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## Finding a Library Gig

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# Finding a Library Gig

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What I'm Reading:

\*everything\* by Henning Mankell and  
Allegra Goodman

**W**hat do the newly minted MLS/MLIS graduates need to know to land a professional job? I revisited what I wrote—and also what Lori Wamsley wrote—in the Fall 2008 *Oregon Library Association Quarterly* issue[1] to see what I could add, as well as what may have changed since then.

## What Remains the Same

**Networking**—The importance of this cannot be emphasized enough. Think strategically about how you spend your time. If you are not already getting some worthwhile library experience, then volunteer. Find a library where you can demonstrate your skills. Help them with \*their\* needs. Any type of library experience is useful. Seriously consider joining local library groups and associations, like the Oregon Library Association, and BE ACTIVE: join a committee; help plan events; introduce yourself when you attend workshops and conferences.

**Temporary/On-call Positions**—It can be scary to give up full-time, non-library work for a temporary job, but if you can manage it, you may find that it is an invaluable way to get some professional experience. If you are not in a financial position to take a temporary job, get yourself on various “on-call” lists. Often these openings are in the evening and weekends, so you may be able to fit in this type of work with your current position.

**Relocate**—Especially if you live in the Willamette Valley, you may need to consider moving in order to get your first break into a professional job. Unfortunately, you are competing with experienced librarians from all over the country who want to move to Oregon! Look at states that do not have library schools—you can always come back to Oregon later.

**Non-Traditional Jobs**—There are many positions that utilize librarianship skills, but do not have the “L” word in their title. Some examples include: records manager; database developer; Web designer; researcher; systems analyst; information specialist; anything with “digital” or “metadata” in the title. The list goes on and on. Join the Special Libraries Association (sla.org) while you're still a student, and you will be able to take advantage of the many resources they make available to members.



### **Considerations for the Future**

These ideas are not really new, but we definitely need to emphasize them in the years ahead.

**Flexibility/Change**—Position yourself for change. Keep current, especially in the area of technology. This may be more difficult to do, once you are no longer in school or if you are not already working in a library. Read library-related journals regularly and follow the blogs of those you respect and who seem to keep current themselves. Find a mentor and meet for coffee.

**Collaboration**—Don't isolate yourself. Work on publishing an article or make a conference presentation with someone with similar interests, especially if that person is already working in a professional position. Being a "team player" is something that all employers look for in an applicant.

**Show Passion/Be Positive**—Applying for jobs takes an enormous amount of time and energy. It's easy to feel demoralized by the lengthy process. Be proactive in promoting yourself through some of the tips already mentioned, such as volunteering, writing articles, and meeting regularly with a mentor.

**Advocacy**—In library land now and in the foreseeable future, we will need to justify our existence every day, so demonstrate you have the leadership skills to do this. Start a blog... and did I mention networking?

### **In Conclusion**

You have chosen one of the best careers on the planet! The job outlook can seem daunting, but I don't think it is any worse than many other professions. Maybe you won't land that "perfect" job right out of the gate, but if you can stay positive and active in the field, you will find a place where you can utilize the skills you've learned in your MLS program. Focus on networking. Stay involved. That break will come! 🍀

### **References**

[1] [http://www.olaweb.org/assets/documents/olaq\\_14no3.pdf](http://www.olaweb.org/assets/documents/olaq_14no3.pdf)

