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Landing the Job:

How Special Libraries Can Support Career Research

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Abstract

Special libraries often provide career searching support to their users. Career research has changed significantly over the past decade, as have the resources available to librarians and their patrons. Librarians at Purdue University's Roland G. Parrish Library of Management and Economics have formed partnerships with other organizations across campus in order to share the cost of specialized career resources, streamline instruction, and best serve students. This article discusses how these cooperative relationships were formed, and also recommends specific specialized career resources that libraries providing career research assistance may want to consider.

Keywords: career research, special libraries, academic libraries, collaborations

Landing the Job: How Special Libraries Can Support Career Research

Introduction

Patrons in special libraries often have, or will have, specialized careers. Though many public and undergraduate libraries offer career resources, much of what they provide is not relevant to the special library patron. Additionally, the types of career resources provided by libraries have changed over the years. Gone are the days of shelves full of books on individual occupations. The library of today must offer more robust and diversified resources, as well as instruct patrons on how to find relevant information.

Our library has been deeply involved in collaborative efforts across campus to provide excellent career research services for many years. We have formed partnerships, purchased specialized resources, and provided extensive instruction, including many outreach activities. The impact of our activities can be seen in our students' confidence as they approach recruiters at job fairs, go into each interview more prepared than their peers, and make informed decisions about which job offer to accept.

Special Library Career Partnerships

Special libraries are in an excellent position to form partnerships with other organizations who share similar goals; these partnerships can help share the cost of specialized career resources, provide instruction, and organize and market events. Academic libraries are in a unique position to partner with career organizations across campus. These collaborations have been made at such universities as Harvard, the University of Illinois, DePaul University (Abel, 1992), Indiana State University (Lorenzen & Batt, 1992), Central Washington University (Allen, 2015), and Fresno State (Pun & Kubo, 2016). In 2007, the management and economics librarians

at Purdue University met with three career organizations: The Center for Career Opportunities, Graduate Career Services, and Krannert Undergraduate Career Services (the career center specifically for the management and economics students). These conversations brought to light that there were efforts and resources being duplicated across the library and these organizations (Dugan, Bergstrom, & Doan, 2009). As a result, the library created a single career resource website, the Purdue University Career Wiki, to collect everything in a single online location. The business librarian also identified thirty-five offices across campus that provide career resources, and reached out to them to see if they wanted to become involved in the shared resource site. She also met with librarians from Purdue's twelve other libraries to identify subject-specific resources that would be appropriate for the site. Eventually ten offices joined together on the project.

The groups also worked together on cooperative collection development, with six of the ten offices contributing funds. Together, they determined several resources they would like to consider purchasing, the librarian set up a long demo to give everyone time to explore, then once a decision was made, all units put money toward the purchase. The money saved from the elimination of duplicate licenses has allowed for the purchase of four additional databases (Bergstrom & Dugan, 2010). At the time of this writing, the Career Wiki is in the process of getting a facelift to match the style of the newly-launched university website. This is again a collaborative effort, as more than just the library uses this resource. Special libraries can adopt similar to increase the reach of resources, reduce the cost to an individual purchaser, and build relationships with those doing similar work.

Specialized Career Resources

As libraries move away from the traditional occupation and career books, it's important to replace these pieces of our collection with tools that will be useful to our patrons. Below are some career resources that a library providing career research assistance may want to consider:

Career Exploration

WetFeet is a subscription service with an excellent library of Insider Guides covering the basics all job seekers need, such as “Ace Your Interview”, “Negotiating Your Salary and Perks”, and “Killer Cover Letters & Resumes”, to occupation specific guides such as “Getting Your Ideal Internship: Accounting”, “Careers in Nonprofit”, and “Careers in Information Technology”. In addition to the guides, which run upwards of 100 pages, there are also hundreds of shorter articles that address a wide array of job search topics and questions. *WetFeet* also connects with just over 350 companies and allows one to directly ask them questions. Some of these companies seem to be much more involved in answering questions on the site than others, however, the company profiles can include additional information and videos that may prove useful to job seekers. For international job seekers, *GoinGlobal* and *My World Abroad* are both excellent tools for researching how to get a job in a foreign country. Job seekers can research country and visa information, and also find links to many job boards for both full time work and internships. *H1VisaJobs.com*, though navigating it can be challenging, is a great service for international students who want to find an employer who has a history of hiring people with an H1 visa. Here at Purdue we have a large number of international students and many have found this site to be helpful in their attempts at finding work in the US.

Company Research

There are several resources that provide company information needed by job seekers. *Mergent Online/Intellect*, *Hoovers*, *NetAdvantage*, and *OneSource* do a solid job providing comprehensive company information, such as recent news, financial information, annual reports, SWOT analyses and more. Several of these will also create lists of companies based on input variables, making it easy to identify companies of a specified type within a geographic area. The caveat to any company research database is that they typically contain only public information. *PrivCo* is the one exception, as they specialize in collecting private company information. Despite this specialty, their coverage of companies is still far from comprehensive and may omit many companies identified by job seekers.

Industry/Market Research

While primarily used in business research, learning more about the industry and market inhabited by a potential employer can help job seekers make informed career decisions. *IBISWorld* is among the best for this, offering more than 700 detailed 30 – 50 page industry reports organized by NAICS code. A close contender is *Mintel*, offering very well-done market reports on primarily consumer-based markets and demographics. A bonus *Mintel* offers is the availability of datasets showing their consumer survey results for all of their reports released after April, 2015.

Conclusion

As we strive to provide the best possible services to our users, it is important to think about the difficulties of the career search and how this area is changing over time. From the basics of creating a LibGuide for career researchers, to purchasing specialty resources, to walking our patrons through the process, the special library can show itself to be a tremendous

asset (particularly when a patron lands the job of their dreams). As a special library, we may have a better idea of the resources that would best serve our patrons on their job hunts, even more so than campus career centers, who, out of necessity, have to generalize their services to all students across campus. A little bit of time and attention to this area of our collections and services can make a lot of difference, which will ultimately help our patrons in a very tangible way.

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