

*Computer Training for Common Tasks:  
A Proposal for On-Site “Mini” Training Sessions  
for Personnel at the New Brunswick Libraries*

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## Computer Training for Common Tasks: A Proposal for On-Site “Mini” Training Sessions for Personnel at the New Brunswick Libraries

### *Summary:*

As PC Coordinators at the four main units of the New Brunswick Libraries (NBL), each of us is regularly approached with requests for information about, or assistance with, basic computer issues. We have found, over time, that the same issues or types of issues are being encountered repeatedly and in each of the units. This repetition of questions, both from individuals and from groups of individuals, serves to identify common concerns that should be addressed in a more formalized environment.

Often, it is taken for granted that all library employees have comparable skill levels, when in fact, this is not actually the case. Users range from true novices to highly skilled programmers, and yet there are few accessible venues for bridging this gap.

Other University organizations, such as RUCS and the Teaching Excellence Center, offer more advanced courses on specific applications, but offer little or nothing to address day-to-day computer concerns. There are also excellent training and development opportunities available through the Libraries, but they also do not generally address the most common day-to-day issues.

Even in cases where relevant instructional opportunities do exist, employees are often unwilling or unable to attend due to time constraints created by their working environment. Some common concerns are:

- using lunch breaks for work-related activities (e.g., brown bag lunches);
- lack of available staff to cover for absences caused by training activities;
- inability to take sufficient time away from regular work to attend sessions that last for extended periods of time; and,
- the need to allot extra time for travel and parking when sessions occur at locations other than the home library of the staff member.

Because we are immediately available, and can answer questions on a case by case basis, we often find ourselves instructing our coworkers on the same issues over time. Generally, this occurs in one of two ways:

- a. An issue is resolved for one employee, but is then experienced by another a short time later, then another, etc.
- b. A common issue, resolved in January, may reappear in December, requiring re-training on the same topic.

While these one-on-one training sessions are commonplace for the New Brunswick PC Coordination Team (NBPC), we would like to recommend a more formalized training experience. Instruction on using basic Windows, managing e-mail folders, and other similar topics has potential benefits for staff members throughout the Libraries. The core of the proposal is the development of a series of “mini” training opportunities for the professional development of the staff and faculty of the Libraries. These sessions would attempt to address many of the “day-to-day” computer issues that affect library employees by using “bite-sized,” smaller sessions than are generally used. Through the formalization of this training program, we hope to initiate a series of training sessions and “refreshers” that will address the concerns of library staff while circumventing some of the problems that currently prevent staff from taking full advantage of available training opportunities.

### **Program:**

In order to address the needs of library staff and to provide more comprehensive training in day-to-day computer maintenance, the NBPC Team extends the following proposal:

#### ***Short, on-site sessions, coordinated with library staff availability:***

It is our belief that users will be more likely to attend sessions that provide “bite-sized” portions of information on a particular topic. These shorter and more focused sessions will allow more flexibility of scheduling, and make attendance more convenient.

The major features of the plan are as follows:

- a. *45 minutes to 1 hour long sessions.* By restricting the time commitment, we can attract attendees who do not have the opportunity to spend an extended time away from their regular duties.
- b. *On-site sessions.* By bringing the sessions to the 4 main NBL units (Alexander, Douglass, Kilmer, and LSM), the majority of employees will not be required to travel, thereby increasing the possibility that *all* interested parties can attend (especially where student coverage is available).
- c. *Staff scheduled sessions.* By coordinating class times with library staff at individual locations, it will be possible to optimize class size and attendance. Sessions will need to be scheduled with as much input from the libraries involved as possible. A main contact or contacts within each library will be identified to assist with this planning.

#### ***Sessions taught by peers and coordinated through a main office:***

Two essential elements of the proposal are that the sessions be efficiently coordinated and that they utilize existing staff and faculty as trainers. The Libraries Office of Training and Development is ideally suited to see that both requirements are met. Since there are many library employees who possess the skills and knowledge to assist their fellow users in resolving day-to-

day computer issues, it seems obvious that we should take advantage of those abilities. It will be an opportunity for staff to share their knowledge and to take a more active role in bringing all of NBL up to a more equal skill level.

***Proposed Session Topics:***

- Basic Windows:  
(drag & drop, right-clicking, creating shortcuts, etc.)
- Backing-Up Files:  
(use of S: & T: drives, CDs, Zip drives, etc.)
- File Organization:  
(using folders, logical naming, and organization)
- Managing Netscape Mail:  
(mail filters, e-mail etiquette, mail folders, etc.)
- Address Book Management:  
(mailing lists, message addressing, etc.)
- Using Webtools:  
(SPAM filter, vacation message, quota check, etc.)
- Using SSH:  
(checking e-mail and using FTP)
- Listserv Use:  
(setting up and managing departmental listservs; using listservs; finding out which listservs you're subscribed to)
- Protecting Your Computer:  
(virus scan, locking workstations, password protection, etc.)
- Setting Up a Website:  
(basic HTML, setting up RCI server space, etc.)
- Basic Q & A:  
(question & answer session about any topic)
- Msoffice Mini-Sessions:  
(potential future sessions covering specific aspects of the various Microsoft applications)

**Budget**

By utilizing resources that already exist within the library system, the cost of this proposal can be kept to a minimum. Much of the budget comes in the form of staff time. Working closely with the Libraries Training and Learning Coordinator, we hope to draw interested parties to teach these sessions, while making their impact as high as possible by condensing the content and timeframe of each class.

**Timeline**

In order to move forward and determine the viability of this proposal, communication must immediately be established with the Libraries Training and Learning Coordinator. Members of the NBPC Team will need to meet with her to discuss the feasibility and planning requirements for each session.

Should the proposal ultimately be accepted, a test run will need to take place during the spring of 2004. Two or three mini-sessions will be offered for the staff and librarians at each of the four main New Brunswick libraries. Each of these test sessions will include a short entry and exit survey to determine user expectation and satisfaction with the classes. Users will also be presented with a list of potential classes and asked to indicate those that are of interest, as well as to suggest additional ideas. Ideally, additional instructors will also be identified from the survey.

By the summer of 2004, a final plan should be in place, and regular sessions can be scheduled at each of the libraries.