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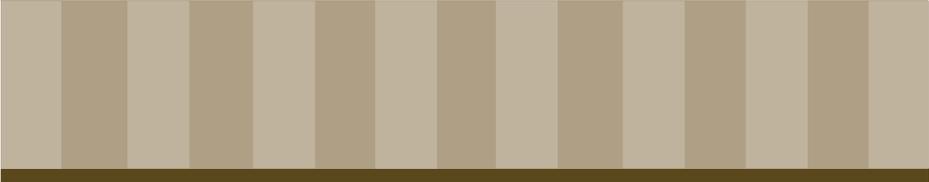
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We surveyed Oregon library leaders and have shared a few of the responses in this issue. For the complete survey results, visit <http://www.olaweb.org/winter2013olaq---supplement>

Question 1

What skills are you looking for in a librarian?

- What I look for in a librarian is not so much skills as personal qualities. I find that, for public library work at least, curiosity, enthusiasm, interest in people, and common sense are as important as knowledge of databases. Those cannot be taught. They do have to have a common core of knowledge of course, but most people coming out of library school will have that knowledge. It's the other piece which will help them be successful in the workplace.
Carolyn Rawles-Heiser, Library Director, Corvallis-Benton County Public Library
- Warm, accessible, friendly attitude, open to change in the environment, willing to adapt and lead and help others adapt.
Mo Cole, Director, Oregon City Public Library
- A deep dedication to customer service. Someone who wants to be integrated into every part of the community, who is always thinking of opportunities for the library to expand a service, develop a partnership, offer a program and take some risks. In a small town like Tualatin, that's a bit like being a local celebrity...not everyone is comfortable with that spotlight but those who enjoy it will thrive.
Abigail Elder, Manager, Tualatin Public Library and OLA Past President
- Outstanding customer service skills, general knowledge, curiosity, interest in ongoing learning, flexibility, project management.
Vailey Oehlke, Director, Multnomah County Library



The Top Ten Things You Should Do to Get Your First Job (or a New One)

by **Stephanie Chase**
Director of Library Programs
and Services,
Seattle Public Library



Currently Reading
Tigers in Red Weather
by Liza Klaussmann

Positions for librarians are becoming ever more competitive—and getting your first professional position can be challenging. While the ten suggestions below aren't a guarantee, they are tried-and-true suggestions for setting yourself as going above and beyond your peers.

1. **Be an intern.** If you live near a large public or academic library or an organization with a special library, explore the possibilities of interning, particularly as part of a project (as opposed to ongoing). As national volunteer and intern opportunities, like Americorps, dry up, organizations are in need of volunteers and interns skilled in librarianship. Focusing on an internship where you are part of a clearly defined project will give you the opportunity to have completed work in your portfolio.

Work with your library school to try to arrange an internship, or contact the Human Resources department of the organization where you would like to work as an intern. An internship might not get you a leg up on a job in the organization, especially if the organization uses the civil service process to screen candidates, but it can give you a listing on your resume that will get noticed at other organizations.

2. **Volunteer.** Look outside of internship and long-term volunteer opportunities to add to your resume. State library organizations, student-focused professional organization chapters, library consortiums and cooperatives, serving on a Board of Trustees, committee work, and non-profit volunteer work in similar fields all provide experience and perspective, additional material for your resume and cover letter, and, importantly, the opportunity to network.
3. **Network.** Through your internship and volunteer opportunities, you should focus on expanding your network. Who is leading the group or project where you are volunteering or interning? Who participates fully in that group? Who has a lot of energy and ideas? Who volunteers often for the work of the group? Who does staff look up to, or



talk about often? These are the people you should work to get to know—and, importantly, to get to know you. Once you have established a relationship, let them know you are looking for a job. Chances are, they'll have suggestions for you.

4. **Network.** Social media is a great equalizer. People you might have never emailed or dreamed of leaving a phone message—and who would certainly have not returned your email or phone call—may reply back to you on Twitter. Use Twitter to keep up with what is happening in the library world, and, importantly, who is taking part in the areas in which you are interested in. Who is presenting at your state conference? Who is presenting at ALA, or in one of the webinars that *Library Journal* or ALA and its divisions sponsors? Follow these folks on Twitter, and interact with their postings. The same would be true with a blog, Tumblr, or other public-facing service. You'll never know when you'll make a connection.

Other social media options can also be useful, although they are, by their nature, less public than Twitter. If your contact has a LinkedIn page, try that; if you can gauge from a contact's friends list on Facebook that they have a mix of friends and professional contacts, it might be worth sending a friend request. Tread carefully, with Facebook especially, as people have their own rules.

5. **Network.** In your internship, volunteer experiences, or through networking, find a mentor. A mentor can be someone who helps you in the short term, or it can be a long-term relationship. Determine what kind of mentor you need, and seek the person who would be the best fit for you. This person can be a wonderful support in your job hunting process—they might be able to connect you with a job opportunity, can review your materials, can act as a sounding board, and/or serve as a reference.
6. **Network.** Did I say network? You should do it. The library world is a small one.
7. **Be willing to relocate.** Sure, you love where you live, and don't want to move—but chances are, there are other librarians, probably with more experience than you, who would like to live and work there, too. Leaving your current area for a job can often provide you with a broader range of experiences than you will find in your current area. If you are willing to look at—and can afford to live in—a rural area, your first job might provide you with a lot more responsibility, as you are likely to be part of a smaller staff. If you can't relocate, being willing to spend a year or two commuting a greater distance than you might otherwise like can provide you with similar opportunities.
8. **Learn about the culture of the place you want to work.** In some libraries, the organization loves professional staff that have worked their way up through the system—starting as a page at such an organization will get you not only a foot in the door, but the inside ability to know when recruitments will open or positions will post. Other organizations look for professional staff from outside—starting as a page or on-call staff here might relegate you to those roles and be passed over for promotional opportunities.



9. **Know the organization's hiring processes.** The goal of the hiring process, particularly at the beginning, should be, in part, to make yourself memorable—and memorable in a good way. Demonstrate that you have researched the organization you are interested in working for by understanding their hiring processes. A bold move in one organization—contacting the Director or other staff person directly—might be your downfall in another.

You will have to work to find out how to walk the fine line between keeping quiet and keeping yourself on the organization's radar; here's where some of the people you have met while networking should be very useful. Learn about the civil service process, if you are applying to a large organization, and follow it to a T. In a smaller organization, learn what kind of skills the organization is looking for, if possible—especially if you are looking to a position where you would be a replacement for a staff person who has left. Highlighting how your skills are similar (if the person was well-liked) or what you bring to the table that is different (if not) can set you apart from the pile of resumes. No matter what, your awareness of these processes should be invisible and integrated into your cover letter, resume, and packet materials.

10. **Present yourself professionally.** When you are moving in the world in which you would like to work, be sure you are always showing your good side. You never know when the person leading your interview panel might be someone you have met previously. Better to have them remember you for your poise, your awareness of what is happening in the library world and/or with local issues, your dedication to your volunteer organization, or your professional attire than for being the person who came to class in pajamas, drank too much at the professional mixer, has an embarrassing picture of themselves up on Facebook or who was an unreliable volunteer. 





Question 2

What advice do you have for *brand new* librarians looking for work?

- Get involved. Volunteer at a library. Join your national, state, and local professional associations and volunteer to work on a committee or task force. Write an article, or contribute to a blog ... Experience is what sets a candidate apart from the competition.
Chris Shaffer, MS, AHIP, University Librarian and Associate Professor, Oregon Health & Science University Library
- Be tech savvy and have a desire to continue to update your skills. We will be helping our patrons use computers, laptops, iPads, and all new items that are introduced to the public ... Continually grow your Reader's Advisory skills—both adult and juvenile. We are the very best at helping patrons find materials they want and will enjoy reading ... Be willing to engage your community. Learn to listen to what they need. Be willing to change to meet those needs. Think outside the box. [Don't be] tied to a 9–5 schedule. Whatever the library was when you were a child—change is coming.
Nancy Arveson, Library Administrator, St. Johns Library
- Seek out lots of different experiences beyond the library world, whether through volunteerism, previous jobs, hobbies, interests. I'm looking for folks who can connect with real people, not just other librarians. Inside the library world, getting involved in the Oregon Library Association is a great way to meet people, share ideas and build your contacts.
Abigail Elder, Manager, Tualatin Public Library and OLA Past President
- Learn to listen well and use [these] skills: Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, technical skills, project management, friendly, helpful and proactive customer service, flexibility, teamwork skills, and good self-motivation and dependability.
David Miles, Kenton Library Branch Administrator, Multnomah County Library



Adventures in Job Hunting

by *Annie Sprague*
Librarian,
Estacada Public Library



Currently Reading
Game of Thrones series
by George RR Martin

I loved library school. I loved everything about it: my classes, the readings, the investigations, and most of all I loved the friends that I made. However, I was leery about discussing my new found passion with non-library friends, family members, or acquaintances. Invariably, when conversation turned to what's-new-with-Annie, I would have to listen to comments such as, "You need a master's degree to work in a library?" or even "Aren't libraries *going away*?" However patronizing those comments were, the question I loathed the most was "How's the job market in that field?" I would then have to admit that the prospects for landing a job upon graduation were dismal at best. This is especially true in the Portland metro area where I live; competition is fierce and job postings are few. While I was in school I tried to not let this slow me down or dampen my spirit. I did all that I could while I was in school to improve my resume—I volunteered, I went to conferences, I took an internship, and I networked my little heart out. Two years passed with me loving school, while I simultaneously pushed the scary and inevitable future to the back of my mind.

My heart became heavier the closer graduation approached. The real world was knocking on my door and I knew that soon I would have to put on my "big girl pants" and begin the quest for work. I was justifiably frightened—I had met people at conferences that had been looking for work for years and had still not yet landed a job. *Forbes Magazine* did not help matters with their publication of an article declaring "... library and information science the worst master's degree for jobs right now" (Smith, 2012). I was disheartened to say the least and the months preceding and immediately following my graduation were some of the most stressful of my life.

This year seems to have been a relatively good one for job postings. Over the course of the summer I applied for about six or seven positions, two of which I thought fit me perfectly. In total, I sat for three interviews. The first interview I went to was for a position that seemed to have been created directly from my dreams. However, the interview experience for that position was daunting. I was required to prepare a fifteen minute presentation, sit before a panel to answer questions, as well as pass two language tests. This also happened to be my first professional interview and by the end I was so shaken that once I reached

the safety of my car, I burst into tears and cried the entire way home. Shortly after that I received a letter concerning my application for the second position that I wanted. I had been dismissed out of hand by the institution that said that I had not met the minimum qualifications. This was a particularly stinging rejection not only because I did meet the qualifications, but also because I had given that particular institution nearly three hundred hours of volunteer service. I had tried to prepare myself for the blows to my ego, but I was less resilient than I had hoped.

Thankfully, all was not lost and I was asked to two other interviews at institutions on the outskirts of the Portland metro area. I was thankful for the opportunities though not enthused by the prospect of the commute that would be required if I were offered a position. In all honesty, by this point in the summer I had become so disheartened by the job search process that I felt that the likelihood of landing a job was impossible. I was mentally preparing myself for the inevitability of having to look outside of my dream profession when the miracle of all miracles happened: I received a call back from one of the libraries I had interviewed at. The director wanted to meet with me again and wanted to introduce me to the library board. I took this as a good sign and by the end of that meeting I had been given a job offer.

I accepted the offer and am now working in a beautiful rural library outside of Portland. Before I took this position I had not envisioned myself working at a rural public library, but I am thankful for the opportunity to work on a wider variety of projects and learn more than I might have working in a larger urban setting. Every day I marvel at my good fortune and am truly grateful to have been given such a wonderful opportunity; I enjoy my work more than I had hoped and am so thankful that I pursued a career in this field. My fears about finding a job, however real they might have been, seem like a distant and unpleasant dream. I am not naïve enough to discount the fact that while I may have found work, many of my intelligent, qualified, and enthusiastic peers have not. I wish that they too could feel the joy and satisfaction that I have been so lucky to have received. My only advice to other job seekers is to keep your chin up; be open to working at a library or in a position that you might not have considered. Even if your career does not look like you had planned, it might end up being something greater than you could have imagined. 





Question 3

What should librarians be doing in today's library?

- Thinking of new ways they can make library resources available to the community, coming up with ways to connect and get information from and partner with their community, thinking about and putting together things that are going on in the world and the implications those things have on libraries and the information, educational, cultural and entertainment needs of our communities.

Mo Cole, Director, Oregon City Public Library

- ... [T]hey should be meeting patrons 'where they are', which could mean geography (i.e. out of the building), interest level, languages spoken, grade/education level—really tailoring their services to the individual. And I use the term "patron" really broadly—it could be meeting your community where it is. Such as identifying a "hyperlocal" information need, like creating an electronic index to the local newspaper, providing a program that addresses a hot topic, offering volunteer opportunities that create future leaders, and creating a welcoming space with materials that reflect the interests of the community.

Abigail Elder, Manager, Tualatin Public Library and OLA Past President

- Engaging with the community they serve (be proactive about assessing community needs/issues and how the library might address them), getting out beyond the walls of the physical library, providing seamless/integrated service (in person, online, etc), managing projects, developing relationships beyond library walls.

Vailey Oehlke, Director, Multnomah County Library

- More outreach. Have conversations with their community. Get to know their community.

Andrew Cherbas, Extensions and Technology Manager, Corvallis-Benton County Public Library



Youth Services Today

by Jane Corry
Youth Librarian,
Belmont Library,
Multnomah County Library



Current Favorite Books

Picture Book: *Oh, No*
by Candace Fleming

Chapter Book: *The Second Life of Abigail Walker*
by Frances O'Rourke Dowell

Teen: *The FitzOsbornes at War*
by Michele Cooper

Adult: *Words Under the Words*
by Naomi Shihab Nye

Twenty four years ago, when I first moved to Oregon, my daughter and I attended storytimes at our local library. As a volunteer, with no other parent in the room, it was my job to keep the children in order while the librarian read to them. I remember the librarian sharing a few stories. I imagine there were songs, but I don't remember them. Then there would be a short movie, looking back I think it was probably a Weston Woods movie. I don't know if other storytimes were like this. I do know that we'd only had our VCR for about two years, so the movie was probably a rare treat for some of the children.

That was then, this is now—let me share a scene from a recent storytime. “If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands”—the one-year-olds in this storytime aren't singing along, but some of them are clapping on cue. A few are wandering around and there's one pulling on the closet door because he knows that's where the toys, which will be coming out in 20 minutes, are kept. One's looking at the quilt over in the corner. Two are dancing, though not together. The parents are singing and we're all having a great time together.

In some ways, youth services has changed little over the years. We still do storytimes. We still connect young readers with just the right book and deal with the kid who needs three print sources for the report that's due tomorrow, even though all our books about Ponce De Leon have been checked out already. We still have the thrill of watching our storytime kids grow into readers and researchers and Summer Reading volunteers. We write recommendations for their first jobs and their college applications. We continue to advocate for children within the library community, with our coworkers and our administrators.

In other ways, youth services has changed, like the rest of librarianship. Most people think immediately of technology. We try to convince that kid that our databases count as print resources, that it's not the same as Wikipedia. Now with the proliferation of ebooks, that's an easier sell than it was a few years ago. For years, there have been computers with games on them in the children's section, later, Internet computers were added. We walk a fine line between access and “protecting them from the dangers of the Internet.” In Multnomah County, we've begun the slow process of replacing our networked CD-ROM game computers with iPads. We worry about not just the adults who can't afford their own computer, but the equally serious problem of children who don't have access in the era of “digital natives” and the serious implications of them falling ever further behind.



Another area of change is storytime. In 2004, PLA and ALSC rolled out “Every Child Ready to Read® @ your library® (ECCR),” a program that grew out of the National Reading Panel’s 2000 report.[1] Now, in addition to our already literacy-infused storytimes, librarians have been trained to provide trainings to parents and caregivers. 117 librarians and 177 home visitors were trained through the Reading for Healthy Families grant.[2] Other librarians were trained apart from the grant. The result of this early literacy education for librarians is that we now have scientific validation for the things we were doing intuitively. Those silly songs we sing don’t just settle and focus the children; they improve vocabulary and phonological awareness. We’ve made storytimes more participatory because we’ve learned that dialogic reading increases comprehension. We also find phrases like “phonological awareness” rolling off our tongues in storytime. We share this new knowledge with parents in storytime and in the stacks. In ECCR, we have a tool to train parents and caregivers in early literacy concepts and practices.

In preparation for this article I emailed several youth librarians throughout the state, asking for their observations on changes they see in youth services. Everyone mentioned the Internet, how much time we now spend online, how much time we spend on email, and how print reference resources are dwindling as online sources proliferate. Things that used to warrant a face-to-face meeting are now done online. Deborah Gitlitz, Bilingual Youth Librarian at Multnomah County, notes: “I can remember when we first had public-access Internet computers at my first library, and how we tried to figure out policies for them and where to put them (it never occurred to us to put some in the children’s area). Jana Hoffman, the Supervisory Librarian—Children’s, at Milwaukie Ledding Library, says: “The most obvious change is the arrival of the Internet. I now spend huge amounts of the workday online—whether helping patrons, placing orders, publicizing programs, or just communicating with staff.”

When it comes to readers advisory, Deborah notes she still gets to do a lot. Dana Campbell, Youth Services Librarian at Corvallis-Benton County Library, shares: “Then: the kids were browsers; now they need accelerated readers and only want to read series and books that are thick. So many great single books are overlooked. Today: everyone is in a hurry; the kids’ days are packed.” I too have noticed many parents and children coming in looking for a book “at their level.” I find I enjoy the challenge of working with the parents to find a book that the child will be excited to read, which is much more important in the long run than reading a book at their reading level. At last year’s Oregon Library Association conference, youth librarians were very excited by a presentation by Barbara Steinberg, a Reading Specialist in private practice. She introduced some of us to Bloom’s taxonomy for the first time. Again, science comes to support what we already practice intuitively. She noted that school teachers are so busy, they can only focus on reading for comprehension, but there are several levels of understanding beyond comprehension that create greater meaning for the reader. She told us that teachers teach the children how to read and our job of encouraging reading for pleasure is even more crucial in this era without school librarians.

One way we encourage reading is through the Summer Reading Program. According to statistics at the state library in 2011 and 2012, 31 percent of 0 to 14-year-olds in the state signed up for Summer Reading[3]. Since 2003, Oregon has been a very vocal member of the Collaborative Summer Library Program, meaning librarians across the state no longer have to develop our own programs, but work with librarians from all 50 states to create the manual, hire artists, decide on a theme, and scout out prizes.



Jana Hoffman mentions another big change—serving language communities other than English. “We now offer our summer reading program materials in Spanish as well as English, and we have significant Russian & Spanish language collections for children and adults.” Spanish or bilingual storytimes and early literacy classes are offered in libraries throughout the state. Multnomah County also serves Vietnamese and Chinese patrons with materials and storytimes in those languages. Libraries throughout the state celebrate El Día de los Niños, with family programming celebrating Hispanic Culture. Of the 16 libraries nationwide to win the Estela and Raúl Mora award for their Día celebrations since 2000, three of them have been Oregon libraries.

Another huge impact on youth services is the dwindling presence of school librarians. Jana points out that when she started, there were librarians in the schools. Now, most schools don’t have them and it is impossible for the public library to fill that gap. In the age of ever increasing amounts of information being readily accessible, one wonders who is tasked with teaching information literacy. Do teachers have the time? Is it being systematically addressed?

Children’s Services has changed and continues to do so. Two things that are occupying youth librarians now are how we can create opportunities for more STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) learning in libraries and the impact of the new Core Competency State Standards. Wilsonville has a summer science program as well as their summer reading program. Other librarians are trying to integrate science and math into storytimes, and some have even started Lego groups. Korie Buerkle, the incoming Chair of the OLA Children’s Services Division, is heading a STEM committee to facilitate sharing of ideas and resources between youth librarians around the state.

The other priority is the new Core Competency State Standards that schools around the country are adopting. With their stress on higher thinking skills and increased reading of nonfiction and primary sources, it is an opportunity for librarians to do what we do best, provide resources and facilitate learning for all. We can also help teachers in selecting good nonfiction titles.

As a librarian in a neighborhood library, most of my time and thought are spent on the tasks at hand: the next storytime, working the reference desk, and preparing book talks for school visits. I rarely step back to take a more distanced look at what it is we do—how we’ve become a major player in early literacy, how we keep learning and adapting to changes in society and advances in technology, all the while keeping in mind the needs of our core audience: children and their parents and caregivers. I’m happy I got this chance to do that. 

References

[1] National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

[2] <http://tinyurl.com/ajf22wd>

[3] Anderson, K. Oregon State Library, Youth Services. (2012). *Summer reading statistics* <http://www.oregon.gov/osl/LD/youthsvcs/srp.certificates/OregonSRPstatistics2011.pdf>





Question 4

What areas of your library do you see as having growth potential for librarianship (management, digitization, outreach, youth services, etc.)?

- Youth—early literacy outreach/training. I don't know if this has the most growth potential, but it is by far the most important place for public libraries to focus their energies. Not only are the first five years of learning vital to success as an adult, but funders (government and private) view effective preschool services as vital and worthy of funding.

Patrick Duke, Library Director, Wilsonville Public Library
- Outreach is big, regardless of how you define it. There are expanding opportunities to deliver traditional outreach (homebound, lobby service, prisons, under-served, etc) and “marketing outreach” (being out in the community, raising awareness of library services). [And] today’s librarian does a lot more management—both project management and personnel/team management than ever before. A strong interest and demonstrated skills in management will go far.

Abigail Elder, Manager, Tualatin Public Library and OLA Past President
- Digital services looks to be expanding, while youth services seems to never go out of style.

James Moore, Library Administrator, Fairview Library
- Archives, special collections, digital collections, and metadata are already important and will only become more so in the future. When everyone has access to every book and journal on the web, the local gems that highlight the institution and its mission will be a critical area of need that librarians can support.

Chris Shaffer, MS, AHIP, University Librarian and Associate Professor, Oregon Health & Science University Library



Finding a Library Gig

by **Perri Parise**

Director,
Oregon Distance Program
Emporia State University,
School of Library &
Information Management



What I'm Reading:

everything by Henning Mankell and
Allegra Goodman

What do the newly minted MLS/MLIS graduates need to know to land a professional job? I revisited what I wrote—and also what Lori Wamsley wrote—in the Fall 2008 *Oregon Library Association Quarterly* issue[1] to see what I could add, as well as what may have changed since then.

What Remains the Same

Networking—The importance of this cannot be emphasized enough. Think strategically about how you spend your time. If you are not already getting some worthwhile library experience, then volunteer. Find a library where you can demonstrate your skills. Help them with *their* needs. Any type of library experience is useful. Seriously consider joining local library groups and associations, like the Oregon Library Association, and BE ACTIVE: join a committee; help plan events; introduce yourself when you attend workshops and conferences.

Temporary/On-call Positions—It can be scary to give up full-time, non-library work for a temporary job, but if you can manage it, you may find that it is an invaluable way to get some professional experience. If you are not in a financial position to take a temporary job, get yourself on various “on-call” lists. Often these openings are in the evening and weekends, so you may be able to fit in this type of work with your current position.

Relocate—Especially if you live in the Willamette Valley, you may need to consider moving in order to get your first break into a professional job. Unfortunately, you are competing with experienced librarians from all over the country who want to move to Oregon! Look at states that do not have library schools—you can always come back to Oregon later.

Non-Traditional Jobs—There are many positions that utilize librarianship skills, but do not have the “L” word in their title. Some examples include: records manager; database developer; Web designer; researcher; systems analyst; information specialist; anything with “digital” or “metadata” in the title. The list goes on and on. Join the Special Libraries Association (sla.org) while you're still a student, and you will be able to take advantage of the many resources they make available to members.



Considerations for the Future

These ideas are not really new, but we definitely need to emphasize them in the years ahead.

Flexibility/Change—Position yourself for change. Keep current, especially in the area of technology. This may be more difficult to do, once you are no longer in school or if you are not already working in a library. Read library-related journals regularly and follow the blogs of those you respect and who seem to keep current themselves. Find a mentor and meet for coffee.

Collaboration—Don't isolate yourself. Work on publishing an article or make a conference presentation with someone with similar interests, especially if that person is already working in a professional position. Being a "team player" is something that all employers look for in an applicant.

Show Passion/Be Positive—Applying for jobs takes an enormous amount of time and energy. It's easy to feel demoralized by the lengthy process. Be proactive in promoting yourself through some of the tips already mentioned, such as volunteering, writing articles, and meeting regularly with a mentor.

Advocacy—In library land now and in the foreseeable future, we will need to justify our existence every day, so demonstrate you have the leadership skills to do this. Start a blog... and did I mention networking?

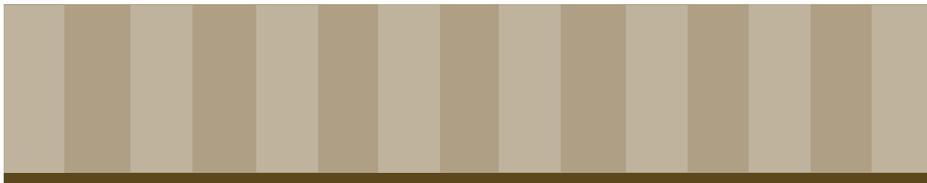
In Conclusion

You have chosen one of the best careers on the planet! The job outlook can seem daunting, but I don't think it is any worse than many other professions. Maybe you won't land that "perfect" job right out of the gate, but if you can stay positive and active in the field, you will find a place where you can utilize the skills you've learned in your MLS program. Focus on networking. Stay involved. That break will come! 🍀

References

[1] http://www.olaweb.org/assets/documents/olaq_14no3.pdf





Question 5

What advice would you give a librarian trying to keep his or her skills fresh?

- Talk to your community. Find out what your community wants, needs, etc. It also depends on how large your system is. Pay attention to Pop Culture.
Andrew Cherbas, Extensions and Technology Manager, Corvallis-Benton County Public Library
- Again, read/talk/think widely and broadly. Follow what's happening in fields outside of librarianship and find ways to tie it back to the job.
Abigail Elder, Manager, Tualatin Public Library and OLA Past President
- Work with the public regularly, share information with colleagues (make [yourself] into learning conduits for all staff), and commit to continuing education.
David Miles, Kenton Library Branch Administrator
- Read the [professional literature], but read way beyond it—look to different industries for innovation and responsiveness. Meet with people, take continuing ed classes, be curious, take a few risks.
Vailey Oehlke, Director, Multnomah County Library



Not Your Traditional Librarian

by **Samara Omundson**
Director, Insight & Analytics,
Waggener Edstrom Worldwide



Currently Reading

*The Signal and the Noise:
Why So Many Predictions Fail—but Some Don't*
by Nate Silver

I am proud to call myself a librarian. But I often wonder why, since the title captures very little of the reality of what I do day-to-day. Sure, I help people access and make sense of information. I can find the answer to most any reference question. I can quickly evaluate the credibility of a resource, either online or offline, and I can query a database like nobody's business.

But I can also lead a several million dollar Profit & Loss statement, write and present 6-digit research and analytics proposals to Fortune 500 companies, develop methodologies and solutions that require the combination of human and computer intelligence, and create a 3-year business plan for a team of 40+ information professionals. But I could not and would not be where I am without the foundational theory, practical skills and general frame of thinking that comes with being a librarian.

So how did I get from librarian to here? My path is not as convoluted as it probably sounds. I simply learned how to apply the same skills that drew me to the field of librarianship in a context that is very different from a traditional library—an integrated communications agency focused on media relations.

During my first term of library school I was fortunate enough to be offered the position of Library Assistant at Waggener Edstrom Worldwide. When I was hired the dot-com bubble was still growing and the Web was a very different world. Wikipedia was not around. Facebook was 4 years from launching. Blogs were still referred to as “weblogs” for the most part. Twitter was not even a glimmer in Jack Dorsey's eye.

Upon hiring, my duties were mostly limited to managing print periodical subscriptions, routing copies and maintaining a small physical library for what was then known as a high-tech focused public relations firm. I answered a few reference questions, and did my share of database searches via Dialog, Nexis Lexis and Factiva. But a good part of my day was spent delivering newspapers, business magazines and trade journals to the account staff in my office.



When I think about how I got from there to “here,” I can identify some guiding principles that I think could help any library or information professional not just find a job outside a traditional library setting, but to find a role where they can really bring critical, even transformative skills to bear.

But first, what are some of the skills and capabilities I am referring to? Probably most obvious is our innate ability to make sense of vast quantities of unstructured data, information or ideas. Identifying structures or patterns that can create frameworks that facilitate accessibility and understanding is a skill that can be valuable to most any organization. Equally, the ability to be self-directed and independent in ambiguous, sometimes uncharted territory is something I see many librarians exercising. Again, organizations across the board can benefit from this.

Still, even armed with skills that have very broad appeal in the employment landscape, it’s rarely easy to find these non-traditional opportunities. It’s not a secret that traditional library jobs can be hard to come by in Oregon, particularly Portland, so some of us are simply forced to look elsewhere. But I firmly believe and have actually witnessed that our skills and strengths are applicable and valuable in more organizations and situations than any one of us can possibly imagine, so it is worth the search.

But where does one start? First and foremost, know that the type of positions I am referring to will not be advertised under “library” or “librarian” on employment websites. Many of the organizations that can benefit from our skills don’t even know to be looking for someone with an MLS/MLIS degree (if they even know that the degree exists in the first place). Who would immediately think that a librarian can play a key role in mapping the social connections of sustainable energy pundits? Or identifying the critical success factors in the way that a multi-national aid organization approaches innovation? Or completely re-imagining how an organization works through technology assisted efficiencies?

But each of us can be empowered to overcome this oversight and limited thinking. My recommendation is to start with the following:

Be bold. Even if you’ve technically never done something, if you think you have the right mix of skills, ambition and motivation to succeed, dig deep for the confidence to volunteer, apply, or ask for a new and challenging opportunity. I know we are a profession that takes great pride in our intelligence and ninja-like problem solving skills. Now it’s time to show the rest of the world what we already know. We can bring value to almost any situation.

Anticipate and adapt. Be ready for what is coming next and think about how you can help others be prepared. By leading into the change versus waiting to see how new developments will impact our world, you are positioned to anticipate and even shape the impact. Think about the current buzz around Big Data for example. This presents a huge computational processing and data structuring challenge for organizations. Librarian and information professional skills are undoubtedly relevant.



Get creative. While we can organize and categorize most anything, don't forget the creative side of our minds. Black and white thinking is what we are known for, but think about how creative we are when faced with never heard before questions. Or when we have to cut our budgets by one half or more. Apply this same sort of nimbleness and creativity to problems or challenges outside of the library world. You will be amazed at what you can solve.

Think big. Sure, the typical librarian is an introvert, but that doesn't mean we should shy away from leadership roles. Increasingly, organizations operate with multiple, self-managed teams of independent knowledge workers. Soon to be gone are the days of massive organization hierarchy. This presents introverts a great leadership opportunity as they are more likely than extroverts or ego-driven leaders to let these teams chart their own course while providing the necessary mentorship, empowerment and development opportunities to keep them on track. No longer is it true that you have to be loud to lead.

Remain curious. I probably don't have to tell most librarians this, but it is possible to get complacent and even a little bored when you are well established in a position and everything seems to be relatively on track. So I will say it: always feed your curiosity. Never stop reading outside your profession. Challenge yourself with new ideas and different ways of thinking. Avoid the tendency to create an echo chamber of your own beliefs and knowledge by adding opposing minds to your Twitter feed or reading a blog about needlepoint when your fingers have never even made a stitch.

I am sure that there are many more actions to be listed here and I encourage all of us to keep thinking and talking about what these might be. My not-so-secret fantasy is that librarians will eventually infiltrate organizations far and wide. So the sooner we begin, the sooner this may be a reality, at least here in Oregon. 



The Job I Forgot

by **Jay Hadley**
Library Supervisor,
Gresham Library,
Multnomah County
Library System



Favorite Book This Year

Moonwalking with Einstein by Joshua Foer

If you've ever been unemployed, you know that it can be a fragmented time. After 13 years working for a variety of non-profit organizations, I found myself unemployed in early 2007. I was casting around for a new job, a new career, and a new direction. My goal: get a good job that included health insurance for my family. I was filling out job applications daily, and when I saw that there was a job at the Multnomah County Library, I thought, "I could do library work; that would be fun." Soon after turning in that application, however, I landed a job in retail, at a soon-to-open, big blue and yellow store in Portland, known for assemble-it-yourself furniture and yummy meatballs. I promptly forgot I had ever applied at the library.

We opened the new store and all of the Northwest descended upon us. I was baptized into an intense customer service experience. It was non-stop, 8–10 hours a day, serving hundreds of people who had no idea how to shop in this brand new store. I realized that my job was actually to equip and train these scared, confused and overwhelmed customers on how to successfully navigate our store and go home with what they wanted. One bewildered-looking man actually came up to me and said, "This place is like a library, so big and confusing; I can't find what I want." His words turned out to be far more prophetic than I realized!

In the fall of 2008, about 18 months after I applied at the library, I got an email that said I could come take a test, which was the next step toward becoming a library employee. I did, and after a test and an interview, I was hired as a 20-hour-a-week library page at Midland Library in Southeast Portland. I kept my part-time retail job as well, since the generous health benefits fulfilled my number one priority for my family.

I enjoyed my job shelving books and assisting patrons. More than that, I enjoyed being a part of something powerful, something good. As I walked around the neighborhood, I realized that the library was the bright spot in that area of town. It was a place for people to connect with each other, and to the information and tools that they needed to survive and thrive. Midland Library serves an incredibly diverse neighborhood, with materials offered in five languages. I enjoyed serving Vietnamese patrons one moment and Spanish-speaking folks the next. I loved seeing surprise and smiles when I was able to introduce patrons to a new part of our collection they hadn't known about. I began to hear a quiet voice in my head. "Hey, I can do this—this library thing. I could do this ... forever."



The customer service skills and extensive training in serving a high volume of patrons transferred beautifully from my retail experience. I proceeded to apply for every library job opening that came along, and soon was training to work as a library clerk. Next came reference training, which qualified me to work as a library assistant. My part time status enabled me to pick up shifts in these other classifications, and opened up more horizons to my eager eyes.

Applying and interviewing for jobs with our county library system is truly an art, as well as a skill. I got better at this as I went along, I learned that your application should be exhaustive in its descriptiveness. "Customer service is one of my strengths" doesn't cut it. Describe in detail, and with several real life examples, *how* you deliver good customer service. Assume that those who will read your application have never met you, and need to know everything relevant about you. You have to fill in the whole picture of yourself.

This applies to the interview as well. Sure, you might be a really great person, with a firm handshake and great eye contact with your interviewers. But you need to project an image of yourself for the interviewers, so detailed in your examples that they can almost see you in action. Being able to recall examples of big or small successes in your work is crucial, so you have a mental catalogue of potential answers for each question you are asked.

I had six interviews in my first two years with the library. My sixth interview was to become a Library Supervisor. As part of my career search, I had read a book called "Do What You Are[1]," a book that applies personality type to work roles and the job search. Understanding my personality helped me to articulate in the interview that I wanted to be a leader, and specifically take an integral role in making decisions and leading teams.

Happily, I was offered the job of Library Supervisor ... *half time*. It was not yet time to quit my retail job. The balancing act continued. I plunged into the world of library supervision at Central Library in Portland and found it to be a rewarding experience from day one. I had the privilege of supervising artists, musicians, authors, avid bikers, and world travelers, all of whom love the library. Library folks rock! Literally, as evidenced by the "library night" of wonderful music that my colleagues shared at a local lounge.

Learning how to supervise was a new challenge, and the skill that helped me most was listening. I listened intently to each person I supervised, to hear his or her concerns, dreams and great ideas. My investment of time in them helped them hear what I was saying, and we moved forward together.

I also became involved with the Oregon Library Association's Support Staff Division, and helped plan the 2011 SSD conference at the Oregon Garden, and co-chaired the 2012 SSD Conference in Eugene. The 2012 conference encouraged support staff from all over the state with our theme of "Support Staff: Changing Lives Every Day." I continue to serve on the SSD board.

After about six months as a supervisor, the library decided it could use me full time. While I was glad to finally have a full-time job with the library, my library director laid out a new project for me, bigger than I had ever attempted before: reorganizing a department to improve customer service and distribute work more evenly amongst a team of 25 people. I interviewed many of the staff to learn about their work. This group of people was extremely committed to the library, had worked faithfully at their jobs for many years, and had a great deal of knowledge that they were happy to share! Several months and untold meetings later, the new structure was put in place, and staff were trained in their new responsibilities.



Informational interviewing has helped me learn more about librarianship as a career. I have interviewed directors of public and academic libraries, academic librarians at community colleges, medical librarians at hospitals, and several of the librarians at the Multnomah County Central Library. All those interviewed were happy to answer my questions about what librarians do in all these different kinds of libraries. Also, as I considered going back to school, they helped me think through what I wanted to gain from a degree in library and information studies.

The transitions have continued this year, as I was asked if I wanted to become a Library Supervisor at a branch, Gresham Library. This reduced my commute from over an hour to just a few minutes, and, having quit my retail job, I felt it was time to go further: I enrolled in a Master's program in Library and Information Studies at the University of Alabama. I now "go to Alabama" each Wednesday evening from 4 PM to 6:45 PM for class, via a synchronous online program. We all wear headsets and talk to each other. In fact, if the instructor calls on you, you better be ready to speak up! My current interest is information literacy, and becoming more skilled at equipping patrons to find, evaluate and use information and technology in their lives.

These past four years have been a whirlwind. I'm thankful for my loving and supportive wife and son, who came on this journey with me, as I worked two jobs for over three years. I've discovered my calling: helping patrons apply for jobs, find books, and connect to resources. I'm also thankful that, while I had forgotten about applying for the library, the library never forgot about me. 

References

[1] Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron. *Do What You Are*. 4th Edition. Little, Brown and Company, 2007.





Question 7

How do you envision the future of your library, and libraries like yours (public, academic, special, corporate, etc.)?

- [The library] will become more and more customized to their communities as the possibilities of what we offer move farther away from the book.

Mo Cole, Director, Oregon City Public Library

- I've seen a continuing trend toward the library as community center and resource, and increasingly, as a place for technological learning. I think those trends will continue. I've wondered a lot about finding different and more effective, wide-ranging ways to partner with the public and perhaps some private institutions to increase our efforts in technology learning. We all know that technology is the new literacy ... I also think we can spend more time partnering with social service agencies, like providing regular staffed hours each week at local agencies whose missions dovetail with our own (career/job centers, etc). We do this already in some limited ways, but it could be increased with more budget and institutional commitment. These ideas aren't new, but still relevant I think.

David Miles, Kenton Library Branch Administrator

- Why libraries exist will determine what we do. Public libraries must continue to leverage their increasingly unique position as one of the few remaining non-commercial institutions that doesn't require membership, affiliation, dues, etc to enjoy it. We will remain a critical part of our community's success and quality of life because we continually assess the community's needs and adjust accordingly. Our collection will continue to shift to more digital content. We will have services, materials and staffing that continues to serve the needs of our increasingly diverse community. We will be more entwined with community partners in meeting our community's needs and we will do it in unconventional ways. Our value will no longer be simply the books we house, but the people who work in libraries who deliver our services, guide people in their learning pursuits, advocate for and guide people in their reading pursuits. It is an exceptionally exciting and pivotal time to be a part of the public library.

Vailey Oehlke, Director, Multnomah County Library

- With school libraries in disrepair, I see public libraries needing to address some of those holes. I also see a stronger emphasis on partnerships, and a recognition that we can't do everything—I think public libraries will specialize in youth services, technology instruction, and reader's advisory ... things that you can't easily purchase or outsource.

Abigail Elder, Manager, Tualatin Public Library and OLA Past President



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Vol./No.	Theme	Deadline	Pub. Date	Guest Editor
Vol 19 • No. 1 Spring 2013	<i>Measuring Success</i>	February 1, 2013	March 15, 2013	Chris King Reference Librarian, Hillsboro Public Library & Karen Mejdrich Technical Services & Collection Development Manager, Hillsboro Public Library
Vol 19 • No. 2 Summer 2013	<i>President's Issue</i>	May 1, 2013	June 15, 2013	TBA

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