

New Professional's Newsletter

For and about new professional members of the Ontario Library Association

Super Conference 2001 Edition

The Coming Librarian Shortage Upside for New Librarians

by Stephen Abram
OLA Vice President, Vice-President, IHS Micromedia

The partner article to this article (Time to Shift the Hiring Gears) talks about the challenges, which will be faced by employers of librarians and information professionals over the coming decade. This article is aimed at the new librarian and what strategies might work for you in this first decade of the millennium. You have a wonderful world awaiting you and a dynamic and exciting career in that world.

What's on the horizon?

✓ Lorraine McQueen, as president of CLA last year, quoted Statistics Canada data that forecast 43% of Canadian librarians were eligible for retirement in the next 7 years. It's not just an issue in librarianship and it is partially driven by the boomer demographics combined with years of under-funding and under-hiring, especially in the public sector. We are about to experience the greatest outflow of knowledge from the

workforce since the Dark Ages and possibly, in historical terms, since the beginning of time.

✓ *The Toronto Star* reported in a front-page headline (Jan. 15, 2001) that the hunt is on in Ontario for 15,000 new professors in the next decade to replace retiring academics. Combine this with competition from the U.S., the rest of Canada and the private sector, an expected increase in the student population by 90,000 and the Ontario double cohort (grades 12 and 13 graduating in the same year - 2003) and you've got the clear foundation of an emerging crisis. There is no basis for thinking that academic librarianship is less prone to the problem of the professorial retirement bulge. It's also predictable that an increase in the number of early career professors will put added stress on academic libraries as new curricula are

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The Chosen Ones: Who we hire - from a CEO's point of view

by Jana S Schuelke
Oshawa Public Library

I have been hiring library staff since 1981 when I became a Branch Head. I consider the hiring process so important that I still sit in on every single interview for any staff position in our library system. I've had other CEO's say to me, "I could never do that. I don't have the time." To which I answer, "I make the time because I think it is one of the most important things we do."

The simple truth is that libraries need good staff, particularly good librarians who are the core of library services. Mistakes in hiring can mean you:

1. Pass up the person with the very skills you want;

2. Choose someone who:
- can't work with other staff members
 - isn't qualified, or
 - won't like the particular job you are trying to fill

Hiring the wrong person is time consuming and demoralizing for everyone involved; and the best libraries make the fewest hiring mistakes.

THE WHOLE PROCESS BEGINS WITH THE JOB POSTING.

It won't surprise anyone to hear that the "net" is the key. We don't even bother with newspaper ads anymore. We post our librarian positions on the internet

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OLA's Upcoming Events Dateline

February

- 1-3 OLA's 100th Anniversary
**SUPER CONFERENCE 2001
Looking Back Reaching
Forward: the Past, Present
and Future of Ontario
Librarians and Libraries.**
Metro Toronto Convention
Centre.
- 24 Ontario School Library
Association Curriculum
Writing Workshops. *Inquiry
and Research: Walking
Through the Curriculum
Design Process and Using the
E-Planner* Locations in
London, Guelph and Whitby.
8:30 - 3:30.

April

- 28 Ontario School Library
Association Curriculum
Writing Workshops: *Corel
Presentations: The Tool
Students Use in a Literature
Research Unit.* Locations in
London, Guelph, Whitby and
others to be added.
- 23 Canada Book Day
- 23 Red Maple Reading Awards
Voting Day.

May

- 2 OLTA Workshop. More
details to follow.
- 11 Silver Birch Reading Awards
Voting Day.
- 17 Red Maple Awards
Ceremony. St Lawrence Hall,
Toronto.
- 24 Silver Birch Awards
Ceremony / Milk Festival at
the Harbourfront Centre,
Toronto. SOLD OUT.

The Coming Librarian Shortage

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created and learned and new research agenda are started.

- ✓ In the school sector we see an emerging crisis in the availability of qualified teachers and principals. This includes teacher-librarians. To some degree it is statistically impossible for faculties of education to create enough new graduates to replace the retiring boomer generation. Combine this with the toxic labour relations situation in Ontario public education today and there is little hope that significant numbers of senior teachers will stay past retirement time to mitigate the problem of too few teachers. The current strategy to move school librarians back into the classroom is short-sighted and hugely damaging to students being educated for an information and knowledge-based economy.

population exploded to fill the ecosystem (Just kidding - but boy will my peers hate this metaphor!), the talented segment of new librarians hitting the market in the new millennium will be potentially challenged with dealing with fast career rises. Like all fast-paced changes it is a double-edged sword.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THIS NEW WORLD AND THRIVE?

Simply put, your profession needs you. Every profession needs an influx of new blood. Your ideas, biases, perceptions and insights have value. Share them. Don't be discouraged by the odd bit of negativity - every generation criticizes the one which follows (you'll remember the old quote from Socrates or the one from Shakespeare). 'Twas ever thus and the trial by fire is part of your inauguration into the profession.

Here are some suggestions on areas that you might like to focus on:

- ✓ Learn how to look for career opportunities in the non-traditional ways. Learn how to mine the job sites on the web such as Workopolis, Monster.ca, Monstert.com and LibJobs. Learn how to filter and mine the library electronic discussion lists for jobs in the areas in which you desire to seek work.

- ✓ Seek mentors. Find and develop mentor relationships with key senior people in your field. Mine their minds for the insights and experiences that can't be learned through book learning and formal courses. Then, use those insights to get better at being an excellent librarian and information professional.

- ✓ It's a worldwide market for librarians out there. Don't limit yourself by thinking that you should only be seeking local opportunities. Take

a risk and look at positions that interest you across Canada and in the U.S. Remember that the NAFTA rules allow you access to the U.S. employment market (and allow U.S. librarians to compete with you in Canada!).

- ✓ Think out of the box. It's an old enough cliché, but it is true that you can expand your opportunities by being open to the practice of librarianship in alternative environments. You really don't need a library to practice librarianship. Conversely, it's not a library is there's no librarian running it - it's just a book room. Keep yourself open to research positions, jobs with vendors, knowledge analyst positions and even those Dotcom jobs (Dotcommers may be suffering a bit right now but does anyone seriously believe they're going to go away?)

- ✓ Be where the opportunities are! Being visible at library conferences, events, workshops and meetings allows potential employers to get to know you. It's true that people hire people they know. Get known and your career options increase. Write articles and book reviews, join or chair committees, train users, speak up and ask questions at events. Don't hide your candle under a basket.

- ✓ Develop a personal continuous learning strategy. I find that signing on to (and occasionally signing off) from subject and library electronic discussion lists allows me to learn a lot in a fairly seamless immersion environment. The plethora

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU AS A NEW LIBRARIAN?

You will have to employ substantially different job hunting, career development and personal development strategies than the current group of employed librarians and information professionals used in the past. Some ideas for your to consider:

With a record number of retirements forecast for librarians, especially in the public sector your career has the potential to take off faster than has been the case in recent decades. Much like when the dinosaurs became extinct and the mammal

Web Resources for Internet Savy Professionals

by Jodi Cecchi
PriceWaterhouseCoopers

Just for Fun:

After a hard day of learning new things, check out these websites which add some humour to our profession. Or, how about watching a movie featuring a librarian?

The Laughing Librarian

<http://internettrash.com/users/lafnlibn/>

IFLANET Library Humour

<http://www.ifla.org/I/humour/humour.htm>

Job Title Generator for Library and Information Science Professionals

<http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/~mach/jobtitle.htm>

In the Movies: An Annotated Filmography

<http://www.lib.byu.edu/dept/libsci/films/introduction.html>

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The Chosen Ones

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and through our interlibrary loan network.

We try to make our postings a clear description of the job. There's no sense in wasting anyone's time. We want applicants to know the qualifications and duties that go with our jobs and not apply if they aren't interested. We usually get 30 - 40 applications for any job vacancy.

The next step is sorting through all of those resumes which begs the question - what gets a resume past the first screening and into the "think about interviewing" pile?

These are the things that make a difference.

1. Any library experience. Put any down even if it is just being a student page or a volunteer. Of course, the more experience you have, the better. Those library schools which have work/study sessions or special work projects give you a head start.

2. Any work or volunteer experience that indicates good people skills. Our entry level librarian positions involve dealing with the public, usually in our reference area. If you have taught anything, been a camp counselor, literacy tutor, volunteers at a hospital, delivered "Meals on Wheels", canvassed for a charity, etc. - put it in.

3. Any awards or honourable mentions you have received which indicate exceptional abilities as a student or volunteer.

4. Finally, any letters of reference you have on file. Include these with your resume by faxing a hard copy with the

resume attached if you are applying on-line. Letters of reference really do short cut the search, and you should ask for one for your files whenever you are leaving any work experience where your good work has been noticed. (And two qualities I like to see in reference letters are punctuality and perfect attendance.)

THE INTERVIEW

We normally select 4 -5 people to interview. If you make it this far, you are ahead of 80-90% of the applicants. Now... how do you become "the chosen one"? Here are the hard facts about the interview.

1. Appearances count. Whether you like it or not, that's the straight truth. Librarians are professionals, and you should dress like professional. This doesn't necessarily mean wearing a suit, but you should achieve a tailored, business like look. Your grooming, including your hair and hands, must be clean. Your spruce appearance indicated to me that you are a person who pays attention to details, that you value yourself as a person, and you care enough about the job to have prepared yourself for the interview.

2. Look me in the eye and smile.

You must be able to do this no matter how shy you are. As an

employer, I am looking for customer service skills. In short, I am looking for approachable, friendly people. If you look me in the eye and smile, I'm 90% convinced you will be good at customer service before you even open your mouth.

3. Take an active part in the interview.

I am amazed at the number of applicants who just sit passively and wait for the interview to happen to them. Think of the interview like a tennis match, i.e. you are either serving or on your toes waiting to return a serve. I am looking for good listening skills, and applicants show me that they are good listeners by their body language, by indicating they understand the questions and are thinking about their answers or asking for more information if the questions aren't clear.

4. Don't talk too much.

Almost as bad as the applicant who doesn't participate in the interview is the one who drones one and on. We ask a number of situational questions because we want to discover how applicants "think on their feet", what their priorities are and how they reason their way to conclusions. It would be easy (even tempting) to talk on and on, but limit yourself to a about a minute. We'll invite you to go on if we want a more complete answer. To help the process, I sometimes throw out little hints which are another test of listening skills.

5. Show me you want the job. Show me that you value public libraries. Show me you are proud to be a public librarian. My career has been in public libraries. I believe in them, and I'm proud of being part of these foundations of our civilization, these learning and cultural centres. I am thrilled when I meet a new librarian who wants to be part of this grand, important heritage.

5. Understand the process

I have a job. You want a job. In our exchange of information I am going to clearly and honestly tell you the requirements for the job, and I am hoping you will be as clear and honest with me. In the end, I am going to hire the best librarian I can find for the Oshawa Public Library. I am also hiring someone to join our library family because our library will be your working home. During the interview, I will constantly be assessing how you will fit into our library family. Can you get along with other people? Are you courteous? Patient? Calm? Will you share the workload and care about others? Do you have a sense of humour? In a choice between two equally qualified librarians. I will always choose the one who seems to be the best fit with our staff.

From the time I start, I will spend hours filling this job. Believe me, our new librarian won't hope more fervently that I do for his or her success and satisfaction with our library. So that's how you become the chosen one. In a future article, I will write about how you make sure your boss stays happy with the choice.

Something Missing?!? Do You have something to offer?

If you have questions or have a suggestion for the next issue, please e-mail, FAX or call your thoughts, comments and suggestions to Stephanie Parcher <membership@accessola.com> Phone (416) 363-3388 x21, or FAX (416) 941-9581 or (800) 387-1181.

The Coming Librarian Shortage

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of free and low cost e-newsletters means no one can be out-of-loop or unaware of trends and developments in our rapidly changing information environment. I subscribe to quite a few but some you might like to consider are:

Search Engine Watch

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com>

Edupage

<http://www.educause.edu/pub/edupage/edupage.html>

Competia

<http://www.competia.com/home/>

NewsScan

<http://www.newsscan.com/>

If you have a specialty you can set up free alerts on that topic at Northern Light (www.nlsearch.com) and get daily or weekly summaries hotlinked to fulltext articles. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that we should use our research skills for our own benefit too!

✓ Don't become overly and narrowly technocratic. In recent years it has been a key part of many new graduate's success to be very technoprocificient. This is still valid but it's a very narrow strategy in the long term. Ultimately your positions will involve increasing levels of managerial effort including, among other skills, planning, project management, negotiating, human resources, etc. Don't allow yourself to have deep technology skills (or any

other narrow discipline) and neglect your development in the managerial arts.

DEVELOP ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR SUITE OF SKILLS.

✓ Seek learning opportunities like distance education and e-learning. Nowadays there are even more opportunities to learn without having to go to in class courses. You can find web-based continuing education on just about any topic – invest the time and learn.

✓ Network, network, and network. You can't learn much if you don't know anyone. And the people you meet your workaday life just aren't enough. Get out and meet a broader range of people – and not just librarians either!

✓ Join associations and don't just join – participate. It's pretty basic that you should be supporting your provincial (OLA) and National associations (CLA). Add on to these those subject or specialized associations that matter to your specialty (SLA, NFAIS, IASC, CAIS, CIPS, CSISAC, etc.). It's not just a matter of employment but these are the groups that lobby, often successfully for the laws, regulations and policies that have an impact on your professional life. As you mature in the profession it becomes clearer to most how essential these activities are – start early. And the major benefit to volunteering in your association is the opportunity to

practice skills in a non-threatening environment with other like-minded and supportive professionals.

Lastly, I have one motto I chant to myself when things get rough. Don't let your current employer reduce your value to your next one. Invest in yourself. If this means you occasionally have to pay for a course, conference, association membership or dinner out of your own funds to grow as a professional – then just do it. What other investment do you know better?

So there's some thoughts. You have the potential to make a difference in the world using your library and information training. Your success depends on you and how you seek and demand the developmental opportunities you need to succeed.

See you around OLA!

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These are your elected representatives. If you have any questions, comments or concerns you would like to see addressed, please do not hesitate to contact them.

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