THE EDUCATION OF THE INDUSTRY

INCITE

Play and learn

Variations of Learning 2.0 programs are offered in libraries all over the world as a means of enabling library staff to learn about emerging technologies. Yet when the program is completed, what can libraries do to keep the momentum going? One possible solution is to promote, support and give formal recognition to self-directed learning.

The need and support for continued professional development is well-established but how ongoing workplace learning is undertaken is changing. In the past, professional development consisted of attending an external workshop or class. However with the speed of technological changes, relevant workshops or seminars don't necessarily exist. Learning 2.0 programs such as 23 Things attempt to address this; however, they too quickly become out of date as new technologies develop. A better way to keep up-to-date with new and exciting technologies may be through self-directed learning.

Trialing online games so you can relate to your younger clients, or testing iCloud so you can help someone use it are a form of learning and professional development.

One of the most significant factors when undertaking self-directed learning is to have concrete objectives in mind. When we attend a workshop we know what we are going to learn. When undertaking self-directed learning we need to think about why we are reading particular blogs, why we are trying out new software, asking ourselves what it is we are trying to learn. Questions such as "how could this make a difference to our service?" or "can this help a particular cohort of our community?" should be underpinning these learning activities, and keeping a record of activities undertaken and learning outcomes achieved may also assist with meeting objectives.

Ensuring that staff members are allocated adequate time and resources is vital. Learning from others is also very important. Tools such as Yammer, wikis and monthly lunch and share sessions can help facilitate sharing and learning. Recognising the need to continually update knowledge of emerging technologies as part of an individual's development goals endorses the importance of this activity as part of their work. ALIA has acknowledged this self-directed learning through their PD scheme.

Once we might have called this type of activity "playing" – now we need to see it as a legitimate learning opportunity.

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