

Job Searching: The Applicant's Perspective: "Greatest Hits" Survey Results:

The Job Search in General:

1. The most effective online resources for job searching are: professional organization "career centers", library listservs (pub-lib, law-lib, library school listservs..), LISjobs, indeed.com
2. Least effective are: National/Generalized job sites like Monster or Career Builder, Craigslist, job aggregators

Library Land Specifics:

1. Library job applicants are split down the middle- approximately half are recent library school graduates (52%) while other job seekers have been out of library school for over two years and beyond (48%)
2. Librarianship is the second or third career for 50% of respondents
3. Many job seekers are looking for their first library job (35%), some are looking for professional advancement opportunities (21%), while others are reentering the job field after being laid off (18%)
4. Most job seekers are focusing their search on a specific field of librarianship (73%), while other searchers are generalists (27%)
5. Less than half of library job searchers are looking for opportunities in other states (46%)

Applications and Interviews:

1. In the past two years job searchers have applied to, on average, 15-20 jobs.
2. Most library job seekers have never heard back from one (or more) of the positions to which they have applied (81%)
3. In fact, many respondents say that they've received little follow up from a majority of the positions to which they've applied (65-90% of positions never follow-up, *per applicant estimate*)
4. Over half of library job seekers have applied to positions that are clearly below their qualifications (63%) or clearly above their qualifications (43%)- simply due to the fact that it is an open job
5. In the past two years job seekers have been to, on average, 2-7 interviews
6. Most interviews have two rounds (64%), while a punishing few have three or more rounds (11%)
7. Only a few respondents (6%) have been offered a position that was subsequently defunded.
8. Unsuccessful interviewees have been notified of an employer's decision by e-mail (66%), form letter (49%), personalized letter (32%), and phone call (30%). An alarmingly high number of unsuccessful interviewees were never notified of an employer's decision (34%)
9. Unsuccessful interviewees wish they notified of the rejection by e-mail (as soon as possible). Also, most respondents wished for personalized touches in rejection notices.
10. Survey respondents are almost unanimous in saying that the most disheartening aspect of their job search is not hearing back from employers after an application or interview.

BEST QUOTES FROM THE SURVEY

On Rejection Notifications:

If I have been rejected by a place where I've had an in person interview then I would appreciate a personalized e-mail or even phone call thanking me and assessing my strengths and weaknesses. After one long, two round interview process I was not hired. To my surprise, they never even contacted me again to let me know one way or the other what they thought of me or who they hired.

Just getting ANY notification is a rare treat. The best one I received had a statement that expressed empathy for the amount of time and effort it takes to prepare a job application - it was almost a pleasure to receive that rejection letter.

On Traits of Successful Applicants:

My new director told me I "kicked ass" in the interview because I really seemed to know a lot about the position and I asked a lot of position-specific questions.

I had done AALL committee work with the hiring person.

I have been told that I interview well (by folks who did the interviewing). Generally, I feel like I have a great chance at getting a job once I get offered an interview because I work hard to present myself well and prepare by anticipating the questions. I keep a list of questions that are the typical stuff (tell us about a time when...) or that were asked during a previous interview. I review the questions and mentally prepare answers for them so I sound more natural during the interview and spend less time trying to think of something to say.

On Disheartening Aspects of the Job Search:

The possibility of being overqualified for even the most routine of jobs and therefore never being able to pay back the massive student loans that those qualifications created.

The feeling that you are sending your resume into a black hole.

Perception. The general feeling among young librarians is that there are too many candidates for too few jobs, and what few jobs there are have immense competition from people with years of experience. This hurts the profession as a whole, as many of the best and brightest (but not the most experienced) will move on to more promising careers against this overwhelming negativity.

The dehumanizing nature of the whole thing. I'd hope that members of a service profession would remember that job applicants are human beings too and treat them considerately.

Rejection after rejection after rejection. It's very difficult to try and sell yourself and your qualifications when (as far as you can tell) they weren't worth anything to the people at the last place you applied. It is a challenge to do SO much work in an area with next to no feedback, particularly with such a tenuous sense of how to improve for the next time.

On What Job Applicants want Library Managers to Know:

You are the representation of our career choice. The actions you take could remain isolated to your specific institution, or create an impression on us of things to come in our career. Professional courtesy is taught to us in library school, I just wish it were uniformly displayed in the real-world.

Please remember we're people. Please take the time to not leave us hanging if you've hired someone or if the search is taking longer than expected. It takes maybe five minutes to assemble an e-mail list and then BCC everyone. I don't need a personalized message. I just want to hear SOMETHING.

Hire professionals for professional duties, not unpaid interns or lower-paid paraprofessionals

I know being a library director/manager is a very difficult - and often thankless - job, and you are torn in many directions. I would argue, however, that it is more difficult to be unemployed month after month, in spite of being a highly qualified, talented, creative, and previously successful professional.