

## DSG Part 7: It's not the the End of the World

During all these years, the Lab grew with workers, and I kept my nose to the grindstone, managing staff and teaching workshops. There were new devices streaming into the libraries because patrons were confused and needed help. We became a solid team, answered thousands of questions, and in doing so, cemented a place for the Training Department to thrive in the public library setting.

However, that old general rule still applies: "Murphy's Law is always in effect." Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. In this case, it wasn't that the Training Lab was a failed experiment. If anything, we proved how well libraries could provide needed training in a comfortable environment! We were highly successful and had to start booking workshops almost *a year* in advance.

But taxes and money and budgets are all important, and our library was getting *another* budget cut. The second within my working years there.

Scuttlebutt abounded, and although the Training Lab team was very busy, we worried a bit. Surely, we were doing fine, our service was proven both *necessary* and *outstanding*. This is not a subjective judgement by me; we got constant feedback from our students who filled in class evaluations, and those were 99% *sterling*. Excellence abounded regardless of the workshop or trainer, indicating that all the trainers were doing a fine job. Our libraries booked our service *constantly*, and with myself and two part-time clerks, we could hardly keep up with the library and patron demand. All of this information was compiled into a monthly report that went up to the Library Board, so they knew we were doing very well.

It was both busy and fun, until it wasn't fun anymore. I do not envy those who had to tell others they lost their jobs; I was one of the ones laid off, and I am still thankful I was not in a position to tell any of my clerks they lost their jobs. That was for the higher administrators.

To make matters worse, the layoffs were going to happen during the major holiday season: late October/early November. Of course, the staff whispers started around August of that year, and since I had never experienced a layoff, I was naive and didn't pay too much attention to any of it. Ironically, I had a current resume, but I only made it in order to have a handy example for one of my classes. "Unprepared" would be an understatement for me.

As the rumor mill ground on, I started to wonder who would take my place. I knew I was going to be laid off; people who worked there longer than I had were worried about their places, so it was just a matter of time.

I was in a strange position: Even knowing I would be laid off and not have my current role, I *desperately wanted the Training Lab to succeed*. I had invested the sum total of my professional life in it, and wanted the Lab to continue. I helped rebuild, rebrand, and reinvigorate the service after it was cut in that first budget crunch. It was a necessary and useful service for our libraries!

With this in mind, I found myself desperate to know my replacement. Since this had been the second round of layoffs within about five years, the administration was hesitant to tell anyone who might fill

another's position. There had been much acrimony the first time around and, of course, this makes sense! It's an extraordinarily difficult time for all involved, and emotions run very hot. I was no different, but I knew I'd come out on the other side of this OK. My home finances were stable, and I was on the hunt for another job. More on that later.

So, knowing I was now on the chopping block, I pushed my bosses to tell me my replacement's name. I stressed that I had no hard feelings towards that person; I chose to concentrate on getting the Lab shipshape and ready for transfer. It was hard; I am not trying to portray myself as a saint here. My mood swings were difficult to control and the grief process is *real*. At work I was pretty professional, at home I worked on controlling myself and not spewing emotions all over my family. I was perpetually exhausted.

Finally, after more than a week of pestering my boss, and several conversations that danced around the very *gender* of my replacement ("they" pronoun was used exclusively), I found out who would replace me.

*She's perfect!* She and I were actually professionally acquainted and if I were the one to choose my successor, I could not have done better.

I was actually very happy for her. In short, the Training Lab would be in the hands of a librarian who liked technology and understood the importance of the service we worked so hard to build. She actually sat in with several classes, and I was able to tell her about my training methods for new hires and how we compiled our statistics for our monthly reports. We got along well during the transition time.

She was the one who hit me with some fascinating news. As we were talking, I found out that the clerk/trainer positions were going to be changed. I felt my eyebrows raise, and she smiled. The Lab would now be overseen by her, a full-time librarian, and she would be overseeing not *two library clerks*, but *three part-time librarians* as trainers *and a senior page*, who served as a class assistant. If you work in a library, you understand that the Training Lab not only *expanded during a budget cut*, but the Library Board and administration bumped up both the pay scale and training required to be a trainer in the Lab. They found a way to save librarians' jobs, even if it was at a part-time rate.

But not mine, not really. Though I was happy for my replacement, I was still in the process of losing my first professional job; I was losing the job that provided me with so much enrichment: creating, learning, managing, teaching. I saw every library in our system and met dozens of staff members while training *thousands* of patrons on all sorts of new computer devices. Name it. All gone.

In early November, my boss called me into the Human Resources office and that was it. I lost my job, and not just my job, but the effort I had put into *recreating* the Training Lab with a whole new level of service. I lost my work on my handouts, my classes, my staff, my colleagues, my patrons, my time, my libraries, my whole working life.

*Blink. Gone. Now what?*