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Adventures in Job Hunting

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Adventures in Job Hunting

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Currently Reading
Game of Thrones series
by George RR Martin

I loved library school. I loved everything about it: my classes, the readings, the investigations, and most of all I loved the friends that I made. However, I was leery about discussing my new found passion with non-library friends, family members, or acquaintances. Invariably, when conversation turned to what's-new-with-Annie, I would have to listen to comments such as, "You need a master's degree to work in a library?" or even "Aren't libraries *going away*?" However patronizing those comments were, the question I loathed the most was "How's the job market in that field?" I would then have to admit that the prospects for landing a job upon graduation were dismal at best. This is especially true in the Portland metro area where I live; competition is fierce and job postings are few. While I was in school I tried to not let this slow me down or dampen my spirit. I did all that I could while I was in school to improve my resume—I volunteered, I went to conferences, I took an internship, and I networked my little heart out. Two years passed with me loving school, while I simultaneously pushed the scary and inevitable future to the back of my mind.

My heart became heavier the closer graduation approached. The real world was knocking on my door and I knew that soon I would have to put on my "big girl pants" and begin the quest for work. I was justifiably frightened—I had met people at conferences that had been looking for work for years and had still not yet landed a job. *Forbes Magazine* did not help matters with their publication of an article declaring "... library and information science the worst master's degree for jobs right now" (Smith, 2012). I was disheartened to say the least and the months preceding and immediately following my graduation were some of the most stressful of my life.

This year seems to have been a relatively good one for job postings. Over the course of the summer I applied for about six or seven positions, two of which I thought fit me perfectly. In total, I sat for three interviews. The first interview I went to was for a position that seemed to have been created directly from my dreams. However, the interview experience for that position was daunting. I was required to prepare a fifteen minute presentation, sit before a panel to answer questions, as well as pass two language tests. This also happened to be my first professional interview and by the end I was so shaken that once I reached

the safety of my car, I burst into tears and cried the entire way home. Shortly after that I received a letter concerning my application for the second position that I wanted. I had been dismissed out of hand by the institution that said that I had not met the minimum qualifications. This was a particularly stinging rejection not only because I did meet the qualifications, but also because I had given that particular institution nearly three hundred hours of volunteer service. I had tried to prepare myself for the blows to my ego, but I was less resilient than I had hoped.

Thankfully, all was not lost and I was asked to two other interviews at institutions on the outskirts of the Portland metro area. I was thankful for the opportunities though not enthused by the prospect of the commute that would be required if I were offered a position. In all honesty, by this point in the summer I had become so disheartened by the job search process that I felt that the likelihood of landing a job was impossible. I was mentally preparing myself for the inevitability of having to look outside of my dream profession when the miracle of all miracles happened: I received a call back from one of the libraries I had interviewed at. The director wanted to meet with me again and wanted to introduce me to the library board. I took this as a good sign and by the end of that meeting I had been given a job offer.

I accepted the offer and am now working in a beautiful rural library outside of Portland. Before I took this position I had not envisioned myself working at a rural public library, but I am thankful for the opportunity to work on a wider variety of projects and learn more than I might have working in a larger urban setting. Every day I marvel at my good fortune and am truly grateful to have been given such a wonderful opportunity; I enjoy my work more than I had hoped and am so thankful that I pursued a career in this field. My fears about finding a job, however real they might have been, seem like a distant and unpleasant dream. I am not naïve enough to discount the fact that while I may have found work, many of my intelligent, qualified, and enthusiastic peers have not. I wish that they too could feel the joy and satisfaction that I have been so lucky to have received. My only advice to other job seekers is to keep your chin up; be open to working at a library or in a position that you might not have considered. Even if your career does not look like you had planned, it might end up being something greater than you could have imagined. 

