

Editorial

Connecting with Co-workers to Build Trust

I read Denise Brush's "Trust in Academic Libraries: How to Build Connections between New Co-workers," in the April 2024 issue of *College & Research Libraries News*.¹ Many of her points resonated with my own experiences working in my institution's library. Trust has become a recurrent theme—across many professions' organizational cultures—since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Trust can erode when there is a lack of connection with other library staff, new or veteran. The library is constantly growing, changing, or adapting to sync with the institutional community's research and instructional needs, current and anticipatory; and new colleagues—across various departments—arrive as steadily long-time library staff retire, or seek new opportunities. Such constant change and growth can make it challenging to build connections with new employees.

Brush writes that:

A library where a large percentage of the employees are new must build trust. Employees who have worked together for a long time have shared understandings, but when new employees join the organization, they must develop relationships with their co-workers before there can be mutual trust (157).

Connecting with colleagues—getting to know them, to understand their work, and to find ways to work together—is very important, but it can be difficult to do. Library staff working varying schedules—such as working from home and working on-site on different days—impacts when, and how often, colleagues see each other. This can make it difficult to build trust in the library. As Brush writes, libraries must intentionally plan events or other ways for colleagues to connect. Otherwise, the lack of connections can be detrimental to the library's organizational culture. In addition to social events and social media platforms for connecting, I would suggest developing cross-departmental task forces, working groups, or other kinds of committees to meet shared work goals. Working together towards shared goals—whether they are part of a strategic plan goal or objective—is invaluable for many reasons. Not only does working together across departments increase the quality of the work outputs, due to the diversity of perspectives, it also organically allows for opportunities to get to know one's colleagues as people, and to learn about their work, which helps establish trust. In addition, inter-departmental work breaks down silos, and requires colleagues to consider different department's need while collaborating to achieve mutual work goals. Finally, working together across departments fosters future collaborations.

While it is essential to get to know colleagues through library-wide social events, be they virtual or physical, working on projects—across different departments but toward a common goal—can also be a powerful way to build connections and trust between colleagues. When change, evolving services, and having library spaces in flux are the norm, library employees

and leadership cannot take for granted that all coworkers in the organization know, or trust, one other. In addition to building connections socially, libraries should strive to build professional connections, and prioritizing inclusive, goal-oriented projects across departments is a natural way to do this. Through building connections between colleagues, a library also builds trust in its organizational culture.

Note

1. Denise Brush, "Trust in Academic Libraries: How to Build Connections between New Co-workers," *College & Research Libraries News* 85, no. 4 (2024): 157–159, <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.85.4.158>