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#### **People matters No. 4**

It is generally accepted that library workplaces are changing, and that leading and managing these changes offers distinct challenges, both to library leaders and employees. But have you looked beyond generalised statements and examined what is happening in your own workplace? Do you know the characteristics and demographics of your workforce? Chances are you have noticed many of the so-called 'baby boomer' generation are nearing retirement. A new generation will be needed to step up into leadership positions.

Shifting demographics play a significant role. At the University of Saskatchewan, our library workforce is heavily weighted towards the boomers, with 69% of the workforce aged between 45 and 65. Our profile is not atypical. We have a large cohort of older employees with many years of experience and service, but we know our staffing needs in the future will be impacted as staff retire and are replaced by younger generations.

Understanding generational differences has been a key focus for our 'People Plan' (our strategic human resources plan), given that we have four generations working side by side in a shifting environment. Certain characteristics and traits can be attributed to each generation, and these are often reflected in workplace behaviours. For example, the approach of 'baby boomers' and 'generation Y' (born between 1982 and 2000) to new technology in the workplace may be quite different.

Generational differences can sometimes lead to tensions. But knowing and discussing the distinct attitudes, behaviours, expectations, and motivations of each generation can help to reduce tension, maintain balance and productivity, and promote a cohesive workforce.

Time devoted to workforce analysis and planning is time well-invested if we are to understand and secure our libraries' most vital resource – a stable and talented workforce.

#### **[CV box:]**

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