

**DEVELOPING  
A CAREER  
INFORMATION  
CENTRE**

*fifth edition*

*edited by*  
**Kathy Gollert**

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Canadian Career Information Association  
CCIA / ACADOP  
Association canadienne de documentation professionnelle

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# *Introduction*

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Career Information is used to support all areas of the career development process. It includes occupational, educational and employment related resources. Materials can be print, audiovisual or electronic format. A Career Information Centre itself can range from a minimal collection of career-related resources housed in one section of a single room to a multi-purpose facility housing a large collection of resources in all three formats.

Historically speaking, few career information specialists were the products of specialized training in this area. Many of us in the career development field have been or will be called upon to set up and maintain a career information centre.

In 1975, the professionals of the Canadian Information Resource Advisory Group (CIRAG), the precursor of the Canadian Career Information Association (CCIA), recognized from their own experience, the value of a guidebook which would lead those required to provide career information through the process of planning, establishing and operating a career information centre.

In 1979, CIRAG published the parent version of this book, entitled **Creating a Canadian Career Information Centre**, written by Janice Basso, Nancy Kendall and Donna Miller.

In 1987, CIRAG received a grant from The Counselling Foundation of Canada to re-write the 1979 book, adding and updating the information contained. Marlis Hubbard, Coordinator of the Career Resource Centre at Concordia University undertook that task along with a colleague, Susan Hawke. The result was the second edition of this work now entitled **Developing a Career Information Centre** (published by CIRAG in 1987). This edition while remaining true to the concept presented by the original writers, namely that it would always be a work in progress and would undergo periodic revisions, greatly expanded the scope of the original text by adding chapters to reflect changes in both the quantity and the type of career materials available at the time.

As the book continued to be a valuable resource to career practitioners and became a tool in academic courses designed to train future professionals, need for a new edition became obvious. The third edition of **Developing a Career Information Centre**, edited by Esther Lohasz, appeared in 1992, published by the re-named CIRAG organization, the Canadian Career Information Association/Association canadienne de documentation professionnelle (CCIA/ACADOP).

The book's fourth edition, published in 1999 and edited by Marika Kemeny was a reflection of the continuing importance of providing current, accurate, up-to-date career information to all Canadians. The growing presence of the Internet as a source of career information was firmly acknowledged in this fourth edition. The expanded 60-page bibliography- French and English resources- provided a comprehensive guideline toward the accumulation of materials for a centre. *Canadian resources were even specifically designated with a maple leaf!*

Now it is time for a fifth edition. Over the last decade this book has become one of the prescribed texts for academic courses in Career Development and Career Counselling. Technology has continued to foster change and development in the field of career information. This fifth edition recognizes not only the elements of developing a career information centre that have remained the same over the years but those that have changed and evolved.

CCIA/ACADOP members trust that this edition, as those editions which preceded it, will encourage a well-structured approach to the process of organizing career resources and continue to be the definitive guide for developing career information centres.

*Kathy Gollert*

# ***About CCIA/ACADOP***

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In 1975, seven career information practitioners, working in a variety of educational settings, met and formed **CIRAG**, the **Career Information Resource Advisory Group**. They saw a need for such an association in order to establish a network of peers with whom they could discuss professional concerns, find contacts outside their parent organizations and develop a means of exchanging information about career practices, world of work trends and career resources.

The **Canadian Career Information Association/Association canadienne de documentation professionnelle** is the culmination of CIRAG's endeavours. It is a volunteer organization of approximately 200 members across Canada who work in the field of career information. Members come from many different settings, such as educational institutions (at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels), libraries, businesses, government and community organizations, students enrolled in career counseling or career information programs, as well as private practitioners in the field of career development.

Members meet at four general meetings each year, which include information sharing about career resources, as well as a professional development component. Members also volunteer their time and expertise to participate in ongoing committees, special projects, or presentations at workshops and conferences. The organization's newsletter, **Career Xchange** contains a wealth of relevant professional information. CCIA also has an e-mail listserv and an Internet homepage, enabling members to communicate with each other rapidly, economically and effectively.

CCIA/ACADOP has taken a leadership role in advocating for the development of high quality Canadian career information and in helping to identify the basic requirements for producing these. The organization is also actively participating in defining the skills and competencies career practitioners should possess, a timely and much-needed initiative in this fast-growing professional field.

For further information about **CCIA/ACADOP**, its activities and membership criteria, please contact the association's office at

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# CHAPTER 1

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## PLANNING THE CENTRE

The initial stages of development for a career information centre are the most exciting but also the most challenging. Careful consideration of the range of future possibilities is crucial to the success of the centre.

This resource manual is designed to demonstrate the entire development process, step by step, from the original concept to a fully operational career information centre. This process is discussed under the following sections in this chapter: **Defining the Centre's Philosophy, Developing a Network, Obtaining and Maintaining Funding, Implementing a Plan of Action** and **Defining the Service**.

The sustainability of the centre hinges on its ability to stay current and to keep pace with change. Although it is common to begin by thinking of an elaborate service, the initial goals must be modest, flexible and realistic, taking into consideration the ever-changing issues related to staff, funding and space. Setting up a career information centre involves much more than simply housing career-related resources in one central location. The development and maintenance of a user-friendly and well-organized collection takes a great deal of commitment. It is best to take time to consider all aspects of the centre at the beginning, as decisions made today will have a substantial impact on the future.

## *Defining the Centre's Philosophy*

### **setting objectives**

The first step in planning is to clarify the purpose and objectives of the centre. This includes justifying the need for a career information centre and explaining what will be achieved by its existence. What type of service will make sense in 6 months or in 2 years' time? It is essential to have a service that is flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of the users. Staying focused on the established objectives is the biggest challenge at this stage, as there are so many possibilities to consider.

### **mission statement**

The planning committee needs a clearly defined mission statement with short term and long term goals. An example of a mission statement is: "to develop a drop-in career information service to assist with career planning and job search needs of community members in the Calgary area". Goals should be focused on providing current resources and programs that will help users to understand where they are in their own career building process. Establishing objectives that make the service unique is also crucial. The resource collection will become personalized over time through increasing familiarity with the clientele and the resources that are most effective for them.

### **identifying the users**

Identifying the users is one of the first tasks in setting up a centre. This group can consist of a particular population within the community and have specific needs, or it may represent an entire community that requires a more comprehensive and generic collection.

The characteristics of the user population should be clearly defined and members of the planning committee should carefully study the demographics of the area in which the facility will be located. This will enable them to gain a clearer understanding of the users and prevent duplication of services that may already exist.

The expertise of the user group can be utilized in the initial stages of planning the facility and on a regular basis as the service continues to develop. Focus groups, formal surveys, workshop evaluations and verbal feedback are all excellent opportunities to obtain input on resources and services.

The following list is a sample of the variety of users that may find helpful the services of a career information center:

- the physically challenged
- post secondary-bound youth and adults
- workplace-bound youth and adults
- apprenticeship-bound youth and adults
- recent post secondary graduates
- individuals refocusing their occupational goals
- individuals re-entering the workforce
- displaced workers
- retirees
- faculty members
- persons investigating work/study/travel opportunities
- parents
- employers.

The target client-group must be accurately identified and the assumptions made concerning user needs have to be verified to ensure the success of the service. Within any information centre, there are distinct user groups, defined by their reasons for needing the center.

They include:

- individuals seeking specific career and educational information
- individuals seeking counselling
- individuals seeking specific information independently, or with little guidance.

When planning staffing needs, it is important to keep in mind the significant amount of time even the most focused career planning inquiry requires. Although the career information centre may be set up in a very user-friendly format, at certain points in the inquiry, one to one attention is usually needed. Additional discussion on the topic of staffing can be found in Chapter 2.

## *Developing a Network*

Now that substantial information has been gathered about the centre's users and their needs and a mandate is in place, a plan of action can be formulated. Visiting other career information centres and facilities recommended by professionals in the field is invaluable at this stage. Local community colleges, universities, high schools, libraries, chambers of commerce and employment centres can be contacted to find out what services they offer and where they are located.

### **engaging allies**

One of the greatest assets, right from the planning stage onward, is finding allies. Sharing the experiences of those who have already been through the process of developing a centre is critical for the individual given the task of setting up a new centre. The support and guidance of these contacts is essential for the numerous questions and concerns that arise while setting up a centre and they will continue to be a resource as the centre develops.

### **networking organizations**

Career information specialists need to be aware of two national organizations that provide the opportunity for networking with other career development practitioners. These are **CCIA/ACADOP (Canadian Career Information Association/Association canadienne de documentation professionnelle)** and **CACEE (Canadian Association for Career Educators and Employers)**. Providing this networking opportunity at a provincial level in Ontario is the **OACDP (Ontario Alliance of Career Development Practitioners)**.

### **preparing for a networking visit**

It is helpful to prepare questions and concerns before visiting other centres. Career development professionals are usually willing to share their experiences. Thus, a list of questions about issues such as funding, staffing, print and multimedia resources, types of services, policies and procedures is useful and time saving. This is an opportunity to compare resources and physical features, talk to staff members of different centres and perhaps observe workshops they offer. It is advisable to visit centres with several different focuses, in order to obtain a well-rounded perspective on the variety of philosophies,

missions and objectives that exist in career information centres.

All of these considerations contribute to establishing an effective service and help in determining the centre's goals. It is advisable to keep in mind, however, that although other facilities may be used as models, ultimately each centre must establish its own unique mandate and methods of functioning.

### ***Obtaining and Maintaining Funding***

Before approaching a funding source or the parent organization for support, a detailed budget plan must be prepared, defining costs for setting up and maintaining the service. Producing a carefully thought-out estimate of costs can strongly influence a decision to support the establishment of the centre.

#### **itemizing expenses**

The first step is to itemize projected expenses. How much will be spent on a core collection? What expenses will there be for furniture, equipment, travel, staff, programs and publicity? Significant thought should be given to decisions regarding costs of purchase and maintenance of computers for the centre, as well as software programs required (see Chapter 3.) Money should be allocated for postage, copying and office supplies (three-ring binders, index cards, classification labels, bookbinding tape, file folders etc.). Often funds are limited and decisions have to be made about the boundaries of the collection. Setting up a realistic monthly resource budget helps greatly in keeping the centre current while remaining on track.

Consulting with other centres to assess their range of budgets can help to justify a particular budget request and assists in gaining the support of a funding organization.

discovering  
sources of  
funding

Even if the parent organization provides the funding necessary to establish a centre, it may only be willing or able to offer initial or partial support. In some instances, it is the responsibility of the career information centre's staff to obtain funding from outside sources.

The first step in securing financial backing is to explore sources of funding within the community. The funding strategy for developing and sustaining the centre should include the exploration of business and industry partnerships, provincial and federal grants, as well as assistance from charitable foundations. Most public and university libraries contain reference books listing funding sources and details concerning grant opportunities and requirements. Many charitable organizations have Internet sites that provide the necessary information for applying for funding.

Funding proposals are much more likely to succeed when they are based on a detailed and well-developed plan. Many books offer suggestions for creating a successful proposal and provide valuable descriptions of format, appearance and content; it is helpful to consult these before drafting a proposal. In general, a funding proposal should resemble a business plan and include the following:

- abstract of the proposal
- statement of purpose and objectives
- outline of methods for achieving objectives
- evaluation of results
- summary of qualifications for establishing the centre
- detailed budget

### ***Implementing a Plan of Action***

gaining  
community  
support

Community support is essential for the successful start-up of a career information centre. The enthusiasm and strong commitment of co-ordinators, staff and volunteers may be very persuasive in achieving this, but convincing arguments detailing the necessity for the service will also help. It is an important marketing feature to explain precisely how the service will benefit the community. If employers see that the facility contributes to the development of a stronger and more focused workforce, they will support the

centre's vision and help champion its survival. Extending services into the community and promoting a sense of ownership towards the centre will gain support and encourage new partnerships.

Defining the scope of the service and tracking its impact on the user groups over time will enable the centre to confirm its usefulness. The career information specialist may clearly see the need for the centre's activities in the community. However, the community also needs to be aware of what the service has to offer and to understand its goals, in order to buy into its mission.

**establishing  
an advisory  
group**

An advisory group made up of representatives from the community can be formed to help promote and develop the project. It is a good idea to include representatives from many segments of the community, to prevent one small group of individuals from assuming total responsibility for championing the project. Administrative staff and potential users should be included in this advisory panel as well. All participants can be encouraged to take part in the planning and implementation of programs and ideas.

**setting  
policies**

Clear policies enable the centre to run smoothly. They provide a framework that clients and staff can understand and to which they can adhere. Policies reduce confusion and conflicts concerning services and ensure equitable treatment for all users.

The setting of fees for service, if any, and the circulation of resources are important policy decisions upon which to agree (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of circulation considerations). In a centre located in a university, for instance, services may be limited to students, faculty and staff. Users outside the institution may only be allowed to access certain facilities of the centre, or none at all. Some centres offer workshops free to students, but allow members of the community to participate on a fee for service basis. Many centres, however, cannot afford to be open to the public, in spite of the desirability of such service.

### **establishing partnerships**

Partnerships with other user groups or institutions are often mutually beneficial. There are many effective ways in which groups with similar purposes can work together to share space, costs, resources and equipment. All aspects of the collaboration between partners should be clearly defined right from the beginning; the policies concerning this interaction should be periodically examined to confirm their currency and effectiveness.

### **choosing a location**

For optimum effectiveness, the career information centre should be centrally situated to the user group, occupying a flexible space that allows for future expansion. Regardless of whether it is located in an educational or commercial setting, or as part of another community facility, the physical space should reflect the service's guiding philosophy and be inviting to users. The shift from print-based resources to computer-based research requires careful consideration when choosing a location (for more details about computers in the career information centre, please see Chapter 3). Other concerns to keep in mind are the physical requirements for the accommodation of staff, classes, workshop sessions and storage of multiple copies of resources, marketing materials and multimedia equipment. Space requirements in the centre can change over time and it may be necessary to experiment with different set-ups to keep the facility looking inviting. Accessibility for users who are physically challenged should also be considered when the centre's location and the arrangement of furniture and resources are being planned.

### **physical setup**

When arranging the furniture and resources of the centre, the elements that make a facility appealing and user-friendly should be given careful attention. The physical separation of shelving and furniture is a practical method for developing traffic patterns and informing clients of the way the information is set-up. Directional signs and posters assist and attract users to specific areas within the centre. For example, if the collection is organized by interest group, the language used to describe the various groups should be easy for clients to understand and to identify the ones to which they belong. On the other hand, if the centre's resources are arranged and catalogued based on a particular classification system, the specific features of this system should be provided to users, so that they can utilize the available materials effectively.

The strategic use of wall space is an additional method of providing clients with guidance and information. Where there is a limited number of staff, it is especially important to provide good directional signs and aids to help users find materials. Relevant statistics, motivational quotes and information on current trends and resources can also be displayed throughout the centre.

### *Defining the Service*

Implementing services to attract and inform users involves practical assessment of what the centre can afford, as well as some “dreaming” of what the service could be in an ideal world. A career information centre should stimulate people to explore and investigate the many exciting possibilities in the process of making career, work or life decisions. However, providing access to career information is only one aspect of this type of facility. It should offer a diversity of services that users can access with relatively little assistance after their initial orientation. Successful career information centres are not regarded merely as a type of reference library; rather they are seen as a one-stop shopping opportunity for gathering current information on a wide range of topics.

**catering to  
particular  
needs**

The centre’s clientele may need to develop communication, decision-making and other career planning and job search skills. Offering workshops on these topics and other introductory sessions encourages clients to make better use of their time and to understand what the centre has to offer. The following are additional services to consider:

- creating publications
- organizing job and career fairs
- sponsoring events
- drawing on local expertise by bringing in speakers
- providing networking opportunities within the community.

**using new  
technology**

The popular use of computer technology, combined with imagination and creativity, can result in wonderful new ways of designing and marketing the career information centre's services.

A well-equipped, up-to-date career information centre should include computers with Internet access, supporting the wide selection of CD-ROM resources and computer software programs currently available on the topic of career development (for further information, please see Chapter 3). Audio-visual resources are also an excellent component for any workshop and an ideal starting point for many people on their quest for information.

**organizing  
workshops**

Career information specialists frequently coordinate and facilitate workshops on their own or, if they are part of a larger organization, in conjunction with counselling or other staff. Workshops can be arranged for special groups within the community to generate awareness of the centre and to serve specific needs. For example, an introduction to assessing company information on the Internet might provide an excellent starting point for someone at the outset of a job search. A job club could be established to offer support for unemployed executives or a seminar on entrepreneurship could be offered for people who are starting their own businesses.

**suggested  
workshop  
topics**

Workshops offered by career information centres help users understand what they have to accomplish and provide them with a general overview of the information they need. The following is a selection of topics suitable for workshops in career information centres:

- career planning
- interview preparation
- networking
- study skills
- exam preparation
- employability skills
- creative job search
- stress reduction
- dealing with job loss
- post-secondary application process
- professional development training
- job hunting via internet
- résumé writing
- personality assessment tools
- work, study or travel opportunities

**utilizing  
local data  
and resources**

The centre's clientele can benefit greatly from information relating to careers and employment in the local community, based on specific trends and demographically relevant issues. It is also valuable to encourage users to take the "next step" of making contacts in their community and establishing their own networks. They need to realize that opportunities for networking are everywhere; it is simply a matter of having the skills to make the connection and knowing where to start. Career information specialists can help users begin their networking by compiling the following:

- a database of community members willing and able to offer opportunities of job-shadowing in their workplace
- a database of community members available for information interviews (in person or by phone)
- a database of companies in the community willing to participate in career events
- a job bank for local opportunities
- a list of Web sites which accept job applications on-line where clients can post résumés or register as employers.

**sponsoring  
events**

Many types of events can be organized and/or sponsored by a career information centre, with the help of a committee and volunteers. For example, in educational settings, an "open house" for students and faculty held at the beginning of the year provides an opportunity to get acquainted with the centre's staff and services. In a community-based service, career fairs can be sponsored to allow clients a chance to meet and talk with people working in a variety of occupations, or a panel of speakers can be invited to discuss jobs available in their locality. This is also a great opportunity to market the centre's services and to develop its network, while gaining community support. Starting small and doing thorough research and planning usually results in a successful and productive event, reflecting positively on the centre and demonstrating the professionalism and expertise of the staff.

**methods of  
publicizing  
the service**

Local social service directories, the Yellow Pages and the centre's own Internet Web site are excellent vehicles for informing the public about a centre's services.

Although centre-specific materials are costly to produce, they can answer frequently asked questions and encourage users to access the service without hesitation. Many career information specialists produce their own in-house publications that provide users with facts about the centre. Publications and newsletters focusing on particular areas of interest, such as job-hunting tips or career planning for students, can be distributed or shared with other colleagues. A directory of local employers, detailing the qualities they look for in employees, is another example of a useful in-house publication (see Chapter 9 for an in-depth look at marketing techniques).

### **Conclusion**

This first chapter is the beginning of an exciting journey for individuals who are about to establish a career information centre. The enthusiasm and commitment of both the centre's staff and the community are critical factors in this activity. Focusing on goals and keeping user needs in mind helps to create a centre that brings information and knowledge to many members of the community. The range of available educational and occupational choices is overwhelming to everyone. That is why there is a tremendous need for a central resource with current information and knowledgeable staff to enable users to make informed and practical decisions about their future.

## CHAPTER 2

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### STAFFING THE CENTRE

Whether establishing a career centre in a secondary or postsecondary institution, community-based agency or corporate environment, the first staffing decision is the selection of a qualified career resource co-ordinator. The co-ordinator's role will include assessing the number of staff members needed, within the limits of the available budget, and determining the qualifications required.

This assessment will involve establishing and/or reviewing the goals of the centre, clientele to be served, budget, as well as the collection size and maintenance. To assist in this process, visits to existing career centres in similar organizations and consultations with colleagues in those environments are recommended.

The first two sections of this chapter, **Determining Staffing Requirements** and **Defining Staff Responsibilities**, are designed to help career resource coordinators analyze their needs. The third section, **Preparing Job Descriptions**, explains the purpose of writing job descriptions and includes three sample descriptions. The focus in the fourth section, **Training and Development**, is on professional development and performance evaluations.

## *Determining Staffing Requirements*

To select appropriate staff, the career information coordinator must carefully analyze the centre's objectives and the qualities required of the personnel. In some career centres, the task of coordinating career information falls within a designated counsellor's responsibility. To date, it has been generally assumed that this person could learn to gather and disseminate career information without formal training. However, given the tremendous volume and variety of career-related resources currently available, the need for specialized training is becoming acknowledged, along with the recognition that this responsibility could consume the majority of one person's time in a full-service centre.

The following are examples of positions comprising the staff of career information centres, although the size of a centre and available resources will determine how many staff members are required:

- *a career information co-ordinator*, usually a trained professional, who is responsible for the overall operation of the centre and its services. This individual typically has a university undergraduate or graduate degree.
- *a career information specialist*, who may possess similar qualifications as those outlined above for the co-ordinator. Alternatively, this person may be a graduate of a community college, career employment advising program, or a library technician, who maintains the collection and offers user support.
- *an administrative support person*, such as an administrative assistant or library aide, who can perform the required clerical functions and provide front-line service delivery to clients. Depending on the size of the centre and its clientele, more than one administrative support person may be required.
- *a technical support worker*, who can work with the other staff to maintain the departmental Web site and other multimedia resources. This person may be a graduate of a community college information technology program.

Most centres are designed in a manner that allows clients to use resources largely on a self-directed basis, with staff assistance available if required. This approach requires the use of clear directional signs and user manuals or tip sheets (see the "Facilitating Access" section of Chapter 6), but can provide quite effective service for clients in centres with fewer staff.

To thoroughly analyze staffing requirements, one must consider the setting, the services offered by the centre, the size of the user community, the maintenance required by the collection and the hours of operation. Staffing needs in a high school may be quite different from those in a university, a community agency or a corporation. In a large centre, several staff members may be required to meet the demands of the user population. The more extensive the services and the busier the centre, the more critical it is to have an adequate number of staff to meet user needs.

## *Defining Staff Responsibilities*

Typically a career information centre is part of a larger organizational unit such as a secondary school guidance department, a career centre and counselling service at a post-secondary institution, a community agency offering career planning and job search services or a human resources unit within a corporate setting.

### **manager**

These organizations are usually led by a director, manager or department head to whom the career information coordinator reports. Managers typically possess educational backgrounds at the university undergraduate level, but often at the graduate level.

Career information centre staff members, such as administrative support staff, technical support workers, student assistants and volunteers provide vital support for the effective operation of most centres and generally report to the career information co-ordinator.

### **co-ordinator**

The career information co-ordinator has the overall responsibility for managing the career information centre. This person is usually charged with hiring, supervising and training staff, budgeting, planning programs and activities, promoting the services, as well as evaluating the centre's general performance. There may also be added duties apart from managing the career information centre. For example, a counsellor in charge of managing a centre may also have individual counselling responsibilities.

Although there may be others on staff whom assist with collecting and maintaining career information, it is imperative for co-ordinators to understand the principles of managing career information, as this will help them make decisions about the selection, acquisition, organization and dissemination of career resources. Co-ordinators must also possess a thorough knowledge of career development theories and be capable of identifying the needs of their users in a timely fashion.

An important part of the career information co-ordinator's job is to promote the centre within the larger organizational context, with potential clients in the community and within the broader career information network. Therefore, the coordinator must become familiar with local resources and keep the community informed of the centre's services. This type of outreach is essential for achieving the aims of the centre and for increasing its population of users.

**career  
information  
specialist or  
library  
technician**

Some centres may have the option of employing either career information specialists or library technicians in addition to a co-ordinator. Career information specialists and library technicians focus on providing the all-important connection between clients and information. Frequently, when budget constraints preclude the addition of such a position, the role of these individuals is assumed by the career information co-ordinator.

The duties of career information specialists depend largely on their particular setting. In general, however, their primary responsibilities revolve around the collection and dissemination of career resources in print, electronic and audio-visual formats. A significant portion of their time is devoted to handling client inquiries and choosing materials for the centre. They are expected to be knowledgeable about resources and community information, in addition to possessing excellent writing skills for preparing guides and brochures for use within the centre. They must continually learn about new information and publications as well as upgrade their own computer and technical knowledge on an on-going basis.

In addition to being responsible for the collection and dissemination of career information, these specialists are often called upon to help develop programs and activities for their centres. For example, they may assist in the development and delivery of programs for students (e.g. résumé writing workshops). In secondary school counseling settings, they may be asked to assist guidance staff with programs in career planning for students. Career information specialists often provide regular orientation sessions or "open houses" to introduce clients to their services and users to the centre. They may also act as a liaison between their centre and the community.

The educational backgrounds of career information coordinators and specialists vary. The range includes professional librarians, members of the counseling profession and/or graduates of college or university programs focused on career development. (For a comprehensive list of related educational programs and professional development opportunities, visit [www.contactpoint.ca](http://www.contactpoint.ca)). Graduates of these programs are trained in career counselling theory and practice, including individual and group counselling skills, vocational assessment, resource management and labour market analysis. Practicum placements are an integral part of their training.

In large centres, the selecting, ordering and organizing of materials becomes very time-consuming. In such settings, it is advantageous to have a professional librarian or a library technician on staff, as these individuals receive extensive training in organizing and retrieving information. They know how to identify information needs and are well equipped to research the latest facts. Librarians are also experts in locating community resources and organizations that assist users.

#### **support staff**

Career information centres involve a multitude of clerical tasks that may be handled by administrative assistants. In some centres, co-ordinators are able to hire staff to take on these duties. In others, due to budget limitations, administrative support staff may be shared with counseling services or other departments. Administrative support staff in career information centres require strong customer service skills, as they are often charged with front line service delivery. This initial contact may form the clients' first impression of the service. Staff members working in this capacity must be well informed about the centre services, trained in assessing client needs and knowledgeable about the centre. They must also possess good communication skills, and should be given clear guidelines for responding to user inquiries and assessing which questions should be referred to other members of the staff.

**technical  
support  
worker**

The increasing use of Internet and multimedia applications within career information centres has led to a demand for technical support. Depending on the size of the department and budgetary constraints, this support may be provided by a fulltime technical support worker or other members of the department, volunteers and/or contract workers.

Ideally, the technical support worker will have formal training in the use of specialized software programs to develop and maintain the centre's Web site as well as to develop other multimedia resources. In addition, technical support workers in career information centres require strong teamwork skills, as they will work closely with other staff members to understand their needs and to develop appropriate career information resources.

**volunteer  
and part-time  
help**

Part-time staff or volunteers can be tremendously helpful in career information centres. The assistance that they provide can stretch staffing resources and extend the services available in the centre. In fact, some co-ordinators depend entirely on such staff.

Although these individuals come from diverse backgrounds, co-operative education, internship, or work/study programs tend to be particularly good sources of workers. These include students from programs such as: career development programs, library and information science programs, social work, counselling and psychology. The hiring of student assistants must be done in a professional manner, with a job advertisement that outlines the responsibilities, requirements and benefits of this work. To support student staff, co-ordinators can also consider participating in wage-subsidized government employment programs at either the federal or provincial level.

Depending on the level of their experience and time commitment, part time staff and volunteers can be entrusted with many career information centre duties, from preparing research guides to assisting with clerical tasks. Well-conducted interviews will provide the co-ordinator with a solid overview of the applicants' capabilities to ensure that they will provide the highest quality service. These staff members must receive thorough training and adequate supervision, regardless of the level of their duties. Client confidentiality must also be emphasized with these staff members. Part-time staff and volunteers should also be made aware of the importance and value of their services to the centre.

### *Preparing Job Descriptions*

#### job descriptions

In preparing job descriptions for staff members, coordinators need to consider job duties as well as the abilities, educational background and other required characteristics of the successful candidate. Writing a good job description goes beyond simply listing responsibilities; it should include the objectives and scope of the job as well.

A first step in developing job descriptions is to develop an overview of the functions and services offered by the centre. The overview should be followed by the specific objectives and functions of each position. The skills and capabilities staff members need in order to perform specific duties must also be clearly defined. The next step is the collection of data for writing specific job descriptions. The organization's human resources department may suggest guidelines or manuals for preparing these. Co-ordinators of similar centres can also be valuable sources of information on position descriptions and requirements.

Providing job descriptions for staff will help to ensure that the incumbent understands his/her responsibilities. This job description should also form the basis for goal setting and performance reviews.

Following are three sample job descriptions, one of a *career information specialist* in the career centre of a public school board, one of a *career information co-ordinator* in a postsecondary setting, and one of an *employment resource assistant* in a community employment resource centre.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
*Job Description*

**POSITION: Career Information Specialist**

**DIVISION/DEPARTMENT: Career and Cooperative Education Department**

**DATE: Effective December 13, 2007**

**PRIMARY PURPOSE OF POSITION**

The Career Information Specialist will work cooperatively, as part of the Career Centre's team, to contribute to a system-wide approach to effective career education.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Career Centre provides career education, information and resources, curriculum assistance and professional development to approximately 2000 elementary and secondary school students and teachers. The Career Information Specialist's primary responsibility is to create information management systems for cataloguing, organizing, maintaining and retrieving specialized and ever-changing career resources as well as providing reference support to users of these resources. Other areas of responsibility include: using and teaching the use of the Internet as a research and career education tool, producing support materials such as newsletters, handouts and research guides, and providing programming assistance to teachers and students within the Board.

The Career Information Specialist fulfills the following duties.

**Programs and Services for Teachers and Students**

- develops and delivers career information sessions in the classroom and in the Career Centre
- researches and provides current career information to school staff and students
- consults with school staff for the set-up and maintenance of in-school career information areas
- consults with school staff on the evaluation and usage of career resources
- makes presentations at career fairs and professional conferences
- develops career resources for all students and, in particular, for at-risk and special needs students
- provides other Career Centre staff with current information regarding occupational trends and career resources

### **Curriculum Support**

- develops career information resources to enhance Ministry mandated career infusion in all subject areas
- provides career information resources online as part of the Board's electronic initiatives
- Staff Development
- co-facilitates the Career Representatives Alliance meetings to provide current and curriculum- relevant career information resources and classroom applications
- develops and conducts career information workshops
- networks with professional associations and community organizations that support the career development process

### **QUALIFICATIONS**

Applicants must possess a certificate or diploma from a recognized community college program focused on career development or from a Library Technician program. Practical experience in a career centre or library is an asset. Demonstrated communication, computer and teamwork skills are required. Experience in a multicultural environment is desirable.

**POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION**  
*Job Description*

**POSITION: Career Information Co-ordinator**

**DIVISION/DEPARTMENT: Career Services**

**DATE: Effective December 13, 2007**

**GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Career Information Co-ordinator is accountable for assisting students and alumni in their career planning and job search efforts by managing a career information resource library; consulting with students on career information and résumé writing and assisting them in researching relevant information pertaining to their planning and job search efforts; developing and presenting related workshops; coordinating special programs; managing the departmental Web site and developing print resources and promotional materials.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

Career Services exists as the student affairs unit responsible for providing programs and services to assist students and alumni with their career planning and job search needs. The Career Information Co-ordinator contributes to the department's objective of assisting students and alumni in preparing for employment by managing the Career Information Centre that provides current information on all aspects of career planning.

**Resource Management**

- manages a resource budget for print, electronic and audio-visual resources
- analyzes the composition of the collection and acquires resources to meet client needs
- oversees the cataloguing and maintenance of the collection
- manages the departmental Web site and electronic resources
- develops multimedia and print resources related to career planning and job search

**Programming**

- develops and presents core workshops and seminars such as résumé writing, electronic job search or further orientation to the Career Services Department
- develops implements and evaluates special departmental programs such as the Graduate and Professional Education Fair, Faculty of Education Sessions and occupational information speaker panels
- engages speakers or representatives for special events

**Marketing Communications**

- promotes events to students and faculty
- develops and distributes printed resources such as a departmental newsletter
- prepares and disseminates the results of an annual graduate survey to various departments across campus

**Co-ordination or Supervision**

- supervises Career Information Centre staff, including the Resource Assistant, volunteers and contract workers
- contributes to the setting and attainment of departmental goals

**Individual Assistance**

- provides assistance to students on an individual basis on résumé writing, job search and other information related to career planning and employment

**QUALIFICATIONS**

Applicants must possess strong research and organizational skills as well as experience working in a library setting. The successful candidate will have the ability to develop and present informative and interactive workshops. Applicants will have experience coordinating and promoting events. Demonstrated computer skills and, in particular, knowledge of Web site and multimedia applications will be a strong asset. In addition, the candidate must possess strong communication and teamwork skills. An undergraduate degree with 2-3 years related experience is required.

## EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

### *Job Description*

POSITION: **Employment Resource Assistant**

DIVISION/DEPARTMENT: **Employment Services**

DATE: **Effective December 13, 2007**

#### **GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

The ABC Employment Resource Centre is run in a partnership with the local community college and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (the primary funder). The center provides job search assistance, computer and internet access and employment resources to unemployed members of the community.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Employment Resource Assistant provides clients with an orientation to the centre's services. He/she also provides information regarding résumé preparation, job search and interview techniques, labour market trends, accessing the "hidden job market", and the use of computer software, including the Internet, in the search for employment. In addition, the ERA provides clients with information on community agencies, services and training programs as appropriate.

#### **SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **Client Job Search Advice and Assistance**

- provides clients with a tour of the center and orientation to the services and resources offered
- assists clients in résumé and cover letter preparation including assistance with formatting on the computer
- assists clients with the use of the computer software, the Internet and other resource center equipment such as fax machine and photocopier
- informs clients about current job search and interview techniques and about labour market trends

##### **Administrative**

- locates and prints job postings, for client use, from the HRSDC (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada) job bank
- collects client data for statistical purposes and report preparation
- maintains and updates employment resource materials
- assists with the implementation of special events at the centre

##### **Computer**

- searches appropriate Internet sources for labour market and career trend information in order to appropriately advise clients
- compiles, evaluates and organizes job search Internet site information for clients

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Successful applicants will have a diploma in the human services field or the equivalent combination of education and experience. Other necessary skills include a good working knowledge of Microsoft Word, the Internet and the ability to communicate this knowledge to clients. Three years previous experience assisting unemployed persons with job search skills and techniques is required. A demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of a diverse client group and the ability to work collaboratively in a team environment are additional and necessary personal skills.

## *Training and Development*

When new members of the staff are hired, they should receive thorough orientation and training. They must be acquainted with the centre's objectives, procedures and policies. Sufficient time must be provided for this training so that they can perform their duties capably and efficiently. Co-ordinators need to plan their training programs to cover all aspects of employee responsibilities, recognizing the volume of information to be learned and the need to train over an extended period of time. They should encourage new staff to ask questions, in order to learn as much as possible about the service.

Developing a high calibre team goes beyond the initial training. Co-ordinators must continually seek to upgrade the skills of their staff by providing professional development opportunities within and outside the centre. A series of inservice training programs can be initiated, or employees can be allowed time to attend professional association meetings.

Staff can be encouraged to take courses and to attend conferences and seminars. Through continuing education programs offered at post-secondary institutions, staff can pursue courses on many subjects that will aid them professionally. Staff members also need to be encouraged to establish networks in order to cultivate their own growth. In addition, co-ordinators should institute evaluation programs that are constructive, motivating staff to develop professionally. The following sections of this chapter are devoted to these topics.

### **in-service training**

In-service training can be highly effective in providing staff with professional development opportunities. Programs can be tailor-made, are relatively inexpensive to present and can easily be adapted to staff schedules.

In establishing in-service training programs, co-ordinators may be able to call upon librarians or counsellors, if they are members of the team. The specialized knowledge of these professionals can provide highly useful staff development at minimal cost.

It is also essential to provide on-going training on the technical aspects of the positions within the career information centre. As new technologies become available for use within the centre (such as new recruitment databases or computerized career exploration tools) all staff in the centre must be trained to assist clients with these applications. In addition, it is essential that career information co-ordinators and specialists update their knowledge of Web site and multimedia applications on a continual basis. The development of career resources using a variety of media will ensure the currency and relevance of the information, as well as increase accessibility for clients.

Co-ordinators should seek input from staff in choosing topics for training. Staff members can suggest subjects for workshops, which will help them in handling certain types of reference inquiries or other encounters with clients. In-house training can also include representatives from and visits to other career information centres, post-secondary institutions and agencies in the community. Speakers from libraries, employment agencies, community organizations and small businesses can be invited to describe their services. In addition to providing information for referrals, visits and speakers present opportunities for staff members to enlarge their networks.

#### networking

Co-ordinators should encourage staff to establish connections with individuals and associations that can help to further their development. Staff who become involved on committees within an organization or with related community organizations help create a network from which the individual can benefit professionally. These networks also strengthen staff connections to the organization and promote the centre and its services. It is especially valuable for staff members to seek out others in similar positions with whom they can exchange ideas related to their work. This can be accomplished in person (at a professional association meeting or conference), or electronically (by joining a listserv on the Internet). Networking with people who serve in the same capacity will expose staff to new programs and service ideas and will encourage professional growth.

**professional  
development**

Attending meetings and conferences of professional groups is another way for staff members to enhance their knowledge and advance professionally. Even when budgets make it difficult to accommodate travel requests, there are usually opportunities available locally for staff to meet with others who share their interests.

Co-ordinators can recommend meetings held by organizations whose members offer career education and information services. These include conferences or meetings of guidance and counselling groups, library associations and career information co-ordinators. These professional development opportunities allow career information centre staff to learn about trends in the field and to stay current with the resources and services other career centres are offering. Meetings and conferences also allow staff to become familiar with new materials appropriate for their collections. Many conferences include product and service exhibits, where vendors also present useful demonstrations of computer software and audio-visual products.

CCIA/ACADOP (Canadian Career Information Association/Association canadienne de documentation professionnelle) is an example of an organization that offers professional development programs for career resource personnel.

Community colleges that offer Career Development, Library Technician, or Information Retrieval Specialist programs often sponsor workshops or continuing education courses. For more information on other organizations that provide opportunities for professional development visit [www.contactpoint.ca](http://www.contactpoint.ca).

Many of the conferences of various library associations discuss topics of concern to career information specialists. Their meetings also keep librarians current on developments in relevant computer technology, increase their knowledge of reference sources and enhance their skills in dealing with user inquiries.

**evaluating  
staff**

An effective goal-setting and evaluation program is essential for encouraging staff to achieve high standards and to develop professionally. Staff morale can be increased when staff members actively participate in defining job goals and setting criteria and objectives for evaluations.

When developing an evaluation system, co-ordinators must consider the purpose of evaluations. Staff members must clearly understand the expectations of supervisors and receive constructive feedback on their performance. Employees should also have opportunities to express their own perceptions of their jobs. One opportunity that allows staff to provide this input is to ask them to set annual goals to work toward throughout the year.

Performance reviews should be conducted at regular intervals. In many organizations, formal evaluations occur once a year, with both the co-ordinator and the staff member completing an evaluation form before meeting for a formal discussion. This discussion should look at the goals set by the staff member, how successful he/she was at attaining those goals and what steps should be taken to ensure that goals are met in the future. Aside from these official evaluations, staff should receive informal feedback regularly, especially in the initial stages of their jobs. These activities contribute greatly to the advancement of the centre's own objectives and to the quality of the service.

### *Conclusion*

There is clearly a direct correlation between the quality of career information staff and the quality of the service provided. Career information centres with clearly defined objectives and an appropriate staffing model are the most likely to be successful. All staff members need to have a thorough understanding of their particular responsibilities. They should receive comprehensive initial training and have access to professional development and networking opportunities on an on-going basis. Regular evaluations to review performance, provide feedback and set new goals will also help to ensure that the centre's objectives are achieved.

## CHAPTER 3

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### TECHNOLOGY IN THE CAREER INFORMATION CENTRE

Computers have become indispensable for the effective functioning of counselling departments, career centres and libraries. Their integration has brought a higher level of service to both staff and users. For staff, word processing, desktop publishing, database management and Internet capabilities have dramatically improved administrative, promotional and client services. For clients, access to software and, of course, to the Internet, has added new dimensions to their career and educational planning.

But computers do not solve all problems and, in fact, often create some of their own, particularly with regard to technical difficulties. They do have limitations and must, therefore, be implemented wisely and carefully into career centres.

This chapter attempts to explain and clarify the use of computers in career information centres. It is divided into five sections: *The “Why”s and “How”s of Using Computers in the Career Information Centre*, *Staying Computer Literate*, *Choosing the Right Hardware and Software*, *Integrating Computer Technology in Your Environment* (with a short list of appropriate software programs) and *Using the Internet in the Career Information Centre*.

#### *The Why’s and How’s of Using Computers in the Career Information Centre*

Computers have become such an integral part of the work world that “doing things by hand”, or accessing information manually seems outdated and inefficient in this “high-tech” age. Even in the smallest setting, there is usually at least one computer available for administrative purposes.

Whether the centre will have a stand-alone microcomputer or a multi-stationed, state-of-the-art, networked system, it is always advisable to talk to people who have been involved in bringing computers into similar centres. They can outline the problems they have encountered and their knowledge and advice can be very useful in making decisions. Qualified guidance may also be available from the parent institution’s Information Technology (IT) Department.

A career information centre can derive maximum benefit from implementing a computer system, for both staff and client use. Career centres use computers for career and educational planning, producing resources and marketing materials and office administration. For staff, the potential uses are among the following:

- career and educational planning
  - providing computer-assisted guidance through software or the Internet
  - accessing related databases such as mentors' or speakers' lists
  - creating a job referral database where students/clients can be matched with employers
  - producing an employer database for employers in a particular community
  - printing recruiting schedules
  - posting jobs
  - creating personal marketing tools
  - preparing bibliographies and handouts
  - producing newsletters, announcements and flyers
- marketing and resource materials
  - preparing presentation materials
  - scheduling workshops
  - ordering, cataloguing and circulating materials
- office administration
  - sending overdue notices for borrowed items
  - maintaining budgets
  - writing reports
  - developing mailing lists
  - printing address labels
  - keeping track of graduates who have obtained jobs

When considering computer applications, programs specifically designed for small libraries should be examined, as well as general word processing, database management, spreadsheet, presentation and electronic searching applications. Software packages (such as **Microsoft Office**) provide most of these features bundled into one package.

**word  
processing  
and desktop  
publishing**

A computer is a must for these functions alone, saving an enormous amount of time for staff, especially in a centre that produces bibliographies, handouts, flyers and similar literature. Word processing packages (e.g. **Microsoft Word or Publisher**) may be used for writing letters and reports, creating lists of materials, producing catalogue cards, making calendars and forms, or publishing newsletters and information. Adding email or fax applications will improve the communication functions of the centre significantly. Since there are many word processing programs on the market and, at present, most of them are capable of performing the same functions, it is important to select one that is familiar or that the parent institution supports.

**database  
management**

Database management is one of the major applications for microcomputers. A database management system (DBMS) makes it relatively easy for someone with a limited knowledge of computers to set up an inexpensive record-keeping system. It enables the career information specialist to produce a database for the centre and set up files for many purposes. Data can be entered, manipulated and recalled easily. For example, in an educational setting, a database management system can store student records, providing information on educational background, work experience, language capability and other factors. Placement officers can search these records for individuals who match company requirements. For example, a list of engineering majors who speak French, or a listing of students who have experience in the field, is then easy to obtain.

A database management system is excellent for answering the unplanned question. It assembles appropriate information quickly from the database. Within a career resource centre, such a software system might be used for reference, cataloguing, inventories, circulation, periodicals control, acquisitions and administration.

Database management programs are also ideal for computerizing the centre's catalogues. The traditional catalogue is quickly being replaced by on-line public access catalogue systems. The on-line catalogue, with its video display units, provides an effective means for locating materials in a collection and for finding bibliographic information.

DBMS programs such as **Microsoft Access**, **Lotus Approach**, **askSam** and **ProCite** allow career information specialists to develop bibliographic index-card systems specifically suited to their own centre's needs (information on these programs is contained in Chapter 6 in the section on cataloguing, under the title: *Database Management Software for Career Centres*).

#### spreadsheets

A spreadsheet is a worksheet of horizontal rows and vertical columns used for analyzing data; it is another major application for microcomputers in the career centre. Spreadsheet packages (such as **Microsoft Excel**) are useful for many administrative activities that involve the storage and manipulation of numerical tables and data. Such programs can be adopted for budgeting, statistical analyses, keeping financial records and other such tasks. They can be useful for gathering statistics on users or for providing circulation statistics. Charts can be created to display relevant data in graph form for presentation purposes.

#### presentation software

Presentation software (e.g. **Microsoft PowerPoint**) can turn a computer into an electronic slide projector for a presentation or a talk, or provide a new way of displaying information traditionally shown on transparencies or slides. The presenter controls the flow of information by the "point and click" method, which makes the presentation more dynamic and focused. In addition, handouts can be generated.

#### electronic searching

Before the advent of electronic technology, users searched manually through a card catalogue for items on career planning. Nowadays, they can search catalogue databases electronically (such as the *Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education* at [www.cete.org](http://www.cete.org)); they can pop a CD (e.g. **Career Cruising**) into a disk drive, or access an unending number of career and educational web sites through the Internet (see *Career Gateway* at <http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/career>). In only a few years, the Internet has revolutionized access to career and educational material for clients and professionals alike. Those commercial database services and CD's that are not currently available through the Internet will soon be on sale on a subscription basis.

Whether or not electronic resources are accessible in their centres, career information specialists must become aware of the vast range that is available. Electronic resources offer information on career and educational subjects such as:

- self assessment
- decision-making
- academic planning
- interviewing
- financial aid
- career exploration
- occupational choice
- job search
- résumé writing
- cover letters
- college/university selection
- employer information
- job opportunities
- study skills

Checking with similar centres and asking the Information Technology Department for assistance are two methods of ensuring that the centre's software and hardware are best suited to its needs.

Career information specialists can set up various folders for clients containing bookmarks such as job search sites, sites that provide labour market information, etc. Clients can also access interactive assessment programs, use the computers to create personal marketing documents and fill out on-line job applications.

An electronic mailing list can be created to inform clients of new resources as they are added to the centre's collection.

Folders, bookmarks and electronic lists are discussed further on in this chapter.

### *Staying Computer Literate*

Career information specialists, who are unfamiliar with the technical aspects of the computer and the variety of its peripheral uses, may be easily intimidated when faced with the updating of a centre's technological infrastructure. The technology and the software are changing at a rate that is sometimes overwhelming. Without too much effort, however, they can become comfortable with computer software and terminology.

How do career information specialists master the intricacies and capabilities of the computer? One of the best ways to overcome gaps in knowledge, negative attitudes and fears, is to organize a computer literacy program. It will help to:

- determine what computers can do for staff and users
- develop a good basic knowledge of the hardware (equipment)
- learn the distinguishing characteristics of mainframe, micro and mini-computers and the principal parts of a computer system
- experiment with software, CD's and the Internet.

There are many ways to upgrade one's computer hardware and software knowledge: courses, magazines, computer clubs, user groups, workshops, linking with other resource centres, accessing on-site IT departments. Other options are to learn in a group, where one can ask questions and share experiences, or to undertake a self-study program using the countless magazines, books, and "how-to" guides in print and electronic format.

- courses** An introductory computer course is a good place for novices to begin. Most of these explain how the computer works and provide instruction on actual computer applications. For more specific software training (for example on *Microsoft Office* or *WordPerfect*), courses are available at many levels and locations. A great array of courses on computer technology is advertised on the Internet. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and the Ministries of Education Web sites are up-to-date reference sources for training courses across the country.
- literature search** Career information specialists can consult a librarian for a literature search (i.e. locating publications by computer) on the subject of computerizing career information centres or a related topic. Not only will this yield a bibliography of materials that might prove useful, it will also provide a good opportunity to see the results of the computer in action.
- books** Introductory books written for the lay individual (such as the *Dummies Series*) present the basic concepts and introduce computer vocabulary. Current books on creating career centres and on the guidance and counseling profession often discuss the introduction of computers and electronic resources into career information centres. However, one must keep in mind that books become outdated faster than resources provided by technological means.
- magazines** Magazines (e.g. *PC World and PC Magazine*) offer a major advantage over books because they are current and up-to-date. They present reviews of hardware and software products, descriptions of new products and tutorials for beginners. It is worthwhile scanning some of the more popular ones; even those that are filled with difficult technical vocabulary introduce products and concepts, thereby helping the reader tune into the high-tech world.
- The counselling profession publishes journals (such as the *Canadian Journal of Counselling*), which produce articles on the role of computers in the counselling profession. These are often easier to understand and more immediately relevant than articles appearing in computer magazines.

## organizations

Counselling, library or other organizations that disseminate career information should be contacted. These can be located through directories available in local public, college or university libraries, or through associations like **CCIA/ACADOP**. They offer information on conferences, courses, seminars, newsletters and publications of value that often contain an electronic component.

Some organizations provide special services. The Counselling Foundation of Canada sponsors **Contact Point (www.contactpoint.ca)**, a website for career practitioners that contains, among other sections, three entitled: *Learning, Networking and Resources*. Found in the *Networking* section, is a "Discussion Forum" which provides an opportunity for career practitioners to communicate with each other, to problem solve and to share information about new developments and resources in the field.

## computer clubs and user groups

Computer clubs provide a means of finding out about software packages and products. User groups are made up of people who have a common interest (e.g. those using the same kind of microcomputers or software packages). There are also user groups on the Internet, where questions are answered and experiences are shared on-line. Career information specialists can find out about groups in their own locality by contacting computer stores, computer specialization. An additional way to join with others having similar concerns is to organize a user group composed of career information specialists in the community (see **Contact Point** above).

**workshops  
seminars and  
conferences**

Attending seminars, conferences and other types of professional meetings is a good way to learn about computer hardware and software and to keep current. Many organizations such as the **ECOO (Educational Computing Organization of Ontario - [www.ecoo.org](http://www.ecoo.org))** regularly advertise their existence to encourage new membership. Some computing organizations are even aimed directly at individuals concerned with disseminating career information.

They offer the following:

- an opportunity to ask questions
- information on the technology behind the computer
- advice for choosing hardware and software
- demonstrations of hardware and software
- a chance to see new products
- hands-on experience.

**rent your  
own**

Equipment can be rented and software can be tested on a trial basis. The Information Technology (IT) staff in the parent institution can provide advice for the selection of hardware and software products; software representatives can be contacted for trial offers.

***Choosing the Right Hardware  
and Software***

**determining  
the centre's  
needs**

How will the computer be used (for creating an employer database; for running word processing software)? How many workstations will the centre need? What additional equipment is necessary for an effective system (desks, printers, modems, power bars, power outlets)? What are the warranty issues? Finding out how others have set up their centre and involving IT personnel in the research and evaluation of products are essential steps in this process. Many institutions purchase equipment through a central purchasing and warehousing cooperative in order to obtain group discounts and ensure technical support service. If this service is available, the purchasing specialist should be contacted for assistance.

Needs must be projected for more than a single year, as today's requirements may be different from those of the future. The centre's computer system should be capable of expanding to satisfy future needs. It may be wise to seek feedback from potential users (staff and clients) through focus groups or surveys as to their perceived computer needs.

Computer system configurations can consist of single-user workstations or networked microcomputers. The latter may also be connected to mainframe computers for access to older mainframe applications, as well as enabling different departments to share their resources by means of the server.

There are numerous models of microcomputers from which to choose and a large selection of software available for every application. If there are several microcomputers in the centre, they can be networked. Networks link together computers to allow shared access of central resources such storage. If the career information centre is part of a larger institution that is networked, users in other parts of the building can access electronic information that is housed in the centre's computers or on the mainframe.

The term "microcomputer" can refer to three different types of computers: IBM computers, IBM-compatible computers and Macintosh computers. IBM and IBM compatible computers use the same operating systems and both will run software designed for IBM microcomputers. Macintosh computers use a different operating system and, although they perform the same tasks as IBM and IBM compatible computers, they generally need their own Macintosh software to operate. Although in the past there were significant differences between the two technologies, today they provide nearly equivalent functions and features within very similar formats. As the large majority of microcomputers in use today belong to the IBM and IBM compatible "family", the following discussions will focus on them and their software.

### selecting a computer system

The following are the main points to consider in the selection process:

- Have I contacted people who can provide me with up-to-date information on available hardware?
- Have I carefully researched appropriate microcomputer systems?
- Have I considered computers that are appropriate for my needs?
- Do I understand the products?
- Have I talked to career information specialists and others who have used the system?
- Will my chosen software work on this system? (remember to consider *all* the software programs that will be running on the system)
- Is the memory size and storage capacity of the computer I am considering consistent with my present *and future* requirements?
- Can the system be upgraded if I need more memory or storage space in the future?
- Is this product compatible with peripheral attachments (printers, phone hook-ups) that I might want now or in the future?
- Is the keyboard comfortable for my hands? Can I read the screen easily? Can I adjust the contrast to control glare?
- Is the monitor's graphics capability compatible with my software requirements?
- Have I considered the manufacturer's reputation?
- Is the system easy to use?
- Does the vendor offer installation and training?
- What type of service will the dealer provide?
- If I have used consultants to help me with my choices, have I made sure they are not biased?

### selecting a printer

There are two main types of printers to consider, laser and ink jet. Ink jet printers are cheaper to purchase and operate than laser printers and are a good source of quick, acceptable-quality printouts for users. They require minimal upkeep and the only on-going expenses are paper and cartridges. However, an important consideration in checking real price performance is the number of pages the toner cartridge is capable of producing. Although ink jet printers are less costly, in the interests of overall efficiency, laser printers are often the choice of centres that serve a large number of clients daily.

**points to consider**

For professional quality flyers, brochures, notices, newsletters and transparencies, the best choice is a laser printer. As with the ink jet, the cost of replacing toner cartridges and the number of pages the cartridge can print should be considered. In addition, there are maintenance costs that should be factored in when purchasing a laser printer, especially in a high-volume environment.

**specific to laser printers**

**selecting software**

- Which type of printer will best suit my needs: ink jet, laser, or both?
- What are the total costs per page of printing?
- What is the machine's printing speed and print quality?
- Does the printer use standard-sized paper?
- Do I need colour capability?
- Is the printer easy to operate?
- What technical support does the vendor offer?
- Will the vendor install the printer?
- Does the printer have enough memory to perform the tasks required?
- What fonts are included with the printer?
- Can additional fonts be purchased inexpensively?
- Am I sure the software will do what I want it to do?
- Have I seen a list of the program's capabilities?
- Will my clients and staff be able to use it easily?
- Does it provide clear instructions?
- Have I conferred with other career information specialists about this program?
- Have I asked them about problems they have experienced with the system?
- Am I expecting too much from the software?
- Will it really reduce my workload?
- Is it appropriate for my setting considering the age of my clients, their backgrounds and so on?
- Is it Canadian? (If it is a U.S. resource, is the information relevant?)
- What topics (e.g. interview skills, résumé writing) does it cover?
- How thoroughly does it cover topics?
- What is the source of the information provided?
- Is the information accurate?
- Is it bias-free?

- On which guidance theories is the program based?
- Have I asked how often the program is updated and how much it costs to subscribe to updated programs?
- Have I seen any reviews of this product?
- Have I seen a demonstration of the software on a system like mine?
- Is the program compatible with my hardware?
- Is the system affordable?
- Is the user base for the program large enough to support future enhancements of the product?
- Is the vendor reputable?
- Does the vendor maintain the software package?
- Is there a customer support telephone number, i.e. a 1-800 number?
- Can I depend on the service?
- Does my IT department support it?
- Is the documentation readable by a novice user? Does it provide sufficient information to operate the program?

**other decisions**

The following are additional decisions connected with bringing new computers into or upgrading existing ones in a career information centre:

- Where will the equipment be situated?
- What security measures can be taken to protect it?
- Who will be allowed to use the hardware and software?
- How will time on the computer be scheduled?
- Who will be responsible for backing up data?
- What limitations will there be regarding Internet access?

With staff that is well trained and well informed about hardware and software, it is easier to handle problems that inevitably arise. The following list is a sampling of software or Internet-based programs designed specifically for career education.

**career education software programs**

- Career Cruising
- Career Explorer
- Career Futures
- Choices, Choices CT, and Choices Jr
- School Finder

## *Integrating Computer Technology in Your Environment*

**be sensitive  
to staff and  
clients**

When introducing or upgrading computers in the career centre, staff and user needs must be taken into consideration. It is important to establish at least one separate workstation and printer for staff use, away from clients. Staff members can then be assured of time and privacy on the computer to complete tasks and projects without interruption from clients.

**keep  
expectations  
realistic**

It is important to recognize that some users and staff may require help in mastering or adjusting to new hardware and software. Not all of them can adapt immediately, or be enthusiastic about change and there may even be some resistance. Scheduling in-service training for staff and workshops for clients will ease the transition; a forum for expressing their ideas, fears and concerns about technology can relieve their feelings of bewilderment and frustration. Handouts and displays to highlight benefits of the new equipment and programs are good ways to include everyone in the learning process.

Computer software is meant to supplement, not replace, traditional library sources in the collection. One should not make the mistake of assuming that computerized information is, by nature, more accurate and up-to-date than other sources. Printed materials often provide more comprehensive and accurate information, which may also be cheaper and quicker to access. The career information specialist can only expect a computer program to be as current as the sources from which it comes and it is crucial to be knowledgeable about these sources.

**guard against  
catastrophe**

It is a significant risk to commit the centre to a major function on the computer without proper preparation. In introducing a computer, upgrades, or new software into the work setting, it is best to start with small projects that give everyone a chance to learn to use the equipment or program. The more software packages acquired at one time, the longer it takes to become familiar with them. Thought should be given to whether staff can realistically be expected to learn more than one at a time. Finally, one must be prepared to deal with machine failures, technical problems, power failures and data loss.

## *Using the Internet in the Career Information Centre*

In 1970, when Richard Bolles was writing the first edition of *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, he found only fourteen other books on career/work-search topics. Times have changed and there has been an explosion of materials covering career exploration and assessment, labour market trends, demographics, work search and the skills necessary for survival in the workplace of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The career information specialist's challenge is to be knowledgeable in these areas and to be able to assist clients in learning how to find appropriate information.

During their lifetime most people will have a number of different jobs, possibly in a variety of occupations. In the on-going search for current, useful information on the Internet and elsewhere, knowing how to research is a necessary skill that must be acquired by everyone. A word of caution: although the Internet can connect users to a seemingly unlimited amount of information, it can also be very time-consuming. Career information specialists (and clients) must keep in mind that the information on the Internet is only complete, current and accurate to the level of those who keep the sites up-to-date. But the lure of so much information at one's fingertips is hard to resist and, as long as the Internet's advantages as well as its limitations are firmly kept in mind, there is no need to. Given the temptation of easily-accessing a plethora of information, some thought should be given to installing a filtering program that prevents clients from using the computers for non-career related purposes.

### **what you need to get started**

- computer with a minimum of 1 Gig of RAM, based on the operating system
- data line
- network card
- 1 gig of free hardware space
- CD and/or DVD drive
- Firewall/router
- Internet service provider: ISPs provide a dedicated (DSL-T1 or ISDN) connection to the Internet and other Internet services such as e-mail. ISPs can be public or private and the cost varies depending on which services they provide. Check advertisements in magazines, newspapers and the Internet itself.

As well as the cost of the computer and the ISP, one must also consider the “hidden” costs of computer maintenance: time spent in training staff, communication lines, server hardware, software, printer and paper supplies. By far, the biggest cost is staff time spent assisting patrons and answering questions.

**comfort level  
with the  
technology**

Another major consideration is the comfort level of both staff and clients with technology. It is important to emphasize that, although the Internet can be overwhelming, there are ways to provide starting points for guiding people. Once users realize that they can find all kinds of information (on any area of interest), they are usually “hooked”. It should also be kept in mind that the Internet is relatively new and growing at such a rate that no one can know it all. However, with some practice and patience, staff and clients can access information that can change not only the way they work, but also the way they think and live.

For career information specialists who are less familiar with the Internet, this section will provide some ideas of the ways in which the Internet can be an effective research tool in a career information centre. It is not intended as a detailed study of the Internet. There are a number of excellent books and videos that provide a basic understanding of this technology.

**basic internet  
terms**

- **Browser:** Graphic interface program that can be used for travelling through the World Wide Web. *Netscape Navigator* and *Microsoft Internet Explorer* are popular browsers.
- **World Wide Web:** An area of the Internet that is organized into Web sites.
- **Web site:** A location on the Web representing an individual, an organization, a company or a collection of information.
- **URL's:** Uniform Resource Locators are the addresses of Web sites. For instance, the URL for the *CCIA/ACADOP* Web site is:  
<http://www.ccia-acadop.ca>
- **Search Engines:** These are databases of documents. Not all search engines have the same information, so searching on different databases will give users different results. Some popular search engines are **Google, Yahoo, Yahoo Canada, AltaVista, Excite,**

novice  
website for  
tips & terms

- **Metasearch Engines:** These let you use several search engines at once, thereby broadening the area of the search. **Dogpile** and **Metacrawler** are the two most popular.
- **Hypertext Links:** These words are underlined, presented in a different colour, or both. Clicking on them will take the user to a new page with related information.
- **Discussion Groups and Electronic Mailing Lists:** These allow users to discuss and share information on topics of mutual interest, or to post questions.
- **Newbie Dome:** This Web site provides basic lessons on internet use and great links.  
<http://www.candleweb.net/newbie>

### *Search Tips and Techniques*

It is very useful to collect URLs of favourite Web sites that can be shared with co-workers and colleagues. Newspapers, trade magazines, associations and newsletters of organizations often have useful reviews, sharing their “best Web sites” of the week, month, etc. Entire books are devoted to this topic, such as **The Canadian Internet Directory** and **CareerXroads, 2003**, with lists of URLs to the best job, résumé and career management sites on the Internet, categorized by subject area. In addition, most Web sites link the user to other sites they recommend. However, it is important to evaluate whether the quality of information they provide is adequate, as there are currently no standards or criteria regulating them. It is a good idea to check out a Web site that has been recommended by a colleague or by a respected publication, because it can save a lot of searching time. This said, searching often leads to unexpected “gems” and real finds.

#### **URL's**

The URL tells the user a great deal about the Web site. For example, **.edu** indicates that it is an educational institution, **.gov** is a government organization, **.com** is a commercial, for profit institution, **.org** is a generic indicator for organization, usually nonprofit, **.int** is an international organization. Recent additions to the URLs have been **.biz**, **.net**, **.info**, etc. When looking at the results of a search, scanning the list of URLs for the suffix **.edu** can be useful, because the content of educational sites is usually of high quality.

When searching by URL, all the .(dots) must be included; the address must be exactly the same as the original; letters have to be small case or capitalized as indicated, because URLs can be case-sensitive.

**bookmarks** Favourite Web sites can be bookmarked. Bookmarks save the URLs in a separate directory, so that the user can return to them rapidly, without having to retype the URL every time.

**folders** Frequently used bookmarks can be kept in folders organized by subject or topic. Folders are a good way to familiarize new Internet users with the “click and point” method. Being able to go to a folder that contains Web sites exclusively for job postings or résumé writing is also a little less intimidating than starting off alone on an Internet search. In a career information centre, where one-on-one assistance may not always be available, this guarantees that clients always have a number of recommended Web sites at their fingertips. Some centres allow users to bookmark their own favourite career sites and keep them in folders for repeated use.

**search engines** Every search engine has its own recommended method of searching and it is a good idea to read the “Tips and Techniques” section that is usually included near the search box. There are many excellent sites devoted to comparing popular search engines and describing the best search techniques for each.

### *A Beginner’s Terminology for Using Search Engines*

**Subject search** Organized as a subject directory, allowing for browsing by topic or subject. e.g. *Yahoo* is organized by subject.

**Keyword search** Enables the user to search Web sites, images, news groups, URLs by keyword. *Google* will allow this.

**Boolean Operators** Permit the combining of terms or keywords to make the search more specific. For example, to find information on the Canadian labour market, you could combine Canadian + labour + market. Similarly, words can be excluded by using a -(minus) sign (with search engines such as *AltaVista*, *Yahoo* and *InfoSeek*).

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Truncation</b>                          | All the Allows searching words with multiple endings, for example <i>Canad*</i> will search for Canada, Canadian, Canadians ( <i>AltaVista, Yahoo</i> ). Some search engines automatically search for words with the same root spelling ( <i>Hotbot, Infoseek, Webcrawler</i> ).   |
| <b>Quotation Marks</b>                     | All the words between the quotation marks will be included in the search, for example "boom, bust, echo" ( <i>AltaVista, Yahoo, Excite, Hotbot, Infoseek</i> ).  |
| <b>Proximity Operators</b>                 | Permit searching by field, for example title:career magazine or image:yingyang ( <i>AltaVista</i> ).   |
| <b>evaluating websites</b>                 | Since anyone can set up a Web site, without having to adhere to rules or regulations, a number of factors needs to be considered when evaluating Web sites:  |
| <b>folders</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ the qualifications, expertise, experience and education of the site creator</li> <li>○ the characteristics of the URL - is it a commercial, for-profit site, an educational site, an international organization?</li> <li>○ the date the site was last updated - is there a date on the site?</li> <li>○ does the site creator give an e-mail address for easy contact?</li> <li>○ how many links does this site have? Do they contain valuable related information? Are the links functional?</li> <li>○ is the site suitable for bookmarking?</li> <li>○ is the layout of the site visually pleasing and easy to follow? Are the links you need for further information visible at a glance?</li> </ul> |
| <b>career assessment &amp; exploration</b> | <p>Self-knowledge is the starting point - whether thinking about changing careers, starting a business, or looking for work. Fortunately, most of the on-line assessments do seem to capture the "essence" of the applicant. Many assessments are free (there are also lots that charge) and can cover a variety of areas: personality and temperament, emotional intelligence, entrepreneurial suitability, etc.</p> <p>Labour market information, trends and demographics are also factors to take into consideration when career choices are being made. The Internet has a wealth of information on these topics, though it is important to ascertain that the source of information is reliable.</p>  |

## work search

Using the Internet may seem like magic - we expect to find information instantly - but looking for work is never easy. Many companies use the Internet to advertise employment; it lowers their recruiting costs, reduces recruiting time and often provides educated and more computer-literate employees.

The Internet has numerous sites listing specific jobs, allowing clients to post their résumés or skills lists that can be matched with potential employers' requests. Clients looking for work can create lists of potential employers and check Web sites for company information. By using information gleaned from searches on the Internet, applicants have the added advantage of displaying their Internet skills to employers.

## professional development

Keeping up-to-date in this wired age is more important than ever for professionals helping clients with career exploration, assessment, or work search. Often the best sources of information are colleagues and peers.

### tips for raising your comfort level with the internet

- collect URLs from trade magazines, newspapers and colleagues
- keep *bookmarks* and *folders* to organize information for easy access
- streamline your search with keywords, synonyms and specific terms
- use " ", +, *field searching*, and *truncation* to make your search more specific
- read the tips included at the beginning of search engines
- ask lots of questions
- play with the technology
- have fun!

## Conclusion

In the future, even small libraries will be offering their users recorded information mostly by means of technology. That is why it is important for career information specialists to be aware of the computer's hardware and software capabilities. In addition to having a clear understanding of the uses of technology in their own centres, they need to become knowledgeable about issues related to the computer and about computer use in other settings. The growing popularity of e-coaching (electronic coaching) allows clients to access career guidance through the use of Web sites and organizations providing this service via the Internet. A world of career information awaits users and a career information centre that is technologically well equipped can bring it to them quickly and effectively. Tracking the impact on the users over time will enable the career information centre to affirm its investment in the latest technology.

## CHAPTER 4

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### SELECTING MATERIALS

Since the quality of service offered depends to a large extent on the collection that is available, selecting materials for the career information centre is one of the most important responsibilities of the career information specialist. This chapter is divided into five sections: *Developing a Selection Policy*, *Discovering Good Sources of Materials*, *Eight Helpful Hints for Selecting Career Materials*, *Evaluating Materials* and *Keeping Materials Current*.

#### *Developing A Selection Policy*

A selection policy should be instituted during the initial planning of the centre, before any material is chosen for the collection. Since selection is time-consuming and requires deliberation, it might be tempting to neglect this step and rush into buying resources. However, the hours spent on developing the policy are worthwhile for several reasons. In the first place, a written policy provides guidelines and goals for collection development. Secondly, it provides for continuity in the event of staff changes. Thirdly, it offers valuable support, should the issue of censorship arise. For example, if someone questions the appropriateness of an item, staff can refer to the selection policy, creating an objective atmosphere for discussing the matter. Not only should every career centre have a written selection policy, the latter should also be revised periodically to reflect shifts in the goals of the centre and, as time passes, the changing needs of a different or changing user population. A comprehensive selection policy addresses the following four topics:

- Goals
- The scope of the collection
- Format
- Selection Criteria

**Goals:** The selection policy should clearly outline the purpose and objectives of the career information centre. Defining the centre's goals is an activity similar to that outlined in Chapter 1 for writing a project proposal.

When potential users have been identified, the following questions should be asked:

- What characteristics, i.e. age, sex, language, educational level, etc., distinguish this population?
- Is there a target group within this audience that is to be served? What are its characteristics and needs?
- Are there career information centres that are already established in the community? Who are their target groups and what types of information do they provide?

The answers to these questions help in writing the selection policy and ensure that appropriate decisions are made in choosing materials. Client profiles and needs assessments are useful in suggesting selection criteria to be applied when resources are considered for purchase. The level of materials must be appropriate for the user group. If users are predominantly of high school age, for example, the collection should be aimed at this level. If the mother tongue of a sizeable population is another language, materials in this language need to be included in the collection. Items that reflect the local region and economy should also be acquired.

**The Scope of the Collection:** The selection policy should include a statement detailing the scope of the collection and indicating the subjects to be represented in the centre. There are many possible topics that can be considered for every resource centre. However, what the career information specialist ultimately chooses to collect is strongly influenced by user needs and budgetary limitations.

The four most frequently used subject areas in career information centres are *career planning*, *occupations*, *education* and *employment*.

**career  
planning**

A comprehensive career collection starts with basic career planning guides that discuss self-assessment, including skills, abilities, values, interests, personality, as well as needs identification. This section often contains information on mid-life career change, personal growth and development, balancing work and personal life, and alternative work arrangements.

**occupations**

The occupations section of a career information centre contains career encyclopedias, books, pamphlets, videos, CD's, etc. on specific occupations and industries, including non-traditional careers and entrepreneurship. It may also have information on job trends, labour market outlook, salaries, working conditions and educational requirements.

**education** This section usually includes manuals on choosing a college, university, or other types of training. It contains guides to Canadian and international academic programs, institutional calendars, books about distance education, co-operative study, apprenticeships, private training facilities, financial aid directories, prior learning assessment and recognition, and graduate surveys (many of these guides are now available on the Internet). In addition, it provides information on graduate and professional school admission tests and books for developing study skills. Many educational guides and calendars include information on specialized facilities and services available to students with special needs.

**employment** The employment section of a career information centre houses material on work search strategies, such as résumé and cover letter writing, interviewing techniques, networking skills, and portfolio development. Directories of companies and institutions, individual employer files and other items intended for researching employer information are also located in this section. Other subjects to include under employment are volunteer work, employment agencies, placement tests, summer jobs, part-time employment, job sharing, and working abroad.

In choosing resources for each subject in the collection, the needs of special groups, such as minorities, the disabled and women must be considered. Many resources have been created specifically for these groups. For instance, women clients may need information on re-entering the work force, non-traditional careers, and alternative work arrangements. Publications specifically for the disabled may include advice and information on disclosure and accessibility issues.

**Format:** A selection policy should specify not only the subjects to be contained in the collection, but also formats to be acquired. A substantial amount of career information appears in printed form (books, pamphlets, periodicals, magazines, annual reports, recruiting literature and educational calendars) and this is likely to be the format collected early on. Items in other formats are gradually becoming more readily available and more affordable. These include audio and

videocassettes, DVD's, computer software and the Internet. Naturally, these different formats will require the added expenditure of videocassette recorders (VCRs), DVD players and computer equipment, as well as the added expertise of the staff.

One method of keeping the information current and realistic is through the use of audiovisual tapes. Centres can tape information interviews with individuals in various occupations and industries and record presentations made by invited speakers. To keep production costs low, these tapes can be made by students or graduates of audiovisual programs, who are willing to do it for their own professional development at no or little labour cost to the centre. Funding and grants may also be available for such projects. Another suggestion is to make videotapes of presentations and seminars, so that users can view them at any time.

There are videos about work search available for purchase, although they can be costly. Renting and borrowing are other options. Some public libraries have extensive audiovisual collections that they lend out; they usually provide a list of their collection. Government agencies, such as The National Film Board of Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, produce audiovisual resources that are available on loan, for purchase, or at no cost. Many industries, associations, individual employers and educational institutions also produce promotional videotapes or CDs that are free or inexpensive.

Audiovisual materials add variety and make the collection come alive. Other media include DVDs, CDs, computer software and the Internet (a detailed discussion of electronic resources for career centres is presented in Chapter 3).

**Selection Criteria:** The selection policy should define clear and concise criteria for choosing materials that are suitable for the specific environment. Materials that adhere to Canadian quality standards such as those found in the Forum of Labour Market Ministers' LMI Product Guidelines are preferred.

The following are some of the criteria to be considered:

- accuracy**
  - What is the source of facts, figures and information?
  - Is the information accurate for the region, province, country where the centre is located?
  - Are other resources that are listed in the publication accurate and up-to-date? Inaccurate information can be misleading, time-consuming and frustrating for the users, and could diminish the centre's credibility.
- authority**
  - Is the author, producer or publisher considered an authority in this field?
  - What is this individual's reputation? Have reviews been favourable?
- balance**
  - Is this subject appropriately represented in the collection? One should strive for a balance of subjects while keeping in mind the special characteristics and needs of users.
- client needs**
  - Do these resources meet the needs of the client population? Even if they are free, resources that are not applicable to the needs of the client population are an additional expense in terms of cost, display space and staff administrative time. For example, if the main client population of a centre consists of single parents on social assistance, they would probably not need resources on working and studying abroad; whereas, this might be a very important resource for a college or university career centre.
- cost**
  - Is the publication affordable? Cost must always be weighed against the overall quality of the item. Sometimes an expensive resource is worth its price in terms of excellence of content and frequency of use.
- currency**
  - Is the item up-to-date?
  - When was it published?
  - Do hairstyles, clothing and equipment depicted make the resource look dated?
  - Does it use current terminology and discuss up-to-date trends?

- What is the shelf life of this resource? General information tends to stay current for a longer period of time, while specific information (e.g. salaries) dates more quickly. Topics that are familiar should be checked to verify the currency of a given resource.
- format**
- Is the item attractive?
  - Is it well organized, with a pleasing layout and clear print?
  - Does an index or table of contents assist the reader in finding topics contained in the publication?
  - Will the resource stand up to user wear and tear?
- language**
- Is the language and terminology used appropriate for the reading and comprehension level of the client user population?
- objectivity**
- Can the publication be read easily?
  - Does the resource “glamourize” a particular profession or career, or does it objectively discuss and describe its realities, including skills for entry-level positions? Promotional material, whether from companies, industry sectors or specialized trainers, may neglect to mention some of the negative aspects of a given profession or industry. While these resources should not necessarily be eliminated from the collection, clients need to be made aware of this factor and guided to other available resources, to balance the information being researched.

## *Discovering Good Sources of Materials*

No single source is adequate for selecting all the materials for the centre. The career information specialist has to consult a number of sources to develop a current and well-balanced collection. These include professional journals and associations, agencies, corporations, government departments and commercial publishers, bibliographies, references within publications and popular periodicals. So-called grey material or brochures produced by associations and governments can also be useful. Further detail on these various sources is discussed on the following pages.

### **professional journals**

Career information specialists should make it a habit to read journals and newsletters published in the career, counseling and education fields. The Internet provides access to many different newsletters and journals from around the world. Materials of special interest are often reviewed or advertised in these sources and publishers specializing in producing career materials can be identified. Such publications are useful in learning about trends and developments in areas related to career and educational planning.

### **associations**

Professional organizations, particularly those at the provincial or national levels, are excellent sources of career or industry-specific information. Publications produced by professional and industrial associations usually provide details on career opportunities, certification requirements and training.

Many associations also publish salary surveys and newsletters. Job advertisements in association newsletters and journals are popular sources for those seeking employment. These newsletters and journals (which are often free of charge) also contain reviews of materials and advertisements of items that may be suitable for career information centres. Most associations have Internet Web sites that may contain specialized job boards and career information.

*Associations Canada or The Directory of Associations in Canada* provides an abundance of names, addresses and Web sites of professional organizations. There are many other specialized publications that list associations.

#### corporations

Many corporations mail out annual or interim reports, company newsletters and recruiting literature. Some larger firms even publish material on employment or career opportunities within their industry as a whole. A number of publications assist in locating corporations that produce this information. Names and addresses of Canadian firms can be found in *The Canadian Trade Index*, *Fraser's Canadian Trade Directory*, *Scott's Industrial Directories* and *The Financial Post's Survey of Industrials*. Medium to large size Canadian corporations of either an industrial or service nature can be found in the *Blue Book of Canadian Business* or *SEDAR* listing on the Internet ([www.sedar.com](http://www.sedar.com)). These publications are expensive, but can be found in the reference section of most public libraries.

#### government

Municipal, provincial and federal government departments and agencies are other sources of career literature. These bodies supply brochures and publications on career opportunities within their organizations. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (formerly HRDC) is an excellent source of details on salary scales, working conditions and labour market outlook. In addition, government departments and agencies often produce useful pamphlets and brochures on searching for work. They provide these publications in quantity at no cost for users. The Government of Canada's Job Training and Career cluster website [www.gojobs.gc.ca](http://www.gojobs.gc.ca) and labour market information site [www.labourmarketinformation.ca](http://www.labourmarketinformation.ca) also provide a great deal of useful information. One of the best ways to find addresses for government departments and agencies is through almanacs, such as *The Canadian Almanac & Directory*, *Corpus Almanac & Canadian Sourcebook* and *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. They can be found in the reference section of most public libraries. Alternately, Internet information seekers can utilize the Government of Canada Internet portal [www.servicecanada.gc.ca](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca).

#### publishers

When commercial publishers of career materials have been identified, the career information specialist can contact them to request publication catalogues and inclusion in their mailing list.

#### **bibliographies**

Some of the larger, well-established career information centres in North America publish core collection bibliographies, listing resources considered appropriate for a basic career collection. Others, like Concordia University's Career Centre, regularly publish acquisitions lists of items added to their collections. Both lists are valuable for selection, especially for building a collection from the very beginning.

#### **reference lists**

New books and pamphlets often contain useful reading or reference lists. Some of these are quite extensive and very helpful in suggesting items to be added to career information centres.

#### **periodicals and magazines**

Many career centre staff members subscribe to a daily newspaper and magazines. Periodicals can be rich sources of inexpensive information. Some of their articles discuss subjects appropriate for career centres, such as the dual career couple, work search techniques, women and work, labour market projections, entrepreneurship, working from the home, or facts on specific companies and industries. They may also contain interviews with people working in various fields. Periodicals are important for their currency and local content.

The "Employment", "Careers", or "Help Wanted" sections of newspapers and magazines should be scanned by career information specialists. Job advertisements might be clipped and added to the collection, either by posting them on the job board, a bulletin board, or by adding them to the file or binder containing information on the specific career or industry being advertised. For many occupations, particularly those in Information Technology, Internet Job Boards such as *Monster.ca* and *Workopolis.com* have become an important source of job vacancy information. They provide details on job openings and offer users an idea of the great number of occupational options available today. They also suggest the types of employers interested in specific fields of academic training, the qualifications required by these organizations and the salary ranges for jobs.

## *Eight Helpful Hints for Selecting Career Materials*

### HINT#1

#### **KNOW YOUR LOCAL LIBRARIES**

Whether the budget is fat or lean, career information specialists must find out about resources available in nearby libraries. They might be able to forego purchasing expensive items for their collections if these items are readily available elsewhere.

### HINT#2

#### **SEARCH FOR REVIEWS**

Materials are often chosen on the basis of reviews that evaluate publications and other career-related resources. If a review or rating has been prepared by a well-established professional in the field, or has appeared in a reputable journal, then it is likely to be reliable. Favourable critiques provide a useful basis for choosing suitable, high-quality materials. However, unfavourable reviews should not necessarily rule out potential resources. An excellent resource for some centres may have received a poor review, simply because it was not considered appropriate for the reviewer's centre or client population. Reviews and book outlines can be found on the Internet as well.

### HINT#3

#### **REQUEST SAMPLE COPIES**

Some publishers and distributors specialize in career-related literature. Many publish career briefs or monographs of one to four pages, which give short descriptions of careers and are available for purchase individually or as a series. It is advisable to ask for sample copies of monographs and publications that appear in a series, before ordering the whole set. Many publishers willingly comply with these requests. Samples of magazines, newsletters and similar types of materials can also be requested prior to purchasing.

Career-related software publishers often produce sample copies of their programs specifically for the purpose of preview and review, though they tend to be incomplete, or non-interactive.

**HINT#4****VIEW MATERIAL FIRSTHAND**

Some materials (such as directories, videos, software, CD's) can be extremely expensive and it is helpful to study or use them directly, in order to decide whether they are worth the purchase price. Periodic visits to local libraries provide excellent opportunities to view material firsthand. Some distributors of videos and software provide preview loans for a limited time with, at most, the cost of the return postage (or pressure from the salesperson). Preview materials must be returned according to the prescribed arrangement, otherwise the centre may be charged for them. Trial subscriptions are also available from career-related online services.

Most bookstores have sections dedicated to career-related and job search topics. Some of the larger bookstore chains have quite extensive sections and even provide chairs for customers to preview books in comfort. Browsing through bookstores provides an excellent opportunity for following trends and previewing materials.

Publishers can usually be found at professional conferences promoting their resources that can be previewed and sometimes even purchased at a discount.

Resource sharing for preview can also be arranged through formal or informal meetings with other career information specialists. For example, *CCIA/ACADOP* has an information-sharing component in each of its professional development meetings, an activity that the participants always find highly useful and informative.

**HINT#5****SEEK THE ADVICE OF OTHER CAREER INFORMATION SPECIALISTS, FACULTY AND OTHERS.**

Career information specialists should seek recommendations from others regarding specific publications. Professionals working regularly with career publications (such as other career information specialists, librarians and career counsellors) can point out their strengths and weaknesses. Most career practitioners are quite willing to share their expertise. If the centre functions as part of an educational institution (e.g. university, community college), faculty members can frequently offer suggestions for purchase of career guides or directories in their fields.

They also know if placement surveys have been compiled in their departments. Provincial placement surveys and the National Graduate Survey conducted by Statistics Canada can provide excellent information on labour market opportunities by field of study. These items make very valuable additions to the collection.

Many career-related associations have established listservs that one can join (either as a member or non-member). This is an excellent way to network and to discover new resources. For example, members of *CCIA/ACADOP* have access to a restricted listserv.

#### HINT#6

#### RECYCLE DISCARDED ITEMS

Some large career centres and libraries have substantial budgets. Staff in these settings can purchase and update expensive items, including educational and industrial directories that are financially out of reach for many career information specialists. These large centres are often willing to make old editions and discarded items available to those who cannot afford them. Care should be taken in accepting discarded materials. While all of these publications will be dated, they can still be fine additions to a collection and a note can be added on the cover of the publication referring users to the location of the newer edition.

Adding discarded items from other centres to library shelves can also help career information specialists decide whether these items are worthwhile in the collection. Frequent use can justify the purchase of expensive items.

#### HINT#7

#### USE YELLOW PAGES

Centres that cannot afford expensive trade and industrial directories should ensure that telephone directories are included in their collection. Though telephone directories do not offer the details supplied in trade and industrial sources, they are less costly and do provide a geographical and subject approach to employers. This is now available on the Internet through *Canada411.ca*.

## HINT#8

### STRATEGICALLY SEARCH THE INTERNET

The Internet has become the world's largest public library. Strategic searches for jobs, labour market information or specific occupational material may yield a wide range of information. However, material should be carefully screened and searches should be carefully constructed to ensure that the information found is accurate, timely and useful.

### *Evaluating Materials*

In evaluating career materials, the sheer volume of publications available on the market is a problem in itself. Career information specialists are faced with such a variety of choices, that it is sometimes difficult to make decisions. They need guidelines for evaluating materials that can be applied when books are initially selected, when standing orders and subscriptions come up for renewal and when lost or worn items are considered for replacement.

#### guidelines

The National Career Development Association (NCDA) publishes and regularly revises the *Career Literature, Software and Video Review Guidelines*, which includes criteria for evaluating accuracy, format, vocabulary, bias and stereotyping, graphics and currency. A similar set of guidelines is available in French from the Gouvernement de Québec: *Critères de conception, de production et d'évaluation de documents d'information scolaire et professionnelle*. The Forum of Labour Market Ministers Guidelines for Labour Market Information products, mentioned earlier in this chapter, can also assist in this process.

#### sexism and racism

With regard to sexism, racism and other types of discrimination, career information specialists must be particularly aware. They must make every effort to acquire bias-free materials for their centres.

#### content

CCIA/ACADOP publishes *Guidelines for Creating Career Information*, which outlines general guidelines for creating career information as well as recommended content elements of an occupational profile. While this pamphlet was created to assist the producers of career information, it is also a useful document for ensuring that career information considered for acquisition includes all the necessary topics.

**frequency of use** Frequency of use is another criterion in evaluating materials for the centre. Are users regularly reading books and pamphlets in the collection? Some career information specialists use circulation records to judge a publication's merit. Another way of assessing use is to conduct a survey. This can help determine the reasons users visit the centre and how satisfied they are with its resources. A survey might be done informally, by randomly questioning users, or it could be conducted formally through the development of a written questionnaire.

### *Keeping Materials Current*

Career information centres are expected to provide facts and figures that are current and career information specialists have an obligation to discard outdated material from their collections. Some publications need to be replaced annually, others biennially and some much less frequently.

Among items that should be considered for annual updating are certain education and employment publications. These include academic program guides, university and college calendars, books on financial aid, industrial directories and company financial reports.

Occupational material does not need to be replaced quite as frequently as the above-mentioned items. Information in this area can generally be evaluated approximately every three years, to determine whether it is still pertinent. However, some occupations date more quickly than others. Technological fields, such as engineering and computer science, undergo rapid changes with new job titles constantly emerging. Other occupations, such as those related to history, fine art, archaeology, anthropology, teaching and sociology evolve more slowly. Materials about these types of occupations may be retained in the centre for a longer period of time. By the same token, information on career planning, study skills and personal development has a longer life. While resources on job search also have a relatively long shelf life, they should be augmented regularly with up-to-date information on new trends and methods, such as behavioural-based interviews, the electronic job search and the use of portfolios. Books on these subjects can usually be kept for several years before they need to be discarded.

### *Conclusion*

Effective selectors of career information know their collections and strive for balance in their centres. They are aware of subject areas that are weak and of those that need updating. They have a clear sense of collection goals and selection criteria and know how to evaluate materials.

## CHAPTER 5

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### ORDERING MATERIALS

Once materials have been selected, systematic and precise ordering procedures must be put in place. The following chapter examines the fundamental steps involved in this process. The first two sections describe the methods of ordering *Priced Library Materials* and *Free Library Materials*. The third section explains how and where *Office and Cataloguing Supplies* can be purchased, while the last section discusses *Budgeting*.

#### *Priced Library Materials*

The most efficient way to approach this task is to designate a particular member of the centre's staff to be responsible for ordering. In most cases, this is the job of the career resource co-ordinator or one of the career information specialists. This person needs to establish and follow ordering procedures, maintain accurate records of orders (both outstanding and received) and prevent duplication of items as much as possible. This individual is often in charge of managing the acquisitions budget as well.

#### where to order

Items can be ordered from local bookstores, suppliers within the parent organization (such as campus bookstores), wholesalers, dealers, distributors, publishers, agencies or associations. Nowadays, in addition to land mail and the telephone, suppliers can usually be contacted by fax, e-mail Internet capability, any Internet provider you can access temporarily (from anyone's home, office or an Internet café) will allow you to obtain your own private, free e-mail address.

Before choosing from these alternatives, the person placing the order must determine which is the fastest, most efficient and most economical method. Is a less costly order worth the trouble of having to prepay items, deal with customs clearances and exchange rates, or follow up on orders not received? In an attempt to support the Canadian book trade, libraries and other users of printed resources have long been encouraged to order from Canadian publishers and agents; a list of these can be found in the following two sources: the *Canadian Publishers Directory* and *The Book Trade in Canada*. Contact the staff in other career information centres and libraries, to obtain the names of additional reliable suppliers.

## how to order

Whether you purchase through an agent or directly through a publisher, records must be maintained for items that have been ordered. A record keeping system can be as simple as cards in a file box, or as sophisticated as a relational data base system. No matter which system is chosen, each record should include all of the following information necessary for ordering a resource:

- author
- type of resource (i.e. book, periodical, video, CD, DVD, software)
- resource title
- series title
- document number, ISBN (International Standard Book Number) and/or ISSN (International Standard Serial Number)
- date of publication (to identify updates of the publication)
- edition
- price, including discounts (if any), postage and handling
- distributor's name, address, phone number, e-mail address
- number of copies to be ordered
- renewal or expiry date if a subscription
- date ordered
- date received

The easiest and most efficient way to maintain an ordering system is to create the above record as soon as a desired resource has been identified. When items are ordered, and ultimately received, this information can be documented on the original record. Records kept on file cards can be filed in an "*Items to be ordered*" section of the file box, then moved to the "*On order*" section, and finally to the "*Received*" section. A fourth section, labelled "*Wish List*", can also be added to the file box for resources that are not absolutely essential, but that could be ordered near the end of the fiscal year, if funds are still available.

Be sure to determine that items requested are not already on order or currently in the collection. A regular follow-up should also be completed on orders that have been outstanding for a long period of time.

## integrating new materials

When materials arrive, the following steps will ensure the quick integration of new acquisitions. The package contents should be checked against the purchase order and invoice (or packing slip), to verify that the items received are the ones that were ordered and that the materials are in good condition. Damaged goods, wrong or incomplete shipments and errors in invoicing have to be dealt with as soon as possible.

### *Free Library Materials*

Requesting free items for the centre is a simpler procedure than the one for ordering priced materials. It is not essential to keep an order file for these resources and duplications, if obtained, can always be used for cross-referencing, displays or handouts.

## how to request free items

The use of a simple form letter or postcard facilitates obtaining free items. It should have a space for the publisher's or distributor's address, the title (or subject) of the resource and the number of copies required. The centre's name, address and a brief statement of its mandate should also be included, as well as a request to be added to the supplier's mailing list, or to be notified of new resources. Be sure to mention that it is understood that the item is free; if a cost is involved, request pricing information only, rather than the resource itself.

Some career information specialists develop special form letters for different kinds of publications. They create separate letters for company literature, financial aid information and academic calendars. Where necessary, they translate form letters into languages appropriate for the publishers with whom they deal. Of course, requests for free information can also be made over the telephone, via fax, email, or the Internet.

## Office / Cataloguing Supplies

In addition to structuring the acquisition of career materials for the centre, a system for ordering the consumable and non-consumable supplies used to maintain, file, catalogue, shelve and repair resources has to be established. One of the best suppliers for library-specific materials, equipment and furnishings is a company called **Brodart** ([www.brodart.com](http://www.brodart.com)) but there are several others as well. Further supplies such as disks, pens, labels, ink cartridges, stationery, binders, etc., are available from numerous office suppliers and stores across the country. When ordering supplies, keep in mind the available storage space and the physical size and type of material in the collection (for instance, article clippings may be housed in file folders in filing cabinets, or in plastic covers in binders).

The staff member responsible for ordering supplies can make a list of all the materials used in the centre. Items are checked on the list when stock is low. Providing storage space is available, it is more efficient and economical to order items in quantity at regular times during the year, rather than purchasing them as needed.

## Budgeting

An accurate running total must be maintained for items on order; the amount of funds spent and remaining must also be carefully recorded. The budget must be allocated to last throughout the entire fiscal year.

Sometimes there is a disparity between advertised costs for publications and actual costs, which should be taken into account when budgeting. This discrepancy often results from additional charges for postage, handling and shipping, inflation, or currency differences when using a foreign supplier.

Many publishers and bookstores offer discounts for libraries, or for multiple copies of items. An inquiry about possible discounts can be incorporated into order request forms.

A *standing order file* will keep those staff members who are responsible for ordering informed of the money they need to set aside for materials received automatically from publishers and distributors. A list of items received annually or biennially should also be maintained, so that money can be kept in the budget for them. Finally, orders should be placed far enough in advance of the end of the fiscal year for billing to occur before final budget figures are submitted. This will prevent budget items from being carried over to the following year.

## Conclusion

The purpose of ordering materials is to provide a well-balanced, up-to-date selection of resources and supplies, while remaining within the limits of the available budget. Designating particular members of the staff as persons responsible for this important activity ensures that it is given continuous and adequate attention. Whether the career information centre is large or small, ordering materials requires an established set of procedures, ensuring efficiency while reducing the likelihood of duplication.

## CHAPTER 6

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### ORGANIZING THE COLLECTION

Career information (like other types of information) can only be accessed and disseminated effectively if the collection is organized within a logical and comprehensive scheme. Ease and efficiency are the primary goals of collection organization and maintenance. The purpose of organization is to make information readily accessible by staff and client. This chapter is divided into four sections: *Choosing a Classification System*, *Cataloguing the Collection*, *Processing Materials* and *Storing and Maintaining the Collection*.

#### *Choosing a Classification System*

No single organization system can meet the needs of all career information centres adequately. That is why career information specialists need to examine various types of classifications in use in similar settings before choosing, adapting or combining systems for their own centre.

#### points to consider

The organization system selected for the collection depends on the following:

- ↘ *Size of the collection* If the collection is small and consists exclusively of books, organizing can be quite simple. Resources can be arranged by topic on the shelves and the shelves labeled accordingly. If the collection contains multimedia materials in a variety of formats, a different system or combination of systems is required.
- ↘ *Collection growth* Although most centres begin with a fairly modest collection, if the possibility of growth exists, the chosen classification system should be able to accommodate such growth. Changing systems can be a costly and time consuming occurrence.
- ↘ *Client Groups* When selecting the organization system for the centre, consideration should be given to client diversity. Some clients are better able to use or prefer to use a self-service approach.

- ↘ *Other Resource Centres in Organization* If the organization has a number of resource centres within a particular geographic area (such as in a large urban setting), it is advantageous, to staff and to clients, for the same classification system to be used in each centre. Using the same system makes possible the creation of an on-line catalogue directing the clients to different resources at different locations.
- ↘ *Staffing* Staff expertise often dictates the selection of the classification system used. If there is a professional librarian or information specialist on staff, the collection can be organized according to accepted library principles and practices. Due consideration should be given to the training and professional development of staff around whatever system is ultimately selected. Whatever the system, balancing the simplicity of the system with the amount of time to be allocated to staff development in its use is paramount.

### Characteristics of Classification System

The following three major features should be considered for each classification system being examined, before choosing one that will satisfy the needs of a particular centre.

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Logical arrangement | All items on a given topic should be shelved together, with related subjects grouped nearby. This encourages users to browse and explore the collection.   |
| Easy access         | A simple system encourages users, allows easy access to information and saves staff time. Most centres depend to some extent on self-service, requiring a classification that is easy for users to understand. |
| Flexibility         | The classification must be flexible and allow for the incorporation of new occupations and subjects as they emerge.  |

Some classification systems are custom-made, while others are recognized and established elsewhere. In most centres a combination of schemes is used (for example, one method can be used for occupational information and another for employer literature).

Career centres within schools (or other types of institutions) that already have a library, should consider choosing a classification system that is similar or identical to the one used by their library. The library's classification system can be modified to suit the specific needs of the career information centre. Comparing notes with other career information

specialists who have modified systems for their own needs is helpful at this stage.

### Classification Choices

There are many types of classification systems appropriate for career information centres. There are six ways of classifying resources in a career information centre: numerical, alphabetical, geographical, by academic subjects, based on interests or aptitudes by industry and colour coding.

**numerical** A numerical classification scheme organizes materials by number. Each number represents a subject in the collection. The following are examples of numerical classification systems.

#### *National Occupational Classification (NOC) / Classification nationale de professions (CNP)*

The NOC was introduced, in 1992, by Employment and Immigration Canada (now Human Resources and Skills Development Canada/Ressources humaines et du Développement des compétences Canada (HRSDC/RHDC) to replace the outdated **Canadian Classification and Dictionary of Occupations (CCDO)**. The NOC was updated and revised in 2001. This system collects and analyzes labour market information and statistics in order to reflect the effects of changes in occupations and in the world of work.

The NOC provides descriptions of over 500 occupation groups that incorporate approximately 30,000 job titles. The NOC is based on skill levels, skill types and interoccupational mobility. The NOC uses 10 occupational groups based on skill types (defined as type of work performed), each skill type further broken down into 4 skill levels (defined according to education or training requirements. There is a NOC matrix plotting the entire classification.

Detailed unit group descriptions consist of a lead statement, examples of job titles in each unit group, main duties and employment requirements (training, education, previous experience). A supplement to the NOC is the *Career Handbook*, revised edition-2003. The *Career Handbook* was developed for career counseling and exploration purposes. This supplement provides further information on the nature of each occupation in terms of aptitudes, interests, physical demands and environmental conditions.

The NOC is available in both print and electronic formats. The software includes the entire text of the print version and summary codes. In addition, CCDO-NOC mappings or comparisons are available in both the print and electronic versions. It is important to note that the NOC can only be used to a certain extent for classifying occupational literature, as there is no individual occupation subdivisions. A number of occupational titles are classed within one unit group; for example, biologists, ecologists, pharmacologists and zoologists all share the same number, 2121. Other materials in the career centre such as job search, education and training, employer directories, etc. require a different system of classification.

### ***Concordia University Classification System***

This numerical scheme, devised by Concordia University's Guidance Information Centre, is described in the *Blueprint for a Guidance Information Centre: Classification System, Classification System Index and Subject Heading Index*. Adopted by a number of Canadian career centres, it provides a means of classifying occupational literature and other types of materials, such as selfassessment and job search resources.

### ***Classification unique en information/ scolaire et professionnelle (CUISEP)***

**CUISEP** was developed under the direction of the Ministère de l'Éducation de Québec. It is an elaborate scheme, allowing for the classification of the wide diversity of subjects found in career information centres. Those seeking an organizational system in French should definitely consider this classification.

### ***The Calgary Labour Market Information Centre (LMIC) System***

The Ministry of Human Resources and Employment of Alberta delivers career and labour market information to Albertans at its LMICs that are located in various cities across the province. A unique classification system has been developed to organize the collection in the Calgary Centre. This centre's collection is multi-media and comprehensive. The system is numbered in broad class and sub-grouped into categories. The call number consists of a numerical subject code, author, association or publisher, and title. This system is modeled on the Dewey Decimal System in common use in community libraries. It was created to align with the 5 steps of the Alberta Human Resources and Development's Career Planning Model.

#### **alphabetical/ geographical**

These systems are generally used in conjunction with other schemes. The first type arranges books alphabetically by author or title; the second sorts resources by country, city or other geographical divisions. For example, materials on a given occupation can first be classified by NOC number and then arranged alphabetically within each NOC classification by author and title. A geographical and alphabetical scheme can also be used in combination, e.g. university calendars which are first arranged geographically by province and then alphabetically by name of university.

#### **by academic subjects**

Centres in academic settings sometimes arrange occupational literature by subjects offered in the curriculum. This is a useful system for helping students relate a field of study directly to occupation titles. Its disadvantage is that many occupations fall into more than one academic subject category and it can be a challenge to choose a single heading for some items.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>by interest /<br/>aptitude</b> | As well, related materials may not be located together. For this reason, the advantages and disadvantages of this classification method should be carefully considered before it is adopted. It may work quite well in a centre that focuses on only a few academic subjects.  |
| <b>by industry</b>                | <p>Classifying occupational literature by ability or aptitude is particularly useful for academic or counseling settings where aptitude or interest tests are regularly offered to clients. As with the previous method, the main disadvantage of this system is that most occupations fall into several aptitude or interest categories and require time-consuming cross-referencing to be truly accessible.</p> <p>This classification is most useful for centres whose settings are dominated by a number of key industries, e.g. trade and economic organizations and business information libraries. The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) has been developed by Statistics Canada in collaboration with the United States' Office of Management and Budget- Economic Classification Policy Committee and Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, as the standard for classifying industries. The first edition of NAICS, published in 1998, revised in 2003, replaced the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). This current system is useful to compare data of similar occupations in different industries. Some difficulty exists in classifying an occupation that can be found in many industries, e.g. accountant. Also, this system makes no allowances for classifying resources on topics such as résumé writing, education and training institutions, job search techniques, etc.</p> |
| <b>colour coding</b>              | In this method, specific colours represent different subject areas e.g. books on careers could be labeled blue with adhesive tape or coloured dots, while those on education could be labeled red. Colour coding is very easy to use independently, because the colours representing specific subjects can be seen at a glance. It is often combined with other systems. For example, within the blue career area, the NOC could be used to shelve occupational literature. However, when the collection becomes large, problems may arise around the sub-grouping within one colour or with deciding the location of resources that may include more than one subject.  |

## Summarizing Classification Systems

Since all classification systems have advantages and disadvantages, each one should be analyzed according to the requirements of the setting and the expertise of the centre's staff. Career information centres can create their own methods of categorizing materials, adopt a system used in another centre, or use a well-known system like the NOC or a simplified Dewey System. Sometimes more than one system may be combined to create the most effective system for a particular location.

Whatever system is chosen, it must be simple and user friendly, must be flexible to accommodate new additions to the collection and must have staff trained in its use. If staff assistance is not available on an ongoing basis, the most practical system is one that users can follow by themselves. Even in centres that are adequately staffed, many users prefer to browse without assistance.

## Facilitating Access

Whatever the ultimate choice of classification system, there are a number of aids that can be provided to assist clients to use the career centre effectively such as floor plans, signs, catalogues, tip sheets, guides and bibliographies.

### **floor plans**

A scale model, professionally produced floor plan can be displayed in a prominent place near the main entrance. A brief outline of the classification system can be posted or distributed to users as they enter the centre.

### **signs**

Colourful, attractive and easy to follow signs capture the attention of people as they walk into the centre. Signs need to be eye-catching in large, simple fonts that can be seen easily from a distance. They can be hung overhead (within the allowable guidelines determined by the building's fire code) or be attached to shelving or walls. If a colour-coding scheme is used, the colour of the signs should match the colour code of each section.

**tip sheets** Tip sheets or pathfinders, guides and bibliographies provide answers to frequently asked reference questions. They can be printed on standard-sized sheets, no longer than an 8 ½ x 14 double-sided page. The career information specialist or librarian can provide basic information, list helpful resources within the centre or refer clients to other community and government agencies. Frequent topics for such reference sheets include: *How to Use the Resources in the Centre, How to Research a Company, Researching Occupations, Where and How to Look for Work, Job Search and Career Planning websites, etc.*

### *Cataloguing the Collection*

Professional librarians catalogue materials to ensure the maintenance of accurate records for items in their collections. However, in many career information centres, the staff does not have time to use elaborate cataloguing techniques and the methods for cataloguing materials must be simple and practical.

It is useful for career information specialists without library training to consult professional librarians before attempting to set up catalogues. Librarians are able to provide practical advice and helpful hints on creating a catalogue. They can also make suggestions on obtaining essential supplies and equipment as well as computer software packages.

This section introduces the basic steps and decisions involved in cataloguing.

#### Basic Steps

**procedures  
manual**

Cataloguing procedures must be well defined to ensure that necessary information is provided for each new item added to the collection. The cataloguer should follow the steps defined in a “procedures manual” to ensure that all essential data is included for each item.

**shelf list** A basic catalogue of resources, or shelf list, must be established for every collection, in order to maintain it in good order. This list is a permanent record of holdings generally organized by classification number. It is an essential tool for conducting an inventory check of the collection or for preparing a bibliography on a given subject. It can be developed in written format and stored in a binder, typed onto an index card and placed into a card catalogue or entered into one of the many computer systems available (see the section on *Database Management Software for Career Centres* later in this chapter).

**standard form** No matter which format is used, a standard form must be created to record the following information for each item:

- classification number
- author
- title
- publisher's name and address
- publication date
- pagination (number of pages) multi volumes
- format e.g. print, electronic, video, CD, DVD, etc.
- Web sites
- date item was received
- distributor's name and address (if different from publisher)
- cost of item

Additional information can be included, such as the number of copies available, the series information (if applicable), the frequency of updating or revision, running time (if applicable), an annotation of the content, or whether the item should be kept on reserve.

**catalogue** The catalogue is the guide to the collection, allowing the user to search under a particular subject, to find a list of items in the collection on that subject and to locate these items in the resource centre.

The classification number and an established subject heading list are essential for accessing resources. The latter is an alphabetical listing of all the subjects contained in the collection. It includes not only occupational titles, but also specialized topics such as “résumés”, “self-assessment”, etc. Authority files for author and subject should be set up. By referring to an established list, the terminology used for cataloguing resources can be consistent. This list must be reviewed on a regular basis, to ensure that dated items are removed and new areas recognized.

The first step in cataloguing a resource is to determine its subject matter. Many resources contain more than one subject, but the one that predominates will determine the classification.

Next, a main entry must be established, as this will affect the cutter number to be assigned. The cutter number separates each title within the same classification number. At least one subject heading should be assigned to a resource title. There are instances where more than one subject heading may be necessary. All subject headings should be cross-referenced and this information added to the shelf list to be used in developing additional records for the publication. Index cards or computerized reports based on author, title or subject can then be created.

### Database Management Software for Career Centres

There are many database software packages that are capable of generating a computerized catalogue. This section examines three of those (inclusion on this list does not constitute a recommendation of the software, but rather a sampling of programs that are being used in various career information centres). Each software package focuses on a different area of data management.

*DB/Text Works* (by *Inmagic Inc*) and *askSam* are text-oriented systems, both with hypertext capabilities: the ability to link key words and phrases in one file to associated textual information in the same file or other files. *Microsoft Access* is a relational database with powerful programming capabilities.

### ask sam

As a text-oriented database management system, *askSam* allows the programming and developing of specific applications for bibliographic and reference material. It accepts data entry and access in any format, without having to know in advance how it will be used. Data can be stored in fields or in free-form style. Records can be updated and edited with built-in word processing features, and it has report generation and statistics capabilities.

*askSam* supports boolean searches (i.e. those which permit the combining of terms or keywords to make the search more specific), free-form queries and hypertext capabilities for detailed cross-referencing that is easy to execute. Data output can be routed to the screen, a printer, or a disk. There is some programming involved in setting up the system, but the initial programming steps are easy to learn and can be implemented quickly, with on-line features and good, free technical support.

### DB/Text works

*DB/Text Works* is a text database management program that supports boolean searches (see above). Searches can be restricted to a specific field or other qualifier. It has the ability to build data files and import/export ASCII text files. Its latest version has many enhanced capabilities such as exporting edit screens to the Web so that one can add records into a database directly from a Web browser. This version also allows direct ordering from a book agent or publisher. It can also accept scanned images to be part of the record. The Web version allows the creation of an online catalogue. It hyperlinks directly to the university, association, company or organization Web site. *DB/Text Works* is popular among small libraries and is very user friendly. *DB/Text Works* can generate customized reports by subject, author, title, etc. The *InMagic Inc.* company offers technical support on an annual subscription basis or on a need to service basis.

### microsoft access

This easy-to-use relational database management system remains quite popular, due to its flexibility and price. It supports hyperlinks and can be used for circulation, cataloguing, ordering, etc. As part of the *Microsoft Office* package, it can also be used for general office management.

When selecting a software package for the centre, price, hardware restrictions and staff training needs must be taken into consideration (refer to Chapter 3 for more information on this process).

In making decisions about catalogues, career information specialists must be realistic about staff time. For instance, it may not be worthwhile to catalogue vertical file items that are updated annually. Other items for which records are not essential include academic calendars, company literature and financial aid information. In most cases, keeping only minimal records for such items is the most expedient.

When new resources arrive, it benefits users to get these items on the shelves as soon as possible. Large backlogs of material to catalogue should not be allowed to accumulate. If this does happen, the centre's cataloguing goals and procedures should be re-evaluated.

### *Processing Materials*

After a publication has been classified and catalogued, it must be physically prepared (labeled, stamped, etc.) before it is shelved in the collection. The procedure used for processing items depends on their format; a pamphlet, for example, is treated differently from a book. The following section offers suggestions for the physical preparation of books, pamphlets, audiovisual materials (tapes, CD's, DVD's, software, etc.) periodicals and magazines.

#### **books**

- Label the book with the classification number as previously described in this chapter under "Basic Steps".
- Stamp the book (on the cover and several inside pages) to identify it as belonging to the centre and to discourage theft. If materials cannot be borrowed, they can be stamped "REFERENCE ONLY" or "DO NOT REMOVE FROM..."
- Stamp or label with the current date. Knowing the date an item was acquired can be helpful when decisions are made about weeding the collection.

- If a book can be borrowed, prepare it for circulation. Apply book pocket, book card and date due slip (if needed). Date due slips, attached to books, indicate to users when books must be returned (see Ch. 8, - *To Lend or Not to Lend*).
  - To protect the cover, plastic sheets can be applied to the jackets of most hard cover books. Clear plastic tape, available in different sizes, can be used to reinforce spines and corners of popular paperbacks. Only heavily used materials need to be protected. Thick paperbacks, not available in hard cover, and loose-leaf binders may need to be hardbound. Information regarding bindery services can be obtained at local libraries or the yellow pages of phone books.
- pamphlets**
- Label with classification or identification number, indicating the location for shelving items. Labels should be attached to the same spot on all pamphlets (e.g. the top left-hand corner), making it easy to know where to look for them.
  - Stamp with property and reference stamps, as is done for books. If the pamphlet has a glossy finish that does not retain ink, apply and stamp an adhesive label.
  - Clearly indicate the date the item was received. Often items are replaced on the basis of publication or acquisition dates and it is helpful if the acquisition date appears on the front cover of a pamphlet.
  - Label the case with the classification number.
- audiovisual materials**
- Type two labels with the title, date and length of presentation. Affix one label onto the case, the other directly onto the audio or videotape, CD or DVD.
  - Mark label with property stamp and the reminder to “please rewind”(if applicable).
- periodicals and magazines**
- Records of periodicals, magazines or newspapers can be kept on vertical files, index cards or an automated system. New issues should be recorded as they arrive. If issues are missed, immediate follow-up with the source of that item is necessary.

- Stamp with the centre's property and date stamps, as well as marking for circulating or reference.
- Attach special heavy-duty plastic folders to the most recent issues of magazines to protect them if they are likely to receive frequent usage. These folders can be reused as needed.

## *Storing and Maintaining the Collection*

### Storage

The collection should be stored in an attractive and accessible manner, encouraging people to use the centre. Methods used for storing materials should not damage them as they are shelved and re-shelved. Storage boxes should be sturdy enough to stand up to daily wear and tear.

Storing methods appropriate for one type of format may be quite inappropriate for another. For example, books lend themselves well to being shelved upright side by side, but pamphlets stored in this manner are easily torn. Pamphlets can be inserted in three-ring binders to protect their covers, or arranged by subject in filing cabinets, using hanging files. They can also be stored in various types of pamphlet boxes. Audiovisual materials and CD and DVD jackets need to be displayed on special racks. The actual audiocassettes, videotapes, computer disks, CD's and DVDs should be stored in special cabinets away from magnetic fields that can cause erasure. Periodicals, magazines and newspapers can be displayed on sloped shelves or racks. For some of the more costly audiovisual materials, it may be prudent to have users provide ID prior to borrowing these items. Some resource centres are fortunate enough to have an adjoining room equipped with a TV, VCR and computer so that clients may view/use resources right within the centre.

Ideas on storing pamphlets, audiovisual materials and other formats can be readily obtained from library supply catalogues.

Making sure that users can find materials is an important part of storing them effectively. Filing cabinets, pamphlet boxes and shelving should be labeled clearly, so that they can be seen from a distance and easily read. Users can then readily recognize the specific location of desired resources within the centre.

### Maintenance

Tables have to be cleared of materials and shelves straightened on a continuous basis, as people use the centre. When borrowed books are returned, they are to be re-shelved as soon as possible. Mending and weeding the collection should be the task of designated staff. The rest of this chapter is devoted to these topics.

#### **keeping the collection in order**

The following suggestions are intended to help career resource co-ordinators structure the work of keeping the collection in order. Establishing a protocol for these activities also indicates to both staff and users the serious nature of maintaining order.

In their attempts to be helpful, many users re-shelve materials in the wrong order. These items are then lost to others until located again by staff. It may be better to encourage users not to re-shelve resources. One way to do this is to post signs stating this request; another is to provide book trolleys or boxes where materials can be placed after use. However, some centres prefer that users re-shelve items; career information specialists must decide which is the best method for their setting.

A practical approach is to assign staff regular shelf-reading duties. Files, shelves and pamphlet boxes should be checked on a continuous basis to make sure that the materials are in order. Shelf-reading is not only essential for keeping resources in order, it is also an excellent way for staff to keep up-to-date with the collection, while monitoring it for missing items. An inventory of the entire collection using the shelf list should be completed once a year. This may be done in conjunction with weeding (see section later in this chapter).

A member of the staff needs to be in charge of cleaning up. This person is responsible for ensuring that materials are re-shelved, tables are kept clear and books are arranged neatly in their place.

Cleaning up should not be postponed until the end of the day, since by then the centre may be in quite a state of disarray. When staff perform these duties at regular intervals during the day, reference staff and users are able to locate the materials they need.

### **mending**

Depending on how heavily materials are used, they will periodically need mending. Book labels become detached, pages torn, covers ripped and spines unglued. If covers are allowed to become completely detached from books, pages may get lost and the damage rendered irreparable. Keeping materials in good repair is very important and staff should examine and repair items whenever they handle them (during circulation, reference duties and shelf-reading).

Most minor repairs, such as mending torn pages and replacing labels, can be done in the centre. Career information specialists may wish to visit local libraries to see how they handle these tasks, receive suggestions of necessary materials and tools and obtain a list of names of suppliers for special tapes and glues. When necessary, bookbinders can rebind books with detached or damaged covers and perform major repairs.

### **weeding**

“Weeding” is library terminology for systematically checking certain areas of the collection to determine what needs to be withdrawn, updated or replaced. It involves evaluating materials for currency, accuracy and physical condition.

It is of particular importance in career information centres to keep the information current. It may be easiest to schedule a weeding process for set times during the year. For example, occupational literature can be weeded at the same time that pamphlets are ordered, or during slower periods.

Occasionally staff may hesitate to discard a publication, in case it might be useful in the future. The following guidelines are designed to assist in making decisions about keeping or withdrawing an item:

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Verify the copyright date             | If this date has been omitted, check the acquisition date stamp to determine when it was received.  |
| Review the content                    | Are facts and figures presented which may be misleading to users? If so, discard it. How is the subject treated by the author? Does it display a particular bias? Review other materials in the centre on the same topic. Do they cover the subject more adequately? If this is the only book on the topic, or the most recent one in the collection, it should probably be kept. |
| Check the edition date                | Is this the most recent edition of this publication? Contact publishers to verify this information.   |
| Is this a popular subject?            | If discarding the item means that users will not be able to find anything on the subject when they need it, consider keeping it.  |
| Examine the book's physical condition | Withdraw it, if it is beyond repair. If the item has been used regularly and is still in print, a replacement copy should be ordered.   |
| Check the circulation record          | How many times has it circulated? Think carefully about discarding items that are frequently borrowed by users.   |

### *Conclusion*

A system for classifying, cataloguing, processing and maintaining the collection must be chosen for every career information centre. Because classifying and cataloguing can be very labour-intensive, career information specialists need to spend time researching these topics and visiting other centres to compare systems. Most importantly, before choosing a classification system, they must analyze their particular situations thoroughly, in order to be certain that the system implemented in their centre will promote the effective delivery of career information.

## CHAPTER 7

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### HELPING THE USER

The reference service in the career information centre is the user's link to career information. This chapter outlines the aspects and importance of this service and presents effective methods for handling user inquiries. Two sample reference interviews are also presented, offering practical demonstrations of important reference principles. The chapter is composed of four sections: *Understanding the User*, *The Nature of Inquiries*, *Community Resources* and *User Interviews*.

#### *Understanding the User*

Career information specialists have similar and interconnected functions with counsellors and librarians. While counsellors help clients become independent by teaching them how to make decisions, librarians teach users to master research, in order to discover answers independently to questions that arise. The librarian's reference encounter, the counsellor's helping interview and the career information specialist's initial contact with the user have much in common. During all of these meetings, there is an attempt to get to know the client and to establish meaningful rapport.

The career information specialist's combination of listening and coaching skills and subject expertise on careers can assist clients to define their career goals. In this process, the career information specialist can help clients to identify their interests, accumulated skills, abilities and achievements and then to make the connection to the steps necessary to attain these career goals.

In this process, the career information specialist should be a resource that clients want to access on a regular basis. It is, therefore, crucial to provide staff who have the skills and knowledge to provide superior service.

Clients need to be made aware of information sources appropriate for their career decision-making. The career information specialist's philosophy of service should be one of consistently adding value to the client's search by passing on the knowledge and the resources the client needs to make good career decisions.

To be successful in helping the centre's users, career information specialists must have a clear understanding of the stages of career development, as well as be able to recognize different types of users. They must actively listen, guard against assuming the client's needs and utilize probing questions to determine specifically what information the client does need. Patience, empathy and good communication skills are therefore essential qualities for this work.

For the purpose of understanding their career needs, clients can be categorized according to their perceived stage of career development. The person seeking help or information may be a first-career client, a client in transition, a special needs client or an information seeker. A middle-aged woman, returning to the workforce after a ten-year absence, brings with her certain expectations regarding her future. She may need materials to encourage her to build on her experiences and abilities. She may also need to identify any skill gaps present and locate the resources available to help her close that gap, thus enhancing her employability. On the other hand, users planning their first careers have very different expectations and needs.

Skillful career information specialists guide users in clarifying their needs. They need to listen to the client with the intent to understand the client's real needs (as opposed to perceived needs). They listen for the client's point of view and not with the intent to control the outcome. The result should be that the client sees the career information specialist as fully understanding where he/she is in the career development process.

The skills of clarifying, paraphrasing, summarizing and questioning for understanding are valuable tools for demonstrating to clients that they have been heard and understood. Consistent use of these skills goes a long way toward making the clients feel comfortable with the career centre personnel and confident of the information they are receiving.

Career information specialists should keep in mind that what clients present might be quite different from what they actually need. In some instances, users may not possess the appropriate subject knowledge or language skills needed to formulate what they really want. At times, they require encouragement to explain their concerns adequately. For example, a user who asks for the location of Canadian academic calendars may really be looking for a list of universities that offer undergraduate programs in geography. Unaware that directories exist for finding educational programs by field, this person may spend time searching through all the calendars to find this information- time that could be more efficiently spent.

Sometimes individuals find it difficult to approach career information specialists. They may hesitate to interrupt staff who are busy at their work, or may just feel awkward asking a stranger for help. A friendly environment, where they can research materials independently, can put these users at ease and ultimately enable them to approach the reference specialist for questions with which they need help.

### *The Nature of Inquiries*

Career information reference questions vary enormously in type and in complexity. One individual may ask for the location of local computer classes while another may request a list of companies that hire graphic artists. The pattern of inquiries depends on the client population. The bulk of queries in some centres may concern basic information about the job search, while in others it may focus on a topic as complex and diverse as researching occupations.

In order to be able to respond adequately to complex questions, the centre's information staff must have detailed knowledge of reference materials, Internet resources and community resources. The nature of these inquiries also demands that staff should be skilled in researching and utilizing the centre's holdings and the Internet. Because of the vast amount of career information available on the Internet, good time management skills are necessary when identifying reference sources and selecting appropriate sites for clients to research. The career information specialist should be, on a regular basis, actively searching out relevant Internet sites for the client base frequenting the centre. Users should, of course, always be given the most current material available on their topic.

### *Community Resources*

An important aspect of career information specialists is their ability to refer users to other sources of information, when their centre does not have the required material. Under those circumstances, alternative resources in the community, the province and the country must be kept in mind. Such resources may include:

- government departments
- chambers of commerce
- consulates
- community agencies
- colleges and universities
- employment agencies
- résumé services
- bookstores.

#### **resources in academic and public libraries**

Public, University, College and other libraries can be especially useful in providing reference information. These institutions contain a wealth of books and periodicals helpful for those engaged in career and educational planning. Their business sections also contain a wide variety of items suitable for clients who want to research employers. In examining the collections of other libraries, career information specialists should look for the following items:

- annual reports of corporations & institutions
- city and regional business directories
- social service agency directories
- periodicals, including newspapers, magazines, and their indexes
- pamphlets on personal development topics
- books on occupations
- computers with Internet access or databases suitable for career planning, job search, etc.
- audiovisual materials
- scholarship and bursary information
- non-Canadian business & academic directories.

Other organizations in the community may also be able to provide valuable information. Consulates and embassies often have useful materials for students who want to study abroad. Chambers of Commerce provide details on local businesses and industries that might be valuable for job hunters. Small Business Bureaus and Business programs at universities might give assistance to clients who want to set up their own businesses.

Local agencies or institutions that present career-related workshops or offer continuing education programs on career-related topics should be noted. There may also be similar programs available through local social service agencies.

It is essential for career information specialists to keep up-to-date with what is happening in the community. They need to know about the local economy, the rate of unemployment and the types of training available in their area. They should be familiar with agencies that provide job hunting programs and with the types of employment opportunities available.

### *Sample User Interviews*

The following interviews are presented to demonstrate certain reference techniques. After paraphrasing the initial question, the career information specialist should determine precisely what the person wants to know by asking the kind of open-ended questions that motivate people to elaborate.

#### INTERVIEW #1

##### **Limited Materials in the Career Information Centre**

**SETTING:** the career centre in a high school

**CAST:** Sue (Student), John (Staff)

**Sue:** I'm looking for information on sports medicine.

**John:** I see. What kind of information relating to sports medicine are you looking for?

*(Paraphrases the student's query to reassure her and let her know she has been understood.)*

**Sue:** Well, recently I met someone in the field. It sounded like something I'd enjoy. I just want to know more about it.

*(Client gradually clarifies why information is needed and what she is seeking.)*

**John:** I have a pamphlet in our collection that will introduce you to this field. Perhaps you know that it's a broad area covering many occupations such as athletic therapist, physiotherapist and sports physician. What makes you think you would like this particular field of work?

*(Encourages student to elaborate.)*

**Sue:** I really love sports and science. I have done some reading and some research on the Internet already and I met a woman working as a physiotherapist and she gave me a few pamphlets. I'm really looking for more detailed information.

*(Student feels more relaxed and expands on the type of information she is seeking.)*

**John:** I see. Well, there are several possibilities. We have only two pamphlets on the subject of sports medicine in the Career Information Centre, but the school library has a book about it, entitled **Careers in Sports and Sports Medicine**. Ask the librarian to show you how to find it. There should be other similar items there as well. Also, ask to be shown how to find periodical articles on the field. You might take a look at the **Journal of Sports Medicine**. Magazine articles are really useful for current information. And while you're there, ask the librarian to show you how to find other titles in **Books in Print**. It lists books by subject. I would expect it to include books on your topic. If you find some that you want to explore, you can request them through the public library's inter-library loan department, or order them through a local bookstore. Also, here are two Internet sites that you can take a look at for further information.

*(Knowing the limitations of the career information centre's collection, John refers Sue to the local library that is close by. There is a good chance the student will pursue this information. John gives her two further sources of information, the local library and the Internet. He is careful not to give her too much information at once, but her body language indicates that she is ready for more.)*

**Sue:** I see. That's good to know. But I think I'd really like to talk to more people in the field. There's nothing like seeing how people feel about their work.

*(This student knows the value of interviewing people in an occupation.)*

**John:** You're so right! It is important to talk to people in the field. There are various local societies for occupations in sports medicine that may be able to help you track down people in the city. **Associations Canada or The Directory of Associations in Canada** lists more than one sports medicine association. Perhaps these groups can provide you with membership lists to enable you to find local contacts. Check to see if these organizations plan to sponsor any regional conventions where you might meet members. And request information on any literature they publish on job prospects and training. Once you have discovered some local contacts, you could consider calling one of them to arrange an information interview.

*(John recognizes that he has established a good rapport with Sue. Sensing that she is receptive to more than a brief response, he provides information on the value of associations as well as on locating people in the field.)*

**Sue:** This has been so helpful. May I see that directory of associations? Then I think I'll go right over to the library and have a look at the book you mentioned.

**John:** That sounds like a good starting point. By the way, if you feel the need for more information on how to choose an occupation, we have some very good books on career planning. In fact, next week one of our counsellors is offering a workshop on career planning that might be of interest to you.

*(John wants to make sure she is aware there are books in the collection on career planning. It might have been useful for him to introduce this earlier into their conversation to determine how much thought she has given to her future.)*

**Sue:** Thank you very, very much. I will keep that in mind. And you'll certainly see me again!

## INTERVIEW #2

### **Ranking Universities**

**SETTING:** the career centre in a public library

**CAST:** Frank (Client), Linda (Librarian)

**Frank:** I'm looking for a list of the best schools for studying psychology.

**Linda:** You want me to help you find information on the top schools in the field?

*(Simply paraphrases inquiry. Does not add anything more to what the client has presented.)*

**Frank:** That's right. I want to pursue a Ph.D. degree in Canada but I don't want to go to just any school.

*(Defines geographical scope of question.)*

**Linda:** Well, that's certainly understandable. Do you have a particular specialization in mind?

**Frank:** Oh yes. I plan to go into clinical psychology.

**Linda:** A recent article in the **Canadian Psychological Review** evaluated psychology departments. Perhaps we can locate it through an index to periodicals.

**Frank:** That sounds fine. By the way, how are such evaluations actually arrived at?

**Linda:** Books and periodicals that rank schools use a variety of criteria to rank them, such as quality of faculty (which often means those with Ph.D.s), library resources, research facilities and budget allocations.

**Frank:** I didn't realize that. Could I investigate some of that information on my own using the Internet?

**Linda:** Yes, in fact, it will be to your advantage to research this topic. College or university calendars are good sources for details on programs. There are directories that indicate the universities that offer these programs. Or, you can go directly to the university Web site where there are links to further information as well as a link enabling you to make direct contact with university personnel. You should certainly consider contacting a national psychological association and talking to faculty at our local university to see what they know about the reputations of various schools.

**Frank:** That makes sense. Can we find out more about research being undertaken at these institutions?

**Linda:** We'll check directories of research to see if we can find out what is happening in this regard and here is a pertinent Web site to have a look at too.

**Frank:** It looks like I might be spending some time here today.

**Linda:** Yes. Evaluating a school is not a simple matter. Now, perhaps we should start by finding a list of schools in Canada that offer Ph.D. programs in psychology.

## *Conclusion*

This chapter has underscored the importance of developing a quality reference service through a valid and adequate collection of resources and knowledgeable staff. Reference work requires skill and training. Career information specialists must be prepared for this work, by acquiring in depth knowledge of resources and their location in the centre or outside, in the community and on the Internet. They need to develop a balanced and current resource collection and acquire the techniques involved in handling enquiries in a tactful and informative manner.

“Front line” reference staff discover much about user needs and should use this information to provide adequate resources for clients. For instance, if there is a lack of material in the collection on a particular subject (e.g. behaviour based interviewing) this should be conveyed to the staff members who do the ordering for the centre. If the career information specialist learns that a sizeable group wants help in preparing résumés, a workshop on résumé writing can be provided. Good communication between those handling user enquiries and those making decisions regarding services is absolutely essential.

The career information specialist should get regular and systematic feedback from users on their thoughts about the centre and how the service could be improved. Surveys can be a useful tool, enabling users to express their opinions and offer suggestions for improving the quality and the functioning of the career centre.

## CHAPTER 8

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### TO LEND OR NOT TO LEND

As the centre's plans begin to take shape and opening day draws near, career information specialists must decide whether or not to lend out materials. There are a number of issues to consider in this process, which are addressed in this chapter under five sections: **Weighing the Pros and Cons**, **Determining What Can Be Borrowed**, **Establishing a Circulation Policy**, **Creating a Simple Circulation System**, and **Regarding Overdues, Fines, Loss and Theft**.

#### *Weighing the Pros and Cons*

Before deciding whether to allow books to circulate, the pros and cons of lending materials should be examined in the context of user needs and expectations. Managers need to take into consideration the public relations aspects of lending and other benefits to the centre. They must also determine whether staff members have time for circulation routines and tasks and whether the budget will allow for the loss and damage that will occur. The demands of circulation may not be feasible in terms of the centre's resources. The following list of pros and cons will assist career information specialists in coming to their own conclusions on this subject.

#### PROS

- Lending materials creates good public relations. Library users are accustomed to taking materials home. If the career information specialist decides not to offer this service, staff must be prepared to encounter disgruntled clients. The availability of appropriate quiet reading space must also be considered. If providing an adequate amount of seating is a problem for the centre and a 'no lending' policy is adopted, clients may be discouraged from using the centre.
- Borrowing allows users time to read items at a leisurely pace. Some publications simply cannot be read in one or two sittings and it is more practical and convenient for readers to take such materials home for a week or two.
- Younger users, such as those in high school, may want to discuss books with their parents, or others. This gives them time to reflect upon occupational and educational choices.
- Allowing materials to be borrowed can discourage theft. Staff must face the unpleasant fact that some users steal items that they are not allowed to take out. These clients may be discouraged from stealing items, if they can borrow them.
- Circulation statistics can be employed for promoting and developing the centre. They indicate how heavily it is used and may assist in justifying budgetary and other requests.
- Loan records show which books and subject areas are in greatest demand. This information helps staff make decisions on whether to withdraw, replace or order multiple copies of items.

- Some materials may be available only in a format that is not supported by the technology available in the career centre. If the centre has acquired such items and is unable to provide equipment to view or access them, it makes sense to allow users to borrow them to view elsewhere.

### CONS

- Checking books in and out of the centre, maintaining circulation files and shelving material are very time consuming tasks. If staff is limited, this may not be feasible.
- Overdues and lost items can cause problems for the staff. Sending overdue notices and telephoning users for late items takes time, and staff must endure occasional disputes with users who return books late or damaged.
- When books are checked out, they are unavailable to anyone else until they are returned. If the collection is small, lending may prevent the centre from having materials on hand when needed and from providing an adequate reference service. Adopting a lending policy must include the cost of supplying multiple copies of frequently used resources and replacing those that are not returned. This could have a major impact on a limited budget.

### *Determining What Can Be Borrowed*

There are many arguments that can be made for lending or circulating the centre's materials. However, centres that are short of staff may not have time for checking out items and keeping track of them. Consequently, they may settle on circulating materials in selective areas of their collections, or they may decide not to lend at all.

In career centres where materials do circulate, career information specialists may choose to keep some items permanently in the centre. Materials which can be borrowed belong to the circulating collection. Those that must be used in the centre belong to the reference collection. Some of these are kept in a restricted area (even under lock and key) on reserve. Users must ask for them, often leaving personal identification, which can be picked up when the material is returned.

Reference materials include items intended to provide specific facts or figures, rather than be read cover to cover. Some typical reference books are almanacs, encyclopedias and dictionaries. Since these publications are used very frequently, sometimes daily, it is important to make them available at all times. The following items could be included in the reference category: dictionaries of occupations, academic calendars, educational program directories, industrial directories and encyclopedias of careers. Since many of these publications are updated annually, the decision may be to circulate the previous years' directory and keep the current issue in the reference collection.

There are other types of materials that might also be designated as “reference”. In certain centres, cost alone might determine whether certain items can be borrowed. Some directories are so costly that career information specialists cannot take chances on losing them. Format may also determine whether an item can circulate. Books may be loaned, but not the more delicate pamphlets, which could be easily lost or destroyed.

It is advisable to label selected materials “reference”, simply to ensure that all items on a particular subject are not checked out at any one time. In an employment section, for example, one might reserve one or two résumé books for use in the library. This will enable users to have access to items on these subjects at all times and staff to have materials on hand to deal with user inquiries. A second copy of some popular publications could be ordered to keep as “reference”.

As mentioned earlier, some publications are not intended for reading in a single sitting. They need to be studied in more depth. Among these items are materials in the following categories:

- personal development
- study skills
- occupation descriptions
- career planning
- job hunting.

At least some books on these subjects should be allowed to circulate, though whenever items go out, there is always the possibility that they may not be returned or may be damaged. Damage most often occurs with personal development books that rely heavily on worksheets or quizzes. A label can be affixed to the front cover of a book reminding users not to write in the book. Many of the current resources in the career information centre can be borrowed from the local public library. Clients should be made aware of this and encouraged to use this valuable public resource.

### *Establishing A Circulation Policy*

If materials are allowed to circulate, a circulation policy must be developed. This policy includes rules regarding loan periods, renewals and reserves, as well as the definition of the client group that is allowed to borrow the centre’s resources. The purpose of establishing a policy is to guarantee that all users have a fair chance to borrow the books and to avoid confusion and frustration for both staff and users. A policy also helps to ensure that materials are returned to the centre in a timely manner.

This policy should be put in writing in case verification is required. While the content and format of the circulation policy varies from centre to centre, most policies answer the following types of questions:

- Who can borrow material from the centre?
- How are authorized borrowers identified? (i.e. a borrower's card, student identification, driver's license)
- How long is the loan period?
- Does the loan period vary for different subjects or formats?
- How many items may be borrowed at one time?
- Are borrowers limited to a certain number of items in any single subject area?
- Can borrowers renew items on loan for an additional time period?
- Are users allowed to reserve materials, so that returned items are put aside for them?
- Can items be renewed or reserved by telephone or Internet?
- Do lending rules differ for staff within the parent organization, for the public, or for students?

Guidelines should be provided for dealing with those who dispute the circulation rules. Unhappy borrowers need to be informed that the rules were created in the interest of fairness to all users. Staff must be made aware of the importance of being empathetic and treating these encounters diplomatically.

### *Creating A Simple Circulation System*

Before allowing materials to circulate, procedures must be established for checking out materials and for keeping track of reserves and overdue items. A variety of circulation systems are employed in libraries. Before implementing one, consider visiting a local public library and asking for access to the latest library literature on the various types of circulation systems. Because the volume of circulating materials is not large in most career information centres, these procedures are best kept as simple as possible. That is why a manual method is more likely to be chosen than an automated one. However, software does exist that is designed especially for the small library and may prove a cost-effective alternative. Partnership opportunities may be available with libraries that exist in the career centre's parent institution. The automated system, while labour intensive to set up, will, in the long run, result in reduced staff time to operate.

Whichever type of system is chosen, it must be one that is capable of providing records of the following:

- all items currently out on loan
- overdue items (items that are late)
- reserves (items that have been requested by users but are currently on loan)

The two manual systems discussed in this section are both based on the use of a small 3" x 5" file box to keep a record of materials on loan. The box contains divider cards numbered to represent the days of the current month. The two systems are very similar; however, one uses a borrower's card while the other does not.

## *SYSTEM #1 (Without Borrower's Card)*

### checking out materials

When users want to borrow materials, a transaction slip is completed containing spaces for the borrower's name, address, telephone number and the title of the resource. The due date is recorded on the top of the transaction slip, which is placed in the loan file under the date due. The due date is also stamped on a slip attached to the item being borrowed, for the user's information. When the resource is returned, the transaction slip is withdrawn from the loan file and destroyed; the resource is then returned to its place in the centre.

### overdues

In this system it is easy to handle overdues and reserves. Overdue items can be located under the appropriate dates in the file box. (For more information on handling overdues see the next section in this chapter.)

### renewals

To renew materials, the transaction slip is pulled from the box and the due date is changed; this is noted both on the transaction slip and on the slip attached to the item. This procedure can also be completed by telephone, although the user must be reminded to change the date on the item.

### reserves

Reserves are somewhat more laborious. To reserve an item, the transaction slip of the requested item must be located; this usually means a check through the entire loan file, since slips are accessible by due date, not by title. Once the slip is found, "On Reserve" is written at the top of the slip, with the requester's name and telephone number on the back. When the item is returned, it is easy to see that someone is waiting for it. This person can then be telephoned and informed that the resource is now available.

## *SYSTEM #2 (With Borrower's Card)*

### checking out materials

The second system makes it easier for staff to check out materials and might be preferred in a centre where there are many regular borrowers. This method involves issuing each authorized user a card containing the individual's name, address and telephone number, along with a unique number assigned to each borrower. Borrowers must produce this card every time they wish to

take resources home. Two duplicates of this card are kept for library records, one filed by number and the other filed elsewhere by name. This provides the centre with a permanent record of all borrowers. The career information specialist must be conscious of protecting the privacy of the borrower's personal information protected so as to comply with current privacy legislation.

In this system, a due date slip and a resource pocket are attached to the resource. A removable card, containing the resource's title, author and classification number, is placed in the pocket. When a borrower wishes to check out an item, the card is removed from the pocket. The due date and the borrower's card number are recorded or stamped on the card and the due date slip is stamped. The card is filed in the loan file box under the due date. Checking out materials is faster with this system than with *System #1*, because the borrower's name, address and telephone number do not need to be entered on a transaction slip; all staff have to do is fill in the borrower's card number. However, if it is one-time borrowers who mostly use the centre, there is no significant timesaving.

When an item is returned, a staff member checks the recorded due date and pulls the appropriate card from that date in the loan file. The card is returned to the resource pocket and the item is ready for re-shelving.

**overdues  
reserves &  
renewals**

Reserves and renewals are handled in the same way as with *System #1*. This is true for overdues as well, except for the fact that they require cross checking of the borrower's card number in the centre's duplicate card file, to determine the name and address of the tardy borrower.

**Regarding Overdues, Fines, Loss and Theft**

**overdues**

An overdue item is one that is not returned by the due date. When a circulation system is implemented, a method of handling overdues must be determined as well. Efforts can be made to collect items that are late, or staff can be instructed to ignore them. In certain settings, it may be argued that the time and frustration spent retrieving late items is clearly not worthwhile.

One of the first decisions to make is the amount of time that should elapse before tardy users are contacted. Since it is time-consuming to telephone users and to send overdue notices, it might be expedient to allow one or two weeks to elapse. Overdue items often show up during this period and waiting may save work.

Borrowers can be notified that items are overdue either by telephone or by mail, or a combination of the two. For example, borrowers may be telephoned after items are three weeks late, followed a week later with a letter or an overdue notice. It is much more efficient to use a postcard or form letter, than to create correspondence separately for each borrower.

#### **finer**

Many centres charge fines for overdues to discourage users from keeping resources for a long time. While this may deter some people, with others it makes no difference as long as the fine is not too large. There are users who keep items as long as they like: either they pay the fines or surreptitiously avoid them, perhaps by returning resources after-hours in a drop-off slot. It is usually not easy to collect fines from this type of user. There are also users who simply do not return materials at all. Recovering the cost of items from this type of user is no easy task. Consideration must be given as to how much time and effort will be invested in recovering these funds.

A policy should be developed to deal with users who continually abuse the lending policy of the centre. The denial of further borrowing privileges is a consequence frequently employed.

Fines may be implemented to encourage users to return items on time, as well as to generate revenue for the centre. Once the decision to collect fines has been made, a routine for handling them must be established. This includes an accounting system for keeping track of the money collected and some provision for security.

## loss and theft

Materials disappear from the collection either through loss or theft. If they are lost, the cost can be recovered from borrowers and the items reordered. When users are charged for lost books, they can be expected to pay the original price of the item, or a standard default lost book charge. Charging the borrower for the replacement cost may not always be applicable, specifically, if the lost title is an older one and there is no intention of replacing it.

Theft is a more serious problem. Weeks or months may pass by the time the loss of an item is discovered. While it can be frustrating, the fear of theft cannot be allowed to become so dominant that everything is kept locked up. This defeats the purpose of making information accessible to users. However, some measures can be taken to guard against theft.

There are two prevalent means of controlling theft in libraries. One method involves the use of staff to patrol the centre, or to station themselves at exits to check patrons as they come in or leave the area. There are centres where users are not allowed to enter with coats, briefcases or packages, but must leave all such items in a cloakroom. In other centres, users are asked to open all bags as they leave, to demonstrate that no items are being stolen. However, these methods of preventing theft can be very costly in terms of staff time and good public relations.

The other method of controlling theft involves the use of an electronic security system. In one model, magnetic tapes or metal plates inserted into items trigger alarms at library exits. These systems require staff time to insert tapes or plates. Even then they are by no means foolproof, as determined thieves are adept at finding ways to remove plates. This means of control is fairly expensive; one must decide whether the cost of the system will be less than the cost of stolen items.

Because most centres do not have the resources to employ expensive electronic systems or to hire staff for security purposes, the following, more modest steps for inhibiting theft may be considered:

- Arrange the centre so that the information desk or staff workstation is near the main exit. This may dissuade potential thieves.
- Buy or rent a photocopying machine, or permit users to take materials out long enough to copy them elsewhere. If users can duplicate needed information cheaply and easily, they may be less tempted to steal materials.
- Consider placing very expensive items, or those that tend to disappear, in a restricted area on reserve. To consult these, users must request them. (Reference sheets or book dummies - wooden blocks - placed on the shelves can direct users to request these from the career information specialist.) Having books on reserve gives staff some control. They can, for example, ask for identification before signing out materials.
- Bags, briefcases and overcoats can be used to hide stolen items. Request that users leave these outside the centre.

### *Conclusion*

If the decision is made to allow users to borrow materials, clear policies and appropriate staff training will facilitate the circulation of the collection and interaction with borrowers.

Clients are often reluctant to ask for assistance when using the career information centre. Their only contact may be with the staff person who checks out materials for them. That is why it is critical for staff members who handle circulation duties to be courteous and knowledgeable about the centre. They may make the difference between a positive or negative impression of the service. Not only must staff master circulation rules, they should also be capable of using good judgement and flexibility in enforcing them. Users should be dealt with respectfully, tactfully and pleasantly in all situations. Clients who are impressed by staff during circulation encounters are more likely to become regular users of the centre.

## CHAPTER 9

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### MARKETING THE CAREER INFORMATION CENTRE

The success of a career information centre cannot be left to chance. Good service is not always a guarantee that it will attract the attention of the community. The human and material resources invested in a centre are wasted if the user group is not aware of what is available there.

Marketing the centre involves more than publicizing its services. The key to its success is to discover which marketing tools are most effective for a particular environment and to ensure that these tools are used in the most appropriate manner. This chapter will discuss several methods of *Creating Awareness of Your Centre*, such as *favourable first impressions*, *multimedia resources*, *internal and external marketing* and *networking*.

#### *Creating Awareness of Your Centre*

The importance of first impressions cannot be overemphasized, as they are powerful and often unchangeable. Therefore, careful consideration must be given to the ways in which the centre can make the most favourable impact upon potential users. A professional-quality centre with current information and an attractive, user-friendly environment is the best marketing strategy. Users who find it helpful will recommend it to their network of contacts. Word-of-mouth is an excellent means of free promotion.

#### creating multimedia resources

Plans should include both internal and external marketing strategies. Certain methods are ideal for helping users understand what the centre has to offer and where to find it. Other marketing efforts are designed to inform the community about the centre's programs and services.

All the materials devised for marketing the centre should strike a balance between aesthetics and practicality to ensure that they will be both informative and appealing to the user group. Contracting the services of a desktop publishing company can be quite expensive, but there are many excellent and easy-to-learn desktop publishing programs that staff members can use to create their own in-house materials. **Microsoft Office**, **Microsoft Publisher**, **Microsoft Powerpoint**, **Adobe Paintshop**, **CorelDraw** and **WordPerfect** are examples of the many programs having this capability and available in a wide range of prices.

## internal marketing

The marketing approach used for a particular centre is largely dependent on how the user group is understood. Receiving feedback from users, as well as from people who aren't familiar with the service can be informative and helpful, resulting in a refreshing variety of suggestions and ideas.

Displays, bulletin boards, posters and signage are tools that can be used to make career information centres more informative and visually appealing. Themes, current issues and hot topics are excellent focal points for displays and bulletin boards. Post-secondary charts, job postings, Internet sites and job search tactics are important pieces of information that are more likely to be used when displayed in an attractive manner. Laminating posters and signage is well worth the minimal cost involved, as otherwise they become easily damaged over time.

Many commercial organizations and professional associations produce publicity materials. Some of these specialize in subjects related to career and educational planning and provide other attractive items, both informative and humorous, that can stand-alone or be part of a display. These range from posters clarifying definitions for common words like *job*, *occupation* and *career*, to those listing full details about various occupations.

Areas of interest within the centre should be clearly divided to make them user-friendly. Each topic can be defined and creatively displayed. Clearly marked headings such as *career planning*, *education*, *job search* and *career information* will help users understand what the centre has to offer and assist them in focusing their search. It is a good idea to make divisions and signage for specific categories within a *Career Information* section, as well as for broader sections. For example, *Job Search* includes a range of sub-topics such as *résumés*, cover letters and interviews. Regardless of what type of environment is created in the centre, internal marketing of the system is key to providing easy access to resources and encouraging people to use the service on a repeated basis.

## external marketing

Web sites, brochures, newsletters, flyers and press releases are excellent marketing tools to be used outside of the centre to attract users and inform people of services and programs. As with any internal marketing tool, all external marketing methods should be visually appealing and reflect the user group. It is beneficial to develop a distinctive centre logo and “visual theme” and to strive for consistency in look and feel between the different media.

The most current way to market a career information centre externally is to establish a Web site. It is reasonably simple and cost-effective to design and provides the centre with a tremendous amount of exposure. Because of the overwhelming amount of information on the Internet, it is important to develop a marketing strategy for launching the site and to link it to other relevant and popular Web sites that will in turn result in increased “traffic”. Most cities have on-line community service directories that serve as essential portals for on-line service promotion. First impressions on the Web site are just as important and lasting as in the actual centre. The information displayed there must be organized, relevant and up-to-date. Web sites require constant maintenance. It is essential to check on a regular basis that links to external sites are still functional. It is also crucial that the visual impact of the site be attractive and appropriate for the user population.

Brochures, flyers and newsletters provide an opportunity for a detailed description of the services that are offered. These items can be distributed widely, because they are cost effective to produce and easily updated. Using a template for the newsletter allows the centre to insert current articles and information and provides a recognizable format for the readers. These external marketing materials should be displayed in the career information centre, so that people who visit can pass them on to other potential users. Bookmarks are useful for providing simple pieces of information about the centre in a take-away format at minimal cost.

The career information centre's marketing strategy should indicate the most effective places to display advertising to reach the target community. Brochures can be distributed in bookstores, local high schools and post-secondary institutions, social service agencies, service clubs, employment centres, supermarkets, shopping malls and at key spots in the parent organization. Staff can be encouraged to hand out flyers at meetings of groups to which they belong and mass mailings can also be undertaken.

One means of advertising activities and services that should not be ignored is mass communication: newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations. The most obvious way of getting coverage by the mass media is to purchase space and time. Although this guarantees coverage, it is very costly and time consuming. A more economical suggestion is to investigate whether radio and television stations offer free public service announcements. If they do, these should be used on a regular basis. If the centre is part of a larger organization or institution, such as a university that has its own radio and television station or produces a newspaper, these options should be explored and utilized. The most cost-effective way to get coverage for events sponsored by the centre is to develop a positive relationship with local media, by meeting with them and providing them with background information on the organization. This, and well-written press releases sent out with adequate lead-time, are probably the best methods for achieving success with media coverage.

#### networking

In previous chapters, the importance of establishing a contact network and getting to know community resources has been stressed (see Chapter 1, *Developing a Network* and Chapter 2, *Staffing the Centre*). The connections that staff develop with people and organizations are extremely valuable in helping the centre meet its mission and achieve its goals.

Visibility and reputation are keys to the success of every career information centre. Conducting career days, lunch-time seminars, library tours, open houses and workshops generates discussion about the centre. Participants in these activities learn about services and pass the information on to their families and friends. These events should be widely publicized both internally and externally, making sure the centre gains the recognition it merits.

Inviting people to the centre and going out into the community to showcase its activities are two highly successful, free and easy marketing strategies. Individuals who have visited the facility, or with whom contact has been established through a community event, become part of the centre's network. They can then be contacted as a resource, used as a channel for marketing the services of the centre, or included in partnership on a great number of projects.

Most computer operating systems are equipped with a simple and flexible contact management database, which is an effective way to keep track of network contacts (see the discussion on database management software for career centres in Chapter 3). In a mass mailing campaign for an event, time and money are saved when contact lists are accurate and up-to-date.

### *Conclusion*

The importance of publicity to the success of an organization cannot be over-emphasized. Technology has provided greater access to the many channels that are useful in marketing, but the competition for the public's attention and the quantity of available services has grown as well. Effective publicity does not always need to be produced by professional advertising agencies but can be created inexpensively within the centre. Effective publicity does require planning, effort and imagination. The centres most successful in marketing themselves are the ones that use the creative talents and technical skills of their staff and volunteers, identify the needs of the user community and work to satisfy those needs.

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