Going Solo: Managing the One-person Library

Patti McCall, MA, MLS
My life as a solo......

- **Albany Molecular Research, Inc.**
  
  “For more than 20 years, as Albany Molecular Research Inc. (AMRI), we have provided fully integrated [drug discovery, development](#) and [manufacturing](#) services – all while adapting to the rapidly changing needs of our customers within the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and related industries.”
When I arrived........

- Small library adjacent to labs
- My office was across the street
- New administration (and library) building was a pile of dirt
- Collection small with a lot of junk
- I was the first full time librarian
- Library services valued
- I knew nothing about chemistry and felt overwhelmed and lost
What I learned

• I can’t know it all. Ask for help
• Get involved
• It’s okay to make mistakes—you will learn from them
• Be a presence. Be heard. Be seen. It’s everything
• Don’t assume people know your value and what you can do for them
• Invite yourself. While not generally considered polite in social circles it is a must for career librarians!
• The best thing about my job was being the only librarian. The worst thing about my job was being the only librarian.
The typical solo librarian....

According the Judy Siess, respected one person librarianship guru, the ideal solo librarian is

• Flexible
• Creative
• Well organized
• Able to think analytically and independently
• Confident in his/her ability to make wise decisions
• High tolerance for frustration
• Able to juggle multiple clients and priorities
• And most importantly....
  Is a team player who specializes in working alone
Job hazards!

According to Siess the most commonly identified frustrations are:
• Professional isolation
• Lack of clerical support
• Reporting to a non librarian
• Frustrated by not being able to do it all
• Inadequate preparation/training for the job
• Lack of job security
• Low pay
Questions?

The other nephew (many, many years ago)
He does not love books.
“Time management is really what we do during time” --David Allen

• Learn when to say **no**.

• Know your role and make sure others do too

• Keep track of how you use your time

• Streamline and eliminate unnecessary tasks

• Free or low cost help? (interns, students, volunteers)
Volunteers/Interns are great but.....

- Treat them as if you are hiring a regular employee
- Have clear job descriptions and expectations
- Devote adequate time for training
- Recognize their strengths and weaknesses
- Provide feedback (and always thank them for a job well done)
- Keep it interesting
- Have projects lined up
Keep your sanity!

• Check email twice a day (and don’t leave it open all day!)
  – Complete the two minute emails!
  – Organize emails that need follow up
  – Delete the junk!
  – Keep actionable and non actionable emails in separate locations

• Keep a routine (easier to stay focused)

• Communicate with your supervisor

• Calendar tools (Moleskine, Franklin Planner)
Keeping your sanity cont’d........................

- Prioritize daily tasks (what needs to done today, this week, next week, etc)
- Do the unpleasant first (Trust me, it makes for a much better day!)
- Do the mundane once in a while
- “Tickler” files
- File your accomplishments
- You work to live, not live to work
Manage thy self (and a few others)....... 

• It’s up to YOU to manage your career

• It takes discipline

• You must be PROACTIVE

• Trust yourself

• Trust others

• How do I effect change in areas I do not control?

• As Judge Judy says, we have two ears and one mouth for a reason
Questions?
Get out there and be SEEN!

• Walk the hallways, walk the library, walk the break room

• Invite yourself! Get involved. Go to meetings. Speak up!

• Solo doesn’t mean silent

• Find out where coworkers, patrons congregate and be there

• Do your patrons even know the library exists?
Being seen cont’d………..

- Do they know what services you provide?
- Start a committee
- Build relationships
- Reach them where they need you when they need you
- Annual reports to communicate your worth
- Make friends with those in “the know”
Shameless (but fun) marketing & outreach ideas
(Remember, image matters!)

- Library Week
- Orientation, scavenger hunts
- Pot luck lunches
- Set up an event table
- Engaging newsletters
- Captive audiences!
More ideas......

- Book discussion group
- Author visits
- Animal therapy
- Share positive feedback
- Attend department meetings (and if possible bring some goodies)
- Highlight faculty/colleague/student research
Profiling your faculty/colleagues

• Be a detective

• What/when are they publishing?

• Connect with them on Twitter and LinkedIn

• What are their research interests?

• What/when are they teaching?
Questions? I’m all ears.
Professional Development

• Professional Associations are a must
  American Library Association (ALA) [http://www.ala.org/]
  Special Libraries Association (SLA) (SOLO Librarians Div) [http://www.sla.org/]
  Medical Library Association (MLA) [http://www.mlanet.org/]
  Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS) [http://www.arlisna.org/]
  Society of American Archivists (SAA) [http://www2.archivists.org/]
  State Library Associations (i.e. Florida Library Assoc)
  Regional library associations (i.e Southeast Library Assoc)
  Field related associations (i.e. Toastmasters) [http://www.toastmasters.org/]
  ACRL (check out special interest groups!) [http://tinyurl.com/klrnuxf]

• Don’t just join. Find a way to get involved. NETWORK!!!!

• Find the right mentor: [http://www.ala.org/llama/llama-mentoring-program]
Training on the cheap........

• Pre conference sessions (don’t forget state and regionals!)

• Conference recordings/Webcasts

• YouTube
  ALA Youtube channel http://www.youtube.com/user/AmLibraryAssociation
  RDA Basics http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MosUV2yR8I0

• Podcasts
  http://www.opal-online.org/archivelis.htm

• Professional association websites
  ALA’s Guidelines for development of policies & procedures on library usage
  http://tinyurl.com/4bozf
  SLA Buyers Guide
  http://slaindustryvendorsearch.com/
Training.....

- Visit another library

- Listservs, Blogs, Message Boards
  Lone Wolf Librarian Blog [http://lonewolflibrarian.wordpress.com/](http://lonewolflibrarian.wordpress.com/)

- MOOCs
  MOOC defined [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massive_open_online_course](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massive_open_online_course)
  Free classes?! Nerd heaven!! [http://www.mooc-list.com/](http://www.mooc-list.com/)

- Vendor training

- LibGuides galore!

- WebJunction (many free webinars) [http://www.webjunction.org/](http://www.webjunction.org/)
Fireside reading........

• *How to Thrive as a Solo Librarian*, ed. Carol Smallwood and Melisa Clapp 2012


• *Bite Sized Marketing*, Nancy Dowd, Mary Evangeliste, & Jonathan Silberman, (Chicago: American Library Assoc) 2010

More campside reads!


Any last questions?
THANK YOU!

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