

### 3. Staff and Training

#### Introduction

Good staff are the key to successful performance in any local documentation centre. Even though they may be working only part-time in the centre, they should be carefully selected and properly trained to carry out the tasks expected of them. It is important to choose the staff carefully and to give them every encouragement to improve their knowledge and skills in the field of documentation through:

- training
- participating in conferences and meetings on documentation
- reading books and journals on documentation

#### What kinds of staff?

Small documentation centres serving single water and sanitation units may be staffed by a part-time supervisor and a part-time assistant, neither of whom may have had any training or experience in documentation work.

Larger centres, particularly those participating in information networks, will need a full-time supervisor and one or more full-time or part-time assistants. The supervisor should preferably be a professionally qualified librarian, documentalists or information scientist, while the assistant(s) should, if possible, have library technician training.

If it is not possible to employ a qualified professional as the supervisor, professional advice and assistance may be obtained, on a part-time or consultancy basis, from:

- qualified staff in other local libraries or documentation centres
- the library and information science department of a local university
- a national or local library association

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

2.1 Staffing

2.1.1 Job descriptions

2.1.2 Sample job description of a resource centre officer

If part-time staff have other duties in the parent institution, these should be reorganised to ensure that they can give proper attention to their work in the documentation centre. If the task of setting up and running the centre is simply added to their existing workload, they are likely to resent it and will not approach it with enthusiasm.

A job description and person specification should be prepared for each staff position. Every documentation service will have its own needs, and will need to formulate job descriptions and person specifications for its own staff in accordance with these needs.

## Staff training

It will be necessary, at an early stage and, if possible, before the centre opens, to organise suitable training for staff. Apart from giving them the technical knowledge necessary to carry out their tasks, this should enhance their self-confidence in relation to documentation work and so make them better able to provide good services to users, as well as increasing their motivation. The kinds of training required include:

- practical training in library and documentation work, including the use of computers
- training leading to technical or professional qualifications in library and information work
- training in the identification and use of water-related information sources
- training in management methods
- training in interpersonal skills

Training may be provided through

- on-the-job training by existing staff members
- practical attachments in other local libraries or documentation centres
- short courses
- formal education and training programmes at academic institutions
- distance education programmes
- online self-education programmes.

**See also: Healthlink Worldwide Resource Centre Manual**

6.9.3 On-line training

Training programmes are organised at various levels – local, national, regional and international – by:

- associations of librarians or documentalists
- library and information science departments in academic institutions
- library and information networks and consortia
- individual libraries and documentation centres
- development agencies

A wide range of staff training opportunities at different levels is available in most countries and online via the Internet. There are at present, however, very few training courses concerned specifically with information in the water supply and sanitation sector. Those seeking training with a specific orientation to water and sanitation information will therefore, in most cases, have to be satisfied with practical attachments to other libraries and documentation centres in the sector.

Information on training opportunities at the local and national level may be obtained from the organisations which provide them, as listed above. Three useful international sources on the Internet are described in Box 4A.

#### **Box 4A: Internet sources of information on staff training**

##### **UNESCO Webworld: Libraries Portal**

<http://portal.unesco.org/ci/>

The training section of this site provides brief descriptions and links to further information on numerous Fellowships, Institutions – in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and North America - online courses and workshops.

##### **ItrainOnline**

<http://www.itrainonline.org/>

ItrainOnline focuses on information technology applications and provides self-study materials and annotated links to online resources in English, Spanish, French and other languages.

##### *Main Site Contents*

- Basic skills
- Web development
- Technical
- Resources for women
- Strategic use
- Multimedia
- Resources for trainers
- Glossary of terms

##### *Resources for Trainers*

A collection of resources for trainers which focus on Internet and ICTs training in NGOs and community organisations. It comprises three subsections:

##### *Effective Training*

Resources to help you to become a more effective trainer and develop training strategies for your organisation.

##### *Multimedia Training Kit*

The Multimedia Training Kit is a series of modular training materials for use in workshops developed by ItrainOnline partners and others. The materials share a common easy-to-use format, and are freely available for non-commercial use.

##### *Topic-Specific Resources*

Annotated links to resources on specific topics, from Internet basics to advanced technical skills. All resources listed include materials specifically for trainers, such as handouts, slide shows, and workshop outlines.

*More information on other sections of the ItrainOnline web site is provided in the appropriate sections of these guidelines.*

**World List of Departments and Schools of Information Studies, Information Management, Information Systems, etc.**

<http://informationr.net/wl/>

This site provides unannotated links to academic departments, schools and courses in the information sector around the world.

### Conferences and meetings

Many of the organisations which organise training programmes also hold conferences and meetings dealing with various aspects of information work. Information management issues are often discussed at conferences and meetings on water supply and sanitation. Staff of the documentation centre should be encouraged and assisted to participate in such meetings at local, national or international level, as appropriate.

### Books and journals

Documentation centre staff needs to keep abreast of developments in documentation work and of new sources of information likely to be of interest to users. The document collections should therefore include technical books, reports, journals, newsletters, etc. on documentation and information science. A selection of useful source materials on documentation and information science is provided at Appendix C.