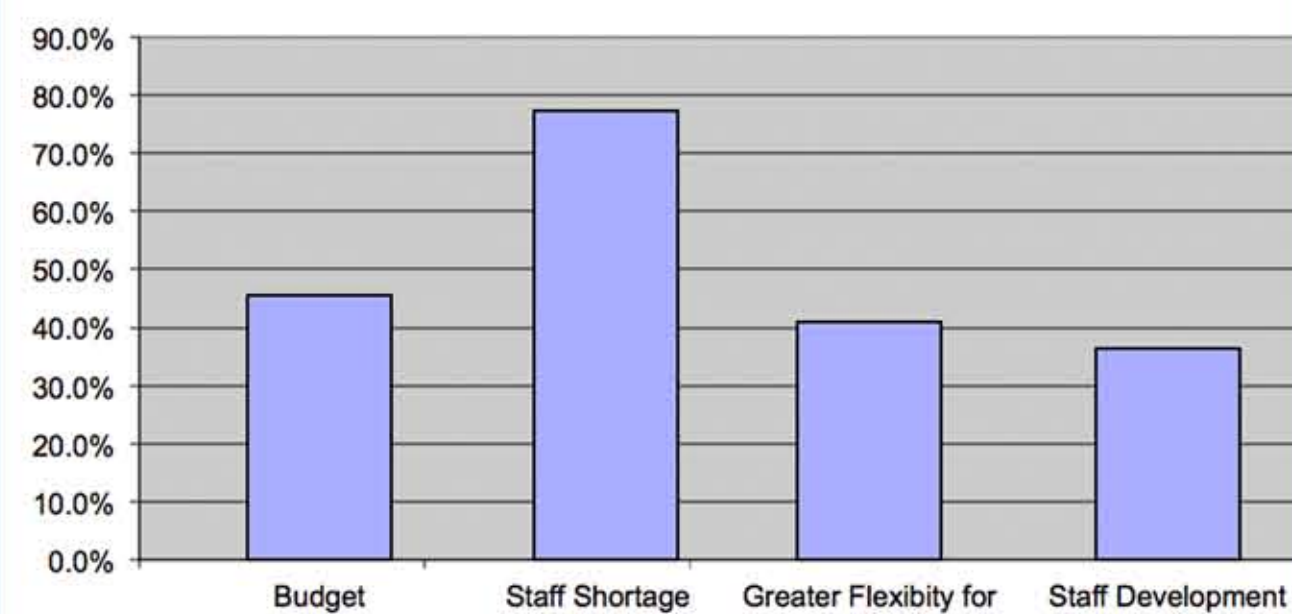
Best Practices for Staff Sharing

2012 IACRL Conference Poster Session
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Background Information

The information presented in this poster session is based on the experience of supervisors at Booth Library, Eastern Illinois University, where several staff members work in more than one department. Information was also gathered from a web-based survey of supervisors who manage staff working in the dual arrangement. Based on a call for participants sent to the CIRCPLUS mailing list, more than 30 respondents completed 10-question survey.

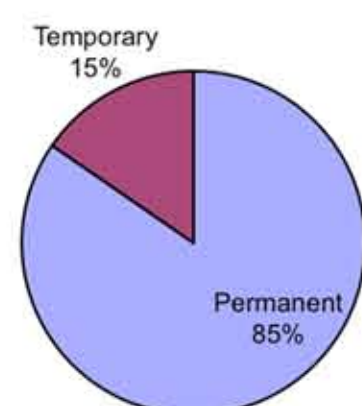
Survey Results: Reasons for implementing staff sharing (could select more than one answer)



Other Reasons

- One department (a branch) at our university needed an additional 0.5 FTE. It may have initially been filled by a person who only worked those hours, but over time a full-time staffer ended up working half time there and half time elsewhere.
- Part time staff wanting more hours apply for other jobs, also I think other depts. just like to steal my awesome staff
- Service development and new customer needs
- Streamlined operations lead to staff sharing
- The hours in one department were shortened and rather than lose the position, we made a dual departmental position.
- Project needs, and personal skill levels

Survey Results: Is Staff Sharing a Temporary or Permanent Arrangement?

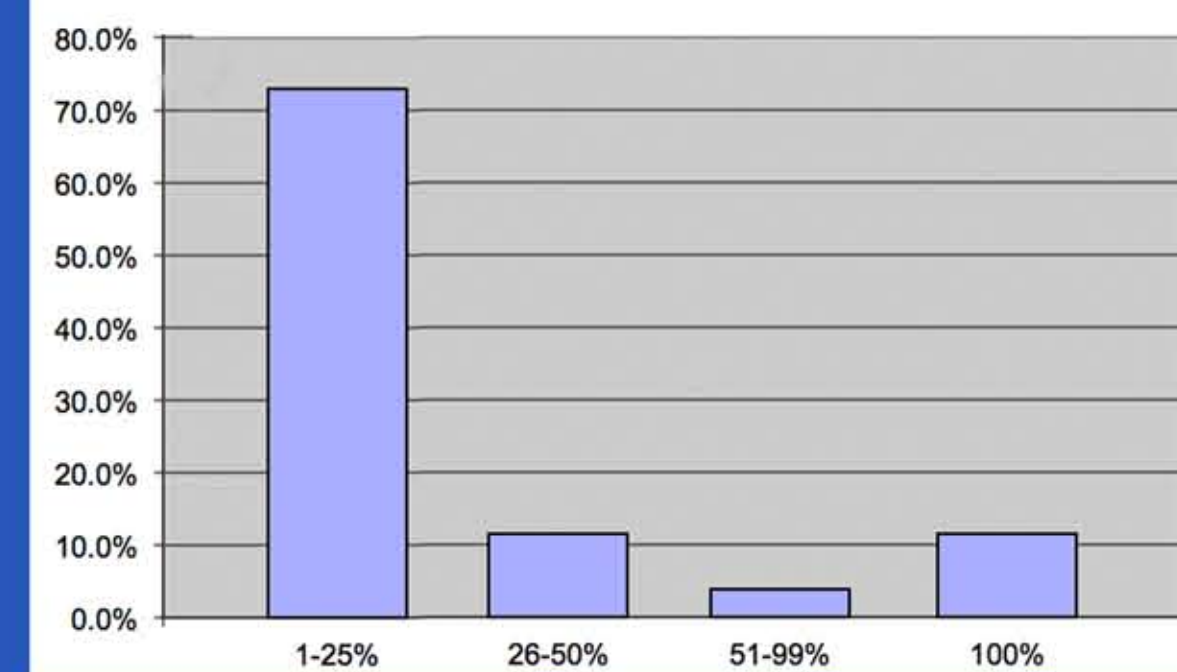


Medium to larger academic libraries often hire and train staff members to perform a variety of duties within a single department. However, in the current difficult budgetary environment, such academic libraries may use sharing of staff members between departments and cross-training in order to maintain the provision of high quality library service. This poster session will present a set of best practices for staff sharing, including scheduling and prioritizing tasks, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of such sharing from the perspectives of the supervisors and staff members. Examples of staff sharing as implemented at Booth Library, Eastern Illinois University will also be provided.

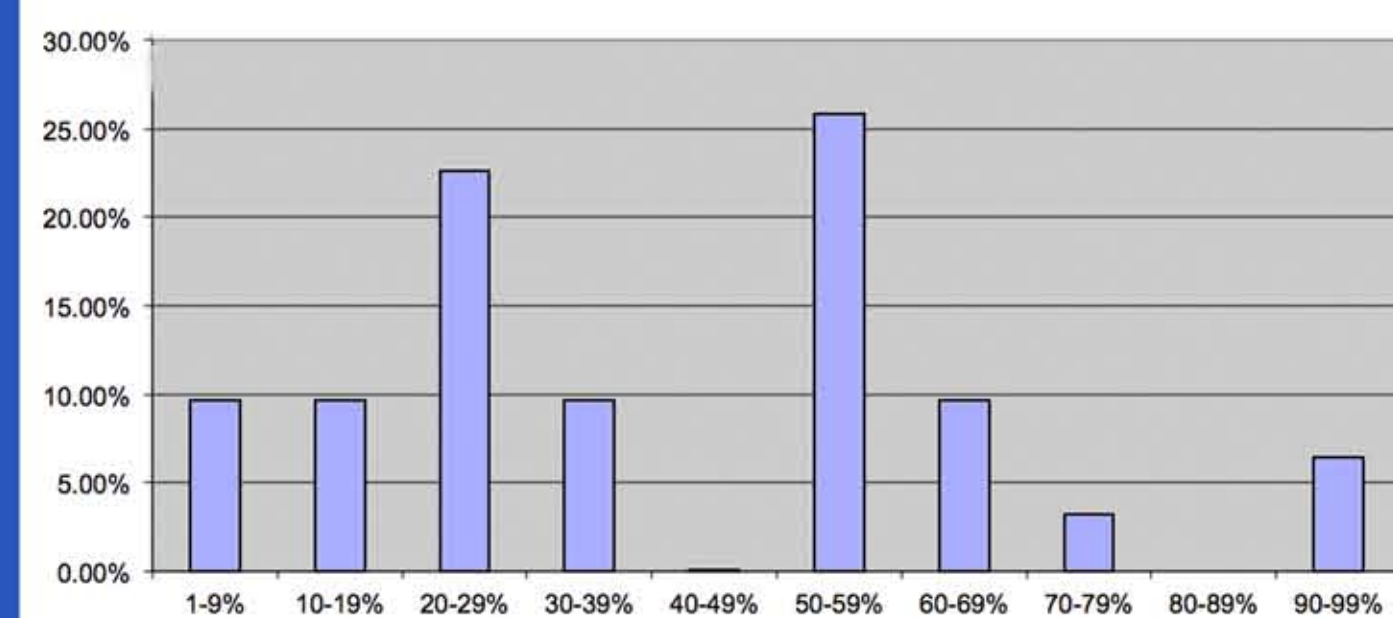
Survey Results: Is the staff member scheduled specific hours or when work is done in the home department?



Survey Results: % of Staff Assigned to more than one department



Survey Result: % of Staff Member's Time spent in other department



Best Practices for Staff Sharing

Survey Results: What is the staff reaction to working in more than one department?

- She is pleased to expand her skills and to have some variety to her work tasks.
- None. Extra hours in another Dept means more income.
- They appreciate the variety.
- They seem to like it as long as they are able to be busy.
- They like it! They like learning something new, having professional development, gaining variety to their jobs, being able to use knowledge gained from the other department to become the "expert" within their home department.
- She loves having different things to do during the day.
- She loves it.
- She previously worked in another department doing essentially student-level work. She did not like that but enjoys the more demanding level of responsibility that she has in our department
- Enthusiastic, as it was initially optional, and allows the Staff to apply a more extensive skill set.
- So far they seem to enjoy it.
- They enjoy the variety of tasks and broadening of skills and incorporation in the entire library.
- Good

- They love it if they get more hours. If hours don't change they may like a new set of tasks, but they don't like it if the other dept. is considered to suck or not be a nice place. Depends on the situation.
- Not good
- Nonplussed
- The really haven't had a significant reaction.
- One of my staff member doesn't like it, but the others are okay with it.
- They love the variety of tasks. They feel more valuable to the library because they were chosen for their specific skill set. They also recognized that their original department was changing so they needed to as well.
- He seems to like it.
- Positive
- They don't like it - some dislike it more than others, and some are more vocal, but none of them like it.
- Good - she likes the variety of work

Survey Results: Advantages or benefits of sharing staff between departments

- Better cross-training and patron services -- She works evenings and weekends at the circulation desk when the ILL office is closed, so she can now answer ILL questions during those hours since she now also performs some of those tasks.
- Such staff are more knowledgeable
- For the library system: cost savings. For my department: none.
- During absences, others can fill in so the operations go smoothly.
- The knowledge our staff members gain in other departments is helpful to our department in answering patron inquiries, and internal processing questions.
- The ability to back-up the other staff in the 3 departments. Comradeship among departments
- The work goes on uninterrupted regardless of who is on deck. As Director I have more options and flexibility in scheduling with this model, and staff have more variety, cross knowledge, marketable skills, and flexibility for themselves.
- Cross of information between the two departments.
- Staff members appreciate the change of pace and the challenge of learning new skills.
- Able to make the best use of highly qualified Staff whose skills are applicable to more than one department.
- Job enrichment, staff development, can try out the new staff member and not committed to having them full time if they don't work out.
- They bridge any gap in communication between two departments. They are generally flexible to help in unforeseen absences, since they are in the building (except those out on the bookmobile).
- Flexibility, work gets done, employees acquire new skills
- They know more stuff and it helps to get gossip from other depts. Basically it makes it easier to spy and figure out things like, who stole our book carts, or who in the other dept is screwing stuff up.
- Both dept get a little help
- More training has occurred and there is no such thing as bad training
- Information sharing between workgroups, improved communication and morale among staff
- Streamlined staff. Staff seem more engaged because of more scene changes.
- More coverage when others are out.
- Greater coverage at public service desks. Another person to move into the closing slot as needed for vacations, illness, paternity leave, etc.
- Greater experience and learning for the staff members.
- We are severely short-staffed; there are not many options and the work gets done.
- Each area gets work done - this person wouldn't have enough to do if they just worked in my area

"Able to make the best use of highly qualified staff whose skills are applicable to more than one department"



"Staff member is unable to devote time necessary for primary assignment"



Survey Results: What problems are associated with sharing of staff between departments?

- More difficult to perform evaluations and manage work -- She performs all of her tasks in another department's work space. The evaluation system we use only allows for one supervisor to input.
- Not available as much as is needed
- Staff member is unable to devote time necessary for primary assignment.
- Lack of flexibility in some supervisors who require individuals to be in their area even when there is not work to be done.
- When our department is short staffed (ie: someone's out sick or at a conference) our staff member must still fulfill their hours in the other department, leaving our department even more short staffed.
- Supervising- out of site out of mind. I often forget about the work she is doing in the other 2 departments because I don't sit in those departments.
- The staff persons ability to focus on the job she is assigned to at that hour (tries to multi-task and this can cause errors)-to change tasks during the day -this staff works part-time in a department that has another supervisor- there is confusion on who she is supposed to report to, ask help of, etc.
- Being so good at leveraging resources, I am continually expected to do more with less. Professional staff sometimes don't get the time they need to think, reflect, study and plan. Running such a tight ship sometimes the library ends up without a professional on-site due to being away in a classroom.
- Need to exercise vigilance for payroll/hours/vacation accuracy, but otherwise it's been working fine.
- Scheduling, really need a full time staff member
- I think the only problems are supervisory - who's monitoring, if at all.
- Good coordination between managers
- Other depts. get to hear gossip about me and my dept. I suppose it is just a two way street. Also I can't schedule my staff without checking with another dept. head. Also my good staff sometimes run off and work all their hours in another dept. uggg, people like to steal my awesome staff and I can't do a darn thing about it.
- Personality issues
- People who do job share are sometimes in essential positions such as HR which causes some HR moves to be delayed by a day or two. Its frustrating when trying to give a pay raise or a promotion to student staff
- Employees have two supervisors, which sometimes gets confusing.
- If someone calls in sick it affects multiple operations. People do not know when someone will be at a specific place.
- Lack of commitment to this department.
- We have not had any problems. Communication is key as is choosing the right staff person for this type arrangement.
- Challenges in communication between departments.
- Extremely low morale. Many of the staff members, whether they are shared or not, see this as a prelude to more layoffs, and they feel they are being taken advantage of.
- Days off not being evenly split between the two (sick and vacation)

Supervisor's Best Practices for Staff Sharing

- Ensure all coworkers understand the assignment so that they allow their colleague to focus on the work in other departments without a pull from the home department.
- See the positives in staff sharing. For the staff member it will mean job variety and additional training which can lead to an improved resume. For the supervisor it can mean better communication between departments and greater coverage.
- Don't be afraid to re-evaluate. For example, does the amount of time the staff member spends outside of your department need to be re-adjusted?
- Schedule the staff members for specific hours so that they will know which task to focus on during what time.
- A dual assignment is best filled by a staff member who likes to learn new things, enjoys a variety of tasks, and can change their focus during the workday.
- Department tasks should be streamlined to allow for the staff member to complete essential tasks when they are available in each department.
- Proper training and supervision will help ensure the staff member has a strong commitment to all their tasks and departments worked in.
- Communication is key. Good communication between the department supervisors as well as between the supervisors and employee ensures there is a consensus on the goals and expectations of the assignment.
- Reporting must be clear so that staff members know who will be evaluating them and to whom to bring their questions.
- Evaluation procedures must be designed to ensure all supervisors are allowed input.

