

ARLIS/NA 37th Annual Conference
Indianapolis, Indiana, April 16 – 21, 2009

Workshop: Creating Effective Resumes, Cover Letters and Job Searching Skills
Friday, April 17, 8:00am – 12:00 pm

Moderators:

Shilpa Rele (absent), Metadata Librarian, University of Miami (May);
Sarah Sherman, Assistant Reference Librarian, Special Collections and Visual
Resources Research Library, Getty Research Institute

Speakers:

Marc Gartler, Directory of Library Services, Harrington College of Design, Chicago,
Illinois. "Resume Does and Donuts"

Janine Henri, Architecture, Design, and Digital Services Librarian, Arts Library, UCLA.
"Reviewing Resumes: Ranking and Selecting Candidates in an Academic Setting"

Rebecca Cooper, Architecture & Instruction Librarian, Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library,
University of Virginia. "[Untitled talk]"

Martha González Palacios, Librarian, Architecture and Planning Library, University of
Texas at Austin. "How I got my dream job...and survived the process"

Resume Reviewers:

Nedda Ahmed, Arts Liaison Librarian, Georgia State University, Atlanta
Virginia Allison, Research Librarian for Visual Arts, University of California, Irvine
Cathy Billings, Art Librarian & Gallery Manager, Brand Library, Glendale, California
Jodie Double, Director of Digital Collections and Archives/Curator, University of
Minnesota, Twin Cities
Louise Culp, Visual Resource Librarian, Franklin & Marshall College, Lancaster,
Pennsylvania
Marc Gartler
Janine Henri
Rebecca Cooper
Martha González Palacios
Sarah Sherman

Recorder: Cathy Billings

Sarah Sherman began the Workshop by noting that co-moderator Shilpa Rele was
unable to attend the conference due to her new employment at the University of Miami
and by introducing the presenters. She explained that the presentations would be
followed by the resume review portion of the workshop between 10:15 and 12:00.

Marc Gartler's talk "Resume Does and Donuts" focused on resume and cover
letter content and design. He described his background in the retail sector where he

would often see 300-400 applicants for a single position. He reminded the audience that resume reviewers often take only 10-20 seconds to look at a resume when there are a large number of applicants and that because of this typos and a poor layout can have a huge (negative) impact. He covered the following in his presentation:

Visual Considerations

Resumes should have a left to right, top to bottom and big to small hierarchy. White space should be balanced throughout (imagine the page in a 4 quadrant grid; each quadrant should have an equal amount of white space and text) with perhaps a slightly larger margin of white space at the bottom of the page. Resumes should not have or use all caps, italicized headers, underlined headers, condensed fonts, borders, watermarks. Bullet points are preferred over long paragraphs of descriptive text. Serif and Sans Serif fonts should not be mixed. For emphasis utilize size and weight within a single font. Marc noted that Serif fonts are good for electronic documents and Sans Serif for printed hardcopy documents. Grayscale or shading of any kind is not advised as it doesn't reproduce well in photocopies. Clipart is not recommended. In short, simple is better and less is more.

Content

Use a consistent voice throughout your resume, either first or third person. Use a professional sounding email address, as opposed to a personal email address that might be quirky. Correct use of tense is important: the present tense can be used throughout, or Marc prefers present tense for descriptions of current work and past for everything else. Don't rely purely on mechanized spell check. Customize and rearrange content as appropriate for each potential job/employer. Tell the truth, but note that "truth is often relative": highlight your strengths and avoid negatives, sell yourself, but "with a 100% guarantee".

Other Considerations

"Cover letters are under letters"—Marc believes that cover letters are never read before the resume is reviewed. The letter should be professional and the points covered in it should match the requirements listed in the job description or advertisement, but without plagiarizing the exact language of the posting.

"Everything you do in the course of applying [for a job] says something," the file format you use included. PDF is the most appropriate file format to use as it indicates your awareness of the needs of the resume reviewer. A Word document might not display consistently due to hardware or software differences.

Look for multiple versions of a job listing and be sure to consult them all. The Human Resources department version might have less information than a version the Library sends out.

If submitting materials electronically, be concise and professional in your email, and don't forget a subject line. The email is the first thing that will be seen and it is important that you give as much thought and care to it as to the rest of your application.

It can be appropriate to provide additional information, for example, you may point to your website that contains writing or work samples, or links to previous employers or

projects. This said, you should not overwhelm the reviewer with unasked for information.

Janine Henri's talk "Reviewing Resumes: Ranking and Selecting Candidates in an Academic Setting" was from the perspective of an academic librarian who has participated in the hiring process and served on search committees many times. She covered the role of the search committee, the role of the human resources department (HR), and used examples to discuss various steps in the process.

The search committee (SC) chair is generally appointed by a high ranking university librarian. The appointed chair is responsible for selecting members to serve on the committee. Members of the SC should be "good sellers" of the institution. The SC has a role in drafting the posting and ensuring it is focused on getting a diverse pool of applicants and is also responsible for negotiations among the various stakeholders.

The HR department participates in drafting the posting. They also review applications to see that they meet minimum required qualifications. They handle negotiations, discuss benefits and write contracts once a candidate is offered a position.

When the SC reviews applications, a first pass usually looks at how candidates rate in terms of required qualifications and preferred qualifications. Janine emphasized the importance of making sure you have covered in your application **all** the required qualifications and as many of the preferred qualifications as you can. Janine showed a sample spreadsheet matrix that is used to track these required and preferred qualifications for all candidates.

Janine discussed the telephone interview, explaining that the SC is listening to the candidate on the phone not just to get answers to questions but to hear how you talk and sound. Typical phone interview questions include:

- "Is there anything you would like us to know about you that is not on your resume?" This is an opportunity to sell yourself and emphasize how you meet the job qualifications, especially if you have experience that isn't directly related or was difficult to quantify on your resume but speaks to a qualification anyway.
- "Do you have questions for us?" Have questions prepared. In asking this, the SC is trying to determine whether you've done your homework about the institution and the job. They want to know that you are serious about being interested in the position. A candidate might simply ask "What do you think a typical work day would be like?"

After the phone interviews the SC gets together to complete the qualifications matrix together. They assess candidates based on the resume, cover letter, and phone interviews.

If you are selected for an in-person interview you can be assured that you are considered qualified for the position.

Rebecca Cooper's talk "[Untitled]" covered pointers and tips for job seekers based on her own experience that resulted in her getting the position she has now. Her tips included:

Start early. It is never too soon to start the preliminary research and for the job search.

Get involved. Being involved with a professional organization (such as ARLIS/NA) is more than being a member. Volunteer for an organization and be able to talk about what you are doing with and for that organization. Volunteer involvement gets your name out there and allows you to network. For example, if you are a newsletter editor, your name is noted by everyone who reads it.

Know where to look for the jobs. HR departments may bypass ARLIS-L. Look in a variety of places, including the Chronicle of Higher Education. On LISjobs.com you might find public library opportunities that would not get posted to ARLIS-L. Remember, "the posting agency doesn't always think about the job the same way that you do". Monster.com might have relevant corporate jobs whose advertisers don't think of them as art librarian jobs. USAJOBS.com, the Federal government's jobs website also may have jobs that are in essence art librarian jobs but aren't described that way or posted to ARLIS-L.

Let the Internet do the work for you. Use Web 2.0 tools like RSS feeds to keep you informed about job opportunities posted on various websites. Page2rss.com lets you create pseudo-RSS feeds for sites that do not offer RSS technology. In addition, the Firefox browser has add-on utilities that let you click once to open all the links in a given folder at once, or to automatically open selected websites in tabs each day (this add-on is called "Morning Coffee").

"Small" jobs can have big opportunities. Jobs that might not be your dream job and might not be described as art librarianship are still worth considering, as they may give you an opportunity to hone your skills and gain experience in all the areas relevant to art librarianship.

Once you decide to apply for a job, do your research. Find out what the employer is really looking for; job descriptions can tell a lot about an institution's culture (and whether you would want to work there). Do research about the institution/department/job in local newspapers, look at library planning documents, gather information about the department and its faculty, and about search committee members. Reach out to the people you know who might have advice or helpful information about the institution or position. Even if you have only met someone once at a conference, send them an email.

Interviewing: Turn liabilities into strengths. Anticipate the areas where your experience does not match up to the job description and be prepared to give examples of what you would do or how you would do something. If there is a presentation component to the interview, nail it! Be entertaining; be knowledgeable, flexible, and able to answer questions.

Finally, you will be given conflicting advice from friends, colleagues, interview preparation publications, etc.: trust your instincts!

In her talk entitled **“How I got my dream job...and survived the process”**, **Martha González Palacios** spoke from the perspective of the job-hunting graduate; in two years she applied for between 40 and 50 jobs and she had six in-person interviews. The handouts she provided contained real-life interview questions she was asked as well as on-site interview schedules.

Martha suggests being strategic as a student by gaining as much relevant experience as you can while in school as well as by taking practical, not just interesting, courses. She also suggests getting as much experience as you can while you are waiting for the perfect job to come along. Part-time library work or on-call library work shows your ability to multi-task.

When it comes to job hunting, her advice is to think in advance about where you would be willing to relocate; for example, a great job in a city that doesn't appeal to you or a job that is not ideal but in a great city may both be acceptable, but it helps to know where you stand on that spectrum.

When you do decide to apply for a job, do not wait until the last minute since unexpected issues can come; she gave the example of having a problem with a University's HR system. While you are looking for a job you should stay current and involved in the profession. Attend conferences and share your experiences with friends: she and some of her fellow recent graduates maintained a Google Docs group where they shared interview questions. And always ask for help from other librarians: ask them to review your resume, have them mock-interview you for practice, and ask them questions about their jobs. She also reminds that you have to be prepared for rejections and try not to let them interfere with your search.

Martha noted that some institutions do not have phone interviews. If you do have a phone interview, get as much information during the call as you can, including names of search committee members, so that you can do your research on them before an on-site interview.

She noted that in-person interviews can last anywhere from two hours to two days. Tips for in-person interviews: wear comfortable shoes; remember that you are also interviewing them; come prepared with questions, including those for HR regarding benefits, relocation package, etc.; take notes; provide handouts during the presentation component.

Whenever you apply for a job think about what you will do if offered the job; sometimes you are so focused on seeking the job that you forget to think about how you'll feel if offered the job. Don't be afraid to ask the institution for time to make your decision and negotiate salary and all benefits before accepting.

Martha talked briefly about the issues of Canadians working in America and vice versa. NAFTA allows this and institutions must complete certain paperwork. She suggests that if you are applying for a job in either country and you are not a citizen you make it clear in your cover letter that you are interested in and willing to move to the other

country. Because there are many small details (for example, your credit history may not follow you from one country to another which complicates finding a place to live and more) she recommends you talk to colleagues who have done it. There are many ARLIS/NA members who could make the process easier for you by sharing their experiences.

Questions and Answers

Q: How do the contents of the cover letter, the resume, and the email relate?

A: (MG) The email is brief and doesn't duplicate the information contained in the resume and cover letter.

Q: How long should a resume be, and how do you know whether to submit a resume or curriculum vitae (CV)?

A: (NA) The institution will say whether they want a resume or a CV.

A: (JH) Not always; they may say resume but mean CV. Just remember that they want to know what languages you speak/read, about your professional involvement, etc.

A: (MG) It depends on where you are applying. The corporate world will expect less information. Sometimes you can submit both a resume and CV. For academia a two page resume is fine; three to four pages is getting long. An academic CV can get to 10 pages.

A: (JH) As your career progresses you have more information to share.

A: (RC) The issue isn't how long it is but how wordy is too wordy. Be concise and pointed, don't stretch and pad a resume or a CV.

A: (JH) You can list library education related experiences if you do not have actual work/employment experience.

Q: How do you (or don't you) make use of student projects, websites, and portfolios?

A: (MG) It depends on circumstances but it is easy for a reviewer to click a link.

A: (JH) If your resume lists "newsletter editor" then include a link to the online newsletter right in the resume. Do not send things that haven't been asked for.

A: (MGP) Remember that in her interviews people mentioned her e-portfolio so she knows they looked at it.

A: (attendee Bryan Loar) ALA's JobLIST website gives good tips on how to prepare websites, online portfolios, etc.

Q: Is it common practice for reviewers to search candidates on social networking sites or Google?

A: (all) Yes. (So be aware of what you make available about yourself online.)

A: (JH) Being active in social networking can be a plus as it shows the candidate has Web 2.0 skills.

Q: Regarding Janine Henri's sample tracking matrix: it was very specific to stated qualifications. How much do other things matter, such as fidgeting during an interview, manner of speaking, etc?

A: (JH) It matters. "Fit" becomes apparent in person.

A: (MGP) Be careful because your state of mind comes through. In one interview, she was feeling sorry for herself after some rejections and it came through and impacted the interview. Many things matter, good and bad, that won't fit into a matrix.

Q: Do you apply for a job if you are short on the required qualifications?

A: (JH) It depends on the type of institution. State/government institutions, for legal reasons, sometimes will only look at candidates that demonstrate all the qualifications. However if you will be able to fulfill the requirement by the time you would be starting the job (for example, having received your MLIS degree) you may still be considered.

A: (NA) Go for it anyway.

A: (CB) Watch the language of the posting for loop holes, for example "two years supervisory experience *or equivalent*".

A: (MG) The private sector is different from state/government institutions.

A: (RC) If you think you are a good fit and are just a bit short on experience, apply and let the search committee decide.

A: (VA) Think broadly about your experience, for example, volunteer supervisory experience can count.

Q: Is it appropriate to call to follow-up post interview?

A: (JH) Can follow up to say thank you and that you are still interested in the job.

A: (RC) When you interview ask, how will the search progress from here on out? Then you will get a sense of the timeline and won't feel like you have to call every two weeks because you already know they expect it to take three months.

A: (MG) A caveat: if you have competing offers, call and let them know.

Q: If you are rejected is it appropriate to ask for constructive criticism?

A: (MG) You can but people will be very cautious about what they say; they'll stick to a very generic script.

A: (attendee Allison Schulte) She sent a follow-up post-rejection which ended up getting her the job after the person they hired quit.

A: (MGP) She got feedback and it was so helpful. It gave her an idea of the experience she was lacking.

Resume Review

Attendees met with reviewers of their choice, after which Moderator Sarah Sherman thanked all participants and ended the workshop.