Focused, Flexible, Free-Range: Becoming a Library & Information Technician in the 21st Century

Ontario Library Association Super Conference, February 3rd, 2017
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ESSENTIAL SKILLS for LIBRARY & INFORMATION TECHNICIANS

Federal Government’s Occupational Classification

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Mohawk College LIT Program Guidelines

Successful Library and Information Technicians are service-oriented and able to:

- Demonstrate good spoken and written communications skills
- Work with minimal supervision
- Demonstrate attention to detail, accuracy and analytical skills
- Exhibit excellent interpersonal skills
- Enjoy working with technology
- Work effectively in a team

Online Resources

Government of Canada Library and Archive Technician
Mohawk College Library and Information Technician
Special Library Association Competencies for Information Professionals
TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Definition: Skill, ability, natural talent individuals can carry with them and readily apply to a new job or work environment. Acquired through school, work, hobbies, personal relationships.

Soft vs. Hard Skills
Hard skills consist of working with things (e.g., computers, knitting) or understanding technology and technical skills (e.g., cataloging, research skills, e-resources)
Soft skills help balance professional and technical abilities (e.g. people skills: supervision, team-work, self-motivated)

Education and Career/life planning inquiry questions:
Who am I?
What are my opportunities? Who do I want to become?
What is my plan for achieving my goals?

CAREER OPTIONS according to Durham College:

What you could be:
- Information assistant
- Knowledge management assistant
- Library technician
- Online and/or library system vendor
- Publisher
- Research assistant

Graduates also acquire skills in research and technology such as web design, blogging and communications.
Where you could work:
- Cultural and/or not-for-profit organization such as a museum or archives
- Electronic publishing company
- Information services, knowledge-management or record- management business/department
- Library-related service provider
- Library or information services within a law office, hospital or corporation
- Market research agency
- Records management or indexing firm
- Special, public, academic or school library
Alternative job titles:

Digital Content Curator  Certified Records Manager
Data Curator  Archives
Market Analyst  Technical Information Specialist
Documentation Specialist  Freelance Researcher
Health Records Clerk  Client Services Representative
Prospect Researcher  Customer Care Representative
Technical Writer  Educational Programming Officer
Grant Writer & Researcher  Museum Guide/Interpreter/Programmer
Data Reporting Analyst  Registration Coordinator/Officer
Volunteer Manager  SharePoint Analyst/Developer
Customer Experience Manager (in a bookstore)
Advancement/Development/Fundraising Assistant
Records Assistant (in a college or university Registrar’s Office)

from “Breaking Out: Non-Traditional Jobs for Library Technicians” by Lauren Bourdages.

Important Skill Clusters in the LIT Field

- Communication
- Customer Service
- Organizing Information
- Technical Skills

Make it easy for the Hiring Manager to see how your skills fit their organization. Make the connections for them!

Resources


Community College of Vermont Skills Inventory Worksheet

ON-GOING TRAINING

Learn HQ: Training & Resources for Ontario Public Library Staff

Ontario Library Association Mentoring

Southern Ontario Library Services: Workshops, webinars, online courses

Lynda.com: Check with your public library
  • 6000 free online courses, connected to LinkedIn

Gale Courses: Check with your public library
  • Gale Courses offers a wide range of highly interactive, instructor led courses that you can take entirely online. As a library card holder in good standing, you are entitled to these courses at no cost. Courses run for six weeks and new sessions begin every month.

NETWORKING

• Attend events
  o introduce yourself to people
  o ask them questions about themselves – i.e. their work
  o have current topics ready to discuss (get in the habit of reading the newspaper everyday)
  o have business cards to give out if it seems appropriate

• Visit libraries wherever you go
  o introduce yourself to staff if it’s not too busy or there’s an opportunity
  o ask them about their library and what’s been happening
  o give a business card if it seems appropriate

• Get involved in your community
  o think about the causes you care about
  o look for opportunities to volunteer and do it
  o get to know the other people involved

• Get on social media
  o LinkedIn – keep it updated, add contacts regularly
  o Facebook – study the security settings, set up posting lists
  o Twitter – use this at events and other things that are ‘in the now’
  o Instagram – if you’re a shutterbug, use photos to share your passion for library and library work
JOB HUNTING

- Be clear on what you want to do
  - ask yourself what you like to do/don’t like to do
  - be very specific
  - make a list
- Be flexible if you can’t find exactly what you want
  - we’re new, so maybe we’re wrong in what we like/don’t like
  - don’t let fear hold you back from trying something new
- Don’t expect to find your ‘dream job’ right out of the graduation gate
- Pace yourself
  - eat and sleep regularly
  - schedule time for yourself
  - job hunting can be a marathon event

INTERVIEW

Think of the job interview as a business meeting to prepare your mind for the actual task at hand.

The key to success for any business meeting is to Be Prepared!

USE the STAR technique to answer questions

- S/T – what was the Situation or Task YOU were involved in
- A – what was the Action YOU took
- R – what was the Result YOU achieved

When preparing S/TAR stories or answers to questions, use these techniques:

- Be specific and concise. Don’t include extraneous or superfluous details.
- Write it out.
- Practice speaking it aloud until it feels natural.

Some common questions to prepare answers for:

- Tell us about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What other interests (outside of work) do you have?
  - relate your interests back to the position you’re applying for

Make a list of the questions you are most nervous about or find the most challenging:

- come up with your answers ahead of time
- practice them aloud and often until it feels completely natural
Remember to send a thank you email to the lead person you met with. Plan an activity ahead of time for what to do after the business meeting. Make it an activity that will help you decompress and stay positive.

**Staying Positive While Job Searching**
- Be active in associations like Ontario Library Association, Ontario Association of Library Technicians, Special Library Association
- Look for free or low-cost training and courses
- Develop a good network and learn to ask for help
- Find a mentor or employment counsellor
- Volunteer inside and outside the library field
- Be flexible and open-minded about how you can use your skills
- Take care of your physical, mental and emotional health
- Celebrate your successes

**How to Stay Positive during a Brutal Job Search**

**How to Stay Positive during a Long Job Hunt**

**Not Every Job is a Perfect Fit!**

**Self-Care for Job Hunters**

**Dress for Success!**

Many communities assist job seekers with an interview outfit. Ask at an employment agency for a program such as:

**Dress For Success**
**Clothing Works** (London)
**Dress Your Best** (for men in Toronto)
**Suits His Style** (for men in Ottawa)