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## Feedback x4: Leading Library Staff through Organizational Review

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# Feedback x4: Leading Library Staff through Organizational Review

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## Abstract

Some say that the only constant in libraries is change but it is often a challenge for our employees. A small committee of public service managers were tasked to explore public service operations and organizational structure through examining the ways in which units communicated, cross trained, and staffed various services. The review process and discussions were expected to include all personnel from access services, research and instruction, resource sharing, stacks, security, and facilities.

Four different ways of involving employees through a comprehensive review process, including SWOTT analysis, roundtable discussions, card sorting, and organizational structure review.

## Methods

1. Employees divided into groups of six and led through a SWOTT analysis by a facilitator from a university department external to the library.
2. Roundtable discussions centered around 5 common themes raised in SWOTT groups were held in a "speed dating" environment.
3. Employees engaged in individual card sorting exercise.
4. Structural scenarios were formed from card groupings, roundtables, and SWOTT exercise to create a survey asking employees which structural scenarios they preferred.
5. Final report with proposed organizational changes, including new unit structure and cross-functional teams, presented to administration.

## Recommendations

1. **SWOTT:** purposefully group participants instead of allowing people to sign up to be with friends; keep distribution of teams even.
2. **Roundtables:** "speed dating" through the topics keeps the ideas and conversation flowing.
3. **Card Sorting:** allow employees to think on their own, reflect, and visualize potential structures.
4. **Survey:** provide potential options for restructuring to gauge what people feel is best for the organization; leads to buy in for changes.

Overall takeaways:

- Leadership stability and support is essential. This review was assigned and started under one Dean, continued under an Interim Dean, and finished with a new Dean. Conducting the review during a time of stability may have different results.
- Be sure you have the ability and administrative backing to implement recommendations; we could only gather data for employee preferences.
- Overall, each activity spurred good conversations and great ideas. Have patience and expect quality results to take time.

## Review Phases

### 1. SWOTT Analysis

Employees were assigned to groups for optimal cross-unit representation. Each group was led by an external facilitator with a recorder taking notes. An additional question was added: "What do we need to thrive?" After responses were compiled, word clouds were made showing the most common.

- **Strengths**  
Services offered  
Committed staff
- **Weaknesses**  
Lack of personnel  
Poor communication
- **Opportunities**  
Assess reporting structures  
Revive staff training program
- **Threats**  
Aging facilities  
Workload disparity

#### What do we need to thrive?

Connect staff in all locations  
Improve work spaces  
More outreach  
Fill vacancies  
Cross-training  
Value each other  
Increase staff  
Re-evaluate SSP  
Better communication  
Collaborate more  
More funding  
Develop trust  
Be flexible  
Balance  
Show appreciation all year  
Better relationship with CLT  
Compensate for extra duties

### 2. Roundtable Discussions

Five topics emerged for further conversations:

- Communication
- Collegiality/Morale/Employee Appreciation
- Stacks Management
- Training/Orientation/Professional Development
- Services Desk - staffing and size

Setup: Large room with 5 tables. One facilitator, 5 employees, and 1 topic per table.

Two questions: What can be done today to address (topic)?  
What can we focus on in the next 3 years to make (topic) better?

Time: After 10 minutes a timer rang a fun song and everyone moved to the next table. In one hour, each participant had the opportunity to discuss each topic.

Result: Many common solutions emerged for each topic from the 10 groups, giving us action items and a clear path.

### 3. Card Sorting

After learning common concerns and gathering ideas for action items in the prior two exercises, employees were encouraged to think about new ways in which the organizational structure could be rearranged to better reflect workflows and enhance communication.

Location: Staff common area behind circulation with fabric-covered partitions; quiet yet accessible.

Supplies: Laminated cards with velcro on the back, each listing one functional work area, plus extra blank cards and markers for ideas.

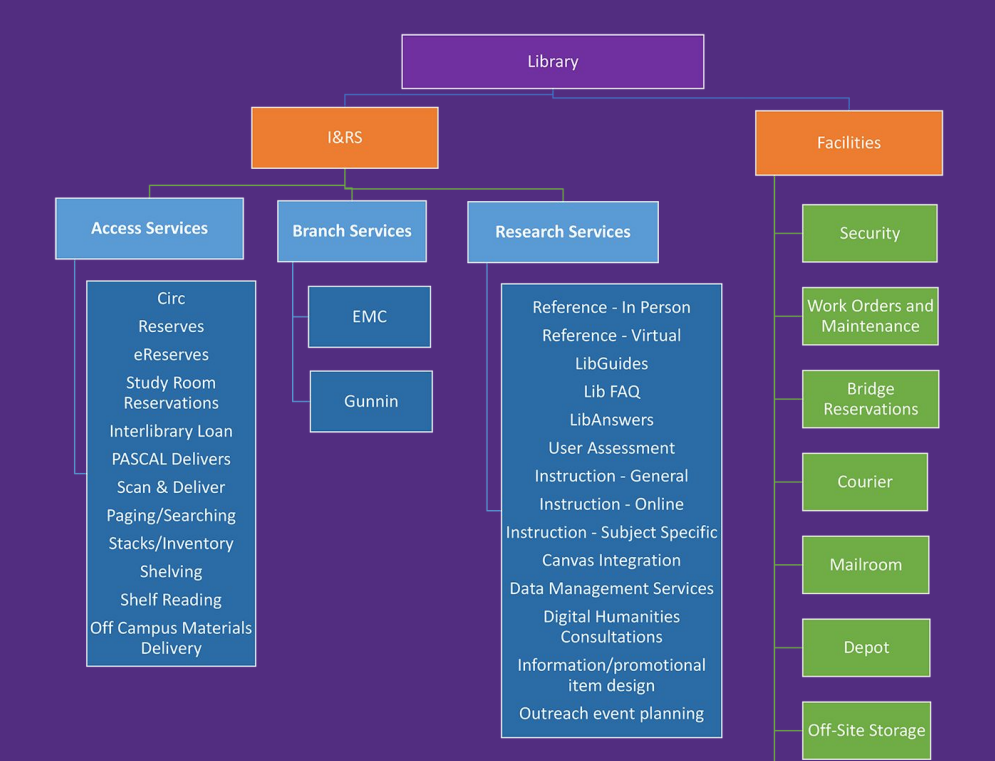
Task: Employees were asked to place the cards into an organizational chart they thought was most logical.

Analysis: Each card sort was photographed, transcribed, and the most common structures advised the survey.

### 4. Survey

The final stage of the review surveyed employees about their preferences for organizational structure changes.

- Three scenarios were presented as an organizational chart.
- For each scenario, employees were asked to rate their level of support for the scenario on a 5 point likert scale, with 0 being Not Supportive and 5 being Definitely Supportive.
- They were asked to provide 3 strengths and weaknesses for each scenario.
- Employees ranked the three scenarios from 1 to 4 in terms of preference, with 1 being the most preferred and 4 being the least.



The survey clearly showed which scenario was preferred.