NMRT Events @ ALA 2008

Meeting	Date	Time	Venue
Conference Planning Groups Meeting	Fri. 6/27	3:00-4:30 pm	Marriott/Salon G
Conference 101	Fri. 6/27	4:00-5:00 pm	ACC/207 A-C
Mentoring Social	Fri. 6/27	6:30-7:30 pm	Best Western Stovall's
Meet and Greet	Fri. 6/27	7:30-8:30 pm	Best Western Stovall's
NMRT Conference Orientation	Sat. 6/28	8:00-10:00 am	ACC/201 A/B
Crossing the Intergenerational Divide: NMRT Outreach to New (and Not-So-New) Librarians	Sat. 6/28	10:30 am -12:30 pm	Hilton/Avilia
President's Program/Membership Meeting: International Insights for New Librarians	Sat. 6/28	1:30-3:30 pm	Hilton/El Capitan
All-Committee Meeting	Sun. 6/29	1:30-3:30 pm	ACC/213 D
Student Reception	Sun. 6/29	6:30-7:30 pm	Hyatt/Grand B
3M/NMRT Social	Sun. 6/29	7:30-11:30 pm	Hyatt/Grand A
Executive Board Meeting	Mon. 6/30	8:00-10:00 am	Marriott room 315
New Board/New Chair Orientation	Mon. 6/30	10:30 a.m.-12:00 pm	Beach/Rancho Las Palmas

***Guide to Reference* seeks advice from NMRT**
Come hear Bob Kieft, General Editor of ALA Editions' *Guide to Reference* (http://www.guidetoreference.org/), speak at the NMRT Conference Orientation in Anaheim on Saturday, June 28th. He will describe how NMRT members can become involved in and influence the design and content of this new online project. Following the Conference Orientation program Bob would like to meet with NMRT members interested in discussing their student experiences in reference courses and as librarians who now offer reference and information services. Bob can be contacted in advance at rkieft@haverford.edu

Inside this issue:

Good eats in Anaheim   Niels Bartels

Finding good, inexpensive food near the Anaheim Convention Center can be a challenge. Wide boulevards and sprawling neighborhoods don't encourage following your nose to a tasty bite. But you're not completely out of luck.

Choose from among the many chain restaurants near the Convention Center or visit Downtown Disney, an outdoor mall with about a dozen slightly overpriced eating establishments. If you're up for something more interesting, you could venture out to one of the small restaurants in the area. Ask the locals for guidance, and you should be able to find something worthwhile.

For a quality burger in a no-frills, neighborhood burger joint, try **Apollo Burgers** (12012 Chapman Ave., 714/971-0825, open 7 days, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.). The cheeseburger is simple and delicious. The fried zucchini are particularly mouth-watering. The teriyaki plates seem popular, as well.

Tacos Mi Pueblo (1188 W. Katella Ave., 714/778-3100, open 7 days, 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m.) is a good place for Mexican food just a block or two from the convention center. They have very inexpensive specials that make an excellent light meal. The shrimp burrito is full of fresh jumbo-sized shrimp. The interior is not fancy, but you can enjoy the jukebox and the large screen TV.

Pat's House (12541 S. Harbor Blvd., 714/534-4490, Mon.-Thurs. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. & 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., Fri. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. & 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., Sat. 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.) serves Thai food in a pleasant atmosphere. The Spicy Basil Eggplant with beef is particularly tasty. Pat's House would be perfect for a casual dinner with friends or colleagues (deliver with a minimum order of $15).

Apply for the Marshall Cavendish Award

Thanks to the generous support of Marshall Cavendish, NMRT will offer three tickets to the Newbery/Caldecott/Wilder Banquet at the ALA 2008 Annual Conference. Simply write a short essay (about 250 words) on how you would benefit and why you want to attend. Email entries to Linda Shippert at lshippert@wsu.edu by May 31, 2008. Winners will be notified no later than June 15th. See http://www.ala.org/ala/nmrt/comm/marshall-cavendishawardaw.cfm for more information.

Planning a happy, healthy conference Marissa Priddis

The best word to describe an ALA Annual conference is WHIRLWIND! Packing loads of professional development, networking, vendor interaction, conference programming and travel can be exhilarating and exhausting, so here are a few tips for a happy, healthy conference.

Plan, plan, plan. Once you receive your list of daily events, scope out those that are most appealing to you, noting their locations and times. Don't plan to attend two sessions that are only a few minutes apart, and are on opposite sides of the city! Pick up Cognotes each morning to note room changes or program cancellations.

Don't over schedule yourself. Particularly if it's your first conference, this is a sure way to find yourself too exhausted to enjoy the conference offerings. Schedule some social time, or just some time to yourself. You may benefit from a daily nap to keep your energy up for the entire conference, or try a brisk walk to rejuvenate yourself.

Food: avoid the famine. Dashing from session to session can leave little time for a leisurely meal. Block out time for a midday meal, and investigate nearby restaurants for meal outings. You may also want to stock up on drinks and snacks - granola bars and fruit are great ways to have a snack on the go. Grab continental breakfast or free coffee at your hotel. Standard fare like hamburgers and fries are typically served in the convention center, but they are costly and less than well-balanced. Explore your options before you become too hungry to care!

Hydrate! Picking up a few bottles of water is essential, particularly if you can find a cheaper source than the coffee stands. The key to feeling great all day is to have a bottle of water nearby, and to refill it often.

Network with your neighbor. Conferences are a great opportunity to interact with colleagues from different parts of the country and different library backgrounds. Strike up a conversation on the shuttle bus. Attend some of the social events offered to meet new colleagues. Chat with fellow attendees before or after sessions - they are obviously interested in the same topic as you. Take a stash of business cards to the conference to share with those that you meet.

Vendor madness! No conference is complete without a lot of time spent in the Exhibit Halls, which feature hundreds of vendors. It's a good time to learn about new products, meet your sales rep face to face, and to pick up freebies. Many booths give away loads of free stuff, but beware...only take what you need, or else you'll be lugging around thousands of pencils and key chains. Many publishing booths give away free "Advanced Reader Copies" of books, so be prepared with extra bags, or a bag with wheels. ALA provides a shipping office so that you don't have to pack your treasures in your carry-on luggage. Take business cards to the exhibit hall to give to vendor contacts.

Schedule "You" Time. Take advantage of your surroundings. Check into city tours and find out about area attractions. Many conference-goers will schedule a few vacation days around conferences in order to take advantage of all that conference cities have to offer.

Check out your travel options. ALA and Gale do a fantastic job of having buses shuttle conference-goers to and from hotels and the convention center. Beyond that, travel can be tricky. Check out your travel options (and prices!) prior to arriving. Some hotels may have a free airport shuttle, for example. In some cases, a taxi from the airport may only be a couple of dollars more than a crowded bus that only runs every hour. Many conference-goers will volunteer to split cab fare if the destination is the same.

Ask. When in doubt, ask for help. There are information booths at the convention center, ready to provide everything from restaurant recommendations to directions on finding a hotel or session room. Hotel concierges are also a wealth of local information.

ALA Annual conferences are fantastic opportunities for those fortunate enough to attend, and hopefully these tips will provide you with the information you need to have a successful, stress-free conference. See you in Anaheim!

Job preparedness and job satisfaction: What new librarians need to know or need to learn

Erin Ellis, University of Kansas and Kara Whatley, New York University

Introduction

Many factors contribute to creating a satisfying first job experience. In addition to questions of locale and position type, salary and tenure, there are some key skills that every librarian should acquire prior to taking that first position. Nan McMurry states that, "obviously library schools cannot tailor their instruction to the circumstances of any individual library" (1988) and this is essential to bear in mind. Some library programs will address important topics like grant writing and instructional design, but many will not. Several other skills like negotiation strategies and networking techniques are best learned in real-life situations or through mentoring.

No matter how they are acquired, gaining and maintaining these skills, and the confidence that comes with them, is essential to achieving success and job satisfaction in the first professional position. This article examines why these skills are so impor-

tant to job success and satisfaction, how new librarians can best acquire them, and how the authors have employed these skills in their careers. Additionally, this article includes references to works on professional development, job satisfaction, and being a new librarian. Armed with such information, future librarians will enter their first positions feeling more confident and prepared (Gordon, R. S., 2004b).

Six Key Skills

Preparation increases confidence. Sherrer reflects that "library schools [should] impart to their graduates that responsibility for continued professional growth and development is as much a personal responsibility as an institutional one" (1996). While a library science education may or may not have met each individual's expectations, it also may not have completely prepared new librarians for the first professional position. New librarians often find the need to supplement their education and skills. In order to

be fully confident upon entering the workforce, there are several key skills to consider. Being adequately prepared leads to many feelings and behaviors: preparation can lead to increased motivation, which can lead to increased productivity. Increased productivity can lead to increased responsibility and achievement that can, in turn, create a sense of self-satisfaction (Dickerson, 2002). In reviewing the library literature and in reflecting on the skills they needed to master and enjoy their jobs, the authors have identified six key skills that students and new librarians should acquire: instructional design and technique, research and writing, technology, time management, networking, and salary negotiation.

Instruction

Many librarians will find themselves in an instructor's role, and being familiar or competent in instructional design principles will save time and give confidence in front of small groups and large classes. However, teaching may be daunting to a new librarian because instruction preparation and delivery may not be adequately addressed in the library school curriculum. This leaves some new librarians feeling unprepared or insecure about their abilities to teach. Even those students fortunate enough to gain some experience in school may find instruction to be "one of their most challenging and stressful activities" (McMurry, 1988).

The authors have provided instruction to a wide variety of students, faculty, and community members with little preparation before their first professional jobs. One author struggled with teaching and course preparation skills in her first job until she began volunteering to teach the general undergraduate sessions. She gradually gained confidence, developed a teaching style and began to enjoy library instruction. The second author took a different route to hone her instruction skills; she focused her practicum on undergraduate research instruction to English 101/102 classes. While doing so, she was able to observe a seasoned librarian in action, gain familiarity with classroom equipment (such as the SMARTBoard), and participate in some assessment measures. This was also valuable during the interview process as she had numerous examples and enthusiasm to share.

Gaining experience beforehand, in both course work and intern or practicum situations, can be extremely helpful to the new librarian. If such an opportunity is not available, the authors suggest observing other librarians as they teach, participating in the teaching workshops sometimes offered on university campuses, and above all, practicing teaching skills.

Research and Writing

To varying degrees, depending on library type, writing and research will be a part of the job duties. For those in tenure-track positions, writing and research for publication will be an expectation. The authors are both in tenure-track positions that require research and scholarly publications. To facilitate this, they have teamed up to collaborate on several articles and presentation proposals. Co-writing and co-presenting is a good way to begin contributing to the profession. In many cases, a librarian needs look no further than his or her own colleagues to find collaborators. Some libraries have strong traditions of "writing groups" where librarians, both new and experienced, get together on a regular basis to discuss potential writing projects, critique work, and discuss publication strategies. Another way to identify collaborators among colleagues is to simply think about the projects one is currently working on. Are there any projects that might be translatable into a paper or a presentation? If so, who are the collaborators on that project? Perhaps he or she would like to join forces to write about that project. The authors have found just asking a colleague to work in partnership works well.

For those in libraries both on and off the tenure track, there may be library or organization newsletters to contribute to, blogs to maintain, web sites to create, and grants to write. These activities will require the new librarian to be an effective writer. Gordon reminds us to "always keep in mind that you are qualified to write for the profession merely by being part of the profession" (2004a). And Etches-Johnson encourages us to "allow [our] recent library school research and writing experience to propel [us] through [the] first attempt" (2004). One author started writing conference reports for an Association of College and Research Libraries' section's newsletter. This experience contributed to enhancing the practice of writing for publication.

Librarians should strengthen grant-writing abilities. Grant writing is different from other writing styles. It requires planning, data gathering, and oftentimes, specialization. In the public library, grants are often needed to fund community activities or special programs. In the academic world, many faculty librarians will be expected to apply for grants to satisfy tenure requirements. Grant writing requires a familiarity with proposal requirements, how to write goals or mission statements, defining a scope and creating a budget and a timeline. Maxwell explains that "grant underwriters usually provide a form or specific layout for how grants should be formatted. Make sure to follow these instructions explicitly" (2005). Grant agencies get hundreds of applicants, and the details are important. Adhering to guidelines such as font size and type, word counts, and grammar are essential. The authors collaborated on a grant submission early in their careers with no prior grant writing experience. It was a daunting undertaking, but a successful one. The submission went through several rewrites, and much proofreading for detail and clarity. One author submitted another successful grant proposal. While the process was still daunting, it was slightly easier the second time. No matter what research or writing one undertakes, the experience will provide preparation for future and, perhaps, more advanced undertakings (Gordon, R. S., 2004a).

Technology

There is no way to avoid using ever-changing, ever-advancing technology in libraries. And while job descriptions may not name it explicitly, new librarians may be asked to use software or create web pages, design logos, draft newsletters or marketing items, create complex databases, make posters, or administer classes on course management software. Librarians should have some basic technology skills prior to their first position and be prepared to continue learning as things change. This is one skill librarians do not want to neglect, as having a leg up on certain software programs and computer applications prior to the first job will give a sense of self-assuredness. Though no one would expect a new graduate to know everything, obtaining some familiarity and comfort with a variety of technology tools will enable the new librarian to adapt, respond, and learn easily.

To keep up with technology, the authors have taken classes offered at their universities, practiced individually with new Web applications, and downloaded freeware. How does a new librar-

ian discern which technologies are worth learning? It really is difficult to say. If a librarian feels it will aid in his or her work or perhaps save time over the long haul, it is worth checking out. If library patrons are asking about it, then librarians must learn it. And how does a librarian keep up with all the new technologies as they become available? The authors find that technology-minded friends and their Web sites and blogs work best. The Blended Librarian Online Learning Community (http://www.blendedlibrarian.org), for example, is one resource for librarians working with technology or designing new instruction methods.

Time Management

Successful time management is an especially important skill for new librarians to acquire. Many activities and projects in library work keep librarian jobs interesting, but it is that variety that can pull librarians in too many directions at the same time. Other saboteurs of savvy time management for new librarians are some skills they employed as students, such as perfectionism, or perhaps a common bad habit like procrastination. No matter the culprit, to be a successful—and a less stressed—librarian, learning some time management tricks will help. One time management trick that the authors rely heavily on are what Debra Allen calls "scheduling gizmos" (Allen, 2001). If a new librarian decides to take the gadget plunge, make sure to use them to schedule not only reference desk hours and committee meetings but also project work time, writing time, and lunch. The authors find by "committing" the hours in their calendars they actually use their time more efficiently. Another time management tactic is keeping to-do lists. These lists help identify daily projects. If making such lists is a new activity, it is a good idea to identify priorities. One way to do this is to use an A,B,C,D quadrant matrix with A being Urgent and Important; B being Important but not Urgent; C being Urgent but not Important; and D being Not Important and Not Urgent (Foust, 2004).

Networking

For some new librarians networking is an innate skill, but for others it may be a stress-inducing struggle. However, networking can provide several payoffs and becomes easier with practice. First, networking with coworkers lets a new librarian quickly become familiar with organizational culture and history. All organizations have unique cultures and politics, and successfully navigating these waters is extremely important to job satisfaction. Shontz and Bullington suggest being watchful and asking a few questions: "Watch how other librarians interact with each other. How do classified staff members interact with librarians and the director? Is it a strict hierarchy or is it more egalitarian?" (1998). Networking within an organization can help new librarians answer these questions and learn the culture very quickly, and it may also help them find a mentor or a lunch buddy.

Additionally, networking in the library world via professional conferences can be key to a new librarian's future professional success. Such connections may lead to many things including "a publication, a committee appointment, a great job lead, or a friendship" (Shontz & Bullington, 1998). Consider small state or regional associations if the national and international organizations seem too daunting. As Larissa Gordon and Meg Spencer

Obtaining some familiarity and comfort with a variety of technology tools will enable the new librarian to adapt, respond, and learn easily.

say, "It might be easier to find your 'niche' in [these]" small groups (2005). The authors have found the American Library Association New Members Round Table to be a safe place to try out networking techniques. The round table provides several opportunities to meet other new librarians and library students who are in the same boat as you – getting to know other professionals, learning their way around the profession, and navigating the ALA organization.

Salary Negotiation

Salary negotiation is a skill that everyone likes to forget about—until it is needed. And, given how critical to later job satisfaction this skill is, it is surprising just how little information concerning salary negotiation can be found in the professional literature. As a new librarian eager for that first job, it is tempting to accept the first salary offered, but there is frequently wiggle room in that offer, often as much as $1,000-$2,000 (Topper, 2004). A savvy negotiator can secure not only a larger starting salary but also some nice and somewhat necessary perks such as guaranteed travel funding, a flexible schedule, or housing. Because salary is in many cases a sticky subject, any librarian beginning salary negotiations should marshal as much information to support his or her position during the negotiation. A good place to begin is by consulting the ALA and Association of Research Libraries salaries. ALA makes its salary database available online for a fee, and ARL publishes its salary survey on its Web site each year.

Once a salary offer is made new librarians should also consider benefits and perks. When considering salary and benefits for a potential librarian position, one author realized that the retirement benefits in her new position would be a huge leap over what she was currently receiving. By factoring that into her deliberations, she realized the new position was actually worth several thousand dollars per year more than the salary alone indicated. Additionally, the authors have been able to negotiate moving expenses and faculty housing into their job offers, bolstering salary offers with seemingly little wiggle room. However a new librarian proceeds with salary negotiation, he or she must proceed with caution. It is true that no one receives what he or she does not ask for in salary negotiations, but it is also true that one must be reasonable in his or her requests—remember that a librarian is being judged as a potential employee during negotiations.

Getting the Skills You Need

Students and new librarians can acquire some or all of these key skills in several ways. By participating in freely available online Webinars and training sessions, paying attention to the library literature or identifying people with significant experience, future librarians will be well-positioned to be a confident professional.

Volunteering/Interning/Working as a Student

If a student knows in advance of some skills that will be needed in their first job that they may not be taught in the library school curriculum, then the student has a great opportunity to seek out experiences to hone these skills before entering the workforce. For example, if a student knows he or she is headed for a career in academic libraries, he or she may want to consider

writing a thesis. As tough as that might sound, it is a great way to get experience in research and writing that will serve him or her well in a potential tenure-track job. Others not willing to tackle a thesis might consider volunteering to contribute to a local or school newspaper, a newsletter, or a professional journal. In addition, students with little to no experience working in libraries could volunteer to gain knowledge and familiarity. One author, having worked as an undergraduate in the university library, took a position at a public library to gain further experience. In six short months she had decided to go on to library school, but not to work in a public library. Brief exposure to different types of libraries will give a student a good idea of whether that is the right environment for them.

Short Courses

As a graduate student or a university employee, there are often short courses that one can take to learn new skills in many technical and non-technical areas. For example, some new librarians may need to know Structured Query Language to run reports. A short course or seminar in using SQL is a good opportunity to learn. Universities offer short courses for less technical skills, too. Many institutions offer short courses or online resources aimed at helping students and staff learn time management skills. Additionally, as noted by Kenny and McMillan's survey, "forty out of forty-one state library associations offer continuing education and professional development opportunities or 'skill-enhancement' workshops" (1992). Students should take advantage of low student membership rates in these associations and reap the benefits of excellent continuing education opportunities.

Mentors

Some library organizations will assign a mentor to new librarians, and others will leave them to develop those relationships informally. Some new librarians may easily find an experienced colleague willing to offer advice, introduce them to the organizational culture, and answer questions new librarians can feel uncomfortable asking. This can be anyone – a colleague, a professor, a librarian at another library (Shontz & Bullington, 1998). But some new librarians may also find that their positions are so specialized that potential mentors work at other institutions. In this case, professional organizations will be the best bet in locating another librarian to serve as a mentor (e.g., the American Association of Law Libraries). Additionally, many library associations at the state, regional, and national level offer mentoring programs. Of particular interest to students and new librarians is the NMRT Mentoring program (http://www.ala.org/ala/nmrt/comm/mentoringcommittee.htm). This program offers both conference and career mentoring and can be an excellent introduction to the profession, to navigating conferences, and to discovering oneself as a professional librarian. Again, students should take advantage of low membership rates in professional organizations to gain access to this and similar mentoring opportunities.

Online Resources

Many professional development resources exist online. Some examples include: Webcasts, podcasts, and vendor-supported online "universities" and "institutes" such as http://www.sirsidynixinstitute.com/future.php, sponsored by SirsiDynix. In these and many other resources, librarians can learn more about applying new technologies in libraries. ACRL offers several e-learning opportunities throughout the year (http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlproftools/elearning.cfm). Librarians can also access professional development opportunities through e-Learning@PLA (http://www.ala.org/ala/pla/plaevents/elearningpla/elearningpla.cfm), American Association of School Librarians (http://www.ala.org/ala/aasl/aasleducation/educationcareers.cfm) and Special Library Association (http://www.sla.org/content/learn/index.cfm).

Additionally, ALA's divisions and round tables offer online toolkits and other documentation that can help new librarians become familiar with issues in any area of librarianship. The Library of Congress also offers Webcasts on several topics (http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/results.php?cat=2&mode=a). Also, do not forget about the ALA discussion lists (http://lists.ala.org/sympa). One benefit of these online resources is that they are available to both students and new librarians, and they offer quick and convenient information potentially at the point of need. Whether or not all learning needs can be met with online resources, a "commitment to staying current with free and timely material benefits any librarian" (Gordon, R. S. 2006).

Professional Literature

As cliché as it might sound, finding time to read the library literature will be very helpful in keeping abreast of current developments in the field. In addition to searching in the library and information studies databases for articles, one can also peruse online newsletters and library blogs, especially for new instructional techniques or new technology resources. Some great places to start include LISCareer.com, InfoCareer Trends (http://www.lisjobs.com/newsletter), and Beyond the Job (http://www.beyondthejob.org). Additionally, each ALA division and many round tables publish magazines, journals, and newsletters. This professional literature helps new librarians stay in touch with what is happening within a particular library field.

Salary negotiation is a skill that everyone likes to forget about - until it is needed, that is

Conclusion

When a new librarian begins the first library job well-prepared, the adjustment from school to real world is easier. Eased are the nagging doubts that perhaps you are not ready, lightened is the slightly heavy burden of needing to know more than you learned in library school. Confusion in the new job is still there, and may persist for months, but there is clarity, certainty, and composure for the practiced librarian. A prepared librarian is a confident librarian, and a confident librarian will experience greater self-fulfillment and satisfaction (Dickerson, 2002).

Ultimately, preparedness and skill acquisition is the library student's responsibility. The acclimation to the first library position in the 'real world' can be less stressful when the new librarian arrives prepared. Albritton reminds us that "in order to function effectively as a professional, one must have continuing learning experiences to reinforce his or her formal education" (1990). The authors embrace continued learning and professional development opportunities, and have found that by engaging in those activities they have improved their own skill sets and built satisfying working environments. Not only does arriving prepared help to ease the transition and contribute to job satisfaction, but it lays

the groundwork for continued career development.

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BobstRef: Blogging the knowledge base in an academic library

Margaret Smith, New York University

Academic libraries are rapidly incorporating blogging into their operations. While there is no official count, as of January 2008 there were at least 300 academic libraries with blogs ("Blogging Libraries Wiki," 2008). At a glance, it is clear these are primarily promotional tools. The blog's ease of use allows brief and timely updates, making it ideal for externally publicizing a library's events and services to its online community (Brookover, 2007).

To a lesser extent, blogs are used internally for communication among staff. For example, libraries at Barnard College and The Bernard M. Baruch College of The City University of New York maintain internal blogs (http://barnardrefdesk.blogspot.com; http://reference.newman.blogspot.com). In these blogs, a staff member might write about a new database or a sudden difficulty with a photocopier, and others would see the update. In concert with RSS (Really Simple Syndication), the internal blog functions similarly to an emailed discussion list, while conveniently centralizing an archive of group updates. The use of an internal blog also prevents unintentional exclusion or miscommunication that arises from group e-mail situations (Farkas, 2007). For example, in group e-mail communication, members may be accidentally omitted from an important memo, or may receive conflicting information from different senders. A blog creates a central location where consistent information is available to all. When staff are distributed in different departments and locations, the blog's conversational aspect builds virtual community more than a discussion list might (Brookover, 2007).

While both kinds of blogs take advantage of the timeliness of the format, a blog shows much potential as a more permanent knowledge base. For example, entries can be browsed by their user-defined categories, or "tags," or searched by keyword so information can be located easily (Wagner & Bolloju, 2005). Writing a blog entry requires no special knowledge of computer programming. Consequently, users with only basic understanding of the internet can still contribute, and the collection can grow quickly. The Michigan State University and Eastern Kentucky University libraries have both capitalized on these features by experimenting with blogs in their knowledge management attempts (Barton & Weismantel, 2006; Stone, 2003). In June 2007, Bobst Library staff utilized WordPress to create a similar collaborative knowledge base called BobstRef.

Method

In conceiving BobstRef, the staff was looking for an easy way to aggregate and annotate information that was located in disparate sources, including personal notes, e-mail, finding aids, library wikis, and the university Web site.

We also wanted to address the problem of hidden knowledge. Often, the knowledge that one acquires while working at an organization remains tacit, passed from person to person but never written in any central location. This is problematic when employees transition in and out of the library, or when reference staff members receive questions that are outside their subject specialty (Gandhi, 2004; Stover, 2004).

To accomplish these objectives, we considered a variety of formats including del.icio.us and Tumblr which can easily aggregate information using the Firefox browser. Ultimately, WordPress

offered advanced features, such as password-protection, widgets, and customizable templates. Compared to other blogging software such as Movable Type, WordPress seemed more intuitive and had incredibly active user forums that provided helpful technical support.

We also considered a wiki, but we preferred the blog's conversational feel. Additionally, wikis generally use more hyperlinked structure, which prevents topic flexibility. In contrast, a blog is ideal for aggregating a series of discrete elements gathered from many different places and people. Blog entries need not refer to one another, and thus are easier to create.

The staff considered two choices when deciding on structure of blog posts. First, staff could post the relevant information within the body of the blog entry. The benefit of this was easy visibility of the answer following a search. This presented difficulties, however. It precluded obvious conversation and collaboration, as well as the possibility that the information was incorrect. The second option was to present the blog entries as a series of questions, with answers in the comments. This was ideal for collaboration, and also it made changes and updates significantly easier. Rather than having to correct, change or update the posts, we could simply add new comments. The initial questions would never change. Moreover, in BobstRef's early stages, we converted our old Frequently Asked Questions into blog entries.

The test phase of this project began in September 2007. In BobstRef's early stages, limited reference personnel posted questions or tips to a main text box located on the static front page of the blog. Self-selected moderators received e-mail notification when there was a new post. They transformed the input into consistently styled entries and added appropriate tags. This moderation would continue to be appropriate after the trial, as it reduced barriers to use; a librarian or staff member need only type in natural language and click "submit." With each question, reference staff posted their suggested answers in the comments section.

With respect to content, questions were broad in scope. They ranged from "What dental benefits are available to librarians?" and "Who do I call when the toilets break?" to "How do I find Nielsen ratings?" The only firm guideline for content was that the information be relevant to library staff's professional lives.

Results

Although BobstRef is still in its beginning stages, approximately 300 entries and 380 comments have been posted since June 2007. Feedback is positive, and all reference personnel report using the blog on more than one occasion (J. Cain; J. Conte; A. Gallin; D. Nakamura; A. Pearce; A. Rutkowski, personal communications, 2007). They find it particularly helpful for phone numbers, number codes for doors, and links to human resources forms (A. Pearce, personal communication, January 9, 2008). Two new hires are especially enthusiastic about the blog and report that it is useful just to browse through the entries in their spare time (A. Gallin, personal communication, January 9, 2008).

The goal of BobstRef was to create an archive of information from many different sources, some disparate and some not even transcribed. In this limited launch, we have succeeded. Reference personnel are easily able to contribute to it, as well as search it and find helpful answers.

Discussion

Soon, we are opening BobstRef to the entire reference staff. We hope that they will not only post their own tips, but also subscribe to the blog via RSS, drop in when they have comments, and regularly use the blog as a resource. Contribution can only increase utility.

Consequently, perhaps the most difficult challenge to BobstRef, as well as other library blogs, is how to encourage participation (Ojala, 2004). Participation is required not only to grow the knowledge base but also to ensure upkeep. With time, older posts may become irrelevant and links may break. To aid with this, in the future, our library school interns may re-validate old entries as part of their student projects. While decentralized knowledge is easy to create, it can be difficult to maintain its accuracy.

Additionally, as this tool is in its early stages, design challenges exist. For example, a better search would prevent posting questions that have already been answered. Making the dates on comments more obvious would be another improvement. This way, it would be easy to see the most current information and gauge whether further investigation was necessary.

Provided these challenges are reasonably met, the BobstRef model shows great promise for future reference services. We are in the process of moving selected questions from our e-mail Ask-A-Librarian service into a separate "BobstQuestions blog." Opening up these questions to the conversation and collaboration of a blog can allow reference staff to add helpful suggestions that may be subject-specific, obscure, or based on personal experience. It is possible that patrons themselves could contribute their own experiences, thus creating a new kind of reference interaction in an academic library. In fact, this kind of reference service is similar to that theorized by Pomerantz & Stutzman (2006) and currently employed by the community blog, Ask Metafilter (http://ask.metafilter.com).

Regardless of future development BobstRef is already a successful demonstration of a blog as communal knowledge management within the academic library setting. It allows individual Bobst Library reference staff members to easily compile their specific knowledge and experiences for the good of the whole.

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Transitioning in librarianship: Examining instances of early-career shifts

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Introduction

In the course of a library career, many librarians remain in one library type and have a straightforward career trajectory. Much attention, in both the formal and informal literature, is devoted to career ascendance within the same area of librarianship. There are a significant number of librarians, however, whose careers are marked by an early-career transition to either another type of library or a new service area, or a combination thereof. Little is known about early-career librarians, defined here as having less than a decade of professional experience. This paper will, based on 230 survey respondents, document some early-career transitions within librarianship and to examine some commonalities shared and differences exhibited by those who transitioned before reaching the mid-career stage. The present paper seeks to provide an exploratory description of transitioning between areas of librarianship within the first decade of service.

Literature Review

To date, no comprehensive research articles have addressed transitioning in librarianship during the early-career stage, although some studies have identified early-career transitions in librarianship and characteristics of transitioned librarians. While the research studies strive to establish common characteristics, the informal pieces cited in this study primarily offer advice. The two informal pieces (one an editorial; the second, an informal study) address specific issues related to early-career transitions. In 2004, Allen and Markgren characterize transitioning as a "common dilemma in librarianship today" (2004, p. 653). In short, "transition seekers" should focus on skill development, continuing education, and interpersonal networking (Allen & Markgren, 2004, p. 653). Pergander's article informally studies ten librarians who have become public library directors within two years. Prior to early-career directorship, some librarians held positions such as youth services librarian, reference librarian, and school librarian, that clearly indicate they were professional librarians, but the specific individual career paths remain undisclosed (Pergander, 2003, p. 253). Pergander does glean some advice from the interviewees such as the importance of networking and continuing education (2003, p. 254).

By conducting interviews with twenty librarians along the career stage spectrum, Pollack and Brown identify transitions experienced by librarians throughout their careers. In their view, early-career librarians fall into two separate categories--those new to the profession (0-5 years experience) and early-career librarians (5-15 years experience). They posit that those new to the profession focus attention on "establishing a place for themselves in the profession" by experimenting with roles and career interests (Pollock & Brown,

1998, p. 36-37). Those new to the profession are likely to change roles by "creating a specialized role for themselves within the profession" (Pollock & Brown, 1998, p. 37).

Schaffer's study highlighting interlibrary loan librarians' career paths reveals 65 out of 109 (69%) respondents had professional library experience in other areas and 51% of the respondents transitioned during the early-career stage. His research demonstrates that it is not uncommon for interlibrary loan librarians to have backgrounds in another area of librarianship.

Measuring career identity was put forth by Phillips, Carson and Carson. The authors assert that entry-level positions lack "opportunity for creative initiatives" (1994, p. 542). For this reason, career identity remains low at the early-career stage. In order to establish career identity, early-career librarians either change jobs or transition to another area of librarianship.

Holt and Strock's study illustrates the recent phenomenon of experienced librarians applying for entry-level positions. Their survey revealed an equal number of professionals with four or more years experience and entry-level applicants (Holt & Strock, 2005, p. 36). This indicates some early-career librarians are indeed seeking a job change.

Precisely because transitioning has either been alluded to in a tangentially related study or supported with scant anecdotes, the acknowledgement of early-career transitions points to the need for further formalized investigation.

Methodology

This study surveyed librarians who transitioned during the early-career. In order to seek them out, the survey was posted to 18 electronic discussion lists affiliated with American professional library associations and specific professional areas of focus. The survey contained 19 questions regarding the nature of the transition, internal and external influences, frequency, and overall satisfaction with the change. Respondents were also invited to include narratives to address the transition's complex nature or hybridztion of professional positions. Respondents are employed at all library types (public, academic, school, special, etc.) and the majority are employed in the United States. All 230 responses were correctly completed, and of these 107 respondents offered extensive anecdotal details about their experiences transitioning.

Results

Transition Chronology, Frequency, and Influences

A majority of respondents (55%, 131) transitioned some time between the first and fourth year of service (Figure 1). Out of this group, 56% (74) transitioned more than once. The fact that the majority of respondents transitioned during the first four years of service also reflects the high attrition rate of many entry-level positions. Fields et al. (2005) assert job mobility correlates with lower job satisfaction, and because most entry-level positions have high-levels of routine duties with little

FIGURE 1. Number of Transitions During The Early-Career Stage
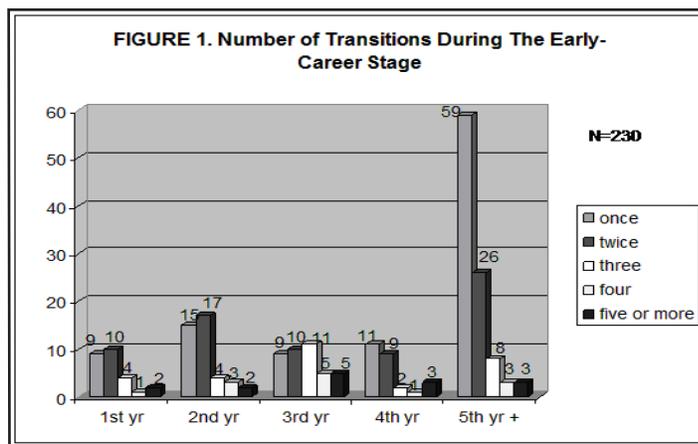
autonomy, early career-librarians tend to exhibit job mobility. A few outliers (12, 5%) transitioned five or more times within the first four years in librarianship.

Two respondents claimed to have transitioned five times during the first year. While this is dubious, these respondents also did not provide individual narrative to substantiate their claims; therefore, it is probable they incorrectly answered this question. Furthermore, some overall responses indicated these frequent transitions often had to do with duty shifts within a particular institution. Rather than label this small subset job-hoppers, their career trajectories indicate librarian roles are often fluid and job descriptions can rapidly change from year-to year depending the library's personnel needs.

These findings are consistent with Pollack and Brown's overarching idea that librarians new to the profession (0-5 years experience) are "ready to take on new challenges and responsibilities" and their willingness to investigate other professional opportunities is defined by experimenting with career roles and interests (1998, p. 36). Of the remaining 45% who transitioned between the fifth through tenth year of service, 85 respondents (37%) transitioned only once or twice. Most respondents were seeking new challenges, promotions, and change of library type.

Job transitions' frequency among respondents also underscores the desire to try out new areas in librarianship. A majority of respondents (53%) have changed specializations more than once during their first decade in the profession. Most respondents (76%) either agree or strongly agree with valuing breadth of experience over expertise in one area. While only 38% either strongly agree or agree with the plan to transition at least one more time, 37% are uncertain, not entirely rejecting the idea. A majority of respondents (65%) cited influences that indicate a job shift accompanied greater opportunities for professional experimentation and career development (Figure 2). Influences such as a change in duties (14%), responsibility level (15%), work environment (16%), and interest in a different area of librarianship (17%) show they are primarily interested in selecting new career goals and confronting new experiences.

Individual narratives accounting for the burgeoning need for professional growth were reflected in a third of the 10l voluntarily submitted narratives. As it turns out, extending oneself could be advantageous. One clever respondent solved many of the institution's problems and was able to transition to a role which provided more job satisfaction. By tackling electronic resources issues at a mid-sized, regional university library, another respondent was able to secure a promotion at an ARL (Association of Research Libraries) member institution within a few years of professional service.

Another respondent enjoyed various challenging collaborative projects with his/her consortium's systems librarian and eventually become a systems librarian at another institution. Challenges, difficult projects, and resolving problems present unique learning experiences that can inspire librarians to seek out another area of librarianship.

Several respondents in the remaining 13% mentioned additional psychological considerations such as boredom and burnout as reasons for transitioning. Some advised that doing the same thing for many years can result in stagnation. Early-career librarians should be proactive in their own professional development. One respondent recommended pursuing cross-training opportunities to learn about another area of librarianship.

The majority of added responses focused on pragmatic life-factors for the transition such as the need for a job overriding other considerations, being geographically tethered to a region, the elimination of positions, and physical health, and other life-events (marriage, spousal relocation, etc.). One respondent advised that it is not practical for most people to "sit back and wait for the ideal dream job to come along and there's no guarantee one will land it when it does." Sometimes practical considerations override professional desires. The respondent also asserted that these positions he/she held out of necessity did broaden his/her knowledge.

FIGURE 2. Influential Factors For Transitioning	
Salary and Benefits	19%
Work Environment	16%
Interest in Different Area of Librarianship	17%
Level of Responsibility	16%
Duties	14%
Presence of Tenure	2%
Absence of Tenure	2%
Professional Organizations	2%
Other	12%

Practical considerations, such as salary and benefits, were not frequently cited as a significant factor in influencing a transition in librarianship. Even though 70% of the respondents had an increase in salary, only 19% cited salary as the main reason for transitioning. Occasionally, the need for an income either due to budget cuts which "forced" employees to work in another area in the library or a reduction-in-force (RIF), did cause a de facto transition for 11 of the 230 respondents.

Interpersonal interactions influenced 53% of the respondents' decisions for transitioning. Almost half of the influential individuals (44%) were mentors, former professors, former colleagues, and former supervisors. A few respondents added that they became interested in other areas of librarianship after observing others in that particular area. Networking with peers remains an important activity during this early-career stage (Pollack & Brown, 1998, p. 37). Through interpersonal interaction new librarians broaden their career perspectives and this often precipitates a career transition. In addition to formal professional interactions, learning about colleagues' roles could inspire one to branch out into another specialization.

Nature of the Transition: Library Type, Area of Focus, and Managerial Status

A significant number of respondents' career changes were accompanied by a change in library type (Figure 3). The most common shift in library type was from public to academic (20%); special to academic (10%) was a distant second. Even though it appeared that many respondents (51%) included transitions not included in the six choices in the survey, about half of this group transitioned more than once and described the sequence of library types. Many multiple transitions were similar: academic, public, then special, or four-year university to two year college or vice

versa, etc. The majority of unique transitions were from either academic to vendor or academic to special (state libraries are included in this classification).

FIGURE 3. Library Type Transition	
Public to Academic	19%
Academic to Public	8%
School to Academic	5%
Academic to School	1%
Academic to Special	6%
Special to Academic	10%
Other	51%

Unlike the change in library type, not one career shift was predominant (Figure 4). The most common shift (8%) was from reference to cataloging, but 56% of respondents had unique shifts not accounted for in the survey. Some unique transitions were the following: outreach to systems/technical services, media specialist to academic reference librarian, cataloging to ILS vendor, reference librarian to subscription vendor; interlibrary loan librarian to ILS vendor, and corporate to electronic resources.   There was a most popular response within these unique transitions—public services/reference to administration which accounted for 57 of the 129 respondents who selected "other." Even during the initial decade of professional service, librarianship offers diverse career paths.

FIGURE 4. Change in Area of Focus	
Reference to Cataloging	8%
Cataloging to Reference	5%
Cataloging to Systems	5%
Reference to Systems	7%
Access Services to Reference	3%
Reference to Access Services	4%
Cataloging to Electronic Resources	4%
Electronic Resources to Cataloging	1%
Reference to Electronic Resources	6%
Electronic Resources to Systems	2%
Other	56%

The number of respondents that became supervisors (38%) also indicates the transition was accompanied by a shift in managerial status. Interestingly, 25% ceded supervisory responsibilities and assumed non-supervisory roles. In many of these instances, librarians were delving into entirely new areas such as systems, vendor sales, etc. The remaining 35% comprised lateral moves—either supervisory or non-supervisory.

Conclusions: Perceptions and Advice

Even though prior roles were left behind, 97% of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the notion that they enjoyed some aspects of their former roles. Half of the respondents think prospective employers are welcoming of an individual's decision to change areas of focus. Despite successful outcomes, 40% of the respondents remain unsure that employers are receptive to an applicant's desire to explore a different area in librarianship.

Despite uncertainty about how prospective employers may regard an applicant's willingness to transition, this clearly does not discourage early-career shifters to seek opportunities to explore different areas of librarianship. They may be unsure about how prospective employers may perceive them, but they are confident about their decision. Many respondents (87%) do not regret their career change in librarianship. Despite the high number of positive responses, 73% of the respondents experienced greater overall job satisfaction; 13% of the respondents remain unsatisfied. Much of the dissatisfaction stems from a low compensation package (salary and benefits) and the lack of opportunities for career development.

Some respondents offer advice regarding how to go about transitioning couched in their narratives. Several asserted that most employers value broad range of knowledge and suggest library science students enroll in "a broad range of classes in library school." Also, one should not solely rely on formal education for shaping development as a professional—self-education and learning from others is effective. One way to learn from colleagues is to seek out mentors and "develop good relationships with co-workers."

Some advice addressed the vicissitudes of early-career shifts in librarianship: "Although I've been in successful in changing jobs roughly every two years, all of my moves, until the most recent, were lateral. It did require explaining and selling myself in each job interview because most employers are looking for depth…I don't think I would encourage my mentees to do the same thing, simply because I think the path I chose was difficult (although rewarding)." Another respondent cautioned: "Unfortunately, librarianship remains in many ways a very conservative profession, and many—but not all—of those in hiring positions look with suspicion on applicants with less traditional, linear career trajectories." It is essential to be prepared to explain early career moves in a positive context and demonstrate how key elements acquired have provided the necessary preparation for one to change areas of focus.

Finally, taking risks was strongly encouraged. One respondent lamented that a misunderstanding influenced his/her decision to withdraw from an internal promotion applicant pool. As it turned out, the first-choice candidate accepted a position elsewhere, and he/she was next in line for the promotion. He/she candidly self-reflects: "I chose to act on my feelings of vulnerability by taking flight from the situation." Self-doubt should never impede embracing a professional challenge.

Based on this study, there is proof of a population of librarians that transition at least once from one area of librarianship to another during the early-career stage. Current literature (formal and informal) describes transitioning during the middle and later stages of a library career, but not during the early-career stage. Further investigation about early-career shifters is needed to see if there are any defining characteristics about this group. For example, an in-depth exploration into the psychological factors precipitating the pursuit of change would contribute to understanding what motivates employees. Another idea would be a generational study to see if one age group has more of a propensity to transition than another, etc. In general, the overarching goal of these studies would be to help managers and employees

reach a professional understanding that would enrich professional service.

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Editorial Policy

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