

The Zen of Law Librarian Job Interviews: How to Interview for a Job and How to Interview the Job*

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The successful job seeker will understand the conduct that is expected and the procedure that will be followed in the interview process. The information about interviews contained in general job search literature does not address the special needs of law library applicants, so Ms. Murray provides general guidelines for the law librarian interview.

¶1 The job interview is a common denominator for anyone employed in law librarianship. Whether you are a technical services librarian in an academic law library or the director of a law firm library, you have interviewed for a job. More importantly, statistics indicate that you will interview for a job again. In 2002, employees had been with their current employer for an average of 3.7 years.¹ Law librarians are not immune from this statistic. In today's job market, law librarians regularly exercise their option to seek different employment.

¶2 As law librarians enter the job market, however, they face challenges in the interview process that are unique to the field. Many of these challenges arise because law librarianship is a small and well-networked profession.² The interview process can lack the anonymity of larger professions. Individuals can develop reputations, both good and bad, that can impact the interview process. It

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1. Press Release, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Dep't of Labor, Employee Tenure in 2002 (Sept. 19, 2002), available at www.bls.gov/news.release/tenure.nr0.htm (copy on file with author).

2. It is easy for a budding law librarian to underestimate this fact of law librarianship. But I can provide an anecdote from my own experience to illustrate the point. I attended law school at Arizona State University College of Law. And during library school, I completed a two-month internship at the ASU law library as well. So I was familiar with the library director, Tory Trotta. When the time came for me to apply for my first law librarian job, I asked Tory to serve as a reference for me. She graciously agreed. The job I applied for was research librarian at the University of Southern California law library. I was entirely unaware of the fact that Tory had served as associate director for the USC law library director, Albert Brecht. I had no knowledge of who had worked for whom or where. I just knew where people currently were employed. Had I performed poorly at ASU, I would have most certainly not received an offer from USC. The moral of the story is you never know whom another law librarian knows (particularly when you are new to the profession).

can also be difficult to interview for a position without a current employer finding out about it. And if you interview for a position and do not receive an offer, you will likely encounter the person who interviewed you in the future. Given these challenges, it is critical that any law librarian, whether prospective or experienced, begin the interview process with a holistic understanding both of how to effectively interview for a job as a law librarian and how to effectively interview a potential employer.

¶3 The purpose of this article is to examine some of the unique aspects of the law librarian job interview and to touch on the general interview etiquette that applies to the profession.³ Its genesis was my own experience with the job interview process. I found myself asking individuals I consider mentors for advice as to what I should and should not do in interviews. Although their answers were helpful, I still wished that the information were out there for me to find. To my frustration, I discovered that there is surprisingly little literature available regarding the interview process for a librarian position, and the literature for the law librarian job interviews is virtually nonexistent.⁴

¶4 This article is not intended to fill that void in its entirety, as it cannot address all interview-related questions a law librarian may have. In addition, since the “rules” of interviewing frequently are more subjective than objective, the reader should take the suggestions provided here as opinion and understand that they may not apply to every situation. There is no one right way to interview. Consequently, each reader should use discretion in applying the information provided in this article to his or her unique situation. Nonetheless, while this article does not address all matters interview-related, it will give the newer law librarian a basic understanding of common issues that arise in interviews and the mores of the profession. It also can serve as a refresher for experienced law librarians preparing to interview after a hiatus from the interview process.

¶5 When I began to write this article, I encountered a fundamental problem. At first glance, it might seem that a job interview is a job interview. However, that is not the case. The context of an interview changes on the basis of the position in question. For example, a job interview for a law firm position is dissimilar from an interview for a position at an academic law library. I could not rely solely on my own research to learn about the interview process of each type of law library. Therefore, to assure that the information contained in this article accurately represented the subtle differences that exist in the profession, I interviewed three respected law librarians representing each of the major segments of law librarianship. Penny Hazelton of the University of Washington Law Library provided

3. This article does not address factors unique to those re-entering the work force after an extended absence or anyone applying as an internal candidate. In addition, it applies only to professional librarian positions and not to library staff positions.

4. What sources I did find are cited within this article.

insight into the academic law library interview.⁵ Judith Meadows of the State Law Library of Montana gave guidance as to the state, court, and county law library interview.⁶ Finally, Linda Will of Dorsey & Whitney LLP in Minnesota advised me regarding the private law firm library interview.⁷

¶6 The article follows the sequence in which the interview process typically occurs.⁸ It first discusses the decision whether to apply for a particular job opening. It then addresses the application process, followed by a discussion of the necessary preparations for the interview process. The interview itself comes next, and the article concludes by considering the decision whether to accept a job offer and what to do if you are not offered a job.

Should You Apply?

¶7 The first decision to be made is whether to apply for an available position. I consider this the hardest decision in the entire process. A variety of concerns can enter your mind when the job posting first appears. What if a better job comes along? Do I really want to live there? What opportunities will I have to grow if I take the position? Will I be satisfied with those growth opportunities? These are just some of the questions that only the applicant can decide due to their subjective, personal nature. But some advice can be given on other more objective questions that are likely to arise.

¶8 First, once you have an inkling that you might consider applying for a job, begin preparing for the interview process. If you have not maintained an awareness of law librarianship's current issues, begin monitoring appropriate discussion lists⁹ and reading the professional literature. If you have not kept up to date on technology relating to your position, investigate the availability of relevant classes at your current place of employment or in your community. Also, relationships with other law librarians, whether as a colleague or mentor, are an invaluable asset

5. Telephone Interview with Penny Hazelton, Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Library and Computing Services, University of Washington, Gallagher Law Library (Sept. 16, 2003) (notes on file with author) [hereinafter Hazelton Interview].

6. Telephone Interview with Judith Meadows, Director, State Law Library of Montana (Aug. 22, 2003) (notes on file with author) [hereinafter Meadows Interview].

7. Telephone Interview with Linda Will, Director of Information Resources, Dorsey & Whitney LLP (Sept. 25, 2003) (notes on file with author) [hereinafter Will Interview].

8. This article was written for the individual who already has a job for which he or she wants to apply; it does not address how to find employment opportunities in law librarianship. For those who want to find law library jobs, a variety of resources exist. National, regional, and local library associations are usually the best resource. *E.g.*, AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, AALL JOB HOTLINE, at www.aallnet.org/hotline/ (last visited Feb. 2, 2004). In addition, certain large cities use placement agencies such as AimUsa or Library Associates. Other options include online job search Web sites, Web sites for individual companies, and local newspapers.

9. For information about discussion forums hosted by the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), including an index of forums and instructions on how to subscribe, see AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, AALL ONLINE DISCUSSION, at www.aallnet.org/discuss/ (last visited Feb. 2, 2004).

in the interview process. If you have not established these relationships, begin networking in the local, regional, or national law library associations.¹⁰ There may also be other organizations within these associations that you can join, such as special interest sections¹¹ or committees.¹² If you are not sure how to begin, volunteering is a quick way to make such connections.¹³ Other networking possibilities include attending conferences or writing for a newsletter.

¶9 A main concern for any job applicant is what salary you would need to make if you got the job. If the job does not pay you enough to live, then it is difficult to justify applying, no matter how great the job may be. There are several salary calculators available online to assist in determining what you need to make to survive and what you would need to make to attain whatever pay increase you feel appropriate.¹⁴ If the job announcement does not include a salary range and you require this information before deciding to apply for the position, you have three options. First, you could speak to the contact person on the job announcement and inquire about the pay range for the position. Second, if the employer has an online presence, you can attempt to find the organization's pay scales on the Internet. Finally, you can wait to gather this information during the interview.

¶10 Another common concern for a potential applicant is whether he or she would want to work for the employer. While it is a subjective question, there are some guidelines to assist you in making this determination. Indeed, this is your first opportunity to begin interviewing the job, gathering the information you will use in deciding whether this is an environment in which you would like to work. Always ask colleagues what they know about the institution. Seek from individuals you respect their opinion of the potential employer. Learn about its administrators and supervisors.¹⁵ After this information-gathering process, you should have a general sense of the reputation of the library and the larger institution, although it is not intended to produce an in-depth analysis of either. Rather, it is a basic inquiry that will alert you to any warning signals that should dissuade you from even applying. If by this point in your investigation you still would seriously

10. While most law librarians are members of AALL, some, particularly private law librarians, also (or alternatively) join the Special Libraries Association (SLA). For a list of local and regional chapters affiliated with AALL, see AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, AALL CHAPTERS, at www.aallnet.org/chapter/chapters.asp (last visited Feb. 4, 2004).

11. See AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, AALL SPECIAL INTEREST SECTIONS, at www.aallnet.org/sis/sis.asp (last visited Feb. 4, 2004) (listing AALL special interest sections, including links to profile and Web site for each).

12. See AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, AALL COMMITTEES, at www.aallnet.org/committee/committees.asp (last visited Feb. 4, 2004) (listing AALL committees, including links to profile and Web site for each).

13. Carol Tripp, *Be Prepared and Interview with Confidence*, LIBR. MOSAICS, May–June 1999, at 8, 8.

14. Two salary calculators representative of those available on the Internet are Salary Comparison Calculator, at www.monstermoving.com (last visited Jan. 31, 2004); and Cost of Living Calculator, at www.salaryexpert.com (last visited Jan. 31, 2004).

15. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 9.

consider the position if offered, it is appropriate to apply for the position.¹⁶ However, if, at any point after applying, you decide you are no longer interested in the job, it is important to immediately remove yourself from consideration.¹⁷

¶11 A question that frequently troubles the newer law librarian is whether he or she is ready to apply for a higher-level position. If you are hesitant for this reason, remember that applying for a promotion is not just about getting the job. It is also about gaining the experience of interviewing for such a position and learning about its requirements. If you possess the skill set that the job requires but lack the supervisory experience, you should not remove yourself from consideration. Supervisory or management experience does not necessarily have to come from your current job. There are other methods of obtaining that experience and then illustrating its existence on your résumé. Penny Hazelton points out if you have chaired a committee or volunteered in a capacity that allowed you to supervise, you can accentuate those responsibilities during the application process. She also believes that two to three years at one job with increasing responsibility is sufficient to serve as a basis for applying for a higher position.¹⁸ Do not fall into the cyclical conundrum where you believe you do not have the experience for the job, but you cannot get the experience without the job. While you may not get the first supervisory position for which you apply, the experience of interviewing will assist you in eventually reaching your goal by teaching you how to emphasize the skills and experiences you do possess.

¶12 An additional concern in the decision to apply for a job opening is whether you should inform your supervisor that you are interviewing for another position. Common sense is really the best gauge when answering this question. You might want to apply confidentially for another position for a variety of reasons. For example, your employer may not be supportive of employees seeking other jobs. In addition, you may have a bad relationship with your current supervisor, or you may fear losing a promotion or additional responsibility by letting your employer know you are interested in another job. An analysis of your supervisor's past behavior is the best indicator as to how he or she will receive your pursuit of employment. If the supervisor has been supportive of professional development and growth in the past, then he or she likely is aware that you will want to advance

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16. Do not let the location of the institution limit you, at least not at this early stage. Even if you have never lived where it snows, you may fall in love with the town when you visit. However, if you are from out of state and have identified a job that was only advertised locally, you should inquire before submitting an application as to whether the employer would interview an out-of-state candidate. A telephone call or e-mail from you will clarify the situation and possibly result in an exception being made.
 17. As previously stated, law librarianship is a small world. Individuals who apply for jobs that they do not want only waste the time, energy, and financial resources of the employer. Such an applicant risks developing a negative reputation. However, it is understandable that, after having interviewed for a job, an applicant may decide that the position is not a good fit. In that case, an applicant can withdraw his or her name from consideration without reservation.
 18. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5.

in your career. There are two advantages to informing your supervisor that you want to apply for another position.¹⁹ First, it maintains a relationship of trust and avoids the risk that your supervisor will learn of your application from another source. Second, you are then able to use your supervisor as a reference without worry that he or she might be contacted before you are able to notify him or her. If you unfortunately do not have a positive relationship with your supervisor or know that he or she would react negatively to your pursuit of another job, it is still possible to apply. However, if you choose to do so, you must tread very carefully. You should contact the individual identified in the job announcement about applying confidentially. While all three individuals interviewed for this article agreed that an applicant could do so without notice, the difficulty arises when the hiring employer decides to interview the applicant. Hazelton indicates that some academic law libraries will check references prior to the interview.²⁰ As a result, when considering the submission of an application without the knowledge of your supervisors, you should clarify when references will be checked. You cannot assume that, if you become a final candidate, you can alert your references at that point. Hazelton also pointed out that by asking for confidentiality in the interview process, you run the risk that the hiring employer will identify you as a difficult or problem employee.²¹ In addition, by requesting confidentiality in the interview process, you also place trust in people that, frankly, you as yet probably have no basis for trusting. Ultimately, if you want a different job, you must be willing to let your current employer know whenever the hiring employer dictates.

The Application Process

¶13 Once you have decided to apply for a job, you are ready to begin the actual application process. Although many consider the act of applying to be a relatively simple process and, therefore, complete the required tasks in a routine manner, this misconception frequently leads to mistakes that can be fatal to the applicant's success. To avoid this result, the following review of application process fundamentals can serve as a useful checklist when completing an application.

¶14 First and foremost, if you are presently employed, it is important to conduct yourself appropriately at your current job. Do not draft résumés, conduct telephone interviews, or engage in similar job-seeking activities while on work time unless you are taking time off to do so.²² It is critical that your colleagues not

19. These benefits apply only if you are seeking a position within the field of law librarianship. If the position you are applying for is outside of the field, then you should seek advice from someone in the profession that you wish to enter in deciding whether you will need a reference from your supervisors in the future.

20. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5.

21. *Id.*

22. I will provide my own personal story here as a warning to others. After practicing law for a year, I decided to pursue law librarianship as an alternative career. I began applying for library jobs without

detect any outward change in your conduct and demeanor. Be aware that applying for a job does not mean that you will receive a job offer, so you may end up remaining at your current place of employment. In that case, you do not want your employer to think worse of you.

¶15 Modern technology has dramatically changed the job application process. For example, applications can be submitted via the Internet, résumés can be submitted by e-mail as attachments, e-mail addresses are usually included on résumés, and applicants may have publications that are only available on the Internet. In addition, many employers do Web searches on candidates prior to conducting interviews.²³ As a result of these changes, there are new factors that you should consider when preparing your application materials. Do not write negatively about your current or former employers online. Be aware of any personal information about yourself that is available online. A potential employer can easily locate information available on the Internet, and it could have a bearing on the success of your application. Examples would be negative statements about an employer that you placed on a personal Web journal or messages unrelated to your job that you posted to discussion lists during work hours. Further, if you provide any URLs in a résumé, make sure that these links are still active before submitting the application.

¶16 When you begin drafting your résumé, also give thought to the contact information you include. Use a telephone number with either an answering machine or voice-mail capability. Use a normal e-mail address. While amusing, unusual e-mail addresses, such as those that include names of comic book characters or childhood nicknames, will be one of the first things the individual reviewing the résumés will notice. While this probably will not be fatal to your candidacy for the position, you want to put your best foot forward. An odd e-mail address may not be the first impression you want to give.

¶17 Certainly you should also give thought to the content of your résumé. An often overlooked aspect of preparing a résumé is the importance of targeting it to the specific wording used in the job description posted with the announcement.²⁴ Always review your existing résumé and rework its language each time you apply for a position. Many institutions have a hiring process that requires ranking of résumés before interviews can be arranged. If this ranking is based on a points

informing my employer. Although I prepared cover letters and tailored my résumé while at work, I never did so while on the clock. I always made sure to arrive early to do such tasks. One day my printer was not working, so I went into the partner's office next door to mine and used his printer. After I was done, I made sure to pick up everything. Unfortunately, I overlooked a copy of my cover letter which I left on the partner's desk. Fortunately, I worked with very understanding and caring people. So I did not lose my job. But I did learn a good lesson. I will not draft cover letters and résumés at work.

23. Cheryl LaGuardia & Ed Tallent, *Interviewing: Beware Blogging Blunders*, LIBR. J., Sept. 14, 2002, at 42, 42.

24. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 9.

system, you will earn the most points if your résumé matches the requirements of the job description by directly reflecting the language included in the job announcement. In addition, as Judith Meadows points out, be sure that your résumé effectively conveys exactly what you do in your current position (or what you did in former positions).²⁵ If your résumé says you were an access services librarian, ensure that you provide a description of the actual duties of your position because access services can have many different interpretations.

¶18 Once you have established the content of your résumé, review it for typographical and grammatical errors. This is a simple step but one that has a huge impact on how far you go in the application process. For the individuals interviewed for this article, a typographical error will put an application at the bottom of the pile, if not remove the applicant from consideration entirely.²⁶ The best way to ensure your résumé contains no such errors is to have someone else read it. It is difficult to identify errors in something you have drafted yourself. At this point, also give thought to the organization, layout, and font you use for your résumé. Ensure that the font is large enough to be easily read. Despite common wisdom, it is not necessary for your résumé to be only one page.²⁷ Hazelton believes that as long as the content is necessary and relevant, a résumé that is longer than one page will not be detrimental.²⁸ If you need two pages to include the content you want in your résumé, then two pages is appropriate; if three pages are needed, then three pages are appropriate.

¶19 The application process can vary by the type of library. While the academic law library application process typically consists of drafting a résumé, drafting a cover letter, and obtaining a list of references for submission, other types of libraries can require that a specific application form be completed. If you are applying for a position that requires you to actually fill out an application, do so thoroughly, accurately, and correctly. Make sure that you submit all data requested. Do not intentionally submit inaccurate or incorrect information.²⁹ Read the instructions carefully as some applications serve in lieu of a résumé, while others allow you to submit a résumé in addition to the application. In the latter case, if you choose to submit a résumé, be aware that law firm and state or county law libraries do not want a curriculum vitae containing every single piece of information about your career. Rather you should provide a résumé with only the information that is pertinent to the position for which you are applying.³⁰ Think of your résumé as a marketing tool that communicates to the employer the information that

25. Meadows Interview, *supra* note 6.

26. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5; Meadows Interview, *supra* note 6; Will Interview, *supra* note 7.

27. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 9.

28. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5.

29. Most job applications contain language that falsifying information in the application can be grounds for dismissal. See STEPHEN P. PEPE & SCOTT H. DUNHAM, AVOIDING AND DEFENDING WRONGFUL DISCHARGE CLAIMS § 2.2 (1987).

30. Meadows Interview, *supra* note 6; Will Interview, *supra* note 7.

will be used to decide whether to interview you. This will probably include your education and employment history, qualifications, and achievements, but not an exhaustive list of all these items because some may not be relevant to the position for which you are applying.

¶20 The cover letter is a part of the application that is often given short shrift. As with the résumé, ensure that there are no typographical errors. Similarly, address the cover letter to the appropriate person and spell the individual's name correctly.³¹ The cover letter is the one place in the application process that you can explicitly market yourself by explaining why you are uniquely suited to the position. As a result, it is important to write a cover letter that says more than "I wish to be considered for your vacancy." You need to discuss not only why you are interested in the position but also how you are uniquely qualified for the position.³² In addition, use the cover letter to explain or discuss information that could not be included in the résumé, such as any gaps in employment. Most importantly, the function of a cover letter is not to reiterate the information that your résumé already provides. Make sure to use it to expand beyond what the employer can see in your résumé. Last but not least, be sure to sign your cover letter.

¶21 When providing a list of references, always ask for permission to use a name before including it on the list. Confirm that you are providing accurate contact information for the individual. However, the most important item to confirm with all your listed references is whether they intend to give you a positive recommendation. It is most likely that you will be on good terms with your references, and you may be comfortable in assuming their comments will be positive. However, if you have any doubt about someone, it is best to find out ahead of time. Also be aware that many supervisors are now limited by company policy to only confirming that you are (or were) an employee and providing the length of your employment. If you ask someone to serve as a reference for you, you should inquire whether he or she is limited by any such restriction and thus unable to provide useful information about you to an employer. Once you have obtained your references, be sure to keep them apprised of any applications that you have submitted.³³ This is helpful to the references because it allows them to prepare their thoughts about you should they be called. Always give your references a current copy of your résumé and provide them with an update if changes occur during the

31. If the name of an individual is not provided in the job announcement and you have no one to whom you can address the cover letter, it is appropriate to address it "to whom it may concern."

32. Michael Saint-Onge, Judith Meadows, & Penny Hazelton, *Delivering the Message on Successful Interviewing, Part I: Getting a Job and Filling a Vacancy*, in EDUCATION PROGRAM HANDOUT MATERIALS, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES, 89TH ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 20–25, 1996, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 83, 105 (1996).

33. *Delivering the Message on Successful Interviewing, Part I: Getting a Job and Filling a Vacancy*, program presented at 89th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries, Indianapolis (July 23, 1996) (audiotape available from Mobiltape Co.) [hereinafter *Delivering the Message on Successful Interviewing*].

application or interview process. Finally, be sure that your references actually will be available; for instance, it will be difficult for the employer to contact a listed reference who is on sabbatical and out of the country.³⁴

¶22 The final step in the application process is to confirm that you are following all instructions in the job announcement. Hazelton notes that, even if the applicant does not understand them, there are reasons why specific requests are made in the job announcement.³⁵ Thus, those requests are important to the employer and should be honored. Submission of an application by e-mail is only appropriate if the announcement indicated as much. If references are requested, do not submit a résumé indicating that “references will be provided upon request.” Be sure to supply the number of references requested. In situations where you believe it would be helpful—for example, when seeking your first job out of library school³⁶—you can submit more references than requested.

Preparing for the Interview

¶23 After the application process is complete, you begin the most arduous phase: waiting to see if you get an interview. The response time can vary dramatically depending upon the type of law library to which you applied. Most public law libraries, as state-funded entities, are required by policy to keep positions open for a specific length of time. In addition, if a search committee is involved, the bureaucracy of the process can require additional time.³⁷ Private law libraries typically are not restricted by such policies and can interview candidates upon receipt of an application. As a result, you should be aware that the time period between applying for a job and being contacted regarding whether you will be interviewed could be extensive. In addition, applicants should be aware there are two types of interviews for a law librarian position. There are “screening” pre-interviews that are designed to narrow the applicant pool prior to official on-site visits. These frequently are held during the AALL Annual Meeting, but can also be conducted by telephone or by videoconference. The second type are the official on-site interviews from which a final candidate is selected.

¶24 If you are contacted for an interview, whether it is a screening session or an official on-site visit, your preparation should begin immediately. When you are on the telephone with the individual coordinating the logistics of the interview, be sure that you understand the entire process. There are many questions you should ask if the information is not volunteered. How long will the interview be? How

34. *Id.*

35. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5.

36. If you have little professional experience, you may find additional references useful to convey to a potential employer the quality of your work. While this will not substitute for experience, it can distinguish you from other new librarians. Or, as I have been told, when in doubt as to whom to use as a reference, include them all.

37. Delivering the Message on Successful Interviewing, *supra* note 33.

many people will participate in the interview? Specifically, which attorneys, faculty members, or librarians will interview you? Is a presentation required? If travel is required, what expenses, if any, will be reimbursed? If you will be driving, where should you park? If necessary, obtain directions to the library. Will you receive a packet of information about the library beforehand? If not, consider requesting one. Examples of materials included in such packets are library publications, organizational charts, and annual reports.³⁸ You should also obtain a copy of the job description if one was not made available in the job announcement.³⁹ If the cost of travel will be substantial and not reimbursable, it is appropriate to inquire as to the number of applicants being interviewed and whether there are internal candidates.⁴⁰ This information can assist you in deciding whether to withdraw from the interview process.

¶25 Even if the employer provides a packet of information about the company or institution, you should begin independently researching the employer. This is your next opportunity to interview the job. Whereas before you were simply looking for information to help in deciding whether to apply for the job, now you want to make sure you are armed with every piece of information about the employer that can help you have a successful interview. And from this point forward, you should include in your definition of “successful” both an interview that allows you to decide that the position is *not* for you as well as one that leads to a job offer. Look at the employer’s Web site and review all policies and information about itself that is available online.⁴¹ Review discussion list postings from both the library and its staff. In addition, search for publications written by individuals with whom you will be interviewing. Ask colleagues and mentors for their thoughts about the employer. When making such inquiries, remember that the profession is a small one and it is possible that the person you are asking has some tie to the institution. It is best not to communicate any information that you would not want the potential employer to know. If you are interviewing with a law firm, research annual surveys to find out the firm’s size, profits, and subject concentration.⁴² Do a news search on the firm to find out if there is any potential for a merger with another firm or any financial problems that you should know.⁴³

¶26 You should also begin to think critically about the interview itself. Using the information you have gathered, identify what you can contribute to the library, such as assistance with special collections or information technology. Identify the information you want to be sure to convey about yourself to the interviewers. The

38. Debra R. Biggs & Cheryl T. Naslund, *Proactive Interviewing: Strategies for the Assertive Job Hunt*, C. & RES. LIBR. NEWS, Jan. 1987, at 13, 14–15.

39. *Id.*

40. Steven D. Zink, *Interviewing Your Prospective Employer*, LIBR. J., May 15, 1986, at 36, 36.

41. LaGuardia & Tallent, *supra* note 23, at 42.

42. Delivering the Message on Successful Interviewing, *supra* note 33.

43. *Id.*

art of the appellate argument involves not only answering the questions that the judges ask of you but also communicating specific pieces of information that you have previously identified as important to your argument. The same is true of a job interview. You want to answer the interviewers' questions, of course, but at the same time you want to provide them with information about yourself that they might not think to ask. A helpful exercise is to have friends or family engage you in a mock interview before the actual job interview. While you can never anticipate all the questions you will be asked during an interview, there are some that consistently occur, such as "what interested you in this job," and "what are your strengths and weaknesses." It is surprising how helpful it can be to have someone actually ask you these questions when you are trying to get into the interview mode.

¶27 In addition, prior to the interview, you also should prepare questions to ask the employer.⁴⁴ This is another critical step in effectively interviewing the job. Just as the employer has certain information it wants to obtain from you, you should have information that you want to know about the employer. By preparing questions in advance, you better your chances of obtaining all the information you will need to make an educated decision as to whether to accept the job if offered. But you also will make certain that you have questions to ask when the interviewers asks if you have any questions for them, as they inevitably will do. In preparing these questions, you should consider what aspects of a job are important to you. Then make sure to draft questions that will elicit information to assist you in determining whether the job matches your preferences.⁴⁵ As you draft the questions, think about to whom they should be addressed. For example, typically only supervisors can answer questions regarding benefits. By identifying the appropriate recipients of the questions *before* the interview, you will be better prepared to get the information you need.

¶28 Another aspect of preparing for an interview that you might consider is contacting the individual who previously held the position that you are seeking.⁴⁶ The information that he or she provides about the job can provide valuable insight into the workplace. This insight will assist you in developing interview questions and determining whether you would accept a job offer from the employer. However, if you do take this step, remember to critically evaluate the information provided by the individual and be cautious of any bias he or she might have.

¶29 The final step in preparing for the interview is grooming. Your physical appearance should not be the deciding factor in a hiring decision. But appearance does impact how others view us. It is important to dress in comfortable business

44. See *infra* appendix for sample questions an applicant can pose to interviewers during an academic law library interview.

45. Biggs & Naslund, *supra* note 38, at 14–15.

46. Zink, *supra* note 40, at 37.

attire.⁴⁷ When choosing an outfit to wear, select one that is business-like and that will not be distracting to the interviewer.⁴⁸ Similarly, any jewelry worn to an interview should not be distracting. Most applicants find it useful to bring some type of briefcase or folder to carry paperwork and other items.⁴⁹ They typically bring extra copies of their résumé, paper, writing utensils, breath mints, and any grooming items they might need throughout the day. Women might consider bringing an extra pair of pantyhose as well.

The Interview

¶30 After you have completed your preparation for the interview, you are finally ready for the interview itself. However, performing effectively in an interview is not an easy task. An interviewer will forget approximately 85% of an interview within an hour of the applicant's departure.⁵⁰ You should not expect your merit for the position to be self-evident.⁵¹ As a result, successful applicants need to stand out in the interview by showcasing their skills and promoting themselves appropriately. When interviewing, you need to demonstrate that you possess three things: the motivation to do the job, the ability and knowledge to do the job, and the experience to do the job.⁵² While doing this may seem easy enough before the interview process begins, the stress of the actual interview easily can make you lose sight of these goals. It is hoped that the following will give you an idea of what to expect in the interview which, in turn, will improve the likelihood of better using the opportunity to successfully market yourself during the interview.

¶31 While the focus of this article is on the unique aspects of the law library interview, a brief discussion of general interview etiquette is warranted. There are many books, articles, and Web sites that discuss the interview process in general.⁵³ These sources cover such topics as the use of body language, how to effectively answer interview questions, and how to market yourself. Here are some basic points to remember. First and foremost, be on time for the interview. Good body

47. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 9.

48. *Get that Job! Job Interviewing Techniques*, in EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM HANDOUT MATERIALS, AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES 85TH ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 1992, at 1-7 (1992), *microformed on* American Association of Law Libraries 1992 Annual Meeting, Program Handout Materials, Fiche 10 (Hein).

49. SHEILA PANTRY & PETER GRIFFITHS, YOUR SUCCESSFUL LIS CAREER: PLANNING YOUR CAREER, CVs, INTERVIEWS AND SELF-PROMOTION 54 (1999).

50. Biggs & Naslund, *supra* note 38, at 13.

51. *Give the Performance of a Lifetime*, INFO. OUTLOOK, Feb. 2002, at 48, 48 ("'Merit does not cut it any more,' says SLA's director of human resources, Michelle Shands. 'Today companies are looking for that extra something in their candidates.'").

52. RICHARD K. IRISH, GO HIRE YOURSELF AN EMPLOYER 48 (1987).

53. See, e.g., MARTIN YATE, KNOCK'EM DEAD 2003 (2003); RON FRY, YOUR FIRST INTERVIEW: FOR STUDENTS AND ANYONE PREPARING TO ENTER TODAY'S TOUGH JOB MARKET (2002); MONSTER INTERVIEW CENTER, at <http://interview.monster.com/> (last visited Jan. 31, 2004); Job-Interview.net, at www.job-interview.net/index.htm (last visited Jan. 31, 2004).

language and eye contact are important to any successful interview because they will show that you are interested in the interviewers and what they have to say.⁵⁴ In this regard, don't forget that you can observe the interviewer's body language as well and use this information as a cue to how the interview is proceeding.⁵⁵ You should also smile and be friendly toward everyone involved in the interview process, including staff, administrative assistants, and student workers. Often someone whom you perceive as a low-level person can have great input into the hiring decision

¶32 Your first interview may be a telephonic interview designed to screen applicants who are under serious consideration for the position.⁵⁶ The telephone interview typically lasts from fifteen minutes to half an hour, and the employer will always place the telephone call. The interview can be a conference call with the hiring committee or a telephone call with a single individual responsible for hiring. You should find out how many people will be involved in the telephone interview beforehand because the dynamic of the interview can change depending on the number of participants. If the interview is a conference call, the interviewers should, as a matter of course, identify themselves before asking a question. If not, be sure you know who asked which question. It is acceptable to ask if you cannot determine the questioner.

¶33 Perhaps the most important advice about the telephone interview is to make sure you take the call in a quiet spot where you can converse without disruption. Do not put the interviewers on hold or allow yourself to be distracted. Do not underestimate the difficulty of a telephone interview—be prepared to give it your undivided attention. I personally find the telephone interview extremely difficult because you are communicating without any nonverbal cues.

¶34 If you survive the screening process, the on-site interview will follow.⁵⁷ Interview structures vary dramatically from library to library, so asking about it beforehand is critical. Academic law library interviews typically last an entire day and include dinner. However, law firm and public library interviews can vary. For the public library interview, Meadows says it will typically be a day to day and a half. However, some can last less than three hours.⁵⁸ Similarly, the law firm inter-

54. For a discussion of body language, see YATE, *supra* note 53, at 97–107.

55. Biggs & Naslund, *supra* note 38, at 15.

56. Many law libraries use the telephone interview as a cost-saving measure by keeping travel costs low. Judith Meadows indicates, however, that while libraries may use telephone interviews to filter out applicants, a decision to hire will not be made based solely on a telephone interview. Meadows Interview, *supra* note 6.

57. Another common venue for interviews in law librarianship is the AALL Annual Meeting during which individuals seeking jobs frequently meet formally or informally with employers that have positions to fill. This activity is coordinated by the AALL Placement Committee; specific information is typically available on AALL's Web site (www.aallnet.org) in the months leading up to the July conference.

58. Meadows Interview, *supra* note 6.

view usually will be considerably shorter in length. According to Will, interviews for law firm librarian positions last approximately one hour.⁵⁹

¶35 Interviews normally will incorporate a tour of the library and possibly the institution's entire facility. If a tour is not planned, ask for one because it will provide you with invaluable insight. Touring the library is an essential part of interviewing the job because it will help you decide whether it is a desirable workplace for you. During the tour, ask to see the office space of the position for which you have applied, since it will be critical to your comfort in the position.⁶⁰ Also be sure to closely observe the library space.⁶¹ The physical space of the library can give you many clues about the library itself. A well-maintained library is a sign of a library that is supported by its parent institution. If you note numerous treatise titles that have been cancelled as you walk through the library stacks, then you may want to inquire about budgetary support of the library. If the number of books in the library is minimal, the library probably relies largely on computer-assisted legal research. There are many such clues available for you during a library tour if you look for them. It is important to determine if what you see correlates with what you are told.

¶36 During the interview, you will be expected to participate in the conversation and not just answer questions.⁶² Remember that this dialogue during the interview process is to your benefit. It will allow you to gather the information you need to decide whether you would want the position if it is offered to you. The best way to be an active participant in the interview is to ask questions. As indicated earlier, the interviewer will expect questions from you. Making conversation during an interview can be stressful, and you may find yourself grasping for a topic. However, it is important to remember not to speak negatively of any previous or current employers. Also, do not mention health problems unless they will interfere with your job performance.⁶³

¶37 Another important interview tactic to learn is how to evade the inappropriate question. You should assume that there is a purpose behind every question.⁶⁴ While it may be illegal to ask questions about children, family, and other personal issues, the best response probably is not to say that you are going to report the employer to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. One way to handle such a question is to ask the interviewer why the question is important.⁶⁵ Perhaps they are trying to get at some entirely different piece of information and just asked a poorly worded question. If not, asking why the question is important will give the interviewer a subtle cue that he or she should rethink the question.

59. Will Interview, *supra* note 7.

60. Zink, *supra* note 40, at 36.

61. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 10.

62. Saint-Onge, Meadows, & Hazelton, *supra* note 32, at 106.

63. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 11.

64. Biggs & Naslund, *supra* note 38, at 15.

65. IRISH, *supra* note 52, at 168.

¶38 It may come as a surprise to some applicants that presentations can be required for law librarian interviews. In general, this requirement is limited to academic law libraries where teaching is a large component of the job responsibilities. According to Hazelton, the presentation typically lasts twenty minutes, with ten minutes afterward for a question-and-answer session.⁶⁶ Employers use the presentation to determine whether you can communicate information effectively and with poise. They do not expect perfection and are aware that you may be inexperienced, nervous, or both. Rehearsing your presentation in front of anyone who will listen is good preparation. Also, before the interview, you should confirm that any equipment you need will be available. Even if you are told that it will be, however, be sure to have a backup plan. In fact, be prepared to do your presentation without any technology at all. Things do go wrong and the most likely time for that to happen is when you need it the most. In addition, ask to have a few minutes before your presentation to orient yourself to the equipment you will be using.⁶⁷ You do not want to be distracted and fumbling with equipment during the presentation.

¶39 Most interviews will include a meal. Interviewing during a meal is always intimidating. It is important to remember that accidents will happen, and interviewers understand that. As long as you mind your manners, you will be fine.⁶⁸ If you are not accustomed to fine dining, there are numerous books you can use to refine your dining etiquette.⁶⁹ If you are genuinely concerned about eating in front of others during an interview, select food you can easily eat without a problem.⁷⁰ Further, interviewers will not expect serious conversation during the meal. Instead most interviewers look at this time as a chance to get to know you in a relaxed and more personal way. Consequently, unless the employer brings up a work-related issue, restrict the meal conversation to casual and light topics such as the local community and cultural activities or a general discussion about law libraries.

¶40 At the end of the interview, there are several things you should make sure to do. First, ask when a decision about the position will be made. This piece of information is very helpful in preserving your sanity as you wait to hear from the employer. It also ensures that you do not contact the employer prematurely with inquiries regarding whether a decision has been made yet. In addition, make sure that all your questions about the position have been answered. You also should reiterate to those who are responsible for making the hiring decision that you are very interested in the job. If the interview process is to conclude with dinner, you

66. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5.

67. PANTRY & GRIFFITHS, *supra* note 49, at 53.

68. Saint-Onge, Meadows, & Hazelton, *supra* note 32, at 104.

69. *See, e.g.*, PEGGY POST, EMILY POST'S ETIQUETTE (16th ed. 1997); SUE FOX & PERRIN CUNNIN, BUSINESS ETIQUETTE FOR DUMMIES (2001).

70. For example, if you order pasta, order a penne pasta that you can grab with your fork more easily than spaghetti.

should consider the end of the interview to be the last meeting before dinner. As a result, any business should be taken care of before dinner. And, finally, if you are going to mail a thank-you card, have a stamped envelope and card ready on which to write your message so that it can be mailed soon after you leave the interview.⁷¹

Dealing with an Offer or Rejection

¶41 Once you have completed the interview, the matter is out of your hands until you are contacted with the results. There generally are three possible results of an interview: (1) you are offered the job, (2) you are not offered the job, or (3) you are contacted for an additional interview. In the last situation, you simply continue on with the interview process. However, if you receive a job offer or a rejection letter, the matter becomes more complex.

¶42 If you are offered the position, you now are faced with the decision of whether to accept it. You likely will be notified of the job offer by telephone. If you know that you do not want the job, withdraw yourself from consideration immediately. If you are going to consider the offer, do not accept right away.⁷² You will need time to absorb the information, confer with relatives, and consider the terms of the offer. Typically, the offer will include a salary, a desired start date, and the amount, if any, for reimbursement of relocation expenses. If there is other information you need to make an informed decision, now is the time to ask. Other information you might want to investigate, if you have not done so already, includes vacation time, sick time, retirement benefits, and tenure or continuing appointment requirements. This is also the time to discuss any days you would need off soon after starting the job.

¶43 Linda Will states that when a job offer is made, it is common courtesy to take no more than an “appropriate” amount of time to consider the offer; she suggests that three to four weeks is inappropriate unless there are extenuating circumstances.⁷³ If you are interested in the job offer but are under consideration for other jobs that you are interested in as well, be honest with the employer about the situation. If you need three weeks to find out if you are going to receive another offer, let the employer know. The employer will be more understanding about the lengthy period of time needed to respond to the job offer if he or she has a justification for it.

¶44 Once you have all the information you need to analyze the job offer, take time to fully evaluate it. What risks are involved in accepting the job? What, if anything, will you lose if you accept the job? In the alternative, what is to be risked or lost by staying in your current position? Ultimately you are the only one who

71. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 11.

72. Zink, *supra* note 40, at 37.

73. Will Interview, *supra* note 7.

can decide whether the job is right for you. But this can seem like an ominous task. The simple act of making a list of pros and cons can be a useful tool in the decision-making process. Talking with friends and family is helpful as well.

¶45 Another important part of the process is negotiating salary and benefits. The AALL salary surveys are an excellent way to determine an appropriate salary if you are unsure what amount you should request.⁷⁴ However, you should be aware that when an offer includes a proposed salary, the employer has usually researched the job market and is offering what it feels is an appropriate amount.⁷⁵ In addition, Hazelton notes that predetermined salary ranges often dictate the salary for state-funded librarian positions. As a result, some employers will not have the flexibility to negotiate salary. There may be flexibility, however, in the areas of professional development and relocation expenses.⁷⁶ Thus, if you feel that additional compensation is necessary but you cannot ask for a higher salary, there are other ways to obtain the compensation. However, be prepared to justify a request for additional compensation to the employer.

¶46 If you decide to accept the offer, do not resign from your current position until you receive a written job offer. Upon receipt of the written job offer, you will want to provide a written acceptance that confirms your start date.⁷⁷ At that point, you should present a resignation letter to your supervisor in person. Resigning from a job is a delicate matter that needs to be handled carefully. An employer may take the resignation as a personal affront. The best way to soften the blow of a resignation is to make your resignation letter flattering or at least positive.⁷⁸ Be polite, thankful, and indicate those aspects of the job that you most appreciated.

¶47 If you do not receive an offer, remember that it may not be a reflection of your abilities. There could be a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with your ability to do the job. There could simply be a more qualified candidate, or one whose personality better meshed with the library's needs. If you are genuinely concerned about why you did not receive an offer, it is appropriate to contact the employer to ask why.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, the reality of the job search process is that you may never hear back from the employer regarding whether the position was filled.⁸⁰ The first you may learn of it is from an announcement in *AALL Spectrum*. While not receiving a job offer can be disappointing, remember the experience is valuable and will undoubtedly contribute to your eventual success.

74. The AALL salary survey is published biennially in print form and made available in an online edition to AALL members only on the association's Web site. AM. ASS'N OF LAW LIBRARIES, AALL BIENNIAL SALARY SURVEY, at www.aallnet.org/products/pub_salary_survey.asp (last visited Jan. 31, 2004).

75. Will Interview, *supra* note 7.

76. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5.

77. Tripp, *supra* note 13, at 11.

78. Saint-Onge, Meadows, & Hazelton, *supra* note 32, at 106.

79. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5; Meadows Interview, *supra* note 6; Will Interview, *supra* note 7.

80. Hazelton Interview, *supra* note 5.

Conclusion

¶48 For a job seeker, a successful interview process consists not only of being prepared and presenting yourself well, but also of gathering the information you need to determine if the job is right for you. The interview process is a time to take responsibility and be proactive in obtaining what you want. This is an intimidating task for anyone interviewing for a job. But as long as you develop a network of contacts within the profession, conduct yourself appropriately during the interview process, and approach the interview in a logical manner, you will be able to effectively interview for the job while also interviewing the job as well.

Appendix Sample Interview Questions⁸¹

Direction, Political Climate, and Administrative Structure of the Library

What is the relationship between the law library and the university library system?

What is the relationship between the law library and the law school?

What role do the law librarians play within the university system; for instance, do they participate in the faculty senate?

Do you have an organizational chart? If so, may I see a copy and does it accurately reflect the work flow?

Are there any administrative changes that I should be aware of?

What is the relationship of the law library with its various patron bases (e.g., attorneys, law students, law faculty, other university-affiliated individuals, and laypersons)?

Does the law library participate in national, regional, or state programs and networks (e.g., RLG, OCLC, or NELLCO)?

Are there library unions?

Does information technology or computing fall within the library's responsibilities?

What long-term projects are going on in the law library?

What are some of the areas of emphasis for the faculty?

Is there a written collection development policy?

Is the collection adequate to meet the patrons' needs?

Who participates in collection development and selection?

What is the relationship between public services and technical services?

What is the relationship between the librarians and the support staff?

Who participates in reference services?

Is there a written reference service policy?

81. The following sources (along with the author's personal experiences) were used in formulating this list of sample interview questions: Janeen Green, *My Turn—Questions to Ask the Interviewing Team*, EMERGENCY LIBR., Jan–Feb. 1990, at 13; Saint-Onge, Meadows, & Hazelton, *supra* note 32, at 105; Biggs & Naslund, *supra* note 38, at 14–15. The sample questions here are designed to be used by an applicant during the interview process. See *supra* ¶ 36. While these questions are geared toward the academic law librarian interview, you can adjust them to suit any law library interview. Select the questions you feel are important to ask based upon the qualities and factors that are important to you in a job.

Financial Condition of the Library

What is the current status of the library budget?

What do you anticipate in is the future for the library budget?

What are your acquisitions statistics for the last year? How are your cancellations?

Where does your funding come from and how is it decided?

Communication and Position Authority within the Library

What are the lines of communication within the library?

How does most communication occur? Written or verbal? Meetings or memos?

What professional development is offered?

Do you hold collection development meetings? If so, how often and who attends?

Do you have librarian meetings? If so, how often?

How often does the entire library staff meet?

What internal committees do the librarians participate in? Would I be assigned to one?

How would you describe your supervisory style?

If I take this position, we will both have the same supervisor. What is it like working for this person?

How would you describe your relationship with the law library director?

Evaluation of Law Librarians

Who evaluates the position's job performance?

How is the position's job performance evaluated?

What are the standards for evaluation: adequate, competent, excellent? How are the standards measured?

How frequently do evaluations occur?

What is the process for achieving tenure or continuing appointment if it is available?

How is merit rewarded: increase or bonus?

What opportunities for advancement are there?

Is professional development outside of the institution supported, e.g., national and regional conferences? If not all librarians can attend, how is attendance prioritized?

Is travel reimbursed? If so, what specifically is reimbursed and how are funds disbursed?

Evaluation of the Position

Does the position offer any supervision? If so, what are the strengths and weaknesses of subordinates?

What clerical support exists?

What are your long-range goals for the position?

Which of the position's responsibilities do you think are most important?

What kind of training is provided for a new employee?

Why is the position available?

What are the current problems faced by this position?

How does the position interact with the other library departments?

Are there internal candidates?

What would you as a supervisor want from me as an employee?

How do you as a supervisor give feedback?

What goals would you expect me to achieve in six months? In one year?

What is a typical day like for this position?

Salary and Benefits

What is the salary range for this position?

Is the institution affiliated with a credit union?

What is parking like within the university? What is the cost of parking?

Are alternative work schedules considered?

Is tuition reimbursement available?

Community and Environment

What are the different weather conditions the community experiences?

Is this a diverse community?

What cultural activities are available to community residents?

Is public transportation available?

What are the reputations of the schools in the community?