JOB TRAINING FOR THE SOLO ART LIBRARIAN

HOW DO YOU LEARN HOW TO DO WHAT YOU DO WHEN NO ONE IS THERE TO TEACH YOU HOW TO DO IT?

Lightning round talk prepared for Le Bibliothécaire Solo: Success in the Diverse World of Solo Art Librarianship | ARLIS/NA Annual Conference | February 6, 2017
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WHERE DO I START?

DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOLO LIBRARIANSHIP...

- Branch Solo
- Solo with Support Staff
- Truly Lone Librarian

...WITHIN DIFFERENT TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS

- Museum / Archive
- Academic Institution
- Design or Architecture Firm
WHERE DO I START?

THE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR WHICH YOU WERE HIRED MIGHT ONLY TELL PART OF THE FULL STORY.

• WHAT WILL MY TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE?

• WHAT ARE MY MOST PRESSING OBJECTIVES?

• WHAT ARE THE DAILY, MONTHLY, PERIODIC, AND YEARLY NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS?

• (HOW DO I EVEN LEARN WHAT MY NEW ROLE ENTAILS?)
HOW DO I DO THIS?

THE NATURE OF YOUR SOLO STATUS WILL INFLUENCE THE WAYS YOU SEEK INPUT...

- **Branch solo**
- **Solo with support staff**
- **Truly solo**

- **Consult internal / institutional colleagues**
- **Seek internal documentation**
- **Reach out to external networks**
- **Seek external documentation**

- **Academic institution**
- **Museum / archive**
- **Design firm**
HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT MY EXCITING [/SCARY] NEW SOLO ROLE?

- **Seek internal documentation**
- **Consult internal / institutional colleagues**
- **Reach out to external networks**
- **Seek external documentation**
SEEK INTERNAL DOCUMENTATION

WHAT INFORMATION EXISTS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS?

- Seek out documents describing your role within the institution*
- Search the servers, scour the cabinets
- Review previous years’ annual reports &/or budget reports
- Review in detail with your supervisor the description of your job, adding in info on frequency, timing, patterns

IF YOU HAVE SUPPORT STAFF, WHAT INFO CAN THEY PROVIDE?

- Ask support staff to write their own job descriptions, outlining where their tasks intersect with yours

*Assist a future librarian by creating documentation where it is lacking
CONSULT INTERNAL / INSTITUTIONAL COLLEAGUES

• AT LARGER INSTITUTIONS, SEEK OUT COLLEAGUES IN SIMILAR ROLES AND RANKS
  • COORDINATE WITH OTHER RECENT HIRES TO SHARE INFORMATION

• ESTABLISH FORMAL OR INFORMAL MENTORSHIP ARRANGEMENTS
  • CONSIDER HORIZONTAL AS WELL AS VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS

• SEEK TO LEARN ALL THAT YOU CAN FROM EVERY PERSON THAT YOU WORK WITH
REACH OUT TO EXTERNAL NETWORKS

GET ACTIVE IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

• Inquire about committee openings, volunteer opportunities, et cetera
• Your society colleagues can become a new set of trusted advisers

MAKE PROFESSIONAL LISTSERVS YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND

• Read, listen, post judiciously.
• Follow up with people off-list on pertinent topics – you may be pleasantly surprised at people’s willingness to answer questions
SEEK EXTERNAL DOCUMENTATION

- **WHAT INSIGHTS CAN YOU GAIN FROM PUBLISHED LITERATURE?**
  - What can you learn about the work of librarians in similar roles?

- **WHAT INSIGHTS CAN YOU GAIN FROM CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, WEBINARS, AND SIMILAR FORUMS?**
  - What can you bring back to your own solo work?
ABOVE ALL, ASK QUESTIONS!
(OF ANYONE WHO CAN PROVIDE INSIGHT, YOURSELF INCLUDED!)

• WHILE THE PROCESS OF LEARNING A NEW SOLO ROLE CAN BE INTIMIDATING – PARTICULARLY IF WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION IS LACKING! – WITH DEDICATION YOU WILL SOON HAVE THE POSITION WELL IN HAND.
THANK YOU!

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THANK YOU!

Image sources:
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