

JOB QUALIFICATIONS

An MLS from an ALA-accredited library *OR an advanced degree in a subject area relevant to the study of [insert subject here] plus relevant library experience* is required. Native or near native fluency, both spoken and written, in [language, if working with language-based collections] is required. Excellent oral and written communication skills are required. The ability to work successfully in a highly collaborative environment and excellent interpersonal skills are also required.

Launch Your PhD Job Search

 **UCI Career Center**  **Friday, 7 May 2004** 

Panel: Career Options Beyond Academia

"PhDs as Academic Librarians: A Career Within the Academy"

- Bill Landis, Manuscripts Librarian, Special Collections and Archives, The UC Irvine Libraries, blandis@uci.edu

Issues and Information Resources Relating to Scholarly Information Professions:

The following selection of organization web sites will give anyone interested in academic librarianship a broad sense of the issues and challenges facing the scholarly information resources and services profession(s) today. Another good resource to explore is your favorite research university library web site!

- *Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)*, "Recruiting to the Profession" <<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/acrlrecruiting/recruitingprofession.htm>>.
 - ACRL academic librarian recruitment brochure <<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/acrlrecruiting/recruiting.pdf>>.
- *Association of Research Libraries (ARL)* <<http://www.arl.org/>>.
- *Coalition for Networked Information (CNI)* <<http://www.cni.org/>>.
- *Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR)* <<http://www.archivists.org/employment/index.asp>>.
- *Society of American Archivists (SAA)* <<http://www.archivists.org/>>.

The Market: Job Postings in Academic Library Settings:

- ACRL: job listings from *C&RL News* <<http://www.ala.org/ACRLTemplate.cfm?Section=crlcareeropps>>
- *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Careers (search keyword "librarian") <<http://chronicle.com/jobs/>>
- *Society of American Archivists (SAA)* employment bulletin <<http://www.archivists.org/employment/index.asp>>.

Post-Doctoral Fellowships in Scholarly Information Resources

The Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), in conjunction with approximately a dozen academic libraries each year, has created a fellowship program aimed at attracting Humanities PhDs into careers in academic librarianship.

- <<http://www.clir.org/fellowships/postdoc/postdoc.html>>

**UCI Libraries
Career Recruitment and Outreach Program
Resource Librarians:**

UC Irvine doctoral students interested in exploring career possibilities within an academic library setting should feel free to contact any of the following UC Irvine librarians to discuss what academic librarians do, and what library and information studies graduate programs are like.

Name	Library Department	Email address
Joan Ariel	Collections	jariel@uci.edu
Judy Bube	SL Reference / Medicine	jbube@uci.edu
Kay Collins	LL Reference / Government Information	kcollins@uci.edu
Jackie Dooley	Special Collections	jmdooley@uci.edu
Vicki Grahame	Cataloging	vgrahame@uci.edu
Jennifer Jacobs	Special Collections / University Archives	jljacobs@uci.edu
Judy Kaufman	Administrative Services / Human Resources	kaufman@uci.edu
Bill Landis	Special Collections / Manuscripts	blandis@uci.edu
Pauline Manaka	LL Reference / Collections	pdmanaka@uci.edu
Linda Murphy	SL Reference	lmurphy@uci.edu
John Novak	LL Reference / Collections	novakj@uci.edu
Cathy Palmer	Education and Outreach	cpalmer@uci.edu
Colby Riggs	Library Systems	cmriggs@uci.edu
Judy Ruttenberg	LL Reference / Collections	jruttenb@uci.edu
John Sisson	SL Reference / Collections	jsisson@uci.edu
Heather Tunender	SL Reference	tunender@uci.edu
Manuel Urrizola	Cataloging	murrizol@uci.edu
Rina Vecchiola	Collections	rvecchio@uci.edu
Liza Vick	LL Reference / Collections	lvick@uci.edu
Yvonne Wilson	LL Reference / Government Information	ymwilson@uci.edu
Christina Woo	LL Reference / Collections	cjwoo@uci.edu

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Putting Your Ph.D. to Work in the Library

By TODD GILMAN

After my column on becoming an academic librarian appeared on this site, I heard from many fellow Ph.D.'s -- both those who had made a similar transition and those who would like to make the move.

The first group confirmed my own experience, namely that the library profession consistently offers a deeply satisfying career with multiple rewards that are too often missing from the faculty positions within reach for most Ph.D.'s. I'm talking about things like career mobility; faculty status; opportunities for advancement such as sabbaticals, release time to conduct research, and money to travel to conferences; not to mention a regular paycheck, generous benefits, and challenging, interesting work with books, electronic resources, and educated people.

The second group I heard from -- those Ph.D.'s considering a library career -- serve as the justification for this essay. They want to know what they -- teachers with substantial research skills as users of academic libraries but without experience in the technical or public-services side of libraries -- need to do to get into the business.

My advice to would-be academic librarians involves four progressive steps. In this article, I'll discuss the first three: making initial contacts, turning a vita into a résumé for librarians' consumption, and mastering the art of the cover letter to obtain support positions (i.e., pre-professional jobs) within libraries. In a future column, I'll talk about the fourth and final step: Choosing a master's program in library and information science -- called an MLIS, MLS, and sometimes just MS, for short -- and making the most of your experience once you get there in order to maximize your marketability when you emerge.

Making Initial Contacts

As any Ph.D. knows who has ever applied for entry-level nonacademic jobs clipped from the Sunday paper, without some kind of personal or professional connection to the institution at which you seek employment, you can usually forget about serious consideration there.

Let's face it: Nonacademic employers seeking to hire entry-level employees will, as a rule:

- Think you are overqualified for their measly position (you are, but that's supposed to be your business).
- Imagine that you would be too expensive to hire even if you would be ideal ("Try me!").
- Want someone younger and more malleable whom they can push around (OK, fair enough).

The typical application from a Ph.D. for an entry-level job results in a terse rejection. You cannot combat such biases on your own: No résumé and cover letter will get you noticed as long as those three letters -- Ph.D. -- stand in the way. Not, that is, unless you have someone rooting for you who can intervene on your behalf.

Fortunately, most Ph.D.'s know at least one academic librarian. Many are even married to one. If you are not so lucky as to have a librarian for a spouse, you can prevail upon the bibliographer from your grad-school days who helped you locate that bit of arcana crucial to your dissertation -- that factoid, treatise, pamphlet, or musical score, the availability of which on microfilm caused the two of you to break spontaneously into a little jig atop an oaken table in Special Collections.

He or she will remember you fondly, be flattered to be summoned for a new mission, and almost certainly want to help (that's what librarians are here for, after all). Ask this librarian -- we'll call him Jim -- whether he would be willing to direct you to someone in the city or town in which you live (or better yet, the college or university at which you are currently employed) who might discuss available support positions in a good academic library. (Of course, if you still work at your graduate institution, Jim could serve as your liaison himself.)

With any luck you will soon boast a meaningful professional contact who can assist you with a multitude of challenges -- setting up informational interviews with his librarian colleagues or recruiters in human resources, putting in a casual good word for you when your application arrives, and serving as a key reference when it comes time to winnow the applicant pool.

From CV to Résumé

Once you have developed a clear course of action with the help of your contacts, and have identified specific jobs for which you would like to apply, you are ready to transform that unwieldy vita into an elegant one-page résumé. You should do this even though work at an academic library is still, well, academic.

Librarians and human-resources recruiters most appreciate applications that are short and sweet -- until you have the MLIS degree in hand (at which point you can revert to the beloved vita with relative impunity). To winnow down your CV, divide your professional talents and accomplishments into three simple categories: education, experience, and technical skills.

Start your CV with the usual contact information, including the URL for your personal Web page, if you have one, which is a good way to showcase your expertise with electronic publishing. The first significant entry after that should be on your technical skills. Call it something like "Skills Summary" and offer a bulleted list highlighting those educational and work experiences most likely to demonstrate your ability to succeed in either technical or public services in an academic library. Here are a few examples:

- If you have a background in French or in other modern languages, you might list that as a "reading knowledge of French and German."
- The years you spent earning your Ph.D., and getting published, could be described as
- "10 years' experience in academic research and critical writing."
- "Five years' experience teaching and tutoring writing and literature" would be a way to describe your teaching assistantships, office hours, and work in the campus writing center.
- If you've ever written grant proposals that included a budget or served as a research assistant for a faculty member's book, list that experience as "Grant writing, budgeting, fund raising, consulting, indexing, and editing."

Your skills summary will serve as the most important information for prospective employers because it advertises your wealth of education and experience instantly, and does so in only a few words.

Next in importance is the section on your work experience. You should feel free to list in detail the institutions for which you have worked, the courses you have taught, and the dates - with the most recent first. Include any postdoctoral fellowships that involved library research.

Finally, interpolate any "real world" jobs undertaken as long as they involved significant responsibility or public service or both. For example, you might include your stint as box-office manager at the local playhouse, as a volunteer at the information desk of an art museum, or as a telemarketer for Greenpeace.

Next on your résumé should come the education section, with your most recent degree listed first. If you place that section any more prominently, readers will assume that you have little or no significant work experience, or worse, that you are not really prepared to embrace a "lowly" library-support position. Putting the skills section first demonstrates that you have what it takes to function effectively in an automated library environment.

You don't necessarily have to possess a thorough familiarity with MARC (machine-readable cataloging) coding or AACR2 (the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules), but hinting that you know you will need to learn those and that you are not afraid of computer technology will boost potential employers' confidence in your aptitude for library work.

Definitely include any software applications with which you have expertise such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access, as well as HTML, XML, or any other markup language you feel comfortable manipulating. If you have worked with bibliographic utilities such as WorldCat or Eureka, so much the better.

The Perfect Cover Letter

"Why does a Ph.D. want to work in the library, anyway? Why isn't this person pursuing a faculty position?" Those will be the burning questions on the minds of most librarians as they review your application. Such questions are understandable and not to be taken lightly. Whether or not you succeed in laying them to rest will make or break you.

That's why the opening statement of your cover letter should convey that you are genuinely interested in library work -- not as an alternative to teaching, driven by desperation, but as your ruling passion. Presumably you do value library work or you would not be applying for the position, so say what it is about library work that you find attractive.

Mention any doctoral or postdoctoral work you have performed in research libraries and state why you valued it. Indicate your enthusiasm for learning the "other" side of library work (i.e., the technical and public-service aspects). Emphasize your foreign-language skills. State when you are available to start work.

Then think through all your life and work experience and develop a case for why you make a credible candidate for the opening. Highlight the aspects of your résumé that strengthen your

argument. Play up your teaching experience, your desire to help students and faculty members find what they seek, and, most of all, your valuable skills as a researcher.

Conclude with a reiteration of your keen interest in the position and as much contact information as you can supply, including the best time to reach you. Keep your cover letter, like your résumé, to a single page, and make sure you have no typos (library work requires meticulous attention to details, so mistakes will be noted). If all else fails, reconstitute your letter as an offer to serve as a library volunteer. There is no shame in this, and it could mean the difference between summary dismissal and a foot in the door.

- Todd Gilman is the librarian for literature in English at Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library.