

HORTICULTURE VOLUNTEER RETENTION IN PUBLIC GARDENS

by

Linda L. Jones

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Public Horticulture
Administration

Spring 1998

Copyright 1998 Linda L. Jones
All rights reserved

HORTICULTURE VOLUNTEER RETENTION IN PUBLIC GARDENS


by

Linda L. Jones


Approved:


James E. Swasey, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee


Approved:


James E. Swasey, Ph.D.
Coordinator of The Longwood Graduate Program in Public
Horticulture Administration

Approved:


John Nye, Ph.D.
Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Approved:


John C. Cavanaugh, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Planning

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my gratitude to the Longwood Foundation, Inc. for my fellowship. Through its generous support, this research was made possible. Thanks also go to my thesis committee: Dr. Karen Curtis, Dr. James Swasey, and Mr. Kiran Taunk. They continually supplied me with the guidance necessary to successfully complete this project.

I thank the staff at the case study gardens: Chicago Botanic Garden, Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, and Holden Arboretum. Their willingness to share details of their programs will enable others to understand and improve horticulture volunteer retention. I must also extend appreciation to all the volunteers and coordinators of volunteers whom I have contacted to garner information for this research.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my family, friends and the staff of Longwood Gardens for their moral support and understanding. Particularly my parents, Donnie and Shirley for all of the opportunities they have offered me throughout my life. Finally, I must thank my sisters, Anita and Ruth, who never really understood the research I was doing, but always supplied the reassurance it was worth all the effort.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
ABSTRACT.....	x
Chapter 1	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose.....	2
Characteristics of Nonprofit Organizations.....	3
Importance of Volunteer Retention.....	4
Outline of Thesis.....	5
Chapter 2	
VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT.....	6
Definitions	6
Model of a Volunteer Program.....	7
<i>Philosophy Statement</i>	9
<i>Volunteer Manual</i>	9
<i>Needs Assessment of the Organization</i>	10
<i>Work Descriptions and Volunteer Placement</i>	11
<i>Recruitment</i>	11
<i>Interview and Placement</i>	12
<i>Orientation and Training</i>	13
<i>Volunteer Evaluation</i>	14
<i>Dismissal of Problematic Volunteers</i>	15
<i>Volunteer Program Evaluation</i>	16
<i>Record Keeping</i>	16
<i>Recognition</i>	17

<i>Volunteer and Staff Relations</i>	18
Chapter 3	
RESEARCH METHODS.....	19
Qualitative Research Methods.....	19
Research Procedures.....	20
Case Study Site Selection.....	22
Chapter 4	
DESCRIPTIONS AND DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDY SITES.....	24
Local and Regional Characteristics.....	24
<i>Chicago Botanic Garden</i>	24
<i>Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden</i>	25
<i>Holden Arboretum</i>	26
Organizational Mission Statements.....	27
Organizational Structure.....	28
Organizational Size.....	28
Volunteer Program Size.....	33
Chapter 5	
ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT THE CASE STUDY SITES	39
Volunteer Program Philosophy Statements.....	39
Volunteer Manuals.....	41
Volunteer Opportunities and Work Descriptions.....	42
Recruitment Practices.....	44
Orientation and Training.....	46
Evaluations.....	49
Recognition and Benefits.....	52

Record Keeping.....	53
Chapter 6	
ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY SITES' RETENTION AND TURNOVER RATES..	56
Chicago Botanic Garden.....	57
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden.....	59
Holden Arboretum.....	62
Chapter 7	
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	64
Summary.....	64
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	66
Recommendations for Future Research.....	69
Appendix A	
PUBLIC GARDENS INCLUDED IN THE TELEPHONE SURVEY.....	70
Appendix B	
INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	72
General Background Information.....	72
General Management Issues.....	72
Volunteer Program Mission Statement.....	74
Recruitment.....	74
Work Descriptions.....	74
Volunteer Opportunities.....	75
Orientation and Training.....	75
Volunteer Evaluation.....	76
Volunteer Program Evaluation.....	76

Rewards and Recognition.....	76
Volunteer Benefits.....	76
Retention.....	77
State Laws Affecting the Use of Volunteers	77
Appendix C	
MISSION STATEMENTS.....	78
Chicago Botanic Garden.....	78
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden.....	78
Holden Arboretum.....	78
Appendix D	
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE APPROVAL.....	79
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	81

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1 Population and Income Data from the 1990 United States Census	27
Table 5.1 Programs with a Program Philosophy Statement.....	40
Table 5.2 Programs with a Volunteer Manual.....	42
Table 5.3 Programs with Work Descriptions for all Horticulture Volunteer Positions.....	43
Table 5.4 Programs Recruiting Horticulture Volunteers.....	45
Table 5.5 Programs with Formal Orientation	48
Table 5.6 Programs with In-Service Training and/or Continuing Education	49
Table 5.7 Programs Implementing Individual and Program Evaluations.....	52
Table 5.8 Programs Providing Recognition and Benefits.....	53
Table 5.9 Programs Maintaining Records with a Computer.....	54

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Case Study Sites' Acreage in 1996.....	30
Figure 4.2 Number of Employees at the Case Study Sites for 1996.....	31
Figure 4.3 1996 Annual Visitation at the Case Study Sites.....	32
Figure 4.4 1996 Annual Operating Budget for the Case Study Sites.....	33
Figure 4.5 Organizational Volunteers at the Case Study Sites, 1992-1996.....	35
Figure 4.6 Horticulture Volunteers at the Case Study Sites, 1992-1996.....	36
Figure 4.7 1996 Volunteer Program Budget at the Case Study Sites.....	37
Figure 6.1 Horticulture Volunteer Turnover Rate at Chicago Botanic Garden, 1992 through 1996.....	57
Figure 6.2 Retention of Horticulture Volunteers at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, 1992 through 1996.....	60
Figure 6.3 Horticulture Volunteer Turnover Rate at Holden Arboretum, 1994 through 1996.....	62

ABSTRACT

In times of budget constraints, public gardens explore ways to maintain existing services without increasing expenditures. Therefore, volunteer programs are an important component of the human resources at many organizations and should be managed to optimize their efficiency. A volunteer program model to help manage and decrease volunteer turnover was created based on current literature and interviews with coordinators of volunteers at selected public gardens. This model was compared to the horticulture volunteer programs at three case study sites: Chicago Botanic Garden, Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, and Holden Arboretum. The volunteer program model includes: a philosophy statement, policy for operation of the program, a volunteer manual, needs assessment for volunteers at the organization, work descriptions, recruitment, interviewing and inviting volunteers to the program, orientation and training, evaluation, dismissal of problematic volunteers, record keeping, recognition, and maintenance of healthy relationships between paid staff and volunteers. Coordinators of volunteers were interviewed regarding the management of their horticulture volunteer programs and retention at their gardens. The results indicate the case study gardens are not actively managing horticulture volunteer turnover. However, the selected public gardens are currently implementing some of the components in the volunteer model. The results of this study will provide coordinators of volunteers, public garden directors, and

human resource personnel with the necessary information to understand volunteer retention and should help decrease the volunteer turnover rate at their public gardens.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In times of budget constraints, nonprofit organizations including public gardens explore ways to expand their services without increasing expenditures. Unfortunately, staff positions are often the first to be frozen or eliminated as personnel expenses routinely make up the largest expenditure for an institution. This can be seen at The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. They have limited the horticulture department's budget growth and no new positions are being created; however, new gardens are nonetheless being created and installed. This is possible because the staff is collaborating with volunteers to establish new and better gardens and maintain the existing landscape plantings. Volunteers have become an integral part of nonprofit organizations' work forces to make up for the reduction in staff (Ellis 1996, 7). Many public gardens historically have had a group of volunteers that supported the institution. However, in recent years public gardens have relied more heavily on the volunteers for the day-to-day maintenance of the gardens. Based on interviews with coordinators of volunteers, public gardens are aware of the importance of volunteers, but the administrators of some gardens have been slow to provide the necessary staff, funds, and support to manage a growing volunteer work force.

Administrators of public gardens want volunteers to assist their staff and many have hired, at a minimum, a part-time coordinator of volunteers to manage the volunteer program. However, until recently, the coordinators of volunteers focused their efforts on two major tasks, recruitment and recording how many hours volunteers serve. Although recruitment and record keeping are important components of a volunteer program, much more needs to be done to retain the volunteers that the coordinators work so hard to recruit.

This thesis focuses on the retention of horticulture volunteers in nonprofit, 501(c)(3) public gardens. For the purpose of this research, public gardens refer to arboreta, parks, botanical gardens, display gardens, and conservatories. The results of this research should be useful to coordinators of volunteers, human resource personnel, directors of public gardens, and other individuals working alongside volunteers. It will help them better understand horticulture volunteer retention. The inverse relationship between volunteer retention and turnover will also be discussed. This chapter characterizes the purpose of the research, describes characteristics of nonprofit organizations, explains the importance of retention, and provides an outline for the remainder of this thesis.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis research is to increase the awareness and understanding of horticulture volunteer retention in public gardens. It illustrates the current conditions of volunteer retention at three case study sites and provides criteria for improving

retention, therefore, reducing turnover. The three case study sites are Chicago Botanic Garden, Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, and Holden Arboretum, Kirtland, Ohio. In addition to the case sites, numerous other public gardens were contacted, and available literature was reviewed. The complete list of public gardens contacted can be found in Appendix A, page 70.

Characteristics of Nonprofit Organizations

It is important to understand the nature of nonprofit organizations to help establish an understanding for the need of volunteers. A nonprofit organization is "not part of a government and does not exist to make a profit." Nonprofit organizations also "exist to provide some service or advance some cause" they are "philanthropic, charitable, or public benefit organizations... serving a public function" (O'Neill 1989, 2). Nonprofit organizations should preclude self-interest and private financial gain (Wolf 1984, 3).

Nonprofit public gardens are not operating for financial gain; therefore, many operate their facilities with no, or a modest, entrance fee unlike similar entertainment or leisure industries. They do not sell products for a considerable profit nor do they have stockholders like most companies. These characteristics cause their operating income to be low and limit the amount of money available to hire staff and provide services. To help make up for the shortfall of paid staff, volunteers are extensively used to complete tasks necessary to make numerous services available to the public.

Importance of Volunteer Retention

Volunteers are an important component of the human resources at many public gardens and attention should be devoted to retaining them. There are many components of a volunteer program, which require an extensive amount of time and resources to manage; however, methods to manage turnover are seldom outlined. It is wasteful, not to mention, inconsiderate to recruit and orient volunteers only to have them leave soon after their arrival.

Economic trends have also been shown to have an effect on volunteering (Hodgkinson et al. 1996, 8). When the economy is in a decline or unstable, as it has been since the late eighties, individuals are less likely to volunteer (Hodgkinson et al. 1996, 1 & 7). The economy was in a state of sustained recovery in 1996; however, individuals were still hesitant to volunteer or volunteer at the same level they had in previous years (Hodgkinson et al. 1996 7 & 8). Coordinators of volunteers must focus attention on retaining the volunteers they have, because recruiting new ones may not be as easy as it has been in the past.

Considerable work has been devoted to retaining employees and the same should be done for volunteers. Like employee turnover, high turnover rates of volunteers can reduce effectiveness in an organization. Effectiveness is defined as the degree to which an organization achieves its goals. It is different from productivity in that it does not provide the ratio of output to input (Price 1977, 110-111). A large number of people are needed each day in public gardens to achieve goals set forth in their mission statements. If several volunteers leave an institution the whole process of recruitment, orientation,

training, evaluation, etc. must be repeated. It can also be said that if retention rates are high, effectiveness will be increased not to mention volunteer satisfaction.

Outline of Thesis

Following the introductory chapter, the definition of a volunteer and horticulture volunteer are discussed as they are used throughout this research. A volunteer program model is also discussed in Chapter 2. The methods used for this research, including the merits of qualitative case studies and the site selection process are covered in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 describes the case study sites by outlining the regional and local characteristics, size of the organizations, and the size of their volunteer programs. The purpose of Chapter 5 is to provide information about the current practices in the volunteer programs at the case study sites and other public gardens. Current volunteer turnover rates and the opinions of the coordinator of volunteers regarding retention are discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 includes a summary of the thesis and provides conclusions from the analysis of the data presented in previous chapters. Chapter 7 also provides recommendations for improving horticulture volunteer retention. Recommendations for future research are also included in the final chapter. The appendices of this thesis document provide supplementary information such as the list of selected public gardens included in the telephone survey, interview guide, mission statement from each case site, and approval from the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Chapter 2

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Definitions

This research will use the definitions set forth by Susan Ellis, expert in the field and author of numerous of books about volunteer management, to define volunteer and volunteerism (Ellis 1996). She states that volunteerism is anything relating specifically to volunteers and volunteering. The term volunteerism includes all volunteering, regardless of where it takes place and if a court or other institution mandates it. Unlike the term voluntarism, which refers to anything done in society voluntarily, and voluntarism excludes volunteering done for governmental agencies as well as court-referred volunteers or students completing high school community service requirements (Ellis and Noyes 1990, 4-7). The term volunteerism is more suitable, because the institutions studied include volunteers fulfilling court ordered community service and requirements for high school graduation.

For the purpose of this research, a volunteer is anyone giving of his or her time without monetary compensation. Therefore, individuals fulfilling community service requirements are considered volunteers. The legal definition of a volunteer includes “a

person who is paid not more than ten dollars per day and a total of not more than five hundred dollars a year” (DeWitt 1998, 4).

Throughout this research, the term horticulture volunteer will be used. This term refers to those individuals who volunteer in areas of plant production, grounds maintenance, plant collections and records, and conservatory display maintenance. It does not include those individuals that help in education departments, development offices, gift shops, or guide programs at public gardens.

Coordinator of volunteers or simply coordinator will be used to refer to individuals managing volunteer programs. The literature often uses volunteer coordinator or volunteer administrator. This researcher believes these titles lead to confusion regarding the employment status of the coordinator. She also feels it inadvertently infers the position is less important than other management positions.

Model of a Volunteer Program

A successful volunteer program can be defined as a program that meets the needs of the organization while meeting the needs of the volunteers (Murk and Stephens 1991, 73). There are many ways to operate a successful volunteer program at a public garden and the basic structure is similar to that used in other nonprofit organizations. There are two popular formats for volunteer support. The first is an independent supporting organization, a separate entity such as a friends organization, and the second is an integrated program with a coordinator or administrator.

This research deals solely with the integrated model. From the reviewed literature available to the researcher, the following model of an integrated program has been created. The basic components of a volunteer program include:

- a philosophy statement;
- policy for operation of the program i.e., recruiting and releasing volunteers;
- a volunteer manual;
- assessment of the need for volunteers in the organization;
- volunteer work descriptions analogous to job descriptions for employees;
- recruitment to fill volunteer positions;
- interviews and selection of volunteers for the organization;
- orientation and continued training for volunteers;
- evaluation of volunteers and the program;
- dismissal of problematic volunteers;
- recording the efforts and successes of the volunteer program;
- recognition of volunteers' efforts; and
- maintenance of a healthy relationship with the paid staff (MacBride 1979, 14).

The components of this model are basic procedures that should be included in a successful and effective volunteer program. The researcher does not intend this model to be viewed as a theoretical model. Instead, it is intended to serve a practical tool to guide a coordinator of volunteers. The volunteer program model in this thesis is a prototype for mature horticulture volunteer programs. The management practices at the three case study sites will be compared to this model and discussed in later chapters.

Philosophy Statement

For the organization to have a successful volunteer program, the coordinator of volunteers should begin by developing a mission-driven strategic plan. The philosophy statement of the volunteer program should be based on the mission and principles of the organization and include input from employees, upper management and a few potential volunteers. This is an integral step and should not be overlooked. Without goals and objectives, it is difficult to attract and stimulate committed volunteers and consequently those that are recruited will not serve the organization effectively (Ellis 1996, 20-21).

Volunteer Manual

The coordinator of volunteers should create policies for operating the program before they move on to anything else (Kuyper et al. 1993, 16). A volunteer manual or handbook should be created. The manual should include the philosophy statement, goals for the program, and a statement regarding how often and who will review these items. Policies concerning evaluations of the volunteer should be discussed with an explanation of opportunities for volunteers who perform well and the consequences for those that fail to perform. The coordinator should develop policies on evaluating the overall program. This could include who will serve on the evaluation committee and how often evaluation should occur. The evaluation committee could be the same committee that helps to formulate the mission and goals.

The volunteer manual should also contain the organizational structure of the volunteer program. This structure is unlike most organizations. Instead of a pyramid, it

often works as a circle consisting of the coordinator of volunteers, the volunteers, and the direct staff supervisor of volunteers i.e., the head gardener in a particular area (Vineyard 1996, 7). This design allows the staff to have direct contact with the volunteers and coordinator of volunteers. In this model, the staff oversees daily tasks instead of the coordinator. This leads to a more efficient system. If changes in job placement need to be made, then the supervisor can give that information directly to the coordinator. This system also allows volunteers to go to the coordinator if they have questions about the program, but eliminates the need for every volunteer to speak directly to the coordinator on a daily basis.

The handbook should contain the organizational chart for the organization in addition to that of the volunteer program. It is this type of information that will help the volunteer feel as if they are a real part of the group by understanding normal operating procedures. Normal operating procedures should also include any employee policies that would effect volunteers such as a smoking policy, drug-free workplace policy, risk management policies and emergency procedures.

Needs Assessment of the Organization

After the mission and policies for the program have been established, the coordinator must find where and how volunteers are needed in the organization. The coordinator should not attempt this step alone. The employees of the organization should be consulted and included in the decision (MacBride 1979, 8). Employees are better

suited to let the coordinator know what type and how many hours of work need to be done on a daily basis.

Work Descriptions and Volunteer Placement

With the above steps completed, the coordinator can list all of the tasks and positions that are available and begin to write work descriptions. Work descriptions are synonymous to job descriptions for employees (DeWitt 1998, 1). Work descriptions should be written with assistance from the staff member requesting the volunteer (Kuyper et al. 1993, 38). Every volunteer position should have a clear description. It should include an objective, list of responsibilities, qualifications, time commitment, and reporting structure (Kuyper et al. 1993, 38). Without a work description it will be difficult to interview, place, and evaluate volunteers fairly and in a defensible way. The description is also vital in becoming eligible to be covered under the Federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 (DeWitt 1998, 1).

Recruitment

Once the needs of the organization are determined, it is time to recruit volunteers. In nonprofit organizations, the first place to look is usually the support organization, if the institution has one. A support organization is often referred to as the friends or members group. This group has already shown interest in the organization and often the members have an understanding of the organization's mission (Kuyper et al. 1993, 45). Statistics also show that 97% of volunteers volunteer because they simply want to help

others and 29% volunteer because a family member or loved one is involved. Those statistics support the idea that staff members should invite friends and family members to apply (Murk and Stephen 1991, 73-74).

Interview and Placement

Interviewing and placement of volunteers is a critical step in a successful program. Coordinators of volunteers can interview on their own or the future staff supervisor and a few key volunteers can accompany the coordinator and interview the potential volunteer as a committee. Often the volunteers or staff member on the selection committee can recognize gaps in candidates' knowledge, skills, or abilities that the coordinator alone may miss. The interview is also a time to probe the candidate to determine where his/her interests lie and present the candidate with information about the volunteer program and open positions (Kuyper et al. 1993, 53).

The interview and screening process is not only a time to determine the interests of the individual but also a time to become aware of any negative aspects he/she possesses. If an individual has been convicted previously of drunk driving, they are probably not an appropriate choice as a car pool driver. A second example is an individual who has been convicted previously of sexual misconduct or child abuse should not be allowed to supervise or work alone with children. Although this may sound harsh for a "reformed" individual, it is in the organization's best interest to err on the side of safety (DeWitt 1998, 2).

Below is a quick checklist for what should be included in an interview process.

- Express interest in the candidate and ask follow-up questions to the application form;
- ask about the candidate's interest in the organization (why does he/she want to volunteer);
- provide information about the volunteer program, especially the specific area in which the candidate is interested;
- give details about several jobs that seem to be of interest to the candidate including the time commitment, training schedule, and the organization's expectations;
- explain the organization's volunteer policy and benefits;
- let the candidate know when he/she will be contacted; and
- immediately after the interview, write a brief summary and impressions of the candidate (Kuyper et al. 1993, 53).

Orientation and Training

It is time to orient the volunteer to the organization once he/she have been selected and matched with a suitable job. This can begin by distributing a copy of the volunteer manual and reviewing it with him/her. The next step can include offering training exercises so individuals can attain skills they will need to perform tasks required in their role as a volunteer (Kuyper et al. 1993, 64-65). Initial training is important so an organization is assured an individual has the basic skills required. In-service training or continuing education classes will help to improve volunteers' skills. In-service training also helps to reduce the chance of a legal claim of negligence being brought against the organization (DeWitt 1998, 2). Employees as well as veteran volunteers can serve as instructors for training exercises. Volunteers often have a close affinity with other

volunteers, therefore, increasing the less experienced volunteers' interest in the training (MacBride 1979, 21). Volunteers often perceive continuing education classes and special lectures as benefits. Volunteers are not always required to attend continuing education classes but many do so for their own enjoyment and development. This is something many nonprofit organizations can do to educate and reward their volunteers.

Volunteer Evaluation

With the volunteer organization established, it is time to evaluate the volunteers and the program. Any technique, which is permitted for the evaluation of employees, is allowed for evaluating volunteers. However, some methods reduce volunteers' willingness to serve the organization if they feel they will be judged too harshly (DeWitt 1998, 1-2). The coordinator should allow the volunteer's direct supervisor to conduct the evaluation. If the direct supervisor is not comfortable doing it alone, the coordinator should provide assistance. Volunteer evaluations should not be a dreaded occasion marking the anniversary of a volunteer's service. Instead, they should provide constructive feedback and allow for open dialogue. If handled properly an evaluation can stimulate the learning and improvement of a volunteer while recognizing his/her achievements (Kuyper et al. 1993, 84).

Volunteers should receive casual feedback throughout the year in addition to formal evaluations. Volunteers need feedback just as employees do. It allows them to adjust their work habits and improve skills that may be weak or lacking

(Vineyard 1996,72). According to the book *Volunteer Program Administration*, evaluations should include the following key questions:

- Which tasks in the job description occupied most of your time this year?
- Which tasks were done only rarely or not at all? Should they be eliminated from the job description?
- Were tasks performed that are not listed? Should they be added to the job description?
- How would you assess your performance of each task?
- What might help you improve your performance of these tasks?
- How would you describe the supervision you received on this assignment?
- How helpful was the training you received?
- What suggestions do you have that might make the work area more productive?
- Do you wish to continue in this assignment?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us (Kuyper et al. 1993, 85)?

Dismissal of Problematic Volunteers

By following the steps outlined in this model, asking the questions listed above, and documenting the responses, a coordinator of volunteers has reduced the risk of having to “fire” a volunteer. However, both the coordinator and the organization have the necessary paperwork to back up their claim if they do have to dismiss someone (DeWitt 1998, 1).

Volunteer Program Evaluation

It is important to evaluate the program in addition to evaluating individuals. Evaluation is more than documenting how many hours are given by volunteers and financial savings to the organization. Volunteers as well as staff should be involved in the process. This is their opportunity to step back from their regular roles and take a broad look at the program. A discussion of the mission and goals is a good starting point and should be followed by discussing other major components of the program (Kuyper et al. 1993, 89). The following points should be included in a routine program evaluation:

- what is the actual quantity and quality of volunteer work done in each division of the organization;
- what are the vital areas which require additional resources;
- which areas are not as important and should receive fewer volunteer resources;
- are there any services lacking;
- does the volunteer group reflect the demographic makeup of the community;
- is recruitment successful;
- are volunteers satisfied; and
- how does the organization benefit from the overall input of the volunteer program (Kuyper et al. 1993, 89-90)?

Record Keeping

The record keeping needs of a volunteer program are complex. Records should include more than the name of the volunteer and how many hours they serve annually.

Coordinators of volunteers should record the performance of each volunteer as well as his/her comments on the volunteer program. This is becoming easier as desktop computers become simpler to use and affordable. Even the smallest organizations can use computers to assist in making volunteer assignments and coordinating schedules that change daily (Ellis 1996, 156).

Keeping organized and accurate records is a vital component when monitoring volunteer turnover. Quality records allow the volunteer coordinator to monitor how many volunteers are with the organization and how a single volunteer's performance changes over time. A reduction in hours served by a volunteer can signal his/her life has changed in a way they are no longer able to volunteer or dissatisfaction with the program. Monitoring the records of the program can allow the coordinator of volunteers to see potential problem areas. The coordinator can attempt to resolve the problem if it is caused by the organization. There is little to be done if a change in the individual's life has caused the reduction in service unless changing the day or time he/she volunteers would alleviate the problem.

Recognition

With all of the evaluations complete, it is time to recognize the efforts of all the organization's volunteers and staff directly related to the program. Volunteers are a valuable and limited resource and should be treated as such. Their individual efforts can be recognized in several ways from a simple thank you card or posting their names in a newsletter to a more elaborate annual gala (Murk and Stephen 1991, 75). The scale of

the recognition usually does not make a difference to the volunteer as long as the organization (coordinator of volunteers, staff, and management) makes it known how much they appreciate the volunteers' services (Ross 1992, 31).

Volunteer and Staff Relations

Successful volunteer programs are driven by the collaboration between paid staff and volunteers (Kuypers et al. 1993 73). A successful volunteer program needs the support of the organization's governing body and paid staff. The staff must be excited about and supportive of volunteers. If some staff members are not, then it is the coordinator's job to help them learn and understand the value of volunteers (Vineyard 1996, 88).

Employees are involved in practically every step of this volunteer program model, and this is done to help them buy into the idea of implementing and maintaining a volunteer program. It is important to keep the lines of communication open and keep the employees and volunteers informed of the organization's position regarding the use of volunteers. The coordinator must continually show how volunteers and employees working together can be a synergistic relationship (Kuyper et al. 1993, 74).

This volunteer program model includes important procedures that will help a coordinator of volunteers manage volunteer turnover and increase retention. The volunteer program model is compared to the volunteer management practices at the case study sites in Chapters 4 and 5. This comparison will illustrate how implementing the steps in this model can increase retention, therefore, decrease volunteer turnover.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was primarily qualitative, using three case study sites. A limited amount of quantitative research was used to help create a basis for comparison of the case study sites to other public garden volunteer programs. This chapter discusses the merits of qualitative research and provides an overview of case study research. The case study site selection for this thesis is also outlined in this chapter.

Qualitative Research Methods

The standard resource for qualitative research used for this thesis is H. Russel Bernard's *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. This reference provides a complete overview of the social science research and techniques for qualitative research. Several sections of the text are specifically applicable and discussed in more detail below: selecting a research site, interviewing, and analysis of qualitative data.

There are three major considerations when doing qualitative research based on the data collected at case study sites, "time, money, and people" (Bernard 1994, 106-7). All three of these factors had a part in the case study site selection for this thesis. The

researcher had two years to complete the thesis, a limited research budget, and depended on individuals willing to share information about their public garden volunteer program.

Semi-structured interviews were selected to collect information about the case study sites. Semi-structured interviews are open-ended, like unstructured interviews, but they are based on an interview guide. An interview guide is a list of questions and topics used during the interview, but the questions do not need to be presented in any particular order (Bernard 1994, 209). The interview guide for this research can be found in Appendix B on page 72. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to better utilize her time and that of the coordinators of volunteers at the case study sites. "In situations where you will not get more than one chance to interview someone semi-structured interviewing is the best" (Bernard 1994, 209).

Analysis techniques for qualitative data are similar to techniques used in quantitative research. According to Bernard, "qualitative analysis—in fact, all analysis—is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain the existence of those patterns. It starts before you go to the field and continues throughout the research effort." The data collected are used to describe the actions and reactions of the case study sites and is compared to determine if patterns exist (Bernard 1994, 360).

Research Procedures

A literature review was completed to collect the most current information about volunteer management and retention. The literature review assured the researcher that the topic of volunteer retention has not been studied in-depth nor has an extensive amount

of materials been published regarding this topic. The definition of horticulture volunteer, volunteerism, and public garden were defined for the purposes of this research. A volunteer program model was also created by reviewing current literature. The volunteer model outlined in Chapter 2, page 7, was compared to current practices at the three case study sites using qualitative research methods.

Qualitative research and specifically case studies were chosen as the most appropriate way to collect information about horticulture volunteer retention. Basic criteria were established to determine which public gardens would be considered as case study sites. The interview guide based on the components of a volunteer program model was created. The information necessary to establish a pattern for volunteer turnover at the institutions was also outlined.

Prior to any contact with potential case study sites, a letter was submitted to the Associate Provost for Research at the University of Delaware explaining the research and outlining the procedures. The Human Subjects Review Committee approved the research as submitted. Case study sites were selected by contacting public gardens that are members of the American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta and determining if they fit the criteria established by the researcher. The coordinator of volunteers was interviewed at three case study sites and each signed a release form acknowledging her participation in this research.

Telephone interviews were conducted with twenty public gardens to support the data collected at the case study sites. These volunteer programs were selected because of their involvement in Volunteer Interaction a national three day conference for

coordinators of volunteers and volunteers from public horticulture organizations. This conference has historically attracted attendees representing some of the most effective horticulture volunteer programs in the United States and Canada. Again, effectiveness is defined as the degree to which an organization achieves its goals (Price 1977, 110-111).

The information collected from each case study visit and telephone interview was compiled and analyzed. The results are outlined and analyzed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. The results illustrate the current practices of the coordinators of volunteers and the horticulture volunteer turnover rates of the three sites. The results of the analysis were used to form conclusions about horticulture volunteer retention and recommendations for decreasing turnover are discussed in Chapter 7, page 66.

Case Study Site Selection

Basic criteria were established to select the most appropriate institutions for case study sites using current literature and informal discussions with representatives from various public gardens. A garden was selected if it met the following criteria:

- is an institutional member of American Association of Botanical Garden and Arboreta (AABGA);
- is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public garden;
- does not utilize union employees;
- utilizes a minimum of 30 horticulture volunteers;
- utilizes a minimum of 100 volunteers throughout the organization;
- has a coordinator of volunteers (This person can be paid or unpaid.);

- maintains records regarding its volunteers; and
- has a volunteer program at least five years old.

The original selection pool of gardens was the 403 institutional members of the American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta (as of the 1996-1997 membership directory). The Directory of Volunteer Programs at Public Gardens containing 121 organizations and produced by AABGA in 1991 was also used to gather information. These references were used to further eliminate gardens not meeting all of the criteria. Before any telephone interviews were conducted, many gardens were eliminated because they did not have enough organizational volunteers or a coordinator of volunteers. Brief telephone interviews served as the second way to eliminate gardens not meeting the criteria. All but nine gardens were eliminated during the initial telephone interview. Most gardens did not keep adequate records. This information was essential in order for the researcher to track the involvement of horticulture volunteers. The nine gardens remaining were then narrowed to only three after lengthy telephone interviews with each organization's coordinator of volunteers.

The three public gardens, which met the established criteria, were selected for further case study review. Chicago Botanic Garden, Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, and Holden Arboretum in Kirtland, Ohio were selected as the most suitable public gardens. These public gardens vary in physical size, but all have a mission, which supports horticulture display requiring the efforts of horticulture volunteers.

Chapter 4

DESCRIPTIONS AND DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDY SITES

Numerous organizational characteristics can affect how a public garden utilizes volunteers. The economic conditions of the surrounding community can impact how many individuals are willing to volunteer and how often (Hodgkinson 1996, 1). The unique mission of each organization also influences the need for volunteers (Kuyper et al. 1993, 14). The size of the institution and how it is organized can affect how many and in what areas volunteers are needed (Kuyper et al. 1993, 2). Therefore, it is critical to discuss some basic characteristics of the case study sites to create a basis for comparison and better understand why each institution operates the way it does. This chapter will outline the differences and similarities of the case study sites, and briefly discuss the impact of these characteristics on each volunteer program. Chapter 5 will build on the information outlined in this chapter and discuss how each case study site manages its volunteer program.

Local and Regional Characteristics

Chicago Botanic Garden

Chicago Botanic Garden is located twenty-five miles north of downtown Chicago, Illinois in a suburb known as Glencoe located in Cook County. According to the 1990

United States Census, Cook County has 5,105,067 citizens and Glencoe consists of 8,217 individuals. The median family income is \$124,248 for citizens of Glencoe while that of other county residents is \$39,296. Cook County is considered urban.

Individuals volunteer more frequently when they are white and have a median family income over \$100,000 (Hodgkinson, 1993, 54). The residents of Glencoe, Illinois fit into both of these categories. This phenomenon implies that Chicago Botanic Garden has a large number of likely individuals to recruit. Chicago Botanic Garden is also a unique organization in the area. There are no other public gardens within fifteen miles of the garden and no noticeable competition for horticulture volunteers has been seen by the coordinator of volunteers.

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden is situated seven miles from downtown Dallas, Texas on the Eastern Shore of White Rock Lake. It is located in a suburban area of Dallas County. According to the 1990 United States Census, Dallas County has a population of 1,852,810 and the zip code area including Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden has 22,583 citizens. The entire county is considered urban. The median family income for the immediate area surrounding the garden is \$41,017 while that of other residents of the county is \$36,982.

The Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden like Chicago is not competing for volunteers with neighboring nonprofit organizations. However, the citizens of the county do not volunteer in the same proportions as those at the other two case study sites. There is more race diversity and the level of income predicts that nearly 23% fewer individuals

will volunteer in the area surrounding Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden compared to the other case site areas (Hodgkinson 1993, 54). Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden's coordinator of volunteers reported during the interview that many individuals are taking part-time jobs in the area instead of volunteering. This is reflected in a low unemployment rate of 3% in Dallas County.

Holden Arboretum

Holden Arboretum is located twenty-five miles east of downtown Cleveland, Ohio, and borders the rural portions of Lake County. According to the 1990 United States Census, the population of Lake County is 215,499 while the immediate area surrounding Holden Arboretum has a population of 30,193. The median family income for Kirtland, Ohio, the town in which Holden Arboretum resides, is \$40,453. The median family income for others in the county is similar at \$40,471.

The coordinator of volunteers at Holden Arboretum has reported direct competition for volunteers with a neighboring organization, Lake Farm Parks, a recreational facility. She has overcome the effects of this competition by marketing Holden Arboretum as an educational facility. They also stress the fact that horticulture volunteers will be helping a "serious institution." Holden Arboretum is located in a county with rural areas. This drastically reduces the amount of individuals living in the county and those within a short driving distance.

Table 4.1 is included to compare the data discussed in this section more easily.

Table 4-1 Population and Income Data from the 1990 United States Census

Case Study Site	Population/ County	Population/ Zip Code area	Income/County Residents	Income/Residents in the Zip Code area
Chicago Botanic Garden	5,105,067	8,217	\$39,296	\$124,248
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden	1,852,81	22,583	\$36,982	\$41,017
Holden Arboretum	215,499	30,193	\$40,471	\$40,453

Organizational Mission Statements

Each case study site has an organizational mission statement (Appendix C page 78) which is used by the staff to guide the development and implementation of programs and displays. The missions, although using different words, have similar goals. They refer to horticulture, gardening, plant collections, and research. The missions support excellence in horticulture exhibits and programs as well as aesthetically pleasing displays.

It takes a great amount of time and substantial resources to achieve the goals set forth in the missions of these institutions. Intensive work is needed to create a display that portrays excellence and is considered aesthetically pleasing in the field of public horticulture. A considerable amount of effort is also required to manage horticulture research projects in addition to producing plants necessary for the displays. There are several goals mentioned in the missions, which could not be fulfilled if volunteers did not

assist the paid work force, although none of the statements explicitly calls for the use of horticulture volunteers.

Organizational Structure

Where the volunteer program is located within the organizational structure is important although there is no one "correct" place. The placement of the volunteer program within the organizational chart impacts the entire chain of command and sends a message to the volunteers and staff (Ellis 1996, 27). If the coordinator of volunteers and volunteer program is to be most effective, they should report to the director of the organization or a senior staff member. Programs that do not report to a member of upper-level management may be perceived as peripheral and unnecessary (Kuyper et al. 1993, 33).

Although each case study site's volunteer program is located in a different department, each reports to a senior staff member. Chicago Botanic Garden's program reported to the director of education when this research began and has since transferred to the public programs department. The volunteer program at Holden Arboretum reports to the director of education while Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden's program reports to the director of Human Resources.

Organizational Size

The size of an organization can affect how a volunteer program is managed and how many volunteers are needed to fulfill the goals set forth in the mission statement.

Four different variables were used to compare the size of the three public gardens: number of acres, number of full-time employees, annual visitation, and annual operating budget. The totals for these variables are based on figures published in each institution's 1996 annual report.

The number of total and cultivated acres at each garden has been illustrated in Figure 4.1. Cultivated acres include outdoor horticultural displays and conservatory complexes. The difference between the total and cultivated acres is land used for buildings, "natural areas," and service areas. Holden Arboretum has 800 cultivated acres in addition to 2300 acres that do not receive frequent maintenance. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden has 59 cultivated acres, 93% less than Holden Arboretum. Chicago Botanic Garden reported that all of its acreage, 385 acres is considered "display" area. However, Holden Arboretum still manages two acres for every acre Chicago manages at an "aesthetically pleasing" level.

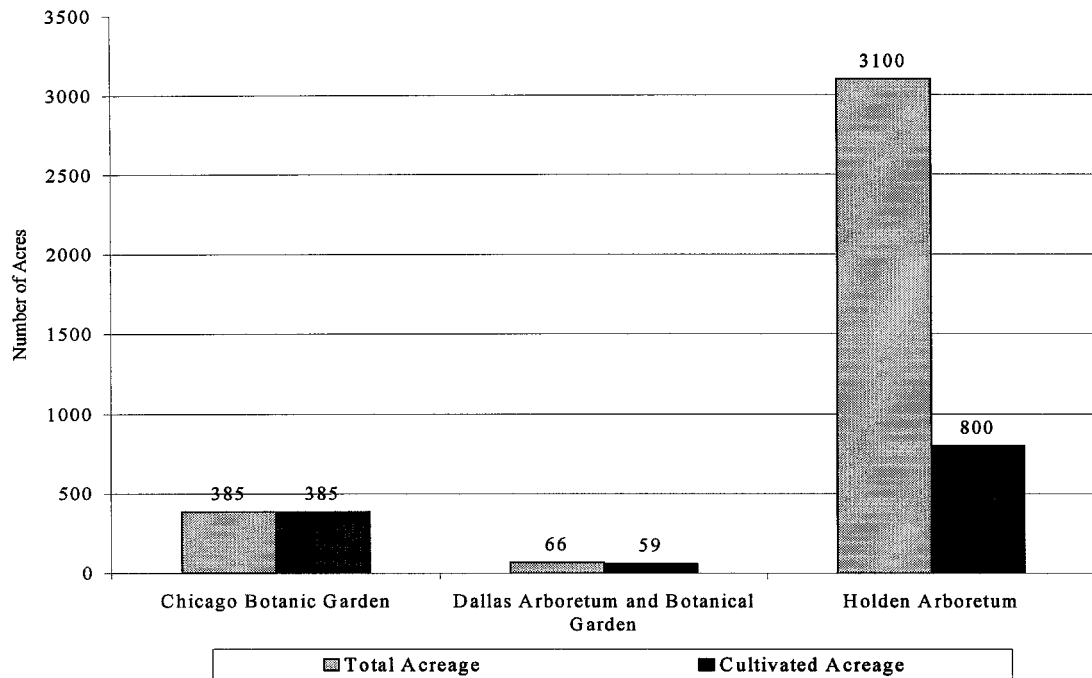


Figure 4.1 Case Study Sites' Acreage in 1996

The number of employees at an organization can impact how many volunteers are needed and how much importance is placed on the work done by volunteers. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. Figure 4.2 illustrates the number of full-time employees for each institution. Salaried employees work 37.5 hours per week while non-salaried employees work 40 hours per week. The datum to determine how many part-time employees necessary to make one full-time equivalent is not available. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden has more part-time employees than full-time employees. The coordinator of volunteers at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden reported that many of Dallas Arboretum's part-time employees are used for special events as security and event supervisors.

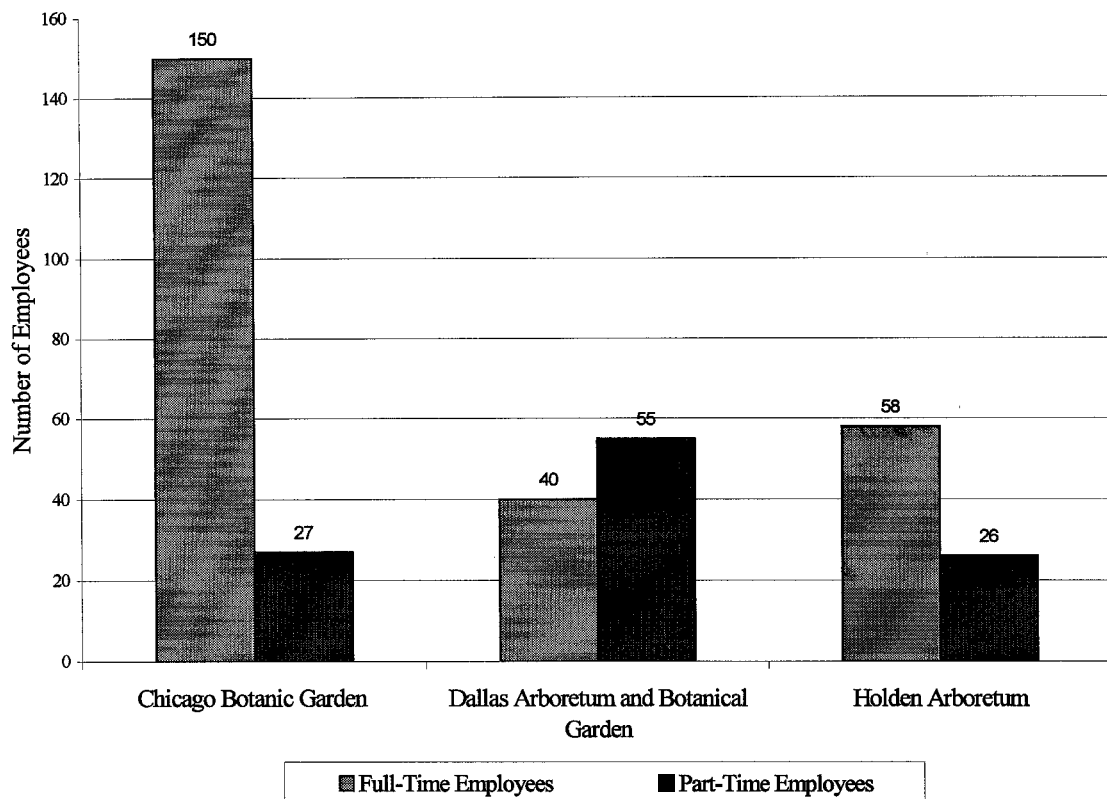


Figure 4.2 Number of Employees at the Case Study Sites for 1996

Holden Arboretum has one full-time staff member for every fourteen acres of cultivated land. Chicago has one full-time staff member for every 2.5 acres and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden has one full-time employee for every one-acre of cultivated land. This comparison can be used to explain why more volunteers are needed at Holden Arboretum than at Chicago Botanic Garden and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

Each visitor to a garden has a physical impact on the property and the horticultural displays. Therefore, it is critical to review how many visitors frequent the

case study site gardens. The 1996 annual visitation of each case study site is depicted in Figure 4.3.

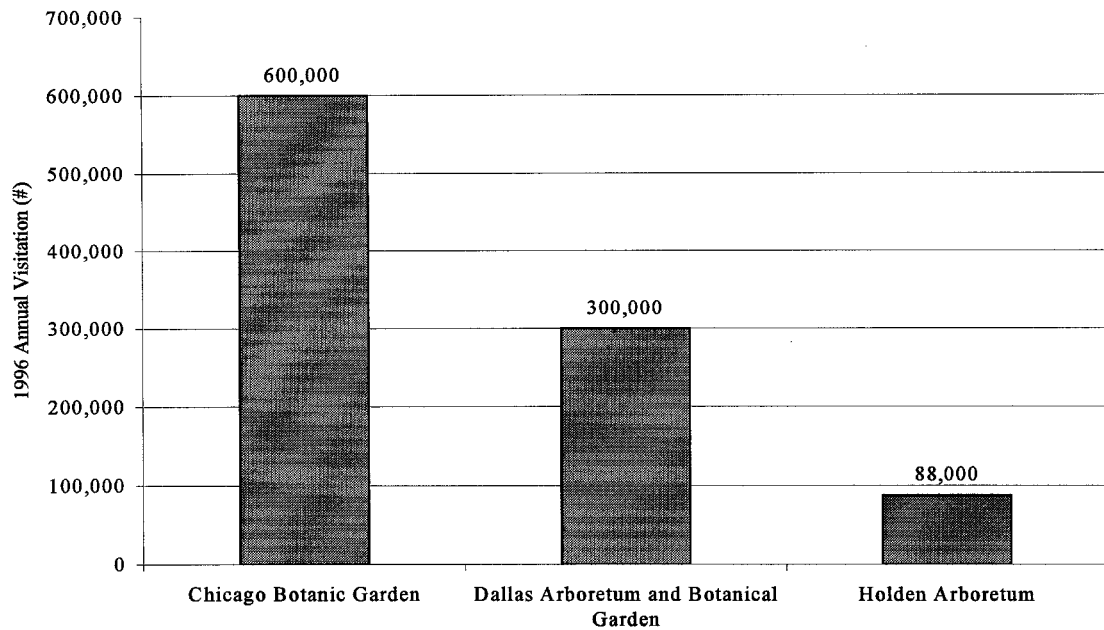


Figure 4.3 1996 Annual Visitation at the Case Study Sites

An organization's annual operating budget can have a great impact on how many volunteers are needed to reach the goals set forth in the mission statement. Volunteers are often relied upon to make up for shortfalls in staff numbers as well as to help maintain the high standards set forth at each case study site. Figure 4.4 graphically shows the differences in the budgets of the case study sites.

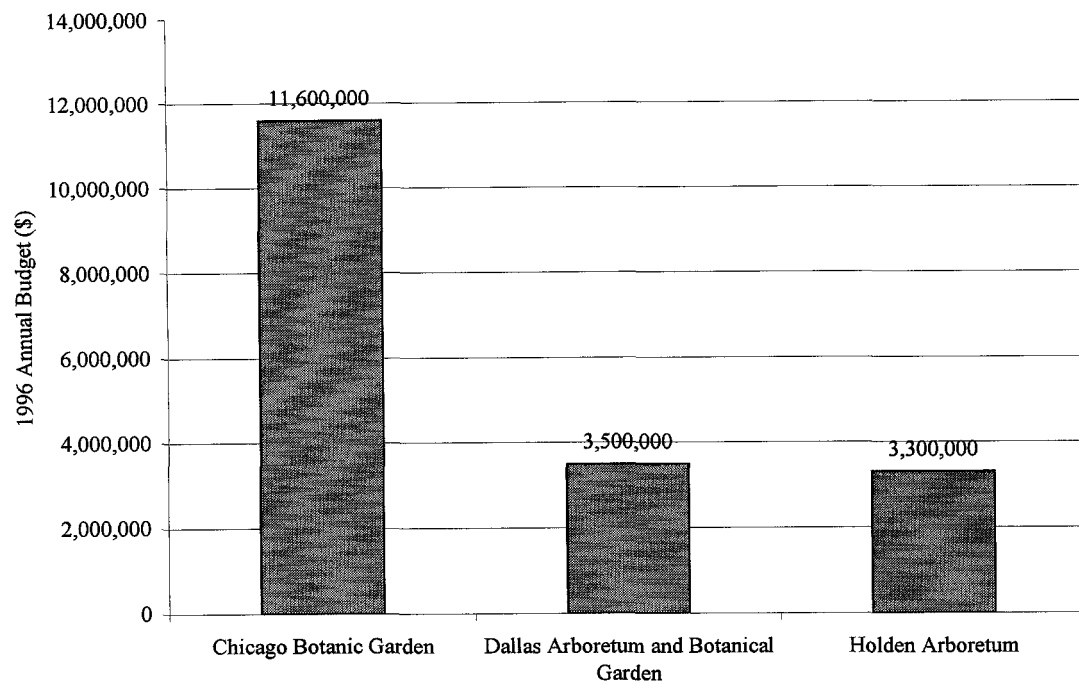


Figure 4.4 1996 Annual Operating Budget for the Case Study Sites

It is important to note that Chicago Botanic Garden is the largest organization based on the annual number of employees, annual visitation, and annual operating budget. They fall behind Holden Arboretum based on the total acreage and number of cultivated acres. Excluding number of part-time employees, Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden's statistics are consistently between the two other case sites.

Volunteer Program Size

The size of a public garden's volunteer program is directly related to the size of the institution. The number of volunteers needed routinely increases as the number of

cultivated acres increases and the size of the annual operating budget and number of employees decreases. The number of organizational volunteers (all volunteers), number of horticulture volunteers, and volunteer program budget are used to compare the size of the case study sites' volunteer programs. Data from 1992 through 1996 are used to illustrate the size of the program over time. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 will use the data outlined here to illustrate the growth of the volunteer programs and retention of volunteers at the case study sites.

Organizational volunteers include volunteers working in every section of the garden including horticulture. The number of organizational volunteers helps to dictate the organizational structure of the volunteer program. With only a few volunteers, the coordinator can provide more individual supervision, evaluation and recognition. It is much more difficult to find personal time for everyone when volunteer numbers climb over one hundred. Figure 4.5 illustrates the number of organizational volunteers at each case study site. Holden Arboretum, the organization with the greatest amount of cultivated land per employee (fourteen), has consistently had the most organizational volunteers.

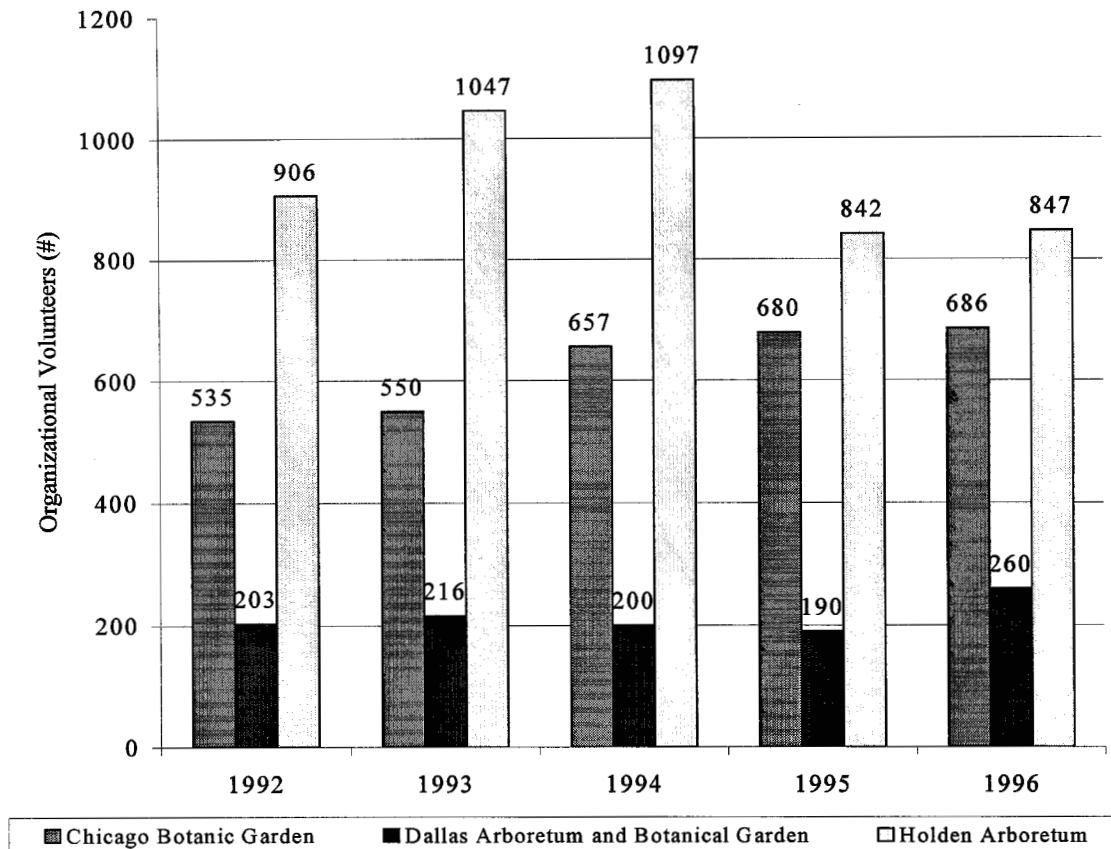


Figure 4.5 Organizational Volunteers at the Case Study Sites, 1992-1996

The number of horticulture volunteers at each case study site is depicted in Figure 4.6. This graph shows that Chicago has more horticulture volunteers than the other two case sites. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden officially began offering horticulture volunteer positions in 1994. Prior to 1994, only two individuals were allowed to volunteer in the horticulture department. Since 1994, the horticulture program has grown to 30 volunteers. At Holden Arboretum, the number of horticulture volunteers has fluctuated from a low of 81 in 1993 to a high of 134 volunteers in 1994.

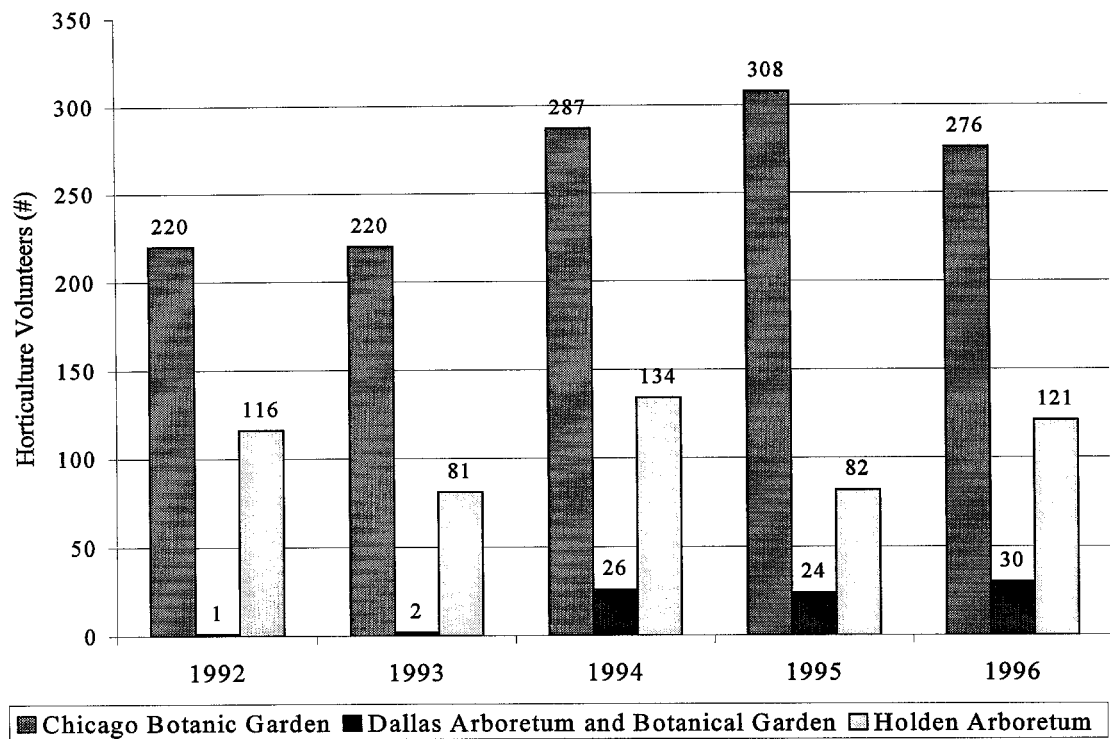


Figure 4.6 Horticulture Volunteers at the Case Study Sites, 1992-1996

The operating budget of a volunteer program can help to illustrate the size of the program. It can also show the importance the administration places on the program. Administrators will provide more resources to areas in which they believe have significant value and less to programs, they believe the organization could survive without. Although volunteers have often been thought of as “free labor,” they are not. Money should allocated to provide a competitive salary for the coordinator of volunteers and for recruitment, recognition, and evaluation of volunteers.

The 1996 budgets including salaries for the volunteer program staff at the case study sites are shown graphically in Figure 4.7. The significant difference in Holden Arboretum's volunteer program budget to the other two case study sites can be attributed to the fact Holden Arboretum does not have a full-time coordinator of volunteers. Holden Arboretum's coordinator works three days a week and receives 78%, \$23,000, of the program's budget. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden allots 65% of its budget, \$58,736 for wages of the coordinator of volunteers and an assistant seven days a week. Chicago Botanic Garden provides its coordinator \$61,500, 67%, of the volunteer program budget.

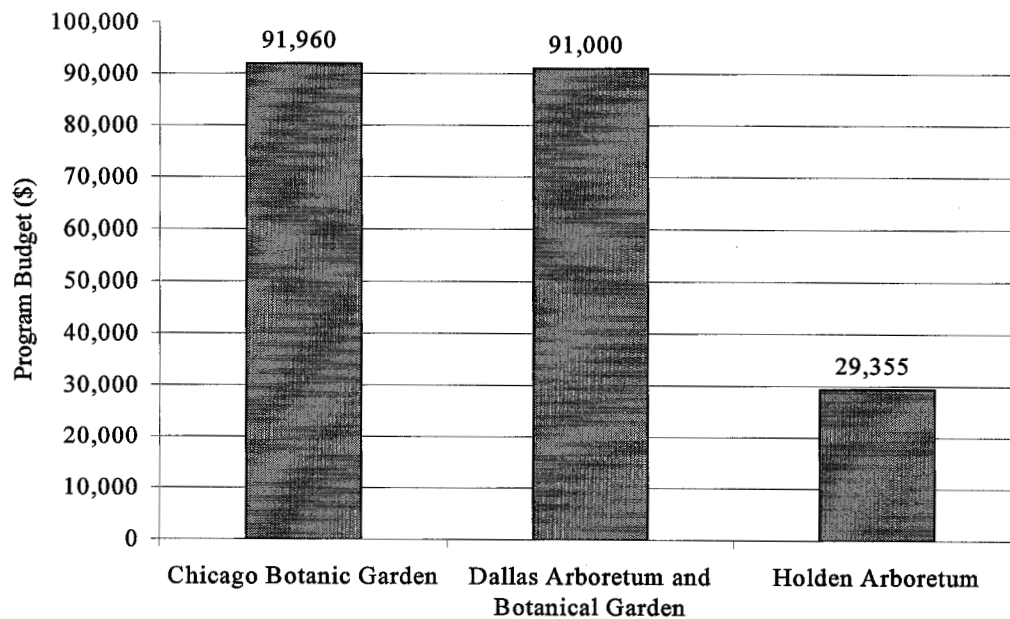


Figure 4.7 1996 Volunteer Program Budget at the Case Study Sites

The size of an organization and the amount of resources devoted to its volunteer program can greatly affect how the program is managed. The descriptions of the case study sites discussed in this chapter are critical in determining how a volunteer program will be managed. The current management practices of the case study sites are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

ANALYSIS OF VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT THE CASE STUDY SITES

A volunteer program model and the components that help make an effective program were discussed in Chapter 2, page 7. Each volunteer program is unique and operates according to its needs. This chapter will outline what the case study sites are including in their programs and a brief explanation. The results of the telephone survey of 20 public gardens (Appendix A, page 70) are included in order to make a comparison to the current practices at the case study sites. The impact of management practices and organizational size on volunteer retention and turnover will be illustrated in Chapter 6.

Volunteer Program Philosophy Statements

Holden Arboretum's coordinator of volunteers and key staff have developed a philosophy statement for their volunteer program. It states that "volunteers should effectively and creatively assist staff in the development and maintenance of Holden Arboretum and its programs through meaningful assignments." Chicago Botanic Garden and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden staff have not created a specific philosophy for their programs. When asked about a philosophy statement, the two coordinators responded that their programs exist to support the mission of the organization. Chicago

Botanic Garden does distribute a copy of the organization's mission to volunteers, but Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden's volunteers do not receive a copy of the mission statement from the volunteer office.

Table 5.1 depicts the case study sites and percentage of public gardens in the telephone survey, which have a program philosophy statement. Chicago Botanic Garden and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden are representative of 60% of the public gardens in the telephone survey. They do not have a specific philosophy statement for their programs. The lack of a philosophy statement can lead to lack of understanding about the purpose of the program between staff and volunteers. Volunteers may begin with a purpose different from that of the program, and eventually decide the volunteer position is not supporting a mission they can support. Therefore, the volunteer may be inclined to separate. Holden Arboretum reduces the likelihood of this by issuing a philosophy statement to all new volunteers.

Table 5.1 Programs with a Program Philosophy Statement

	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden		✓
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden		✓
Holden Arboretum	✓	
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	40%	60%

Volunteer Manuals

Both Chicago Botanic Garden and Holden Arboretum have a volunteer manual including general information about the volunteer program as well as policy statements. The manuals produced by Chicago Botanic Garden and Holden Arboretum provide volunteers with a clear understanding of program operations in addition to what their responsibilities and benefits are as volunteers. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden has a "core" volunteer manual that includes general information about the Arboretum, but does not include policies relating to the volunteer program. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden does not provide horticulture volunteers the same type of information regarding policies and work descriptions that are provided to other volunteers in the organization.

Table 5.2 depicts the case study sites and the percentage of public gardens in the telephone survey, which have a volunteer manual. The table clearly illustrates that the majority (75%) of coordinators of volunteers believe volunteer manuals are important enough to prepare for their volunteers. The volunteer manual is a major component of an efficient program. It enables the coordinator to effectively communicate detailed information to every new volunteer. The components of the volunteer manual vary with the size and maturity of the volunteer program. As the program grows, the manual becomes more critical in insuring volunteers are informed of their responsibilities and policies of the organization. A volunteer manual helps to reduce misunderstanding about expectations and rules of the organizations. Fewer misunderstandings lead to more satisfied volunteers and fewer separations.

Table 5.2 Programs with a Volunteer Manual

	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden	✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden	✓	
Holden Arboretum	✓	
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	75%	25%

Volunteer Opportunities and Work Descriptions

Chicago Botanic Garden has defined the opportunities for horticulture volunteers. They have fourteen specific areas that utilize horticulture volunteers ranging from the rose garden to plant propagation. Each position has its own work description and a staff member that supervises the volunteers. The position description includes the following information: service area, name of supervisor, location to sign in, purpose of service, qualifications, typical assignment, expectations, and training and development supplied by the garden. By updating the work descriptions, supervisors can help to improve volunteers' satisfaction. Chicago Botanic Garden includes volunteers when creating and editing volunteer work descriptions. This involvement allows the coordinator and staff supervisor to know better what the volunteers prefer doing and if possible, assign more appropriate tasks.

Holden Arboretum has seventeen specific horticulture positions. Volunteers work in the Rhododendron Garden, Wildflower Garden, Butterfly Garden, among others. Work descriptions consisting of the position title, name of supervisor, training requirements, and time commitment have been created for four horticulture positions.

The coordinator of volunteers stated that she is in the process of creating work descriptions for the remaining work assignments.

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden has unstructured horticulture volunteer positions, and has not created formal work descriptions for horticulture volunteers.

Volunteers routinely report to the same area of the garden each time they volunteer, but may rotate to other sections as the staff requests their help. Staff supervisors are not as clearly identified, as they are at the other case study sites.

Table 5.3 illustrates the case study sites and public gardens in the telephone survey, which have created work descriptions for all of their horticulture volunteer positions.

Table 5.3 Programs with Work Descriptions for all Horticulture Volunteer Positions

	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden	✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden		✓
Holden Arboretum		✓
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	75%	25%

The varying degree of formal work descriptions for horticulture volunteers is consistent with the researchers observation that as the size of the program increases the program becomes more formal. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden with the fewest number of horticulture volunteers has not created any work descriptions while Chicago Botanic Garden has a work description for every horticulture volunteer position. The

impact of not having descriptions for every position in a moderate size program can be seen at Holden Arboretum in the next chapter. Without descriptions, volunteers do not know what will be expected of them and there is no basis for fair individual evaluation. Coordinators will be unable to offer meaningful suggestions to improve a volunteer's performance or satisfaction of the program, if there are no clear expectations. This can cause volunteers to become frustrated and separate from the organization.

Recruitment Practices

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden has not made a concerted effort to recruit horticulture volunteers. This is reflected in its total number of horticulture volunteers (30 in 1996). Individuals working in horticulture come to them and specifically request that assignment. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden places most of its recruiting efforts on educational volunteers.

The recruitment efforts of Holden Arboretum are clearly exhibited in the significant jump in the number of horticulture volunteers in 1994. They increased the number of horticulture volunteers 30% (67 individuals) from the previous year. Holden Arboretum's coordinator of volunteers targeted individuals involved in nature and garden clubs, plant societies, and the retired teachers association. She also had the public relations department create a press release about the garden and mention the need for horticulture volunteers.

Recruiting efforts at Chicago Botanic Garden are targeted on individuals that have knowledge of the botanic garden and live within fifteen miles of the garden. Staff

members at Chicago Botanic Garden rely on their volunteer newsletter and current volunteers to spread the word that volunteer opportunities are available. Members of the garden hear about opportunities through the members' newsletter. The coordinator of volunteers will occasionally place an announcement for horticulture volunteer positions in a local newspaper especially when Chicago Botanic Garden opens a new garden feature.

Table 5.4 depicts the case study sites and percentage of public gardens in the telephone survey, which specifically recruit horticulture volunteers. Chicago Botanic Garden and Holden Arboretum are not representative of other public gardens in regard to recruiting horticulture volunteers. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden currently does not recruit horticulture volunteers. This reflects the tendencies of 70% of the public gardens in the telephone survey. The volunteers that do serve the horticulture department at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden come on their own initiative. Its volunteers tend to remain dedicated to the organization because they came on their own.

Table 5.4 Programs Recruiting Horticulture Volunteers

	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden	✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden		✓
Holden Arboretum	✓	
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	30%	70%

Orientation and Training

Chicago Botanic Garden holds a general orientation meeting every month to six weeks. This meeting is for prospective volunteers. The coordinator of volunteers organizes and hosts this meeting and informs the attendees about the garden and the volunteer program. It is a time for individuals to ask questions about specific opportunities at the garden. After a volunteer is interviewed and invited to volunteer, Chicago Botanic Garden offers a specific orientation to the section of the garden where the individual will be volunteering. This is on an as needed basis and is often facilitated by a "seasoned" volunteer. The specific orientation includes a tour of the grounds, a look at where tools are stored, and a discussion of the work description.

Training opportunities are limited in the horticulture program at Chicago Botanic Garden. Most of the initial training is on the job and further training is the responsibility of the volunteers. Continuing education courses, which the garden markets to the public, are available to volunteers if extra space is available. Volunteers are required to pay for class materials but do not have to pay a registration fee. The coordinator of volunteers urges volunteers to enroll in these courses if they are related to their volunteer position. Currently, volunteers frequently take part in continuing education courses. However, volunteers occasionally request more training at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Holden Arboretum provides one-on-one orientation to volunteers once they have joined the program. The coordinator of volunteers personally shows the new volunteer around the property and reviews the volunteer handbook. Reviewing the handbook with the new volunteer insures the coordinator that the new volunteer understands the

intention of the volunteer program and policies, which may affect the volunteer. If a large group comes in at once, as happened in 1994, orientation is included in training. Training is routinely on the job for horticulture volunteers. Their supervisor will review how they prefer a specific task be completed, as the need arises. Detailed training is provided for volunteers in the Wildflower and Butterfly Gardens. These areas are more demanding and require a better grasp of specific knowledge.

Volunteers at Holden Arboretum have numerous opportunities for continuing education and in-service training. Volunteers who complete a minimum of 35 hours of service can enroll in an unlimited number of continuing education courses sponsored by Holden Arboretum for the public. During January and February, the arboretum sponsors in-service lectures and field trips for the staff and horticulture volunteers covering topics such as plant propagation, rock gardening, wildflowers, etc. Volunteers are strongly urged to take part in these learning opportunities to improve their working knowledge of plants and gardening. In 1996, about one quarter of the volunteers took part in the training opportunities. Currently volunteers are satisfied with the amount of training and are not requesting additional opportunities.

At Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, new volunteers are shown the volunteer office, where they should sign in and sign out, and introduced to their staff supervisor. Dallas Arboretum's volunteer program does not have any formal orientation for its horticulture volunteers.

Table 5.5 illustrates the case study gardens and percentage of public gardens in the telephone survey, which offer formal orientation to volunteers. Chicago Botanic

Garden and Holden Arboretum are representative of 85% of the public gardens in the telephone survey in regard to formal orientation. The formal orientation enables volunteers to become familiar with the organization at the beginning of their term. The familiarity leads to higher comfort level and satisfaction with the volunteer position. If volunteers feel uncomfortable, they are likely to separate from the organization. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden with the fewest number of horticulture volunteers overcomes the lack of formal orientation with the personal one-on-one attention the volunteers receive from the staff. Formal orientation will become necessary as the horticulture volunteer program grows at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

Table 5.5 Programs with Formal Orientation

	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden	✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden		✓
Holden Arboretum	✓	
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	85%	15%

Dallas Arboretum and Botanic Garden's horticulture volunteers receive their training on the job. Horticulture volunteers are invited to three training sessions each year for docents and garden guides at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, but few participate in the cross training.

Winter workshops for the public are the only opportunities horticulture volunteers at the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden have for continued education. These are

available to the volunteers free of charge if they assist the staff in hosting the workshops for the public. The horticulture volunteers appear to be satisfied with the educational opportunities, because they are not requesting additional training.

Table 5.6 depicts the case study sites and percentage of the public gardens in the telephone survey, which offer in-service training and/or continuing education. Each coordinator of volunteers at the case study sites cited horticulture knowledge is important for their volunteers to be efficient and comfortable. Based on previous work done by the researcher at Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College, horticulture volunteers also place a high value on continuing education and training. Opportunities for training motivate volunteers to return season after season.

Table 5.6 Programs with In-Service Training and/or Continuing Education

	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden	✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden	✓	
Holden Arboretum	✓	
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	90%	10%

Evaluations

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Society evaluates the volunteer program on an annual basis. If there is a noticeable problem, such as attrition, the coordinator of volunteers will ask questions to help determine what is causing it. Currently Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden is not implementing formal performance evaluations of

individual volunteers. During the interview, the coordinator stated "if she were to start a new program she would include individual evaluations. However, to incorporate them into an existing program may cause too many hurt feelings." The staff supervisors of the horticulture volunteers do provide informal feedback. This feedback lets the volunteer know on a daily basis what they are doing well and what could be improved.

Like Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, Chicago Botanic Garden does not evaluate individual horticulture volunteers. When asked if the staff supervisors provide informal feedback the coordinator of volunteers stated that "it depends on the supervisor. As a group, horticulture is probably the weakest of all the volunteer groups at this point." She attributed the lack of interest in evaluation to the fact that "evaluation is scary and it does not pay you back immediately." Therefore, the staff supervisors do not take the time to evaluate the volunteers.

Chicago Botanic Garden conducts an annual evaluation of the entire volunteer program. The coordinator of volunteers recruits volunteers to facilitate the process, and the information from the evaluation is shared with everyone. Sometimes the results are posted and other times the coordinator gets a group of volunteers together to discuss it and make changes to the program. The coordinator of volunteers also interviews each staff supervisor to determine how the program can be improved from his/her point of view.

Holden Arboretum does not perceive the need to evaluate individual volunteers. The coordinator of volunteers feels the staff is providing adequate feedback to volunteers on a daily basis. She noted that some staff supervisors are better at working with their

volunteers than others. In lieu of individual evaluations, the coordinator of volunteers speaks with each staff supervisor to determine if they are experiencing any problems with volunteers and handles them personally. Holden Arboretum has not completed a program evaluation in five years. The last evaluation was deemed useless, because it lacked constructive feedback.

Table 5.7 outlines the case study sites and percentage of public gardens in the telephone survey, which implement individual and organizational evaluations. The case study sites are representative of other public gardens in regard to not implementing individual evaluations. The omission of individual evaluation reduces the likelihood coordinators of volunteers know why volunteers are satisfied or unsatisfied with their positions. Coordinators are working only from assumptions and hunches they may have about an individual volunteer without this information.

Chicago Botanic Garden and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden represent 45% of the public gardens in the telephone survey by implementing volunteer program evaluations. Program evaluations help the coordinators to better understand the current condition of their volunteer programs. The researcher supports the premise that quality evaluation will lead to high retention rates. This will be illustrated in Chapter 6.

Table 5.7 Programs Implementing Individual and Program Evaluations

	Individual Evaluation		Program Evaluation	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden		✓	✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden		✓	✓	
Holden Arboretum		✓		✓
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	20%	80%	45%	55%

Recognition and Benefits

Each case study site has an annual recognition event. Volunteers are recognized for the number of years of services they have provided. They are given a token of appreciation such a pin, certificate, or membership to the organization. Holden Arboretum and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden also award a certificate to a “volunteer of the year.”

Horticulture volunteers are offered comparable benefits at each case study site. Table 5.8 depicts the case study sites and percentage of public gardens in the telephone survey, which provide recognition and benefits. The most common benefit is fellowship and the opportunity to learn more about horticulture. Each case study site offers a volunteer newsletter and invitations to special garden openings or volunteer parties. Mileage, from the volunteer’s home to the garden, is also considered a benefit, because it can be used as a tax deduction.

Table 5.8 Programs Providing Recognition and Benefits

	Recognition		Benefits	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden	✓		✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden	✓		✓	
Holden Arboretum	✓		✓	
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	95%	5%	90%	10%

Recognition and benefits as trivial as they may seem are essential to keeping a volunteer happy. Volunteers often volunteer to help an organization or a cause; however, some volunteers also have personal goals. The researcher has found that in the case of horticulture volunteers it is often camaraderie or the opportunity to learn more about gardening that promotes them to volunteer. The coordinator at each case study site stated that horticulture volunteers were the least demanding of their volunteer groups. The coordinators at the case study sites have been successful in providing appropriate and timely benefits and recognition for their volunteers, although horticulture volunteers are not demanding it.

Record Keeping

Each case study site is keeping some form of records. The data most often collected are the volunteer's application with personal information, area of service and the number of hours of service. This is the basic information most institutions use when writing grant proposals and making presentations to the board of directors about the

volunteer program. Each institution depends on the volunteer or his/her supervisor to turn in the number of hours volunteered.

Holden Arboretum and Chicago Botanic Garden use a computer to maintain volunteer records. Neither coordinator is extremely familiar with the software; thus, reducing the usefulness of the technology. Dallas Arboretum is still using paper records and index cards to keep track of its volunteers' service. This makes it difficult to identify trends in the program.

Table 5.9 outlines the case study sites and percentage of public gardens included in the telephone survey, which keep volunteer records on a computer. Chicago Botanic Garden and Holden Arboretum are representative of 70% of the public garden in the telephone survey. Again, this corresponds to the premise that as a volunteer program matures the management of the program should become formalized. Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden's horticulture volunteer program has not reached a size that warrants the use of a computer record keeping system.

Table 5.9 Programs Maintaining Records with a Computer

	Yes	No
Chicago Botanic Garden	✓	
Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden		✓
Holden Arboretum	✓	
Public Gardens in Telephone Survey	70%	30%

This chapter has outlined which management practices each case study site implements and how the sites compare to other public gardens included in the telephone

survey. This comparison allows the researcher to illustrate which sites are representative, ahead or behind in terms of instituting various management practices. The case study sites are representative of other volunteer programs in the United States in terms of creating volunteer manuals, formal orientation, in-service training, recognition, benefits, and computer record keeping systems. They have instituted the practice of recruiting horticulture volunteers and evaluating the volunteer program before the majority of public gardens in the telephone survey. However, Holden Arboretum and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden are behind other programs in terms of creating work descriptions for all horticulture volunteers.

Eighty percent of the gardens included in the telephone are neglecting individual evaluation. The case study sites are also deficient in individual volunteer evaluation. Regular evaluation is an important component in the model in order to determine volunteers' satisfaction. Without individual evaluation and exit interviews, it is nearly impossible to understand why volunteers are separating from the organization. This information is critical to the process of managing turnover.

Chapter 6 will illustrate the current retention and turnover rates at the case study sites. The needs, size, and maturity of each program have a direct impact on the turnover rate at each organization. The data depicts the impact of many of the management practices outlined and discussed in this chapter on horticulture volunteers.

Chapter 6

ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY SITES' RETENTION AND TURNOVER RATES

Retention refers to the number of individuals remaining at the organization in a given period, and is often defined and discussed in terms of turnover. Retention and turnover are inversely related, when retention rates are high turnover rates are low. Turnover is the number of individuals separating from an organization, voluntarily or involuntarily, in a given period of time (Mobley 1982, 10). Voluntary separation includes individuals leaving on their own initiative for any reason, personal or otherwise. Involuntary separation refers to individuals asked to leave by the organization.

Little research has been done regarding volunteer retention and turnover. However, many researchers have studied employee turnover in-depth, and many of the principles regarding employee turnover can be used to manage volunteer turnover. This chapter will discuss rates of volunteer turnover at each case study site and management practices that impacted the loss of volunteers. Because "no fully acceptable solution has been discovered to compare turnover percentages from one institution to the next," this thesis will not compare turnover rates from one case study site to the next (Mobley 1982, 59). Further research (discussed in Chapter 7, page 69) will be necessary to make significant comparisons and identify trends in volunteer retention at public gardens.

Chicago Botanic Garden

The volunteer turnover rates at Chicago Botanic Garden were determined by randomly selecting fifty horticulture volunteers from the 1992 roster and tracking their involvement. Turnover is simply the number of individuals separating in a given year divided by the number remaining from the original fifty. Figure 6.1 shows the percentage of separations for each year 1992 through 1996.

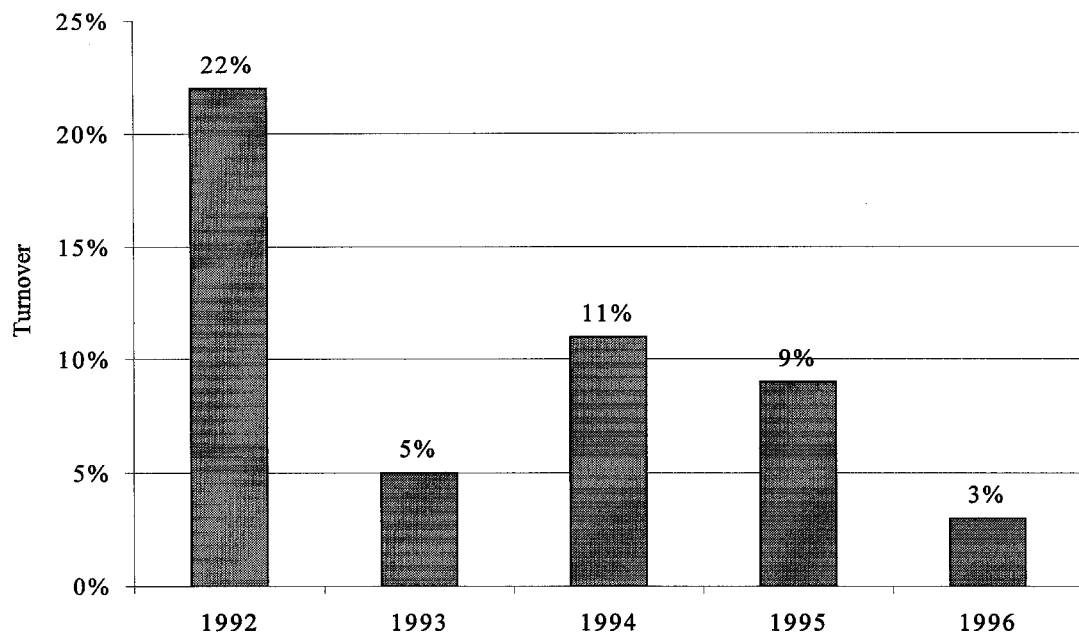


Figure 6.1 Horticulture Volunteer Turnover Rate at Chicago Botanic Garden, 1992 through 1996

It is difficult to explain the significant fluctuations in the turnover rate of the individuals studied at the Chicago Botanic Garden without interviewing the volunteers who left. The coordinator of volunteers stated that in 1994, a new garden was being

opened and at least seventy new volunteers were recruited. In that same year, turnover increased to 11% from 5% the previous year. The influx of new volunteers could have led others to believe that they were no longer needed. Research does show that the longer individuals are with an organization the less likely they are to separate (Mobley 1982, 57). Therefore, the decline in turnover from 1994 to 1996 follows the predictions set forth in literature.

At the end of the five years, twenty-nine volunteers, 58% remained of the fifty in the study. This 58% are the volunteers who are satisfied with their volunteer positions and feel comfortable with the environment. It can be inferred those remaining twenty-nine individuals had a clear understanding of what would be asked of them and what they would receive in return when they began. This was accomplished by distributing and reviewing a work description and volunteer manual when each of them was invited to volunteer. The volunteers retained (58%) were satisfied with their volunteer positions and had made a conscious decision that Chicago Botanic Garden was where they wanted to spend their personal time.

The 42% who left (21 individuals) may have had personal life changes that reduced their free time to volunteer or health conditions that prevented them from volunteering. The coordinator can not always predict how or if a volunteer program candidate's life will change drastically. However, they should attempt to determine the candidate's potential to stay longer than one gardening season during the selection process.

The coordinator of volunteers at Chicago Botanic Garden has managed the volunteer program since its beginning in 1977 and is comfortable with volunteer turnover. She is aware of the positive benefits turnover brings to an organization including: infusing new knowledge, displacing poor performers, and stimulating change. Until this research, she had not closely looked at the retention rate of the volunteer program. She stated the turnover rate in the program was not a problem. She is satisfied as long as turnover does not go over 50% per year. The economic costs caused by turnover are not significant at Chicago Botanic Garden because most of the training is on the job and recruitment is primarily by word of mouth. The reduced efficiency caused when "seasoned" volunteers leave is noticeable, but is not perceived to be causing significant problems.

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden is different from the other two case study sites regarding the development stage of its horticulture volunteer program. Horticulture volunteers were first allowed to volunteer in 1991 when an individual "campaigned" to become a horticulture volunteer. Until 1993, when a second person became a horticulture volunteer no thought was given to having a structured horticulture program. Currently there are 30 horticulture volunteers. Figure 6.2 depicts the retention rate of the program for each year 1992 through 1996. The retention rates were tabulated by dividing how many individuals remained at the end of the year by the initial number of horticulture volunteers for each year. Because the program was small, a random sample

was not used. Instead, all of the horticulture volunteers were included in the study. Turnover is not graphically illustrated for Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, because it is limited to four individuals during the four years studied.

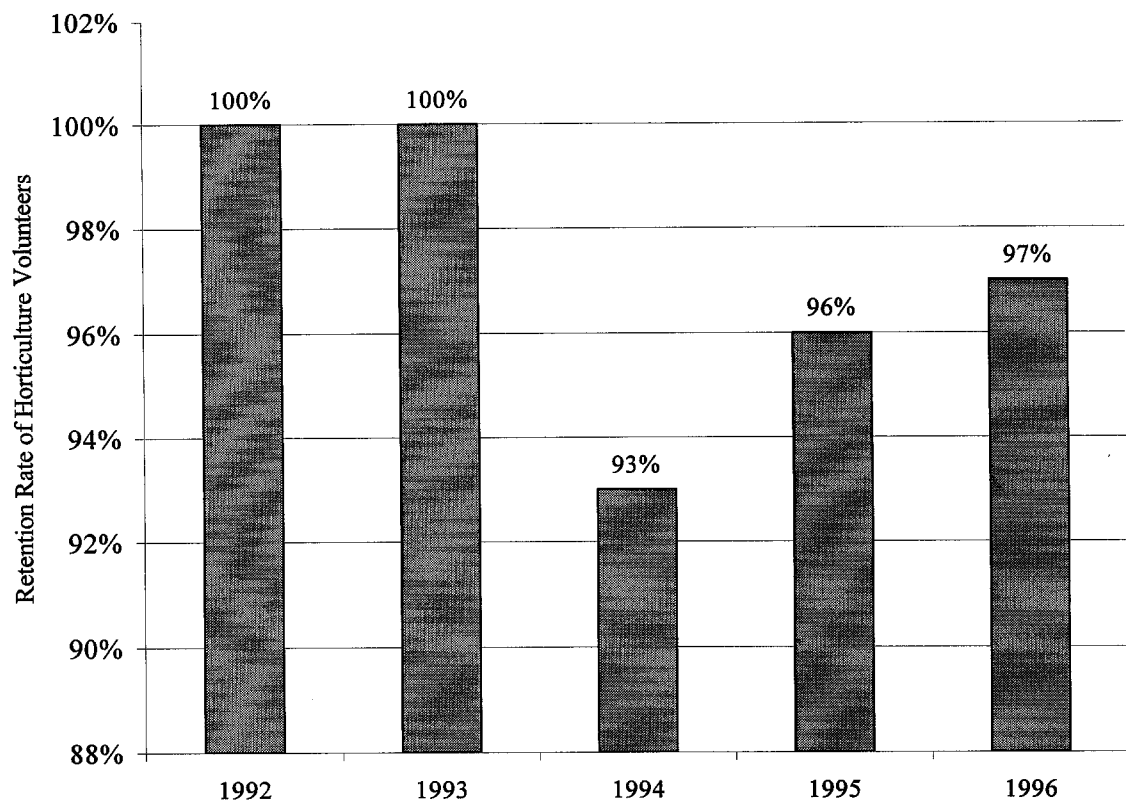


Figure 6.2 Retention of Horticulture Volunteers at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden, 1992 through 1996

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden determines why horticulture volunteers separate from the organization. They do this by writing a letter to or calling the volunteer when they fail to come in for an extended period. Four individuals have ceased to volunteer in the horticulture volunteer program, and all have done so due to personal

reasons and nothing the arboretum has done. Two individuals encountered health problems, one moved out of the area, and the final individual took a part-time job.

In spite of not having many of the components suggested for a successful volunteer program, i.e., work descriptions, continuing education, and evaluations, horticulture volunteers are likely to stay at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden for more than one garden season. Horticulture volunteers perceive they are needed and have a sense of ownership in the gardens in which they work. This is because there are a limited number of horticulture staff and volunteers, and the horticulture volunteers have come on their own initiative. There has been no formal recruitment for horticulture volunteers. Taking the effort to find out about the gardens and ask to volunteer shows the remaining volunteers had put in a great amount of time thinking about it and deciding where they wanted to spend their free time.

The coordinator of volunteers at Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden is encouraged by the high retention rates. When asked how long she expects horticulture volunteers to stay she stated, "I would like them to volunteer until they can no longer get to the garden and back home." She also stated horticulture volunteers are the easiest volunteers to satisfy at her organization. They ask for very little and give volumes of labor in return. This satisfaction helps to keep the horticulture volunteers coming back year after year.

Holden Arboretum

Holden Arboretum's coordinator of volunteers recently updated Holden's record keeping system and in the process lost data about individual volunteers before 1993.

Therefore, this section will include information from 1994 through 1996 only. Figure 6.3 shows the turnover rates of 50 randomly selected horticulture volunteers. The data show 26% (13, individuals) separated from the organization in the first year of the study and decreased by 12% in the second year. In 1995, five individuals (14% of the remaining 37 in the study) quit volunteering. In 1996, six individuals (19% of the remaining 32 in the study) resigned.

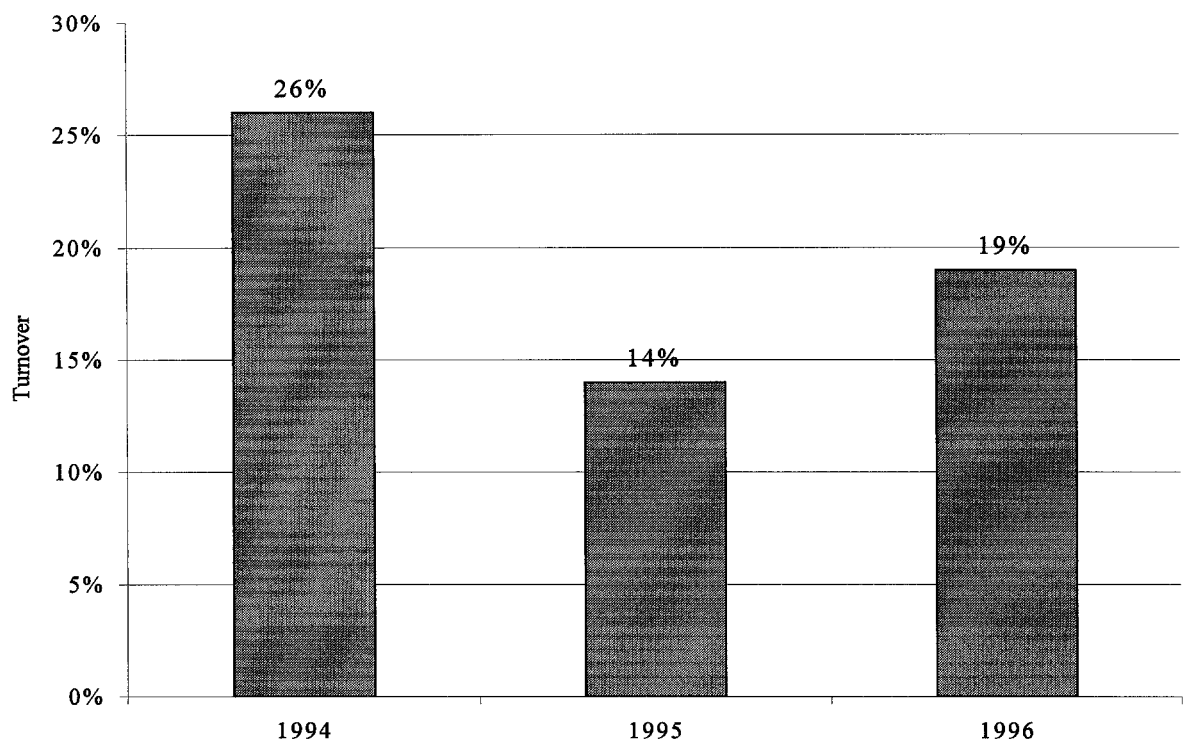


Figure 6.3 Horticulture Volunteer Turnover Rate at Holden Arboretum, 1994 through 1996

Several documented inputs resulted in the 48% turnover in three seasons at Holden Arboretum. Holden Arboretum utilizes high school students in its horticulture volunteer program. The high school students have historically only volunteered enough to fulfill their high school community service requirement. The large number of horticulture volunteers (134 in 1994) in addition to a part-time coordinator instead of a full-time coordinator reduces the amount of time each volunteer receives from the staff. This reduction in attention from staff members and the coordinator can cause volunteers to loose interest in the organization and leave.

The volunteer coordinator would like to see horticulture volunteers stay at least two seasons if not three. Although Holden's coordinator of volunteers does not believe the volunteer turnover has had a major impact, she expressed that the knowledge volunteers gain on the job and from in-service training is a benefit to the organization. When they leave that body of knowledge is lost. She is also concerned about the future. With competition from an area recreational park for volunteers, Holden Arboretum needs to manage volunteer turnover better and increase volunteer retention.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The case study sites represented a range in size based on number of acres, operating budget, number of employees, and number of visitors. These characteristics influenced the size of the volunteer program as well as the methods used to manage the program at each case study site. Dallas Arboretum with the smallest horticulture volunteer program did not follow the volunteer program model as closely as the other two case study gardens. However, they had extremely low turnover rates. This supports the researchers claim that each organization is unique and must modify the volunteer program model, discussed in Chapter 2, page 7 to suit its needs. As a volunteer program grows the management of the program needs to be formalized in order to maintain low turnover rates. The researcher believes formal orientation, job descriptions, and training become more critical as the program grows. This theory is confirmed by Joan Kuyper author of *Volunteer Program Administration*. She states that as a program matures procedures and policies are established, and volunteer jobs are defined. The increased formalization allows a limited number of paid staff to work with a large number of volunteers more efficiently (Kuyper et al. 1993, 23).

The public gardens included in this study have not begun to actively manage volunteer turnover. They are implementing many of the components of the volunteer model including: creating a philosophy statement and a volunteer manual; providing formal orientation, in-service training, formal recognition, and benefits; and using a computer to maintain records. However, public gardens are neglecting critical steps in the model such as creating work descriptions, evaluating volunteers individually, and evaluating the volunteer program regularly.

The researcher believes as budgets continue to be restricted more emphasis will be placed on volunteer efforts and coordinators will be asked to increase the number of volunteers serving the organization. This is becoming increasingly difficult to do. Holden Arboretum has reported competition for volunteers with a neighboring organization, and Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden reported that more individuals are taking part-time jobs in the area in lieu of volunteering. Reducing volunteer turnover will be a critical factor in increasing the number of volunteers at an organization.

This research provides adequate information for public gardens and coordinators of volunteers to implement an effective volunteer program. The volunteer program model was created specifically for coordinators of volunteers to review when they implement their volunteer programs. Not every component of the model may be appropriate for each organization, as each organization is unique. However, if every component is considered and modified to fit the needs of the organization volunteer retention will be increased and turnover will be reduced. Specific recommendations for public gardens are outlined in the next section of this chapter. Additionally, this chapter

presents recommendations for future research regarding volunteer retention and turnover in public gardens.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Every public garden can manage volunteer retention although they cannot eliminate turnover. There is no way coordinators of volunteers can keep individuals from moving, becoming ill, or taking a job causing him/her to no longer volunteer. However, coordinators can do many things to help control turnover rates. The researcher recommends coordinators of volunteers begin by implementing the volunteer program model. Many problems that lead to turnover such as misunderstandings about the volunteer program's philosophy statement, volunteer time commitments, or work duties will be eliminated by implementing the procedures discussed in the volunteer program model. Keeping detailed records, performing evaluations and studying the information gathered will help coordinators identify problem areas and trends in the program. After identifying problem areas, coordinators can alter current practices and create new procedures for the program.

In order for public gardens to increase volunteer retention, they must focus more attention on preparing volunteers for his/her new role. The researcher recommends doing this by creating detailed work descriptions. The work descriptions must be reviewed with the volunteer when they begin and after they have worked in the position a pre-determined amount of time. Coordinators can ensure that the volunteer understands what is expected, by reviewing the description with the volunteer when he/she begins. At that

time, coordinators and volunteers can make alterations if possible. The new volunteer should consider a different volunteer position if alterations are not possible. Coordinators should follow-up with volunteers after they have worked in a position for a given period to determine if the position is the right one. If a change is needed, coordinators should transfer the volunteer to a different position or slightly alter his/her current position. The attention devoted to an individual's needs is necessary to improve a volunteer's satisfaction and help to keep him/her at the organization for more than one season.

Chicago Botanic Garden was the only case study site implementing program evaluations on a regular basis. This is an important component of the volunteer program model. The researcher recommends each institution implement an evaluation process, which identifies areas of the program that need improvement. Coordinators must identify which field supervisors do not provide volunteers adequate on the job training, daily direction, and feedback. Coordinators should work with the staff to improve the working relationship they have with volunteers. Regular evaluation also allows coordinators to track the success or failures of specific areas of the volunteer program from year to year. This information allows coordinators to modify their management practices as the program changes.

The researcher also recommends public gardens institute individual evaluations for volunteers. Yearly evaluations are essential to understanding how volunteers perceive their positions and roles at the garden. There is no sure way of knowing the level of satisfaction of a volunteer without asking. Individual evaluations also allow coordinators and staff supervisors to determine if volunteers should be transferred to another volunteer

position or receive additional training for their current position. If evaluations are not implemented, volunteers may quit instead of asking for more training or a new assignment.

Currently Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden is the only case study site asking why volunteers separate. The researcher recommends coordinators institute exit interviews and follow-up surveys to help understand why volunteers separate from the organization. Because exit interviews sometimes elicit predictable answers, a follow-up survey should be mailed to the individual to allow anonymity. The survey may enable the individual to answer more freely and honestly than a face to face interview. Exit interviews and surveys will provide specific reasons for volunteers moving on to other endeavors. Some reasons may be beyond the control of the coordinator while others may be altered easily.

Communication is one of the most important components of the volunteer program model, although it is not explicitly mentioned. Communication is critical before volunteers begin, while they are volunteering, and after they separate from the organization. It is inherent in interviewing, discussing job descriptions, training, and evaluation. The researcher recommends the coordinators of volunteers and staff supervisors communicate freely with volunteers. This communication will help reduce turnover rates and increase horticulture volunteer retention. Communication will help the coordinator to make the volunteer program a synergistic relationship between the volunteer and the organization.

Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis is limited to horticulture volunteers and because of limited time, money and willing participants could not provide an overall trend of volunteer turnover in public horticulture. There is a need for other scholars to continue research on volunteer retention and staff at public gardens to study volunteer retention at their own gardens. Specific areas of further study are listed below.

- Compare volunteer retention at a broader sample of public gardens to create a basis for comparison.
- Interview volunteers that have separated from public gardens and discover reasons for leaving.
- Study turnover according to specific categories such as voluntary quits and involuntary quits.
- Study turnover among volunteers that begin at the same time. Determine if the cohort effect impacts how long they will stay.
- Study turnover based on demographic information. Determine if specific categories of people require different inputs to keep them as a volunteer.
- Study the impacts of turnover on effectiveness and costs of operating a volunteer program at public gardens.
- Study the impact of multi-cultural diversity or lack of multi-cultural diversity in a volunteer program on volunteer retention.
- Review the needs for risk management policies in volunteer programs.

Appendix A

PUBLIC GARDENS INCLUDED IN THE TELEPHONE SURVEY

Atlanta Botanical Garden
P.O. Box 77246
Atlanta, GA 30357

Longwood Gardens, Inc.
P.O. Box 501
Kennett Square, PA 19348

Betty Ford Alpine Garden
183 Gore Creek Drive
Vail, CO 81657

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
4801 LaCrosse Avenue
Austin, TX 78739

Callaway Gardens
P.O. Box 2000
Pine Mountain, GA 31822

The Living Desert
47900 Portola Avenue
Palm Desert, CA 92211

Denver Botanic Garden
909 York Street
Denver, CO 80206

Luthy Botanical Garden
2218 N. Prospect
Peoria, IL 61603

Fairchild Tropical Gardens
10901 Old Cutler Road
Miami, FL 33156

Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Garden
22306 Aldine-Westfield Road
Humble, TX 77338

Huntington Botanical Gardens
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, CA 91108

Myriad Botanical Garden
100 Myriad Gardens
Oklahoma City, OK 73102

Inniswood Metro Gardens
940 South Hempstead Road
Westerville, OH 43081

Norfolk Botanical Garden
Azalea Garden Road
Norfolk, VA 23518

The North Carolina Arboretum
P.O. Box 6617
Asheville, NC 28816

United States National Arboretum
3501 New York Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Santa Barbara Botanic Garden
1212 Mission Canyon Road
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

U. S. Botanic Garden
245 First Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College
500 College Avenue
Swarthmore, PA 19081

Utah State University Botanical Garden
1817 North Main
Farmington, UT 84025

Appendix B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

General Background Information

Inception date of the volunteer program

Total number of organizational volunteers for each the past five years

Total number of hours of service given by all organizational volunteers as a whole for
each of the past five years

Total number of horticulture volunteers for each of the past five years

Total number of hours of service given by the horticulture volunteers as a whole for each
of the past five years

Randomly select fifty horticulture volunteers and track their activity i.e., continued
involvement

Job description of the Coordinator of Volunteers

General Management Issues

What is the budget for the volunteer program?

What portion of the budget is allotted for the salary of the coordinator?

What is the organizational structure of your volunteer program?

Which department is the volunteer program located?

Whom does the volunteer coordinator report?

What are the volunteer coordinator's responsibilities?

What authority does the volunteer coordinator have to make decisions such as "hiring" or
dismissal?

Who directly supervises horticulture volunteers? (Do you delegate volunteer supervision to others in the organization?)

If someone other than the coordinator supervises volunteers, do these individuals receive any training in managing volunteers?

What skills, abilities and experiences are required to become the volunteer coordinator?

Does the volunteer program have a volunteer manual?

What information is contained in the manual?

What types of policies are included in the manual?

Are all policies related to volunteers included in this manual?

Who is involved in creating these policies? (administration, volunteer coordinator, volunteers, and/or employees)

How is this manual different from the employee handbook?

Does each volunteer receive a copy of the manual?

When are there opportunities for horticulture volunteers to volunteer? (Year round, seasonal, or other)

Are there a minimum number of hours a volunteer must give each year?

If there are a minimum number of hours required, how is this requirement managed?

What are the consequences if an individual does not volunteer the minimum number of hours?

Does your program have active and inactive volunteer status (or leave of absence)?

How can this status help keep volunteers interested in the volunteer program?

What value per hour does the institution place on a volunteer's services

Does the organization require references and a background check for volunteers?

Does the organization require a drug test for volunteers?

How many hours are in a normal workweek?

Do you perceive any competition from neighboring organizations?

How do you overcome competition from neighboring organizations?

Volunteer Program Mission Statement

What is the mission of the volunteer program?

Is the mission clearly exhibited in a written statement?

How and when do volunteers become aware of the mission statement?

Is this mission statement reviewed at any time? If so who is involved in updating the mission?

Recruitment

How does your volunteer program recruit volunteers?

What methods do you use for recruiting volunteers?

Whom do you recruit? (General characters of the person)

When and how often does the program recruit volunteers?

Do you use local newspapers to help promote the volunteer program?

Does your public relations office help promote the volunteer program?

Do you utilize state and local volunteer agencies that help individuals find volunteer positions?

Where does the program recruit volunteers? How does the program recruit a diverse group of volunteers?

Work Descriptions

What information is included in job descriptions? (Are they vague or detailed?)

Who is involved in writing job descriptions?

Do staff members who directly supervise volunteers help?

Do volunteers assist in updating job descriptions?

With the results of performance evaluations, are individuals' job descriptions updated to suit their skills and interests?

If job descriptions are updated, how is it accomplished?

Volunteer Opportunities

What types of tasks are available for volunteers to complete?

What tasks can volunteers do only with direct supervision?

What tasks can volunteers have autonomy?

Who determines which tasks a volunteer can do?

Orientation and Training

What type of orientation does your program offer for new volunteers?

Are all volunteers required to attend orientation sessions before they begin work?

How long is the orientation?

What material is covered during the orientation?

Who leads the orientation?

How many times a year is it offered? On the other hand, when are volunteers required to attend?

What type of in-service training or continuing education is provided? (Video Training)

How often is in-service or continuing education training offered?

Who facilitates the training exercises?

Are all volunteers welcome to these exercises?

Are volunteers required to attend?

What topics are covered during training exercises? (Safety Training)

Do volunteers request more training?

Do volunteers request access to in-house lectures and continuing education classes?

Do the volunteers have free or discounted access to in-house lectures and continuing education classes?

Volunteer Evaluation

How often are volunteers evaluated? (Formally and Informally)

How are horticulture volunteers' performance evaluated?

What areas of the volunteers' performance are evaluated?

What type of tool do you use?

Is this tool different from an employee evaluation?

Who performs the evaluations?

What type of training does this person receive prior to evaluating volunteers?

What do you do with this information?

How does the information from evaluation help in placing a volunteer?

How does it help identify weaknesses in volunteers' abilities?

What processes are in place to improve volunteers' weaknesses?

Volunteer Program Evaluation

What methods are in place to evaluate the volunteer program?

How often is the program evaluated?

What areas of the program are evaluated?

Who is involved in evaluating the program?

What is done with the information collected from evaluations?

Rewards and Recognition

What rewards and recognition are given to volunteers?

What criteria are used to determine an individual's rewards?

Volunteer Benefits

What benefits are offered to volunteers? (List specifically)

Is safety equipment offered as a benefit?

How are benefits allocated? (A graduated scale, to everyone, or based on a minimum number of hours volunteered)

What is the market value of benefits compared to a salary?

Retention

How long do you expect horticulture volunteers to stay?

How long do you need them to stay to gain back what you have invested in them?

What do you invest in them in the way of time and money?

Is a high retention rate important?

If so, why is it important?

If not, why is not important?

How long do you think horticulture volunteers normally stay?

State Laws Affecting the Use of Volunteers

Are you aware of any labor laws that may affect how your institution's use of horticulture volunteers?

Do you have to follow any statutes, laws, regarding fair labor standards, affirmative action etc.?

Appendix C

MISSION STATEMENTS

Chicago Botanic Garden

To stimulate and develop an appreciation and understanding of gardening, botany, and conservation by developing gardens, plant collections, and education and research programs of excellence while providing a continuing aesthetic experience at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden

Our mission is to build and maintain a public botanic garden and arboretum which promotes the art, enjoyment, and knowledge of horticulture, while providing opportunities for education and research. We are committed to excellence, good management and fiscal responsibility.

Holden Arboretum

The Holden Arboretum's Mission is to promote the knowledge and appreciation of plants for personal enjoyment, inspiration and recreation, for scientific research, and for educational and aesthetic purposes:

- to develop and maintain documented collections of woody plants and other botanic specimens appropriate to the climatic zone of northeast Ohio,
- to acquire, grow and display plants, both ornamental and those of scientific interest and to demonstrate horticultural principles,
- to study, manage, and conserve the natural environment, including flora and fauna, of The Holden Arboretum lands and,
- to engage in horticultural research and in educational and public service activities that will enable others to make use of the knowledge acquired.

Appendix D

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE APPROVAL



OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST
FOR RESEARCH

210 HULLIHEN HALL
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
NEWARK, DELAWARE 19716-1551
Ph: 302/831-2136
Fax: 302/831-2828

30 May 1997

Ms. Linda L. Jones
Longwood Graduate Program
Campus

Dear Ms. Jones:

Subject: Human subjects approval for "Volunteer Retention in Nonprofit Public Gardens"

The above-referenced proposal, which you submitted for human subjects approval, will qualify as research exempt from full Human Subjects Review Board review under the following category:

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless (1) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and (2) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please notify the Human Subjects Review Board if you make any changes in this project.

Sincerely,

Costel D. Denson
Vice Provost for Research
Chair, Human Subjects Review Board

cc: James E. Swasey

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bernard, H. Russell. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994.
- Dewitt, James D. *A legal Handbook for Nonprofit Corporation Volunteers or What to Do Till the Lawyer Comes*. 1997. <http://www2.polarnet.com/~jdewitt/vlh/>. (5 February 1998).
- Ellis, Susan. *From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Volunteer Program Success*. Philadelphia: Energize, Inc., 1996.
- _____. *How You Can Benefit from The Latest Volunteer Trends*. Nonprofit World 13 (Sept/Oct 1995): 53-56.
- Ellis, Susan and Katherine Noyes. *By the People: A History of Americans as Volunteers*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1990.
- Gardner, James E. *Stabilizing the Workforce: A Complete Guide to Controlling Turnover*. New York: Quorum Books, 1986.
- Hodgkinson, Virginia et al. *Giving and Volunteering in the United States: 1996 Edition*. Washington D.C.: Independent Sector, 1996.
- Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993.
- MacBride, Marie. *Step by Step: Management of the Volunteer Program in Agencies*. Bergen County, N.J.: Volunteer Bureau of Bergen County, 1979.
- Mobley, William H. *Employee Turnover: Causes, Consequences, and Control*. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1982.
- Murk, Peter J, Ph.D. and Jane F. Stephan. *Volunteers: How to Get Them, Train Them, and Keep Them*. Economic Development Review (Summer 1991): 73-75.

O'Neill, Michael. *The Third America: The Emergence of the Nonprofit Sector in the United States*. Jossey-Bass Publishers; San Francisco, CA, 1989.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. *1990 U.S. Census Data: Database: C90STF3B*. 1992.
<http://venus.census.gov/cdrom/lookup/>. (5 February 1998).

Vineyard, Sue. *New Competencies for Volunteer Administrators*. Downers Grove, IL: Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996.

Wolf, Thomas. *The Nonprofit Organization: An Operating Manual*. Prentice Hall, Inc.: Englewood Cliffs, NJ: 1984.