

REORGANIZING STAFF

When I made the switch from working as an associate attorney to working as an academic law librarian in the summer of 2022, I knew that I would be involved in “behind the scenes” workplace activities, such as hiring, earlier in my career than I would be as an attorney. My first introduction to the process of hiring a staff person at the law library came this past spring.

When a member of our library’s staff left the law library back in May, we were faced with two options. One was to fill the existing position. That role—public services associate—was responsible for carrels, interlibrary loan (ILL), archives, and marketing, including library displays. Some of those aspects are highly cyclical, like the work on carrels, which is busiest at the start of the academic year, but quiet the rest of the time. Outside of carrel season, this role focused on archives/special collections and interlibrary loan. But the volume of ILL work has decreased substantially in the last couple of years, and although there is always more archival processing work to do, our two main special collections—the [National Bar Association Records](#) and the [Charles Wennerstrum Papers](#)—have been digitized. There wouldn’t have been anything wrong with hiring another person to fill the role as it existed, but we opted for the second option and treated the opening as an opportunity to try something new.



The other law librarians and I made a list of the administrative activities we currently oversaw—for me, that included supervising student workers at our Information Desk, overseeing library scheduling and hours, and coordinating room reservations in the library. We reshuffled some of the old public service associate duties, reassigning ILL work to one staff member and archives work to another. These adjustments allowed us to create a public services manager position, who would oversee the students at the Information Desk, library hours and rooms, carrels, and would help coordinate all library marketing efforts.

Creating this new manager position brought numerous benefits. From our perspective as law librarians, it allowed us to alleviate the burden of administrative duties that, after past staff reductions, had fallen on us. In addition, there are other more practical benefits. This position involves management duties that necessitate independent judgment. Therefore, we could classify this position as exempt, resulting in an increase in pay and slightly improved benefits, at least at our institution. Rethinking the role not only reduced the amount of administrative work done by librarians, but also allowed us to advertise a position with a more competitive salary and benefits than otherwise would have been possible.

Through this staff restructuring process, I helped write the job description, communicated with Human Resources, interviewed candidates, and helped select the candidate. Now, as the public services manager’s direct supervisor, I am working closely with my new colleague to get her trained in the various aspects of her role.

I was very lucky throughout this process to have the expertise and experience of my colleagues to rely on, but we were also fortunate to be given the chance to innovate. As law libraries continue to shift and change, approaching hiring with a goal of trying something new can be an excellent way to make the best out of a staff member leaving.

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