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**More than Potlucks: Reviving social engagement for a thriving library workplace**

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More than Potlucks:
Reviving social engagement for a thriving library workplace

Heidi Blackburn, Lori Schwartz, Diana Allard, and Laine McCurrin
Organizational Culture

“practices, values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions of formal and informal groups” (George & Jones, 2008, p. 567)

“Institutions are constellations of established and enduring practices, beliefs, roles, and meanings, which shape and are shaped by individual actions. They provide rules, norms, ideas, and assumptions and constrain or enable us” (Garcia, 2011, p. 150)
We don’t have time! (Why should we care?)

- Poor organizational culture can cause workplace anxiety and attrition if employees feel unwelcome.
- Issues such as dysfunctional coworker relations, stereotyping, discrimination, and even sexual harassment could all complicate an otherwise effective workplace environment.
- Organizations must be proactive in creating environments that increase the likelihood of success for all members (Greer, Stephens, & Coleman, 2001).
Courtesy Committee (1985-2006)

• Staff
  • Voluntary, representation from all departments

• Space
  • Large break room, non-public staff areas

• Funding
  • Proceeds from Goodie Days
  • Selling ice cream bars (freezer)
  • Coffee proceeds
  • Stipend from Dean
Events (1985-2006)

- Holiday Party/Chili Feed
- End of Spring Semester Potluck
- Student Worker Appreciation Day
- Valentine’s Day Treats
- St. Patrick’s Day Treats
- Halloween Treats
- Retirement Parties
No Committee (2006-2010)

- Library renovation
- Lack of funding
- Departmental events
Positive Employee Recognition Committee (PERC) (2010-2013)

- **Staff**
  - Voluntary, representation from all departments
- **Space**
  - Reserved classrooms, Faculty Lounge, non-public staff areas
- **Funding**
  - Stipend from acting Dean (non-food items)
  - University Library Friends
Events & Activities (2010-2013)

• Holiday Party/Potluck
• Library Worker’s Day
• Ice Cream Social
• Retirement Parties
• KUDOS Board
• Birthday Cards and Yearly Work Anniversary Certificates
• Monthly treat day for that month’s Birthdays
• Set up CLASS (Criss Library Academic Student Scholarship) Scholarship with Director of Patron Services
No Committee (2014-2015)

Departmental events for all:
  • Chili Cook-off
  • Dip Contest
  • Baking Contest
  • Salad Days
  • Pi Day (3.14)
Social Engagement Committee (2015-Present)

We needed a revival:

• Morale was plateaued because of uncertainty
  • No dean, interim dean, new dean
  • Strategic plan -> No strategic plan

• Lots of new hires!
  • Introductions between departments to cut down silos
  • UNO/Criss Library traditions/ideas

• Culture shift
Social Engagement Committee (2015-Present)

- Made up of 2 staff from every department
- Meets only as necessary
- Provides Welcome Swag Bag to all employees and goes out lunch with members outside their departments
- Reoccurring events but also spontaneous events (40th Birthday, Barak Obama’s visit, Halloween)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Name</th>
<th>Event Dates</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Pie back-off.</td>
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<td>Vote with change.</td>
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<td>Proceeds to UNO Food Pantry</td>
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<td>Pi Day Bake-off</td>
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<td>Apr 2016 –</td>
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<td>Catered</td>
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<td>breakfast tacos and afternoon cupcakes from local businesses</td>
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<td>Color Me Calm</td>
<td>Dec 2015 – Relaxation event</td>
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<td>Apr 2016 –</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to unwind post-finals</td>
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<td>National Library Workers Day</td>
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<td>Day</td>
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<td>Bizarre Bazaar</td>
<td>Jan 2016 – trade your weird</td>
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<td>Apr 2016 -</td>
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<td>holiday presents</td>
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<td>Library team</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of walkers (and a couple runners). Partners attended.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chili Cook-off</td>
<td>Jan 7 – Cook-off, vote with</td>
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<td>May 2016 –</td>
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<td>your change. Proceeds go to</td>
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<td>Dip cook-off.</td>
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<td>Employee Emergency Loan Fund</td>
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<td>Vote with change.</td>
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<td>Proceeds go to GSRC.</td>
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<td>Welcome for Dean</td>
<td>Jan 2016 - Welcome reception for</td>
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<td>June 2016 –</td>
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<td></td>
<td>new Dean</td>
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<td>Meet at dog</td>
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<td>park for some social time.</td>
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<td>Then cook-out at someone’s house. Partners attended.</td>
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<td>Farewell for Dean</td>
<td>Jan 2016 - Farewell reception for</td>
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<td>Monthly treats celebrating employee birthday/work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>interim dean</td>
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<td>anniversaries</td>
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<td>Birthday/Anniversaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shakespeare on the Green Volunteering</td>
<td>Jul 2016 – Jun 2017</td>
<td>July 2016 – Several employees volunteered one night at Shakespeare on the Green, a local Omaha event.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smooth(ie) Ride</td>
<td>Jul 2016 – Apr 2017</td>
<td>July 2016 – Blender bike for students workers and employees</td>
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<td>Ice Cream Social</td>
<td>Aug 2016 – Sep 2016</td>
<td>Aug 2016 – Afternoon event to build your own sundae</td>
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<td>40th Birthday Party</td>
<td>Sep 2016 – Oct 2016</td>
<td>Sep 2016 – Celebrated Criss’ 40th birthday with cupcakes and lecture of our history</td>
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<td>Holiday Potluck</td>
<td>Dec 2016 – Jan 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bizarre Bazaar</td>
<td>Dec 2016 – Jan 2017</td>
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<td>Chili Cook-off</td>
<td>Jan 2017 – Feb 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pi Day Bake-off</td>
<td>Mar 2017 – Apr 2017</td>
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<td>National Library Workers Day</td>
<td>Apr 2017 – May 2017</td>
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<td>Claussen-Leahy 5k</td>
<td>Apr 2017 – May 2017</td>
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<td>Dips de Mayo</td>
<td>May 2017 – Jun 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bark in the Park</td>
<td>May 2017 – Jun 2017</td>
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<td>Birthday/Anniversaries</td>
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<td>Monthly treats celebrating employee birthday/work anniversaries</td>
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teaspinning
UNO Criss Library

sanbornjennifer, perdita00, sjmartin5633, melissalh07, jillienmoreno, jlwn4690, the_dilattantista, knittinginy and jimmy_steen like this

teaspinning Go into work and find a chili cook-off for charity. I think I found my people.
Chili Cook-off
January 2016
Pi Day Bake-off
March 2016

bildungsromans, neilblahblah, mclainers, knittinginy, worthafortune and coxabey like this

teaspinning Pi Day at #crisslibrary - this is the face of sweet, sweet regret. (Soon.)
Please join us for

Dips de Mayo

May 5th, 11:30am-1:30pm
Room 231

Looking to flex your dipping muscles? Grab your favorite recipe and enter your dip in the following categories:

- Salty and satisfying
- Smooth and sweet
- Nacho typical dip (other category)

Sign up on the wiki to bring a dip and/or a dipper to complement your colleague’s entry (chips, graham crackers, fruit, etc.). Bring your appetite and vote with your change for the People’s Choice trophy!
Nacho Typical Dip Category

Laine McCurrin

Dips de Mayo 2016

University of Nebraska Criss Library
May 5th, 2016

Social Engagement Committee
Tired of just eating at library events? HOWL about we try something new!

BARK IN THE PARK!

**WHEN:** Friday, 3 June @ 5:30pm

**WHERE:** Hanscom Dog Park—32nd and Woolworth

**WHO:** You and your two- and four-legged friend(s)!

**AFTER:** Meet-up at Tammi’s for EATING! And more puppy time!

Don’t have a dog? Don’t TERRIER self up about it!

Bring yourself and have a BALL!

**YORKIE** to contributing is to bring something to eat or grill at Tammi’s! We all will!

(It looks like this is the end— I might have to pull the PUG on this flyer...)
Bark in the Park

WHERE:
Hanscom Dog Park—32nd and Woolworth

WHO:
You and your two- and four-legged friend(s)

AFTER:
Meet-up at Tammi’s for grilling (thanks Scott!), potluck, and more puppies!

The pups will be provided for in Tammi’s backyard, so bring them along, too!

When:
June 3rd @ 5:30pm

Bring something to grill for yourself and/or a side dish for everyone to share.

BYOB, if you’re into that!
SHARK IN THE PARK?!

nope.
bark in the park.
june 3!
teaspinning

This is what happens when you give a lot of animal-loving library people a fun social event to look forward to AND empty board space. Can you find George and Betty?
Criss Library Trivia Night

Join us for a little back-to-school brew! Come enjoy some light appetizers and get to know your co-workers! A full variety of craft beers will be available for purchase.

Flex your trivia muscles by joining a team or cheer on your colleagues from the sidelines.

Trivia will start around 6:30pm and significant others are welcome!

We hope to see you there!

August 12, 5:30pm
Nebraska Brewing Company
7474 Towne Center Pkwy #101,
Papillion, NE 68046

For more details about this group, see http://www.geekswhodrink.com/

Brought to you by the Criss Library Social Engagement Committee

Questions? Contact Heidi at hblackburn@unomaha.edu

the quiz is upon us...

Q: Objectively, when is the best date for inter-office socialization??
A: August 12, 5:30-9:30

Q: Where, objectively, should you be for said inter-office socialization?
A: Nebraska Brewing Company Tap Room (6950 S 108th St, La Vista, NE 68128)

Q: Who should attend said socialization event?
A: You, your spouse, BFF, plus-one, partner, buddy-o...whomever makes you happy!

Q: Can I eat there?
A: Of course! the SEC is buying appetizers!

Q: Can I drink there?
A: Of course! Nebraska Brewing Company makes some super sweet beers. You’ll have to pay for your own, though. State funding...

Q: What about trivia teams?
A: Either work out a team of six ahead of time, or we’ll make them up on Friday!

That’s Mike. He’s our Quizmaster.
Scores
Our Other Name is a Pun ... 58
Staff Infection ... 58
Chewbacca ... 57
LOCness Monster ... 57
The REAL Founders of ISIS ... 52
Dean's Dead Heads ... 41
Lessons Learned: Variety

- Free events…Events that cost money
- Annual events…One-time events
- Food events…Active events…Community events
- Inside the library…Out in the wild
- Interaction required…Not required
- Different times of day (involve all employees)
Lessons Learned:
Funds, Support, Communication

Funds:
- Line in budget
- Friends group

Support of Leadership:
- $$ (what they provide)
- Verbal (what they say)
- Visual (how they participate)

Communication:
- Frequent updates by email or whatever works for you
- Bulletin board that changes and is interactive
Lessons Learned: Formalize

Give your committee (group, team…) structure:
- Elect leaders and set term limits.
- Aim for participation from every department/area.
- Be flexible (don’t squash enthusiasm).

Strategic planning:
- “Culture” reflected in current plan.
- Need leadership on board…refer them to research presented earlier if they’re reluctant!
- Workplace culture can turn over quickly—for the good or bad. Make it a priority.
References

For continuous updates on creating an engaged and supportive workplace, subscribe to *Library Worklife* (ALA/APA) at [http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/](http://ala-apa.org/newsletter/)


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