



Teamwork in Libraries: 1R and 3Cs

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Abstract:

This paper explores the complexities of teamwork in library settings, emphasizing the imperative need for effective communication and more, it also provides some real-world strategies to improve work efficiency for library teamwork.

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Teamwork in Libraries:1R and 3Cs

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INTRODUCTION

Expressions like "It's not my job!" and "No one told me that's my duty before!" are often heard in collaborative workspaces, creating frustration and hindering project progress. The recurring negative reaction is communication issues and causes a lot of frustration. Despite realizing the core of communication in group projects, challenges persist. This paper explores the complexities of teamwork in library settings, emphasizing the imperative need for effective communication and more, it also provides some real-world strategies to improve work efficiency for library teamwork.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

We have to admit that there are multiple communication hurdles within library settings. One of the critical challenges deserving a closer examination is cross-cultural communication. Beyond the surface level, it involves navigating through the rich variety of diverse communication styles, such as non-verbal cues, and language interpretation that each cultural background brings into the collaborative mix.

In 2022, Librarians identifying as Hispanic or Latino (of any race) constituted 8.0%, while those identifying as Asian-American or Pacific Islander comprised 5.1%. ("Library Professionals," 2023). As a result, prioritizing communication in daily teamwork is crucial.

Therefore, understanding and exploring communication styles within library teams is crucial to recognize the rich diversity that arises from varying cultural backgrounds. Different cultures exhibit distinct communication styles, creating a fascinating tapestry of interactions in the workspace. A notable example of this cultural divergence is often observed between Asian and Western communication norms.

Asian cultures, such as those in many East Asian countries, often emphasize indirect communication. To save "face", i.e. harmony and maintaining positive relationships are highly valued, leading to a preference for subtlety and implicit expressions. In these cultures, individuals may convey messages through ethnicity, language, values, and cognitions may affect the dynamics of culturally diverse teams in different ways. Deep-level cognitive differences, such as holistic versus analytic cognitive style (Nisbett, 2003), allow them to communicate effectively without explicitly stating their thoughts or opinions.

Contrastingly, Western cultures, particularly in the United States, tend to prioritize direct and explicit communication. Clarity and straightforwardness are valued, with individuals encouraged to express their thoughts openly and assertively. In this style of context, a straightforward request is often seen as efficient and transparent, minimizing the potential for ambiguity. Individuals from Western cultures may prefer direct and explicit communication, while those from Asian cultures may value indirect and implicit communication.

Consider the dynamic scenario where a library team is enthusiastically engaged in a collaborative endeavor, shaping the narrative of the "Best Read of the Year" project. In this time-sensitive teamwork module, the librarians strive to disseminate information across the college-wide community, establish deadlines, design submission forms, collect feedback, and create captivating displays both physically and online, including the meticulous curation of a libguide.

Within this closely collaborative module, Librarian A, deeply rooted in a cultural context that values indirect communication, approaches feedback with subtlety. While the team discusses the arrangement of books on the front shelf, Librarian A subtly expresses reservations without explicitly articulating dissent. She refrains from voicing her disagreement directly in front of the entire team but instead opts for nuanced actions by her beliefs. Adjusting the placement of books display and edit the libguide accordingly, she reported via email to her supervisor afterwards.

Contrastingly, Librarian B, emanating from a culture favoring direct communication, interprets Librarian A's actions as an endorsement of the proposed arrangement. Believing both librarians to be on the same wavelength, Librarian B proceeds confidently. However, the interpretation slightly varies from Librarian A's intentions, highlighting the subtleties inherent in cross-cultural communication.

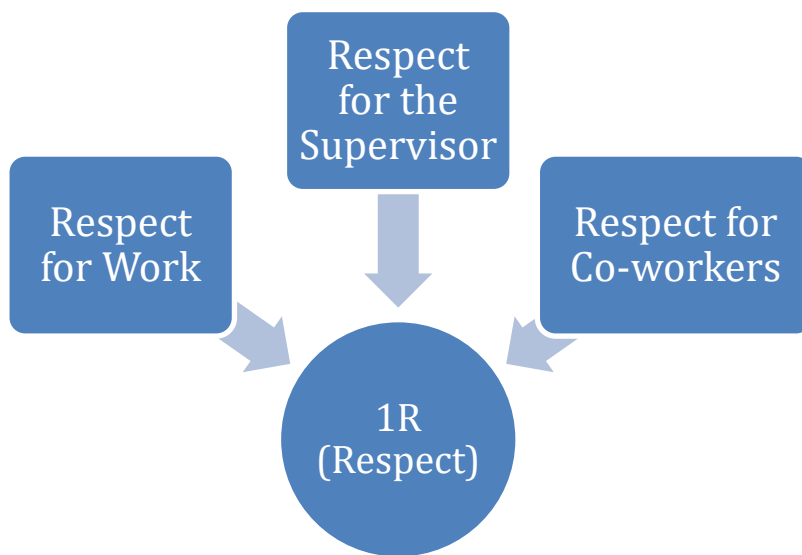
Stahl & Maznevski found that culturally diverse teams are more creative but can be both positive and negative in a diverse team (Stahl, 2021). This dichotomy in communication styles introduces a challenge. Librarian A, offering indirect feedback, expects her concerns to be inferred and adjustments made accordingly. On the other hand, Librarian B assumes that if there were any issues, they would have been explicitly communicated. The unexpected conflict arises, leading to misunderstandings that might unravel as the project progresses. Both librarians believe in their own working philosophies and to protect themselves when finally brought to their supervisor, starts a big fight. The relationship between them is getting worse. As a result, they cannot work in the same team for a long time.

This scenario underscores the necessity for heightened awareness and understanding of cross-cultural communication details. Librarians need to navigate these differences delicately, appreciating the diversity in communication styles to foster effective collaboration. By embracing these differences, the library team can fortify its collaborative foundation, ensuring a harmonious and productive working environment for everyone involved in the project. Some specific strategies will be discussed in this paper.

1R AND 3CS FRAMEWORK

In this exploration, the study introduces a transformative approach to enhancing teamwork within library teams, emphasizing the crucial role of the 1R (Respect) and 3Cs (Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration) framework. This framework serves as a bedrock for fostering successful collaboration and synergy among team members. Dive deeper into the essence of the 1R framework, unraveling its layers to provide a comprehensive guide on cultivating a culture of respect within library teams.

Now, let's explore a comprehensive explanation of the first aspect of the 1R framework—Respect. This seemingly simple word encapsulates a multifaceted concept with three distinct dimensions.



Respect for work

Firstly, there's the aspect of respecting the work itself. This goes beyond mere completion of tasks; it involves a profound commitment to executing responsibilities with proficiency and dedication. Elaborating on the professional obligation to perform tasks at the highest standard, it's crucial to emphasize the significance of individual work ethics. Each team member's approach, diligence, and attention to detail contribute not only to personal success but also to a collective sense of accomplishment within the entire team. Recognizing the intrinsic value of each task and approaching it with a mindset of excellence lays the groundwork for a work environment where everyone's contributions are valued and collectively elevates the overall success of the team.

It's essential to underscore that respect for work serves as the cornerstone for the other two aspects in the "R" framework. Without this foundational respect, further discussions become meaningless. This fundamental principle is tied to work ethics and beliefs, emphasizing that a culture of excellence and dedication to tasks is crucial for meaningful engagement with the

subsequent aspects of the R framework. In essence, respect for work sets the tone for a work environment where collaboration, communication, and cooperation can flourish.

Second, respect for the Supervisor: It becomes particularly pertinent in the context of a relationship between a new director and a librarian with an extensive tenure in the library. The dynamic unfolds as the librarian, entrenched in the familiarity of the "old" ways, is hesitant to embrace change. Meanwhile, the new director is enthusiastic about implementing her fresh administrative style, drawing insights from her past experiences in different roles.

In this scenario, the essence of respect takes on a sensitive dimension. It involves the librarian acknowledging the valuable experience and established practices that the supervisor brings to the table. Simultaneously, the supervisor recognizes the librarian's long-standing commitment to the library and the wealth of knowledge embedded in the "old" ways. Navigating this balance requires a mutual understanding and appreciation for each other's perspectives.

The librarian's reluctance to change may stem from a deep-rooted dedication to the library's traditions, while the supervisor's eagerness for innovation may be driven by a desire to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Bridging this gap requires a respectful dialogue where both parties actively listen to each other, valuing the strengths each brings to the collaborative effort.

Moreover, it is imperative to underscore the significance of unwavering support and adherence to decisions made by the supervisor once they are finalized. While constructive discussions and debates are encouraged during library staff meetings, employees must recognize the importance of unity once a decision is reached. Disagreements and differing opinions are natural in a collaborative environment, and open discourse can lead to innovative solutions. However, once a decision is made, all staff members need to align themselves with the agreed-upon course of action. This commitment to unity fosters a cohesive and efficient work environment.

It is equally vital to emphasize the need for professionalism in these discussions. Rather than resorting to gossip or venting frustrations under the table or to other colleagues, employees should channel their concerns through the appropriate channels. Encouraging a culture of open communication where feedback is given directly and respectfully, without undermining the supervisor's authority, is paramount. This approach not only maintains a positive work atmosphere but also ensures that any issues are addressed constructively. Ultimately, presenting a cohesive and professional image is a big plus to the collective success of the library team, bringing about the achievement of shared objective.

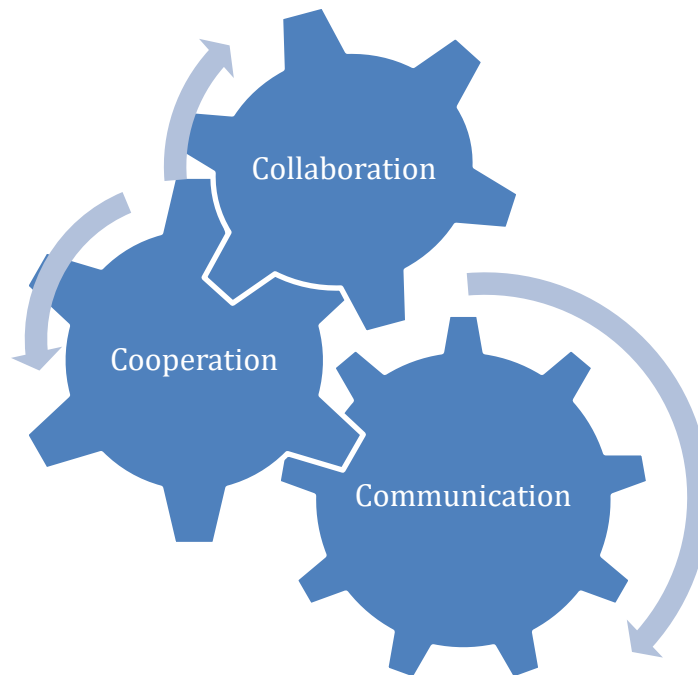
Thirdly, fostering respect for co-workers within the library setting is a fundamental pillar for nurturing a harmonious and productive work environment. This commitment extends beyond professional roles and encompasses aspects such as age, recognizing that age itself is a matter of respect, albeit not an exclusive one. In a diverse team, young librarians bring passion and fresh perspectives, even though they may lack experience. Conversely, senior librarians offer a wealth of knowledge and experience that can serve as a guiding light for their younger counterparts. It is

essential to view this age diversity not as a barrier but as an opportunity for mutual growth and collaboration.

Another context is cultural differences. In the diverse landscape of the library, where team members often come from various cultural backgrounds, embracing and acknowledging these differences becomes essential. Open and transparent communication is crucial, encouraging team members to share their cultural backgrounds and preferences, fostering mutual understanding. For instance, some staff may naturally speak with a louder voice, while others, possibly due to language barriers, may speak more softly. It is imperative to respect and appreciate these variations, recognizing that diverse communication styles contribute to the richness of the team. Addressing conflicts constructively and promoting a culture of inclusivity further solidify the foundation of respect, allowing the library team to leverage its diverse strengths for collective success.

In essence, respecting co-workers goes beyond acknowledging differences; it requires recognizing and appreciating the diverse strengths and potential for growth within the team. By fostering an environment where individual contributions are valued and cultural diversity is celebrated, the team can harness its collective power to achieve shared goals and thrive in a dynamic and inclusive work culture.

3Cs - Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration



Communication stands as a pivotal and indispensable element within the 3Cs framework, its paramount significance impossible to overstate. Serving as the lifeblood of effective collaboration, it encompasses not only the transmission of information but the assurance that the conveyed message is clearly and accurately understood by all team members. The poignant questions raised at the beginning of this paper vividly illuminate potential pitfalls in the absence of robust communication. To address such challenges, it is imperative to underscore the multifaceted nature of communication, recognizing its extension beyond verbal exchanges alone. In addition to explicit words spoken, elements such as tone, body language, and facial expressions wield substantial influence in conveying meaning and fostering a deeper understanding among team members.

In the digital age, email has become a fundamental method of workplace communication. However, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. Despite its convenience, email can give rise to miscommunications. In Bodell's book, the distinction between using email for information conveyance versus discussion is highlighted. Bodell suggests that once the back-and-forth of emails exceeds a certain threshold, typically three times, it is advisable to transition to more direct communication methods, such as a phone call or a Webex meeting (Bodell, 2016).

Cooperation, in the context of teamwork within a library, takes on a 'vertical' dimension. It involves the seamless partnership of team members within the library. Consider a scenario where one team member excels in detail-oriented tasks but lacks agenda and time management skills, while another possesses a natural gift for innovative programming and events but lacks patience. By recognizing and combining these diverse strengths, the library can curate engaging and well-organized events that captivate the community. In this example, meticulous organizational skills ensure smooth execution, while creative programming adds a touch of uniqueness, creating a

comprehensive and memorable experience for patrons.

Furthermore, cooperation extends beyond individual projects to the optimization of daily workflows, particularly in the realm of online teaching library instruction. Take, for example, a team member adept in technology integration collaborating with a colleague excelling in patron engagement and instructional design. By combining their expertise, they can implement technologies that not only facilitate seamless online library instruction but also enhance the overall user experience. This joint effort might include developing and integrating user-friendly platforms for virtual classes, featuring interactive elements like quizzes, polls, and multimedia resources to actively engage learners. Moreover, the team can explore innovative ways to personalize online instruction, tailoring content to diverse learning styles and preferences. Harnessing cutting-edge technology, such as AI tools, enables the library team to establish a dynamic and adaptive online teaching environment that promotes deeper understanding and knowledge retention. This cooperative approach extends to ongoing improvement, with the team regularly assessing the effectiveness of online teaching methods, gathering user feedback, and adapting strategies to address educational needs. Implementing a cyclical process of assessment and refinement ensures that online teaching library instruction remains not only technologically advanced but also pedagogically sound, meeting the diverse needs of the library's user community in an ever-changing educational environment.

The strength of cooperation lies in its ability to transform individual capabilities into a collective force that propels the library toward innovation and excellence. By fostering an environment where team members not only recognize but actively utilize each other's strengths, libraries can navigate challenges more effectively and embrace growth opportunities.

Collaboration emerges as a critical component in the intricate ecosystem of a college community, positioning the library as a dynamic hub thriving on interconnectedness. In contrast to the "vertical" nature of cooperation, this collaborative approach takes on a more expansive "horizontal" or even "outputs" style, much like the library's feelers reaching everywhere, transcending its physical walls. The significance of collaboration extends to forming fruitful partnerships with diverse departments across the college, transforming the library into a central hub. Here, the library becomes an environment where interdisciplinary collaboration flourishes, acting as a catalyst for academic growth and innovation. This collaborative spirit not only encourages cross-disciplinary initiatives but also reflects the evolving nature of education and the dynamic needs of the college community.

Consider the collaboration between the library and the science department. By understanding the features, functions, and interests unique to each department, the library curates specialized resources that cater to the academic needs of science students. This tailored collaboration, including databases, libguides design, information literacy, online and in-person help, etc. ensures that the library becomes a vibrant resource center, supplementing the curriculum with relevant materials.

The collaboration with the ESL department unfolds a dynamic fusion of creativity and

knowledge. Librarians actively engage in ESL department staff meetings and student conversation groups, contributing to community research initiatives. The ESL book collection not only aligns with the aspirations of new immigrants pursuing the American dream but also provides tailored resources that resonate with the specific needs of the classrooms. Through joint events, such as author talks or art/history exhibitions, this collaboration enriches the college community with a vibrant cultural experience.

These case studies underscore the transformative power of collaboration between the library and different departments. The success of such partnership hinges on an understanding of each department's unique characteristics. Through active involvement with the features, functions, and interests of other departments, the library cultivates interdisciplinary collaboration. As a hub that fosters collaboration, the library becomes a driving force in creating an inclusive and thriving academic environment for students and faculty alike.

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Communication within library teams is multifaceted, influenced by cultural impacts and evolving technological landscapes. To gain a deeper understanding, let's explore four key communication challenges and strategies to address them.

Cultural impacts and communication styles

The presence of cultural diversity within library teams can introduce variations in communication styles. As mentioned earlier in this paper, direct communication may be favored in some cultures, while others may emphasize indirect expressions. These differences can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. To address this challenge, promoting cross-cultural training and awareness programs can enhance team members' understanding of diverse communication styles. Examples of such training include workshops on effective intercultural communication and guest speaker sessions featuring experts in cultural sensitivity. Encouraging open discussions about cultural differences helps establish an inclusive environment where everyone feels heard and understood.

Technology-driven communication norms

The pervasive use of technology in communication introduces challenges related to the adoption of various communication platforms and the potential for information overload. For instance, team members may use different messaging apps, such as Microsoft Teams, Webex, Zoom or traditional phone text messages, leading to fragmented communication channels. This diversity in platforms can result in difficulties in tracking conversations and coordinating efforts effectively. To tackle this, libraries can implement unified communication tools to ensure that everyone is on the same platform. Additionally, establishing guidelines for effective digital communication, such as response time expectations and appropriate channels for different types of messages, can streamline communication processes.

Generational Differences in Communication Preferences

Library teams often consist of members from different generations, each with distinct communication preferences. Younger team members may lean towards instant messaging and social media, while older members may prefer traditional email or face-to-face communication. Bridging this gap involves creating a communication strategy that accommodates diverse preferences. Implementing mentorship programs where younger members can learn from the experience of their older counterpart fosters understanding and facilitates knowledge exchange, bridging the generational communication divide.

Remote Work and Virtual Collaboration

The rise of remote work introduces challenges related to virtual communication. Team members may struggle with feelings of isolation, and the lack of non-verbal cues in virtual communication can lead to misunderstandings. To address this, libraries can implement virtual team-building activities and regular check-ins to maintain a sense of connection. Providing training on effective virtual communication, emphasizing clarity in written communication, and leveraging video conferencing for face-to-face interactions can enhance the virtual collaboration experience.

By addressing these communication challenges proactively, libraries can create a collaborative and inclusive environment that leverages the strengths of diverse team members.

SOME STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

In addressing the intricate communication challenges faced by library teams, it becomes imperative to implement practical strategies that foster a collaborative and inclusive environment. The following brief strategies aim to provide concrete steps for improvement, with a focus on cultural sensitivity, open dialogue, and mentorship. By integrating these practices, libraries can nurture effective communication and create an atmosphere where team members from diverse backgrounds feel heard, understood, and empowered in their roles.

Cultural Sensitivity Training

To address communication challenges, implementing cultural sensitivity training becomes paramount. Librarians can benefit from workshops that delve into the intricacies of cross-cultural communication. These sessions can provide practical insights, using real-world scenarios to enhance cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Open Dialogue

Encouraging open dialogue within the library team becomes a powerful tool for navigating cross-cultural challenges. Librarians should be encouraged to share their communication preferences and expectations openly, fostering an environment of mutual understanding.

Mentoring and Peer Support

Establishing mentorship programs and encouraging peer support becomes instrumental in facilitating communication between librarians from different cultural backgrounds. Experienced team members can play a crucial role in guiding their peers through the intricacies of cross-cultural collaboration.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integrated 1R and 3Cs framework offers a comprehensive approach to cultivating effective teamwork within library settings. Anchored in the principles of Respect (1R), this framework goes beyond theoretical abstraction, becoming a guiding philosophy intricately woven into the fabric of collaborative endeavors. By recognizing and valuing the unique strengths, perspectives, and contributions of each team member, libraries can instill an atmosphere of mutual appreciation, laying the foundation for profound collaboration. Simultaneously, the 3Cs—Communication, Cooperation, and Collaboration—act as interdependent pillars, serving as an amplifier for the potential of library teams to excel. Communication, as the cornerstone, transcends mere information exchange, evolving into a dynamic interplay of verbal and non-verbal cues tailored to diverse team needs. Embracing cooperation and collaboration optimizes workflows, leverages individual strengths, and triggers a transformative shift in the library experience. Together, the integrated framework provides a holistic and synergistic approach to enhance team dynamics, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment that advances library services and initiatives.

Looking towards the future vision of libraries, by encouraging library teams to wholeheartedly apply the 1R and 3Cs frameworks, a cultural shift is envisioned where respect becomes the norm, communication transforms into an art of understanding, and cooperation and collaboration emerge as the driving forces behind innovative library services. As these principles are interwoven into daily operations, libraries are poised to navigate challenges, embrace opportunities, and elevate their role as dynamic hubs that enrich the intellectual and cultural tapestry of their communities. By embracing the 1R and 3Cs framework in its entirety, library professionals can meet the library mission, pave the way for a culture that thrives on respect, effective communication, and collaborative synergy, ultimately enhancing the overall performance and satisfaction of the team, ushering in a future where libraries are agile, responsive, and deeply connected to the needs of their patrons and communities.

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