

New Members Round Table  
Online Discussion Forum Committee  
May 2016 Discussion Summary

The topic of the month was: tips and recommendations for gaining additional or specialized skills after library school. What do you do when you feel you either "missed something" in library school or did not have an opportunity to gain these skills but still want them? What is the most effective way to gain them? Internships? Classes and workshops? Finding ways work with colleagues at your current place of work to gain insight and skills? Volunteering?

Thank you to everyone who participated. We had a lively discussion that touched on engagement with professional organizations, workshops, webinars, volunteering, internships, part-time employment, and continuing education courses offered through a variety of institutions both online and onsite.

**Professional Organizations:** One strategy suggested was to be involved with professional organizations such as NMRT and LLAMA through ALA. For example: being a [mentee through LLAMA](#) and working for a journal such as the [Journal of New Librarianship](#).

**Continuing Education Courses, Workshops and Webinars:** There are many sources for continuing education classes, workshops, and webinars - both offered online and onsite. Onsite examples provided by participants included: courses offered through their Alma Mater (also available online), courses through institutes like [Rare Book School](#), and workshops offered onsite at conferences. Examples of sources for online professional development courses included [Library Juice Academy](#), [TechSoup](#), and ALA divisions such as [LITA](#) and [RUSA](#). A discussion participant made the excellent point that it is important to learn about the course structure to determine whether there will be hands-on exercises, discussion, or lectures. If experiential learning is your goal, you will want to make sure the class will be able to provide that for you. It is one thing to read about a topic, it is another to be able to demo or practice a skill.

**Volunteering, Internships, and Part-Time Employment:** Spending time with other professionals doing the kind of work you are interested in pursuing is valuable. You can learn whether you would like to be in a particular setting. One of our discussion participants described her experience interning in a special collections library. While she ultimately determined this was not that path she wanted to take, she gained some other skills working with databases that have served her well since. This same discussion participant also noted the value of looking into community college libraries or local universities for experience in an academic context. She specifically suggested part-time adjust positions. She had had experience doing this. In this context, she was able to apply and expand upon her time teaching computer classes at a public library to her work in this two-year college instruction setting.