Interviewing at an Academic Library

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WESTERN LIBRARIES

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Outline

- Getting the interview (resume/letter)
- What to expect
- How to prepare
- Strategies for framing and answering interview questions
- What to avoid
- Where to get help
Getting the Interview (Resume and Cover Letter)

- Match your experience and skills to the job posting
- Customize your cover letter and resume
- Be very clear about the kind of work you’ve done (internship, part-time, dates of work)
- Follow the instructions in the posting
What to Expect

• Typical Itinerary @ Canadian Academic Library:
  ○ Presentation (15 – 30 minutes plus questions)
  ○ Formal Interview (45 minutes – 2 hours)
  ○ Lunch
What to Expect

- Other possibilities:
  - Meetings with:
    - local unit
    - all librarians or all staff
    - the managers in the local unit
    - the university librarian
    - a senior administrator at the university
    - faculty/staff/students in the department(s) you would be supporting
    - A union representative
  - Tour of library/campus/city
  - Writing exercise
  - Business Office – expense reimbursement
The Request for Interview

- Get excited! 😊
- Arrange logistics for interview
- Start your homework
  - Reread the Job Posting
  - Familiarize yourself with the institution (strategic plan; collective agreement)
  - Familiarize yourself with the people (Google them)
The Presentation

- Carefully consider the question or problem and *answer it*
- Know your audience
- Stay on time
- Technology
- Be prepared to answer questions
The Formal Interview
Types of Questions

• Tell us about yourself...
  ○ Why are you the best candidate (or best fit) for this position?

• Job related skills & experience
  ○ Collections, Reference, Instruction
  ○ Cataloguing
  ○ Scholarly Communication

• Scenario
  ○ You’ve been asked to... Tell us how you might go about handling this situation.

• Behavioural
  ○ Tell us about a successful project that you’ve worked on...
  ○ Tell us about a time when you had to deal with a difficult situation/colleague/patron...
“Tell us about your experience providing reference service.”

• Knowledge, skills, abilities
  ○ Understands scope of ‘reference’ (at desk, in office, online/chat, office hours)
  ○ Customer service skills
  ○ Comfort with technology
  ○ Demonstrates some knowledge of key resources
  ○ Basic reference interview / negotiation with students
  ○ Give examples if appropriate
Question: **Please describe a particular work project you have been involved with where you worked as part of a team. What was your role? Was the team successful? How did you feel that you contributed to the success of the team?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural Question</th>
<th>Specific Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description/Overview</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Project description and scope</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Middle</strong></td>
<td><strong>Background/ Evidence/ Examples</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role and responsibilities, skills used or developed, awareness of stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>End</strong></td>
<td><strong>Summary/Your Role/Success</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome of project, reiterate your contribution</td>
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Other Types of Questions

- What are your research interests / what research projects are you currently working on?
- What are some trends that you see in academic libraries or higher education that might affect this position?
- How do you keep current in your field?
- What kind of professional development have you done / are you interested in doing?
What are they looking for?

- Competencies
  - Self-awareness (strengths and weaknesses)
  - Problem solving skills
  - Leadership skills
  - Creativity
  - Recognition of others’ skills
  - Collaboration/cooperation/consultation
Questions for the Committee

• It’s a good idea...

• Considerations
  ○ Ask questions that you actually want an answer to
  ○ Ask straightforward questions
  ○ Between 1-3 questions (be conscious of time)
  ○ Is there something you’re interested in that hasn’t been discussed? If so, ask if there will be opportunities.
Things to Remember

- You are always being interviewed
- Be an active participant
- Be confident and professional
- Be ready to give a tentative start date
- Understand your rights: employment equity
- Follow-up with a thank you
Things to Avoid

- Badmouthing current or previous colleagues or institutions
- Being overly confident
- Being too informal - language
- Under-dressing
Other resources?

- GRC career resources
- Library interview questions
  - Mr. Library Dude: [http://mrlibrarydude.wordpress.com/](http://mrlibrarydude.wordpress.com/)
- Student Success Centre / Career Central
- Writing Centre
- OLA FIMS Mock Interviews
- Job Shadowing
- Networking – conferences, talking to librarians