

THE LOSS OF THE “LIBRARIAN” TITLE

We have all heard and accepted numerous reasons why the terms “library” and “librarian” should not be used. Some of the popular reasons include:

- Using the “librarian” title holds us back from being recognized for our full set of abilities.
- Calling our resources a “library” confuses users on what’s available.
- There are other better-known job titles that cover our responsibilities, such as Digital Assets Management Specialist or Reference Supervisor.
- Librarians have poor cultural images (It’s a Wonderful Life, thanks for that).



Although I aspire to management, and have assisted in occasional interviews, I have not yet held a paid managerial role. However, I have significant and recent experience as an early career librarian trying to find work. As a representative of the early career population, I think that removing the “librarian” title from job openings makes job hunting so much more frustrating and difficult than it should be.

Maybe I chose the wrong courses in school, but when I finished my MLIS I had no idea that law firms hired librarians. When I searched for work, I looked for openings with the employers I already knew (Santa Clara County and various community colleges) and searched for jobs labeled “librarian.” Nearly a year after graduation, I finally found a full-time position at my first law firm when they posted an opening for “Librarian.” Thank God they did! If they had not been clear, I would not have known my education had qualified me for this fantastic line of work!

A few years later, after I was very happily situated at another firm, I still continuously searched job openings and the [AALL Salary Survey](#) to ensure I was getting paid at market value. I needed to see what positions that required my experience and education were paying. I have a master’s in library science, no JD, and a few years of law firm experience. If I could have run a search according to educational requirements, the task of finding comparative jobs would have been easy. But no! That filter does not exist on LinkedIn, Google Careers, or Indeed. So, I can search by “librarian,” right? No again! Because there are so many variations of titles, I had to think very hard and push my linguistic creativity to its limits to predict what others in my exact same industry and line of work might label their jobs.

I agree that some librarian jobs need to re-label themselves to clarify their responsibilities. For example, Chief Knowledge Officer. I’m not suggesting we rename the position as Chief Library Officer. A C-suite position obviously covers more than one department.

And even jobs with less management responsibility may benefit from removing the “librarian” title. For instance, a cataloger in a public library needs to have strong skills in cataloging, more so than storytelling. Advertising a job for “Librarian” but expecting them to do only cataloging would be disappointing to most candidates.

But really, why can we not call the job Catalog Librarian? That way newly graduated MLIS holders can search “librarian” and find more potential jobs.

Removing the term “librarian” from job titles has forced me to perform proverbial backflips to locate jobs that match my criteria. But hey, at least it gave me my first taste of a gnarly research project!

FURTHER READING

- [What’s in a Name? Exploring the Word “Librarian” and What It Means](#)
- [A Librarian By Any Other Name...](#)
- [Help Me Overthink this Plate of Job Titles](#)
- [Real Job Titles for Library & Information Science Professionals](#)

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