

Learning on the Fly: How high school educated library directors engage in self-directed learning to resolve information needs

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ABSTRACT

Literature in the field investigates and debates the importance of the MLIS degree in librarianship. This information is of limited use in Maine where over 30% of public library directors have only a high school diploma. The research questions guiding this Constructivist Grounded Theory study are: How do high school-educated library directors in Maine experience librarianship? How do they develop as librarians? Two major themes emerged through semi-structured interviews: “winging it” and “self-directed learning”. Winging it is the perpetually unsettled state the participants are in due to lack of training for their positions, limited access to continuing education, and little time or space away from the public to accomplish work tasks. Winging it manifests itself in performing unpaid work and feeling overwhelmed and behind. The participants resolve their status of winging it in constant and overlapping cycles of self-directed learning (SDL). This study will contribute on a scholarly level to the continued conversation regarding the worth and relevance of LIS education and the intersection of education and experience in librarianship. As for practical implications, if information about the culture of the profession and how to perform the work is not coming from formal education, appropriate professional development and training is critical. Understanding the knowledge base, skills, needs, and obstacles to access will result in better-designed training and continuing education.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Information services; education of information professionals

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Self-directed learning; LIS education; grounded theory; workplace learning; continuing education.

