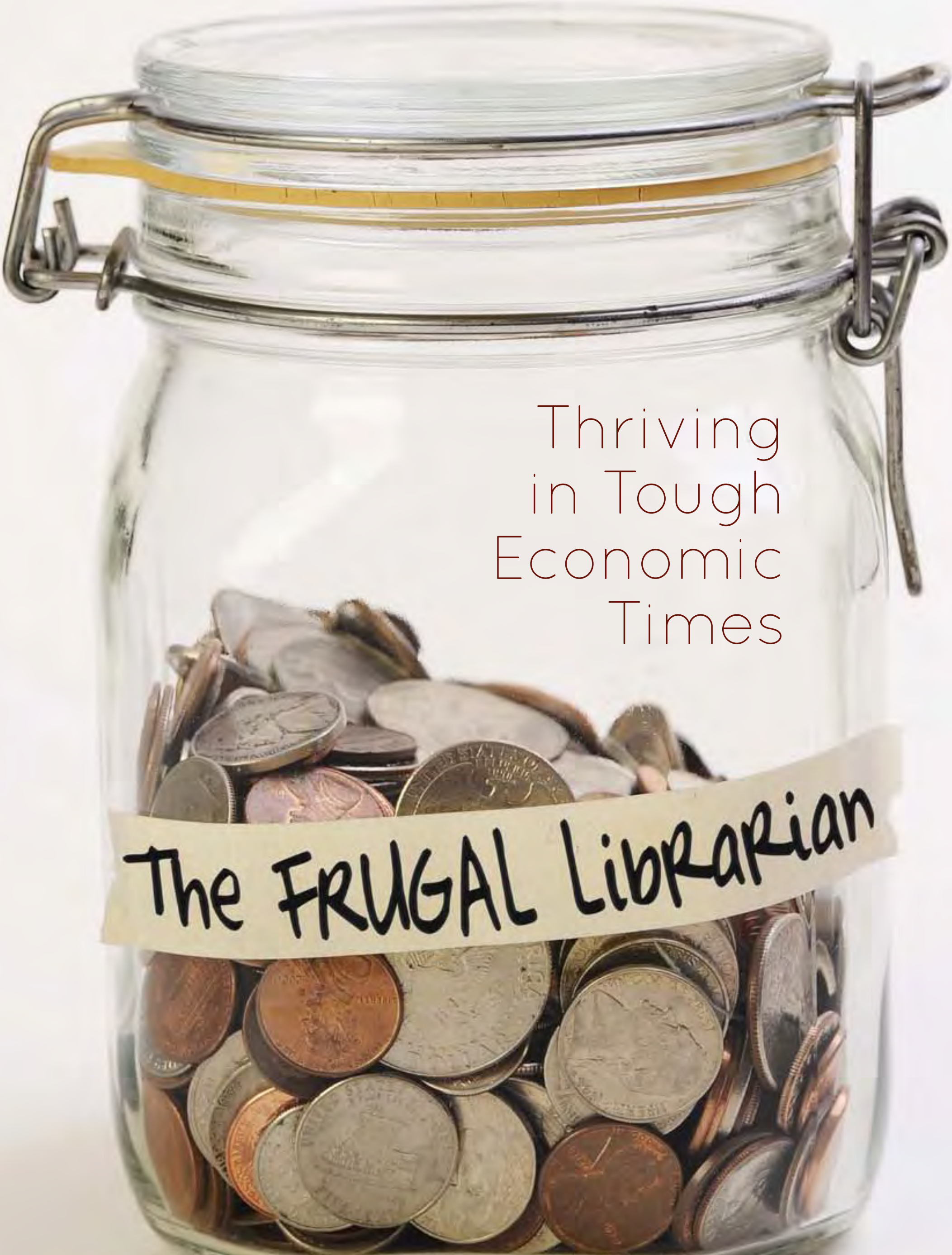


# The FRUGAL Librarian

## Thriving in Tough Economic Times

EDITED BY **CAROL SMALLWOOD**

www.alastore.ala.org

# THE FRUGAL LIBRARIAN

## Thriving in Tough Economic Times

Edited by Carol Smallwood

American Library Association
Chicago 2011

Printed in the United States of America
15 14 13 12 11    5 4 3 2 1



ISBN: 978-0-8389-1075-7

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**
The frugal librarian : thriving in tough economic times / edited by Carol Smallwood.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8389-1075-7 (alk. paper)
1. Library finance--United States. 2. Libraries--United States--Cost control. 3. Libraries--Economic aspects--United States. 4. Library science--Economic aspects--United States. 5. Libraries and community--United States. 6. Libraries--United States--Case studies. I. Smallwood, Carol, 1939-
Z683.2.U6F73 2011
025.1'10973--dc22
2010034317

Book design in Charis SIL and Avenir by Casey Bayer.

♾ This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

ALA Editions also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. For more information, visit the ALA Store at www.alastore.ala.org and select eEditions.

# CONTENTS

## PART IV: PROGRAMMING



## PART V: SHARING



## PART VI: MANAGEMENT



## PART VII: ON-THE-JOB SUCCESS

# FOREWORD

**THE THIRTY-FOUR CHAPTERS** of *The Frugal Librarian* present insightful—and often personal—responses and recommendations on how to not only survive but also thrive in tough economic times. Some chapters focus on what librarians naturally do best as they serve as the public's key trusted source for information. Thus, the first section in the book provides advice for serving patrons and their job-seeking needs. Marwin Britto describes how librarians can help faculty advance their technology skills. Many chapters provide descriptions of useful resources including social networking sites such as LinkedIn.com, business information websites, and sources of grants. Patron-centered concerns also underlie the chapters on public programming, which describe such successful events as a Rooftop Poetry Club and a "Green Talk" series of workshops. James Lund, Wayne Finley, and Joanna Kluever take the glass-half-full view, advocating taking advantage of the economic crisis by calling on librarians to expand their loyal patron base and create programs that are based on community needs.

Job loss is the greatest concern during economic shifts. J. James Mancuso writes more closely from the heart, as he learned to "turn the box sideways," to create new part-time employment after he lost his position as a theological librarian. Margaret Lincoln took on new responsibilities in anticipation of a change in her job as a school librarian. Kacy Vega and Kim Becnel consider how to continue to add a service, in this case outreach, when staff positions are eliminated.

In the early days of the development of librarianship as a profession, the focus was on library economy. Librarians are rediscovering efficiencies in efforts to reduce costs. This volume's contributors present various approaches to better cost efficiency—through bidding service contracts, streamlining digitization, selling gifts and weeded items, using green features, and relying more on data in making decisions.

For alternatives to face-to-face continuing education, Colleen S. Harris describes other opportunities to stretch oneself and learn, including writing for publication. For those who attend library conferences, Regina Koury shares her strategies for limiting the usual expenses. In tough times, librarians turn to making new connections and partnerships. The five chapters in part V, Sharing, cover such collaborations as joint-use facilities, the advantages of multitype regional libraries, and partnering in technical services through communal acquisitions decisions, shared catalogs, and open-source products.

Though all library staff are involved in identifying and implementing creative means to reduce expenses while continuing—or even expanding—services, it is natural that staff turn to management (part VI) for vision, advice, and coordinated decision making. The chapters on staffing (part VIII) offer ideas to meet and satisfy the largest budget category—personnel.

When all is said and done, the contributors to this volume illustrate that libraries serve as vital and central human services centers. The library public has responded, with library borrower's cards and visits at an all-time national high. Although faced with the necessity of reducing expenses, and even reducing staff, libraries and librarians demonstrate once again their versatility and their ability to adjust to and be creative in the face of economic challenges.

**Dr. Loriene Roy**
*Professor, School of Information*
*University of Texas at Austin*

# PREFACE

**LIBRARIANS ACROSS THE** United States are experiencing rises in prices while cutbacks shrink their resources as they struggle to keep up with information technology and patron needs. Economics, as in other professions, is affecting all types of libraries, but librarians are meeting the challenge with creativity and dedication.

To prepare this volume I sought chapters from practicing public, school, academic, and special librarians from different areas in the country to help colleagues manage their libraries. I asked contributors to share 2,100–2,300 words written by one librarian or coauthored by two and to use sidebars and headings to guide the reader.

Contributors were chosen for the relevance of their topics as well as their ability to convey information clearly after being given Gustave Flaubert's advice: "Whenever you can shorten a sentence, do. And one always can. The best sentence? The shortest." Their contributions have not been published elsewhere.

It was a pleasure working with these professionals willing to share their experiences with colleagues. Their innovation and dedication are evident in this timely anthology.

**Carol Smallwood**

1

# KNOWLEDGE-BASED JOB HUNTING AND INTERVIEW PREPARATION

*Michael A. Germano*

**CURRENT STATISTICS ON** joblessness tell a story unlike any other in the history of labor in the United States: specifically, unemployment that hovers near 10 percent and almost doubles when one factors in the underemployed, those working part-time who prefer full-time employment, and the discouraged job seekers who have given up altogether (Dugan 2009). The competition for jobs is fierce, with an astounding six applicants for every opening (Evans and Blumberg 2009). More people are chasing fewer jobs than during any previous recession, at numbers that in some ways rival those of the Great Depression. Virtually all industries, even relatively safe havens like education, have been subject to furloughs, cutbacks, layoffs, and reorganizations (Mattioli 2009). With such a drastically changed unemployment landscape, it follows that job hunting has changed as well. It has become more unpredictable, more competitive, and more frustrating than ever, with all indications that the changes are here to stay, maybe even irrevocably. Welcome to Job Hunting 2.1, the Great Recession version.

Although the job market may have changed dramatically in the past two years, the tactics used to find a job have not. For many it is business as usual, with an outdated approach to job hunting based on using a host of competing websites to send out as many applications as possible, despite the fact that the number of posted jobs has fallen (Dresang 2009). As librarians we are in a unique position to advocate a whole new way to look for a job: the use of research, intelligence gathering, and knowledge management to produce a more thoughtful, strategic job hunt that is premised on actionable knowledge that results in targeting industries and companies instead of the random, scattershot approach that highlights today's online job searches. In short, it is time for librarians and information professionals to take a leadership role in the job search process by doing what we do best and most naturally—advocating the use of credible, evaluated information to facilitate problem solving.

## KNOWLEDGE-BASED JOB HUNTING

Although nothing can substitute for qualifications, experience, and credentials packaged in a compelling resume and conveyed during a persuasive interview, a gap in research and knowledge goes into the creation of these critical narratives that leaves many job seekers stuck in place as they send resume after resume with no results. Job seekers falling into this category could benefit from a new knowledge-driven job search strategy that uses business research skills and information sources for refining the job search process. The goal is a more strategically planned job search that is based on and informed by current, reliable business intelligence directed at uncovering the best opportunities. As librarians who are primarily concerned with acquiring, evaluating, and applying information in order to answer questions or solve problems, we can guide job searchers through a process premised on using business information sources to produce a more knowledge-based job hunt that looks something like this:

- Uncover broad economic indicators to understand their impact on career choices and job searching.
- Examine industry surveys for target companies as well as new products and markets.
- Create and maintain a file on targeted companies including profiles and recent Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) filings.
- Polish resume and create a list of keywords relevant to industries, companies, and positions that can be used to tailor cover letters and resumes.
- Constantly review company profiles, industry surveys, and SEC filings as a means of presenting a compelling application, resume, and interview presence informed by business solutions.
- Update online profiles for professional social networking sites complete with reviews of people who have worked with you and references.

- Execute interview process with confidence based on strong knowledge of company and industry in which it operates.
- Engage in timely follow-up that reaffirms value to employee and solicits feedback on interview performance.
- Use newfound information and knowledge to attend career fairs, trade shows, and chamber of commerce meetings to network more effectively, armed with meaningful knowledge and compelling ideas to share.
- Constantly reassess cover letters, resume language, and interview positioning of skills in order to learn continually from job-hunting failures and successes.
- Maintain a knowledge-based job-hunting journal that documents applications, interviews, and follow-up communication by industry and company in order to identify trends or patterns behind failures and successes.
- Negotiate offers by researching data on working conditions and salary.
- Continue to use research and analytical skills to convey value to new employer and securing promotions.

Directing job hunters more effectively through a process that involves the steps listed above may require some brushing up on business information sources for many librarians. The bibliography and materials may appear complicated or nuanced, but their application to job hunting and interview preparation is easily understood. The applicable business resources can be divided into three broad categories: economic trends and statistics, company information, and industry data.

### SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social networking sites can play a vital supporting role for job hunters who target companies and industries and not necessarily specific jobs (Elmore 2009). Facebook is increasingly relevant to job searchers as a way to connect with companies and recruiters, made possible by recently relaxed rules regarding company pages (Dutta and Fraser 2009). The most useful site, however, is LinkedIn.com. Corporate recruiters use LinkedIn as a means of identifying talent, confirming job history, and getting references. Establishing a current LinkedIn profile is a great first step. Follow up by inviting former colleagues and supervisors to write reviews of your performance. The most valuable reviews from the recruiters' perspective are those that speak to specific competencies, skills, or successes.

## ECONOMIC TRENDS AND STATISTICS

Economic indicators can provide important information for job seekers. Some, like the percentage of unemployed by state and region, are obvious. Others, such as factory orders, can be the factual basis for assessing growth or retraction in an industry or region. Use such data to consider future growth potential or hiring on a broad scale, and don't get discouraged.

Without doubt, the best one-stop shop for economic statistics directly related to knowledge-based job seeking is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics website (www.bls.gov). It is full of relevant hiring statistics and projections for specific careers, industries, and geographic regions. Also worth noting is the bureau's job satisfaction, compensation, and benefits tracking data, since these are critical components in negotiating an offer.

## COMPANY INFORMATION

Many employment seekers already use information about companies in their job searches. As information professionals, it becomes incumbent

### BEST BUSINESS INFORMATION WEBSITES

***Standard & Poor's Net Advantage:*** Premium site most notable for its industry surveys.

***LexisNexis:*** One specific application of note for job hunters: Company Dossier's "Create Company List" feature can be used by job hunters to create a customized prospect list of companies.

***Mergent:*** Premier company and industry intelligence research tool.

***Yahoo! Finance:*** Free business information site, particularly useful for tracking stock prices, evaluating solvency, and retrieving current SEC filings.

***Company websites:*** An individual company's website can be an excellent information source for understanding corporate culture, identifying critical keywords, and getting a window on management's perspective of performance and upcoming challenges. Look for the section titled "Investor Relations." The most useful data can be found in annual reports for shareholders as well as investor webinars and conference calls.

on us to ensure that the use of such information is reaching its full potential. Many job hunters who research companies take a shallow approach, neglecting critical resources that can make the difference as they try to present themselves through applications, cover letters, resumes, thank-you notes, and interviews in a way that conveys deep knowledge of the prospective employer and demonstrates a fit between applicant and company.

Company information is either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative information includes financials such as the income statement and balance sheet, which can tell a story regarding solvency and future viability (Bensoussan and Fleisher 2008). Qualitative information, normally found in company profiles from a variety of databases or the company's own website, is mostly related to markets, products, or management strategy. For knowledge-based job seekers the ideal scenario is a public company, since these companies answer to shareholders and as a result must file a wide range of disclosures that can provide insight into the company's culture, challenges, and growth potential. Such intelligence can be used to tighten up keywords on resumes, demonstrate laser focus on cover letters, and provide a strong basis for informed and intelligent interviewing—all of which are especially important at the screening level, when mere minutes can be the determining factor between gaining a full-fledged interview and falling off the candidate slate altogether.

Most company profiles include succinct business descriptions, products, brands offered, locations, top-line revenue analysis, and analyst opinion of the company's potential. Datamonitor, one of the leading publishers of company profiles, packages this useful information in a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses,

### SEC FILINGS

SEC filings are easy to use once you know what to look for. For knowledge-based job hunters, information professionals should direct researchers to three specific filings—the most recent 10-K, 10-Q, and 8-K. Older information is too stale to be used for cover letters, resumes, or interview preparation. The 10-K is the annual filing, similar to the annual shareholders' report but with more detailed disclosures on risk and challenges in the sections titled "Risk Factors" and "Management's Discussion and Analysis . . ." The 10-Q is the quarterly report and has the same type of information as the annual but for the most recent quarter. The 8-K is an irregular interim filing that discloses any material event related to the business environment about which shareholders should know, such as recent sales performance, changes in strategic partnerships, or management defections (Stanko and Zeller 2003).

opportunities, and threats) analysis. Job seekers can use this kind of analysis to demonstrate their ability to add value by concretely tying those corporate-wide potentials and problems to skills and competencies, regardless of the level of the position applied for. For example, if a company's SWOT analysis mentions a specific threat like "inability to manage costs associated with rising prices from suppliers," the savvy knowledge-based job hunter can use that nugget of intelligence to demonstrate experience and past proficiency in working with or managing cost controls. The result is much more compelling than a cover letter that responds only to a more generic competency like "familiarity working with budgets." Using company profiles and SWOT analyses can make an applicant stand out from the pack, since it demonstrates a keener understanding of the business in question while providing a framework to demonstrate value. If Datamonitor is unavailable, the same information can be extracted from SEC filings.

## INDUSTRY INFORMATION

Industry information is also quantitative or qualitative. Such data as overall sales for an industry as well as specific sales for the leading companies in that industry are great examples of the more quantitative side of the information landscape for industries. This kind of information can be used to identify and target leading companies for openings. The qualitative data and analyses, however, are the more useful for knowledge-based job hunters. The best resources for this type of research are industry surveys from publishers such as Standard & Poor's or Mergent. Industry surveys are a critical information source for knowledge-based job hunting; they put companies in context, especially with regard to competition and broader economic conditions that may represent enormous challenges or opportunities to which one can anchor specific skills or competencies and make them relevant to an employer.

Similar to company information, industry-wide analysis can be used at the application stage up through interviewing and negotiating an offer. It is worth noting that some of the most critical data points for knowledge-based job hunters come from analyses of the industry's growth potential in the coming quarters or years as well as the potential for growth in narrower subindustries. Such information can be used to target companies that may be engaged in future hiring, since the trends outlined in industry surveys are virtual treasure troves when it comes to future growth, expansion, and viability.

## CONCLUSION

As information professionals we are in a frontline position to help those suffering the most during the Great Recession—the jobless. Librarians have traditionally provided guidance and assistance to the jobless. There is nothing new in this. What is new is the current job market, which has dramatically and irrevocably changed in the past few years. Sharing our knowledge and skills relevant to researching companies and industries could provide a valuable edge to job seekers who may be stuck in a process they don't fully understand or feel they have little or no control over. We can play a vital role by arming job hunters with the knowledge to amp up their employment search by using business information to target companies and industries. Instead of merely helping job seekers find information about where jobs are posted, librarians should encourage the unemployed to rethink their search by digging deeper through traditional business information resources to uncover potential openings by company and industry. Additionally, we can encourage them to use that knowledge to make a stronger impression during the application process and interview stage. This guidance could provide the critical edge required to get someone hired in this competitively challenging and altogether unprecedented job market. In the best case, it can result in not just a new job but a job with a new skill set that allows employees to continually reassess their value and contributions.

### WORKS CITED


Bensoussan, Babette E., and Craig S. Fleisher. 2008. *Analysis without Paralysis.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press.

Dresang, Joel. 2009. "Online Want Ads Down Again." *McClatchy-Tribune Business News,* September 29, D1.

Dugan, Ianthe Jeanne. 2009. "After the Boom: Working Two Jobs and Still Underemployed." *Wall Street Journal,* December 1, D2.

Dutta, Soumitra, and Matthew Fraser. 2009. "When Job Seekers Invade Facebook." *McKinsey Quarterly,* no. 3: 16–17.

Elmore, B. 2009. "Social Networking Strategies." *Baylor Business Revie*w 28 (1): 25.

Evans, Kelly, and Deborah Lynn Blumberg. 2009. "Work Openings, New Hires Decrease." *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern ed.), December 6, A2.

Mattioli, Dana. 2009. "A Hard Lesson for Teachers." *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern ed.), August 11, D1–D4.

Stanko, Brian, and Thomas L. Zeller. 2003. *Understanding Corporate Annual Reports: A User's Guid*e. New York: Wiley.

# 4

# LAID OFF? HERE'S ONE WAY TO LAND ON YOUR FEET

*J. James Mancuso*

**WHEN MY WIFE** asked how my day had gone, I responded that we could talk about it after dinner. With her uncanny intuition, she knew instantly—"You lost your job." Well, technically yes. I had been notified that morning by the seminary where I had worked as the theological librarian for the past nine years that my contract, which would expire in five months, could not be renewed this year due to the seminary's severe financial situation. By whatever term you call it, the downturn in the economy that began in the fall of 2008 had hit our household as well, and I was about to find myself in the 7 percent of America that is employed, but not full-time (*BusinessWeek* 2009, 13).

We took a few days just to discuss the situation among our family members, including our three nearly grown children. We approached the need to replace my income in a calm, logical, and comprehensive way.

Our first decision was to treat this job loss in its full context: as a family matter and not just a career change for me. We had lived in the area for more than twenty-five years. Two of the children were in college locally, one in high school. Our roots were deep: the local area holds our circle of close friends, hundreds of professional and church-related acquaintances, and thousands of memories. In viewing the entire situation, this consideration held a lot of weight. None of us wanted to move from the area, or even consider leaving our home.

Our second decision was that we would pursue every means possible to replace my income without moving. Since my job as a theological librarian, including being an adjunct professor of English, was unique in our region, I knew that a similar job within driving distance did not exist. A thorough examination of job listings in the newspapers, library job websites, and other sources did not turn up a single opening for a full-time position that matched my needs, experience, and qualifications. Thus, a dilemma of two unsatisfactory choices presented itself: stay in an area where I could not find a full-time job, or move from the area where all five of us wanted to live.

Most Americans have heard this maxim popularized in the 1980s and 1990s: "Think outside the box." Thinking outside the box involves finding solutions to problems that lie outside self-imposed limitations once one realizes that it is permissible to go outside the lines to find a solution.

## TURNING THE BOX SIDEWAYS

As I wrestled with this dilemma, I began to realize that I still needed to think inside the box, but in a different way. It reminded me of the time I was looking through a book of house designs from the 1920s (Gordon-Van Tine Co. 1992, 55). I had found a picture of a house whose designer had dubbed a "bungalow," using a familiar term of his day. He had actually designed the first suburban ranch house plan. How had he done that? He had taken the bungalow floor layout and turned it sideways. From this fresh perspective in the eye of one maverick house designer have now sprung the designs of countless ranch-style houses.

From this observation I coined the phrase "turning the box sideways." The time had come for me to see my job loss situation from a new perspective: I had to turn *my* box sideways. Our family needed the sum total of my income, which had always come from a full-time job, but in turning our box sideways I realized that the income could just as easily come from several part-time jobs.

In other words, the box still remained. Inside that box were our home, friends, church, and all the rest, and thinking *inside* the box precluded moving to a new area geographically. But inside the box were also my expertise, specific talents and skills, and thirty-plus years of experience in the library field, along with the experience and relationships from my work in professional organizations. Why not keep thinking inside the box, valuing its contents as well as its limits as nonnegotiable, but turn it sideways to see my need for a job as a need for a certain amount of income? The sum of several incomes earned from a multiplicity of related jobs in the field of library science can equal the income from a single job.

Our third decision had been made: I would not put my limited time and energy into finding a full-time position; rather, I would secure several part-time jobs, the income from which would equal one full-time job. Limiting the job search gave us the freedom and peace of mind to pursue this course of action without the constant confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty that come from indecisiveness. We knew it might not work. We all knew that we might end up having to move. But this plan held a reasonably good chance of succeeding, and I was willing to try it.

## TAKING ACTION

With these fundamental decisions behind us, I plotted out a course of action:

Relearn the art of job hunting.

Spread the news.

Network with colleagues.

Recast my resume entirely.

Brush up on interviewing skills.

With a plan in place and a specific objective in mind, I began.

### The Art of Job Hunting

Looking for a new job is tough. Looking for three new jobs can be three times as hard, or one-third as hard. It's all in how you look at it. Looking for just one perfect-fitting, complete, full-time job in a tough economy can be frustrating, daunting, and may take longer than five months. But finding part-time jobs is much different. Employers eager to shed costly full-time employees from their shrinking budgets are far more likely in today's market to be looking to get the work done with a cadre of part-timers. Okay, maybe this is not one's cup of tea forever, but for now it can work.

An added emotional bonus comes with the securing of each part-time job. As each part of the income fell into place, I was encouraged to push forward, knowing that at least some percentage of the income had been replaced.

Job fairs, employment seminars, online classes, and webinars abound. I took advantage of them. Local job fairs probably are irrelevant for finding a professional library job, but often an attendee can take advantage of free classes on the art of job hunting, including resume-writing workshops, honing interview skills, and finding the hidden job market. They are even useful for simply interacting with others who are in the same boat; you can give each other tips and encouragement.

## Spreading the News

Possibly the single most important aspect of the experience is just simply getting the word out that you are looking for part-time work. E-mail proved to be an essential tool for me. Through e-mail messages and phone calls I was able to inform dozens of colleagues that I was in the part-time job market.

## Networking with Colleagues

Networking with colleagues began seventeen years ago when I became active in local, state, and national professional library associations. It was natural and easy to contact them and ask if there were part-time openings. All three new sources of employment came as a direct result of contacting librarian friends, explaining the situation of the downsizing, and asking if they knew of part-time work.

## A New Look for an Old Resume

In fact, several new looks for an old resume. Having been at a full-time job that was extremely satisfying professionally, I had not spent much time keeping up my resume over the past nine years. I had to pull together all the relevant information for the updated resume, which meant using the old information on hand, finding records of recent events and continuing education, and then designing a whole new, fresh look. Having most of the information already in electronic format in WordPerfect surely simplified that process. I found sound advice and effective layouts in some basic books from the public library. I ended up creating one large master resume containing all the information, from which I then created briefer, tighter, more focused resumes to use in specific applications. Thus, each time I applied for a position, I tailored my resume to suit it.

## Interviewing Skills

Books on interviewing helped. So did a close friend of mine, a retired human resources manager who really took an interest and gave me some great advice and tips. It is important to note that when someone is interviewing for a part-time job, the stakes are much lower. Both the employer doing the interview and the applicant are much more at ease. This can translate into a much less stressful process of applying and interviewing for a job.

## REPLACING THE INCOME

Over the next five months I secured four sources of income. Since I was the only person actually giving library service in the seminary library on a daily basis, the seminary was eager to retain my services, even if they could afford to pay for only ten hours per week. They also immediately agreed to have me continue teaching my courses. With 30 percent of the income replaced, I was off to a good start. The seminary students, faculty, and I were all delighted that I could remain in my office.

News of my need for a part-time position traveled quickly among my colleagues, professional contacts, and seminary friends. Through one of them I heard of a totally online seminary in need of a theological librarian to manage its electronic resources. I interviewed and got the position—a twenty-hour-a-week job that I could do from my home or wherever I and my laptop computer happened to be.

A library consortium whose staff knew me well pulled me in as a ten-hour-a-week consultant, doing the same sort of work I had done in a previous position ten years before. An old friend of mine hired me to do substitute work at the reference desk of a local public library. Though as a source of income it turned out to be minimal, it nonetheless has kept me in touch with public services and the broader library community.

So, when my full-time position came to an end, I had retained my job (at a reduced schedule) and added three additional employers, all in the library field, and replaced all of my income.

## IT ALL WORKS

How does it all work? It requires constant flexibility and a great deal of organizational skill to juggle the constantly changing needs of four employers.

On the downside:

- My family cannot easily keep track of my schedule or whereabouts.
- I lack all the benefits of full-time employment, like retirement account contributions, paid holidays, and medical coverage (which we secured through my wife's employer). When the swine flu hit, I had no paid sick leave.
- Having multiple offices, briefcases, business cards, and job titles can be disconcerting. Each morning I have to think out my varying needs and pack accordingly.
- Juggling schedules is a constant exercise in organization and flexibility.

- Working at home sometimes does not work well; it requires a lot of discipline.
- Each job requires its own expertise.
- No two days are alike.

On the upside:

- I can name my own hours, take time off if I need to, and work odd hours.
- I can do my online work at a coffee shop, library, or bookstore, and I do. Truthfully, it is far more productive than working at home, which can be distracting.
- I meet new people, make new friends, learn new things.
- Because we stayed in our home, I and my family members avoided the stress, loss of friends, complexity, and upset involved in pulling up stakes and moving across the country.
- No two days are alike. (Yes, it can be a plus too.)

## UNEXPECTED BENEFIT

One aspect of this whole experience of dividing my work week among four employers has become an unanticipated benefit to me and the employers: what I do at each workplace informs what I do at the others. From my work in building an online seminary library, I am now much more in tune with electronic resources that I can utilize at the other, more print-based seminary library. Outside my office door are print resources that can be used to fill interlibrary loan requests for students of the online seminary. At the library consortium office I learn of discounted services and products that I can use to answer questions at the public library reference desk. Because I am still on the front lines of library service, I bring a lively perspective to my consultant role at the library consortium setting, which is quite removed from traditional library settings. Everyone benefits.

## EVENTUALLY SPEAKING

I have enjoyed this chapter in my work life. I am learning all I can from it. I have embraced it as a necessary, but probably temporary, phase—a transition time. I do not want to waste this opportunity to expand horizons and learn new things, but I do indeed look forward to having a full-time job again.

## WORKS CITED

*BusinessWeek*. 2009. "Jobless Rate Jumps to 9.7% in August." *BusinessWeek Online,* September 7. www.businessweek.com/investor/content/sep2009/pi2009094_098102.htm (accessed January 14, 2009).

Gordon-Van Tine Co. 1992. *117 House Designs of the Twenties.* Mineola, NY: Dover.

# NOTHING TO LOSE

## Creative Programming for the Frugal Librarian

*Lisa A. Forrest*

**AS ACADEMIC LIBRARIES** continue to transform from "the building with all the books" into lively spaces for engaged learners, it is imperative that librarians enact the learning mission of their institution. But how can librarians inspire a lifelong passion for learning and extend their influence past the limitations of "one-shot" instruction classes and the reference desk? Literary clubs, booktalks, and workshop series can allow librarians to go beyond simply providing access to information; dynamic programming such as this can support the professional growth, intellectual exchange, and cultural enrichment of the entire community.

But in today's financially strapped times, librarians can be too quick to dismiss innovative programming ideas in their libraries. Contrary to the assumptions of campus administration, many innovative programs can be initiated and run with little or no expense. At E. H. Butler Library (Buffalo State College, State University of New York), creative programming such as the Rooftop Poetry Club, the Rooftop Reading Club, and the "Green Talk" workshop series successfully utilize the talent and resources already present within the community. And, equally important, they serve to strengthen partnerships across campus and to create new roles for librarians along the way.

Obviously, these sorts of programs are great for all involved, but how do we get from here to there?

- Well, it's easy to arrange readings and events when you want to be involved yourself. What are current topics that you would like to learn more about?
- What events are already happening on campus? (It helps to follow the campus news and events calendar.)
- What are folks talking about in your community?
- What are the student organizations doing on campus?

You don't have to be "the expert" to lead a program or club; you just need to be motivated. Start with a genuine curiosity on the subject and then do what you do best—gathering and presenting relevant materials. Contact university and local authorities on the subject, check out books from your own library, and then take the time to explore and learn from these freely available resources. Most of the time, local organizations are looking for venues to get the word out about their mission and will jump at the opportunity to present to an interested audience. For example, our "Green Team" has hosted talks by local experts on earth-friendly cleaning (leading to the making of cleaning solutions to use in the library), city gardening, campus recycling, and reusing old building materials. Our Rooftop Poetry Club features readings by local poets, workshops run by students and faculty, and community poetry/art projects (past projects have used discarded library materials such as card catalog cards, outdated topographical maps, and unwanted LP record albums). Interested in getting similar ideas off the ground? While you're at it, keep in mind some of the following points to help you along.

## YOU ARE MORE THAN A GUIDING LIGHT

Librarians are experts at *guiding* patrons to high-quality information, but our role too often ends at this stage. When librarians create programs that incorporate library resources, new life is given to underused collections and to the library itself. Librarians become more than vessels through which patrons simply obtain information; they become educators who actively transform information into meaningful knowledge. An added bonus of this is that patrons get to know *you* as more than just the person sitting behind the desk. Leading programs can foster valuable relationships (some long lasting) and carry out the library's mission far beyond the confines of the reference desk.

## MINE YOUR RESOURCES

The first thing we did when starting the "Green Talk" series was to create an online subject guide on environmental topics. The Rooftop Poetry Club's website features all sorts of links to useful resources about poetry. Don't stop with physical resources—who are the local experts in your library, on your campus, and in your community? Contact these people and draw on their expertise. Very often, folks are more than willing to talk to others about their special interests or skills (and will often volunteer to do so for the library). We have had a variety of grassroots organization leaders as featured speakers for our "Green Talk" series. Many faculty members volunteer to read their poetry or lead workshops for the Rooftop Poetry Club.

## RECYCLE AND REUSE

When mining your physical resources, remember to make optimal use of recyclable materials for various projects and displays. For example, the Rooftop Poetry Club utilized outdated topographical maps for a community poetry project and discarded book jackets for a journal-making workshop. The library's Green Team has used shredded paper, unwanted CDs, and other discarded library materials for earth conservation displays. In honor of Earth Day, the team encouraged staff and students to contribute to the "Paper Doesn't Grow on Trees" display located in the library lobby. The paper collected in the display was reused to create scratch pads for students. While contributing to the display, students were encouraged to write down (on discarded catalog cards) a "green resolution" (such as "I promise to use a reusable water bottle" or "I promise to shut down my computer when I leave the house") and decorate the tree branches with "green promises." To complement this display, the Rooftop Poetry Club wrote "Poems to the Earth," which were exhibited alongside vintage curriculum posters from our curriculum lab collection.

## RETHINK SPACE

When deciding on meeting places for workshops and other events, consider the underutilized spaces within your library (especially the out-of-sight/out-of-mind spaces near the stacks). For the Rooftop Poetry Club and our "Green Talk" workshop series, that means meeting on the rooftop of the library during warm-weather months. During colder months (we do live in Buffalo!) the poetry club hides away on the third floor of the library, concealed near the literature stacks. You don't need a lot of space to set up a few chairs and a podium. Meeting outside of the traditional conference room allows students to become more familiar with unknown parts of the library (and the resources available beyond the computers). You will be surprised at how often participants leave your event with a newly discovered book in hand. We have also used other obscure areas (a quiet table on a desolate floor) for activity-based workshops, such as journal making and personal essay writing. It only takes a little searching to hear a new student exclaim, "Cool . . . I've never been up here before!"

## NETWORK

Your community is bustling with activity, so get outside the walls of the library and connect with those who share your interests. There is always networking to be done, whether at your local literary organization, a talk at the history museum, or a jewelry-making class. Join online social networking groups related to your interests or, better yet, start your own group. Network with other similarly minded organizations in your community to develop meaningful (and economical) partnerships.

## PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES

Student and faculty members of the poetry club have taught everything from reading poetry aloud to writing poems about food. As educators, we know that career planning and preparation sometimes fall through the cracks for many college students. Experience in leading workshops, and the evidence of transferable skills that this represents, is a worthy addition to any professional resume (no matter the career). When students ask me for letters of recommendation for graduate school or employment, it's easy to comment on their enthusiasm and abilities when I have experienced them firsthand myself.

### WHAT ARE YOUR INTERESTS AND CURIOSITIES?

When starting a new club or program, it is important that you consider your own interests. For me, poetry was a natural fit. The continued success of the Rooftop Poetry Club, which features readings, talks, and workshops by local and nationally recognized poets, is due in part to my own fascination with and dedication to poetry. We likewise started the "Green Talk" series to educate ourselves and others on environmental issues, which led to other positive green initiatives in the library and across campus (such as double-sided printing and our magazine exchange program). Our Rooftop Reading Club (an offshoot of the Rooftop Poetry Club) was started to support the women's studies program and its sponsorship of a visit by *Pink Think* author Lynn Peril. Whether your interest is local history, organic gardening, or graphic novels, the possibilities are absolutely endless (not to mention affordable).

## OUTREACH

Offering programming in the library is also great for library liaison with student clubs and departments on campus. For example, we recently invited the Spanish Club and the classical language department to a booktalk on the Spanish Inquisition (given by retired alumni). I notify creative writing faculty on upcoming writing workshops, and in return they keep the Rooftop Reading Club posted on their department's literary events. The Rooftop Poetry Club was recently invited by the local art museum to write poems to accompany an exhibition featuring the art of Charles Burchfield, leading to a scheduled tour, workshop, and reading at the gallery.

## BRING IT ALL TO THE TABLE

When the Rooftop Poetry Club offers talks and workshops (e.g., on journal making or sonnet writing), I gather the library's collection of relevant items for a no-cost display during the meeting. Students usually explore these materials with great enthusiasm and often check them out to take home. We also provide an active catalog link to relevant resources on the event's web page announcement. Consider scheduling viewings of related films as well, but check with your acquisitions department to see if public viewing rights were purchased with the video before you show it to a group. When collecting library materials, don't forget to glean bits from archives, print journals (our collection of *Life* magazines is priceless), special collections, curriculum, music recordings, art, and local resources. Be sure to leave information for participants to contact you after the meeting or event. Trust me, *someone* will track you down to share something new that he discovered, to ask you something related to the program, or to ask you for help with a totally different project.

### WHAT'S UNDER YOUR NOSE?

When you are arranging for guest speakers or workshop leaders, it is easy to overlook valuable human resources within your own library. We all have unique talents and skills. My own library is filled with writers, music buffs, animal lovers, knitters, cooks, and baseball fanatics. Library staff have voluntarily presented on topics such as making green gifts for the holidays, songwriting, local gardening, and recycling on campus. This is also a great way to get to know your colleagues.

## APPRECIATE . . . AND ARCHIVE

Everybody likes to be acknowledged for their hard work and generosity. It is a good idea to provide featured guests *something* in exchange for their time and energy (even if they are already on board with your cost-cutting spirit).

For all of our Rooftop Poetry events, we archive high-quality photos and podcasts on our website. Featured poets and workshop leaders appreciate the publicity our site provides and often link the archive to their personal web pages. The library benefits from archiving the events, since the record serves as tangible evidence of the library as an active learning space. It's a win-win situation for everybody.

## CONCLUSION

See? You don't need a big budget to establish innovative programming in the library. Since 2005 the Rooftop Poetry Club has functioned with just enough funding for refreshments (think tea and cookies). We were lucky enough to find a great meeting space—keep an eye out for similarly wasted spaces—but we also do all of our own marketing, including desktop publishing and the use of Web 2.0 technologies to promote and archive our events. And even with this grassroots effort, I continue to be amazed at the new connections, both on campus and within the community, that are possible through the club—from establishing solid relationships with faculty members and local agencies to being featured on a national radio program. As librarians, we already have the perfect meeting space (the library) and a *world* of resources at our fingertips. Start small (perhaps one booktalk or invited speaker) and see where you can take it. Remind yourself and those around you, you've got nothing to lose.

### PROMOTING AND ARCHIVING YOUR EVENTS

There is no shortage of free web tools that you can use to promote and archive your events. Blogs, social networking sites, and photo- and video-sharing sites can provide creative platforms from which to advertise and share group activities. Our library utilizes WordPress blogging, Flickr photo sharing, YouTube video sharing, Twitter, iTunes (for our podcasts), and Facebook. We are currently exploring Voice Thread technology, which allows the creation of unique visual presentations with social commenting features.

# 15

# MUSEUM PASSES

## A Low-Cost, High-Impact Partnership

*Rebecca Tuck and Lisa Fraser*

**PARTNERSHIPS ARE A** valuable tool that can help libraries meet the needs of patrons, stretch limited resources, and connect with new users. King County Library System (KCLS) in Washington State has developed partnerships with museums in the local area to provide free passes that are distributed by the library. When organizations are struggling for funding it may seem contradictory to provide free access, but many museums offer periodic free or reduced-entry days as part of their regular outreach. By pairing with the library, the museum demonstrates a commitment to the community, reaches new potential supporters, and gains access to the professional resources of the library. Library patrons enjoy free admission to the museums and interesting programs at the library.

## WHERE TO START

As with any partnership, it is important that the museum and library have similar goals for the pass program. Each should make contributions to the partnership that enhance the value of the offering as a whole. The contributions vary depending on the museum and the library; take advantage of your strengths. The library contribution might include books or other resources related to the museum's collection, opportunities for museum staff to present at the library, generic or specialized booklists, or librarian presentations at the museum.

The first museum is the most difficult to approach, since this is a new venture for both organizations. Look for an organization that has a good reputation and is financially stable. Pass programs can take time to attain full use, so your partner should have a history of follow-through and a focus on long-term benefits.

Though it can be tempting to start with the largest, best-known museum in your area, remember that it is likely to be inundated with requests for partnerships. Instead, focus on a museum that may have fewer opportunities to partner. If there is a museum that already has a connection to your library, that may be the ideal starting place. In the absence of a relationship, you can boost your credibility by providing references from organizations with which you have worked.

### STARTING THE KCLS MUSEUM PASS PROGRAM

When we started the KCLS museum pass program, we looked for a museum that shared the library's commitment to the community, whose exhibits complemented our collection, and whose staff were open to innovative ideas. Bellevue Arts Museum fit all of those criteria. In addition, the staff at the museum and the library had previously worked together on programs. The initial meeting revealed similar goals: the museum hoped to increase attendance and membership through greater awareness of its programs, and the library wanted to promote collections and programs to a new audience.

## THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

At a minimum, be sure that the individuals entering into the agreement are authorized by their respective organizations to do so, and that the agreement meets the standards of both organizations. In some cases, an informal agreement that is documented in e-mail could be sufficient to ensure that both sides understand the expectations of the partnership. Many organizations prefer a more formal letter of agreement. Whatever the format, have the following information in writing:

- Name and contact information for individuals coordinating the programs at both organizations.
- Information about the passes themselves, including their form, the number available, and any restrictions on their use.

- Criteria to be used to evaluate the program, the evaluation schedule, and the date when the program will be reassessed.
- Method of communicating issues that could affect use of the passes, such as closure dates for the museum or library or the loss of physical passes.
- Process for renegotiating quantity or other restrictions.
- Coordination of publicity, collection of information about users, sharing of contact lists, division of cost/responsibility for printing or other advertising.
- Supplemental activities such as programs or resource lists that will be provided by either organization.

## RESOURCES REQUIRED

The main resource used in developing and administering a pass program is staff time. The first program will require the most effort as you learn the issues of your particular organization and area. Though no two agreements are exactly the same, the knowledge gained from each partnership will improve subsequent ones.

It is helpful to have one person at the library serve as the contact for the museum pass program. That person spends time at the beginning of the project exploring the options for administering the passes and then identifying possible partners. Time to meet with internal contacts—administration, cataloging, web services, public relations—as well as with museum representatives is necessary. Once the passes are in circulation, the program contact must maintain the pass mechanisms as well as the relationships with the museums.

It is essential that all library staff are able to speak knowledgably about the museum pass program and understand how to make the passes available to patrons. For a simple program with one museum, an information sheet may provide all the necessary information. If new software is used or there are multiple museums involved, a more comprehensive training program may be needed. It can be helpful to designate one or more staff "experts" who can answer more difficult questions about the passes.

Museum passes provide an opportunity to showcase library collections and programs; these require additional staff time. Library staff may create booklists or subject guides, arrange programming at the library, or conduct outreach. These features enhance the pass program and can be adapted to fit the skills and available time of the staff.

## THREE WAYS OF APPROACHING PASSES

Museum passes can be designed in a variety of ways. There are three basic categories of passes, with variations within those categories.

*Onetime Pass*

- A day pass can be a simple, easy way to provide museum access for your patrons. This approach can be an excellent way to work with museums that are unable to commit to a larger program.
- The museum offers admission to patrons with library cards on a selected day.
- The pass can be a onetime-only arrangement or scheduled yearly, monthly, or quarterly.
- Two-for-one passes are another version of this idea and one that some museums may prefer.

*Physical Pass*

- For ongoing pass programs, a physical pass may be easiest for small systems and stand-alone libraries to implement.
- Patrons pick up a pass by visiting the library and checking it out.
- The pass can be as simple as a laminated card with the logos of both the library and the museum; a bar code and a small sleeve that accommodates a date due slip should be on the pass.
- Admission to the museum is dependent on the date due slip, which clearly states the date or dates that the pass can be used.
- The date due slip is surrendered at the time of museum admission, which can help reassure museum staff that the passes are not used by more than one person.
- To be accessible, the pass should be visible in the catalog.
- Passes can be reserved in the same way as other library materials, or you can make passes unavailable for holds in order to maximize the amount of time passes are in circulation.
- Details of the pass need to be worked out with your circulation and cataloging departments.

*Online Pass*

- Online registration is useful for offering larger pass programs involving multiple branches in a library system.
- Online pass software easily tracks how many patrons use the passes and offers ease of use for online patrons.

- Software geared for museum passes is available for purchase and provides an easy option.
- You may also be able to utilize the event software used for programs and storytimes; patrons sign up online and are e-mailed a confirmation that serves as their admission to the museum.
- Patrons without e-mail have the option of calling the library, where a staff member can sign them up and print out a confirmation for mail or pickup.

## PROMOTIONS

Museum passes may be just one part of a library's relationship with a museum. Programs, such as ones previewing upcoming exhibits, benefit both organizations. Compiling booklists for a museum offers the library a chance to highlight its collection as well as being useful for the museum. Displays of books related to a current museum exhibit, including flyers about the exhibit, are another way to promote the relationship. Purchasing the museum's exhibit catalogs demonstrates the library's long-term commitment; depending on its budget, the museum may be willing to donate a copy to the library system. All of these ideas offer promotional opportunities for both organizations

### DETAILS, DETAILS

When designing your museum passes, be sure to consider these questions:

How many passes will be provided?

Will the pass be valid for one or multiple days?

Will passes be limited to cardholders, or can anyone in the service area use them?

Will there be a limit to how many times a patron can use a pass?

If physical passes are being used, how will unreturned passes be handled?

If online passes are being used, how will you deal with patrons who don't have e-mail?

What statistics will you compile, and how will they be collected?

and provide a chance to showcase both the museum pass program and the ongoing relationship.

Cobranding with a museum can double the number of opportunities for promotion, for the museum will also be eager to get the word out. There are many ways of promoting museum passes:

- Strategic placement on the library's home page.
- Information about the passes on the museum's website.
- Signs and flyers in the library.
- Local media coverage, especially if passes are new in your area.

## SNAPSHOT OF THE KCLS PASS PROGRAM

- The museum pass program includes art, history, and children's museums.
- We offer over one hundred passes per week that admit up to 380 people to local museums.
- Although some museums charge libraries for passes, all of our partners provide the passes without cost.
- Patrons reserve passes through our event software; the e-mail confirmation provides entry to the museum.
- Each pass admits two to six people.
- We launch each new program with a soft opening, to ensure that all the details work well before there is any publicity.
- Books about various exhibits are displayed across from the reference desk, giving staff members a chance to promote the program.
- Our pass program was picked up by a local blog and mentioned in its "Bargain of the Week" feature.
- The museums provide exhibit previews and other programming at the library.
- Librarians provide an annotated booklist for selected exhibits at one museum; the museum formats and prints the list.
- KCLS purchases copies of the art museum's exhibit catalogs; the Bellevue Library maintains a run of the museum catalogs in the reference area.
- Although there was an initial outlay of staff time, the ongoing commitment is minimal and is easily outweighed by the benefit to our patrons.

- Book displays related to current museum exhibits, including information about the passes.
- Posting to city or neighborhood blogs.
- Passports that can be stamped on visits to different museums.

## MAINTAINING THE RELATIONSHIP

After you have established a great working relationship with a museum, it is important to keep the relationship well oiled. Check back with the museum staff periodically to see how the program is working. Compile and share with museum staff statistics of how many patrons have attended events; be sure to include positive comments from patrons. Reevaluate the program as outlined in the agreement. Attend exhibit openings and express appreciation for the contributions of the museum to the community and to the library.

## EVALUATION

Evaluation answers the question, "How well have we done what we set out to do?" Ideally, evaluation is a joint effort between the library and the museum. Using a single method for both organizations is more convenient for the users and acts as a reminder of the agreed-upon goals. One of the challenges in collecting data is to abide by the privacy policies of your library; be sure that you are familiar with them.

Outputs are fairly simple to measure. These include the number of pass registrations or checkouts, the number of times passes are used to enter the museum, or the number of people admitted. Less direct measures include assessing circulation of titles on a booklist or attendance at related events. These methods provide quantitative information and are the least intrusive to users.

Evaluating the experience of patrons who use the passes is more challenging. One of the simplest options is to provide a printed survey to patrons when they enter the museum, with a request that they fill out and return it. If online collection is preferred, patrons can be urged to provide feedback by e-mail or through an online survey. Another alternative, if contact information is being collected by either the library or the museum, is to distribute a follow-up questionnaire.

## MAKE THE PROGRAM YOUR OWN

Whether you have a wide variety of potential partners or only a few museums from which to choose, there is a strong likelihood that you can develop a pass program that will work within your available resources. In a difficult economy, the library and museum will both benefit from a partnership that draws on the strengths of each organization while providing a valuable service to patrons. Make the program your own by reflecting the goals and values of your library and community.

# WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Solutions for Creative Staffing

*Heidi Blackburn and Erin Davis*

**IN THESE DAYS** of budget cuts, librarians have been called on to engage patrons while doing more with less and less. Because of massive reductions in funding, many libraries have become creative with their staffing, leading to greater need for effective and economical information technology so that the library's presence does not fade away. In this chapter we present two case studies that feature different approaches to this situation. Through creative staffing and innovative technological solutions, both the Utah State University's (USU) Merrill-Cazier Library and Kansas State University–Salina's library have maximized productivity efficiently while maintaining a high level of commitment to serving patrons during a period of economic restrictions.

## KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY AT SALINA LIBRARY

The most recent state funding for Kansas State University has been reduced by 12 percent from 2006 funding levels. For the Salina campus, these cuts have resulted in (or are expected to) a 2 percent reduction in student salary funds, and operating budgets were decreased 10 percent for administrative departments. Even before the budget restrictions, the Salina campus library had already reduced the number of student worker positions. In 2009 only five workers were scheduled, none were hired for the summer, and only six were rehired for the fall. During this transition, the staff—one director, one reference/instruction librarian, and two staff members—struggled to perform the day-to-day tasks of four full-time positions and to cover the circulation desk. The most drastic move of not hiring student workers in the summer resulted in reducing the circulation desk from 61 hours a week coverage to zero, in order to retain a budget that could accommodate a reduced number of student workers in the fall of 2009.

To find a balance between meeting the needs of students and complying with budget restrictions, library staff members agreed to stagger their working hours during the summer, with each person taking a 10 am–7 pm shift one day a week, Monday through Thursday. This allowed the library to stay open later while keeping employee morale high, since no one was forced to alter her schedule completely. With disparaging talk about restrictions, budget cuts, and the economy, this was essential to maintaining positive attitudes in the workplace. Although monitoring the desk is not a challenging task in a library of this small size, it has had an effect on the staff in two distinct ways: increased responsibilities, and, consequently, some projects being put on hold.

Increased responsibilities have come in the form of handling new tasks at the desk, such as answering calls, selling coffee, checking in materials, and other public service duties. Although the librarians have always stepped in and helped during a sudden rush of patrons, they are now expected to leave their desks when a patron approaches. This puts their own daily tasks on hold and therefore pushes back other responsibilities. For example, the acquisition of e-books has been a project the library wishes to implement, but researching vendors and assessing the library's needs have moved to the bottom of the priority list because daily tasks like cataloging and interlibrary loans take priority.

In the fall of 2009, the Salina campus library staff hired six student workers to cover the peak operating hours, which included opening and closing shifts. Still, because the library faces a continued shortage of staff and simultaneous expectations to maintain the expected level of excellent customer service, the staff have adopted new methods to keep everything running smoothly. Here are a few of them:

- Adopting Google Calendar as the official office calendar software so that each librarian can quickly see who is scheduled to be in or out before making appointments, booking bibliographic instruction sessions, or planning meetings, thus ensuring fewer scheduling conflicts.
- Mandating cross-training so all staff are capable of such tasks as setting up the laptop/projector for meetings and running the coffee shop.

- Holding weekly staff meetings (instead of biweekly), which enables staff to be more informed about changes and upcoming activities in the library.
- Creating additional online tutorials and posting them on the library's blog, which gives instructors the option to use the tutorials in lieu of a full instruction session.

The library was already experiencing cutbacks before the term *recession* started being thrown around in meetings in early 2009 and was thus prepared to face changes. Some organizations might have despaired at the idea of making additional adjustments throughout the year, but the Kansas State Salina campus library was already in "budget mode." Although the restrictions made in the fall were by no means ideal, the library was prepared to accommodate reductions, having already survived the summer semester without student workers. With further university-wide budget cuts under discussion, the library may have to resort to another hiring freeze on student employees. Even though the library would regret the loss of additional employees, by applying methods previously adopted, the staff are better prepared for such a situation.

## UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

The economic crisis had a significant effect on students, faculty, and staff at USU. The state budget cuts for the university have added up to $27.5 million (Fall 2008–July 2010). Personnel were given the option of joining the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program, a onetime offer that allowed employees to discontinue their employment at USU. This program combined with the budget cuts directly impacted the Merrill-Cazier Library's reference department, reducing staffing by 1.5 FTE librarians and 1 FTE staff member. Another position was already vacant because of a librarian's retirement the previous year. To further complicate matters, the library was purposefully postponing hiring because of budget uncertainties, so the 2.5 FTE reference librarian positions remained vacant.

All told, the Merrill-Cazier Library's reference and instruction department consists of eight full-time librarians, two half-time librarians, one teaching assistant, and three library peer mentors. During the 2008/9 academic year, librarians taught over 1,000 instruction sessions, reaching some 10,648 students. To sustain the heavy teaching loads, the library became creative with staffing. Below we highlight some of those adaptive solutions.

## Creative Staffing

*Library peer mentors.* Library peer mentors (LPMs) are student employees trained to provide reference and instruction assistance to students. Three students were hired to work during the 2008/9 academic year in the reference department. The LPMs play an important role in the library, teaching library instruction classes, staffing the information desk, and assisting with assessment projects for the reference department. Hiring the LPMs freed up staff time for other professional responsibilities and proves to be successful year after year.

*Hire a teaching assistant.* The library has found that hiring a teaching assistant is a great way to maximize funds while helping to ease the workload for other librarians. The library administration approved redefining the job description for the reference library assistant so that responsibilities now emphasize teaching assistance for librarians. This helps ease the teaching burden for the other librarians, particularly with the vacancies resulting from multiple retirements. The teaching assistant not only teaches but also keeps track of instruction statistics, helps manage the reference collection, and provides office support.

*Instruction classes.* The library implemented several changes in the instruction department to help sustain teaching demands. One change included limiting the number of English 2010 classes to three per semester with assigned professors. A second change involved reevaluating lesson plans to include only the most essential learning activities that concentrate on integrating research within the writing process.

In the past, librarians had scheduled anywhere from five to ten sessions with several sections of English 1010 and 2010. Now, although a class may meet with a librarian only one to three class periods per semester, students are strongly encouraged to contact their librarian, to visit the information desk, or to use the library's e-mail help resource for additional assistance.

*Reevaluate.* We also evaluated individual teaching loads, and the library experimented with a new staffing model in which one librarian is assigned

### INTRODUCING . . . YOUR VERY OWN PERSONAL LIBRARIAN

The USU Library found that when each class is assigned a personal librarian, students are more likely to return to the library and ask for help. Students seem to prefer the high-touch approach, since a hands-on learning component is always incorporated in which students can receive one-on-one research assistance.

a lighter teaching load each semester. The hope is that this teaching librarian can use the additional time to work on research projects for tenure and promotion requirements. To help pick up the slack, the teaching assistant and library peer mentors are assigned the extra classes, including online classes.

*Write Now! drop-in workshops.* The library recently started holding drop-in instruction sessions at the end of each semester called "Write Now!"—which offer both writing and research assistance. In these sessions, students obtain assistance with research papers from writing center tutors and library peer mentors.

## Innovative Technologies

In the face of massive budget cuts, along with creative staffing libraries are relying on innovative technological solutions more than ever. The need for effective yet economical tools, such as Web 2.0 technologies, LibGuides, chat services, and other outreach activities are critical in these tough economic times. Libraries are doing what they can to stay afloat so that their online presence keeps up with current technology.

*LibGuides.* Instruction numbers have gone up as LibGuides and other innovative technologies are increasingly used to personalize the student's library experience. LibGuides are online websites designed to enhance classroom instruction and point students to relevant resources; they enable librarians to connect with students even after the class has ended. LibGuides are ideal for both one-shot and course-integrated classes, since the students can still connect with a friendly library face and have a research guide tailored specifically to their class. Some students even continue to use the LibGuides as their point of reference instead of the main library website long after their initial library instruction. Other students discover them when searching the library website and use them, even if they are not enrolled in a class. LibGuides are an excellent example of maximizing productivity while effectively serving patrons' research needs.

*Meebo.* The embedded chat feature within LibGuides is yet another way to serve patrons at their point of need.

### HOLD AN INSTRUCTION SANDBOX

Instruction sandboxes are a fun way to collaborate with colleagues to learn about a new digital tool together in a relaxed, informal way. The USU Library reference department holds one at the end of each semester to update LibGuides, share tips, offer mutual support, and celebrate the end of a hectic semester. This approach not only boosts staff morale but enlivens general excitement toward jobs and new technology.

Meebo, a free chat widget, is installed on the main library website and on each LibGuides page. Some librarians enable Meebo to default to the reference desk chat account so that a librarian is always available for instant messaging. Patrons then have the capability to chat with a librarian any time during the information desk hours.

*Web 2.0 tools.* Web 2.0 tools have transformed libraries and the way people communicate with each other. Incorporating these innovative technologies into the classroom encourages an interactive, hands-on library experience without breaking the library’s budget. Many of the technologies are free tools and require only minimal training for staff, including these:

- Collaborative web technologies (e.g., the social bookmarking site Del.icio.us)
- YouTube (e.g., showing Stephen Colbert’s “Wikiality” clip)
- Podcasts (e.g., students can record a review of a source and post on Blackboard)
- Wikis or blogs (e.g., librarians can create a wiki for the class, so students can comment on each other’s research ideas)

## CONCLUSION

There are economical options available to those librarians willing to try them to enhance library services. The library at Kansas State University–Salina has suffered repeated losses of student employees each year yet maintained a strong commitment to customer satisfaction through flexible summer scheduling, increased communication channels, cross-training, and online modules. Utah State University’s Merrill-Cazier Library has also implemented creative staffing such as peer mentors, teaching assistants, and the use of online technology to balance face-to-face teaching with online assistance to improve productivity and maintain high-quality service to patrons. Both libraries, though differing in size and patron needs, have managed to keep their staff active and engaged with patrons despite financial restrictions by seeking creative solutions to their ever-changing needs.

# INDEX

Page numbers in italic refer to information in sidebars.

# You may also be interested in


## LIBRARIANS AS COMMUNITY PARTNERS: AN OUTREACH HANDBOOK

Edited by Carol Smallwood

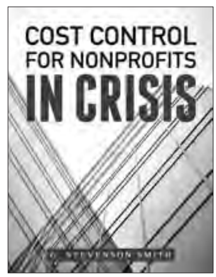
Including 66 focused snapshots of outreach in action, this resource reflects the creative solutions of librarians searching for new and innovative ways to build programs that meet customer needs while expanding the library's scope into the community.

**ISBN: 978-0-8389-1006-1**
**216 PGS / 6" × 9"**

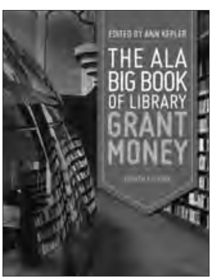
## MORE ADMINISTRATION, MANAGEMENT, AND FINANCE TITLES


**WRITING AND PUBLISHING**
EDITED BY
CAROL SMALLWOOD
**ISBN: 978-0-8389-0996-6**


**WINNING LIBRARY GRANTS**
HERBERT B. LANDAU
**ISBN: 978-0-8389-1047-4**




**COST CONTROL FOR NONPROFITS IN CRISIS**
G. STEVENSON SMITH
**ISBN: 978-0-8389-1098-6**




**THE ALA BIG BOOK OF LIBRARY GRANT MONEY, 8E**
EDITED BY ANN KEPLER
**ISBN: 978-0-8389-1058-0**


**INTERLIBRARY LOAN PRACTICES HANDBOOK, 3E**
EDITED BY CHERIÉ L. WEIBLE
AND KAREN L. JANKE
**ISBN: 978-0-8389-1081-8**

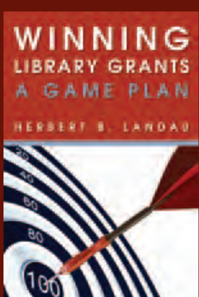

**MANAGING LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS, 2E**
PRESTON DRIGGERS AND
EILEEN DUMAS
**ISBN: 978-0-8389-1064-1**

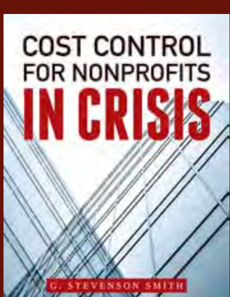
Order today at **alastore.ala.org** or **866-746-7252!**

ALA Store purchases fund advocacy, awareness, and accreditation programs for library professionals worldwide.

You may also be interested in






## PRAISE FOR

# THE FRUGAL LIBRARIAN

## THRIVING IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

*"The boundless energy and creative spirit of the librarians writing in this book will inspire others in the field to make more of their limited resources."*

**—Melissa J. Clapp, MA, MS, Instruction and Outreach Librarian, University of Florida**

*"As a librarian working with 30 percent less funding in a community that recently suffered the loss of over ten thousand local jobs, I am thrilled to be on the receiving end of so many creative and practical ideas."*

**—Elaine Williams, MLS, Branch Manager, Highland County District Library, Lynchburg, Ohio**

*"*The Frugal Librarian *delivers innovative solutions for today's profound economic challenges."*

**—Suzann Holland, Director, Monroe Public Library, Monroe, Wisconsin; 2010 Winner of Public Libraries Feature Award**

*"From new job seekers to people who have been laid off, from librarians to managers, many can acquire and increase their knowledge about job hunting, fundraising, developing and utilizing partnerships, management, and programming on a reduced budget."*

**—Vera Gubnitskaia, Youth Services Manager, Orange County Library System, Orlando, Florida**

ala editions

AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION / alastore.ala.org
50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611
1 (866) SHOPALA (866) 746-7252

Scan this QR code to go to the ALA Online Store from your smartphone (app required).

ISBN 978-0-8389-1075-7
9 780838 910757