

Shorter Learning Curve for New Staff Members

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<http://www.csm.ornl.gov/Internships/abstracts/RicayeHarris.pdf>

ABSTRACT

Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) has a number of new research programs, including the Center for Computational Sciences' National Leadership Computing Facility recently announced by Secretary of Energy, Spencer Abraham. In order to recruit new staff for these programs, as well as to keep pace with attrition, the laboratory will be hiring a number of new employees.

To help these new employees make an efficient transition into the laboratory, a survey of "new" staff members was developed, administered, and analyzed to determine what information resources, processes, and activities had been either useful or problematic in their first few months at the laboratory.

- Outlined the process
- Conducted informal focus groups to determine scope of survey
- Created web-based survey instrument
- Developed table in Oracle database
- Coded a C program to insert responses from the survey instrument into database
- Generated list of new employees from the personnel database
- Distributed survey to new employees
- Collected responses
- Created data summary web page using Cold Fusion
- Interpreted the data
- Made recommendations

APPLICATIONS

Macromedia Dreamweaver

- HTML
- Design survey
- Tables
- Form

Macromedia Fireworks

- Graphics
- Formatted images to appealing style
- Exported to web-based survey

Structured Query Language (SQL) script

- Designed table within the Oracle database
- Created field names
- Designated type of data each field contained

Crimson Editor

- C program that links survey and database
- Opens database
- Inserts information into database
- Closes database
- Awaits next execution

Cold Fusion

- Output results from survey



RESULTS

- Analyze the data
- Accommodate new employees
- Create new web pages
- Ease stress of new employees
- Enable ORNL to continue as employer of choice

SURVEY

OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY NETWORKING & COMPUTING TECHNOLOGIES

New Staff Web Usability Survey

The goal of this survey is to get a better idea of the types of information new staff members need. This will help us get that information to them faster and with less aggravation in the future. Thanks for taking the time to complete the survey.

The six questions below give you the options of (1) "checking" responses that have been gathered from talking to a few small groups and (2) providing additions or comments in the text box at the end of each section. Please check all the responses that apply and provide any additions or comments you think would be helpful.

1. What sort of information would have been useful to know before arriving at the lab? (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> The location of the laboratory (not in or near town)	<input type="checkbox"/> Meal arrangements (availability of cafeteria, canteen, kitchen facilities-- distance to offsite food)	<input type="checkbox"/> Description of job responsibilities
<input type="checkbox"/> What is there to do in Oak Ridge?	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate of buildings (cold, hot)	<input type="checkbox"/> Distance to parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Consequences of speeding	<input type="checkbox"/> Consequences of sending inappropriate email or inappropriate internet use	<input type="checkbox"/> Description of what new staff member's organization does

Please add any other responses or comments in the box below.

RESULTS

Survey Results and Recommendations

An analysis of the responses to the New Staff Web Usability Survey suggests that the following information resources, processes, and activities had been either particularly useful or problematic for new staff members in their first few months at the laboratory. The items below were those cited most frequently by survey respondents.

It is recommended that at least the most frequently cited strengths be built upon and the most frequently cited difficulties be addressed.

Information that would have been useful to know before arriving at the lab

- Meal arrangements (cafeteria, canteen, kitchen facilities, distance to off-site food)
- Description of job responsibilities
- Description of what new staff member's organization does
- Distance to parking

Activities that would have been helpful to be able to complete before arriving at the lab

- Computer accounts and other access privileges
- Tax forms, financial information
- General employee training

Information that has been hard to find online

- Up-to-date map of the laboratory and parking
- Acronym list
- Information about computer access from home

Online resources that have been particularly useful

- Staff directory
- ORNL Today daily newsletter
- Site Index

Things new staff members have to do online

- Check mail
- Training
- Surveys
- Search for job-related information
- Download software
- Search through research literature
- Look up new terms

Suggestions for improvement

- Up-to-date map of laboratory and parking, make it print-friendly
- A directory of summer students to make new acquaintances easier to find
- Staff directory should include complete information for all staff, even contractors
- Make sure forms include information about where they are to be sent
- Provide more information about local athletic and entertainment options

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