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Bring Learning to All Library Staff: Scaling and Sustaining Professional Development Content

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INTRODUCTION

You may be thinking of developing content to use as professional development (PD) for staff in your organization, or perhaps you have been awarded a grant that includes developing learning content for a specific audience. This “content” could be in the form of a course, a webinar, a tool kit, or a combination of items that are intended to impart knowledge, build skills, or support a learning community of practitioners. In any of those cases, there are ways to design and deliver the material so that many more can learn from it. With some advance planning and strategic partnerships, you can reach a statewide, national, or multinational audience that can benefit from the learning opportunity you have created. This chapter describes how WebJunction—a program of OCLC Research that offers a free and open online learning network for those who work in or with libraries—supports the scalability and sustainability of PD. Readers will also get tips for how to make PD as accessible and affordable to as many learners as possible.

SCALING SUPERCHARGED STORYTIMES: A CASE STUDY

Translating Research into Practice

In early 2014, WebJunction learned about a new research study from the University of Washington (UW) Information School that demonstrated the measurable impact of library storytime on development of early literacy skills in young

children (Mills, Campana, Okuno, Pugh, & Lengua, 2015). WebJunction contacted the principal investigator, Dr. Eliza Dresang, who shared that as they headed into the final phase of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)–funded grant project, they were interested in seeing the resources promoted and disseminated to libraries across the United States. The UW research team faced a challenge because the project budget did not include funding for promotion and dissemination, and the website that was hosting the project resources would only be available for three years. Dr. Dresang was also aware that improvements and enhancements were needed so that the tools and resources developed by the research team would be understandable to and useful for storytime librarians who had not participated in the controlled study. While field testing the research with forty Washington State public libraries, the research team discovered that peer-to-peer mentoring among the storytime practitioners was a key factor. The participating library staff said they found it valuable to talk about their experiences with the tools, give each other feedback and support, and share additional resources for storytime practice.

Design, Pilot, Scale

This initial conversation with Dr. Dresang led to OCLC proposing an IMLS National Leadership Grant to translate the UW Information School’s research and materials into teachable practice that could be delivered as an online instructor-led orientation program. The proposal was funded, and the WebJunction team partnered with Washington State Library and the early learning nonprofit Thrive Washington to design, pilot, and scale the research-based storytime practices that the state library had dubbed “Supercharged Storytimes.”

WebJunction first piloted the orientation program with eighty-eight public library staff in Washington State. Over four weeks, the cohort completed four training modules in the form of live online sessions hosted on WebJunction’s Moodle learning management system. In between these sessions, the participants conversed in a dedicated online discussion area, where they shared how they were applying what they learned to their storytime practices and offered one another advice and encouragement. A fifth wrap-up session was offered three weeks after the conclusion of the modules.

Following this pilot run, WebJunction partnered with the state libraries of Maine, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, and Wisconsin, to coordinate a multistate learning cohort of 470 library staff, all of whom were recruited by the state libraries through an open call for participants. The full cohort attended the live sessions together, with WebJunction providing separate discussion spaces for each state to talk about state-specific issues together. Evaluation feedback underscored that participants appreciated being able to access the session recordings at their convenience to review material, and they valued the interaction with their peers. As one participant stated, “My favorite part of this training was all the sharing via chats, discussion forums, and other resources. It feels like a deep pool of ideas, info, and inspiration to draw on for a long time.”

Alternate Formats; Open Educational Resources

Several state libraries, both those that had and had not participated in the project, expressed interest in having more library staff go through the Supercharged Storytimes program. To help address this need, WebJunction staff repackaged session recordings, handouts, and tips into a self-paced course and set up another discussion space for self-directed learners to connect with one another asynchronously. Another 905 library staff from across the United States enrolled in the self-paced course, for a total of 1,463 learners enrolled in WebJunction's Supercharged Storytimes.

Updates and Expansions

In 2017, OCLC received an IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian grant to increase the scope and reach of Supercharged Storytimes even further. WebJunction expanded the course material to include the full range of early literacy skills, and with early learning expert Saroj Ghoting and Seattle Public Library's Early Learning Program manager CiKeithia Pugh, new modules were developed on family and caregiver engagement and on applying an equity lens to storytime programs to reach underserved communities. The project also included consultation from the Public Library Association to inform a new module on program assessment using Project Outcome, a free tool kit of patron surveys, survey management tools, custom reports and data dashboards, and other resources to help library staff measure and share the impact of library programs and services. WebJunction partnered with the state libraries of Alaska, Utah, New Jersey, Tennessee, Minnesota, and New York and the Southeast Florida Library Information Network, each of which committed to conducting a series of Supercharged Storytimes training sessions in their region.

The project team designed and conducted an orientation program to prepare the trainers who would be teaching the course in their region. This six-session online program introduced trainers to the course content, and throughout the program, trainers were asked to provide feedback about the course and the trainer tool kit. Most of the participating states needed technical support from WebJunction to set up the learning management system (LMS) that they would use to administrate and host the course and discussion area for their regional learners. In addition, the state library of Texas informed the WebJunction team that they had been planning statewide Supercharged Storytimes and asked whether they could also use the training materials (they had not participated in the train-the-trainer program).

After the completion of the train-the-trainer program for the state library partners, WebJunction staff updated the self-paced course that was created during the first grant and replaced the original version in the WebJunction Course Catalog with the expanded version. The new course was quick to attract hundreds of enrollments as soon as it was announced in the fall of 2018, but WebJunction wanted to add one more feature. The project team created a four-week instructor-led online course to teach a cohort of one hundred library staff from around the country how to serve as peer facilitators for coworkers who go through the self-paced

Supercharged Storytimes course together. Inspired by Peer-to-Peer University's *Learning Circles: Facilitator Handbook* (P2PU, n.d.) and Richmond Public Library's *Supervisor Learning Circles Facilitator Guide* (Richmond Public Library, n.d.), the team published a *Facilitator Guide* for anyone to download and adapt for their library (Doyle, 2018). The guide offers tips and techniques for fostering social connection and discussion among colleagues taking the course together to encourage the peer-to-peer mentoring that was found to be so valuable for practitioners learning how to supercharge their storytime practice.

In addition to those activities, WebJunction promoted the course through its marketing channels, presented about it at library conferences, and provided state library agencies with outreach material to share through their library network. This set of activities has resulted in more than three thousand library staff who have taken the Supercharged Storytimes course, and with a few months of the project still remaining at this writing, enrollments continue to tick upward. The course, trainer tool kit, and online community will remain available beyond the life of the grant.

This example speaks to the mission and approach of the WebJunction program, which has been shaped by its ongoing exploration of the potential of online learning to bring high-quality and affordable continuous learning to libraries. Today, WebJunction manages a free and open online learning community that connects library staff to the people, skills, and pragmatic ideas that help libraries to adapt, lead, and thrive. In addition to its core offerings of free courses, webinars, and the regular publication of articles, news, and downloadable resources, WebJunction also designs regional, national, and multinational initiatives to spread innovative practices such as Supercharged Storytimes across libraries. This is accomplished through partnerships with funders, library associations, state libraries, and other nonprofit organizations.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WEBJUNCTION

WebJunction's program began as part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's first philanthropic endeavor, the U.S. Libraries project, which installed and updated more than thirty thousand computers in eleven thousand libraries in North America and held more than twelve thousand computer training sessions with librarians between 1997 and 2004 (Gates, 2004). Seeing how isolated many of the libraries were and their staffs' limited access to training, the foundation sought proposals for an online portal that would help small and rural U.S. public libraries keep their computer technology up-to-date, give them a platform to connect across the miles, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and resources that support public access to information in public libraries. OCLC, a long-standing nonprofit library service organization that manages cooperation among thousands of libraries across the world, was seen as having the infrastructure for and experience with managing shared content; in 2002, OCLC was awarded the funds to execute its vision (OCLC, 2002).

WebJunction launched on May 12, 2003, with a Web-based repository of resources for libraries. As Bill Gates Sr. put it during a 2004 speech, "We need to

give librarians the right training. Librarians are the indispensable partners in bringing the Internet to everyone. But 40 percent of all libraries don't offer any formal technology training for their staff. Part of our answer is WebJunction.org. It's a website we've helped launch that offers librarians clear instructions on setting up computers, maintaining networks—even talking to city council members about funding" (Gates, 2004).

Computer technology training was only the tip of the iceberg; the Gates Foundation also awarded OCLC special project grants to conduct other projects, including Rural Library Sustainability, which trained rural library directors on technology planning and community needs assessment across forty-two states, and Spanish-Language Outreach, which improved understanding of, outreach to, and services for the Spanish-speaking communities served by public libraries in thirty-six states (WebJunction, n.d.). WebJunction also led a project to identify and document the full range of knowledge and skills that are applicable to the library workforce, publishing the *Competency Index for the Library Field* in 2009, with updates in 2014 (Gutsche & Hough, 2014).

As the Gates Foundation's libraries program expanded in scope, and the IMLS strategy articulated an emphasis on how public libraries can thrive as community anchors, WebJunction also telescoped to a wider gaze and began to create and collect learning content on a broader range of topics. The program saw a continuous cycle take shape that shows what libraries must do to thrive as a community-centered institution: (1) identify their communities and understand the needs of those communities; (2) build or adapt capacity—collections, space, technology, and staff competencies—to serve those needs; (3) design and deliver services to meet the needs; (4) reach and engage community members with those services; and (5) evaluate the impact of services on essential facets of community health, including education and lifelong learning; health, wellness, and economic success; social connection; and civic engagement. WebJunction leadership recognized that the program should evolve its mission to focus on building the knowledge, skills, and confidence that library staff need to move through each phase of this cycle. This meant engaging with organizations, networks, initiatives, and experts both inside and outside of the library field with whom to collaborate to design, implement, and scale learning that strengthens public libraries as community catalysts (see Figure 6.1).

THE LEARNING PLACE FOR LIBRARIES

Sixteen years after its launch, WebJunction's library learning network continues to be unmatched in size, reach, and impact. In 2018, 26,000 individuals enrolled in WebJunction courses and webinars. This total was a 15 percent increase over that of the previous year and a continued pattern of steady increases over the past five years. In addition, 370,000 unique visitors consumed library-related articles, news, and downloadable resources that WebJunction publishes throughout the year. Reflecting the program's long-standing work as a Gates Foundation grantee, 71 percent of WebJunction users work in a public library. Just

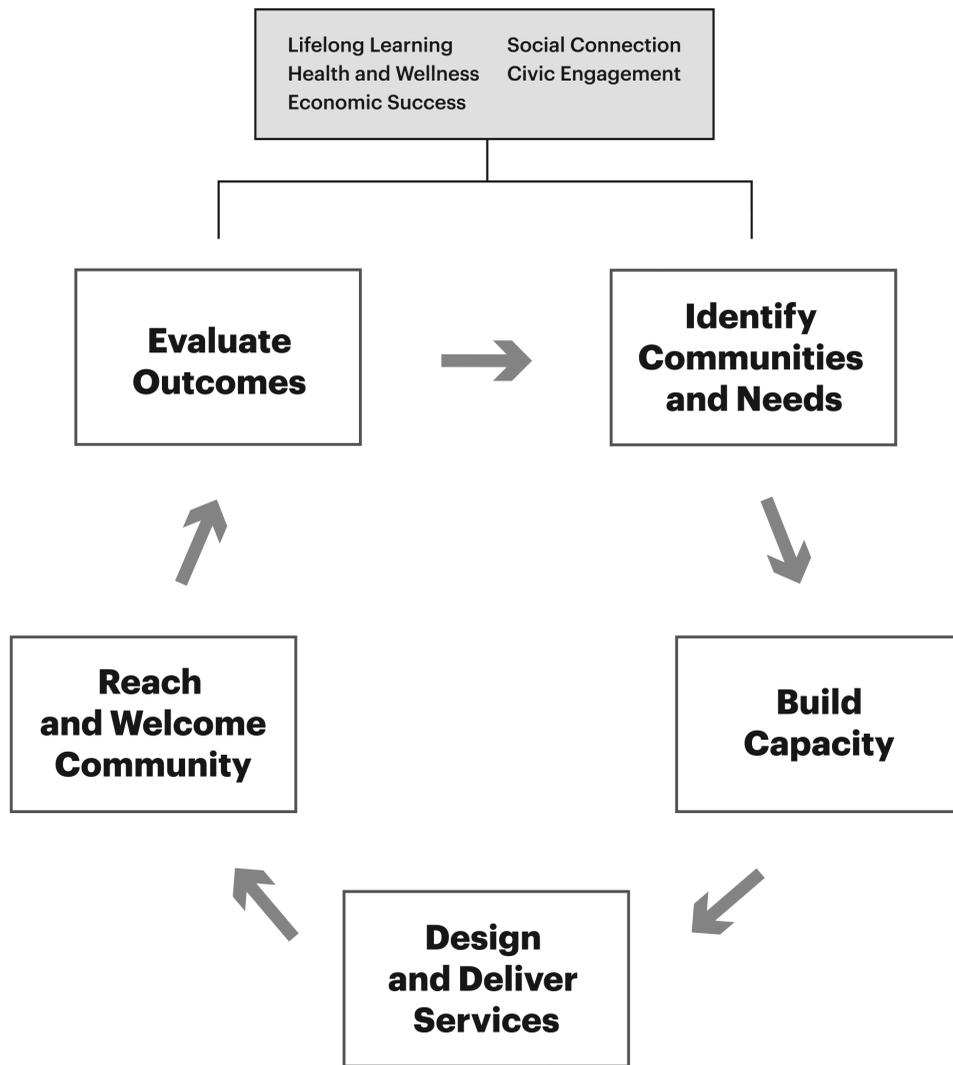


Figure 6.1 Community-Centered Librarianship Life Cycle

under a quarter (23%) of those users work in large library systems serving populations of more than 100,000. Another quarter work in medium-sized systems that serve populations between 25,000 and 99,999. Staff from small libraries (serving populations of less than 25,000) make up 43 percent of WebJunction’s public library users. To put this in perspective, IMLS data indicates that 77 percent of U.S. public library systems serve populations of less than 25,000, and 6 percent serve populations of more than 100,000 (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2015).

More than 90 percent of WebJunction users are located in the United States. Again, this largely reflects the North American and public library priorities of the grants that have funded WebJunction’s marketing and outreach activities. Another

audience-shaping factor is that all WebJunction content is in English; that being said, WebJunction webinars have drawn participants from forty-five countries in six continents. Through OCLC's global library membership, the Gates Foundation Global Libraries program, and international conferences such as Next Library and the International Federation of Library Association's World Library and Information Congress, the WebJunction team has interacted with training representatives from national libraries, regional consortia, and library support organizations. These national and global interactions have not encountered a sustained free or low-cost online learning network or equivalent service for library staff in any other country or region.

Enrollment data indicates that WebJunction users represent a broad range of library roles, from volunteers and part-time paraprofessionals, to reference and patron services staff, to directors and administrators; many users have more than one role at the library, especially in smaller organizations. Users in all stages of their careers, from LIS students through retirement, have participated in WebJunction. There is a fair amount of churn among users, as library workers learn about the resource in a variety of ways. Some LIS schools include an overview of WebJunction for new students. In other cases, a call for participants related to a national-scale project led by OCLC can catch the interest of library staff who might not otherwise think that WebJunction has something relevant to their learning needs. The team has also heard from enthusiastic users who, after moving to a new library, inspire colleagues to check out the program's offerings. These users are often in a new position of authority, and they credit WebJunction for supporting their professional development along their career path.

CORE OFFERINGS

WebJunction has developed and continues to grow a set of core offerings that it shares with its users through the WebJunction.org website.

Courses

WebJunction's biggest draw is its Course Catalog, which is hosted at learn.webjunction.org. In 2018, there were more than twenty thousand people who enrolled in courses in the catalog (Table 6.1). As of this writing, the catalog contains more than 50 self-paced courses and over 270 curated webinar recordings; content is both added and weeded out throughout the year. All catalog offerings were expressly designed for library staff learners. Some of the offerings were created by WebJunction, others in consultation with or by other trusted organizations and agencies. The types of organizations WebJunction works with to develop courses include state libraries, library associations, LIS schools, and nonprofit organizations. Each course is matched to a topic, and users can browse offerings under each of the topics. The exception to the topic-based categorization is when a set of courses are packaged together as a stand-alone curriculum from a single provider.

Table 6.1 Topic areas of WebJunction Course Catalog, with number of courses per topic (2020)

Access and Equity (15)	Media Smart Libraries (3)
Advocacy (7)	Older Adults and Seniors (5)
Alternative Basic Library Education (ABLE) (13)	Organizational Management (24)
Assessment, Evaluation, and Planning (23)	Outreach (10)
Children (24)	Personal Growth and Development (14)
Collections Management (29)	Programming (22)
Create and Deliver Training (8)	Readers' Advisory (5)
Customer Service (9)	Reference (13)
Design 4 Learning: Online Teaching Skills for Library Workers (7)	Social Media (13)
E-books and Devices (11)	Space Planning (5)
Friends, Trustees, and Volunteers (6)	Teaching Patrons (15)
Funding (11)	Technology (19)
Manage Staff Development (10)	Young Adults and Teens (13)
Marketing (14)	

Webinars

WebJunction produces approximately twenty-four live webinars each year. These live events—each one usually one-hour long—are used to raise awareness among library staff of emerging issues that may be affecting communities; to spotlight a library or libraries' innovative practices, programs, or services; or to introduce resources that other nonprofit organizations or agencies have developed that might be useful to libraries. These sessions nearly always feature presenters who can speak to direct library experience, even when the session has been organized by someone outside of the library field. In 2018, more than 8,200 people attended the live sessions, and thousands more watch the recordings of these sessions, which are made available within twenty-four hours of the live event.

With today's relatively easy access to inexpensive Web conferencing applications, the webinar format has been adopted by many organizations, and there is now a plethora of options for library staff from which to choose. In fact, the Wyoming State Library compiles a curated list of free webinars offered by various organizations, which WebJunction publishes to its website each month. However, many webinar producers have not been trained in best practices for online training and online learner engagement; some are missing the basic skills of instructional design, Web conferencing technology, or adult learning theory. Therefore, there is a disconcerting large variation in quality among the webinar-based learning offerings presented to library staff. WebJunction has tried both to model and teach best practices for webinars, and the feedback from users is encouraging. Cumulative results from postwebinar surveys show that attendees rate WebJunction webinars positively for their production and their impact (see Figure 6.2).

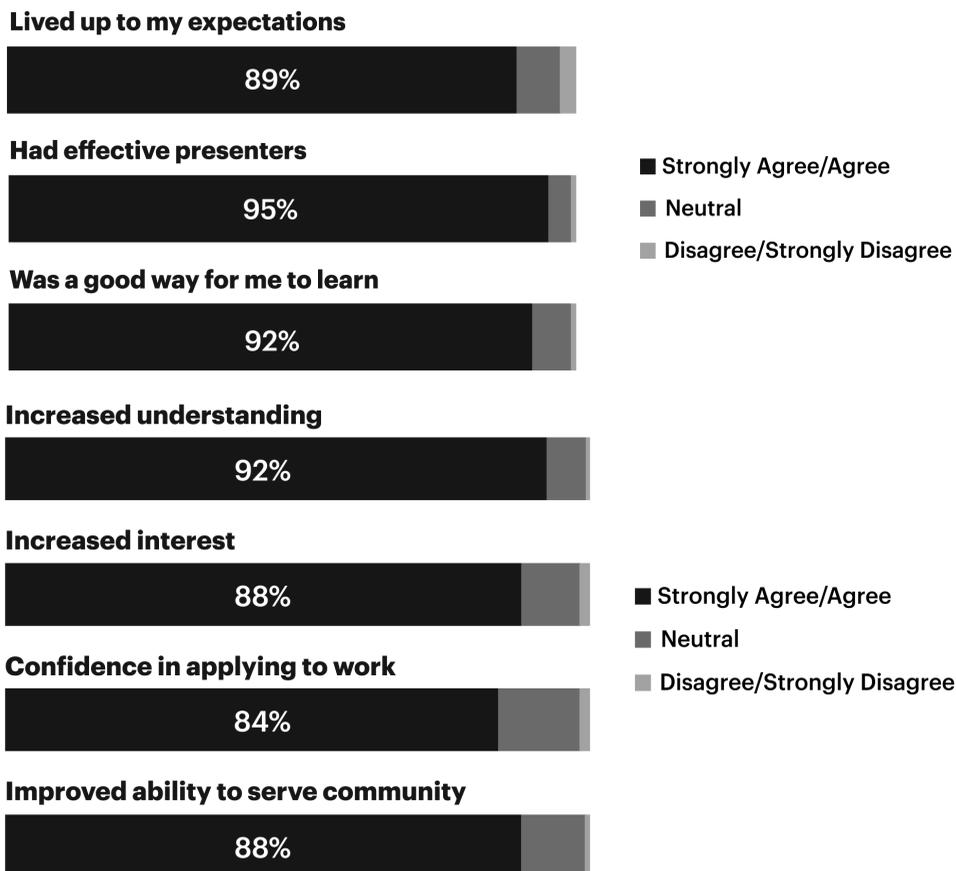


Figure 6.2 Cumulative 2018 Results from Postsession Survey of WebJunction Webinar Attendees (n = 1805)

Topical Resources

Rounding out the rest of WebJunction's core offerings are regularly published articles, news, and downloadable resources. Articles are written by members of the library community, subject matter experts (in topics such as health, finance, government, early learning, etc.) as well as WebJunction staff. The articles often spotlight promising library practice, innovative service models, and issues currently under discussion in the field. News stories keep readers informed of upcoming OCLC and WebJunction offerings and project developments. Staff members collect and curate tool kits, handouts, guides, and more from libraries and other organizations and publish them to WebJunction.org as downloadable files. The website is populated with links to relevant resources published on other websites; many of these links are surfaced by users through webinar chat, discussion forums, and social media. WebJunction staff assess the quality and credibility of suggested links before adding them to the content repository.

All of these materials are organized under topic areas that can be browsed by visitors to the WebJunction website. The topics are organized under four broad categories: Library Service, Management, Staff Training and Development, and Technology (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2 Topic areas of WebJunction Website

Library service	Management	Staff training and development
Access and Equity	Advocacy	Competencies
Children	Assessment, Evaluation, and Planning	Create and Deliver Training
Collections Management	Budgets and Funding	Manage Staff Development
Customer Service	Friends, Trustees, and Volunteers	Personal Growth and Development
Health Happens in Libraries	Job Descriptions	Technology
Marketing	Legal Responsibilities and Ethics	E-books and Devices
Older Adults and Seniors	Organizational Management	Digital Inclusion
Outreach	Partnerships and Collaboration	Managing Public Computers
Programming	Policies	Social Media
Readers' Advisory	Space Planning	Technology Planning
Reference		Website Design
Social Library		
Spanish Speakers		
Teaching Patrons		
Workforce Services		
Young Adults and Teens		

Grant-Funded Learning Initiatives

The Supercharged Storytimes example described at the start of this chapter illustrates how WebJunction uses grant funding to design, pilot, and scale initiatives that go beyond course creation. These projects enable the team to explore the learning needs around a new or emerging topic, try out new training design or delivery modes, or pull together expertise needed to develop a new curriculum. While the team always looks to previous work when formulating new initiatives, WebJunction typically uses grant funding to delve into new territory; thus, the projects are varied in format. For instance, while working on the Supercharged Storytimes project, WebJunction was also delivering two other national training programs.

Wikipedia + Libraries: Better Together

The Wikipedia + Libraries: Better Together project (WebJunction, n.d.) was made possible with funding from OCLC's award from Knight Foundation's 2016 News Challenge and a supplemental grant from the Wikimedia Foundation. The project team led a national cohort of just under three hundred library staff through an online instructor-led course on how to use Wikipedia to teach information literacy and research skills and how to connect local knowledge and resources with the world through Wikipedia. The project was executed in several phases: (1) hire a Wikipedian-in-Residence to serve as a consultant and copresenter of the material and to liaise with the Wikipedia community; (2) raise awareness of and

interest in the topic among public libraries so that they understood why learning about Wikipedia would be of benefit to them, their libraries, and their community members; draw from interviews with librarians who had excellent examples of how they used Wikipedia in interesting ways; (3) create the course and deliver it in six live online sessions over nine weeks; (4) gather examples of how the participants were applying the learning in their communities; (5) post the curricular materials for other trainers to adapt and reuse to teach others. The team is now working on several adaptations to the course for other library types and other countries.

Small Libraries Create Smart Spaces

With a grant from IMLS and in partnership with the Association for Rural & Small Libraries, WebJunction guided fifteen small libraries in twelve U.S. states as they applied design thinking principles to create a space for active social learning at the library (WebJunction, n.d.). The libraries were selected through a competitive application process. Each participant committed to attending thirteen live online sessions to complete seven modules over the fifteen-month period of engagement. Each session was presented by WebJunction project staff, with consultants brought in to present special topics. Sessions within modules six and seven were spread out over nearly a year while participants planned and executed their space design projects; over this time period, the cohort was gathered intermittently to share process and discuss their experiences. The stories of the libraries' transformations were documented and published on WebJunction. The positive results from the participating libraries led IMLS to award OCLC supplemental funding for WebJunction to continue the project with a second round of libraries. Members of the first cohort enthusiastically agreed to serve as peer mentors for the second round of participants, which is getting underway as of this writing (OCLC, 2019).

Training Consultation

WebJunction offers its platform and expertise to other organizations that are undertaking training initiatives or grant projects that include a training element. Their consultation may include researching learning needs, coaching instructors, designing curriculum, hosting instructor-led courses or webinars, designing self-paced courses, or promoting courses to WebJunction's primary audience of U.S. public library staff. The rest of this chapter will provide details about how WebJunction approaches training and how organizations can use WebJunction to provide more sustainable and wider-reaching professional development.

WEBJUNCTION'S APPROACH TO ADULT LEARNING

Just as WebJunction's mission evolved over time, WebJunction staff have drawn on their accumulated experience with constructing learning experiences to hone

the approach to adult learning. The following principles are incorporated into the design of each learning offering to make it human centered, to make it expandable, and to make it last (see Figure 6.3).

Design for Continuous Learning

No schooling can prepare us for all the skills needed for library work, and those skills are ever-evolving. Everyone working in the library profession must be tapped in to resources that can help keep them up-to-date and moving forward. This means that professional development and continuing education must be relevant, accessible, and adaptable to the working professional's schedule and learning context.

Design to Transform

Training that only focuses on transferring knowledge or teaching a specific skill is likely to miss a key ingredient to learning: confidence. By recognizing and addressing learners as feeling human beings, instruction can help them embrace their newly gained knowledge or skills with a commitment to put it into action.

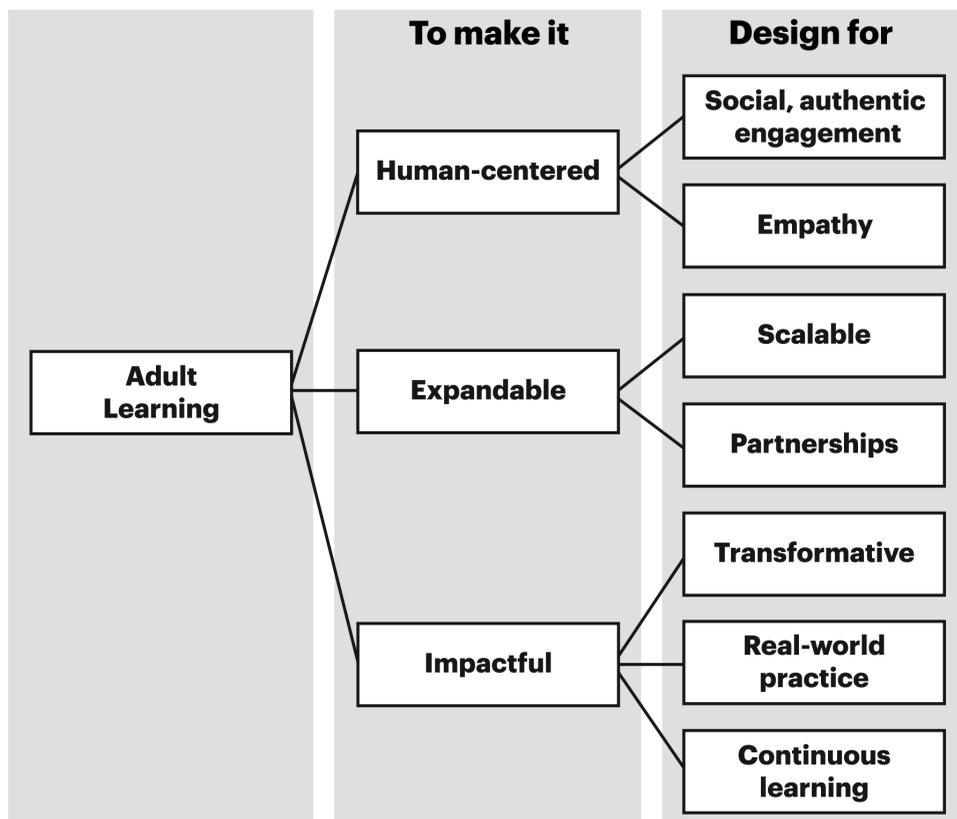


Figure 6.3 WebJunction Principles for Designing Adult Learning

When learning achievements are recognized and celebrated, the learner is more likely to feel empowered to adopt a transformative mind-set that can grow and ripple outward through the library and into the community.

Design for Real-World Practice

Library workers—as with most adult learners—are seeking immediately applicable information that will help them in their work or life. Ground the curriculum with real-world examples, preferably presented by people with direct experience with those examples. This does not mean that concepts and theories have no place in instruction; it does mean that instructors should be able to answer these three questions on behalf of the learners: What’s in it for me? What’s in it for my library? What’s in it for my community?

Design for Social, Authentic Engagement

Human beings need social connection, and the online environment both helps and thwarts this need. Respect that learners fall along a spectrum of online engagement, from silent watchers, to occasional posters, to highly interactive peer mentors. The team designs options for interaction that support this whole range. Learners should not be forced to interact, and not everyone finds online engagement as equally stimulating; however, by offering a variety of engagement tools and activities in a safe, supportive space, learners are encouraged to discover which ones help them to express themselves authentically in a way that allows them to be seen and heard.

Design with Empathy

By respecting learners as individuals who have unique perspectives and situated knowledge, the learning format, content, and presentation will be more inclusive and accessible. It is important to recognize that learners bring their own wisdom and experiences that instructors and other participants can learn from and to make room for that exchange. As instructional designers and learning facilitators, it is the job of WebJunction staff members to continuously examine their personal perspectives and the team’s collective practices for unconscious bias and other blind spots that may be impeding members of the library community from feeling seen, heard, or welcome to learning spaces.

Design for Scale

The WebJunction team brings people together to share. By providing time and space for library staff to listen to and learn from peers from across the United States and beyond. They encourage library workers to share their know-how, problem solve together, and build a support network across the miles. WebJunction

listens too and incorporates real solutions from libraries across the world into its training programs.

Design with Partners

It is likely rare that a single organization has the training expertise, the topic expertise, the ability to reach everyone with the need to learn about the topic, and the capacity to leverage all three of those strengths. Working with others can help to build and extend capacity. There are many ways to partner, for example, forming an advisory group, contracting with a specialist to deliver an aspect of the project, or using another organization's communication channels to reach a wider audience. WebJunction has relied on partnerships to deliver large-scale, innovative initiatives that they could not do on their own, and they have been a resource for other organizations that wish to do the same.

WORKING WITH A PD PARTNER: DISCOVER, DECIDE, DOCUMENT

Each member of the WebJunction learning team (including the authors) has worked for the WebJunction program for more than a dozen years. Individual team members bring a range of skills and expertise, including instructional design, online community management, writing and editing, presentation skills, knowledge of learning management systems, and formal library education and experience (Figure 6.4). Alongside this team of veteran staff, the grant-funded projects often allow the option to bring in additional skills and perspectives with temporary staff who become valued, integral members of the team for the duration of their time with the project. Over the years of working closely together, the team has developed its strong collaborative mind-set and approach to online learning that has become imprinted in their DNA; this helps them offer a consistent experience to organizations with which they work.

To come to a shared understanding with partners about the expectations, goals, resources, and constraints of a project, the process starts with a discovery conversation with the designated stakeholders of an organization to get clear about the timeline for the project, the target audience, the learning outcomes, and other goals for the organization or dependencies that are at play. This initial conversation will also delve into specific elements of the deliverables that need to be defined so that a scope of work document can be created. For example, if training is the output, does the organization wish the format to be self-paced, instructor-led, or blended format—and why? Will there be an evaluation component to the project, and, if so, what and when will it measure and through what type of instruments? The discussion may also include options for interactivity and a community of practice that could be designed into the project. Prospective clients will be asked questions to define roles and expectations for both WebJunction and the client organization; for example, which organization is responsible for marketing and promotion, and, in the case of a course, will it be hosted in WebJunction's LMS or

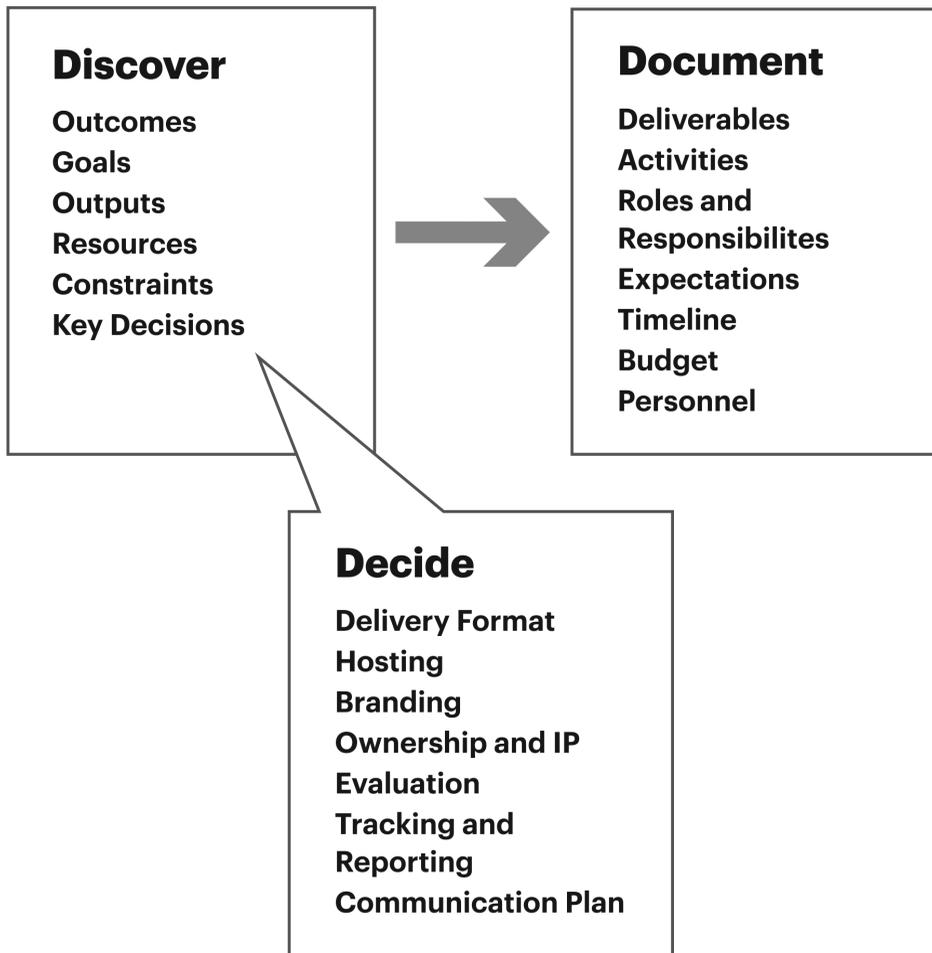


Figure 6.4 Working with a PD Partner: Discover, Decide, and Document

in the client's? This input informs a scope of work document with an estimated budget and timeline to complete, which can be used for the basis of a contract between OCLC and the organization. For organizations that are discussing partnerships with another training organization, consider including these aspects in the scope of work:

- Check-ins at milestone points, to allow for the opportunity to make adjustments before the deliverable is completed.
- Time for beta testing. This involves recruiting people who were not involved in the creation of the course to run through the content with fresh eyes. Beta testers are encouraged to provide feedback about the entire experience, and this information can be used to improve the content before releasing it publicly. When possible, it is appropriate to provide a small honorarium in appreciation of the tester's time and effort.
- Details of accessibility requirements and how those will be addressed.

DELIVERY FORMAT DECISIONS

There are several factors to consider when deciding how best to deliver learning, with *scalability* and *sustainability* being two key ones. In addition, the amount of engagement desired from learners, the budget available to support the development of the course, and the length of time staff are available to support delivery will also affect the choice of format. Use the early discovery discussions with your training partner(s) to uncover the best design approach that meets the goals and the constraints of the project. Face-to-face training is a delivery mode that is still widely used, because its scalability is quite limited (in light of the expense required to conduct the number of in-person training sessions that would be needed to reach a large number of learners), this exploration will focus on styles of online training.

Asynchronous, Self-Paced Training

Courses in which a learner may enroll outside of a set schedule to fit around their availability and preferred pace are referred to as *asynchronous* and *self-paced*. In the past, self-paced courses have been available in DVD or other physical formats; however, today, they are almost exclusively available through Web-based catalogs. The training can be designed to take the learner as few as ten minutes or more than ten hours to complete, depending on the content and requirements. Although there are no instructors guiding the learners in real time while they are going through the material, there can still be activities such as quizzes or reflection questions that encourage the learners to apply something they learned in the content. And, such as with the Supercharged Storytimes example, peer groups can take a self-paced course together, and a course host can offer a discussion space for individual learners to connect with each other for informational peer mentoring and support.

The format of asynchronous, self-paced training can vary quite widely. The WebJunction Course Catalog has examples of at least four different styles of such content, all of which may be found by searching for the title in the catalog at learn.webjunction.org.

- *Civility Goes Viral*. This is an example of a recorded webinar. This WebJunction-produced session was presented by Valerie Gross and Christie Lassen, of the Howard County Library System, and Sonya Durney, of the Portland Public Library. The webinar was recorded in Webex (other webinar software tools have similar recording functionality). As with all WebJunction webinars, a webinar producer edited the recording to remove the general announcements and technical support information that occurs at the start of each session, neither of which is useful to those viewing the recording. Participants are only able to view and listen to the recorded content; there is no way to join in the interactivity that the live sessions' attendees participated in. Learners can, however, read through the chat transcript from the live session, and they have access to the closed-captioning transcript, as well. In support of live and recorded webinars, a Learner Guide is often created. This guide aids

self-directed learning on the topic and builds on the information shared in the webinar. Learner Guides include several questions or activities focused on the webinar topic; these can be used by an individual or as part of a tool set to facilitate a group conversation around a topic.

- *Extreme Customer Service, Every Time.* This content started as a WebJunction-produced webinar presented by Gretchen Caserotti, of the Darien Public Library. As this was a very popular recording and topic, WebJunction wanted to enhance it further. Using software from Articulate, an instructional designer chunked the webinar into several modules, added interactivities, and repackaged the content into an experience that presents more like a self-paced course.
- *Media Smart Libraries.* Created through a partnership with the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, this content helps participants gain skills in using, analyzing, and creating digital media and film. The content for these three modules was built into WebJunction's Moodle LMS. WebJunction worked with the University of Rhode Island team to translate an in-person course to self-paced content that could be hosted in their course catalog. Translating a face-to-face course into online content requires the course developers to consider how to modify the activities and experiences for the learner to address the lack of face-to-face communication and take advantage of tools available in a virtual learning environment. Not all the activities from a face-to-face course will translate well to the online environment, and the needs and experience of the learner must be considered.
- *Shelving with Dewey.* This course was originally created through the LibraryU program that had been led by the Illinois Library Systems and the Illinois State Library. The course was popular, but the format had become quite outdated. As WebJunction was the legacy host for LibraryU's courses, it decided to invest time into refreshing the most-used courses. The courses were created using Articulate software, which includes tools for designing interactive elements to provide a dynamic experience for the learners. However, the software is relatively expensive and requires technical expertise to use, which is an important consideration for both the original creation of the content and future updates to the content. Course designers can include many features in courses created with Articulate, including narration and closed-captioning, if it meets the needs of the project.

The process for creating each of these examples was quite different, as were the time, materials, and expertise needed. For a single one-hour webinar, it could take approximately twelve hours to develop the content and schedule and to deliver and post the recording. On the other hand, a resource such as *Shelving with Dewey*, which is an interactive course designed to take one hour for learners to complete, could easily require sixty hours of staff time for design and development over several weeks, and it also requires specialized skills and software.

Because asynchronous training is designed for learners to access on an ongoing basis, the potential for scale is high as long as learners know where to find it and are able to access it. If the course is hosted on a bespoke website that may be shut

down after the end of a grant project, then the sustainability of the content is threatened. Likewise, if the content covered by the course is likely to quickly become obsolete or require updates in the near term, then that should be factored into the selected format.

Synchronous Training

Synchronous courses include the guidance of an instructor and sometimes additional subject matter experts who present the content live to a group of learners, often referred to as a *cohort*. Each member of the cohort will enroll in a specific timebound instance of the course, and the synchronous training sessions are produced with online Web conferencing software, such as Webex, Zoom, or Adobe Connect. Times and dates are scheduled for the cohort to meet together and explore the content; the live sessions and related activities may be done over the course of several weeks or in a single session.

A key advantage to the synchronous training format is that instructors can create opportunities for the learners to engage and learn from each other in real time. This can be accomplished using tools in the Web conferencing software that allow for online interaction, such as polling, chat, and whiteboarding. The cohort approach can provide a more enriching experience for learners when the group is successfully engaged. Adult learners appreciate the opportunity to hear about the experiences of their colleagues in regard to the training topic and the ability to get feedback on issues that they are encountering.

The successful delivery of synchronous training requires having the requisite time, technology, and expertise. The delivery of a single online session to a group of twenty-five participants requires a learning management system, Web conferencing software, a trainer to present the content at the scheduled time, and, preferably, a producer to manage any technical support issues that surface. If a much larger cohort is expected, additional resources may be needed to monitor and guide chat and other discussion spaces and to respond to questions. This can all take weeks to plan, schedule, and deliver, which can come up against budget or resource constraints.

CHALLENGES TO ONLINE LEARNING

No matter the delivery style, online learners can be faced with numerous distractions that include e-mail, phone calls, colleagues stopping by their desks with questions, or customers who need attention. Trainers must set the expectation that the learner has committed to being present and participating in the learning sessions. It is recommended that learners who enroll in courses designed to last several weeks get buy-in and support from their managers. To aid in this, WebJunction outlines the time and effort commitment to the learners when they register for the training so that expectations are clear up front.

While Web-based learning has expanded opportunities and created more options for learning, technology can present some challenges for both learners and

presenters. These can include issues with connectivity, such as the quality of audio or video, and learning how to use the features of the software. For presenters, scheduling a practice session allows time for people new to online learning applications to explore the functionality and become comfortable with it prior to needing to do it with a live audience of perhaps hundreds of their peers. Technical support questions and problems during live sessions can be disruptive to the flow of the content. WebJunction has a team member serve as a dedicated technical support point of contact who works with participants one-on-one to solve any technical support issues. This frees up the host and presenter to focus on the session's learning content and avoids having technical issues take over the chat space. Participants are asked to join the session five to ten minutes prior to the official start time so that they can get settled in, check their audio and visual connections, and get any technical issues resolved.

Live video that shows the speaker while they are presenting an online session can be a great way to forge a stronger connection between the presenter and the attendees. However, experience has shown that smaller libraries often do not have the bandwidth required for an adequate and consistent video feed; therefore, WebJunction generally avoids it for training sessions. The absence of video and the ability to take in the nonverbal communication that face-to-face interaction allows for means that it takes longer to develop rapport between instructor and learners, particularly in courses designed to last several weeks.

Designers and trainers should also consider accessibility factors that will enable as many users as possible to participate and benefit from the content. In live webinars, scheduling a closed-captioning service to capture the presentation is one way to support participants who have low or no hearing ability. Captioning costs should be factored into the budget and marketed to participants. Making all of the presentation materials (such as PowerPoint slides) available for download in advance of the live session allows users to magnify or otherwise adjust how the slides are presented to meet their vision needs.

HOSTING CONTENT

Making the most of online courses includes deciding how the content will be hosted and made available to learners. In some cases, posting the content on a website is a viable option, but that can limit the information that can be collected about learners and their experience. Large-scale learning programs are better served by a LMS, which is designed to organize, administrate, and share learning content. The Moodle LMS that WebJunction uses is an open-source platform that is updated and maintained by a broad community of developers.

Branding and Ownership of PD Content

The diversity of developers and creators that produced the course content in the WebJunction Course Catalog is a strength. When working with other organizations to codevelop learning content, there are different options for how the course

is branded and described to credit the organizations involved. If WebJunction is simply hosting the content created by another organization, the course will retain the sole branding of its creator. If the content was developed through a partnership, then the groups reach an agreement about how to credit all partners involved. If the content was created as part of a grant, then the funding agency will be given the proper acknowledgment. When WebJunction hosts content created by other organizations, use of Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike licensing is encouraged to allow others to reuse and adapt the content for their local, noncommercial purposes. This is not mandatory; organizations can include the licensing restrictions that they prefer. These decisions of copyright and ownership of intellectual property are essential to address when working with a content delivery partner.

Marketing and Promotion Channels: Typical Results

How you market a learning opportunity will impact who will take advantage of it, so it is important to consider the appropriate channels for raising awareness among the learners you wish to reach. These learners could be from a limited and known audience, such as a regional area within a state; or the desire may be to get participants from a wide variety of locations. WebJunction uses its monthly e-newsletter, *Crossroads*, which has more than twenty-one thousand subscribers, to inform users about new learning opportunities. State library agencies, library associations, and other library support organizations are also engaged to further widen the audience that receives information about upcoming opportunities. To make cross promotion as easy as possible, WebJunction staff may provide text, links, and images that can easily be posted into social media or included in newsletters. Topical Listservs, Facebook groups, and other distribution clusters can also help reach the intended audience. It is also important to remember that marketing is an ongoing effort. New subscribers join mailing lists or subscribe to newsletters, and reminders of WebJunction's core offerings may be old news to some and new information for others. Frequent, clear, and consistent communication about learning opportunities will catch those who may have new capacity or new needs for learning that makes the message more applicable than it did in the past.

ASSESSMENT METHODS AND REPORTING CAPABILITIES

Determining what you need to assess from the learner is important to define during the planning phase of your training project. What, if anything, do you need to know about the learners and their activities? Do you need to track who they are and where they come from? What information will help you improve the training?

Reflection Questions

One technique that WebJunction uses is to include reflection questions that are embedded into a course. These questions are open-ended and designed to allow

the learners to think about how to apply what they have learned. These questions can be as general as, “What is one thing that you can do right away to apply what you learned?” or a bit more directive, such as, “What programs at your library could benefit from including a patron evaluation?” Or, the questions can encourage learners to consider the perspectives of their community and patrons, such as, “Who do you anticipate will resist the removal of books or other familiar objects when your library starts the weeding project? What will you say to them?” These reflection questions are not graded and generally are not reviewed by anyone other than other participants, but they still present an opportunity to be engaged with the content and reinforce learning.

Quizzes

A quiz can be used to help the learners (and the course designers) gauge whether they have retained information from the course and to reinforce their learning. There are different formats that a quiz can take. For example, it could be required that the learners complete a multiple-choice quiz before they can move on to the next course module. Or they may need to pass a quiz to receive a certificate of completion. With software such as the Articulate suite, quizzes can be built inside of the course. Another option is to build it into the functionality of the LMS. Both options can collect data about the users’ responses, but one option may be better for implementation, which is something to explore during the discovery phase of your project.

Evaluation

As with any training, the inclusion of an evaluation for learners can help the course developers assess both the formative and summative outcomes of the course, which can in turn aid decisions about updates to either the design or the content of the course. Learners may identify aspects of the course that they found impactful or that was less important to their needs. Evaluations can also help to demonstrate the impact to funders and decision-makers about future investments.

Reporting capabilities in an LMS can provide data on overall usage and individual user activity; reports can be delivered via e-mail or exported on demand. In WebJunction’s Course Catalog, learners create user accounts; this allows for an accumulated history of each user’s course enrollments, progress on learning activities, and course completions. The LMS can be configured to track this information in a variety of ways. WebJunction’s training partners are often interested in the total number of enrollments and completions. The issue of completions can be quite complicated because of the variables involved in setting this up. Adult learners approach learning very differently, so focusing on completion data may not provide a full picture of the learners’ experience. If a particular aspect of course completion is important to measure, this requirement should be surfaced with the designers and LMS administrators so that the required data is tracked.

Certificates of Completion

WebJunction issues certificates to all learners who attend live webinars and to those who complete a course in the Course Catalog. The webinar certificates are issued via e-mail; the learners may either print or save the PDF-format certificate for their records. In the Course Catalog, the LMS tracks learners' progress and completion and keeps a copies of the certificates on file for the learners to access on demand. Organizations that require library staff to earn continuing education credits often require learners to provide these certificates. WebJunction encourages all learners to check with their local agency to determine whether the courses they are interested in will qualify for CE credits.

CONCLUSION

Although this chapter covers a wide range of factors and considerations for developing online professional development, it is not meant to be daunting. Rather, the hope is that you will be encouraged to think big when considering scale and long term when considering sustainability. Also remember that you do not have to go it alone; pooling resources and expertise to deliver quality professional development to the library field can bring the benefits and opportunities to more learners. There are partners to help you achieve this vision; reach out, explore your options, and see what will work best for your needs.

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