

Interviewing at an Academic Library



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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

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
 - 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 and people (e.g., library/university website; strategic plan; collective agreement)

The Presentation



- Introduce yourself
- 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...

Job Skills Questions



“Tell us about your experience providing reference service.”

- **Knowledge, skills, abilities**
 - Understands scope of ‘reference’ (at desk, in office, online/chat, office hours)
 - Public service skills
 - Comfort with technology
 - Demonstrates some knowledge of key resources
 - Basic reference interview / negotiation with students
 - Give examples if appropriate

Break it Down: Behavioural and Scenario Questions

	Behavioural Question	Specific Example
Beginning	Description/Overview	Project description and scope
Middle	Background/ Evidence/ Examples	Role and responsibilities, skills used or developed, awareness of stakeholders
End	Summary/Your Role/Success	Outcome of project, reiterate your contribution

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?**

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
- You are also interviewing them
- Be an active participant
- Be confident and professional
- Be ready to give a tentative start date
- 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

Q & A

