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The HLS Guide to Library School

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The HLS Guide to Library School

**COMPILED BY THE HACK LIBRARY
SCHOOL TEAM**

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Introduction

It all began with an October 2010 [post written by Micah Vandegrift](#) on the blog [In the Library with the Lead Pipe](#). Micah proposed the creation of a collaborative online space for library students that would provide “tips, insights, challenges, definitions or any other type of ‘hack’ that a current or future student might benefit from.” Thus [Hack Library School](#) was born. Since that time three years ago, writers have come and gone, but it is with this same spirit that the current Hack Library School team offers library students *The HLS Guide to Library School*.

When the opportunity arose to compile an ebook of our content, we jumped at the chance but found that working with a large publisher was not the right fit for us. Instead, we chose to create a freely available, open access publication meant for all library students to enjoy. We are happy to report that it will be archived in the [e-LIS Repository](#) in addition to being available [on the blog](#).

This ebook contains some new content but mostly posts that have appeared previously on the blog. It is not necessarily a compilation of the best of Hack Library School or even indicative of the breadth of our content; instead, we have selected content based on the most practical advice we could give to others to—you guessed it—hack library school. We’ve divided the content into three main

sections: Before Library School, During Library School, and After Library School. Within these sections, you will also find subsections intended to help organize the content meaningfully.

We hope that no matter what stage of library school you find yourself in, you'll be able to benefit from the collective wisdom within this guide.

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Project Manager, *The HLS Guide to Library School*

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Britt is librarian at the V.E. Petrucci Library in the Department of Viticulture and Enology at California State University, Fresno. Embedded within the wines and vines program, she provides library services to the Department, the community, and the grape, raisin, and wine industries. She is an activist for libraries, and is interested in partnering with diverse communities to provide innovative library and information services. Britt graduated with her MLIS from University of California, Los Angeles in 2011.

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Alison is finishing up her MSLIS with a school media specialization at Syracuse University. Because she is perpetually indecisive and persistently curious, this is her third round of graduate school. Alison was a teacher in a previous life, and is interested in all things education, including information literacy, social media in the classroom, censorship, and the future of school libraries. She blogs at [Beyond the Bookshelves](#) and tweets [@alisonjane0306](#).

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Topher recently finished his MSLIS at Syracuse University's School of Information Studies, where he continues to study for a certificate of advanced study in Data Science. His interests include information design and architecture, taxonomy, and the idea that librarianship goes well beyond the library. He sees the MLIS as an amplifying degree, and plans to use his growing skill set to translate information from specialized content areas into a form understandable by everyone. Topher's undergraduate background in Music, English, and Biology forever forces him to stay interdisciplinary, a quirk he greatly enjoys. He contributes regularly to Hack Library School, is a past contributor to [Information Space](#), authors [Multivariable Librarianship](#), and can be found on Twitter [@hieanon](#).

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Julia Skinner

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Micah Vandegrift

Micah steals most of his “ideas” from the digital humanities community. He is interested in refreshing library science education, which led to the formation of a group blog called HackLibSchool. Micah is currently the Scholarly Communications Librarian at The Florida State University where he works on open access advocacy and anything related to digital scholarship. He writes periodically online and tweets incessantly at [@micahvandegrift](#). Micah’s next project is whatever DH is doing now. He earned his MLIS at Florida State in 2011.

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**PATHS TO LIBRARY
SCHOOL**

Experiencing LIS: Route to School

This is a collaborative post by multiple Hack Library School writers.

Brianna M.

I grew up basically living in the tiny Main Street library of the town I grew up in. My mom would take us there just about every other day, so often that I can still remember the precise layout of the building. I was an eclectic reader, checking out YA fiction, adult non-fiction, and children's books all at the same time. One day I brought home *Lolita*. My dad looked at it and with a slight raise of his eyebrow said, "That is a very erotic book." Matter of fact, no fuss... so, needless to say, I read widely. Around this time I even [spent one Take Your Daughter to Work Day](#) at the Poynette Public Library, where the librarian was kind enough to take me under her wing. However, I didn't really foster dreams of becoming a librarian. I wanted to be a dentist. It seemed like a practical, helpful, and stable career. And I'd get to be a doctor! Well, when I learned how much chemistry it took to get

into dental school I balked. I became an English major instead. It came easily to me. About a month into my freshman year of college, I looked up careers for English majors and I learned about archivists and academic librarianship from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Everything clicked into place. Suddenly my hoarding of random ephemera from my childhood made sense. I was a born collector. I spent my entire undergrad experience knowing I was headed to library school, so I was able to gather up some volunteer experience. I started library school immediately after finishing up undergrad and haven't looked back since.

Britt F.

I am and have always been a huge bookworm, and my friends always used to tease me (in a bad way!) that I was going to be a librarian when I grew up. I always used to huff that just because you like to read doesn't mean you're going to be a librarian. My "epiphany" came while sitting on the floor of the San Francisco Public Library, doing research on gendered portrayals of violence in children's literature. I looked up and looked around at the diversity of the patrons using all these resources for free, and realized the library is for me. I felt an almost physical shift in my body, and I swear, there was a beam of light shining down on me. Angels sang. Pages looked at me funny. I was meant to be a librarian, and my third-grade self was right: my decision to become a public librarian had nothing to do with books, and everything to do with politics. My personal beliefs align perfectly with I feel the library represents at it's best, what I saw in SFPL that day: open, democratic, non-corporate, non-Capitalist, citizenship-status blind, locally active. The creativity, the daily interaction with people, the continuing education, all just icing on the cake!

Heidi S.

Some (so-called) friends tricked me into going to library school! Tricky librarians! I'm sure there were other influences, but essentially, I got a student job at the computer help desk at my undergrad library at the end of my first year. I LOVED THE JOB (the librarians, atmosphere, students, work, etc.) and continued working there until I graduated. The summer before my final year, I was given some "special projects" to do for the library. Working on these fascinating projects (a scanning project, inventorying, creating reports, making a wiki, etc.), the summer flew by and suddenly my senior year was starting and I told my (so-called) friends I was headed for my MLIS. They snickered quietly (they're librarians, remember?) and said, "Yeah. We take complete credit for *that* brilliant idea." They totally set me up! Tricky librarians! (Thanks, ladies!) So, where am I now? I'm about 20 days short of graduating! I'm heading back "home" – to provide library services for people in small, rural libraries. I'm all about service, folks. If there's one thing I've learned these past couple of years, it's that the best resources are the people you serve! Who knows! Maybe I'll be a "tricky librarian" and set an unsuspecting person in the IS direction.

Julia F.

I grew up loving books and libraries; I was an avid reader and big library user. The idea of librarianship as a career path lurked in the back of my mind for a long time, competing with everything from paleontology and illustrating children's books (my elementary school aspirations) to publishing and editing (early college). But I first thought really seriously about librarianship during my sophomore year of college, while completing a library instruction research lab required of all English majors. Unlike many of my

classmates, I got really excited about learning to use the library and its resources more effectively, evaluating sources, and developing my literature-related research questions. When my librarian instructor jokingly suggested that I should teach the class instead of her I thought, “Oh! Wait, I could actually do that!” During the rest of college, I spent time volunteering and interning in libraries, talking to the librarians about their work, working as a writing tutor, and paying attention to my growing love of research and information. Based on these experiences, I felt confident that librarianship was for me and I for it, so I jumped into library school straight after completing a BA in English. Any qualms I’ve had about being young or lacking in professional experience have been powerful motivators for me and I’m happy with my path.

Julia S.

I have a dirty secret: I didn’t start out wanting to be a librarian. Or an info pro. Or anything close. I started out majoring in Drawing after a lifelong obsession with creating art. After one semester, I realized that I shouldn’t turn it into a career (although I still make plenty of art). I switched to Psychology, hoping to work with sexual assault victims. I volunteered and lectured and did many exciting things. And then I applied to 12 PhD programs and was rejected from all of them. Hindsight being 20/20, this was a really good thing because it saved me from jumping into a field I thought I loved, but now realize was not a good fit for me. Around this time one of my best friends suggested library science. Another one of my best friends had suggested it for years, but for some reason it took two people to make it stick. I remember applying and when I got the letter I told my cats (yeah, I live with lots of cats—big surprise there!) ‘well, here’s rejection #13.’ I opened the envelope and was so excited, I even called my poor friend and woke him up

to tell him about it! Like Britt, I had always been famous for having my nose stuck in a book, and was often found quietly tucked away in a corner either reading or drawing. I have an unhealthy obsession with special collections, but beyond that I wasn't fully sure what I wanted to do when I got to my LIS program. I wasn't sure why I was learning computing and I felt swamped with information. I finally found my niche through opening up and interacting with other students and forcing myself to branch out and try new things. Now I get the best of both worlds—I get to do art and bury myself in special collections materials, but I also get to connect with people worldwide through social media and OA publishing!

Lauren H.

From a very young age, I thought that I wanted to be a teacher or a librarian. My elementary school librarian, Mrs. Dodd (no relation), embodied the classic stereotypes of librarians—gray hair, glasses, shushing—but she was so sweet and encouraging, and I adored her. She challenged me in reading from a very young age, giving me scores of advanced reading recommendations before she retired. I've since found that I do not want to be a school librarian, but her love of service sent me an important message – librarianship was about people, not necessarily reading or books. I worked in my community college Learning Resource Center as a work-study student for two years, performing a variety of tasks—circulation, reference, government documents, and more—and was essentially another staff member. I loved the college atmosphere and helping both patrons and faculty with their research needs. This shifted me toward academia, and eventually toward academic librarianship. I took a [bit of a detour](#), thinking that I wanted to be an English professor, but when I finally realized that that wasn't my path, I

knew exactly where I was headed. Librarianship wasn't my back up plan – it was what I had really wanted all along. I could not be happier with my soon-to-be profession – it contains the perfect amount of service, teaching, and research. Now that I think about it, I should probably give Mrs. Dodd a call and thank her for her service and inspiration!

Micah V.

I went to library school because I didn't know what else to do, and the application deadline was late in the summer. I enjoyed books as a kid, did well in college as a Humanities major, and went on to a Masters program in American Studies simply so I could write a thesis on punk rock. Which I did. I had the pleasure and honor to work with Dr. Wayne Wiegand in my MA program, and as the doom of graduation started to hit me, Dr. Wiegand took me aside one day and said, "Hey, we could use folks like you in librarianship." It was not until halfway through my very first semester, in a Digital Media Concepts and Production course, that I realized that LIS involved a lot more these days than books and Dewey. And I was hooked. I have warmed to the idea of books, and enjoyed learning about the history and theory of the profession, but to be brutally honest, I'm still not really sure "librarian" proper is what I'll end up being. The things I like are all on the outskirts of Librarianship (cultural heritage, digital archives, digital humanities, tech journalism, web technologies, information technology, communications media, etc), and so I think my place may be mediating relationships between these different (yet similar) fields. The best part about all this though is that I do well in communities, and it seems that the LIS field is a community-focused profession, and one I'll be proud to represent and contribute to, whatever job title that ends up being.

Paul L.

I have always been wanting to become a librarian, but other things kept getting in the way. In college, I found a job as a copy cataloging assistant, and I greatly enjoyed helping make a substantial dent in the backlog of books that had been purchased but not yet added to the large university library's cataloging system (and thus not made available in the stacks). I knew then from my brief experiences with the behind-the-scenes work of academic libraries that I could be happy doing that type of work for a career. After college, I almost went to library school but was seduced by literary studies to pursue graduate work in English and a teaching career first. After a decade-long detour, I returned to the idea of working in libraries and finally took the plunge to obtain my MLIS degree. I had a clearer understanding of academic libraries' place in academic research and how I wanted to be a part of those networks of research, teaching, and publishing.

Rose C.

I basically grew up in my local public library. My parents didn't have the money for activities like gymnastics and dance, so I went to the library instead. I never thought spending my free time at the library was unusual until high school, when I stopped by the library with a friend. I was picking up a book on hold, and the librarian didn't need to ask my name to retrieve it. My friend just couldn't understand the bond between a librarian and regular patron. While my love of reading kept me going back to the library, it's ultimately my desire to help others that led me to become a librarian. I didn't even realize you could become a librarian until I had already started a doctoral program in anthropology immediately after undergrad. I quickly realized in my first semester that while people fascinated me, I didn't want

to study and observe them in an academic vacuum — but to work with and help them. And then it hit me: becoming a librarian is an actual career that I could pursue! Before I jumped into another graduate program, I did my due diligence and spoke with a few academic librarians to get a solid understanding of their daily work. Those conversations roped me in.

On Being an Older Library School Student

by Laura Sanders

During my first few weeks of library school I noticed that my cohort was a mix of people in their early twenties fresh out of their undergraduate degrees, and older people who were coming to librarianship as a second career. I count myself among the second group; I am thirty years old and worked for several years as a teacher before enrolling in library school. (I guess some people might take issue with me describing myself as “old,” since thirty is not exactly ancient. But librarianship *is* my second career and that changes things considerably.) After years of always being the one in charge, always the one responsible for lesson plans and grading and classroom management, I was looking forward to being a student again.

Yet during my first year I discovered that attending library school as an older student comes with its own unique benefits and challenges. Your knowledge and skills will shape your view of the librarianship profession, but you may relate to the world quite differently than your younger classmates. When I compare myself as a library school student to the sort of student I was during my first graduate degree, I see how my perspective and priorities have changed. Here are some of my reflections:

First off, the benefits...

You know yourself as a professional

Regardless of what field you worked in before, the greatest benefit of coming to library school with previous professional experience is that you already know how you operate in a professional context. You will likely already be aware of your strengths and weaknesses as an employee, how you respond in certain situations, the way you interact with colleagues, and under which conditions you are most productive. For example, years of teaching have put me in enough sticky situations to know that I can handle any curveball my workplace throws at me. When I take my first librarian position I may make mistakes at first, but I already have confidence in my own adaptability. I trust myself to improve with time and I know I will do a good job.

You've got the skills

More specifically, you will bring the skills you gained in your former career to librarianship. Although library instruction and readers' advisory can be a bit daunting for many library students, they don't faze me because teaching is so tied to both of those things. As another example, I know library students who have

worked as computer engineers and can code databases brilliantly, or multilingual people who can link metadata in different languages. No matter what you've done, you will have a lot to bring to librarianship and your contribution will be unique!

You're ahead of the game... in some ways

Depending on what you did before, you may encounter topics in librarianship in which you are already experienced. You might have already managed large groups of people, which would give you more to talk about in your management course. Or you might be proficient in html5 or Ruby or other useful programs that enable you to put a little extra sparkle in your assignments. Plus, you probably know how to sell yourself. It's likely that you already have a clear idea of how you want to contribute to the profession, which enables you to be more articulate about your goals at job fairs or when speaking to your advisor.

Another important benefit: chances are you will have less difficulty finding student work. My previous teaching experience helped me to land a part time library job during the school year as well as a full time summer position in an independent library. I have learned a great deal from them. Your professional background will give you an edge when applying for such positions.

Despite all these benefits, being a more mature student has its challenges as well.

The financial hit

Paying tuition fees is never easy no matter how old you are, but I do find that it's harder to be a student when you're older. In developed countries, the late teens to mid-twenties are earmarked

for university. But by thirty, time spent in school is time spent out of the workforce. Though I can't say I enjoyed the relative student poverty of my undergraduate years, it was less difficult when all of my friends and I could sit in someone's basement apartment eating mac and cheese out of a blue box. But now, the majority of my friends are working professionals and homeowners. It gets disheartening to pound the pavement for an apartment that's in your budget, to turn down dinner invitations with friends because you can't afford to go, or to watch the money you manage to scrape together going toward tuition instead of your retirement fund. Or for that matter, food. I just keep reminding myself that I won't give up until I'm a working professional too.

You're ahead of the game...but you have to start from scratch

It is likely that you were somewhat established in your former field before starting library school. But now that you're changing careers, you've lost that established position and are back at Square One. You may have to do core courses in library school on topics that are basically just review. You may become frustrated when you've given assignments that seem like useless busywork. You may have to take positions for which you are overqualified as you struggle to get a foothold in your new field. Starting over is tough.

Different priorities

The first time I did a graduate degree, I was twenty three and had precisely one pressing demand on my time: graduate school. While that did gobble most of my time, it did not have to compete with the demands of a job, a partner, or children. But many older students are trying to do their degrees while working, holding

relationships together, and looking after kids. Such a situation forces you to abandon perfectionism. By this I do not mean to imply in any way that you do not take your work seriously or that you do not strive to do well. But you have to be able to say, “This is good enough,” turn it in, and get on with life. While this is a challenge, personally I believe that balance makes us more efficient, productive, and happy librarians-to-be in the long run.

Thus, as you’re navigating your way through library school as an old(er) student, try to remember to work with your strengths and persevere. You may have a slightly different experience than the average student, but you can learn to make the most of it and even enjoy yourself!

Am I Ready for Library School?

by Julia Feerrar

Just three months ago I walked across a stage in south-central Pennsylvania to receive my undergraduate degree. I thought of the hard work completed, the friendships forged, and I wished fervently that my next steps forward would be sure-footed. I mean that both literally and figuratively: I hoped to navigate the stairs without tripping and I hoped that I was ready for library school in the fall.

Two weeks into my master's program, I'm thinking back to that moment and reflecting on my preparation. Honestly, I've felt like quite a novice in the past few weeks. Although I interned in libraries and archives, and tutored extensively in college, I have nowhere near as much as experience as some of my older classmates. I've never taught in a classroom, I wouldn't know where to begin in HTML or CSS, and my understanding of metadata is rather vague. Self-doubt has been creeping in. Am I

ready to do this? Should I have taken a year (or more) to try and get more job experience? Is there a place for me in this profession? How do I figure out what that is? These and similar questions have been running through my head and I'd like to share the answers I've been developing.

“Readiness” isn’t exactly relevant.

At least not an “I feel totally prepared to enter the library profession and I know everything I need to know to do so confidently” kind of readiness. If I did, why go to school? After all, these programs must exist for a reason, right? I have to remind myself that my classmates and I *applied* to be here. Our past experiences and academic training were sufficient for admission. It's time to stop worrying about what could have happened in the past and get ready to learn as much as possible.

Stop comparing and start sharing.

Many of my self-doubts arose as I compared myself to the new people I met. Since reading Laura Sanders' wonderful piece, [On Being An Older Library School Student](#), I've been realizing how great it is that everyone brings different knowledge and skills to their graduate programs. I look up to the students with years of professional experience and I value their insights in class, but I have to remember that those of us who just finished undergraduate degrees have an important point of view to share as well.

Recent graduates are probably still in the academic groove—comfortable with things like regular reading and writing assignments or with learning management systems like Blackboard and Sakai. Perhaps we've been library users more

recently than those returning to school after time away and the issues surrounding, say, an academic library may be fresher in our minds. We may not have as much job (or life) experience, but we're eager to learn.

Being new often means being open.

Although some people enter library school with a clear direction and career goals, many don't. I've spoken with multiple second-year master's students who have changed specializations as they explored their interests in the past year. Staying loose and allowing some room to discover new possibilities for future careers is a great mindset when starting school.

Embrace being a beginner.

That novice-ness I've been feeling has compelled me to ask questions, talk to other librarians, and to look for ways to get the experience I feel I lack. Interested in another student's past job or current on-campus assistantship? Want to learn more about a certain professor's research or a librarian's job? Take them for coffee and ask them about it.

As one of my college professors once told me, feeling behind can be a really powerful motivator. In her words, "lean into the punch": face any feelings of intimidation, get busy, and jump into new things. Get involved with professional student organizations, look for volunteer opportunities, and find a part-time job or internship as soon as possible. Get to know people and learn from each other—these are your future colleagues.

Sure, I could have taken more time before beginning library school, but this is the path I chose. I've found it really useful to

think of library school as a new adventure. I'm ready to learn, explore, and make new connections. I'm excited to be here.

Yes, You Need a Degree for That

by Topher Lawton

Don't let the flood of questions overwhelm you!

When I was starting library school, nobody warned me about the sheer number of questions I would receive, from family, friends, and random strangers. Most of them are variations on a single theme:

You need a Master's for that?

While I'm still getting these questions, now that I'm more than halfway through my program, I think I have better answers...

You're going to grad school for what, now?

Library and Information Science. Yes, it's the degree I would need for some types of library work, but nowadays it's so much more than that! Librarians exist to connect people to the information

they need, and these days those connections are just as likely to be expressed by digital means as by physical ones.

Library & Information Science has a human focus that's stronger, in my mind, than some of the other information-driven degrees. I wanted my graduate degree to reflect my own values and interests, but while the MSLIS is a professional degree, it's interdisciplinary, and I'm not bound to work in a library simply because the word "library" is in the degree name.

So you need a Master's degree to alphabetize books?

No, but advanced training allows me to design entire systems for cataloging—alphabetizing might make sense for some collections, but others might do better with Library of Congress subject headings, the Dewey Decimal system, or something else entirely. Most systems—even the ones that are most common—have some glaring inconsistencies, and my degree will prepare me to help fix them, or design an entirely new solution for the collections I'm working with.

That said, organizing and sorting a collection is really the least of my worries. My degree is professional training that goes far beyond a single library collection. I'll be an information scientist: A guide to the information-overload jungle, able to forge raw data into useful information, training others in the sorts of techniques required to be considered literate in the new big-data era.

Can't a volunteer do your job?

It depends on the job, and on how much training the volunteer has. Think of an EMT—many Emergency Medical Services squads are entirely volunteer-run, but the implication that "anyone" could walk in off the street and save a trauma victim is misguided

at best. Volunteer EMTs go through many dozens of hours of training before they ever go on a call, and EMTs have to keep up with a strict schedule of professional development and continuing education or they risk losing their ability to practice. While I'm not suggesting that information work is life-or-death, I would hope that volunteers planning to "replace" a librarian have an equivalent background of training and experience.

Bear with me: librarians do a great deal more than "library work." While we should have the necessary training when we graduate to go work in a library, we also have the experience we need to be a force for good in our communities. We can help drive better business decisions by preparing white papers and environmental scans in brief. We can encourage people of all ages to be curious about their world. We could use our talents to serve only our own ends, but instead we provide perspective and insight to anyone who asks, and help them sort out some of the thorny problems they're faced with. We are social workers, educators, businesspeople, scientists, and far more than that:

We are librarians.

Of course, the questions are evolving just as my answers do.

**CHOOSING A
PROGRAM**

Things to Consider When Applying to Library School

by Alison Glass

So you've made the decision to apply to library school—that's great! Not all library schools are created equal, though, and it's important to find the best match for you. Here are a few things to take into consideration as you narrow down your choices and make your decisions:

- **Accreditation.** This one is pretty important. It is often said that it's not where you go to library school, but what you do there, that matters, but most libraries and other potential employers are going to be looking for candidates with degrees from ALA-accredited institutions. Good news, though: there are a lot to choose from. A full list can be found on the ALA

website: <http://www.ala.org/accreditedprograms/directory/alphalist>

- **Location.** Where are you hoping to live while in library school? Do you want to be in a major city or rural area, on a coast, north or south? Do you want to find a school that is close to home so that you can continue to work or take care of your family, or are you willing to move? There are library schools located all over the country, in a diverse range of environments, so it is important to decide where you would be most comfortable for the next few years.
- **Online vs. on campus.** Many library schools these days offer distance learning via online classes, which is a convenient option for people who want or need to continue working full time while they go to school, or for people who like independent, flexible learning options. Additionally, if you plan to keep working but don't live near a library school, online classes are a good option. Other people, though, prefer the experiences and learning opportunities of in-person classes, and would prefer a campus-based program. Some library schools also offer evening classes on campus, so people who work during the day can still attend. It is important to think about how you learn and what would make the most sense for you when choosing between a campus or distance program.
- **Specialization.** Are you dying to be an archivist? Crazy for youth services? Fascinated by data science? You may

want to consider a library school that has areas of specialization where students can gain in-depth knowledge of a particular area of library and information science. Some library schools have specific tracks or concentrations depending on what you want to study, while others have a wide variety of electives from which you can choose to develop your skills in a particular area. Not sure what you want to do yet? That's cool too — while all library schools have some required courses, not all programs require a specialization. Check out the course offerings of potential library school programs to make sure there are courses available that seem interesting and relevant to you, or allow you to sample a wide variety of library topics.

- **Opportunities for work.** It's no secret that the key to becoming a successful librarian is not just going to library school, but also getting experience working in a library. If you don't have any library experience, library school is a good time to get some. Check out potential library schools to see if there are student jobs available in the university libraries, public libraries in the area that hire library school students, or the opportunity or requirement for an internship or practicum during library school. While you'll learn a lot in classes, this practical experience will be invaluable when you're looking for a job after library school.

Every person is different, and each will have his or her own priorities when applying to library school. Since you will be investing a lot of time, energy, and money in this venture, it's important to choose a school that is the best fit for you. These are just a few of the things that might help you make that decision.

Dual Degree Programs

by Brianna Marshall

Have you ever considered pursuing another Master's degree while going for your MLS? In my experience, having the option of completing a dual Master's degree was one of the main draws to Indiana University. I was interested in pursuing an MLS and an MIS, or Master's in Information Science, both of which are offered by the same program. However, my program also offered several other partnerships—with History, English, Musicology and African Studies, just to name a few. In my program, it's not uncommon for students to be pursuing two degrees, which takes less credits to do together than if they were to do them separately.

Today I want to outline some considerations for pursuing simultaneous Masters' degrees. It may just be a good fit for you!

Who should consider a dual degree?

Those who know they want a job as an academic librarian—especially as a subject specialist, in a tenure-track role, or at a prestigious university should consider an additional Master's degree. Additionally, those who think they may find themselves in an alt-ac position may also find it useful.

Job postings for academic librarian positions often include a second Master's in the required or preferred qualifications sections (again, especially if it is for a tenure-track position). If you want to be a subject librarian—think English, History, Social Science, Law—you may need an advanced subject degree or you may not, depending on the institution. But either way, having it surely won't hurt you.

Ideally, you should ask yourself the question: What is my ultimate job goal? Look at sample job ads—does the need for an additional advanced degree ever show up? Look at librarian CVs and resumes for the type of position you are considering. All of these things should indicate whether you absolutely need a second Master's, if it would just be helpful, or if it doesn't really add anything to your path.

Other things to consider

- Money – How much does it cost? This is a really important consideration. People go to grad school for different reasons with different funding, so it's not a black and white issue. However, you really, really want to be sure that pursuing an additional Master's degree is a good investment.
- How it works with your program – Will it be a huge inconvenience? Do you get to combine credits through

your program? Are the programs flexible and willing to work with you?

- Others' feedback – Just to be on the safe side, ask others in your field what they think. Try the [INALJ LinkedIn group](#), Twitter, or your mentor. You'll be able to get relevant advice that can help you decide whether this is worthwhile.

Steps to get a dual degree

This dual degree might be formally created by your program, or you may have to forge your way yourself. Either way, the first step is to examine the offerings of your program through the catalog. Whether your program offers dual degrees or not, be sure to talk to an adviser. Although it may not be officially on the books, the advisers may have helped someone with this process before. Discuss your options.

You'll also want to keep in mind that both programs likely have different admissions procedures and standards. Whether you are applying to both at the same time or adding an additional degree after starting your MLS, don't make any assumptions about the application process. Do all your research well in advance.

Dual degree experiences

I don't regret at all pursuing a dual degree. It has given me more time to sink into my program, work more, and even find funding. It also gives me the techy edge that my MLS alone would never give me, and since I want to work with digital libraries this is vital. However, all students' experiences are different. To this end,

I wanted to include statements from three students in my program who are also pursuing dual degrees.

Anna Arays

Library Science & Russian and East European Studies (MLS/MA)

When considering dual degree combinations, I recommend area studies and librarianship as an incredibly useful pairing. For starters, completing a professional program and a humanities program at the same time is incredibly engaging — you get to gather your field skills while also exploring avenues of research for your own interests. Not only is this personally enriching, but it's professionally valuable, as those research interests and area specializations will get noticed when you're on the job market. Many areas of library service rely on professionals with expertise in a particular area: subject reference, foreign language cataloging, and even curating rare and special collections usually require knowledge of a second or third language, if not an entire degree. An area specialization not only lets potential employers know that you have firsthand experience with the needs and interests of students in humanities fields, but also provides a framework for how you display and market those skills. For example, Russian and East European Studies may sound like a niche field, but it can provide a wealth of opportunities for a library student with a focused set of goals and interests. At this point in my graduate career, I have identified my strengths and I have profiled the types of settings I would most like to work in — this enables me to start building networks, making connections with other librarians and professional organizations, and generally making myself known in a specific field where my subject expertise may soon prove useful. While dual degree programs are not the best choice for everyone,

I do think they are an incredibly valuable option for students who wish to work in an academic library or other research institution.

Valerie Lazalier

Library Science & History of Art (MLS/MA)

I began my coursework in the History of Art program a semester after starting my Library Science coursework, and I am so glad I chose to do both. I will echo what was said above about how perusing two degrees opens up more opportunities for funding and job experience while in school, and makes you better qualified for jobs after graduation. That being said, it can be time-consuming to develop your resume in libraries and another field simultaneously. To stay competitive in both fields, you'll have to not only do (nearly) twice the coursework, but also have twice as many jobs, participate in twice as many organizations, follow twice as many listservs, and ideally attend twice as many conferences. It's almost inevitable that it will take more than two years to complete two master's degrees, so that extra time makes it slightly more manageable. Fortunately, during that extra time you'll be getting the invaluable '2-3 years of experience' in your field asked for on nearly all job ads I see. I feel much more confident about going into the job market knowing I'll be qualified for a greater range of jobs and have twice the experience of other recent graduates of library science or art history programs. If you can get funding, a dual masters degrees seem like a great way to jump start a career!

Erika Jenns

Library Science & English (MLS/MA)

My decision to apply to dual degree programs stemmed from my desire to have options and to prevent encountering limitations in

the post-graduate-school job market. I was an English major as an undergraduate and was not prepared to give it up, so the dual degree option offered a nice way to continue studying English while allowing me to apply it to something more concrete—rare books—through the specialization in rare books and special collections in the Indiana University Department of Information and Library Science.

My interest in pursuing a master's degree in library science originally stemmed from my studies in English. After working with rare books and manuscripts at the Lilly Library at Indiana University Bloomington as a part of one of my undergraduate English classes, I began to consider pairing my interest in literature with a degree that would allow me to work with rare books all of the time.

After deciding that I wanted to have my cake and eat it too, it was time to begin applying to programs. I had heard rumors from friends and mentors about dual master's programs, but I found it more difficult to obtain concrete evidence of their existence than I had anticipated. When institution websites weren't helpful, I turned to the archaic system of phone calls and emails.

At times it was a real challenge for me to gain access to the carefully guarded realm of dual degree programs, but my advice is to keep your head up. Don't be discouraged by seeming obstacles or the potential unavailability of faculty and staff members. When I received a no or an unsure answer from one department, I called the other. I kept bothering the institutions I was really interested in attending until I got a straight answer from both departments on how I could pursue a dual degree at their institution.

Some schools didn't have a master's option at all, but Indiana University Bloomington did, which was one of its bigger appeals for me. The research I did before applying was quite time consuming. I often had to leave messages with multiple people because office staff members were unsure of whom to direct my questions to. As a potential student, you really have to do the grunt work with some institutions to make it happen, but it's not impossible. Once I broke through the barriers of miscommunication (or lack of it), I found most staff members to be quite helpful and willing to discuss my options with me.

I haven't started my program yet, but I'm optimistic. I'm really looking forward to having some variation in my coursework and to meeting people in two different departments. I think that the varying coursework will keep me stimulated, and I hope that in the long run, more doors will be unlocked for me because of the diverse experiences I will have in each department.

Hack Your Library School Application

This is a collaborative post by multiple Hack Library School writers.

Annie P.

Several years ago, I had moved to Savannah, Georgia, to attend SCAD. I didn't actually end up going to school there, but I had plenty of time to think about what I really wanted to do with my life. I stumbled across an ad for an art librarian and I thought "That sounds like an awesome job that combines my interests!" I ended up back in California, got my B.A. in art history and started thinking seriously about applying to graduate schools. I was very happy that I had fostered good relationships with my art history professors, so it was easy for me to ask them for letters of recommendation. Additionally, I had worked as a cataloging assistant in my undergrad library, so my boss was happy to write a letter for me. It helped that I knew what I wanted to do after I was finished with college, so I tried my best to talk to my professors while I was still in school.

I really wanted an on campus program so I also looked at programs outside of California. I considered Pratt, University of North Carolina, UT Austin, Indiana University, and University of Illinois. Most people wonder why I didn't just go to SJSU, the most convenient and cheaper school. I wasn't working in a library at the time, I thought it would be harder to get experience if I went to school online, but that was just my personal opinion. In order to prepare for the application process, I took the GRE and totally bombed it. Standardized tests make me nervous and I honestly don't believe they are a measure of intelligence. That's what I tell myself anyway. I wrote multiple letters of intent/statements of purpose, some which were terrible now that I look back on them. I ended being accepted to IU, decided to go to the Indianapolis campus because I thought there would be better job opportunities and the rest is history. I don't regret coming here at all, I feel like I made the right choice.

My advice to anyone who is applying to library school is to talk to a librarian who has your dream job. Ask him or her about the job entails, just to get a good idea of what you're getting yourself into.

Brianna M.

I'm originally from Wisconsin and wanted to stay in the Midwest, so I chose to apply to the University of Michigan, Indiana University, University of Illinois, and University of Wisconsin. As I compiled my application materials, I had my mentors look at them and provide feedback. This was tough because though they were wildly supportive, I felt pretty naive. BUT—it is always advisable to have many eyes on your materials to spot rookie mistakes. I compiled my applications with the statement I heard from about seven people ringing in my ears, "DO NOT say you want to go to library school because you love books!" Duly noted. In my

application I wrote about how I wanted to work with technology and special collections materials. My advice for writing a personal statement is to give the reviewers tangible goals and aspirations, even if you're not absolutely sure or you think you might change your mind later. The personal statement just gets you in the door, and then you can make all the drastic trajectory changes you want. My inclination is that you're better off providing tangibles than something vague.

One piece of advice for the post-application, pre-decision time is to visit the schools if you have the opportunity. I visited each school, which definitely impacted my final decision. It's hard to get a feel for the school without visiting in person. And last but not least, money is important. Compare costs very seriously. In particular, if you have an in-state option I would advise you to strongly consider it. I whittled my school down to either IU or UW. UW was in-state and therefore much cheaper, but IU had the dual-degree and the digital library expertise that I sought. Plus, IU was an adventure. I grew up in a Madison suburb and my sister was starting her freshman year at UW. It felt a little too comfortable, so I took a gamble coming to IU. They offered me a small scholarship and I dedicated myself to finding more and leaving with as little debt possible. I've done all right for myself; I've been persistent, talked to the right people, and secured additional funding. When it comes to reducing your debt, I recommend being absolutely gritty, ruthless, unceasing. These days, library school—and higher education in general—costs an absurd amount of money. Do whatever you can to take care of yourself financially.

Britt F.

Funny that we should be talking about this now, as I just cleaned out the file with my grad school application packet. I can't believe I was accepted anywhere with the statement of purpose I wrote!

I was a English Literature/Creative Writing double-major in undergrad, and I intended to pursue a MA/PhD in English Lit with a research focus on radical/critical theory readings of children's literature... until I had an epiphany my final semester that public children's librarianship is where I wanted to be all along. Academia would have been awesome, but I needed something more grassroots (and I'm too anti-establishment to have done well as an elementary school teacher). With this in mind, I applied to schools that not only had a progressive/critical theory-oriented approach to LIS, but also were in locations where I could work with the community I wanted to serve after graduation. I applied to Pratt, as I was particularly interested in their LEO (Literacy, Education, Outreach) program; to UCLA (in-state tuition and their leftist/diversity focus was a big plus in their favor) and University of Washington's iSchool. I took the GRE once, and my verbal reasoning score was very high, and my quantitative reasoning score, very (very) low. I was convinced that I wouldn't make it in with such a low score, especially as I had a high undergrad GPA, but had done terribly in all of my math classes. I tried to make up for this by asking for letters of recommendation from a professor that I had served as a graduate assistant to as an undergrad (to demonstrate academic ability), a small press I volunteered for (to demonstrate well-roundedness and skills in fundraising and marketing), and a children's art therapy program I taught for (to show commitment to serving low-income communities and experience with children). The above-mentioned awful statement of purpose focused on my own experience as a poor kid in a rural community who was able to survive/thrive because of the local

public library, and then broadened out to my practical interests (literacy, the library as a community center, family education) and research interests (radical/progressive children's literature, progressive library policy).

I received acceptance to Pratt first (in a beautiful package I just recycled), and even though they offered a merit scholarship, it was still incredibly expensive. I was half way through my UW application when my acceptance letter to UCLA arrived. It had been sitting on the counter for hours without anyone telling me. I opened it, screamed a four-letter word in exuberant joy, and accepted the next day! While later I wished that I had looked for programs that had a stronger youth services focus, I also appreciate that being a minority specialization gave me advocacy skills, and the experiences I had working out in the SoCal community are, I think, what makes me marketable at the entry-level.

Heidi S.

Like Zack, I talked to my mentors at my college library (where I worked for 3+ years) and asked them about their experiences in library school and where they thought I should apply. One of them mentioned the University of Washington iSchool and I started looking into it. At the same time I learned about ALA standards and looked into which schools had specific focuses or tracks for librarianship. At that time I wanted to be in an academic setting. I began the application process in August and had completed three applications by Christmas. I was accepted to one (my third choice) by January and was waitlisted for my top two choices. In March I was offered a spot in my second choice and in the middle of May I was offered a spot in my first choice – the University of Washington! I probably shouldn't have led my second choice

school on as much as I did, but I didn't want to give up hope for my first choice school. Being put on a waiting list is the worst feeling – the uncertainty is nerve-wracking! My best advice for someone completing library school applications is to talk to your mentors, do your research and be patient.

Julia S.

One of my best friends had a knack for befriending/dating LIS students, and he was the one who told me 'hey, you should be a librarian!' Apparently, I give off a librarian vibe, which is exciting. I only applied to the one program in Iowa City (University of Iowa SLIS) because at the time I wanted to stay here (I still love IC, just not tied to it the way I was.) I got some stellar letters of recommendation from professors, and I felt like my statement of intent was pretty solid, but I still for some reason doubted I would get in (probably because I'd been rejected from a number of Psychology PhD programs before this.) So, when I checked my mail when I got home late at night, I remember walking in the door and announcing to my cats that my rejection letter had arrived, and then being so pleasantly surprised when I got in that I jumped all over my apartment. My big take away from this is to make sure you turn in the absolute best application materials you can. Talk to the people you really hope will write letters for you (remember, the worst they can do is say 'no') and spend a lot of time on your own letter. For my MLS application, I think I had 6 or 7 people look it over for me. That's probably excessive, but all that insight and forced rewriting made it much better than it would have been otherwise!

When I applied for PhD programs last year, I decided to apply only to programs I really loved and avoid applying to back up schools that I was less thrilled about. I made a decision early

on that, because I absolutely adored what all the programs were doing, I would allow funding packages to be a strong influence on my choice. It was a major consideration anyways, but focusing on funding allowed me to free myself (somewhat) from staying awake at night agonizing over which of my favorite schools I liked the best. I did the same thing as before (stellar rec letters from wonderful profs, tons of proofreading, etc.) and I got accepted to 3 of the 6 schools I applied to. Choosing between those 3 was such a hard choice! I loved all of them, and all of them offered great funding packages and, more importantly, the opportunity to work with and learn from some incredible faculty members.

All 3 accepted me pretty early on, which was nice because I had a lot of time to ponder and weigh my options. It came down to Florida State and another school, and it was a really hard decision! They were the top 2 of my top choice schools, so I was very excited I got in! I spent a few weeks talking with faculty from the department and other SLIS students/alum who were going through or had just been through the process. In the end, I chose Florida in part because of funding, but mostly because I felt like I already had a connection to a body of students there (although I knew a few folks from the other school) and because their faculty, mission, and curriculum all align very well with what I want to get out of my doctoral education. I've been more and more impressed with FSU the closer I get to starting my program (current PhD students have friended me on Facebook, and the program has a very strong social media presence so I've gotten to see all the great things students and alumni are doing) and I imagine I'll love the program even more once I'm there!

The things I took away from the PhD application process could apply to the MLS too: first of all, know what you want out of your

education and only seek out schools that offer that. This was a super helpful approach when I was narrowing down the list of places to apply to. Once I spent more time getting cozy with the places I applied, I discovered that there were a few that I liked a lot but weren't a good fit. The two that I ended up choosing between were the ones that had missions and curricula that I got excited enough about to corner my friends and talk about for long periods of time. Second, departments want students who show initiative. Even if you're in another field right now or are unsure what your research goals are, if you are actively engaged in activities and leadership it will help you stand out. I also found that a lot of schools wanted to know about my publications, but were even more interested in my journal editing experience. If you're able to get on at a peer-reviewed journal as a reviewer or editor I highly recommend it. Not only do you gain some really valuable experience, but it's experience that schools want to see. At the PhD level, students should be starting to develop interests/expertise in an area (or a small handful of areas.) I do lots of library history research, but I also want to research a number of other areas. Lastly, all students should look at how they can engage with our field in unique ways: are you starting up a project at your library? Blogging or publishing in journals? Any activity that shows you're looking at our field critically and trying to find ways to get involved that adds lines to your resume but help improve the field as a whole are always good!

Laura S.

I was born and raised in Alabama, but I've always longed to travel and live in other places. I moved to Toronto, Canada for a year ([long story](#)) then back to Alabama. The semester before I applied to library school, I was working at the University of

Alabama part-time in the Writing Center, and part-time for my friend as a babysitter. I knew that the University of Alabama was a great school, and I had heard good things about the SLIS program. But I still had the travel bug (and was missing Canada already), and considered applying to University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, UBC, McGill, and others. For my UIUC application, I set out to [interview a librarian](#), and talked to the director of the local community college library. She was really fantastic, and I learned so much from just talking to her for an hour. I also learned that she was an occasional adjunct professor at UA SLIS, and she had only good things to say about UA. I realized that applying to UA meant: in-state tuition, and I already had student loan debt; I already had a job here, and could offset my expenses; my family was here, and I had a brand new nephew; I could start in January instead of the following fall; once I finished my core courses, I could move anywhere and take electives online. Thus, I applied only to UA for the spring semester, and would apply to other schools in the fall if that didn't work out. It worked out – in a big way. I eventually got a graduate assistantship and student library jobs, and I found a place in the SLIS community. I also got to temporarily satiate the need to travel by [studying abroad in London](#) for graduate credit.

Therefore, my tips for applying to library school are: 1. Don't be afraid to stay local. Your ALA-accredited MLIS is good for any librarian job. 2. BUT – research funding opportunities, as well as student library jobs and internships, at the schools you're considering. Your MLIS will get you nowhere without experience, and you want as little debt as possible in the meantime. 3. Unless your school choices really emphasize GRE scores, do not stress too much. My quantitative score was horrendous, and it didn't prevent me from getting into grad English programs or LIS programs.

Focus on the whole package – a good statement of purpose, quality references, etc. 4. Speaking of statement of purpose, have someone read over it. I luckily worked in a writing center, and had one of my co-worker friends read over it and offer advice. 5. If you can, get in contact with students who are currently in a program. If you plan to move to a new city, or commit to an expensive online degree, you want to make sure it is a good fit for you. I know us HLS-ers are open to answering questions, and we probably know someone on Twitter who can answer your questions about a particular school!

Micah V.

I'm pretty sure I'm going to be the odd ball out for this one. My experience with the application to library school was actually pretty different from everyone else's. If there's one thing I learned, that is still resonating in my professional life, it's often not what you know, but who you know.

I did a previous masters degree in American Studies, which I enjoyed very much, and through that degree I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Wayne Wiegand (a name some of you may recognize). I worked with Dr. Wiegand on the Florida Book Awards for the last part of my MA program, and when I was approaching graduation with no plans and absolutely no job prospects, Dr. Wiegand took me aside and said, "Hey, we could use come critical thinkers like you in librarianship." Little did I know at the time that I would fit so well in this field and have such a passion for it. The actual application part was the simplest portion on my transition once I made the decision to go for it; since I was already a grad student the 'official' side of things was a smoothly rolled into the new program, and the details (Statement of Purpose, Letters of Recommendation) were processed quickly, especially

with Dr. Wiegand's stamp of approval (he's a rockstar here at FSU). Basically, I skated in because I had no plans, the deadline was late in the summer, I'd been turned down by all the PhD (History) programs I'd applied to, and I had one really great, resounding letter of rec.

So, if I have a tip to offer from my experience, it is to work your connections. There's probably someone you know that can help you along your path, and getting in touch with them and letting them know your goals can have incredible results. And please don't be mad at me for getting in easy! I'm working hard to make it worth it!

Nicole F.

For me, going back to graduate school was a big career change. I was working in banking and ready for a new challenge but I actually thought I was going to get my degree in public policy. It wasn't until I was chatting with my dad one day that the whole prospect of library school came up. I have to be honest, I didn't even realize the degree existed! But soon I was in touch with several librarians that were friends of my family and that I knew from growing up and I was hooked on the idea of getting my MLIS. Since I spoke to mostly librarians who had gone to Simmons, that was the school that went to the top of my radar. I was also living in London when I applied so part of my application process was influenced by wanting to come back home to Boston, where I lived for 8 years before moving London, and Massachusetts, where I grew up. I figured that I was already going to be moving back and switching careers- I could probably do so without also having to learn a new city!

I looked a bit at the University of Rhode Island's program, as well as Syracuse's, but in the end I only applied to Simmons. I was fairly confident with my undergrad transcript, my letter of intent, and the fact that I had done a bit of coursework towards my MBA. I was also pretty pleased I did not have to take the GRE. It was a bit difficult for me to figure out the recommendation aspect as I wasn't able to tell anyone at my job that I was applying for school. However, an old manager of mine volunteered to write one, and then I was able to ask two other colleagues in confidence which I was very grateful for. I applied at the end of Summer 2008 and did not have to wait very long as Simmons has rolling admissions. It wasn't until I had sent everything in, though, that I did get pretty nervous, especially as I had only applied to one school! However, as luck would have it, I found out I had been admitted the same week that Lehman Brothers went bankrupt. It all seemed like some fairly wonderful timing! So I was off to Boston and Simmons; to a campus I had never seen and a program I still had much to learn about...

Paul L.

I actually have two very different experiences with applying for library school—the first time was a year after I finished college, and the second time was over ten years later after I had spent five years teaching college English classes full time. Both times, I only applied to one specific school because I was limited geographically for personal reasons. I would certainly suggest that people apply as widely as possible and be prepared to relocate if necessary or to understand what it means to attend an online program if that is a possible option.

The first school I applied to was UNC Chapel Hill's School of Information and Library Science (SILS) program. As a recent

college graduate, I included some letters of reference from professors who knew me well as well as one letter from my supervisor for the copy cataloging position I held as a student. I also had GRE test scores, which I had taken because I also applied for graduate programs in English (and which I ended up pursuing first). I wrote an idealistic though perhaps unoriginal essay about the power of libraries and books to open doors for people like myself, and I still think it was a pretty good essay though it also revealed how little I really knew about librarianship. In hindsight, I wish I had done a bit more reading into library work before applying for library school so that I could have articulated more clearly what my interests might be. Ultimately, I did gain admission to the SILS program along with some scholarships and graduate assistantships, but I somewhat foolishly did not decide to pursue a library science education at that point, not realizing that many programs do not provide such wonderful financial and work experience assistance.

The second school I applied to over a decade later was St. Catherine University's (St. Kate's) Library and Information Science program. After a somewhat disheartening experience teaching college English classes, I wanted to explore a career change, and luckily St. Kate's library program, the only one in Minnesota, was just down the street from me. I also had a friend teaching in the program, someone I actually met in the context of academic work in Asian American studies, and she had been gently encouraging me to jump ship from literary studies to librarianship since we met about ten years ago. Once I decided to go back to school, I talked to my friend about the program in St. Kate's and applied for admission. I had colleagues who knew my academic work write me letters of recommendation, and I was able to write an essay about my interests in scholarly communications

rather than just abstract, lofty visions of knowledge and libraries. I also took time to look through the curriculum to think about which classes I might like to take, and I also studied the faculty profiles to see which professors I might like to work with in classes or on other types of projects.

My advice for library school applicants is to make sure you can show some kind of experience with libraries—whether it is simply using them in substantive ways (more than just checking out books) that show you understand the circulation of information or having experience working in them. It probably helps to be able to write essays that go beyond expressing a love of books and learning to offer concrete details about how you imagine yourself doing the work of librarianship.

Rebecca H.

For all of my undergraduate career I was sure I wanted to be social worker and was lucky enough to find part-time employment in the field. I always loved school and during my junior year decided to complete an Honors thesis. During the course of writing I became more and more sure that instead of social work, I wanted to pursue a PhD in Sociology (my undergraduate major). I spoke to my thesis advisor and after submitting many drafts of a statement of purpose for her review realized I had no idea what I wanted to do. I loved school and wanted to continue learning, but getting a PhD didn't feel like the right fit.

After graduating I was lucky enough to find full-time employment as an entry-level social worker (one that didn't require a MSW) but very quickly understood that I had no passion for social work as employment. I had a bit of a meltdown but started to look into MLS/MIS programs. I thought public or academic libraries

would be a good bridge between my aforementioned interests — learning and social service. I attended an information session for the University of Michigan iSchool because I was already living in Ann Arbor and walked away feeling confident that I wanted to pursue an MIS. I decided I only wanted to apply to the “top” schools, which in hindsight is totally absurd. It is more important to find a school that supports your needs and interests than one that is highly-ranked. I had a good undergrad GPA and while my GRE scores were lacking, I felt confident in being accepted. The “top” schools at the time were UNC-Chapel Hill, University of Michigan, University of Washington and the University of Texas. I was accepted to all of them and ultimately decided on UT because they offered me in-state tuition (my parents live in Texas) and my boyfriend was really excited to leave Ann Arbor.

Be ye not so snobbish! Do your research and find schools that are a good fit for you. I lucked out in that I absolutely love UT, but ranking of the school should only be one consideration among many — such as types of degrees offered, requirements, financial aid, internship opportunities, etc. — and not the only one. Once you’ve found a handful of schools you like (or one, for that matter, if you really love it), study for the GRE (if necessary), ask mentors for letters of recommendation, get a lot of feedback on your personal statement, and relax. You’ll end up where you’re supposed to be!

Turner M.

As I mentioned in my [Hack Your Program post](#), when I moved here to Portland I didn’t expect to stay longer than a year. I thought that a year would be enough of a break from school before heading back east for graduate school (I knew at the end of undergrad that I wanted an MLIS). Well, not only did I end up staying in

Portland, it took me three years before heading back to school. I spent the time working at Borders Bookstore – and developing my customer service skills – where I discovered a few of my coworkers were enrolled in Emporia’s distance learning program. Based in Kansas, they have a Pacific Northwest cohort based here in Portland. Seeing how it was Portland’s only MLIS program, it was the only one that I applied to. As my undergrad GPA wasn’t anything to write home about and my GREs were just above the minimum, I feel that my acceptance was really based on my letters of recommendation, my statement of purpose and my interview. I feel pretty lucky that I got in, as it was the only place I applied. I should have at least applied to the iSchool’s distance learning program. All’s well that ends well, right?

My advice for folks applying to MLIS program would be to apply to more than one school, and remember: most program directors and admissions officers are going to look at your application as a whole package. So don’t stress too much over one detail, and really put your effort into highlighting your strengths.

Zack F.

I didn’t want to be a librarian until the August before I applied to schools. I’d been out of school for a while and working as bookseller, and decided that while I liked what I did, I wanted more money for doing it. My problem was I had no clue what librarians did or what the process of getting a Masters would look like. Before I even started my application I set out to learn as much as I could about what librarians do. I got in touch with a librarian who had helped me out a lot in college, went to an information session at the University of Washington, and read a few books. The more I learned about librarianship, the more I thought, “this is the career for me.”

I felt like I had a lot to overcome with my applications. I was a poor student as an undergrad and my GPA was fairly low for graduate programs. I had applied to graduate school before (in a different field) but hadn't gotten in, despite some assurances that I didn't have anything to worry about. Because of that experience, I wanted to spend as much time as possible on this round of applications. That decision, combined with a terrible holiday season at the bookstore, led me to apply for some schools that I hadn't really considered at all. When I got started I looked at the schools who's had deadlines I couldn't reasonably make, so I made a list of programs I who's deadlines worked with my schedule. From there I selected the schools I would like to go, and started working on my applications. Each program required slightly different things. The first thing I did was get in touch with the people who I wanted to write my letters of recommendation. I checked with them in person, stayed in touch and let them know where I was. I did this before I started filling out paperwork, because I knew that of everything this was the part that was least in my control. Then I wrote a draft of the personal statement that I would use as a template for my other essays and sent it a few people to check. I filled out as much of the applications online as possible, edited my essay to fit their various constraints, and submitted them. I was 2/3, which I considered really good. I didn't complete one application because I had already gotten in to the University of South Carolina and felt that this program would offer me better opportunities.

Hack Your Program

by Paul Lai

The Hack Your Program series offers observations about specific programs from the perspective of current students or recent graduates of the program. While these posts are of course limited in providing brief, individual perspectives, they offer a way for prospective students to get the inside scoop on programs beyond promotional materials and conversations with faculty who might have a vested interest in attracting more students to the program. These posts, then, open up conversations about the actual experiences of students in them.

All posts in the series: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/category/hack-your-program>

Beit Berl: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/07/01/hack-beit-berl/>

Dominican University: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/09/30/hack-your-program-dominican-university/>

Emporia State University: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/05/31/esu-slim/>

Florida Statue University: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2012/12/05/information-and-i/>

Indiana University – Bloomington: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2012/01/30/hack-your-program-iub-sli/>

Indiana University – Indianapolis: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/05/25/hack-your-program-indiana-university-indianapolis-slis/>

Pratt University: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/08/02/hack-your-program-pratt/>

San Jose State University: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/08/11/hack-sjsu-slis/>

Simmons University: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/06/01/simmons-slis/>

University of Alabama: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/05/24/uab-slis/>

University of California-Los Angeles: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/05/27/hackucla/>

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/09/23/uigsli/>

University of Iowa: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/07/08/hack-your-program-university-of-iowa-slis/>

University of Maryland: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/10/18/hack-your-program-university-of-maryland-college-of-information-studies/>

University of Michigan: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/08/16/umsi/>

University of Sheffield: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/07/28/hack-sheffield/>

University of South Carolina: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/06/16/uofscslis/>

University of Tennessee: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2012/02/03/utk-sis/>

University of Washington: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/05/30/uw-hack/>

University of Wisconsin-Madison: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/09/15/uwm/>

Valdosta State University: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2011/06/28/hack-vsua/>

Study Abroad (via UNC Chapel Hill): <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2012/08/10/mlis-beyond-borders/>

What's Not in a Ranking?: <http://hacklibschool.wordpress.com/2013/04/02/hack-your-program-whats-not-in-a-ranking/>

**ONLINE
PROGRAMS**

The Perils/ Possibilities of Attending Library School Online

by Justin de la Cruz

There's an old adage that you only get as much out of something as you put into it. But what happens when you end up in a class that you really don't need? Or one that doesn't **hold your attention**? Despite my undergraduate experience in a psychology research lab, this semester I chose to take a basic research methods course designed to teach those without a social science background the fundamentals of researching in the field of library studies.

When I found myself in my first few class sessions being introduced to terms like "independent variable" and "causality" — subjects I'd been exposed to a number of times before — I at first let my mind wander, and then eventually took advantage of the

online course format by opening up some internet browser tabs. I started checking social media for links to interesting websites, articles, or news bits. I surfed the net, listened to music, played some guitar, and checked into class from time to time to add a brief comment – to pretend like I was there. Only later did I realize that I could be better utilizing my time.

If you should ever find yourself ahead of the curve in one of your classes, try to reign in your goofing off and block out your class time for something that will help with your professional development. Consider:

- **Schoolwork** – Check out your upcoming reading or writing assignments for your class and see if there are any you can do while class is being conducted. You'll have the added benefit of having your instructor and classmates there if you have any questions.
- **Local networking** – If you're ahead of the curve, chances are that some of your classmates are too. It might be hard to figure out who, but try reaching out to your classmates outside of class to see if you can form a discussion group that can serve as a supplement to the class. You might be able to get into more complex issues that will hold your attention, and you'll gain some peers in the profession.
- **Global networking** – If you're going to mess around on the internet, at least make it relevant. Library studies programs exist to lay out the foundations of the field – self-study and internships are how students begin to develop into professionals with specialties. So read an

interesting library science-type blog like [ProffHacker](#); write your own library-related blog post; find and learn how to use an interesting computer tool like [Plixr's Editor](#) or [Dropbox](#); or search out new professional contacts on Twitter or Facebook.

You may feel that since you know the material you've earned the time off from class. It's certainly okay to take a break when you feel that you need it, but remember that when you signed up for this class, you mentally blocked out certain times to devote to studying. Don't lose all that time that you pledged to yourself.

In Defense of Online Education

by Rose L. Chou

In online discussions about the current state of LIS education, I've seen heavy criticism of online education. Check out these [blog posts](#), especially the comments, for some context. I think the general perception of online programs, LIS or not, is that they are easy and students enrolled in them are recluses, hiding away from interacting with other people. While I can't speak for all programs and all online students, my experience has been that online programs are challenging — though in a different way than offline programs — and I certainly am no recluse.

My main problem with many comments criticizing online education is that they are entirely disparaging. To those who are dismissive of online education, stop putting down those of us who choose to be students at an online program. Your overwhelming negativity is not constructive. I absolutely believe we should be critical of LIS education — *as a whole*, online and offline — but

discussions shouldn't just turn into stubborn debates. If you personally don't like the idea of taking classes online, it's just not a fit for you! But for many others, online education *is* a fit. A profession that's built on the value of access to information should not have a hard time understanding the benefits of online education. I work full-time, as many people do, and online programs are more flexible and fit better with my lifestyle.

Not everyone needs an in-person classroom, and not everyone excels in that type of learning environment. LIS programs should absolutely be exploring and implementing alternative teaching methods. Online programs aren't necessarily easier or harder than offline programs — they require different skills. Additionally, in-person classroom discussion doesn't work for everyone because it has to be facilitated well (and I personally think a well-facilitated classroom discussion is much rarer than generally acknowledged). Online programs offer an alternative. Either way, discussions shouldn't only take place in one environment. Students should be having these discussions both online and offline.

Thinking that online education is going away is unrealistic. As it is, I challenge you to find a class that isn't already a hybrid. Most offline classes have an online component, whether it's professors posting articles on Blackboard or students contacting their professors through email. Since online education is only going to increase, be supportive and encouraging instead of dismissing our choice of program delivery. If students, online or offline, aren't taking steps to gain work experience in a library or other information environment, that's a different issue altogether. And it has nothing to do with the type of program.

Again, I think we should be critically examining LIS programs, but I'm tired of seeing online programs get targeted more than offline

ones. They all have issues. Let's be constructive in figuring out how to solve those problems together.

Online Classes: A Non-Love Story

by Alison Glass

So here's the deal, HLS friends: despite the fact that I am a [documented introvert](#), I like to do my learning in an actual classroom. I know that many library school programs are online, and that this format is convenient for people who don't want to leave good jobs, or who can't pick up and move to a new location, or who have to take care of their families. There have even been [several](#) Hack Library School [posts](#) in support of online education. But I made the decision to leave my job and move to a new place and go to school full-time because I wanted the experience of an on-campus program.

So what, exactly, is the problem? Well, there are many things I love about my library school program. However, enrollment in my specialization is small, and many of those who are enrolled choose the distance program; as a result, the majority of our classes are online. Last semester, I took only core classes, so this semester is

my first experience with online courses. And I am going a little bit crazy.

For one thing, I've [mentioned before](#) that I am a procrastinator by nature. While I am working to be better about this, the fact of the matter is that I tend to put off working on things until the last minute. With two online classes this semester which both have modules that end on Sunday nights, a lot of work gets left to do on the weekends (this also makes me feel like there's no real 'break' in the week from work and classes).

For another thing, I do, actually, like talking to and interacting with my classmates and professors; this is much harder when two thirds of your classes take place in the virtual world rather than the actual one. I find class discussions valuable (even if I don't love to participate in them), and I don't think online discussion boards provide the same experience. Additionally, it's much easier for me to pay attention to a professor who is actually in the same room as me; when I'm listening to an online lecture, I'm tempted to do other things on the computer instead of giving the class my full attention.

I also miss the social aspect of learning; I spent last semester building new relationships with classmates through group projects, class activities, and casual social interactions, and now I feel like I rarely see them, because we all lead busy lives, and now we don't have campus classes to bring us together each week.

So, what can I do to make the most of this educational experience? Well, here is this campus girl's guide to surviving online classes:

Make a schedule.

Campus classes normally last about 3 hours. I've started blocking out a 3-hour chunk of time each week for each of my online classes. During this time, I close out all of my other computer programs, put my phone away, turn off the television, and devote all of my attention to the class. Sometimes I finish early, and sometimes there's a little more to be done, but after that three hours, I'm done for the day. (Obviously, homework and project assignments require time outside of this block.)

Make friends with the other campus students in your online class.

I've been lucky to have one or two fellow campus students in my online courses. When the time comes to work on group projects, we make a point to work together; this is a good way to incorporate some of the social aspects of learning back into online courses.

Get involved in extracurricular activities.

Outside activities are a great way to pursue different interests and maybe even add something useful to your resume. They are also a good way to make sure you actually get to talk to people, and don't end up having increasingly random conversations with your cat (not that that's happened to me...).

Unplug.

Like many people, my job as a graduate assistant requires me to spend most of my time at a computer. Add to that the time I need to put in for online classes, and I am spending a LOT of hours each week in front of a screen. It's important to take a break – read a book for fun, go to a Zumba class, meet a friend for coffee – so that I don't end up with a hunchback and astigmatism.

Like I said before, I am not trying to bash online education – I know it’s a great option for a lot of people. For me, however, it isn’t ideal; since it is my reality, though, I want to make the most of it, and so far these are the solutions I’ve found.

**PREPARING FOR
LIBRARY SCHOOL**

So How Do I Pay For All This?

by Julia Skinner

One thing students and potential students in nearly every field stress out about is how to pay for their education, and LIS is no different. Here is a list of places to look for support, as you embrace your new-found field of study:

Departmental scholarships/fellowships/assistantships

Your department probably has some funding lying around that students compete for yearly, and I definitely recommend giving this a look when you apply. I looked at our scholarships *after* I started, only to realize that the ones I wanted were for 1st-semester students. Ideally, you can apply for scholarships and assistantships and the like when you apply to the school; if not, write the program assistant to find out what steps you need to take to be considered! Another bonus to assistantships and fellowships, in addition to some nice funding, is great experience! You get

to work closely with a faculty member and learn more about their work, gain some new skills, and hopefully get a nice recommendation out of the deal.

ALA scholarships

The American Library Association and its various divisions also offer some scholarships and awards. ALA has [general scholarships](#), scholarships by [specialty area](#), scholarships for [support staff](#), and scholarships for [underrepresented groups](#). I say apply for as many as you can—the worst they can say is no, and if you happen to get a couple scholarships, that's even better!

Some ALA divisions also offer scholarships. LITA (Library & Information Technology Association) has a list [here](#), and there are some for folks interested in [children's librarianship](#). I'm sure that other ALA divisions offer funding too, so make sure to check around the sites of those you're a member of!

State library associations and professional organizations

Most state library associations offer a small handful of competitive scholarships for LIS students. For those of you involved in professional organizations (e.g. for special/medical libraries) either in LIS or not (e.g. a professional organizations for educators), check their websites and ask around about funding opportunities.

Odds and ends

Other options? On campus jobs (make sure to apply for work study on your FAFSA, as some folks require it) make some cash for you and give you some great experience (and potential references). Also keep your eyes peeled for one time opportunities: e.g. a scholarship to attend a conference, or an opportunity to write

for a book/encyclopedia/journal, etc. Get on as many listservs as you can to stay informed about your subject area and be in the know about new opportunities (I'm on listservs for several print culture and book studies groups, along with several LIS and history groups).

FAFSA

I know, it's loans, not grants or scholarships. But it's good to fill it out every year whether you end up needing it or not just so you can have a backup if something falls through. I recommend filling it out as early as humanly possible so you don't have to think about it. Also, you can add up to 10 school codes for the same FAFSA app (I did a FAFSA for all the programs I initially applied to).

Try to explore multiple avenues of funding and keep your eyes and ears open for new and exciting opportunities! Always apply if you meet the criteria; the worst thing that can happen is that you don't get it and the best thing that can happen is that you do!

Working, Volunteering, or Interning Before Library School

by Julia Feerrar

If you're considering library school, if you've been accepted, and especially if you're already there, I would strongly recommend getting hands-on experience as soon as possible. An internship or even just a bit of volunteering will help you to build a foundation of knowledge and skills as you pursue your degree. Other hackers have written on finding opportunities and [making the most of them](#), but I'd like to address some key benefits of getting pre-library school experience in the first place:

Identifying interests and goals

Before starting library school I had never been paid to work in a library. However, I *had* spent considerable time interning and volunteering in them and had been an enthusiastic patron for as long as I could remember. During college, I spent two summers in a small academic library and one semester in my college archives, building an understanding of various kinds of library work. In addition to providing me with a basic 'how things work' familiarity with many areas of academic libraries, my internships helped me to identify some of my interests and strengths, and to identify areas of librarianship I wanted to explore further. For example, after spending a lot of time by myself with boxes and files of papers in one internship, I decided that it would be important for me to pursue positions with more collaboration and patron interaction in the future. Figuring out what you don't enjoy can be just as useful as discovering what you do.

Developing transferable skills

You may be lucky enough to land an internship that aligns with your emerging career goals, but even if you do your goals may change. That's okay! Interning or volunteering will allow you to develop skills and knowledge that you can use in all kinds of positions. I've found things like presenting to a room full of people, providing some form of customer service, and adapting to new technology to be very useful skills in many different library-related settings—and I didn't necessarily learn these skills in a library. Be flexible about the contexts in which you look for job experience; tutoring, marketing, IT assistance, or volunteering as a museum docent could give you an opportunity to develop the skills you'll need.

Making connections

Pre-library school experience—whether a paying job, internship, volunteer work, or shadowing—is also an opportunity to start building professional relationships with others in the field. My former internship supervisors were great resources for what to expect and think about during library school, and I look forward to staying connected with them. Take advantage of a supervisor’s experience and ask them about their career path, lessons learned, favorite resources, etc.

Don’t panic if can’t find the perfect position, or if your other commitments preclude you from doing more than a few volunteer hours. But do take the time and effort to get your feet wet in the proverbial professional pool.

How to Spend the Summer Before Library School

by Brianna Marshall

Two years ago, I had just graduated from my undergrad program and was eagerly awaiting moving to Indiana to start library school. I read Hack Library School and anything else I could get my hands on that might provide some glimpse of wisdom. What should I do? How should I feel? I wasn't exactly sure, and that made me nervous.

If you'll be starting library school in the fall, here are some ideas for how to spend your summer, in no particular order. (If you're a year in, you may enjoy Topher's post on how to [hack your summer vacation](#).)

Start looking at job descriptions you're interested in. Librarian resumes and CVs, too.

Nicole wrote a great post outlining several reasons [why you should start looking at job ads now](#) and I agree with her ideas one hundred percent. You probably aren't exactly sure what you want to do, and that's fine—you'll just have a wider pool to research. Keep an open mind and look at many different types of jobs. Job descriptions can help shape the two years (give or take) that you spend in library school.

Looking at librarian resumes/CVs serves a dual purpose. Not only can you see how someone in your field progressed from job to job, you can also see the variety of ways librarians choose to format these documents (which, as anyone who has ever puzzled over their CV knows, can be extraordinarily valuable). Just google "public librarian resume" or "academic librarian CV." Or get more specific: throw in digital, instruction, reference, archivist... whatever career path you want to learn more about. Many professional librarians post these documents online.

Manage your expectations.

I have spoken to several students who came to library school only to be swiftly disillusioned. It's possible that your program will not align with your expectations, for better or worse. Understand that your program is first and foremost a business, and that it won't necessarily deliver you with everything you need to become a gainfully employed librarian upon graduation. You'll want to take what your program provides to you and supplement it with jobs, internships, conferences, networking, and self-directed learning. I can't emphasize it enough: library school (your program, classes) is just one component of your library educational experience.

Decide what you want out of library school.

So, after managing your expectations, what do you want your experience to be? Lately, there's been a lot of talk about the value of the MLS. I think it's helpful to know that there is a vast number of opinions out there. I recommend reading the following blog posts. (Don't forget the comments! My goodness, those are almost more telling.)

- [Can We Talk About the MLS?](#) - Library Journal
- [Yes, We Should Talk about the MLS](#) - Agnostic, Maybe
- [Why am I Getting my MLIS? Because I Have To](#) - Agnostic, Maybe (guest post written by HLS writer Chealsye!)

As you'll read, there is a lot debate about the merits of practice vs. theory in library school curricula. Understanding the variety of opinions can help you shape your own experience, and that is always a good thing. Hopefully you will not leave library school disappointed with your MLS.

Lose your complex.

We all have our hang-ups, usually that we are hopelessly inadequate frauds and that everyone knows more than us. I want to convey very clearly right now that this is not the case. Whether you think you're too old or too young, have zero library experience or "just" paraprofessional library experience—whatever the case may be, comparisons just don't matter. They're useless and they'll slow you down, and inaction is the real killer. Trust in your own competency and put yourself out there.

Understand your finances.

I know, I know, nobody wants to ponder this. So many of us are sinking into debt for an MLS. I'm a fan of looking the debt square in the eye while considering whether you have any options for reducing it. Are there scholarships on the horizon? (Apply for them, even if you don't think you'll get it.) How can you position yourself to be competitive for them? Is there funding available through your program?

Enjoy yourself.

I really hope you're not reading this and thinking, "OH NO I am so behind! I'd better stress myself out now about how much I need to do!" Stop yourself this second if that is your reaction! Knowledge is power, and doing a little thinking about these topics before the craziness of orientation, a new city, and new faces can do wonders. Be flexible and know that you can set up a framework for what you want to get out of library school—and that it will probably change. This is a good thing!

During Library School

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GETTING STARTED

The First Term

by Zack Frazier

Below is a timeline that roughly follows my own experience in library school and what I have noticed other successful library students doing. Most of the activities are simple non-time intensive ways to help create opportunities to improve the quality of your library education.

Day 0

Start a blog. Librarianship is more and more a profession that demands communication, management, and leadership. Start a blog now. It doesn't matter what you write about (although libraries should be involved in some way), but get practice writing for an audience. If you become a public librarian, you'll have to write book reviews and memos. If you become an academic librarian, it will be libguides and memos. Special Librarian? Memos, reports, and some sort of other information product. A blog will help you when you become a professional; it will help you in library school, and it may even help someone else.

Day 1

Set up your email on the first day of classes. You should either have your school email kicked to a Gmail account, or use a school-provided Microsoft Outlook account. Either way both Microsoft or Google provide enormously productive software through their cloud computing services. This is especially helpful when you have to collaborate with classmates on group projects. After you configure your email, set up a calendar. It doesn't have to be complete, or your main calendar, but both Google and Outlook's calendar functions will aid you in scheduling meetings. Outlook is particularly good at this. Once this is done, spend some time playing around with the product suites. It's always good to get to know your tools. As a librarian, or information specialist, you will be expected to evaluate and rate products and teach people how to use them. Also, it can be annoying when someone doesn't want to use a particular product and then goes to an untested third party product that sucks.

While I recommend using Outlook if your university provides it (a lot of institutions use it as their email provider), **you MUST create a Gmail account.** Some people hate Microsoft, so you'll either have to use crappy third party sites, or use Google's great document suite for collaboration. Even if you love Microsoft, consider using Google Docs; seriously it's *Da BOOM!* for collaborative writing.

The 1st Week

You should be talking with your advisor and professors. It's not really an option, especially if you're in a distance program. I'm not going to talk to you about that. **In your first week, you should start scheduling informational interviews with librarians.**

I did this my first week and it was the best thing I've done in library school so far. If you want to be a public librarian, start talking to people at the local public library. Find out what they do, what skills they have, and what courses they took. Your professors are (hopefully) smart, capable people; some of them may have actual experience as a librarian and some of them may even be current librarians. However, you should talk to as many people who currently work in libraries as possible before you graduate. You'll have to develop your own style of librarianship eventually; it will be a remix of your personality and the experience of people who have come before you. Learn as much as you can now so you can be ready to be a librarian on day 1 of your post MLIS job.

The 1st Month

If you haven't already, join your student organization. It's a great networking tool. [Student organizations](#) can also be a good place to blow off some steam and have fun. A lot of them do weekly or monthly happy hours or meet-ups. Plus, a commitment to professional development is one thing hiring committees look at. So, get started early and join your student organization. You should do this day one, but it should definitely be done by the end of your first month. If there isn't one for your program, start one. You can do it!

Write a blog post, and/or letter examining your experience up to this point. What have you learned? What challenges did you run into? How has this met or failed to meet your expectations? I wrote both and found it to be an enormously rewarding experience. Writing about your progress will allow you to reflect back on your growth later on. It's a great way to track your progress.

The 1st Term

Write down your plan! By the end of the first term you should have some idea of what you want to do. You may want to do a ton of things, but shoot for the hardest. If you train to be a marathon runner you might not be the best sprinter, but you can sprint. If you train to be a sprinter you might be great for that short burst, but running a marathon might be out of your reach. That's my advice. My own personal library school philosophy involves becoming as much of a library badass as possible, so take that particular advice as you will. Either way, you should know what you want to do when you're done, and have a plan.

Join a national professional organization. It's a great way to get supplemental material, advice, mentoring, and networking. Also, see the above advice on joining your student organization. National professional organizations also offer webinars; oftentimes members get free or discounted admission.

Finally, you should attend a local conference or business meeting of a state-level professional organization. These are great networking opportunities, but moreover they are a great way to learn about the libraries in your state, not just in your local area. You should considering joining one of these organizations as well. For example, [InfoCamp SC](#) was a two day unconference examining issues of user experience, information design, and information architecture. It was at the University of South Carolina, in Columbia SC. *Full disclosure, I'm helping to organize it.*

In library school, you'll have to chart your own course, but I hope this timeline helps you structure your experiences in a way that maximizes the opportunities you'll be exposed to.

Class Checklist

by Heidi (Kittleson) Schutt

You are probably “stuck” taking required (core) courses this term, and that’s good! If you took what you WANTED to take, you might not be challenged. You might be missing out on some good foundational information about LIS. You might not meet your favorite group member. You might miss your favorite instructor! You might miss an opportunity for your cohort to make an inside joke that will last for years to come! You might not realize that even though you really WANT to be an academic librarian, you really SHOULD be a public librarian. Library School has a way of helping you find yourself.

So, while you’re taking those first couple of required courses, you’ve got to peruse the course catalog! You may think you have just started classes, but before you know it, an adviser will be contacting you and announcing class registration dates and times and instructions. Be prepared. Here’s how.

Checklist:

- **Cover your butt** and take the required courses in the “suggested order” and at the “suggested term” The next-to-last thing you want is to be taking a required course instead of working at an awesome internship because you didn’t follow instructions or suggestions from advisers. The **last** thing you want is to be graduating late (and spending more money) because you couldn’t get into a required class because you decided not to take it at the right time. Follow the instructions or suggestions from your advisers. Which leads me to...
- **Advisors have memorized the course catalog.** They really do want to help you (and the rest of your cohort), so use them wisely. One of the best ways to get information from them is to make a special filter/folder for the emails they send you. This way it’s easier to go back and reread what they’ve told you. Re-reading also prevents you from asking them questions they’ve already given you answers to. If it’s easier for you to understand through a face-to-face meeting, ask for one! Even if it is over Skype! gChat w video or A Google+ Hangout, but don’t be overbearing. Your adviser probably has a lot of other people to advise and sometimes answers to your questions are better found through the second+ year students.
- **Pick our brains!** When you join a student org (whether it is formal or informal), talk to the students who are farther along in the program. Ask what they would do if they were back at the beginning of their program. Ask

questions about professors. Ask questions about assignments. Ask questions about textbooks. Ask questions about practice vs theory (see next bullet). I'm sure they'll want to talk and they'll definitely have an opinion about the course or topic. I honestly picked another student's brain on the bus for about 45 minutes and she didn't care AND I learned SO much about what to do my second year.

- **Practice vs. theory.** You can never think about this too much. Well, I'm sure you can, but it's not a bad thing! Through your conversations with advisers and other students, attempt to find a personal balance for practice and theory in LIS. A balance that allows you to have the best education you can. There will be some classes that are heavily theory-based and require written papers and in-depth research, models and perhaps a chance to publish! But there will also be practice-based classes where you will stand up and give booktalks, design bulletin boards, or write an outline for a Library Launch for college freshmen. The practice vs theory debate is not a new one. [Here's](#) one of my posts about it; It's been talked about on the blog [here](#), too. but it is new to you and therefore YOU get to decide what works for your learning style. Talk about it!
- **Have a “fun” course** scheduled every term. Although you do have to get your required courses out of the way, make sure you designate one of your courses as “the fun one”. One way to do this is through the use of Pass/Fail

or Credit/No Credit. This gives you more time to focus on the content and less stress about the grade you're going to get. If it's your fun class, you're more likely to do the assignments anyway. And if there's absolutely not one single course you can make your "fun" one, consider looking at graduate courses outside of the LIS program that could still give you credit and also be a benefit to your education.

LISers, this is going to be a great time in your life. And you're fortunate to have the support of your HLS writers and editors as long as you stay in contact with us. Share your questions, concerns, thoughts and ideas. Let's grow together!

Questions and Advice

This is a collaborative post between Teresa Silva, who was entering her first year of library school at the Pratt Institute of Information and Library Science, and Turner Masland, who was entering his final semester of Emporia State University's School of Library and Information Management.

Teresa: Finally, after months of waiting, I'll be a student once again. I'm excited and eager to get going. Following various blog source recommendations including a [recent post](#), I've started a [blog](#), I have a [Twitter account](#), and after years of having a cell phone solely for dialing and texting, I've upgraded to a smartphone. I've registered for my classes, all core, which I figure will give me a better idea of what I'd like to concentrate in, so come second semester I'll be able to take classes with more of a focus. Now it's just a matter of attending orientations and various introductory activities before school at the Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science officially begins on August 29th.

The next two years will be dedicated to learning as much as I possibly can about the realm of information and library science. I'd like each class that I take to be challenging, to learn how to effectively relay information to the public in whichever concentration I choose, to be able to engage with my professors and classmates and develop strong professional relationships, and to reach my goal of graduating and finding a job in something that I enjoy.

Now, I'd like to ask my fellow collaborator, Turner Masland, some questions about his first year experience.

1. How was your orientation to library school?
2. Did you feel you were given all the information you needed during your orientation?
3. What expectations did you have upon starting school? Were those expectations met by the end of your first year?
4. Was there anything unexpected that occurred and you wished someone had told you about?
5. What advice would you give to someone who is about to enter his or her first year of library school?

Turner: Let's start first with Teresa's questions:

1. *How was your orientation to library school?* My orientation was a whirlwind! With a lot of information thrown at me, it was pretty overwhelming. We had a panel of current students and alumni who spoke to us about their experience and offered advice, with them mostly telling us the importance of getting a job in a library, getting involved in professional organizations, and networking as much as possible. This was a lot to take in. But it was good advice, especially if you understood that you weren't going to accomplish it all in the first few weeks (or even the first term) of library school.

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is your career. It is going to take time.

That first day, I remember sitting down next to the girl with the most tattoos, because she seemed like an interesting person. Little did I know that she would become one of my closest friends. It will be important to get to know your classmates: they are going to be your collaborators throughout your time in school, your networks as you enter the profession and some of the only people who are going to understand what you are going through. In many ways, they are your support group and they are important to the process.

2. *Did you feel you were given all the information you needed during your orientation?* Great question! If I did, it went in one ear and out the other. There was just so much information thrown at us, it was hard to take it all in. Listen to what your faculty, advisers and fellow students have to say, and try your best to jot down what seems most important to you.

3. *What expectations did you have upon starting school? Were those expectations met by the end of your first year?* My expectation was that library school was going to teach me everything there is to know about being a librarian/information professional. Looking back, that was a silly expectation. Library school is the start of the process of developing your career, and it is going to set you up with an excellent foundation. But it can't teach you everything. You will learn just as much (and in some cases more) once you start managing information in your first job/volunteer gig/internship.

4. *Was there anything unexpected that occurred and you wished someone had told you about?* Not to scare anyone, but I did not expect it to be as hard as it was. This is a pretty subjective view,

because some people in my program thought it was too easy and others didn't make it through. Juggling work, school, and life became a challenge. Seeking out help and talking regularly with my *amazing* advisor got me through the program. I realized that it was okay for me to slow down the program a bit (I'm finishing the program a semester after many of my cohort members), and was thankful to have a wonderful support system with my family, classmates, and professors. My advice: don't be afraid to ask for help!

I also wish that someone told me to join Twitter earlier! The blogs/articles/opinions/insights shared there have directly contributed to many of my classroom experiences! There would be many times when I would join a discussion with the line "Just the other day, I saw on Twitter..."

5. *What advice would you give to someone who is about to enter his or her first year of library school?* Teresa asked some amazing questions, which has already covered a lot of what I would say here. Know that this is a start of a journey: Library school will prepare you, but prepare to learn outside of the classroom, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

I think the biggest piece of advice that I would like to offer is to remember that librarianship and information management is a collaborative process, and this concept manifests itself in many ways. The most direct way you will experience this is working with your classmates. If your program was anything like mine, every class incorporates group work. You will also need to network and get your name out there, as that is how you will most effectively land a job: through people you know and through people who know you.

You also need to pay attention to what is happening in the industry at large, as well as what is happening in the areas in which you want to focus your career. There is a constant conversation happening on Twitter, Facebook, Google +, Tumblr, and on blogs. Librarians love to share their stories and their observations; be sure to tune in and share your perspectives. Being open to collaboration is going to not only advance your education and careers, it is also going to prepare you to handle a profession that is never going to stop changing.

The most important piece of advice I can give you: Have fun! This is an awesome profession comprised of fascinating people and it is very welcoming to new students! The learning process that you start in library school is going to continue throughout your career and you are going to be amazed at the places it will take you!

**CHOOSING THE
RIGHT TRACK**

Informational Interviews for LIS Students

by Julia Feerrar

Last week I found myself suddenly teary-eyed during a meeting with a librarian. No, I wasn't sad or upset. The librarian's obvious love for his work had just inspired and moved me so much that I couldn't keep my eyes from filling.

I'm only a little bit embarrassed to admit that this wasn't the first time I got a little misty about librarianship. There are few things I find more inspiring than talking to people who love what they do, and that goes for librarians especially. Accordingly, incorporating informational interviews into my supply of professional development tools was one the best things I did during my first semester in library school (shout out to Zack Frazier and his [tips](#) for the first semester). Talking to librarians about their career paths and current positions has given me opportunities to learn

about specific library settings, the skills involved in certain positions, and the challenges and joys of librarianship as a profession. I have also expanded my professional network, gained confidence in my interviewing skills, and boosted my enthusiasm for the future.

The web has lots of resources about informational interviewing. This [tutorial](#) from Quintcareers.com and this [article](#) from About.com offer guidelines for preparation, active listening, and follow up. Instead of rehashing all of the information found on these and many other sites, I'd like to offer my thoughts on two aspects of informational interviewing that I see as most challenging: working up the courage to ask for an informational interview and figuring out how informational interviews can play a part in job hunting.

Confident contacting

Even as I sing the praises of informational interviewing, I recognize that it can seem intimidating or potentially awkward. I used to be afraid of bothering librarians or asking silly questions. I often feel nervous before pressing send on a carefully drafted email and before walking into a meeting because those first impressions are so important to me.

Before attempting to schedule an interview, I like to begin by identifying some kind of learning goal. For example, soon after I started library school I realized that I had only a vague understanding of how a large university library system works with its various departments and branches. I decided to contact the director of one of the libraries on campus, hoping to learn about how her library fits into the university context. My initial reflection gave me direction (I knew that I wanted to talk to a

director at one of the main libraries) and confidence (I felt like I had a valid, central reason for requesting an interview).

When asking for an interview through email I always begin by introducing myself as a library school student interested in learning more about x or y. Having a mutual acquaintance to reference in that first introduction can be another confidence booster. As students, we have incredible networking resources in those around us and I would certainly recommend asking an instructor, classmate, or colleague if they can put you in touch with anyone who can then answer your questions. However, I don't see this is a prerequisite for interview requests. If you already have contact information (a librarian on campus or a guest speaker from a class), I don't think there's anything wrong with approaching them directly.

Information seeking and job seeking

Almost every article I've read about informational interviews warns explicitly against asking for employment. As a general rule, I agree completely: informational interviews are about seeking information, not jobs. However, as I searched for library experience last semester, I found that keeping my job hunt totally separate from informational interviewing was pretty difficult. I wanted to ask questions like, "I'm really interested in working here or somewhere like it and I'd love to get more experience in x, do you have any advice?" or even, "Does this library hire student assistants? How does that process work?" Those kinds of questions hint at employment. Is that okay? As students looking to get hands-on experience, I think we may have a little flexibility to stray into job- or internship-seeking discussions as long as we proceed with caution and keep learning as the focus of the interview.

Regardless of whether or not employment-related discussion features in an interview, I see informational interviewing as playing such a useful role in job interview preparation and professional development more broadly. I hope that it won't be too long before I can offer inspiration and encouragement from the other side of the table.

Self-assessment and Identifying What You Want to Know

by Annie Pho

Self-assessment is a life long learning tool that helps guide us in identifying what our personal strengths and weaknesses are. Whether you are a working professional or a student, this is a valuable skill to have and to work on. Taking the time to reflect on what you've learned and what you still want to learn is essential for self-growth and development. For a student like myself, who is in the middle of my MLIS degree, doing this was crucial for planning the rest of my curriculum. Being able to identify what gaps I had in my own experiences helped me to make some decisions about what I need to do in the upcoming year.

Some people go into library school knowing exactly where they want to work. In fact, it's usually an ice breaker question, "What kind of library do you want to work in?" On the other hand, I'm

sure it's normal to change your mind a few times once you've become acclimated to the library field. I have definitely shifted my personal goals since I started my program. I went from being sure I wanted to be an art librarian, to realizing I should be more flexible. I started looking into digital libraries. I had to ask myself where I want to be once I am finished school and what kind of work I want to do. As a result, I needed to shift my coursework to match my goals.

To help me prepare, I spoke to a professor who specializes in digital libraries to see what he thought was important for students to know and learn. He was kind enough to recommend some books and classes, but what really helped me was some job postings that he printed out for me. He underlined all the skills and qualifications that were required to show me what employers are looking for. I also recommend that all students do this because this is how you can identify what else you want to learn while you're still in school and whether your program can teach you those skills. It can be a little intimidating to look at a list of qualifications that are full of acronyms (XML, PHP, MODS, METS, EAD to name a few), but once you break each one down, it is actually manageable. If you don't know what something is, most professors or librarians in the field are willing to give you their advice or explain any program that you don't recognize.

Let's be honest, it's unrealistic to expect to learn everything that you'll need to know in school. In a 36 credit hour program, there just isn't enough time to cover everything. More than likely, you're going to have to make sacrifices and look elsewhere to supplement your learning. My program doesn't offer classes in metadata, database design, or XML, so instead, I looked outside my program to see where I could learn a little more on my own. I

was able to find some cool workshops taught by the IT department in my library, in addition to taking a summer course in metadata taught at a different campus. There are plenty of ways to make up for any gaps that you may have, like volunteering or interning somewhere that will help you gain experience. The most important part of that is being able to identify what you need to know and figuring out how you are going to learn it.

Start Reading Job

Ads Now

by Nicole Helregel

One piece of advice that multiple people gave me around the time I started library school is: it is never too early to start reading library job ads (*especially* if you've already started library school). Of course the library hiring process is not so lengthy that you need to start actually seeking jobs if you aren't within a few months of graduation. Rather, looking at job ads is a great way to discover a lot of things about yourself, your library school, your career goals, the job market, and the field that you have entered. While it can sometimes be disheartening (because you're still far away from graduation) or strangely inspiring (because of the totally amazing opportunities and positions that are waiting for you) or even confusing (why would I need to know how to do *that*), reading library job ads will almost always prove to be an enlightening and worthwhile use of your time.

Here are some of the key reasons you should be reading library job ads **now** and how you can use them to shape your path:

Developing your long term goals/career path

Reading job descriptions in the field is one way to narrow down your interests and goals. A lot of us come into library school with an undecided/generalist feeling. We know we love information, people, access, and technology, but we're unsure of how exactly that manifests into a career. By reading about the requirements and duties surrounding LIS jobs, you will be able to hone in on what exactly you want to do once you graduate!

Shaping your degree

Once you have a clearer sense of your long term goals, you can *use them* to shape your LIS educational experience. This seems very basic, and is probably something you're trying to do already. But using job ads specifically has helped me in a number of practical ways. Look at the ads for the jobs you want most: what kinds of experiences will you need? Use these to shape your course choices and practicum/internship ideas. What kinds of tech skills are required? Use these to shape what kinds of tech courses you take. Don't get too hung up on individual programs or languages, but rather focus on learning the basics of and theories behind things like database and web design.

Gaining valuable experience

The sooner you figure out what kind of practical experience you need, the sooner you can seek it out. Many students finish their MLIS in two years. That's two years of time you can spend getting in-library experience (whether paid, volunteer, internship, or practicum). Don't wait until the month before graduation to find

out that the job you want requires a year or more of in-library experience! Read those job ads and figure it out; the sooner, the better!

Inspiration

Sometimes it can feel like your MLIS is dragging on forever. Other times you can get bogged down by the negativity of peers or coworkers. Perusing job ads can be an uplifting, inspirational experience, *if you let it*. Yes, it can be distressing to think about how much more you have to do before you're on the job market. And, yes, sometimes reading job descriptions can seem daunting. But, you can choose to use it as a positive exercise: read over your dream job descriptions and think positive thoughts about graduation, your career possibilities, and the dynamic, engaging field that you have chosen to enter. Trust me, reading job ads can actually be an uplifting bright spot during rough times.

It's a good habit to make!

It's never too early to start figuring out some good areas and sites to look for potential employment. If you've been using said sites to do all of the aforementioned things, you'll already be well-versed in the language, terms, and requirements when it comes time to search in earnest for a post-graduation job!

Advice on Advising

by Ashley Wescott

I have an awesome academic advisor. You may be thinking “Is that a typo? Did she say awesome?” I’ve had conversations with my advisor that drastically changed the look of my coursework and could ultimately change my career. My advisor provides honest, inspiring, challenging feedback that every student should be privilege to—but many are not. Heidi Kittleson’s post [Class checklist](#) spurred some great discussion that revealed how much of a mixed bag advising can be.

The quality of advising relationships can run the gamut from school to school. Online advising can differ from on campus advising. Your advisor may be a LIS faculty member or a generic university administrator. Some advisors engage their advisees while others keep it business. In a dream world we would all have access to great advisors. Since that’s not the case I’ve done my best to dissect my interactions with my advisor to figure out what works, what other students should look for in an advisor—and where to turn if your advisor’s not cutting it.

Getting to graduation

Start planning for graduation early on. Discuss with your advisor your degree's requirements and the best path for meeting them. As you begin school look at requirements and course schedules to create a degree plan that details what classes you will take by semester. If you're not required to create a degree plan with your advisor, create one on your own and ask them for feedback.

This is meant to be a flexible tool but in some cases it may be difficult to plan out several semesters in advance. You may change career paths, course offerings may change, etc. At the very least ask your advisor for meaningful feedback on course pairings each semester. My advisor has looked at my degree plan and suggested moving classes around because of work load or even because skills learned in one class complimented a course project in another. Planning ahead can allow you to strategize with your advisor instead of just marking courses off a requirements list.

Getting to know you

Library school does not happen in a vacuum. One of the first conversations I had with my advisor included her asking me, "What is your dream?" This was followed by questions about my habits as a student, my work situation, my life in general. Library school can get tough. Job hunting can be tougher. It's important for you and your advisor to know why you're putting in this work, spending this money and taking this leap. It's also important that your advisor knows your context. Do you have kids? Are you working two jobs? Do you have a learning disability? Hopefully your advisor is working to discover these things about you. If not, tell them what you think they need to know so that they can give you good advice that is relevant to your situation.

Tough love

Picking out classes can be like going to a candy store—there are so many neat things to learn about in library school. While your advisor should be supportive of your goals and choices, they should also be telling you to eat your vegetables. Before the summer semester I picked out a lot of *cool* classes that came highly recommended by my classmates. My advisor gave me feedback that led to me swapping out those classes for more challenging ones that would provide me with more marketable skills. Most of the reviews you hear about a class will be from other students. While this is important, seek out faculty or advisor feedback when possible. They might think a class is cool too, but they may have some good input on how a course will help you build your resume and meet your career goals.

Keep track

As you discuss goals and select classes with your advisor, consider jotting down notes or keeping a journal of your interactions. Save emails as well. There may be a brilliant thought that you want to revisit later—or you may need to use this documentation as back up if something goes wrong.

Where to turn

If you feel like you're not getting the feedback and advice you need from your advisor—seek it out. First, if you think it will be well received, ask your advisor for more engagement. Hopefully they'll respond to your request. If you're still coming up short, search for a faculty mentor who can give you good info on your degree plan, coursework, and career goals. You can also look to

working professionals for advice, or look for alums of your program to get their insight on specific classes and professors.

Your advisor, mentor, or alum can offer real world, practical input and guidance that you may not get from other students. There are lots of nuances in the library world. If I were picking out my courses on an island my degree plan would look very different. With input from your advisors and mentors you can feel better equipped to make smart choices in your education and career.

Choosing a Specialization

by Annie Pho

Usually within the first few weeks of library school, you are asked what type of library you want to work in. If you're like me, you might have had some vague idea of what you wanted to do before you started school. I had wanted to be an art librarian, and my first semester I geared many of my projects around art librarianship. Half way through my first semester, I switched gears and became more interested in digital libraries. You never know what will happen! However, not everyone has a clear idea of what area they want to specialize in and in reality, what you think you want to go into changes as you continue with your education. Many library schools offer specializations which can cater to your interests.

Here are some tips to keep in mind as you figure out what interests you.

- **Be flexible** – what your areas of interest are will probably change. Take classes in the subjects that sound interesting to you. It's a good way to judge whether you'd really want to specialize in that or not. You might stumble upon a totally different path.
- **Interview other librarians** – [talk to someone](#) who does what you want to do. My first semester, I talked to an art librarian and she gave me insight into her job duties as well as the types of reference questions she got. It helped me to see the difference in work settings. Most librarians are nice, helpful people and are usually willing to talk to students.
- **Test the waters** – Try and get some experience in your area of interest. Think you want to be a children's librarian but you've never worked with kids before? You should probably at least volunteer a couple hours to see if that's what you really want to do. Perhaps you can [do an internship](#). The more you put yourself out there, the more opportunities will pop up that interest you.
- **Check out [professional organizations](#)** – There are tons of specialized organizations out there for different kinds of libraries. You can join them, sign up for emails, go to conferences, etc. They're a good resource for finding out more information.

The best advice I have for those who are starting their library school journey is to just get your feet wet first. Get comfortable learning the librarian jargon and acronyms. Put your feelers out and see what might interest you. Nothing is final, you can always

change your mind, but do remember that eventually you'll want to focus your energy.

Don't Like Your Curriculum? Change It!

by Britt Foster

You're scanning your program's course schedule, and see no classes being offered in your specialization. Or you attend a conference, and realize that there is a gaping hole in the way your school addresses this important issue in the field. The good news: you're an engaged learner who is conscious of the resources being put into your coursework and your degree. The bad news: graduate schools have finite money, faculty, and flexibility for adding courses to the register. What can you do to make sure your curriculum meets your interests and educational and professional needs? Take charge!

In 2003, the Student Diversity Action Group came to the faculty of the UCLA IS program and submitted a proposal for two courses, one being a core course that addressed cultural diversity and

activist thoughts, tools, and resources for the contemporary information professional. The result? An existing class was dropped from the core curriculum, and Ethics and Diversity became a graduation requirement. As of 2009, UCLA is the only program that requires a course on diversity for information professionals.*

Looking at the motivations for this addition to the curriculum, it's easy to see why UCLA students asked for such a course. Serving the diverse population of Los Angeles, working with indigenous populations, and designing information access structures for communities across the world, MLIS students recognized the need to be aware of cultural and community differences in approaches to information. The UCLA MLIS program is an incredibly diverse one itself, hosting more ALA Spectrum Scholars than any other. IS students deserved (and demanded) that their education meet an important concern for their research, practice, and development as professionals. If you feel your curriculum doesn't do the same, here are some ideas to make it happen:

Ask! If you feel a topic isn't being addressed in your curriculum, the first place to go is your faculty. There may even be a course approved in the register, but it hasn't been offered in a while because of perceived lack of student interest, or unavailability of faculty. Having other students pledge to enroll in a course should it be offered helps. If it's a specialization course (such as Storytelling), communicate with the faculty or adjuncts who have taught that course in the past. If it's a broader topic with continued and broad relevance (such as the Diversity and Ethics course), the development of such a course may take longer, and a coalition of students and faculty is going to be necessary.

Wander! The reality is that no program is ever going to be able to offer everything. Take advantage of other resources in your community. Start with the department course coordinator and find out if courses taken through extension programs or other departments can count towards your degree. If you're a remote access student, check out university programs in your area. Look at classes in areas like child development, public policy, ethnic studies, law, theater arts, art history... The possibilities for subject specialization, or an introduction to an important satellite topic in your specialization, are endless.

Design it! If you're lucky enough to have an information professional you admire or a really interesting IS project accessible to you, explore the possibility of designing your own course through a directed study or fieldwork. These are usually set up differently than internships, with more of a research element, making them ideal for both practical and theoretical approaches to a topic of interest.

Expand! If you're ever going to graduate, you have to take these courses this time around, plus your internship, not to mention your job... It can be hard to make some of the above options fit in your schedule. So why not take what you have and make it work for you? In my experience, most instructors are flexible about making courses work for students. Ask if your major paper topic can be on an issue related to both your interests and the issues addressed in the course. Meet with your professor to discuss your interests and how they see it fitting into their research or topic of study. Ask for resources and readings beyond what's listed in the syllabus.

Make it un-official! Remember that not all educational experiences need to have credits assigned to them. Check out

blogs in your specialization (or not!), and follow topics of interest to you in other fields. Reach out to your student associations and make a proposal for a panel discussion. Take advantage of webinars and continuing education courses offered by national and state professional associations, consortiums, and even vendors. Don't forget the value of asking established colleagues if you can sit in on their sessions or programming; in my specialization of children's services, I frequently call the hosting library and ask if I can attend events, even though I have no children. Once I explain that I'm a future children's librarian, they're more than welcoming, and usually offer themselves as a resource for any questions I might have. It doesn't even have to be formal: visiting your girlfriend a state over? Take a walk around the university library and check out their resources, their design, any innovations (libraries are excellent date places, FYI). Home for spring break? Check out the local history archives.

What it comes down to is *you*. Just as we act as agents for those we serve, be an agent for your own education and professional experience. Explore. Get unconventional, and expand the definition of LIS education!

*Thanks to Professor Anne Gilliland for providing this resource: [Service Learning: Linking Library Education and Practice](#). Chapter 11, by Clara M. Chu, discusses in depth the UCLA Diversity and Ethics core course requirement.

The Independent Study: Making Your Own Course

by Paul Lai

An independent study is a valuable option for customizing your learning during library school. In an independent study, you essentially create your own course on a topic of your devising, working in concert with a faculty mentor. In format, the independent study is like the tutorial system used by some British universities for undergraduate education; you meet individually with the faculty member on a regular basis and discuss a set of readings as well as writing assignments.

You must bring a lot to the table each meeting, but the benefits include one-on-one attention, more focused exploration of a topic that interests you, and more flexible scheduling. Some programs even allow two or three students to do an independent study together if you prefer.

Professors will differ in the way they conduct the meetings, but most faculty expect students to take the lead in discussions. They will ask questions in order to help students clarify what they are thinking and what kinds of issues they want to discuss. Don't think of the situation as an exam where the professor has the knowledge and you are there to be tested on how much of it you have absorbed. Think of it, instead, as a chance to talk to a library researcher about a shared interest in librarianship. An independent study is also a great chance to learn differently than might be the established culture of [teaching methods in your library school](#).

Ideally, an independent study supplements and complements what your program's curriculum already offers. However, some schools also let you use an independent study to cover a topic that doesn't fit your schedule timing-wise (some courses may only be offered every other year or even less frequently).

Planning the independent study

Start thinking early about what you might want to study. The scope of an independent study can be broad or deep, but the extent of your engagement with the topic should be of sufficient amount to equal a standard course. Consult with faculty and [academic advisors](#) about potential topics to make sure that what you want to study isn't already covered by a course on the books.

You will want to start thinking at least a semester in advance so that you can find a suitable faculty mentor whose expertise matches your topic. You will generally have to write up a proposal, which can include the proposed study topic, a rationale for the focus, a preliminary reading list, and a description of the learning documents that you will produce. These documents have

traditionally been informal and formal papers, but be creative! You might do a poster presentation to submit to an ALA conference. You might compile an annotated bibliography. You might create a service learning project with a local organization. You might create a website. You might make video tutorials for a library's online resources.

Things to consider

As the name implies, an independent study puts much of the responsibility for learning on your shoulders. Don't wait around for your faculty mentor to tell you what to do. Do seek her or his advice, though. If you find yourself lost in the material or at a loss for how to proceed, don't be afraid to say so.

Make sure you have good rapport with your chosen faculty mentor. You don't want to suffer through a semester of awkward or difficult meetings!

Ask around to see what independent studies your classmates might have done (on what topics and with which professors). The department office might also allow you to look at proposals others have submitted in the past.

Also be aware that your professors generally take on independent studies above and beyond their usual teaching, research, and service obligations, and they may or may not be compensated for the extra work.

Possible benefits

You will get a chance to learn what you want to learn.

You can demonstrate your ability to work independently and proactively, something your future employers will surely love.

You can tackle in depth that really interesting topic you started thinking about for a previous class's [final research paper](#).

You can get a head start on exploring the literature for a topic you would like to write about for your [master's essay](#).

You can study something that is too new or too cutting-edge to have made it into your program's curriculum. It takes time for courses to make their way through the bureaucracy of schools, and given the rapid pace of change in the field of librarianship, it is inevitable that there will be topics relevant in today's libraries (and the libraries of tomorrow) that have yet to find expression in the offered courses.

In the spirit of HackLibSchool, I'll end with another suggestion: think about how you might use an independent study to sync your learning with a library student at another program. Perhaps you could develop an independent study together and incorporate conference calls with each other and faculty mentors as part of the semester's meetings, or you could use a shared email listserv to carry on a discussion virtually across programs. (The [Declassified](#) series offers a look at how useful it is to think across programs in terms of particular classes.)

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**SKILLS &
COMPETENCIES**

Building Project Management Skills as a Student

by Emily Powers Souza

As librarians' roles evolve, project management skills are becoming increasingly significant to potential employers. Library students interested in technical and leadership positions may want to acquire project management experience while still in school. This can be challenging, since the nature of a project manager's role involves levels of responsibility that may not be given to graduate students.

Some ways to attain this experience may include volunteering on digital projects, involvement with professional organizations, or taking a leadership role in group classwork. Internships and pre-professional jobs may offer access to relevant professional development workshops—I attended a 2-part project management course run by the project management office at [my internship](#)

[site](#), which gave me a valuable overview of project management concepts and practices.

For a look at one specific LIS student/project manager experience, I sent some interview questions to Chelsea Gunn, who managed a digital library project for a class we both took at Simmons College GSLIS. The class collaborated on a semester-long project and built a [digital library showcasing materials from the Simmons Archives](#). This was a complex undertaking involving multiple working groups of students with overlapping deadlines and dependencies, and Chelsea made sure our deadlines and standards were met.

Can you introduce yourself, Chelsea?

Prior to attending Simmons, I studied English and Creative Writing in Pittsburgh, PA, and because of that background, I am particularly interested in working with collections related to the humanities. I graduated from the archives track in GSLIS in May 2012, and spent my summer as the library intern at the Salzburg Global Seminar in Austria. Currently I'm working as a Field Surveyor for the RHODI Project (www.rhodi.org) at the Rhode Island Historical Society. The RHODI Project is a year-long grant-funded project surveying the history and heritage sector or Rhode Island, with the intention of creating a comprehensive directory of those organizations and their programs and collections, as well as of assessing the needs of the sector within the state. I also work on a contract basis for the Digital Ark in Providence, doing project-based digitization for cultural heritage organizations.

Can you talk a little about your experience as a project manager while you were an LIS student?

I served as the project manager for the Simmons GSLIS Digital Libraries course, in which the class forms committees to digitize a scrapbook from the college archives and create a digital exhibit to preserve and share its contents. My main responsibility as such was determining the critical path of the project, and upholding the deadlines established for each leg of the work. I also set the weekly agendas for our classes, and facilitated the group meetings. It was an interesting experience for me because I had never been charged with looking at the “bigger picture” issues of a project in this way, and I certainly learned a lot from it.

What were some challenges you faced?

Because we were creating a digital library from start to finish in barely three months, a good deal of the committee work was interdependent and managing those overlapping deadlines was very challenging—within a short span of time, you want to be sure that each committee has enough time to do their work well, without cutting into the time of other committees who are waiting for that finished material in order to begin their own work. Enforcing deadlines while being sympathetic to the time crunch of the project, as well as students’ commitments to jobs and other coursework, was a difficult line to walk.

I have also noticed that when working on a tight schedule, technology likes to throw a wrench into

things. In the case of our project, a scanner that we were using to digitize the scrapbook began to die, and compromised some of our master files. This meant taking the time to re-scan and re-edit the corrupted images in order to have them ready for our database committee. To some degree, planning for those kinds of problems is impossible, but I suppose it's always important to remember that any problem is possible.

What are some things that you learned during this project that you've found professionally useful?

I would say that the number one lesson I took away from this is that specificity is incredibly important, both in creating deadlines and communicating with colleagues/teammates. After having the experience of managing that project, I can see the value in placing much more specific, step-by-step deadlines, whereas in the past I would usually focus more on the final, major deadline. Because my current position with the RHODI Project is grant funded and has a definite end date, rather than simply saying, "I need to visit and survey 250 organizations this year," I have broken my work down step-by-step by the week. Likewise, when communicating my progress to my supervisor, I know that it's much more helpful to give specific details of my progress, rather than a general or vague report. The more specific you are, the fewer surprises there may be in the final hour. As a the Digital Libraries project manager, I was always especially grateful for the groups that gave detailed weekly progress reports, and I try

to keep that in mind whenever I report to my project manager now.

Thank you, Chelsea!

If you're interested in learning more about project management, here are some resources I've found useful:

- H. Frank Cervone wrote series of articles on (digital) library project management for OCLC Systems & Services. [Influencing: a critical skill for managing digital library project teams](#), [How not to run a digital library project](#), and several more.
- From the same journal, an overview of best practices for technology project management from Frederick Zarndt. [“Project management 101: Plan well, communicate a lot, and don't forget acceptance criteria!”](#)
- [Project Management Resources](#) from the Praxis Program at the University of Virginia
- And also this post from their blog, about [project management and graduate training](#).
- For a look at another librarian's experiences, see Caro Pinto's discussion of the [Librarian as Project Manager](#)

Why I Learned to Love the Command Line

by Rebecca Halpern

I'm sure you've all heard a million times by now that libraries are looking for young professionals with technology skills. And I'm sure you've all thought to yourself "But of course, I use technology all the time! I'm proficient in the Microsoft Office Suite, I conduct online research like a champ, I would medal in the social media Olympics!" And, of course, you'd be right. Libraries do need professionals that are intimate with and can teach software applications, are comfortable with online research both in databases and free web resources, and can smartly and strategically develop a social media plan. But I'm also increasingly sure that we need to up our game in order to stand out and better serve our patrons. I'm talking about the hard stuff, the stuff we were hoping we'd never have to think about because of our

blessed IT departments, the stuff that puts us face-to-face with the command line: y'all, I'm talking about coding.

Coding is an invaluable skill for young information professionals. While we won't be expected to attend to database or systems administrator duties, we may be expected to embed videos in our library website's HTML file, or modify a database, or troubleshoot electronic resource access issues, or simply be familiar enough with coding restrictions and limitations to have informed discussions with our IT department. Austin Public Library is currently transitioning to the Drupal platform to decrease the reliance on the IT department for doing basic things like updating a blog. Platforms like Drupal and WordPress do not in themselves require any programming knowledge, but knowing HTML, CSS, and JavaScript will enhance interactivity and customizability. In other words, it just can't hurt to be familiar with a programming language (and, believe it or not, its kind of fun!).

I'm lucky in that because my program has such a focus on information science, it offers several programming courses, the most popular of which is Database Management which teaches the language PHP and database language MySQL. I went into the class expecting to see unfamiliar faces, students who are in my program but take mostly usability or information architecture classes. Instead, I was greeted with mostly people like me: library- or archive-track students who want to improve or begin their programming knowledge. We move at a quick but manageable pace. More importantly, while the assignments are difficult, they're so different from what I'm used to (ahem, writing papers, ahem) I find a good challenge in them. In addition to looking good on a resume and making me the official computer genius of my family, coding also challenges my brain in new ways, forces

me to think creatively and problem solve, and affords many opportunities to collaborate with my classmates when a script just won't do what I want it to—and I think we can agree those are [skills useful to ANY information professional](#).

I want to be clear that I'm not advocating that librarians become professional programmers—programmers spend years of their lives and dedicate their career to the art. If your library or museum is lucky enough to have a dedicated IT department, bless them. I will say though, as library websites become the primary service point by which patrons interact with the library, librarians should know how the web works, what languages it works in, what languages do what, and how the web is structured. My vision of the future library does not have each department working in a vacuum, separate from one another, but rather librarians and IT professionals working together, sharing a common language, and figuring out how to best serve the community.

What can you do if your program doesn't offer any introductory programming courses? First, look outside of your department; many graduate-level departments teach introductory courses. Talk to your advisor and see what your campus offers. Similarly, if you can receive credit for them, check your local community colleges. There are also lots of free online sources. [Code Year](#) is a great program that has weekly assignments and is done entirely online for FREE. The [W3 Schools](#) have all of their training manuals online and they are easy to understand and offer exercises. The beauty of programmers is their willingness to put their work on the web for others to use, modify, and learn from.

Read the [comments](#) on the original version of this post for further discussion and resources.

How I Learned to Love Printer Jams

by Julia Feerrar

Do you ever daydream about your future professional life? Do you imagine yourself as a high-powered librarian, answering thoughtful reference questions or maybe cataloging rare and beautiful documents? Initiating programs that bridge the digital divide or solve access and licensing issues? I know I do.

But here's the thing: although I have big plans and aspirations, I recognize that life as an information professional isn't always going to be the glamorous montage of my dreams. Example: I started working at the reference desk in an undergraduate library a few months ago and quickly discovered that I would spend much of my time assisting patrons with printing and scanning. Clearing jams, replacing toner and paper, explaining policies, walking patrons through the process...not the most exciting part of patron interactions, but a useful and necessary service. I'm sure there are plenty of 'printing and scanning' equivalents in other areas of

librarianship, library school, and in all professions, for that matter. **So, how do we deal? Can we ‘hack’ the mundane aspects of work and school?**

In my reference class we’ve talked about “teachable moments”—points at which learning becomes possible or easier—when working with patrons and I think we can identify teachable moments for ourselves as well (as cheesy as that may be). Hacking everyday tasks like printing and scanning requires an attitude adjustment—that is, a willingness to see the skills you’re developing as useful and more broadly transferable. If I stop and think about it, I can see that dealing with printers and scanners every day has given me an opportunity to learn some pretty important skills: asking patrons lots of questions in order to find the source of their problem, taking the initiative to offer help, and becoming more comfortable troubleshooting with an audience (e.g. a line of ten undergrads anxiously waiting to print before their classes). I wouldn’t say that I look forward to printer misbehavior, but I can appreciate the learning opportunity.

Sometimes we need to do boring, tedious things. Sometimes elements of our classes or work experience may not be what we initially imagined, but that doesn’t mean that they aren’t useful. For me, hacking library school is largely about putting in the effort and taking a little extra mental energy to draw connections where they may not be obvious or easy.

Presenting Your Best Self

by Nicole Helregel

Library school is *full* of presentations. Whether it's a short, informal talk or a long, detailed speech, I've had to give some kind of presentation for almost every library school class I've taken. Partly just a given in academia, frequent presentations will also be a reality for many of us in our future careers. LIS professionals are often expected to speak eloquently and concisely to everyone from peers to administrators to the general public.

Over the last few semesters, I feel as though I've learned so much more about presenting and presentation styles from my LIS peers and professors than I ever did in undergrad. Thus, I thought I'd share a little of their collective wisdom. Some of these things seem fairly obvious, but many have changed the way I present myself and my information to others.

Must it always be a PowerPoint?

When planning a presentation, you always have to decide what, if any, visual aids you will use. “Presentation” has almost become synonymous with “PowerPoint,” but it doesn’t have to be! PowerPoint is a very useful tool, and it can be great for a lot of situations, but it shouldn’t be the only weapon in your arsenal. When you find yourself slipping into the same old PowerPoint layout, consider mixing it up with something more dynamic like [Prezi](#).

Cut the amount of text in half; better yet, throw it out altogether

Crazy, right? Except it’s not. I recently had to help craft a group presentation for a marketing course. I was ready to plug away with some standard Title/Picture/3-5 Bullet Point slides. But one of my group members (who, it comes as no surprise, is already working in a management position at an academic library) insisted on minimal text. And when I say minimal, I mean *very lean*. We ended up only using images, a wee bit o’ text, and a lot of Smart Art (PowerPoint’s infographics). Instead of reading or otherwise heavily relying on our PowerPoint, we used it as a visually pleasing aid to the bulk of our presented information, which was spoken. The feedback we received was very positive.

Infographics are your friend!

Infographics, when used appropriately and effectively, are such an attractive and informative way to convey statistics, which can often be dry and boring. Use whatever tools you can find and create responsibly! (There is nothing worse than an inaccurate, vague, or otherwise confusing/misleading infographic. Be careful!) Check out these [10 best tools for creating infographics](#) to get started!

Can you ever have enough backups?

We've all heard it before, but we can all stand to hear it again. Back up that important presentation material. Put a copy on a thumb drive, put a copy in your inbox, put a copy on the cloud, have a copy on paper. Nothing says "I'm unprepared!" like a last minute tech emergency, even if it isn't your fault. This goes double for presentations that are part of job interviews.

Know your stuff, no matter what

If the unthinkable happens and you can't access a single backup, you should be able to present without a single aid. This may be tough, but you should know it backwards and forwards. This is good practice even if a catastrophe doesn't occur: If you know the material inside and out then you'll be less likely to rely on your presentation aids and more likely to seem confident and prepared.

A handout is never a bad thing

My instructional design professor *loved* a handout. She could not get enough of them, and for good reason – they appeal to visual/textual learners, they're great for audience note-taking, and they give the audience a takeaway that they can refer back to. The crafting of an attractive, informative handout is its own art, but can definitely be very impressive, especially to potential employers.

Consider sharing

Have some really cool presentation slides or handout? Consider putting the .pdf up on your blog or sharing your slides on something like [SlideShare](#). Find a way to share your awesome

work with the world *and* provide a way for your audience to follow up on your information after the fact.

Learn to Write

(Well)

by Joanna June

Alternate title: all I needed to know about acing grad school I learned in 6th grade.

As we close out another semester of our varied Information Science degree pursuits, final projects, papers and presentations are probably top of mind – or wanting to be forgotten. As I was scrambling to complete my own submissions, my procrastination tendencies still going strong, I was continually reminded of one thing: the ability to write is incredibly important.

Now before you say “duh,” and stop reading, let me explain a little. I am positively stunned by how many, in graduate studies, professional and personal life, are unable to string together a cohesive sentence – not to mention paragraphs that explain a point clearly. I’m sure that you, in group projects or email chains,

have read something through and silently or aloud said, “um... what?! What are you trying to say?!”

So here is the hack: Learn to write quickly and well.

I’m particularly thinking of my MSIT contemporaries who, with vast knowledge of systems and technicalities of which I’m profoundly envious, are seemingly flummoxed by getting that information to page – in plain English. Even I was recently censured for writing an executive summary for an Information Systems Final Project that was deemed “too technical in language.” So writing is constant practice, balance, and skill, begging for improvement by us all.

I find that I might rely too much on this skill (again see procrastination tendencies) but if a hack gets the job done, isn’t it the best kind? It occurs to me how often I rely on my ability to bang out 1000 words without breaking a sweat. That 1.5 page executive summary was done in well less than an hour. Whenever I turn in a paper I wait for the [Fraud Police](#) to show up and scream “you didn’t spend enough time on this!” Surprisingly, they don’t. So when I sit down to write a paper, email to a potential [collaboration partner](#), [application](#), [important course summary](#), or [behemoth project](#), I have the confidence to write effectively.

No, I’m not Twain, Hemmingway, Chabon or Austen (most of those links go to the awesome writings of other incredible HLS hackers). My words will not go down in the annals of history for their beautiful turn of phrase – much as I might like them to. My sentences simply get the point across in a readable manner. Which, in LIS school and life, is really what is needed.

It starts, of course, with reading. More specifically: reading comprehension. It is critical in our profession to be able to efficiently sift through information and find the important bits. While I might have taken little time to actually write that executive summary, I had read the entire paper twice and allowed a day or so to let the ideas percolate and sift down to the most essential. I copied and pasted out the important sections and voila! I had an outline.

Once we know what we are trying to say, regurgitating those ideas in a cohesive manner is much easier. So, my first tip when you sit down to write; know clearly in your own head what it is that you want to express.

Then, how do you get those sticky words to page? That also can begin with reading – reading critically to discover how the writers you like relay their message and then emulating them.

There are also of course plenty of resources out there to help you write better. Find ones that appeal to you and practice your reading comprehension to learn what is important. Know and follow those rules of writing first and foremost. I joke that I use proper grammar and punctuation in my text messages.

For really, writing doesn't have to be – shouldn't be – complicated and scary. It is just about expressing your ideas. You can practice and gain confidence all the time. You just have to write.

Practice. Practice. Practice.

It doesn't get simpler than that. I'm sorry, Mr. Darcy, there is no other way. You have to learn the rules and then practice. It is only through writing that you will find your voice and flow.

Make yourself do it. Often. You don't have to show your words to anyone, but through writing, you will get better.

Write a journal; describe the important aspects of that interesting article you just read to solidify the concepts in your own mind; volunteer to take minutes and meetings; email those friends you have been missing about what has been happening in your life; write letters to your gramma – whatever. Just write.

I found writing for my blog, here at HLS, and tweeting – yes tweeting – have been helpful for my writing skill. Writing well is about relaying a message in an engaging and clear manner. Condensing a message into 140 characters or less forces you to find and express the most essential information with extreme brevity. Making it public forces you to think about audience and how your message is perceived.

One of my best tips, whether you are going to share your piece publicly or just to a professor, is to walk away from it for a while and then read what you have written aloud. First, it is a great error check. You can't make your point if your reader is distracted by poor grammar. More importantly, hearing the words helps answer the question: Does it make any blessed sense? The greats, whatever their other faults, express their point. Does your writing do that?

In sum: learn the rules by reading, know what you are trying to say, and write. There is no better hack than to have confidence that you can crush out 1000 words without crazy amounts of effort. You're going to need this skill constantly in your profession, may as well get good at it now.

Playing Nicely With Others: Doing Group Work

by Annie Pho

How many of you have had to do group work in graduate school? What's that? All of you? Okay, I thought so. Like it or not, group work is integral to library science curriculum. When I first started, I wondered why I had to do so much group work. What's the purpose of it? Is there a [lesson to be learned](#)? There are so many risks when you have to work with a group of people you don't necessarily know that well. Coming from an undergraduate background in art history, where you sit in a dark room and stare at slides, you don't even know who is in your class, let alone have to talk to anyone. It's a solitary endeavor. However, library school is totally different. You're expected to talk to your classmates, [peer review their work](#) and collaborate with them. That can be really off-putting for someone who is a) shy b) used to studying alone c) new to the program, thus not knowing anyone and d) a control

freak. This semester, I've had to do a couple of large group projects and wondered how collaborating could be made easier.

This post isn't really intended to tell you what tech tools to use to make group work easier (basically, use Google Docs). You can check out our [post](#) on [Gradhacker](#) for our favorite tech tools and Micah's [Web Apps post](#) for more info on that. A big part of smooth sailing on group projects is communication! It's harder to do that in an online setting, which is when the tech tools come in handy. In terms of building a relationship with your team, you need trust, honesty, and agency. Sometimes you have to take the risk of being vulnerable and tell your group that maybe you made a mistake on something. For example, I recently had a project where one of my group mates was very much a control freak, so there were times when I felt frustrated by her expectations of all of us. I had to be honest with everyone and say "hey, I can't get the work you want done in the time frame you're asking" and my other group mates thanked me for my honesty. Most people would rather their group mates tell them when they can't do something, rather than just not do it. You still have to do your part though. Organization is also really helpful. Dividing up the workload and setting deadlines is key to accomplishing projects. Reconnecting with the group also keeps people accountable and keeps the communication line open. Finally, saying "thanks" to your group can go a long way, because everyone contributed something.

No group is perfect though, there's always the occasional slacker who doesn't communicate well. Or what if you just don't get along with that person? I always try and understand where that person is coming from, despite our differences. Sometimes, you just have to swallow your pride and find a way to get the project done,

without strangling anyone. It happens and it sucks, but you get over it and move on.

Back to the question of “why so much group work in library school?” I think it prepares us for the profession. From a professional standpoint, you probably end up in lots of meetings and working with a group of people to achieve a common goal. The same goes for ALA committees and round tables. In the library, you spend a lot of time with people (patrons or coworkers), so might as well start working with them while you’re in school. It really helps someone like me who comes from a background where very little group work is involved. It gets me into the mindset of playing nice with others, learning what I respect in my colleagues and what I don’t like dealing with. I learned to relax and trust other people to do their part, plus it’s nice to look back and see the things I’ve accomplished with my group.

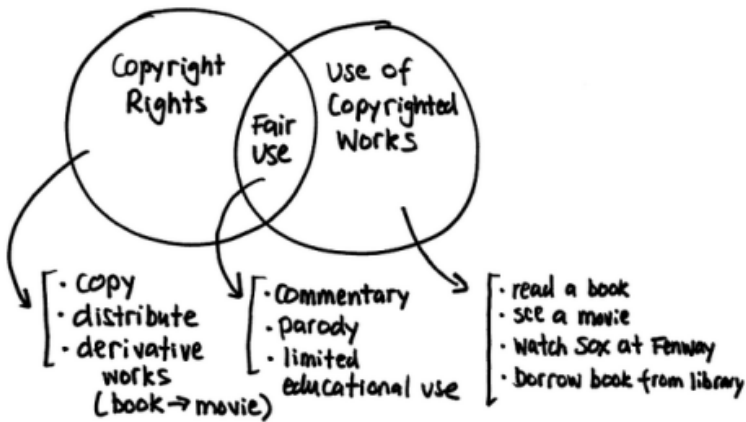
Copyright 101

by Chealsye Bowley

The class I want to see in every MLS/MLIS program is Copyright 101. Want to be a reference librarian? Copyright will impact your job. Want to be an archivist and build digital collections? Copyright will impact your job. Want to be a School Library Media specialist? Copyright will impact your job. Seeing a pattern here? Copyright touches all aspects of librarianship. It governs how we can share information. Whether for protecting the rights of the library or patrons, or determining how we can make our collections available, copyright knowledge can benefit all librarians.

I got a small glimpse of copyright law in my Introduction to Information Policy course and decided I needed to know more. This semester I enrolled in the Copyright Law through the FSU College of Law. Through this class I gained familiarity with both statutory law and legislative history, discussed the [Georgia State case](#), and had class an hour after the [Kirstsaeng](#) decision dropped.

No class in graduate school has better prepared me to be a librarian, and it wasn't even a library school class!



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The basics

Copyright is a legal concept that grants authors exclusive rights over their works for defined periods of time. Copyright owners have the exclusive right to copy, distribute, make derivative works, and publicly perform or display their works.

The idea of copyright has existed for hundreds of years. It has been put through multiple variations, originating as a type of censorship, and growing into a law meant to protect and incentivize authors and artists. Currently, in the United States, we operate under the Copyright Act of 1976. The 1976 Act originally provided protection to authors for the author's lifetime plus 50 years and 75 years for corporate authorship. In 1998, protection was extended to life plus 75 years, or 120 years after creation or 95 years after publication for works of corporate authorship.

Woah. That's a long time. So, what are our options to legally use materials, as librarians and individuals, before copyright expires? Get permission or qualify for fair use.

Fair use

Fair use is a right outlined in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The following outlines the four factors of fair use:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes
2. The nature of the copyrighted work
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole
4. The effect of the use upon the potential market for, or value of, the copyrighted work

Now, it is important to note that just because a library is a non-profit doesn't mean that use is automatically fair, and simply acknowledging source of the copyrighted material does not substitute for obtaining permission. The distinction between what is fair use and what is infringement is not always be clear or easily defined. There is no specific number of words, lines, or notes that may safely be taken without permission. It can get pretty complicated. You want to be careful in order to avoid being liable for copyright infringement.










In 2008, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University press, and SAGE Publications filed suit against four officers of Georgia State University for "pervasive, flagrant and ongoing unauthorized distribution of copyrighted materials" through the library's e-reserve system. Of the 75 cases of alleged infringement, Judge

Evans held that five were infringement. The rest were fair use or the use was too minimal. A rule of thumb developed from the case that 10% or less of a book, or a chapter, was fair use. However, the case is currently being appealed and there isn't a standard number for fair use. This is a prime example of how copyright law can impact libraries and how important it is for librarians to have some training in the law.

Creative Commons

Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization that enables the sharing and use of creativity and knowledge through free legal tools. Creative Commons provides easy to use licenses that work alongside copyright and enable an author to modify their copyright terms to best suit their needs. These licenses allow authors to tell others what they are allowed and not allowed to do with their protected work. These licenses allow for the greatest legal dissemination before public domain, and are very useful for authors who want to openly share their work.

Currently, the organization provides the following six licenses:

LICENSES	TERMS	CC BY NC SA,
	 Attribution Others can copy, distribute, display, perform and remix your work if they credit your name as requested by you	
	 No Derivative Works Others can only copy, distribute, display or perform verbatim copies of your work	
	 Share Alike Others can distribute your work only under a license identical to the one you have chosen for your work	
	 Non-Commercial Others can copy, distribute, display, perform or remix your work but for non-commercial purposes only.	
		

<http://education-copyright.org/creative-commons/>

This blog post is copyrightable. As an author, I own what I create from the moment I create it. There is no requirement to register it with the copyright office. Let's be kind to me and say I die at the wonderful age of 100 in 2090. This means this post is protected until 2160. Normally you would need my permission use my work, but thankfully Hack Library School uses a CC BY NC SA license. This means you can use this post or any other posts on the blog in any way as long as it is for non-commercial use, you attribute the author, and share your product under the same license. Awesome, right?

Interested in learning more?

- Read the [Copyright Act of 1976](#)! It isn't scary as it sounds and you'll learn a lot.

- Go listen to Lawrence Lessig's TED talk on the "[Re-Examining the Remix](#)." Lessig is Harvard law professor and a founding board member of Creative Commons.
- Look over the [basics of Copyright handout](#) from the United States Copyright Office.
- Check out the Berkman Center for Internet and Society's [Copyright for Librarians course](#).
- Learn more about the Georgia State case. The GSU Law School has put together a great [libguide](#) that provides a timeline and a compilation of blogs and court opinions.
- Keep a lookout for future copyright law MOOCs. Earlier this year, Harvard offered a free online copyright law course for 500 people through [edX](#).

The Skills You Don't Learn in School

by Annie Pho

Librarianship is a profession that's all about [helping people](#), which means we need to be able to work with them. Even if you don't work with patrons, you'll still have to work with coworkers that run the gamut. Cat lovers(ahem), gamers, tattooed drinkers, the sweet old lady who doesn't know what email is(patron or coworker), you might run across them all. You can't escape people in this profession! Whether you were drawn to this profession because you love books, or because you wanted to put off student loans, having people skills is a must. We're expected to have some technology skills and maybe even more advanced [programming skills](#). That's all great! However, there are a lot of things library school can't teach you. People skills being one of them. No one can teach you how to be in the world, that's something that we all develop as we move forward in life. Employers are looking for folks who have these skills.

For example, take a look at these qualifications taken from different job ads:

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Demonstrated commitment to customer service.
- Ability to manage complex workload, prioritize tasks and complete work on time with minimum supervision
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively, and to contribute positively to a team within a rapidly changing, complex and multicultural environment

Basically, they want to know if you are a good person to work with. Are you going to be okay to work by yourself on certain things? Can you talk to people? Can you be a team player? Are you going to go crazy if someone asks you how to print for the millionth time? Addressing this in a cover letter isn't as easy as saying "I am a great communicator" or "I work well with others" because they want to know how you do that. If it was asking for specific tech skills, it would be easier to address. "Excellent interpersonal skills" isn't a course that you can take in school. Sure, we might take a reference or information literacy teaching course, but does it really show you how to work with a patron or be a nice person? Not really. These qualifications should be indicators of what is expected of us when we graduate. They want well-adjusted, socialized people, but being that person means that you should have developed that skill somewhere along the line.

Brett Bonfield wrote in his post [Perspective and Doing Good Work](#): "What you do before you get your library degree matters..." and for many of us this is true. Even if you don't have prior

library experience, there are transferable skills that you can use in a library setting. I spent many years slinging coffee beans, working in customer service. I had no clue that the experiences I had at the coffee shop would actually help me as a reference librarian. I've always been a shy person; but since I worked in a high traffic, noisy coffee shop, I learned to be loud in order to be heard. Now I'm more comfortable with the public and can handle being at the front of a crowd (check out Andy Burkhardt's post on [developing soft skills](#) for more pointers). It took my awhile to realize it, but knowing how to deal/work with people is something I brought with me to library school, not something I learned in class. Taking what I've learned through the years and applying to the big picture has totally helped me feel like I'm in the right place. After all, we are a people based profession.

The Portfolio, or Ending with a Bang and Not a Whimper

by Madeleine Mitchell

Let's just say that you're in your final semester of library school. It's an exciting time, the end is near, you're anxious to start the big job hunt, or if you're lucky enough to have a library job, maybe you're looking forward to moving up the library ladder. Nothing stands in your way now, except for one thing. The culminating experience – the academic gatekeeper that vets your qualifications and once and for all declares you ready to enter the world of paid (hooray!) librarianship. No pressure.

In the SLIS program at [San Jose State University](#), we have our choice of two possible routes through the culminating experience, which is what our department calls the final, cumulative project of our LIS career. Any SLIS student wishing to graduate may either write a Master's [thesis](#) or complete a [portfolio](#), which is a

comprehensive overview of your work in the program. Though I was tempted by the in-depth nature of writing a thesis, I decided early on that it would make more sense for me to do a portfolio because it would explicitly tie my strongest accomplishments together while requiring me to review everything I had learned in my courses, thus helping prepare me for job interviews along the way. It sounded like a no-brainer in my first semester, and it was definitely the right choice for me, but it's a lot to bite off – an amazingly-lot to bite off – and it's best to lay the groundwork early and often.

So, for those of you in the middle of your culminating experience, whether it be a portfolio, a thesis or something else entirely, here is what I've learned (so far) about keeping your sanity through the process. And, for those of you have yet to tackle this wily beast, read on for a little advice about how to start preparing for it way, way, way in advance.

1. Start early

In a recent [post](#), Alison resolved to start keeping a professional portfolio. This ties into one of the best pieces of advice I received during my first semester of library school. It came from a student assistant who was just finishing her final project. The advice was this: If you're going to do a portfolio, *START NOW*. This might come a bit late to those of us already hip-deep in the culminating experience, but for the folks just starting their programs, it really is a lifesaver.

What does *STARTing NOW* look like? It's a lot of little things. If you have a choice, decide what you want your final project to be by the end of your first year. Look at the requirements. Do you need to show evidence of professional competency? Review

the competencies after every semester and jot down a couple of notes on how each of your courses fulfills them. Keep your course work organized in a way that makes sense to you so you can find it when the time comes. I even made little annotations on the big projects to reference later, and it's proving to be unbelievably helpful now.

In all honesty, the end of semester organizing and note-taking got to be a pain at times, but stay strong, stay focused and stay organized – your future self will thank you when it's time to support your understanding of library demographics and you could swear you wrote a discussion post on that two years ago, but you can't find it to save your life.

2. Get organized

When you're staring at a terrifically large project that must synthesize everything you've learned in the past 2-3 years, and it's due in roughly 2-3 months, even the most organized future librarian might panic. The key is to stay organized. This is where all of that starting early comes in handy. If you're lucky, your past self will have your coursework, lecture notes, discussion posts and readings filed away so you can sift through it all by category, skill or semester. If you're not so lucky, all is not lost. Give the entire amorphous heap a quick look. Then look at your project requirements and start sifting according to what you're most likely to need. Just beware that you will need to account for this in scheduling. Which brings me to....

3. Make a schedule

Look at your final project requirements and start breaking the work down into discrete parcels. Be realistic and leave room for

mishaps, illness, and dismemberment, but for the next 2-3 months, let that schedule rule your life. For example, for the **fourteen competencies** supported by my program, I need to complete fourteen 2-3 page competency statements, plus evidence, summaries and miscellany in 3 months. That means I need to write roughly 2 competencies per week. Keep in mind that you'll need more time early on while you find your rhythm and get organized. With five competencies under my belt, I'm able to work faster now, but I'm really glad I accounted for that learning curve early on.

4. Pace yourself

Most final projects are marathons, not sprints. You might come out of the gate flying but if you're not careful, it's easy to start lagging before you're halfway through. Take it one step at a time and try to maintain as much **balance** as you can. This might sound strange given that I just harped for a paragraph about sticking to a schedule, but schedules work two ways. Yes, they keep you from falling behind. But they can also keep you **motivated**, and even more importantly, they keep you from burning out. Trust me.

Here's another example from my ongoing experience:

Early on, I finished my scheduled work early and decided to make a push. I pushed so hard that I lost sleep, got stressed out and became really unpleasant, all while producing work that I ended up rewriting later. If you finish your work early, that's great. If you want to get a bit ahead, wonderful. But make sure you go outside and get some fresh air. Go to a movie. Do whatever it is that you do that reminds you that you're human and not just a grad student desperately trying to finish your degree. Your work will be there when you get back, and you'll do it better for the break.

So, that's what I've learned so far from working on my portfolio. As my big deadline looms, we'll see if I can follow my own advice, particularly in regards to balance!

INVOLVEMENT

Student Governance

by Paul Lai

Another school year is upon us! Over the next few weeks, we will add some more tips and discussions to our [Starter Kit Series](#) as we welcome new library students to the blog. We'd like to encourage returning students to revisit the series along with us as well and especially to dive into the comments to share your own experiences and tips.

For today, I'd like to bring up the idea of joining and serving in *student governance* as a useful part of a library student's education and experience. Librarians foster civic participation by providing education and information for informed citizens in electoral campaigns. Librarians also face the challenge of being advocates for libraries to legislative funding bodies, corporate boards, and other governing organizations that hold the purse strings for libraries' budgets. All of this work requires a solid understanding of on-the-ground politics and how to navigate bureaucracies and hierarchies. Please also take a look at a related and overlapping post by Britt last year, [Student Organizations and LIS Education](#),

which focuses on the many benefits (and difficulties) of being a part of student organizations on campus such as ALA student chapters, professional development clubs, and special interest groups. Make sure to read through the comments there, too, which offer an excellent conversation with many people sharing thoughts on their schools' particular organizations.

I've always been a lurker in student groups and never a huge fan of being an officer (all that responsibility! all the work trying to get other students involved!). But after a few years in my previous career where I served on numerous committees and attended countless meetings with my colleagues, I realized how important it is to be involved in the daily governance as well as the decision-making process of whatever institution, organization, or community to which you belong. It is often in these smaller groups where decisions get made, both formally and informally, that shape the way the institution is run. Additionally, there is a lot of networking and more subtle building of consensus that only happens in these types of groups. (See also an earlier HLS post by Annie, [Playing Nicely with Others: Doing Group Work](#), for more comments on working with others and tips on successful group work.)

So, in addition to getting to know your fellow LIS students, building relationships with them as your future work colleagues and peers, I suggest looking beyond your own program to the larger institution of your school. Think of yourself as part of a program shaped by a larger system. Look to make your voice heard, not just in the program with other students and faculty, but also in the university at large, with people in related programs and in the administration. Learn where your LIS program is situated in your school—details such as which dean the program reports to

have a lot to do with the types of resources, funding, and support the program has. In short, think of yourself as part of a larger community in the institution. (Also worth considering is Micah's post about connecting LIS students more with other grad students on campuses, [HackLibSchool](#), [meet GradHacker](#).)

On a more mundane level, getting involved in student governance is also a great primer on how democracy works in action. You'll learn how people run meetings, how people debate topics and come to decisions, and how people navigate bureaucracies and hierarchies. These lessons are all invaluable for grounding lofty philosophical questions about the values of librarianship. Become that informed citizen that we are always championing! Understand how to articulate your positions and needs; figure out which people on campus you need to approach to address various issues.

I greatly admire my fellow students who have taken on leadership roles in the student organizations and governance. I have learned so much in the past year from watching them and listening to their appeals to the rest of us for participation. In my school, one of the big issues the current leadership has been trying to address is a lack of communication with students. Like some other library science programs, ours includes many people working full-time (our classes are all evenings and weekends) and with substantial family obligations, so it is difficult to get students to come to campus for extra meetings beyond classes or to deal with discussions and issues outside of course work. But it is work that is important if we are to be heard in the institution.

I, for one, plan on being more active in my program's student organizations and governance bodies this year. We have a [Student Governance Organization](#) that acts as a representative body for

MLIS students specifically to address any needs we have and especially to be a liaison to the faculty and administration. I am also going to look into being one of the MLIS program's voting members to the university's Graduate Student Advisory Board this year. The GSAB includes reps from each of the graduate programs on campus and is primarily a forum to exchange information and build community between the programs. (I am unclear on how much of a voice the group has with the administration.)

Student Leadership: Time to Get on Board!

by Steve Ammidown

I'm a joiner. There, I said it. Being a part of one organization or another has been as natural as breathing for me since I was a kid. So it was only fitting that I joined the [Student Archivists at Maryland](#) (our chapter of the [Society of American Archivists](#)) when I arrived at the University of Maryland iSchool. It's a quick way to meet like-minded people and dive quickly into a field that you're going to spend a relatively short amount of time studying. I was a little surprised at the low attendance at the meetings though- why should that be?

We've had a number of HLS posts extolling the virtues of getting involved. [Paul talked about](#) the knowledge about your program that can come from being a part of student organizations, and the way it can be good practice for the working world. Chelsey

made student organizations [an important part](#) of supplementing your graduate school experience. But [as Britt pointed out](#) a couple of years ago, library school student organizations tend to have a tough time of things. There's plenty of good stuff student organizations offer- "Meeting the educational and professional needs that aren't being met in the classroom. Networking and peer interaction. Resume gold." But it's hard to schedule, and hard to interest a student body that isn't as homogenous age- or location-wise as the undergraduate one that lines up for hours to sign up to join clubs their freshman year.

So what can motivate library students to become leaders? I'm now part of the leadership team for the Student Archivists at Maryland, so I asked some of my fellow iSchool leaders why they got involved. Their reasons mirror what Britt pointed out above- learning beyond the classroom, networking, especially with other students and faculty, and affecting change in the program on some level. There's a common thread here- these are all things that will help you get a job. Passive membership has its benefits as well, but when you step up to leadership positions, you stake your claim as someone who wants to make a mark. And in a difficult job market, that's the sort of thing employers are looking for.

You don't have to take my word for it, either. Check out [the responses](#) from [Terry Lawler](#) to the Hiring Librarians Survey. Many of the skills you see listed will *not* show up in one of your classes. Leadership, organizing meetings and giving presentations at national conferences are things that you need to take the initiative on yourself.

I know that leadership can be a terrifying word, especially in a profession so frequently associated with being an introvert. And there's a connotation that "leader" = "alone." That doesn't need to

be the case! A flat, more collaborative leadership structure may prove beneficial for your group, allowing everyone to contribute without feeling like their neck is on the line. Annie's excellent post on the [skills we won't learn in class](#) extols the benefits of the kind of group work student organizations engage in.

What I'm saying is, don't wait. Join up with your student chapter of whatever alphabet soup organization most relates to your interests ([ALA](#), [SAA](#), [SLA](#) and [ASIS&T](#) are just a few examples). If you see a need for a new kind of organization, start it yourself! The [iDiversity group](#) at the University of Maryland is a great example of this. Student memberships are typically cheap, and it gives you something to talk about with your favorite instructor, who's probably a member of the same organization. And when those calls for volunteers come (and they will), don't hesitate to answer them. It will build your reputation, and will only help you in the long run.

Advocacy in Library School

by Nicole Fonsh

Dictionary.com defines *advocacy* as “the [act](#) of pleading for, supporting, or recommending; active espousal.” I know I heard and used this term before I began library school but I honestly think my awareness of it has increased tenfold in the last two years of my program.

You may think that it is because I’m learning all about advocacy and how to be an advocate for libraries and the profession in my courses. And sure, you would be partially correct. I’ve had a few professors mention budget cuts to libraries and what it means for the profession and the likelihood of us finding jobs when we are done with the program. But as advocacy seems to be at the forefront of the library profession these days. ALA even has an [Advocacy University](#) section on its website. And the library blogosphere always seems to be talking about it (see Andy Woodworth’s blog for some [fantastic posts](#) on the issue).

However, I often feel that my LIS education has left me lacking the skills to take on real-life advocacy; both DURING my degree as well as when I'm finished. But is this actually something that should be taught? How to advocate? Are those skills that should be integrated into a graduate program? And beyond that – what role should library school students play in advocacy efforts that are going on in the area?

This last question is one I've thought about a great deal during the last year. Some of you may have heard about the budget concerns in Boston that were threatening to [close several branches](#) of the Boston Public Library last year. [To find out more you can check out the [web site](#) that was created by concerned patrons of the library.] I feel like whenever issues like this arise, the more people helping out and raising voices, the better. Yes? And my second assumption was that library school students who live in the very same city as these branches and who are going into the library profession would want to be involved in the process that was going on right in front of them. This is where I found myself kind of disappointed. My fellow students did not seem to want to be engaged as I thought they would. Now don't get me wrong, there were several students who were all over what was going on and were involved and engaged. And I also realize that grad students have school, work, families, and loads of other commitments. But I saw this as kind of a perfect opportunity to not only get involved in the community but get involved with reaching out to local librarians and patrons; despite which type of librarianship you were studying. On the other side of it all, I thought that perhaps my professors would encourage us to get involved. And this was not 100% the case either. Again, there were definitely professors who were involved but I would have really liked to have seen the program as a whole become more engaged in what was going on

in the library community right at our doorstep. I was worried that, as the library school community, we were guilty of thinking “that is someone else’s issue.” But maybe I was asking too much of a graduate program?

My fellow HackLibSchool editors have had some of their own experiences with advocacy in their communities. Britt Foster spent a tremendous amount of her time advocating for [Measure L](#) in LA and wrote a fantastic post about what it means to be an [activist librarian](#) along with her most recent post on [Activism and Advocacy](#). And Heidi Kittleson, in her last days of her grad program, has been advocating for the iSchool, at the University of Washington, as its funding has been threatened. She wrote about the situation in a recent Hack Library School [post](#). Also, check out the great [post](#) on [Lyndsey Runyan’s](#) blog about the iSchool situation.

Emerging Leaders and Professional Involvement

by Anita R. Dryden (guest author)

This past year I had the pleasure of participating in the American Library Association's [Emerging Leaders](#) program, which is designed to help new librarians get involved in ALA. Throughout the course of the program you attend leadership training, meet many of the current leaders in ALA, and are assigned to a small group to complete a project for a Division or Round Table. The EL program was a wonderful experience – I loved getting to know a group of really engaged, passionate young professionals while working on an exciting and beneficial project that helped me learn more about how the beast that is ALA works.

Emerging Leaders is open to current students and recent graduates and the deadline for applying to the 2013 class is August 3. If you are at all interested in participating, I would highly recommend

that you apply – with a few caveats. First of all, the program is quite selective, so you need to be sure that you have some good references that can speak to your leadership potential. Second, acceptance into the EL program requires a commitment to attending both Midwinter and Annual conferences during the year of your participation. Conference attendance certainly isn't cheap, and if you haven't found a grant or employment that can help with funding, you may want to hold off on applying until you can rely on some funding assistance (there are some scholarships/funding available – but as you can imagine, these are even more competitive).

So while I wholeheartedly endorse applying for and participating in the EL program, I want to offer some general tips for becoming professionally involved within ALA and other organizations. What follows are a few tips I've picked up from being involved with ALA, as well as a couple of local and student groups.

Most importantly, volunteer to help.

I can't stress how many times I have heard this advice, and it continues to be valuable. ALA in particular is a HUGE organization and can be very intimidating to those who are just starting to get involved. Yet many organizations are looking for new people to participate in committees and work groups but they can't ask you if they don't know who you are. Submit volunteer forms, give your card to organization leaders at networking events, mention to everyone you meet that you are interested in getting involved – it's the only way anyone will know to ask you.

Fill out the appropriate forms.

This is really critical – in many organizations, you cannot be appointed to a committee or other work group without filling out a specific form. New Members Round Table (NMRT) and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), both part of ALA, are great examples of this. The president of the organization, nominating committees, etc. cannot appoint people who haven't completed their organization's form, even if they think you would be a great fit. And when filling out these forms, be sure to give specifics about your past experiences that can help match you to an appropriate committee. For example, I have a fair amount of event planning experience from my pre-library career, so I've been able to get onto some conference and reception planning committees by indicating that.

Start small.

You are unlikely to get elected to the ALA Council or the executive board of an organization or division right away. That's fine. Look for early opportunities for involvement within subdivisions of organizations, groups aimed specifically at new/young professionals, local/state organizations, or student groups. It is often easier to meet and get to know officers in these smaller groups, and turn those networking connections into opportunities. I've had luck getting involved with subdivisions of ACRL as well as local groups for new professionals, which can then be translated into doing the same type of committee work on a larger scale. Serving as an officer of my student ALA chapter helped show my leadership abilities and is still something that I list on my resume and applications.

Actually show up and do what you volunteer for.

Hey, everyone has times when they are overwhelmed with responsibilities and some things slip. But being extremely conscientious during your early committee work can help mark you as a good committee member, and you'll stand out in people's minds as someone that they can rely on – leading to more and more important assignments down the road.

For those of us working in academic libraries, this kind of “service to the profession” is often a requirement for promotion/tenure/continuing appointment. For librarians working in other types of libraries, professional involvement can be a satisfying way to work on the grander issues affecting the profession, network and meet like-minded colleagues, and get leadership opportunities that will make your resume stand out from the crowd. From a personal standpoint, my participation in Emerging Leaders as well as generally within ALA and local groups has been extremely rewarding – both as a resume builder and as a chance to meet and work with great librarians that I wouldn't have met otherwise.

Making the Most of Mentorships

by Rebecca Halpern

In an earlier post, Ashley discussed some of the ways to [hack your advisor](#)—but what if you get stuck with someone you don't like? Or doesn't know much about your field of study? Or just plain stinks? Lucky for you there is an oft-neglected source of sage wisdom and comforting words: the mentor.

While I'm lucky enough to have a fantastic academic advisor, I'm even luckier to have found a mentor to give me more practical advice. Mentors are a kind of unofficial advisor, a professional who works in the field with whom you can have a close and open connection. Where your academic advisor can guide your classroom choices, mentors offer insight into the information profession. Often, your mentor can be a family friend, a work supervisor, or even a seasoned colleague. Whatever your association with your current or prospective mentor, here are

some things I've learned about mentorships that I hope you will find useful.

Why bother?

Mentors are people who, pardon my slang, know what's up. Because they work in the field that you want to work in, they have the inside information about hiring trends, marketable skills, and the nuances of daily life that can make or break a work environment. Moreover, mentors know what you're going through. They went to library school, they had to search for a job, they had to navigate the [uncertainties we all feel](#) as graduate students. Most importantly, they came out on the other side—they have some good advice to share!

Where to find one

Like I said above, mentors can come from just about anywhere. Some schools offer an official mentorship program, linking students up with professionals in the community; if your school does, take advantage! Look around places where you work or volunteer—is there someone you're friendly and comfortable with? Is there someone who loves to give (useful) advice? Does your mom's best friend's niece work in your dream job? Do you follow someone on Twitter who links to interesting things and has thoughtful things to say? Ask them if they would mind if you emailed them for advice or to find out more about their job. In my experience, people are happy to talk about themselves; after all, librarians love to help!

What to look for

Ok, I'm going to be real biased here and say that I have an amazing mentor. She's smart, funny, has my dream job, and loves to calm

me down from the proverbial library school ledge. But what makes her great?

She's a current information professional.

Being in the profession, she has a perspective different than the bright-eyed one I carry with me. She's honest with me and tells me with equal enthusiasm what she hates and loves about her job. Knowing she has a passion for information service despite the administrative craziness she often deals with helps me understand that, above everything else, librarianship is a job that has its ups and downs. Find someone who can speak to you candidly about the profession and loves what she does.

She's a forward thinker.

Similar to above, my mentor has a good grasp of where the profession is going and the kinds of skills I should be developing. She is a fierce advocate for ebook lending and DRM-free materials. A mentor who thinks about the future of the profession and is engaged with current debates and theories is a mentor who will stimulate and challenge you.

She's an alum of my graduate school.

While it isn't strictly necessary to have a mentor with the same alma mater as you, it is helpful when I need advice choosing classes. She knows most of the faculty, is familiar with the curriculum, and can tell me the courses she still refers to in her work. If you can't find a mentor from your program, look for someone locally or who works where you'd like to work. Having someone on the "inside" is the only way to get the advice your academic advisor isn't allowed to tell.

Mentors are a fantastic source of practical advice and guidance. With their insight, you can feel better about entering the profession and have a clearer idea of what kind of work is right for you.

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ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Social Media and

#LIS

by Joanna June

In library and information science schools we are coming to terms with, well, terms. Lexicons, vocabularies, common jargon sets and search terms are the tools of our trade. So I ask: Have you noticed though how many verbs have been web-born? Or, in the spirit of web 2.0, social web-re-born?

Tweeting, tagging, PMing, following, up-voting, DMing, pinging-back, liking, pinning, digging, starring, etc... They all have new meaning in our social media infused landscape. I'd include "blogging" but that seems like as old a term as "googling." become part of our international dictionary. While we might know the terms, have a vague sense of what hashtagging is (for instance), how does social media intersect with our LIS, MLIS and MSIT pursuits?

The landscape has grown and changed even since Alison's piece last year on social media for introverts. After Paul's article about [staying on top of library news](#), and Nicole's piece on building your [business cards](#) (and what information to include) I was thinking about all of the options of social media and how it can be a little daunting to try pick betwixt them. As the resident HLS Online Community Hacker, I thought I would make a stab at doing a rundown. But there is just *so much*. Though they are often used for professional purposes, the choices when it comes to social media use can also be very personal.

Consider this just a little primer then to start the conversation. I hope you explore having more of a social media awareness and maybe find a new tool or method of interaction on a personal or professional level. And then I hope you share what is your social medial platform of choice and how you use it in school. I think that is what social media platforms and streams are about: giving users various tools for connection. We, as Information Science Professionals should love and excel in that right? Ok, so a quick and dirty list of the biggies out there (with plenty of room for you to add your thoughts in the comments)

- [Twitter](#). The bird that launched 1 million #hashtags. So culturally relevant the tweets are being saved by the Library of Congress and it is given credit for an important part of the Arab Spring. Many of you cited Twitter as your #1 source of news, of the LIS or 'other' variety, and I would have to agree. There are lots and lots of articles out there about twitter etiquette and how to best use it. I'll just say that you should get a handle and, even if you don't tweet or make your tweets public, poke

around and see what information is available in that space. If nothing else it is an amazing study in how the #hashtag became a household-name search tool.

- [Facebook](#). With more people on Facebook than in many countries — combined — to say nothing of the events, pages, and brands represented, it is fair to say that Facebook is the biggie of the group. It is interesting to watch how much people use this platform, adapt to it's changes, and now expect features to be included in other spaces (and visa versa). What do you mean I can't see if he has read my message yet? Everyone has their own balance of Personal and Professional in this space, but safe to say it isn't going anywhere anytime soon. Best to at least understand the difference between a profile and a page and the various security options.

(I should note here that with your Twitter or Facebook profile you can log-in or create profiles on a number of other social media sites and applications. It is completely up to personal preference if you want all your streams connected in this way or want to keep them more separated by using an email address instead)

- [LinkedIn](#) A professional networking site that links you, your resume and those that you have worked with. It still feels like it hasn't reached critical mass yet but I know people who swear by it to be connected with their industry and even get jobs. It would not hurt to have a profile and, if you're in the job market or not, your resume posted.

- **Pinterest** It might seem like just a lot of pictures and rabbit hole of time suck... but people are using the site as a search tool and interacting, sharing and contributing in droves. If you're unfamiliar, it is a personal image collection that then links back to the source of the image. So you "pin" a picture with a comment to your virtual bulletin board (or one of your themed or grouped boards) and others can then comment, like and "repin" to theirs. Creating a network that then links back to the original. Play around with it (whatever you do, don't search for "cute cat")
- **Delicious** It is basically a web-based bookmarking application you can use to save, organize and share links. I have an account and have been pointed to others streams but this is an interesting one for me as I still haven't been able to get used to using it. It is one of those tools that I like in theory but just haven't made practice. <https://delicious.com/>
- **Digg, Stumbleupon, Reddit, Fark...** I'm grouping these because they are news aggregators of various forms but I think they still have their place in social media. Comments and/or votes boost the visibility of a story or image on each site, usually broken down by category.
- **YouTube** Yes, it is for videos but with now the ability to like videos, subscribe to channels and comment, it is also very very social. I also know of several that use it as their primary search engine.

- **Instagram** The fun-with-filters on your camera phone app has come way up in the world. It also uses a bevy of hashtags for finding and integration with Facebook, Twitter, flickr, etc so expect to see more hipster-cam in other streams. (oh, and interesting sidenote: I have heard from 3 parents in very different places that instagram is the only “social media” site/application that they let their tweens-and-under kids use. I don’t know what that says yet but I wonder if that will continue)
- **Google+** A way to share content with your “circles” through your google profile. Articles and online content ask for a +1 from you to add them to your feed and having +s on your content or site supposedly helps with your ranking in google search. This is another that I just haven’t made work for me, but many are really getting behind it.
- **GoodReads** This might be a different breed of “media,” similar to the aggregators, but with authors doing interviews with the platform and lots and lots of users submitting review, forming book clubs, starring their favorites and filling out their virtual bookshelves it is a viable social online space dedicated to reading.

This is to say nothing of blogging platforms which have become so much a part of the base Internet landscape, hardly distinguishable in some cases from websites, I’m not sure they are even “social media.” And that many, many of these applications are interconnected so you sign in with your twitter account to instagram something you found on pinterest and then put it up of

digg... ad nasuem... And also there are also web-aps like hootsuite that allow you to read and post across multiple platforms, often with scheduling capabilities.

Just like my [eResume guide](#), my main point is to have us looking at options and finding what is right for our personal proclivities and workflow. We also should have some awareness of various social media streams to see if adding or boosting the profile of the organization, institution or library for whom we work would make sense and serve users.

Oh, and hashtagging? Just a social, user-directed way to search.

Walking a Fine Line: You 2.0 vs. Well, You

by Rebecca Halpern

Last winter my colleague [Annie](#) wrote about the importance of online self-branding for information professionals. I couldn't agree more that personal branding is important for both budding and seasoned professionals. Not only does it demonstrate a level of competency with social media technologies, but it also demonstrates that you're connected with the profession and other professionals. Plus, deciding to count your few free hours blogging and tweeting as professional development is totally awesome.

Despite all this, I find branding myself to be challenging. First, I read a lot of library blogs and I find myself getting lost in the "echo chamber" of blogs—the phenomena of one article being posted dozens of times among different blogs. I spend hours a day reading library blogs, sometimes to read no more than a handful of different articles. Secondly, there is a fine line between using social

media to stay connected professionally and using social media to stay connected.

The other day my brother asked me if I got a new position as a social media outreach person for the library. After I told him no, I asked him why he thought that and he replied because all my tweets are about the library. In fact, a few other friends I've stayed connected to on Twitter express confusion over why all my tweets seem to be about libraries. The simple answer is because I love libraries and want to talk about them a lot. But it goes deeper than that: I tweet primarily about libraries because I've come to think of social media sites as primarily e-portfolios for potential employers and not as tools to express myself and stay connected with friends, family, and other professionals. How much do I want my online presence to be exclusively professional? If a potential employer stumbled upon my personal blog, which, for all intents and purposes is a style blog, would they think I'm a ditz? What kind of image am I portraying if say, half of all my tweets were about cooking or gardening or my political leanings? Is it wise to keep some social media connections strictly professional and some strictly personal? Self-promotion is a critical component to professional development, but I don't want to alienate my loved ones who want to keep in touch via social networks.

Is LinkedIn Worth the Effort?

by Kevin Coleman

A classmate from my Transformative Learning and Technology Literacies class at San Jose State University sent me a [LinkedIn](#) connection request about a month ago, prompting a total revamp of my oft-neglected and unfinished LinkedIn profile. I realized that my profile needed to be presentable if my classmates were going to be looking at it, and also because, oh right, I'm graduating soon (I mean, I hope!). And not to mention that part of the coursework for the above mentioned class includes creating our own [Personal Learning Networks](#), or PLNs, which a LinkedIn account could be considered a part of.

So, of course, I said yes to the connection request, because it's a part of a class assignment, and it might be good for networking for future jobs and lifelong learning—but oh no my profile! I hadn't looked at my profile in a year, and never really completed it to begin with, and I doubt I'm alone in this predicament. As I became

consumed with the task of making my profile presentable and exploring all the site's features, I got excited about the possibilities that LinkedIn could offer, but after investing a lot of time (time I could have spent on Facebook!) updating my profile, I began to question the usefulness of such professional-based social networking sites, particularly for MLIS students and job-seeking librarians.

LinkedIn seems to be well on its way to becoming as ubiquitous as Facebook, but with *connections* instead of friends, and the allure of potentially finding that amazing new job you've been dreaming of. According to LinkedIn, they had [150 million members](#) worldwide as of February 2012, with college students and recent grads making up the fastest growing type of new member. There are more than one million professional networking groups on LinkedIn, including hundreds of library related groups. According to this [infographic](#), 13.9% of LinkedIn members are in the "Information Technology and Service" industry, which sadly could just indicate that there are a lot of librarians looking for jobs. But are librarians finding good job leads on LinkedIn? Based on a recent search I conducted there are very few actual library related job postings listed on LinkedIn, and overall LinkedIn does seem more oriented to big business and the tech industry.

But if you're the type of person who reads Hack Library School—you like to keep up with what's going on in libraryland; you probably spend a little too much time on the Internet; and you're desperate, or soon will be desperate, to find a job—it's likely that you're already on LinkedIn or will be soon, no matter if it's actually beneficial. So let's discuss what's good about LinkedIn beyond finding a job. LinkedIn offers a good way to manage all of your professional contacts in one easily accessible place for those

times in the future when you might need a recommendation or reference. It's another way to keep up with what your classmates, colleagues, mentors, etc., are doing professionally, which can benefit your lifelong learning. And it's a great way to market yourself beyond the resume using LinkedIn's interactive profile features (like adding web links to projects that you've worked on, or linking to your twitter account, personal website or blog). Like Facebook, LinkedIn allows you to share articles, videos, and even status updates; however, in most cases, what you share on LinkedIn should be relevant to the professional worlds that you're involved in.

There are lots of ways to integrate your personality into your LinkedIn profile. Just do it thoughtfully and don't forget the [basics](#) of managing your profile. This might take more effort than Facebook initially because your LinkedIn profile needs to be professional and polished, while at the same reflecting your personality to potential employers. And if LinkedIn is going to be beneficial to you, it's going to require a more strategic approach than the usual randomness of Facebook. For example, don't connect with everyone that you know on LinkedIn; instead, select the majority of your connections based on shared interests and goals. Interestingly, LinkedIn requires that you already have some sort of relationship with a potential connection or connections in common, so they've eliminated some of the randomness of online networking right there.

LinkedIn may not lead to a job, but then again it might. So, if you have a few extra hours, it probably wouldn't hurt to create a glamorous LinkedIn profile and see where it leads. You'll feel productive, at least! But remember, in the end, it's still about the connections that you make in the real world, so get out there!

How to Stand Out in the Job Search Crowd: ePortfolios

by Chris Eaker

Over the last couple of weeks, we've brought you a series of posts about preparing yourself for the job search. Ashley gave you general advice she gleaned from an [interview with a hiring manager](#). Rose brought you advice on filling out your [job application and creating a cover letter](#). Then Laura talked about tips for [how to dress](#) when you go to an interview or job fair. Today's post talks about a tool you can add to your job search toolkit to help you stand out: the eportfolio.

The portfolio concept has been around for a long time within the art and architecture fields. In a portfolio, a student builds a collection of examples of his or her work to showcase to potential employers. This concept, however, is a relatively new one within library and information science schools. Some schools, such as [San](#)

[Jose State University](#), require all their students to complete one [Correction: SJSU gives students the option of creating one over a thesis, and most students do chose this option.]. Others, such as the [University of Tennessee](#), are in the process of implementing the portfolio as an alternative to the thesis or comprehensive exams. Today, I'm going to answer four questions to introduce you to the portfolio and explain how it can be an asset to your job search, namely:

1. What is an eportfolio?
2. What are its benefits?
3. Why should I consider making one?
4. How do I get started?

What is an ePortfolio?

An eportfolio is an online showcase and demonstration of your skills and knowledge. It's a website where you discuss your education, showcase and exhibit products you've created, and accent your improvements and growth throughout grad school and beyond. The eportfolio also provides a platform for collection of "learning artifacts." Learning artifacts are actual examples of your learning. They can be in the form of exams, projects, presentations, or research papers. You can also use an eportfolio for visualization of important material and knowledge. For example, you can display concept maps for each of your classes to display what you learned to strengthen and enhance your learning.

What are its benefits?

One of the major benefits of preparing an eportfolio is that it provides a place for active learning and reflection. Active learning

is the opposite of passive learning. Passive learners sit in the classroom — maybe taking notes, maybe not — and listen to the teacher. They study and take exams, but rarely give the material another thought. Active learners constantly reflect upon what the material is teaching them and how they can apply it to their future goals. When their tests are returned, they analyze what they did well on and what they need to work on. They write a journal entry about it to solidify the experience and extract the important details to take away from it. They might even attempt to redo the exam questions they missed to improve them. This form of learning causes the students to truly synthesize the material into their thinking, not merely memorize and regurgitate it for an exam.

Another benefit of an eportfolio is that you can demonstrate how you've grown and improved over the course of your graduate school years. This is key, because employers want to see that you can grow once they hire you. They expect you to continue learning and growing as an employee, so accentuating this in your eportfolio proves to them that you're capable.

Why should I consider making one?

Even if your program doesn't require you to make one or offer it as an option, you should create one. Contributing to your eportfolio throughout your career will place you above the crowd in each of your classes because you will have synthesized the material far more deeply than your classmates. You will also stand out when you graduate because you will have proof of your skills, knowledge, talents, and growth to show your potential employers. Simply telling an employer what you can do in a resume and cover letter is one thing, but showing them examples of where you've actually done it makes you stand out.

How do I get started?

Creating your own eportfolio is easy! You can use any web content management software you are familiar with, such as Drupal or WordPress. I suggest you start with WordPress because it is very easy to operate. Almost anyone can get started in WordPress with almost no web design experience. Simply set up a free account and get started. There are plenty of WordPress tutorials on YouTube to help.

Building Your eResume

by Joanna June

Do you have an eResume yet?

I think it goes without saying that every day we become more and more digitally driven. Personally, even though I know it is still done, I cannot imagine sending a hard copy of my resume or examples of my work anywhere. I have my emailable versions but, for my professional life, I think a website is the best way to showcase my work and work history.

The eResume can be simple as an online resume or more complicated with pages and/or links of work examples showing your competencies. The latter dives into the ePortfolio territory. As Chris [eloquently stated](#): an ePortfolio is an online showcase and demonstration of your skills and knowledge. Some schools require them and require them to have specific information. For the purposes of this piece I am referring to your online portfolio

in a more general sense and to distinguish from a full ePortfolio I'm calling it an eResume. Chris's reasons for having one and what I outline below can be applied to either/both.

Basically an eResume is an effective way to give potential employers access to your most up-to-date CV and credentials almost anywhere because it is web-based.

With conferences, internships and resultant networking potential, along with the (relative) lull in coursework, building your ePortfolio, eResume, or website is an excellent summer project. Again, Chris already made [an excellent case for why you should have an ePortfolio](#), setting some expectations and guidelines. But what about the *how*? We received a nice [<140 character request](#) from [@RobbinZirk](#) to answer this question and, as the resident MSIT hacker, I thought I would try to give some options.

There are two huge, major caveats that one should point out at the beginning of any posts like this.

One: Web tech changes fast. New tools, options, platforms, sites and languages are being developed and, as we recently found with the "sunsetting" of GoogleReader, tech is also disappearing. So this post is probably dated even as I type it yet I will try and give a snapshot of what I see as possibilities. Please add your own in the comments and if something new comes about, I will do the same!

Two: Be smart about anything you put on the web. This is, after all, is supposed to be a professional representation of you and your work. Respect [copyright](#), be choice and proud of the [image you are representing](#), and be incredibly diligent in double and triple proofreading your work. This goes for both your ePortfolio and anything you link to. While I am advocating here some pretty

basic platforms, if you begin to really mess around with your site, make sure code and links particularly work across browsers and platforms.

Ok, disclaimers done. It's time to get building...

Step 1: Gather your info.

Polish up your resume, get to writing that personal statement, and pull together the list of materials that you want to showcase. I think Nicole's recommendation to look [at job postings](#) is an excellent one for this process. My website/ePortfolio is for my tv production work, so I use tv terms and show my work as an editor while linking to some of my "other" talents. As I finish my MSIT, I am building a new site and ePortfolio to more align with the jobs I want — using the language and terms that are standard in those areas.

My advice is to start with something as simple as getting your resume online. You can even use GoogleDocs or Dropbox to create a link to a file that is easily updated. You can follow that with an "about me" up and then flushing out with more examples, pieces of your work and details using a site builder or blogging platform. If you chose to build a full site, you should still have a PDF version of your resume and your CV (if they are different) available for viewing and downloading (check out [Brianna's awesome example](#)).

You should also decide if you are going to link to your various social media streams. Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, GoodReads, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, personal blog, professional blog, YouTube channel, etc. could all have their place depending on your style and desired use of those platforms.

We might spend a lot of time worrying about the technology but really: content is king. Spend less time worrying about the method and more time honing your message.

Step 2: Become master of your domain.

Even if you choose to use one of the simple web-presence-building platforms I list below, I think it is worthwhile to own your domain name. You can use a domain registrar like NameSecure.com to see if your desired name is available and then claim it. It is likely going to cost you \$10-20 a year and you can set it to automatically renew. I think it is a small investment to make you look that much more professional, not to mention easier to point others to: “Check out my work at VideoJoJune.com” is a lot easier than “go to <http://2011.ispace.ci.fsu.edu/~jj10h/>”

A huge advantage too is you can then point this name to any other site you wish. When or if you chose a different platform or build your own site, you don't have to change business cards, your resume or the links or people that your have given your webaddress to. Your domain will always point to your most recent and best content. Most of the platform options I list below have the ability to make it look like you are on your domain when you are really on a free platform (like Tumblr or WordPress).

Step 3: Build it.

As noted, there are tons of options for this step (you can Google “free web sites” for yet more). The most important factor is to find an option you are comfortable working with and making your own. If you are a whiz at HTML, by all means build your own site from scratch and host it. If you didn't really understand that last sentence, here are some other options.

I tried to find as many free and low-cost options as possible. They are in no particular order and for brevity I am limiting myself to just a sentence or two on each — you can follow the links and poke around and see what is right for you:

- [WordPress](#) - The major blogging platform out there, users include this very blog. Free, fairly easy to use and very customizable, you don't have to "blog" to effectively use this platform; simply using a series of connected pages would work just fine.
- Personally hosted sites – I use [BlueHost](#) for my personal domains (both WordPress-based blogs and HTML sites) – but there are many, many out there. I also have used [Theme Forest](#) to find low-cost templates for both HTML and WP sites (you can search for free ones pretty easily as well to cost-effectively boost the look of your site).
- [Tumblr](#) - Free and quite customizable with free or low-cost themes. It is a blogging platform but could easily be structured for an eResume.
- [Google](#) - A pretty basic site builder but it is free and can connect to your existing gmail address.
- [Blogspot](#) - Google's blogging platform, similar to Tumblr but a little more basic.
- [LinkedIn](#) – If nothing else, build a LinkedIn profile so your resume and contact information are accessible via the web.
- Facebook page – Not your personal profile, but a page that you create and people can like. You can save files (like your resume), pictures, links, and even long

statuses about projects if you were so inclined. It might not be the most professional but, especially if you were applying for jobs that ask you to have social media chops including familiarity with Facebook, it could work as proof of knowledge.

- [Wix](#) - I haven't used it but it is a well-rated, hosted, free website builder.
- [Webs](#) - Free trial, low cost from there, another well-rated site builder (that I haven't personally used).
- [SquareSpace](#) - Low cost, professional-looking hosted sites.
- [Typepad](#) - Fairly low-cost site-builder and host (Seth Godin among many others use it)
- School hosted site - FSU has server space that we are able to use while in school (a requirement for some classes even). The advantage is that it is free; the disadvantage is that it might not be available once you graduate.

There are many, many others. Again, find something that suits your needs and technical abilities - better that it work well and be simple than some beautifully themed, intricate site that doesn't convey your information.

Spend the majority of your creative juices and efforts on your content. Make sure you back it all up locally to your computer and/or put it elsewhere in the cloud. Most of all: get something out there! You never know when you'll meet someone and want to point them to your site.

CONFERENCES

Why You Should Register for a Conference ASAP

by Joanna June

If you are new to your LIS program, you're probably just trying to get your feet under you (as I was a year ago). Old hands are re-acclimating to the familiar [not-enough-hours-in-the-day feeling](#) and we are all looking at due dates, reading lists and task lists with dread.

For the first time or the 10th, you might be [drowning in a sea of acronyms](#) and the thought of adding [ALA](#), [MLA](#), [SLA](#), or [AMIA](#) seems like it will shortcircuit your brain. Believe me, though, **the effort of finding a good conference and then attending is going to save you tons of time, energy and even money in the long run.**

It is worth it to add this to-do to your plate in a place of priority. Hack Library School has published some great resources for hacking a conference, particularly the Granddaddy of them all: ALA ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Even if you can't make it to [Anaheim](#) this summer, **you ought start planning to attend at least one LIS conference in the next year.** Let me explain my experience.

I was the one who knew what they wanted to do when she grew up: work on Sesame Street. TV was "it" for me. That is, until it wasn't. A strange confluence of events brought me to LIS and I thought that after getting an MLIS I'd either work in a traditional library or in a media center of a school.

In my first semester of my distance learning program I was overwhelmed by the new vernacular and issues of LIS. I wanted to meet some fellow librarians/archivists face-to-face and was lured to the [Florida Library Association](#) conference because one of my favorite (guilty pleasure) authors [Tim Dorsey](#) was the guest speaker. Plus the meeting was in Orlando so I had friends to stay with and visit so it was low-wallet-impact.

I wasn't entirely wowed overall but at FLA I heard a rousing and thought provoking keynote from [R. Dave Lankes](#), was able to make contact with a few professors and fellow students, and attended a number of interesting sessions that slowly seeped me in current library language and issues. In total, valuable experience but I had two additional huge takeaways.

There is no replacement for one-on-one contact with potential employers and mentors.

I can say with certitude that meeting one professor at FLA resulted in landing a stellar year-long internship in Florence, Italy. There

was hustle and work after the initial contact but that one meeting made the cost of FLA attendance completely worth it.

Not only is association membership a good line for your resume, think about the time when you are or will be drafting a cover letter for a position with 500 other applicants. How much more will you be able to stand out if you are able to include “we spoke at XYZ actually about...” or “I participated in your break-out session on ABC and was particularly impressed by your thoughts on...” or even “at ALA I attended numerous sessions on ZYX and am excited to bring the ideas learned there to this position by...”

The education you get at a conference is one your classes can't give you.

At FLA I discovered that despite my ideas of small-town librarianship, I don't want to be a public librarian or even a school librarian. The issues are interesting to me academically but the day-in-and-day-out job description, as felt by session topics and related by conversations with other attendees, is not compelling. I have the utmost respect for school and community librarians, all the more because I know that isn't for me.

How much time, money, effort, and frustration did that one weekend save me? I came back and switched my concentration to something I'm enjoying much more. I joined AMIA and found a volunteer/intern opportunity to learn more hands-on. I had plans to go to their conference which fell through but I'm getting a good deal of information from the newsletter and listserv (benefits of my student membership) and know that I'm on the right path.

You owe it to yourself and your future career. I hear that specialized conferences are even better in terms of networking and

education. From ALA chapters, to various special library meetings, to the myriad of state conferences, there is likely a conference close to you which wouldn't require too much monetary or travel investment – **particularly as it is significantly cheaper to be a member and attendee when you are a student.**

Un-conferences and webinars are great but there is no substitute for in-person contact. So get thee to a conference!

Professional Preparations

by Joanna June

It's time to get yourself ready to attend whatever conference or professional networking event you have on the books for this summer.

Sometimes preparations before the event take as much time and are just as important as attending itself. You can review some of our previous posts about what to [wear](#), [attending without attending](#), and [conference planning](#) for some great general tips and information for surviving a conference — and we probably don't need to tell you to [plan your sessions](#) early so you have ample time to research presenters or sessions you definitely want to see.

Conferences are not only about taking in new new information, they are an [invaluable networking space](#). Here are some preparatory hacks with an eye on networking and professional

development to get you ready to confidently hit the conference floor.

Business cards

There was a [twitter discussion](#) recently about business cards and the result was that yes, they are still valuable and desirable to have. You don't want to be that guy/girl littering every hand with a business card but you do want to have them at the ready. It [isn't too late](#) to get some printed for ALA and they [don't have to be expensive](#). You can even get blanks at your local office supply store to print at home.

Dave Delaney has some good [quick tips](#) for a better biz card; I particularly liked his ideas to have whitespace for the receiver to make their own notes, and to possibly include a picture. As a student, you probably want to include your institution name, degree sought, and expected graduation date. At the least they should look professional and have your current contact information.

Update everything

Speaking of contact points, have you updated your professional documents and public profiles recently? Hopefully you will be making lots of new contacts and connections and you don't want to send them to an outdated website with an old resume. Now is the time to polish, proofread (again) and prep your professional accoutrements including your...

- Resume
- Cover letter
- List of references and recommendation letters

- A drafted follow-up contact email (“Hello XYZ, It was so great to speak with you at ALA...)
- ePortfolio (you **do have an eportfolio**, right?)
- Professional website
- LinkedIn profile
- Twitter account (including your avatar and bio)

It also might be the time to scrub your Facebook or other social media sites of anything that might raise eyebrows to a potential employer or peer — the former will almost certainly check and it is best to know how you appear to the outside world.

Start the conversation early

Twitter is a powerful tool before and during conferences. Follow the conference Twitter account for all the latest updates (if you don’t have a Twitter account you should strongly consider getting one but you can also access in any web browser). Also, never underestimate a conference buddy! Post in your school’s Facebook group or listserv and talk about attending in class to find out who else might be going. You shouldn’t only spend time with those you know but it helps to walk into a room with one familiar face, both for information sharing as well as the chance to divide and conquer conflicting sessions.

Keep calm with your carry on?

Finally, what will you pack and what will you pack it in? While **a suit** is likely overkill for a conference, you should be thinking about what you **plan to wear**. Will you depend on the likely conference bag giveaway or do you need to bring/buy a suitable conveyance for your stuff? Will you use a notebook, laptop, iPad,

phone, etc. for note taking? It is good to start thinking through these logistics so packing is a breeze and you have what you need when you arrive (don't forget pens!).

Hopefully the hacks herein are good notes and reminders for all of us to get our professional lives in order — you never know who you are going to meet so best always to be prepared!

What to Bring and What to Do

by Paul Lai

For some extra advice, I asked some of my friends who have gone to national conferences what attendees should bring and what they should do while at the conference. Here are their suggestions:

What to bring

- Business cards. If you don't have any yet, make some quick ones on a printer with card stock!
- Bring clothes that you can layer. Not only is Chicago summer weather fickle, but you will have to deal with variable conference center and hotel air conditioning systems.
- Granola bars or other portable snacks. You will be booked solid (if you are doing things right) and may forget a meal here or there.

- An empty water bottle. Stay hydrated!
- Professional looking pen. (“No bics, man,” says my friend.)
- Camera (sound settings off if possible for less obtrusive picture-taking).
- Chargers for your phone, camera, tablet, computer, and other gadgets.
- Comfortable shoes.
- Blister creme.

What to do

- Make sure to schedule time to network (at more formal events as well as more informally over meals and drinks). Meeting people is as important as attending sessions.
- If you know that you need time for yourself, make sure to also schedule some downtime away from people, especially if you have roommates.
- Be ready to pick up swag (free stuff! books! pens! bags! random thing!) at the exhibits.
- If someone invites you to an event or meal, go! Make lots of friends.

Thanks to Roger, Sarah, Bryan, Julia, and Stephanie for these suggestions!

Get Your Network On

by Lauren Bradley and Annie Pho

National conferences bring together different librarians from across the country, all in one place. It gives everyone the opportunity to meet new people and network. This is pretty fantastic if you think about it, but for a newbie student or librarian who has never been before, this can be an overwhelming experience. It brings to mind a number of questions about what to do and how to use this experience to network. Luckily, we have paired up a conference newbie, Annie, with conference veteran Lauren, with a question and answer session for some guidance on how to network.

Annie: What can I do before the conference to help me prepare?

Lauren: First, update all of your social networks, especially Twitter and LinkedIn. If you can create an online portfolio, blog, website, or digital business card, do so. Then, create business cards

that have a URL of something of yours, even if it's just your LinkedIn page (see our tips for business cards at the end of the post). If you don't already, start connecting with librarians before the conference. Make a list of people you'd like to talk to in person if you have the chance. If you notice people hosting Tweet-ups and other meet-ups, put them on your schedule.

Annie: What is the best way to network if you are shy?

Lauren: I can be very shy, and I am still working on overcoming it for networking purposes, so I am no expert. The best advice I can give you is to just start. If you're using Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn to talk to other librarians and library professionals, you're already doing well. If you can equate @ replying someone on Twitter with walking up to a stranger and saying hello, it might be less nerve-wracking. Most every other person at the conference is there to meet new people, too, and they will almost definitely welcome your introduction or question. The worst thing someone can do is be mean/rude, and clearly they are not worth knowing. So just take a breath, walk up to someone, say hello, and introduce yourself. One icebreaker is that you're both already wearing a name tag, so one intro line might be (after the "nice to meet you") "I noticed you're from Mitch Hedberg University in Portland, OR. I'm very interested in academic libraries. What's your job title? How do you like working there/living in Portland?" You get the gist.

Annie: What if you don't have a smart phone to utilize social networking? Will there be wifi? Is it OK to have laptops?

Lauren: There will be free wifi, at least in the convention center (I assume the hotels for conference purposes will as well). If you don't have a smartphone, it is perfectly acceptable to use an iPad,

laptop, netbook, iPod Touch, etc. However, some sessions will be more crowded than others, or simply less spacious, so using a laptop in a session just depends on the room you're in and how comfortable you will be. Also, try to be respectful to the speaker – I know we're sort of expected to tweet, but I still look up and make eye contact, nod, etc.

Annie: Should I stick with other students or explore on my own?

Lauren: You're (and I direct this at all the first-timers, not just Annie) a first timer at a HUGE conference, so of course you're going to want to spend time with fellow students. You may even be tempted to copy your friend's conference schedule the first day and go to every session/lunch together because you're so overwhelmed. However, I would HIGHLY encourage you to step out of your comfort zone in every way possible, and that means attending the sessions you're most interested in, going to lunches with complete strangers – you name it. Try to confront what you're most nervous about being alone – is it being nervous about networking? Not knowing where to go? Keep in mind that you're going to be at a conference with 20,000 of the most helpful people you're ever going to meet – do not be afraid of them, and don't be afraid to ask questions! (especially if you're lost – that's a great networking opportunity 😊)

Annie: What should I bring to network at the convention center? Phone? Cards?

Lauren: Definitely bring your phone and any other gadgets that you can utilize social networking with (emphasis on Twitter and Foursquare). Bring your gadget chargers so that you can recharge if they die. Also don't forget your business cards, and if you're so inclined, buy a holder for them to store both yours and the ones

you will collect from others. Have a pen on you to write on the back of others' business cards (details to remember them by). You can also bring print resumes if you're job hunting.

Annie: How many events/ sessions should I aim for in a day?

Lauren: Listen to your body. If you start at 8 am, then attend a session every hour until 5, you'll be too exhausted to hang out and do fun stuff after (including tweets up and dance parties). Not to mention – the “after” stuff is usually where the most networking happens! If you can, alternate days where you sleep in. Skip a session or two during the day to take a nap or explore the exhibits. But back to networking – alternate between sessions that are purely presentations, and partly or purely social. You have to create your own opportunities to network, since hypothetically you could go to 8 back-to-back lecture type sessions each day, go out to dinner with your friends, and go back to the hotel, never speaking to a stranger. Just do everything in moderation.

Annie: As a poor graduate student, am I totally missing out if I don't go to any of the sessions or events that cost extra money?

Lauren: I can honestly say I don't know, since I've always been a poor graduate student and have never paid for a single extra session. I have wondered if the networking opportunities are better at these sessions. Can anyone who has attended paid sessions answer this for Annie?

Annie: In the sea of people, how can I make sure someone will remember they met me? Also, I met a cool librarian, what should I do to follow up?

Lauren: Well, you can't guarantee anything (unless you're the lady in the lobster hat I met at SLA – you can always try a

schtick!), but you can certainly do your part by following up during or after the conference. I would suggest gathering all of your collected business cards and creating a Google doc spreadsheet with all of their info (that way, you can ditch the cards if needed, since they're harder to keep up with). There are various levels of follow-up – if you just met some cool people you want to keep up with, follow them on Twitter, add on LinkedIn, visit their blog and comment, etc. If you want to do heavier networking, like following up on a possible job lead or asking someone to become your mentor, you might send a more formal email, letting them know how much you enjoyed meeting them, asking them a couple of questions, and thanking them for their time. Really, just do what feels comfortable to you in how you met that person.

Other networking tips:

- We've mentioned Twitter quite a bit. Follow the conference hashtags to read what others are doing, and join in the conversation. You may even see someone asking, "Does anyone want to have lunch with me?" That brings me to my second tip.
- Use meal times for networking! You've got to eat. So does everyone else. If you're interested in a certain round table, find out if they're hosting any socials. You can search conference websites and Facebook for these events. Last year I attended the [ANSS social](#) and [Bites with LIRT](#). And if you see someone on Twitter asking for a lunch date, go for it!

And finally, for business card advice:

See Erin Dorney's [excellent blog post](#). Here are pictures of [my business card from last year](#) and [Annie's business card](#). I went to [Vistaprint.com](#) to order mine, and Annie used [Moo.com](#). I also have friends who created their own using templates in MS Word and a printer.

Presenting at Conferences While in Library School

by Brianna Marshall

There have been some terrific posts about conferences on Hack Library School in the past: Chris recently wrote about [unconferences](#) and Joanna wrote a post earlier this year [encouraging students to attend conferences](#) as a library student. Today I want to take these posts a step further and encourage other future librarians and information professionals to not only attend but also present at conferences while in library school. I concluded my spring semester with a panel presentation at a state conference (Society of Indiana Archivists) and a poster presentation at a national conference (LOEX), where I had such great experiences that I want to encourage other library school students to take the plunge and do the same.

To reiterate some of the reasons Joanna mentioned in her post, attending conferences is a valuable part of your library school years because of the networking opportunities, educational takeaways, and considerably lower student registration costs. When you present at a conference you get all of the same benefits of attending while also gaining valuable experience for your resume/CV. After presenting at a conference, you will have documented evidence of contributing to the profession (a great way to prepare for those job postings that say “demonstrated commitment to professional development” preferred/required!). It also shows that you are comfortable with public speaking, which I guarantee will make you stand out on the job hunt.

There are multiple types of presentations at conferences (poster, panel, and paper) and conference sizes (local, regional, state, and national). They each have their own culture and provide different opportunities for student presenters. Poster presentations are usually the format students are encouraged to take up at larger conferences (a pretty low-pressure introduction to conference participation), whereas smaller conferences will likely accept paper sessions from students and working professionals.

So, why don't all library school students present at conferences? I've determined a few main barriers to conference participation and thought I'd offer up my tips on overcoming them.

Presentation topic

Sometimes it feels as though coming up with a compelling topic for a presentation is an insurmountable goal... but you can do it! If you're able to choose topics that are already part of your workload, presenting isn't that much more work than what you're doing anyway. You can double-up by presenting on topics you've

researched as part of a class, or if relevant and okayed by your boss, at work. Drawing on an internship experience is another classic presentation topic. Take advantage of your fellow library students and propose a poster or panel session with them—it will be less pressure just on you (but like any group work just make sure you pick reliable peers to collaborate with).

Money

Ah, funding. Most library students are not rolling in the dough, so money is a serious consideration when it comes to attending/presenting at a conference. While student registration is considerably cheaper than normal registration, it can still be expensive. Sometimes there's no way around this and it becomes a difficult choice to make, but I think with a little strategy you can find ways to lower your overall costs.

- **Start small:** Regional and state conferences often have very affordable registration fees (in the \$25-50 range) and occasionally these will be waived for presenters. These conferences may be within driving distance, so if you have a vehicle you can go there for the day without needing to get a hotel room.
- **Free money:** Apply for any and all scholarships you can. This seems obvious but sometimes funding opportunities are not advertised as well as they could be, especially in the case of small conferences—which is ironically where you have the best odds of being granted the money. Don't be afraid to contact the conference committee asking if there are any scholarships available to help

students attend and present at the conference in question.

- ***Band together:*** Actively seek out others in your program who want to carpool and/or split a hotel room. Not only is it incredibly nice to have a support system when you're experiencing [impostor syndrome](#), this can really break the cost down into a manageable figure.

Lack of planning

Often, calls for proposals are advertised anywhere between 3-12 months in advance of the conference with deadlines well before the conference itself. This requires prospective presenters to not only know about the conference in question but also come up with an idea for their presentation.

Because the timelines vary from conference to conference, there is no other way to prepare than: go forth and do your research, future librarians! I recommend utilizing an electronic list service and maintaining a list specifically for upcoming conferences that you are interested in presenting at. For instance, I currently have most of the 2013 large and mid-size conferences I'm scoping out on my own list. Because I am often adding new conferences and deleting ones I've reconsidered, the list stays fresh in my mind. I'll know to start looking for calls for proposals for the 2013 group starting this fall. All it really takes to stay on top of conferences is diligence and some Google search skills!

Scheduling

If you can afford the registration, saw the call for proposals, and had a presentation topic accepted, first of all, congrats! There's

still managing your schedule to contend with, though. We're all juggling classes, jobs, and internships, so sometimes the thought of adding a conference to the mix can be (if you're at all like me) almost hyperventilation-inducing. However, the nice thing about conferences is that you will find out whether your proposal has been accepted months in advance, so you should be able to make any necessary arrangements by then. It can be tricky, but I firmly believe conferences are worth prioritizing and squeezing into an already tight schedule.

An additional note: merely proposing a presentation topic and having it accepted doesn't mean you are instantly committed to presenting. If something has come up between the time you submitted your proposal and the time you find out it has been accepted, you are perfectly free to decline. A conference committee member will likely ask you for a confirmation and if you say yes it's only then that you are committed to presenting—so it's always worth it to at least propose a topic!

Nerves

I saved this barrier for last because I think it's the most serious adversary library school students have in presenting at conferences. Let's just get it out there: public speaking is uncomfortable. Wondering if your proposed topic—even if it has already been accepted for the conference!—will be relevant and interesting to your audience: also uncomfortable. Putting yourself out there in a community of librarians you very much admire and want to be respected by: you guessed it, *SUPER* uncomfortable.

Maybe there's a percentage of library school students that are not uncomfortable to some degree with these aspects, but I'm not one of them. My solution is just to do it anyway, and so can you! You

definitely don't have to feel every second like you're a superstar. In fact, a lot of the time you will probably be plagued by self-doubt (I am!) and that's okay. You can do this. [Read this article.](#) Prepare well, enjoy yourself, and be proud that you're challenging yourself. Keep in mind that the librarians I've met at conferences seem to truly enjoy hearing what library students have to say, so believe in yourself because you likely have many valuable contributions to make to the field!

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**JOBS &
INTERNSHIPS**

Apply Yourself

by Joanna June

When I tell people [what I am doing](#) in Florence, Italy, for a year, I am invariably asked one question: “How did you land such a position?!” To which I smile broadly, often chuckle a little and answer simply and honestly: “I applied.” This, my LIS, MLIS, and MSIT friends is one of my best hacks for library school and life.

You have to show up. For most positions and roles that you want to land, that means tossing your hat in the ring with an application.

If you have been following HLS’s new series [“So What Do You Do?”](#) you have heard about a number of great internships and programs to round out your LIS education. In none of them (at least so far) does the hacker say: Well, I was just standing around on a street corner and someone said, “Come do this thing.” Whether it’s getting into library school, volunteering, taking a leadership position in the club which eventually leads to the internship which then leads to a job with your dream

organization... all the steps start with some sort of applying yourself – even if it is as simple as showing up.

I am additionally reminded of the “showing up” truism as I have recently been interviewing students for library assistant positions. Last semester, four students applied. Guess what? Those four people were hired. None of them seemed to be unstable or problematic in an interview so selection was easy. Those that tried and submitted their applications – a simple Google form – on time, got hired.

I was then shocked at how many more students came to me after the hires were made and work had started and said “Oh, I wanted to apply but ___(forgot/was unsure/put it off/was busy/etc)___, can I still work for the library?” or “Are you going to open the process again?” No. No, I am not.

First, it doesn’t speak well to interest nor a solid work ethic that the deadline was missed. (Takeaway: Send early, send often, and follow the directions for the application to the letter.)

Second, it would be blatantly unfair. (Takeaway: Don’t ask for special consideration or worst of all, an extension.)

Third, why – as a manager – would I think that the next time would be any different? I was pleased with the work of the students that were hired and the two that came back to Florence were assured jobs against a much larger applicant pool this semester.

Those returning students that missed the deadline last time and asked about it later? *Not one* applied this time. A number of others who expressed interest didn’t either. Which is sad because I’m sure

they would be great additions to the library but I can't hire them because they didn't apply. (Takeaway: Apply!)

If you limit yourself by not even applying you are 100% assured of not getting the gig.

If you [make the attempt](#), even if it is an outside chance, you at least have some chance. Sure, you shouldn't waste your energies by applying for things you aren't interested in. Do your research and be somewhat selective (our time is limited) but err on the side of over-shooting. What an incredible position to be in that you turn down a role that you decide isn't such a great fit! Even if you don't land the job, if nothing else you get [cover letter writing and interviewing](#) practice and you know that your [digital resume](#) is up to date for when the really great thing comes along.

You can go to [amazing](#) and [unexpected places](#) with your LIS degree, even while still in school. **Don't limit your options by not even trying.** It can be scary to ask for the [informational interview](#), press "send" on your cover letter and resume email, put in to lead a [seminar at that conference](#), or press "submit" on [your application](#). The information is out there to help guide you (see all those links) but you — YES YOU! — have to take the leap and do it.

Don't procrastinate. Don't over-think it. Don't self-limit by indecision. It gets just a little easier with practice and every other person applying is likely feeling the exact same way. [You're not a fraud!](#) If you have the interest and take the time to submit an application, you — yes you! — deserve to at least be considered.

Put yourself out there and go for it. You truly never know until you apply yourself!

Tips for New Students Looking for Library School Jobs

by Brianna Marshall

As a second-year SLIS student, I've talked to quite a few new students in my program who are anxious about securing library jobs. I can understand how they feel; after all, one year ago I was a freshly-minted SLIS student. I had never gotten paid to work in a library. I came to library school with the sage advice of my mentor, a very recent library school grad, ringing in my ears. She had conveyed to me in no uncertain terms that I should work as much as I could while going to school to build my resume. Because of her, I came to library school knowing I needed to jump right in—but that didn't make the process any easier.

By now I've held several jobs and it has led me to realize that my real education happens when I go to work every day. I view my coursework as something to get through; if my classes are

enjoyable it's a plus. I have taken enthralling classes, practical classes, boring classes, and enragingly irrelevant classes. They've fallen all over the spectrum. So while I attempt to do well in them, my main priority is working as much as is feasible. I firmly believe that library jobs should always trump coursework because if you do not work, you will not get a job in a library upon graduating. We could squabble about the particulars (*maybe* you could get a paraprofessional position without experience) but I don't think it's contestable. The library job market is intensely competitive and the more library experience you have, the better off you will be.

With that said, the following are a few tips I have for new students looking to work while in library school.

Reconsider “waiting to settle in” before getting a job.

I'm not trying to be callous: I understand the hectic nature of moving a few days before classes start, unpacking, dealing with a new living situation, navigating an unknown city and campus. At times, applying for jobs seems like it can hang out on the back burner as you switch to survival mode for the foreseeable future. However, I'm always wary when I hear this because it's altogether too easy to let a month, then a semester, slip by. By the time you begin applying for student jobs, you may realize that it takes longer to land a student job than you initially thought. If you are pursuing the average MLS-seeking timeline of 2 years, that's a significant chunk of a fabulous window of opportunity that you end up not working!

Be enthusiastic...and not too picky.

Especially if you are coming to library school without prior library experience, you'd better plan to bust out the charm. Just like

competition for professional positions, competition for student positions is fierce (at least at my university). Personality and enthusiasm means a lot. Also, don't be too selective in the jobs you are applying to. If you want to be an archivist upon graduation, of course apply for any and all archives jobs that come up... but for your first semester, grab whatever position you can in the library system rather than holding out for the "perfect" job. In my library, the common wisdom is that it is easier to get a job you love after you have another job in the system. You're seen as less of a wild card that way.

Be aware of the difference between being too picky and settling, though. You very well might need to initially take a non-library job or a less-than-ideal library job (book reshelver, for instance) to pay the rent, but stay actively on the lookout for library jobs. Don't let a temporary setback become a barrier to building a strong resume that will make you competitive for professional jobs.

Have a resume, CV, and sample cover letter on cloud storage.

I would recommend Dropbox or Google Docs for this purpose. At the very least, include your resume as an attachment archived on your email account. There is power in having access to this document any time and place you can get on the internet; instead of an arduous process, updating these documents becomes simple and no longer tied to location. At my institution, sometimes supervisors for widely coveted jobs like reference assistant stop accepting applications after a window of only a few hours, so time is of the essence. You don't want to have to either start from scratch since you're at school all day or chance it by waiting until you get home to apply. The cover letter will need to be tweaked,

but I always find it much easier to adjust one that is already created than to start from scratch on a blank page.

Find your balance.

Everyone comes into library school with a different set of responsibilities that then affect their classes, work, and life for the duration of their program. Work within your own circumstances to determine the workload you're comfortable with—preferably one that allows you to maintain your classes, personal responsibilities, and some semblance of life satisfaction.

A big distraction to finding this balance can be comparing yourself to your peers. Keeping up with what they are doing and taking inspiration from their accomplishments can be a great motivator but it can also lead to feelings of inadequacy, especially during the beginning of your library school career. Challenge yourself without getting bogged down by comparisons.

Be tenacious.

I believe that amazing growth is possible in library school, but it requires toughening up. Learn to get comfortable going through every step in the job application process: the giddiness you feel when you see that job posting, the whirlwind compilation of application materials, the nervewracking interview you leave not knowing if it went well or not. A few days later, if you get the dreaded email that you haven't been selected for a position, compose a short, gracious response thanking the person for considering you. Then immediately archive that junk! After all, you don't need it poisoning your inbox and bruising up your ego every time you glance at it. Allow yourself to mourn the loss of that perfect student job that you fell so hard for. Rejection

rarely fails to sting (even after you have other successes keeping you buoyant) but keep in mind that everyone, even those library heroes you put up on a pedestal, has experienced it. I try to remind myself that success is often just another word for tenacity. So keep applying... before you know it a job will stick!

Tips for Your Job or Internship Application

by Rose L. Chou

I recently served on a search committee for a tenure-track academic librarian position and reviewed applications for a paid (!) summer archival internship. Nothing I'm going to share in this post is groundbreaking, but I just want to reiterate some key points to keep in mind when sending in applications for jobs and internships.

Logistics

1. I really appreciate when your file names include your full name and what type of document (resume, cover letter) it is. While a file that's named after the place you're applying to is helpful for your own reference, it's not helpful for mine.

2. This is definitely a personal preference, but I *really* love when application materials are sent as .pdf files. Never trust Microsoft Word to keep your formatting true. You also take the risk of leaving track changes on (oh, it's happened — and yes, it looks bad).

3. One way I can tell if you're detail-oriented is if you actually send in everything that's asked for. If the job/internship posting asks for your availability, be sure to include it.

Content

1. Tailor your cover letter. Show that you looked at the organization's website and know something about it, and specify why you want to work there. You will especially stand out if you discuss why you are interested in performing the type of work explicitly listed in the job description. If you talk about how you'd love to learn about digitization when it's not described in the position description at all, it's a clear giveaway that you didn't read it thoroughly — or that you're just recycling an old cover letter without much editing. Oftentimes, I'll see a resume that looks good but change my mind after reading the cover letter.

2. Think of your cover letter as exclusive from the resume. Please don't just repeat what's on your resume, but really explain why your past experience is relevant to the position.

3. Write clearly in your cover letter. If I need to read a sentence multiple times to understand it, you'll stand out for the wrong reasons. One sentence does not need to take up five lines.

Of course, most of these are just my personal preferences. Be sure to check out the blog [Hiring Librarians](#), which provides many different perspectives from hiring managers on what they look

for in a candidate, and [Open Cover Letters](#), which publishes cover letters from librarians and archivists who got hired.

A Tale of Two Part-Time Library Jobs

by Alex Harrington (guest author)

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” may be a bit melodramatic, but “it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness” fits pretty neatly when I try to describe my graduation from library school. See, I didn’t plan ahead, and I had no idea what to expect job-wise when I finished. I thought that having a graduate degree in library science meant I was automatically qualified to be a librarian. But I learned better, and now I have two part-time jobs in libraries (plus one non-library job). This is not what in-library-school me thought that after-library-school me would be doing, but so far it’s working for me. Because some of you might find yourselves in similar situations whether you expect to or not, I hope sharing my story and some advice I’ve learned along the way will help you in your post-graduate job searches.

Story of my life

To understand the advice I want to give you, you first have to hear the story of my post-library-school employment. So gather 'round, and I'll tell you a tale...

I worked at a non-library-related job throughout grad school. I finally noticed the problem with this in my last semester, the summer of 2010, and did some volunteer work at the public library, shelf-reading my own "adopted" section two or three times a week. (It was too little, too late, as far as my hire-ability was concerned, but I made an effort.)

During that same summer semester, I had an internship with the local community college. I worked with the electronic services librarian. Everyone was very friendly and gave me good advice, and I had a good time in general. Then the semester ended, I graduated, and I started looking for jobs. I did so all fall and winter.

Finally, I figured out that no library work experience meant I really couldn't get a librarian position, even though I had the degree. (This was news to me... but I was 23; let's chalk it up to naïveté.) All the librarian postings said they wanted at least a year or two of library work experience. I realized that I would have to take a paraprofessional job to get the experience that, along with my degree, would make me suitable for a librarian position.

In the spring of 2011, I was in the middle of interviewing and waiting to hear back about a clerk position at the public library (the type of position that requires nothing more than a high school diploma, a grasp of the Dewey Decimal System, and the ability to show up) when the electronic services librarian from the community college emailed me. She said they wanted to hire a library specialist in reference; would I be interested? Well, it was part-time and paraprofessional, but it seemed better than shelving

books all day. I interviewed and got the job. Fast forward to six months later, in August 2011: the college said they wanted a weekend librarian for the campus closer to my house. I got that position, too. So now, I'm a part-time library specialist at one campus, part-time librarian at another campus, and I still work part-time at the non-library job I had throughout school. (That's 51 hours, seven days a week, in a 25-mile radius, for those keeping score at home.)

It might sound like I don't enjoy my current employment situation, but that's not true. My non-library skills actually come in handy more often in the library than you might expect. I like staying busy, and having three jobs is a great way to stay busy. Plus, as my colleagues remind me, I'm still young. I have the energy to keep up this schedule for a while without risking burnout. However, this type of schedule isn't for everyone. Ideally, most people want to come out of graduate school looking at a full-time job that calls upon the skills and knowledge they developed while earning their degree. So how do you manage to do that?

Your turn

My situation isn't that unusual to hear about nowadays. Many graduates are finding out – a little too late – that they need qualifications other than their degrees in order to get the jobs they thought would be handed to them after graduation. Keep these four things in mind, and maybe you'll be able to start out higher on the totem pole than I did:

Plan ahead.

Get library-related work experience while you're still in school. Start as early as possible. Volunteer if you can while you search

for a paying gig. Start reading job postings for your ideal jobs and learn about the usual requirements for those positions. They may not be what you expect.

Get your foot in the door. You might have to start in a part-time or paraprofessional job, even with the graduate degree. It happens. Don't let it get to you. Just do your job with pride, and do it well, and before you know it, they'll be asking you to take on bigger responsibilities and move up in the library world.

Have patience. Work experience takes time. Work hard, and wait patiently as your experience grows. Focus on doing the best work you're capable of in the meantime and time will fly.

Look for opportunities. Sure, if someone asks you to do an extra task or help them out, that's a good opportunity to demonstrate your skills and willingness to be helpful. But seek out opportunities, too. If there's a section that nobody else wants to weed, ask if you could have a shot at it. Maybe your library is completely absent from the world of social media, and you think they could benefit from being on Twitter or having a blog. Try not to step on any toes (there might be a librarian who is extremely proud of that gaudy bulletin board you wanted to change) but get creative and think of ways you can prove to your supervisors that you are a benefit to the library.

For other job search ideas, you may enjoy the resources [Preparing to job-search: Some considerations](#) and [Job tips for future/recent LIS grads](#). (They have some really great advice that I wish I had heard two years ago!)

Internship Tips and Insights

by Lauren Dodd Hall

If you're a brand new library school student, you may feel it's a little early to start thinking about internships/practicums. While I do think you need a few weeks to get settled in and feel less overwhelmed by the new atmosphere (and information overload), it's a good idea to begin thinking about internships as soon as you're able. My number one tip for new students is to start perusing job ads – subscribe to job lists using an RSS reader, and save the ones that interest you. You don't have to have your “track” figured out yet, but if you know some of the skills you will need to meet job requirements, you will feel a bit more focused when it comes to choosing classes and internships.

LIS programs vary when it comes to internships and practicums; some are required, some are optional. At UA, internships are optional, but students are strongly encouraged to do at least one semester-long, 150-hour internship for pass/fail credit. It doesn't

hurt that SLIS has an amazing internship coordinator who is not afraid to call any library : Students talk to her about their interests, she names off some choices, and they go from there.

First things first: if an internship is not required, DO ONE. There are some exceptions to this. If you're already working in a library part-time or full-time, you may not need an internship. If you can't physically fit one in your schedule due to life conflicts, it's understandable. Otherwise — do it. I can't stress this enough.

Now for the other tips:

- Seek out paid internships if you can, even if you can't get class credit for them (UA students can't). You can find these advertised on job sites like LibGig and ALA JobList, but also check your school's listserv, and ask your professors for information about opportunities. My second internship was a paid [SCEP position](#). If you know of any other great resources, please leave them in the comments!
- Whether your school has an internship coordinator or not, do some research on libraries you are interested in interning at. If you're going to be working somewhere for any length of time, it's important to know you'll be happy there.
- Talk to your friends, classmates, professors, and network — anyone who may have knowledge about these libraries and their departments. This is part of the research, but it's a lot more crucial than just looking at a library's homepage. Without personal recommendations

from my classmates, I probably wouldn't have committed to driving out of town two days a week for my unpaid internship – gas money adds up!

- If you have an interview for your internship, make sure you ask questions about the library, but more importantly, discuss the kind of projects you'd like to work on and what kind of projects they have available. A reference internship, for example, should be more than just working at the desk – you should collaborate with librarians on projects like LibGuides, marketing/social media, etc. A young adult or children's internship would be incredibly beneficial during summer reading. You want to make sure that you will get real, professional experience, and that you won't just make everyone's copies all semester.
- With that said, keep in mind that you're not going to always do the most super awesome projects of all time. You may do a couple of projects that seem tedious, but will actually teach you a lot. During both of my internships, I completed several projects that librarians would've done (they were just on the back burner), and while each had tedious aspects, I learned SO much. I didn't work on a project that I didn't enjoy and gain knowledge from.
- If this is possible to gauge from the internship interview (or hearsay from your classmates), try to find a library who will integrate you into their culture as much as possible. Even though I was a volunteer, my unpaid

internship provided me with a free parking pass, a .edu email address and school ID that provided me with database access and Microsoft Outlook access, and my own cubicle. I got invited to library meetings on my Outlook calendar (and I was invited to attend any meeting I wish), and I had access to the library's Sharepoint content management system with all of their internal documents. All this is to say – I felt very ingrained in the work culture of the library, and it was such a positive, empowering experience. I want that for every LIS student!

- I mentioned this in my [Dos and Don'ts of Library School](#) post, but if possible, work on a project that produces something tangible for your portfolio/resume.
- Keep in mind that an internship is a big time commitment. You won't have to work on your internship outside of your time at the institution (unless you're doing something from a distance), but you also won't have that time to do your own work. At UA, internships are 150 hours, which roughly translates to 10 hours a week. It doesn't sound like a lot until you completely block out that time from your schedule! My unpaid internship was 12 hours a week, plus 4 hours of travel time for the week total. It was rough on my schedule but very worth it. I physically relocated to another city for my paid internship and worked 40 hours a week my last semester, but I was finished with my coursework by then.

- Absorb everything. Take copious notes, or keep an internship blog. Talk to as many people who work in the library as possible. Try to integrate *yourself* into the culture.

Finally, if you have a great experience, let your supervisors know how you felt. Give them feedback to use for future interns. Ask your supervisor if you can list her as a reference. And make a point to keep in touch with people from that workplace – they can be invaluable to your network, job search, and professional development.

Every LIS student should have a wonderful, skill-building experience, and I hope that if you are a librarian/information professional who hosts interns or LIS student volunteers at your library, you will keep in mind how much it means to us when you take the time to be a mentor. We will remember it and pay it forward! I can't wait for the day I can host interns or be a mentor to someone.

Making Internships Work for Everybody

by Topher Lawton

Even though it's still just midway through the fall semester, I'm already looking ahead to the transition from student-hood to professional life next summer. I know that my internship experience is one of the most fantastic things I've done so far to open the door into the working world, and I hope that most students will also take advantage of an internship during or shortly after a Master's program.

That said, it's important for us to make a compelling case to the libraries where we hope to intern—hosting interns takes a sizable chunk of resources away from the day-to-day operations of many libraries, and library students should keep that in mind. Here are some tips for making your internship a win-win experience for everybody.

Be intentional! When you are setting up your internship, know what you want to learn! Plan ahead, even before you look at host sites, to figure out what you hope to gain, and then try to design an experience that will get you those skills. Some internships don't work out simply because they aren't the right "fit" for a student, but if you can figure that out before the internship is started, you'll have a much better time.

Keep an eye out! Along with knowing what you hope to gain, try and find out why your host institution might need an intern—do they have specific projects that they want help with, or do they just want another pair of hands? Can you do things on a meta-level that will help them in the future, establishing practices that will pave the way for others?

Represent! You're in library school, which means you're the connection point between the academy and the practice of librarianship. Be respectful, of course, but if you're asked to give input, don't be shy! I had a few opportunities in my internship to do some trend-spotting, and help the library where I worked get a sense of what was coming down the pike in terms of necessary library skills and services. Take advantage of opportunities like that to find your voice.

Remember the rest of us! When you do have your internship nailed down, don't forget that there might be other students in the future who want to be exactly where you are. "Leave things better than you found them" is rather cliched, but it's good to keep in mind a secondary goal: When you leave, you want your host institution to be excited to hire another library student for a similar position. While "professionalism" may mean different things to different people and changes depending on the

environment, try to get a bead on what your host organization expects and live up to those standards.

As for actually getting the internship of your dreams, there are plenty of resources out there, both [here](#) and [elsewhere](#), to get you started. Talking to your professors, your classmates, and your network (not to mention the trusty Google search) can point you in the right direction, and from there you can start to narrow down your focus.

How to Survive and Prevent a Bad Internship

by Chealsye Bowley

There's a good chance that you've had a bad internship or job experience. Maybe it was mundane tasks, unfriendly co-workers, or damaged expectations that did you in. Many MLS/MLIS programs require, or at least strongly recommend, an internship or practicum before graduation. Internships are great ways to taste-test a type of librarianship, network, and get practical experience. The unfortunate reality is that we don't always know what we're walking into when we begin an internship. So, how do we survive or prevent a bad internship?

Survival

If you're already going through a bad internship experience or find yourself in one later, you'll need to know how to survive. Take a

deep breath, remind yourself it is an opportunity to learn that will only last a few months, and use the following tips to better your internship experience.

Make a list

Identify what the negatives of the internship are. Don't just think, "I don't like my boss/co-worker" or "I'm bored." Instead write down the specifics. This may seem like you're focusing on the negatives, but in reality this will allow you to pinpoint the problem and filter out the positive aspects, too. Then take a hard look at your list. Is your internship "bad" because you have poor communication with your supervisor? Are you bored because you aren't being challenged and aren't able to use the skills you've been learning during graduate school? Identifying the specific problems can bring you to possible solutions that will make your internship experience better.

Focus on the good

Identify the positive things about your internship. Maybe it is a co-worker you're becoming friends with, a wonderful patron, or you find your internship project to be very exciting.

This year I started grad school in a new town with a new job. It was a big transition, so I took a tip from Pinterest and decided to start a [good things jar](#). The idea is simple: get an empty jar, jot down a quick note when something good happens, and put it in the jar. It serves as a way to collect good memories and remind you of the positive happenings. It comes in handy during stressful times like finals and hectic work weeks. If a jar doesn't suit you, keeping a list in a notebook or on sticky notes in your desk drawer are also simple solutions to finding positivity.

Get proactive

Are you bored? Ask to do more. Volunteer for extra tasks. Propose a side project. Now is the time to start flexing your librarian knowledge muscles. Your supervisor or co-workers may not know what additional skills you have if you don't offer to use them.

Get advice and seek support

Speak with your graduate advisor, professor, mentor, fellow library students, or friends about the experience. It is OK to be unhappy, but make sure you have a support system.

Ask yourself: What has this internship taught you?

Internships are all about the learning experience. Maybe all internships, like news, are good. Or maybe not... But every experience can provide a learning opportunity. At the very least you'll learn what kind of work place best suits you and have a stronger idea of what kind of co-worker or supervisor you want to be in the future. Take away what you did learn from the experience, even if it was not exactly what you wanted or expected.

Prevention

The only good kind of problem is one you prevent from happening. If you know what your future supervisor expects of you and/or you are going to execute a specific project, your internship has a high chance of success and a positive learning experience for you.

Know what to expect

When you interview be sure to ask for specifics about what your daily tasks will be and the supervisor's goals for your time there. Remember that your interview is a conversation, and you're also interviewing them to see if the internship and work place is a good fit for you and your skills.

Propose a project

The best kind of internships are ones that you can show off later. Whether it is a physical product or program development, evidence will make your portfolio look even sharper. The internship may be for specific project, but if not, be sure to propose a project idea you have before starting. You could also try approaching a library or institution with a project proposal and request an internship to complete it.

Get a Job, or: The Ethics of Library Internships

by Laura Sanders

Well, it's that time of year again... classes have wound down and we have (mostly) caught up on sleep after the bleary, stress-filled days of final exams and projects. And now, as we step blinking into the sunlight for the first time in months, our minds turn to the chirping of birds, the roar of road construction... and summer work.

But just as exams and projects are stressful, finding a way to occupy your summer brings its own concerns.

Many library school students will spend their summers doing internships, or, as they are more commonly known in Canada, practicums. The [School of Information Studies](#) at McGill University, where I attend library school, offers such a summer

practicum program. Participants spend ten hours a week during the summer doing unpaid work at a variety of institutions, including public libraries, university libraries, school libraries, hospitals, museums, corporations, and archives. When it was first announced, I was extremely interested in participating, but I soon began to have reservations. In fact, I find the whole idea of practicums/internships extremely problematic.

On the plus side, practicums provide library students with hands-on opportunities that they probably wouldn't be able to get otherwise. You get a taste of a real working environment, you do a range of different things, and you actually get to apply the concepts you've been talking about in class all year. Practicums also provide valuable networking and mentoring opportunities. And since we live in the real world, we have to acknowledge that if organizations were required to pay their practicum students, these positions would not be nearly so plentiful. But as this [article in The Atlantic](#) points out, practicums/internships nonetheless have an element of exploitation: "Internships have become an inextricable part of the college experience and a pre-req for post-graduate employment. But this presents a Catch-22 for lower-income students who want to work in politics, research, journalism, non-profits, or other industries that traffic in unpaid internships."

In short, students who can't afford to work for free miss out.

Back in February, a mass e-mail was sent to everyone in my program about a [summer library internship](#) available with the United Nations in Vienna. I was able to think of several particularly sharp and knowledgeable classmates who would have made excellent candidates for it, and the opportunity could no doubt have launched a stellar career for each of them. But as the internship program does not reimburse students for travel

expenses, living arrangements, or visa costs, none of us could afford to do it. By not providing any financial recompense for its interns, the UN is excluding many of the brightest and best in the field in favor of applicants who come from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds. Admittedly, this is an extreme example, but I do find it ironic that an organization that spearheads international aid does not facilitate the induction of a more diverse range of people into its ranks.

As a blogger named Lance at New Archivist states in [this post](#): “I think most people will agree that diversity includes not only people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, but people of different economic backgrounds and experiences. However, at the same time we are giving a lot of lip service to diversity, we are also constructing roadblocks to achieving those goals.” People from all walks of life have a great deal to contribute to the library and archival communities and should have the opportunities to do so.

But not only may we be driving away those of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the willingness of volunteers to do the work that requires professional expertise undervalues our profession. This is the exact opposite of what we should be doing. Sadly, this is an age where most people don't see the relevance of librarians and archivists anymore (including the Canadian federal government, which recently [made enormous cuts](#) to Library and Archives Canada). The task falls to us to be tireless in our efforts to explain why our services are more necessary than ever.

The summer practicum is not an option for me. At thirty years of age, I am too old for parental assistance and because I was employed full time before starting library school, I am not eligible for student loans. I am funding my studies through a combination of personal savings and part-time work during the school year.

Full-time summer employment is my only chance to counter the alarming depletion of my bank account. Of course, because the library field relies so much on student practicums, summer library positions for students are few and far between. I spent much of April grinding my teeth wondering how it would all pan out.

A potential solution, one that The Atlantic doesn't mention, is government programs. I was hugely fortunate to find full-time summer employment in the library field through a government-subsidized program called [Young Canada Works](#). It provides grants to public institutions such as libraries, museums, and NGOs to hire summer students. The program is hugely beneficial to both parties. The student is paid a fair wage and gains experience in his or her field, and the hiring institution gets a helping hand at no cost to them. At my job I get to do a bit of everything: circulation, cataloging, home delivery, selection, weeding, and event planning. It will go far toward helping me find a professional position after graduation. I thank my lucky stars that the Canadian government funds this program. As it turns out, my employer has also hired practicum students through McGill's program, and our job descriptions are basically identical. But because of Young Canada Works, I get paid. Not for a second do I take this for granted.

So for me, it worked out extremely well. However, given the cuts the Canadian government has recently made to both libraries and youth services, I cannot expect that this solution will benefit a wide range of library students. If anything, the number of beneficiaries is only likely to decline over the next few years. I understand why many feel that unpaid internships are their only option.

The thing is, I should not be too swift to condemn practicums, as they can be hugely beneficial. Especially since I do still hope

to do one. But the circumstances in which students undertake them makes an enormous difference. In my case, McGill offers a winter practicum as well, when students do their ten hours a week in lieu of a fourth library school course. To me, this is key. I will still pay the same amount of tuition. The time I spend doing practicum work will be the same amount of time I would spend on coursework for a fourth class. It will not cut into my summer earning time, nor even the part-time job I hold during the school year. In situations where internships do not negatively impact a student's financial position, I am all for them.

The Suit

by Laura Sanders

A few weeks ago, I signed up to attend McGill's School of Information Studies' annual career fair, which was held last week. Over thirty employers were going to be present from all over Quebec and Ontario. As the fair approached, the organizers began to send e-mails about how the attendees could prepare. One e-mail included the following:

"Last year we did get complaints from employers about some students who were not dressed appropriately. We hope that this will not be the case this year. Please, no ripped jeans, graphic t-shirts, hoodies, etc."

Perhaps my shocked reaction to reading this demonstrates my conservative side. I am still getting accustomed to being back in Canada again after four years of living in South Korea, a far more formal culture where ripped jeans are still only barely considered acceptable street wear, never mind career fair attire. Nonetheless, at the risk of sounding like a curmudgeonly old grandmother, I feel

strongly that those who wore street clothing to the fair missed a crucial opportunity to make a strong first impression on potential employers.

As my previous boss used to say, “Dress for the job you want, not the job you have.”

After many years of a student life and a student budget, the idea of dressing up for potential employers is a bit daunting. Business suits are expensive, and if you don't wear them regularly they can make you feel awkward and fake, like you're trying to be someone you're not. But you've just spent one or two years in library school building up your professional experience and credentials. Don't undermine all your hard work by wearing inappropriate clothing to an interview!

Unfortunately, I did exactly that. A few years ago, when I was about to graduate from my undergraduate degree, I applied for an administrative assistant position and was granted an interview. Figuring that because I was still a student I would not be expected to dress up, I went dressed in a casual summer skirt and sandals. When I got there, I was horrified to discover that every single other candidate there was dressed in a business suit. As you might expect, I did not get the job. I learned my lesson. The next time I had an interview, I wore a tailored suit and new shoes. It was an uncomfortable drain on my budget, but it got me my first professional job. Proper attire is an important investment in your employment future. Even though I have zero interest in working in a corporate environment (I hope to become a school librarian), I found that wearing suits helped me to develop my professional identity and gave me a sense of confidence when I was a first year teacher.

Dressing well in any situation where you might encounter potential employers not only conveys that you respect them, but also that you take yourself seriously as a professional. Additionally, it is a very easy way to give yourself an edge over others competing for the same job (just like writing thank you notes after a job interview, a professional courtesy that shows you to be polite and considerate).

So, whether you're looking for your first professional job or a summer gig, dress as professionally as you can. Here are some tips:

1. Invest in a quality suit in a conservative colour that fits you properly. Get it dry-cleaned several days before your interview. If you choose to wear a skirt, look at yourself in the mirror while sitting down to make sure nobody gets an accidental glimpse of something they shouldn't!
2. Wear clean, polished shoes. Ladies, go with flats or low heels, and make sure that you can walk comfortably in them. Also, pantyhose. I hate them too, but they're an unfortunate necessity.
3. When you choose a shirt to wear under your suit, select a solid color (no patterns) and make sure that it is pressed.
4. Go with a conservative hairstyle, jewelry, and makeup. Ensure that your hair is out of your face. (There is some debate about visible tattoos and facial piercings; personally I think that depends on the organizational culture of the workplace that's interviewing you. If you're not sure, call ahead and ask the administrative assistant what he or she would suggest.)
5. If you need a briefcase, take one. If you don't, leave it. Also leave any bulky bags or purses at home. You want to convey an aura of organization and efficiency.

6. If you'd wear your outfit to a nightclub or a pub, it's not job interview attire.

7. Be comfortable! When I went to the career fair last week, I saw that my classmates had all followed the advice of the e-mail and were professionally dressed. However, it was clear that some of them were extremely ill at ease in their formal attire. Employers will be able to pick up on your discomfort. So if you're not used to business suits, wear one to class or the library or the coffee shop until you start to feel more comfortable. (I like to wear my suits while I write cover letters!) Sign up for a mock interview at your university's career centre and wear it to the interview. Soon it won't be so uncomfortable.

Once you actually start working, of course, take the organizational culture of your new workplace into account. After I wore a full business suit to a job interview for a part time student job at a local public library, my new employers laughingly told me that suits wouldn't be necessary on the job. These days, I wear business casual clothing to work, but I'm still extremely glad that I wore a suit on the day of the interview!

**TAKING CARE OF
YOURSELF**

Work/Life Balance in Library School

by Laura Sanders

While graduate students in any field are prime candidates for burnout, it is my belief that library students face special challenges where work/life balance is concerned. We must pay tuition, but we are rarely offered the teaching assistantships or other forms of financial aid that our counterparts in other fields would receive. In addition to our schoolwork, we must obtain as much library experience as possible prior to graduation so that we can maximize our job prospects. Even those of us who are fortunate enough to land paying part-time library work find it necessary to broaden our CVs through volunteer positions or unpaid internships – often more than one! In order to sell ourselves to potential employers, we participate in conferences, blog, tweet, network, maintain digital portfolios, and try to find time for a beer once in a while. Such overextension can quickly lead to exhaustion and burnout...but in this economic climate where jobs are scarce, we're all anxious to set ourselves apart from the hundreds of other

candidates out there. So, how can we be successful librarians and lead balanced lives?

This is a question I've been grappling with throughout my first semester. I came to library school after several years in the workforce, in a position that I adored but that also demanded my every waking moment. After three years of seventy hour work weeks and a personal life that was in complete limbo, I finally admitted that my lifestyle was not sustainable. When I started library school in the fall, I wondered what changes I could make that would allow me to downshift. I still wanted to work hard, but I also wanted to enjoy my life.

So I decided to be systematic about how I spent my time in library school. I asked myself what achievements and skills potential employers would seek in me after graduation. I knew that varied work experiences and French language abilities would be high on the list, so I took a part-time job at a public library as soon as I could. I enrolled in a French class (I hope to find work in Montreal so bilingualism is important). I also signed up for two student committees, took volunteer opportunities when possible, and committed to presenting at one conference at least this year.

Although these activities have spread me pretty thin, probably too thin to downshift successfully, I feel I've made a good decision about how to allot my time. Happily, I also find that I am devoting a great deal more time to my relationship, family, and friends, leading to a much greater sense of well-being in my personal life. I do have more balance than I did before.

Even so, I still struggle. Letting go of my own perfectionism has been a major hurdle for me this semester. Sometimes I find myself thinking thoughts like, *If I didn't have so much to do, I would have a*

perfect GPA. Then I berate myself for not being good enough to do it all *and* have a perfect GPA. I continually have to remind myself that being well-rounded is not only important, but healthy.

The [ACRLog](#) has an interesting [post](#) on this subject. According to them, many libraries are experiencing difficulties attracting solid candidates in the Gen X and Gen Y age brackets to directorship positions, as the younger librarians prefer to devote more energy to their families and friends than to a stressful, demanding position that is not perceived as rewarding. While I am not sure that Gen X and Gen Y are really that easy to pigeonhole, for me the main point of the article was that the younger librarians are not pursuing advancement simply for the sake of advancement. They want their lives to be fulfilled in every context.

As librarians-in-training with many demands on our time, how can we avoid exhaustion and burnout? The website [LIScareer](#) has a list of articles that deal with these issues in a library setting. I can also share with you some time management techniques that have kept me sane this semester:

Limit your available time

I had a professor who always said, “Work expands to fill all available time.” I didn’t understand what she meant back then, but now I realize how true this statement is. Since I don’t want my work to dominate my life, I try to limit my available time. For example, just because I have all Saturday to complete a homework assignment doesn’t mean I have to take all Saturday to do it. I ask myself, could I finish it in five hours? If the answer is yes, I work as efficiently as I can to get it done in that five hour block. Ironically, I’ve found that the work I produce in these limited chunks of time is usually better than it would be if I dragged it out for days.

Ask yourself where your time *really* goes

In the same way it's easy to lose track of how much money you spend if you don't record every purchase, it's easy to lose track of how you actually spend your time. I might tell myself that I worked on my essay until 3AM, but if I was checking Facebook every few minutes then that's not really true. I want to exercise but keep telling myself I don't have the time, when I could easily scrap the TV I watch before bed to get up early for a swim. Being aware of where your time really goes can make a huge difference in your efficiency.

Give your work all you've got – then leave

It used to be that the boundaries between work life and home life were a lot more distinct. You just left the office and that was it. These days, the onus is on you to set those boundaries. This requires some planning and communication, but a few simple changes can help a lot. Do schoolwork on campus or in a coffee shop, not at home. Tell your coworkers that you don't check your work e-mail on weekends. Try to have an established routine even on days when you don't have classes so that you don't unintentionally end up wasting the whole day. Above all, work as hard as you can while you're working – then get out of there and stop thinking about it!

It's Okay Not to Have Time

by Zack Frazier

I know it seems really whiny, but it seems that these days I just don't have any time. I feel constantly overwhelmed and no matter how much I do, I have a hard time keeping all my balls in the air. I know that I'm not alone in feeling this. In fact it seems like many of my friends in their last year, and especially those in their last term, have run into similar issues.

I think there are several factors that contribute to it. Our degree programs are for professional degrees and many have a practicum requirement. By our last terms many of us are either volunteering regularly, interning, or working in a library environment, which means that much of our day is spent working. On top of that I've noticed that by the time library-schoolers get into their last term they are largely taking extremely specialized classes. Unlike many cursory introduction classes these tend to have a more complicated and often a larger workload. If you're doing things

right (in my humble opinion), you should also be involved in some sort of organization, whether its the local SLA chapter or your student group. In short, you just don't have any time.

So how do you get by?

I think the first thing to do is realize that it's OK to not have a life (for 4 months). Be honest with the people who matter to you. Maximize the quality of time you're spending with people, even if you have to cut back on the quantity. Realizing that this is a stressful time and accepting it is the first step to getting through. Once you know your situation, you can take steps to maximize your quality of life.

One step to take is maximizing your time management. Learning these skills now will be a great carry-over into your professional life. David Allen and Tim Ferris are two authors who come to mind who have written about ways to increase your efficiency and manage your time well. There's also the great blog [LifeHacker](#), which has lots of tips for making your life more streamlined while increasing your quality of life.

In terms of other techniques, I recommend keeping an up-to-date task list. Nearly all of the most effective librarians I know use a to-do list. If you have a smart device, there is a host of apps you can use. Two that I've used to great effect in my own life are "[Do it Tomorrow](#)" and "[Astrid](#)." Do It Tomorrow is a notebook interface that gives you a two-day framework for tasks. Astrid is a cloud and social networking to do list. I like it because it syncs between several of my other services and is a bit annoying, which makes me pay attention to it. People also like [Evernote](#) as an organizer, but it's so multifaceted I tend to lose my to do lists in with the other notes.

Learning to say “no” is also important. Librarians are an enthusiastic, helpful, and agreeable lot; which normally means we get walked all over. Learning to say “no” is tough, but now is the time to learn! Too often librarians are told to make more with less. Right now you have less time, but people want you to do more with it. It’s ok to tell someone that while you think their idea is great, you don’t have the time to help them out. This isn’t a call or an excuse for laziness. Its a call for responsibility. Its a lot easier to explain to someone that you’re too busy and can’t commit to doing something than to explain why you dropped the ball.

Finally, I think it’s important to remember to make time for yourself. Having a personal space that you can be selfish about can be a much needed isle of sanity in the barely managed chaos. I’m trying to make sure that I get time to go to the gym. My friend has set aside a yoga class or two and has Mondays as a personal day. Whether it’s a day off, a coffee break, or walking your dog, making “me” space is a good way to give yourself time to relax and reflect.

If you’re as busy as I’ve become, you’re probably already thinking about the above. Good luck, and remember we’re almost to the finish line!

How I Learned to Keep Worrying and Love Library School

by Alyssa Vincent (guest author)

So, you've subscribed to your library blogs, bought your textbooks, stocked up on highlighters, and are ready for your new life as a library school student/future superstar librarian. Every child will love reading because of you! Students will have unprecedented information literacy skills thanks to your trailblazing instruction!

Yeah, but first you have to get over all of this self-doubting, second-guessing, and generalized loathing of library school and librarianship.

There is no rule saying that every library student has to fundamentally doubt themselves. But nearly every student—even the one who can't stop foaming at the mouth over becoming

a member of the American Library Association and speaks in acronyms—will at some point question their commitment to school and the profession. The good news? You're human. The bad news? Seriously doubting something that you're paying/loaning thousands of dollars for and devoting tons of time to sucks.

I self-identify as a chronic doubter. I assume that the best decision to make is the one I didn't make, and the decision to go to library school wasn't exempt from that. I had two choices: go to Parson's New School for Design and get my MA in Fashion Studies or enroll in Emporia State University and obtain my MLS. From the moment I chose the life of the librarian, I have had more doubts than I can count. But none stronger than the doubts I felt during the second half of my first year at school.

During my first semester, I had nagging moments of self-doubt, but pure adrenaline guided me through. Along with starting school, I had just moved across the county and in with my boyfriend, begun a new job, and volunteered at a couple of different organizations. But as the year went on and I inevitably settled into my new home and new roles, I started feeling...weird. At first, I couldn't put my finger on it, but all of the sudden I was steering clear of all things libr*. I hated theory, research, and the Library of Congress (even though they've never personally wronged me). By the second month of these feelings, I felt like a shell of myself as I went through the motions of doing my homework and participating in online/class discussions. At that point, I seriously considered dropping out of my school. I felt alone, scared, and stupid for spending so much money on a program and a life that wasn't making me happy.

What we have here is a textbook case of “library schoolpacalypse.” Thankfully, there are a couple of survival techniques that you can employ to wade your way through this mental war zone.

Don’t be afraid to voice your insecurities.

If you find yourself spiraling downward into a never-ending state of doubt, by all means, say something. Maybe don’t call your cataloging professor at midnight to express your deepest, darkest fears, but talk to a classmate. Don’t like your classmates? Talk to the Internet! Case in point: I enjoy my classmates, but wasn’t feeling comfortable divulging the true extent of my insecurities to people with familiar faces, so I originally blogged about my insecurities on my personal Tumblr. As a result, random library folk responded with honest and encouraging words. Those classmates I was afraid to talk to expressed sentiments akin to “I’m so glad you wrote that! I was feeling like that for (insert number of days/weeks/months) and I thought I was totally alone.” Guess what? You’re not alone in what you’re feeling, and that’s one of the most comforting things to remember when you’re navigating your way through school (and life, really).

Validate your feelings, and take time to decipher them.

Only you can know whether or not this doubt is stemming from a real dissatisfaction with your program and the idea of being an information professional or if it’s something that ebbs and flows. A lot of times though, it’s hard to distinguish feelings of true discontent from periods of insecurity and doubt. It’s important to mentally sit down with yourself as many times as you need to and decipher what you’re feeling.

- Is it stress over a major assignment you're not confident about completing?
- Is it a class that you hate that you had thought you would love?
- Does your stomach turn when you think about dealing with people and information every day?

I experience all of these feelings and more. But the feeling that never sticks around for long is the last one. Sure, I have bad days where I don't feel like dealing with people at all—much less people with complex information needs—but those pass. Pardon my simplicity, but sometimes school is not fun. You can get a bad professor, an assignment that seems pointless, or peers that annoy you to no end. If you're lucky, all three will happen at once! But you're not there forever, and someday, you'll be helping people connect to information that might improve their lives...and sometimes worrying about your ability to succeed at that.

Let's fast forward to present time. I'm back on Team LIS thanks to thoughtful discussions with peers, an attitude check, and a new-found community. My attitude check was one of the most helpful adjustments that I could have made. Sure, doubts are natural, but throwing a 24/7 pity party isn't. I forced myself to look at the positives of my program and found plenty that I had been formerly ignoring. Also, I challenged myself to actively look outside my program for professional fulfillment. My new-found community was found thanks to a desperate Google search of "fashion librarianship." It turns out that there's a thriving community of fashion/costume librarians, a career that only a few months ago I had been afraid to want because it might be impractical. Now, I religiously follow the [ARLIS/NA Fashion, Textile, and Costume Librarians blog](#) and have a new reason to move towards a career

that unites my interests of organization, access, digitization of physical objects, and fashion.

Putting a halt to the doubting cycle takes work. And here's the kicker: doubting is an inescapable part of life, so it's best to get used to the work now. The best and most meaningful decisions we make have the most emotional baggage attached to them. Does that mean it's the wrong decision? Nope. I'm writing this post while I'm feeling particularly confident about school, but I know that doubts will come again. And I'll do my best not to fear them, because they can serve as a way to mentally check in with myself and make sure that I'm getting the most out of this experience that I can. I hope you'll be able to view your doubts in a similar light.

Keeping Track of Inspiration

by Julia Feerrar

The end of my first year of library school has been a welcome reminder to reflect: to remember that, not so long ago, MARC and FRBR were meaningless acronyms, I had never answered a reference question, and I didn't even know what half of my course titles meant. I've been sorting through notes from classes, panel discussions, and workshops in an attempt to mentally index the year and to check in with myself. In doing so, I have remembered some of the moments in which I felt especially excited about what I was doing and learning—e.g. hand-coding my first website, planning instruction sessions, and talking to librarians about the work *they* love. Honestly, I had forgotten about quite a few of my favorite moments; losing track of inspiration is quite easy amidst the [anxiety and self-doubt](#) that can strike throughout the busyness and unknowns of graduate school. In the face of these worries and doubts, reminding ourselves of what continues to draw us forward on our chosen paths can be incredibly powerful.

Today my library school (and life) ‘hack’ is to **keep track of the things that inspire and excite you**—things that can then serve as motivation, as a guide when picking classes and developing projects, and even as content for resumes, cover letters, and interviews. I think we learn and work best when we’re excited about what we’re doing. Keeping a finger on the pulse of what poet William Butler Yeats describes as the “rag and bone shop of the heart”—the often disorderly yet foundational deep structure of ourselves—encourages that excitement.

I challenge you to join me in recording the things that inspire and excite you. I plan to record one thing every day, using Evernote (my favorite note-taking app), but this kind of project could work in a variety of ways. I could imagine going old school and keeping a physical journal of ideas, or building a list of great library and information moments in some form of word processor. Those inclined to share could tweet, blog, or even pin. And all of those record-keeping options could occur at regular or totally irregular intervals. The point is to reflect and to track professionally relevant excitement and learning so that you can have something to look back on when you need re-inspiration and reorientation. No need to be too strict about what counts as “professionally relevant”; the things we find inspiring in our personal lives can and should certainly inform professional and academic pursuits.

I hope you’ll consider joining me in pursuit of further self-awareness and information excitement!

Getting Through the End-of-Semester Slump

adapted from posts by Alison Glass and Joanna June

Do you feel that buzz in the air? Or maybe you can actually feel the vibrations under your skin and drumming in your ears. You might even be thinking “I don’t have time to read Hack Library School right now!” It isn’t just the caffeine you’ve been living on. If you’re like a number of our fellow LIS students, professionals, and hackers, what you’re surely feeling right now is **STRESS**.

Even if you are done with your own finals, if you’re working in a library or around any type of student population, by osmosis you are picking up on the stress hormones of those around you. Patience is hard to come by. Deadlines feel like do-or-die. Your brain feels like it is careening around the blackness on the back of a TRON bike.

Breathe, friend, and let's talk stress management. How can we make it to the end of the semester without suffering a nervous breakdown? Here are some hacks and tips:

Breathe.

Seriously this is the best tip I can offer. In fact, stand up from your computer or put down your portable device right now and take 10 deep breaths. Close your eyes and ease your shoulders down. Stare at the back of your eyelids. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth 10 times. Repeat once an hour or as needed.

Make a list.

The big, scary, undefined is a Goliath on steroids. If you break your tasks down, they become littler gremlins. The list also helps you prioritize and see if there are demands on your time that you might be able to release or slide. I did this with this very post, as I was scheduled for last week and knew I just couldn't get it done. What a difference a few days can make! The list also lets you see there is some end in sight.

Make a schedule, and stick to it.

Sometimes I think professors get together and agree on one or two days to be the due dates for all final assignments. Regardless, we all know that the last few weeks of the semester are going to be a whirlwind of papers, projects, poster presentations, and other finals. Before you're in the midst of this whirlwind, block out specific chunks of time to work on each assignment, and stick to the schedule. This is helpful both in budgeting your time to get everything done and forcing you to stop, take a break, or work on something else before you get to the point of pulling out your hair.

Pick and choose the things you go to.

There are lots of great things going on, but you don't have to go to every single club meeting, academic talk, or social event. Choose the events that you feel are most relevant or important to you, and pass on the others. There will be other opportunities for learning and growing as a professional and socializing with your classmates, so you don't have to fit everything into this one insane two-week period.

Talk to your friends and family to let them know what you are facing in advance. Let them know that you're just not going to have a whole lot of time to enjoy their company or other extracurriculars. This eases some of the social pressures and lets you focus on what you need to get done so you can enjoy later.

Reach out to your professors.

If that major project or term paper is just not coming together and completely overwhelming you, send an email to your professor and let them know. Offer to show proof of work and ask (politely) for an extension. Or offer to turn in the assignment as it is at the deadline but ask if you can work on it for an extra few days or discuss its failings to make corrections in the hopes of improving your grade. The point of this schooling after all is to teach us to be professionals. Just as you could and should be upfront with a boss about a need for an extension to make a work product better, so too could you do the same with coursework. It never hurts to ask.

Move.

Exercise is [incredibly good for the brain](#). Take a walk, go to kick-boxing or Zumba, run, bike, or simply stand up and do 40 jumping jacks — studies also show that just taking quick breaks from sitting

for long periods helps with overall health. Get your blood flowing and release some of that tension.

Make time for yourself.

I think this is particularly important for those of us **who are introverts**. Many end-of-semester activities involve being around a lot of people, and this can be draining. It's important, even when you have a lot of items to check off your to-do list, to take some time to relax. Do yoga, read a book for fun, watch an episode or two of your favorite tv show-whatever helps you to maintain your sanity.

Change your venue.

I know too well the lock yourself in your bedroom, hunch over your laptop, books, and notes, and grind it out mentality. It turns out that practice is probably **not good study practice**. Going to sit somewhere else, working in a coffee shop or the library, taking your laptop onto the porch for a while, changing positions, or otherwise changing your environment helps your brain distinguish what you are learning and make new connections. Even if your retention doesn't statistically improve, it can be much better for your general outlook on life, while working around others working can help you focus and make you more productive.

Eat, drink, sleep.

Make sure you are getting proper sustenance and sleep. Read: a diet of power bars and coffee with two hours of sleep is grossly hurting your productivity. Take the time to eat and sleep well and you'll be much more effective than if you pulled an all-nighter on Red Bull to try to cram in your notes. We're all happier, more productive people when we get enough sleep.

Celebrate your accomplishments.

You may not realize it when you're right in the thick of finals chaos, but you're learning, creating, and doing great things, and you should be proud of them. Don't forget to include them in your portfolio, share your new-found knowledge with others, and give yourself a pat on the back for making it through another semester.

Finally: **Know yourself.** What works for "everyone" might not work for you. Take a moment to think about what has helped you in the past and try to replicate it. The end of the semester can be hectic and draining, and can send even the most enthusiastic library school students into a slump. But with a little help, we can make it through the end-of-semester slump, and live to see another semester.

How to Hack Your Summer Vacation

by Topher Lawton

Congratulations to everyone who's just finished the first year of an LIS degree! If you're anything like me, you're still occasionally having phantom-homework guilt, as it's such a novel feeling to have a bit of spare time. That spare time can be put to good use, though!

In the spirit of Zack's Library-School Starter Kit for the first semester, here's a few ways to spend your summer:

Take an internship!

Whether your program [requires one or not](#), internships are great ways to get experience, build up your resume, and make some contacts out in libraryland who can help you after you graduate. There are tons of [resources on internships](#), and your school may have a career services office that can help you find one, but perhaps the best thing to do is find a library where you'd like to

work, and just ask if they have an extra project for you. Having a specific project in mind can help alleviate the risk that an internship will have you photocopying and getting coffee—while those jobs are valid, they don't really boost your skills.

You can also use an internship to test out a part of the field you're not sure about—whether that's a library type (Never worked in an academic library? What about a public library? Rural vs. inner-city?) or an area of interest (reference, cataloguing, digitization, etc). Finding an internship in that area gives you the chance to feel out a certain aspect of librarianship that you might not otherwise get to try.

Learn to code!

Librarianship is increasingly dependent on fluency with programming and web development skills—why not take the summer to build them up? If you can already program, learn a new language; if you're comfortable with HTML, try your hand at XML, or even PHP. Take advantage of things like [Codeyear](#) or the [various resources to help with Ruby](#).

Even if you've never written code, dive in! It's a new language, and like any language it gets easier to use with practice. Try and understand the architecture of a database, or of a basic system like WordPress.org. Librarians should be able to interface with web designers easily, and knowing a little bit of code is a great way to do that.

Go to a conference!

[ALA Annual](#) is coming up, so is [SLA](#), and the other [options are manifold](#) as well. Librarians are a remarkably [well-conferenced](#) bunch, and it's important to understand that side of the field. Find

your way to a conference this summer! (And if you choose ALA Annual, be sure to come to a [Hack Library School event](#)! Keep your eye on the blog for more details as we get closer to the end of June.) Even state library associations have valuable conferences or one-day meetings with sessions that will inform you. I've also had great experiences with chapter meetings in both SLA and the Music Library Association—if you're a member of any professional organizations (and you should be), see if they have any events coming up that you can attend.

Alternately, go to an [unconference](#)! (or [host one](#)!) [Unconferences](#) have a totally different feeling, and are significantly more participatory by design. Attending one can give you a perspective that standard conferences don't touch.

Whichever type of gathering you pick, don't be shy! You'll learn lots, but also, be sure to meet people! Introduce yourself, and strike up a conversation with everyone you can—you'll never know who might turn into a close colleague, or a friend. The library world is incredibly well-networked, and breaking into that system is good to do as soon as possible.

Index thyself!

This advice comes straight from [my adviser](#), and it's excellent. Chances are pretty good that in your first year you've produced a LOT of content. Blog posts. Projects. Websites. Essays. Published articles, perhaps. While they're all still fresh in your mind, collect them, and put them somewhere you can keep track of them, [like an e-portfolio](#). If that's your personal blog, so much the better. If you've started a portfolio offline, tuck a list there as well. Keeping track of everything you've created will help with job applications

(including internship apps) and can come in handy later as well, if you ever need to go back to review work you've done.

I highly recommend making that index public, somewhere, but even if you just hold a private list it's still important to gather everything now, and save yourself the trouble later.

Relax & recharge!

Last, but perhaps most importantly, it's SUMMER! Take some time for yourself! Do the [fun reading](#) you've been unable to get to, go offline for a few days, do what it takes to be ready for another full year of library school! Even if you're taking summer classes or working full time, make sure you get at least a little time to rejuvenate.

After Library School

NOW WHAT?

Reflections on the End of Library School

by Zack Frazier

Like many here at Hack Library School, I've been super busy with finals and the stress of graduating (see my [two previous](#) posts from earlier this year). Now that I've passed through the crucible of my last term, I've found myself in another tricky spot: the job hunt. I'm fortunate in that I have a job and a place to live for the summer while I find myself gainful employment, but if I didn't have those two things, I'd be up the creek. I thought I would offer some advice based on my experience and give you some great websites to look at before and during your own job hunt.

Any term is stressful, but oftentimes the last term is more so. I found myself taking some of the most difficult classes I've ever taken, in a leadership position in our student organization, and working nearly 45 hours a week. This is not a good environment

to conduct a job hunt in. If your last term looks similar, apply for jobs, but just don't be disappointed if you only are able to get out 1-2 applications a week. If you're jobless at the end of it, don't feel bad either. Most of my friends have found jobs, but it's just taken them a bit after finishing. If you can't avoid the hectic final term, try spending time thinking about a system you can use when you're done to take on the job hunt. When you finish and give yourself a week to breath again, then dive in full bore.

To avoid the sand trap I found myself in, I highly recommend planning your library school experience so that your most difficult term is the term before your final term. Taking one of the most difficult classes in your program while working and trying to find a job isn't any fun—trust me. If you plan it out right, your last term should have something interesting and a full helping of some form of practicum, but nothing that gives you grey hair like my databases class did.

In addition to the advice on course scheduling, I'd like to share some of the better websites I've found to help you with your job hunt.

[I Need a Library Job](#) is a favorite amongst the Hackers here. It's a website listing job boards, resources, and postings of library jobs. In addition it also has articles on the job hunt and interviews with a variety of people, including some of us.

[Hiring Librarians is essential reading for anyone who is engaged in a library job search.](#) It's not job postings, but it is interviews and data about what people are looking at and for when they see your application. It's the best library-related job search website out there. However you conduct your job search, bookmark and regularly read this blog.

[Letters to a Young Librarian](#) is a blog I just discovered. It's a really interesting blog aimed at people just entering the profession. The posts cover a variety of subjects but include things related to the job hunt.

[Libgig](#) is a searchable database of library jobs; it's sort of a meta job search engine. I'm recommending it not so much for that key feature as for the articles that it frequently links to on its main page.

Check out this group post from [In the Library with the Lead Pipe](#).

There's also [a great post](#) on the job hunt complete with spreadsheet that Heidi posted way back at the start of this blog. I highly recommend checking out her post and using her sheet, which I used as the basis of a database I constructed for my job hunt but never used (I just like making databases).

REAL JOBS

Preparing to Job- Search: Some Considerations

by Rebecca Halpern

For those of us preparing to graduate in the next several months, it's time. Time to get ready to job search. Or, as I'm known to do, it's time to prepare to get ready to job search because, hey, you can't be overly prepared, right? This piece isn't about applying for jobs themselves—for that, turn to [Heidi's post](#) from earlier this year— but the few weeks or months of preparation before you start: the “holy crap where do I even begin to look or know what I'm looking for?” stage, if you will.

I am by no means a job-seeking expert, but I do have a running joke with my family that I collect part-time jobs, so I've been friendly with my resume and cover letters for a while. Spending time tweaking and polishing your official application materials is important, but I've found that the job search preparation process

is just as important. What am I talking about? Here's a few tips to make your search a little more organized.

Face the facts

For the last semester, I've subscribed to just about every relevant job-seeking listserv out there. Among my favorites are Lib Gig Jobs because I don't have to sort through dozens of non-relevant job openings, ALA Job List because even though they have a lot of intermediate and upper-level jobs I get a sense of where my career could be headed, and ILI-L, ALA's Information Literacy and Instruction listserv because that's the type of job I'm looking for.

The benefit of subscribing to listservs is 2-fold: first, you can get a sense of what's out there now. Do you really want to move back home to Ohio but in 4 days you only ever see 1 job opening? You might want to consider another location, at least temporarily. Do you have your heart set on cataloging in a special library? In a few days, you'll see how many positions are out there. It's a good reality check. And don't forget: **ain't nothing wrong with part-time** (for now)! Second, you can see where your skill sets are useful and what needs to be improved on. For me, after reading dozens and dozens of job descriptions, I have a pretty clear understanding where my shortcomings are, and because I still have several months until I graduate, I can start working on them now.

Be warned: subscribe to the digest version if you can! Because the last thing I want to do is get distracted by potential jobs during finals, I have a listserv folder in Gmail, subdivided into the specific listserv, and I have all the emails directly routed to the folder. That way I can look at them when I'm ready. Check out Lauren's

post on [special libraries](#) and Annie's post about [art libraries](#) for resources.

Get the word out

If you're going to ask people to be your professional references, which, by the way, you should always ask, give them plenty of notice. Some people want to be notified of every job you're applying to so they can be prepared to be specific, others just want a sense of the types of positions you're looking for, and others still might want to write you a stock letter of recommendation. The point is, now's the time to figure out who will be your references for what kinds of positions and to give those people a heads up. Many academic positions want letters from your references and the more time you can give them to write it, the better the letter will be and the more your reference will like you (no one wants a 1 week deadline). It'll also open the conversation for your professional mentors to talk to you about their job search, what skill sets they see in you, and any tips they might have.

Organize

I have a Google Calendar to keep track of deadlines, required application materials, and an estimation of how long the whole application will take me to put together (overkill? That's my middle name). Point is, figure out what works for you to keep up with deadlines and whatnot. Now's the time to nail down an organizational structure. For example, I have a "job search" folder on my hard drive, and within that folder, I have folders for every position I apply for that includes the job description, any research I might have done on the organization, my resume, cover letter, references, and any supplemental materials they require. I like to

group them by type: academic, public, instruction, outreach, etc., but that's just me. Again, think about what works for you.

Advice from a Hiring Manager

by Ashley Wescott

Last semester I took an Academic Libraries class that required me to interview an academic librarian. I reached out to Courtney Young to help me complete this assignment. Ms. Young is Head Librarian & Associate Professor of Women's Studies at Penn State Greater Allegheny and the 2013-2014 President-Elect of ALA.

The goal of the project was to get a real world perspective on some of the special academic library issues we had discussed throughout the semester. While I drafted interview questions to address this objective—I couldn't help but see the interview as an opportunity. I was pretty confident that my interviewee had a hand in hiring at her library. Getting an interview can be tough, getting feedback from a hiring manager can be even more difficult. Knowing the struggle that many of my peers are facing in the job market, I thought it would be a good idea to ask her what she looks for in a job candidate. Courtney Young had some brilliant and unexpected

advice that I hope you can put to use as you look towards the future and begin your job search.

Takeaway 1: Passion matters

As Ms. Young and I discussed the issues of job candidates, she indicated that passionate prospects stand out to her. She urges job hunters not to apply for any and every open position—but the ones that they are truly excited about. If you apply for everything, the “any job will do” spirit will come through in application materials. As I think about Ms. Young’s advice, I can see the merits of saving your time and resources applying and researching jobs that you are genuinely interested in—instead of spreading yourself thin trying to apply for everything.

Takeaway 2: Put your cover letter to work

Ms. Young had a great take on resumes and cover letters—“The resume is the skeleton. The cover letter is connective tissue, muscle and fat that build up the skeleton.” While your resume shows the basics—use your cover letter to convey your excitement about the position and show how you are a great fit. Be sure to use your resume to put a positive spin on a job requirement you may not live up to. If you’re passionate about a job, don’t give up in your cover letter. Be upfront that you’ll need to grow your knowledge in the area—and communicate your enthusiasm to do so.

Job searching is hard work. Hopefully you can take these tidbits and put them to use. Happy hunting.

Oh, the Places You'll Go (With Your MLIS)!

by Chris Eaker

Did you know your ALA-accredited master's degree is accepted in countries other than the good ole USA? That's right, the US is not the only place where you can use your ALA-accredited master's degree to work in a library. As Laura explained in her post on [becoming an international school librarian](#), you can take your degree and work in an international school overseas. But have you considered working in a public or academic library in another country? If not, you should! In addition to being an exciting adventure — what could be more fun than working in a foreign library? — it's also a great way to build goodwill between people of different countries. I've done a little digging and found several countries where you could go and put your degree to use right away, and others that might need a little more work, such

as learning another language. Below are some brief examples of places you can go.

Places where no additional qualifications or knowledge are required

Australia

The [Australian Library and Information Association](#) (ALIA) has a reciprocal recognition agreement with the ALA. Under this reciprocal arrangement, American graduates of ALA-accredited master's degrees are eligible for ALIA Associate (librarian) membership and may apply for positions advertised at librarian level in Australia.

New Zealand

The [Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa](#) (LIANZA) accepts the ALA-accredited masters degree in New Zealand, as it is considered a sister organization.

United Kingdom

The [Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals](#) (CILIP) has a reciprocal agreement with the ALA. This allows graduates holding American bachelor's and master's degrees in library and information sciences to apply for jobs asking for qualified librarians and information professionals in the UK.

Ireland

The [Library Association of Ireland](#) recognizes library and information qualifications from sister associations, especially the ALA. Each overseas qualification is considered on a case by case

basis. Ireland may soon have a formal agreement with ALA. Recently, the only LIS school in Ireland ([University College Dublin](#)) has had its courses formally recognized by ALA because the Library Association of Ireland accredits their courses.

Canada

The [Canadian Library Association](#) (CLA) accepts the ALA definition of what constitutes a professional qualification: “The master’s degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association (or from a master’s level program in library and information studies accredited or recognized by the appropriate national body of another country) is the appropriate professional degree for librarians.”

Hong Kong

The [Hong Kong Library Association](#) accepts a master’s degree from an ALA-accredited program. Click on this link to the Hong Kong Libraries Gateway, which includes a directory of over 600 libraries in Hong Kong: <http://dir.hkla.org/>.

Singapore

Singapore accepts an ALA-accredited master’s degree if an American student is interested in working in a library in Singapore. In fact, Singapore sends some of their librarians to the USA to obtain the professional degree. No additional training is required. The only thing is that the library must apply for an employment pass for a foreigner to work in the organization from the Ministry of Manpower in Singapore before he or she could start work.

Places where you may need to learn a new language or jump through a few more hoops

Germany

According to the [Berufsverband Information Bibliothek \(BIB\)](#), in Germany, the more important issues are that the graduate fits into the working place, has an understanding of the German language, and that the library is interested in getting him or her for that particular job than it is where he or she comes from.

There is an other good opportunity for graduates and experienced colleagues: [The BIB-ALA: German-U.S. Librarian Exchange](#). ALA and BIB signed an agreement to help each members in finding exchange libraries for professional exchanges. So if you are interested, just fill out the questionnaire.

Denmark

It is possible that Danish libraries would accept graduates from the USA, but only when they have the right job to offer to the person. Also, the language is a barrier. Danish public libraries will require fluent Danish speaking from their employees, and Danish can be a very difficult language to learn.

Finland

In Finland there are regulations concerning the training of personnel working in library services. This means that in order to work as a qualified librarian, you would need to apply for a decision from the Finnish National Board of Education. However, a formal decision is not necessary for a person to be able to work for a short period in a Finnish library.

Recognition of qualifications is always made on a case-by-case basis. For this reason, they cannot guarantee a certain decision in advance or give a definitive assessment of which Finnish qualification a specific foreign qualification corresponds to, nor is there a list explaining the equivalence of qualifications completed in different countries. The prerequisite is always that the person is qualified to work in library services in his/her country of origin, and that the degree and the degree awarding higher education institution are both accredited and a part of the official higher education system of the country.

Belgium

An ALA-accredited student will always be strongly considered by any American company located in Belgium. Regarding public libraries, unpaid placements are always possible (depending on the language level of the students) but a professional hiring would be difficult as one of the main recruitment conditions is Belgian nationality. Placements in information centers and university libraries are also a possibility. If students do want to go to Belgium to get a job, they should investigate obtaining a PhD in a Belgian university.

Be sure to read the [comments](#) on the original blog post for more thoughts on working in another country.

KEEP HACKING

Continuing Your Education After Library School

by Lauren Bradley (guest author)

A number of us Hack Library School readers and writers have finished library school recently, but our education is far from over. Many of us have criticized what we feel was lacking in our LIS schooling (and in fact, was the very inspiration for this blog!). In order to become the most competitive job candidates we can be (and to remain relevant as our careers progress), we must continue learning far after graduation day. A personal anecdote: my cousin went to library school in 1999, which was really not that long ago. Two years later, Google was launched and changed the way the world interacted with information. Here are some ideas on how to keep learning:

Develop your skill sets.

Librarian positions require a wide diversity of skills, many of which aren't taught in library school (and even the ones that are, often are taught in a theoretical sense that doesn't really stick). Revisit Annie's [self-assessment](#) post for discovering what skills you lack for the positions you wish to hold. At this point in time, tech skills are invaluable. Mashable recently had a [post](#) about free resources for learning programming languages. For a more formal learning setting, community colleges are a good place for technology courses, and don't forget to look into auditing courses at your alma mater(s). Don't be afraid to venture outside of the library community; there are many free or cheap courses by community groups aimed at other types of professionals.

Look for leadership development programs.

Apply for a leadership development program like the ones held by ALA and SLA, among many other professional organizations. Your local chapter may have their own program. Leadership programs don't need to be library-specific; if you work at a large institution, your workplace may have a leadership or mentoring program in place. Another idea is to find a librarian fellowship. IMLS and Library of Congress both offer fellowships, although there are many others to be had, especially in the special libraries. These are a good way for new librarians to gain experience with a short time commitment (typically 6 months to a year).

Stay connected.

Nicole wrote tips on how to [stay connected](#), but I want to reiterate the importance. The library world is very small and it's important to make connections in the field. These connections may help you land a job or create a partnership across institutions. Being connected will also keep you on top of emerging issues in our field

and help you identify emerging skill sets (back to point one; we need to stay on top of these in order to remain relevant).

Do free work.

Most of us did free work throughout library school in the form of internships or volunteer work and it seems most unappealing to go back to. However, continuing to do free work can help you network, expand your skill set, and get out of the rut of your own institution's workflow. Get more involved with professional organizations, either on the local or national level. Join committees, attend meetings, or volunteer your time. However, free work doesn't need to be a hardcore commitment — one of the technical services librarians at my work volunteers once a month at a local charity bookstore. It allows her to give back to the community while at the same it gives her the chance to work with the public (something she doesn't do at our library) and work with popular titles (we are a specialized academic research library). Volunteering with a book sale, literacy project, or a Friends of the Library group is an easy commitment to make and uphold.

Publish.

Although publishing is only really required for academic librarians, it never hurts to have a few citations of your own work on your resume and portfolio. The thought of publishing may seem terrifying, but remember, we do hold master's degrees! It is completely appropriate to try to publish, particularly in the library and information science field. If there is a particular student piece you wrote that you feel really good about, try approaching your professors and asking for help to whip it into publishing shape. They may also have connections with editors at various journals. Unless you are on the tenure-track, consider publishing in journals

that aren't peer-reviewed, open access journals, or doing reviews. If you aren't ready for traditional publishing, start blogging. Don't be afraid to pitch ideas for posts at established blogs that accept guest bloggers (like this one!).

To start my own post-library school education, I am working with a former professor to get a piece published in a journal in our field, and will be sharpening my markup language skills this summer.

How to Supplement Your Library School Education

by Chealsye Bowley

No matter how great a MLS/MLIS program is there just isn't enough time and courses to learn everything. HLS alum Annie Pho previously discussed [the interpersonal skills we don't learn in school](#) and [identifying what you want to know](#), and Lauren Bradley contributed a guest post on [continuing education after library school](#). It can be very frustrating to look at job postings and think, "*What does that even mean? They didn't teach me that!*" But with an optimistic and do-it-yourself attitude the gap between what you know and what you need to know can shorten.

Take advantage of free online courses

Video tutorials or Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) take DIY to a whole new level.

Two great resources are the free [Khan Academy](#) and the subscription based [lynda](#). Khan provides a library of high-quality instructional videos, and lynda offers software training through video courses. So far I've used lynda to learn more about Google Analytics and Drupal. Drupal is an open source software that I've seen listed among the "desirable skills" section in many job postings. If your university doesn't subscribe to lynda, you can seek out videos on YouTube, consult open source software communities, or take a MOOC.

Even though it is called do-it-yourself, sometimes you need help from a teacher. MOOCs are a great way to learn for free from prestigious institutions and great instructors. Some top MOOCs are offered through [edX](#) and [Coursera](#). Harvard Law School even began experimenting with a MOOC [Copyright Law](#) course.

Step outside your comfort zone

Even though it can be intimidating to go outside of the skill set you're good at, take the risk and don't worry about [the fraud police](#). Instead of saying "I can't do it," say "I can't do it... yet!" There are many skills I wish were taught in courses, but programs have to play catch up to the new trends and growth of librarianship. Even if your program offers a more common course like web design, it may not fit into your schedule or you'll want to keep learning after the introductory course is over. You can teach yourself HTML and CSS, and consult online video tutorials to achieve a higher skill level.

Would reading knowledge of a second language be helpful? Many libraries subscribe to foreign language learning software like [Mango](#).

Have a cool idea for a digital library? Build it! You'll get to practice metadata.

Want to develop an app? Do it, you're a future technology rockstar!

If you can take classes outside of your program and still get credit for your degree, try those out. Since my program doesn't offer an archives course, I have a few friends that are taking Introduction to Archives through the History department. This semester I'm supplementing my interest in open access by taking Copyright Law. Taking outside courses can help keep your curiosity levels up, round your skills out, and provide engagement with different kinds of students and professionals.

Join a club or volunteer

I've seen marketing and advocacy in many "What I Wish I Learn in Library School" lists. The best decision I've made so far was in college when I joined a student club that focused on advocating for censored writers. After that I continued joining other clubs and volunteering. I didn't plan for it, but those experiences have given me leadership, communication, and advocacy skills. If your school has an ALA or ASIS&T student chapter, sign yourself up, help out, and gain some new skills!

You can also put your skills to the test by volunteering. Maybe you'll volunteer by cataloging your church's lending library by using [LibraryThing](#) or open source softwares like [Koha](#) and [BiblioteQ](#). Or develop a reading series at your local library that you'll do the marketing for and facilitate. If you're interested in being a children's librarian, you can hone your event and donation request skills by hosting a craft workshop in a classroom or

children's hospital. You can even join or run a Wikipedia "edit-a-thon." If you can get this experience through a paid internship or a job, that's great! The goal is to have something tangible to show how much you've learned and something to discuss in a future job interview.

Be more open

Be curious and try new things. Go open through open education with MOOCs, video tutorials, and open source software you can mess around with. The internet makes it possible to learn about almost anything. You probably won't become an expert through online tutorials, but you can still learn a lot to prepare you for a job after graduation. I know it is easier said than done to acquire new skills, but if there is something you need or want to learn there is a way.

Afterword

Writers come and go at [Hack Library School](#), but all of us are united by a common goal—to “hack” our education and customize our programs for the best possible experience. Through the blog, and through this book, we hope to change the course of Library and Information Science education, but we can’t do it alone.

You can join us by questioning your professors. You can join us by designing an independent study. You can join us by sharing what you’re learning, by blog, tweet, or white paper. You can join us by questioning us, and bringing new information and ideas to the table. You can join us by cultivating the idea that our education is our own, and we have a responsibility to make it the very best we can.

Whether you’re finishing library school, or just getting started, you can join the hackers and makers that fill library schools and libraries across the world. We come from all backgrounds and all specializations, and our interests are varied as can be, but we share a passion for tweaking the system. As we strive to challenge ourselves, we leave a legacy that will improve our discipline.

Keep hacking!

Topher Lawton

Deputy project manager, *The HLS Guide to Library School*