CHAPTER 13

Making the Most of and Moving Beyond Your First Professional Position:

Strategies for Success

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After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- articulate the benefits of introspection in order to create a reflective professional practice throughout your first job and beyond;
- identify strategies for leveraging your first professional position in order to prepare for and find success in your second job search; and
- identify a professional narrative you would like to craft in order to intentionally tailor your online presence, external community, and project work to specific area(s) of expertise.

Introduction

Securing a first professional position in academic librarianship is a pivotal moment. Others have written about how every accomplishment LIS students work toward leads to this important "finish line"[1]—the culmination of the first job search.[2] The narrative of the first job as the "end point" continues to persist, despite the fact that the contemporary employment environment is such that very few professionals secure either a perfect or a permanent position during their initial foray into the job search.

This preoccupation precedes convocation. Since the MLIS is characterized as a professional degree, emphasis is placed on developing and demonstrating "job-ready" skills at the expense of all else. Institutions are boastful of their post-graduation job placement rates,[3] often putting these statistics front and center in recruitment materials. This focus is further underscored by the fact that both LIS

instructors and established professionals alike are constantly encouraging students to put their time and energy into making themselves marketable for that first search,[4] often encouraging the completion of additional professional development (internships, coursework or other skills-based training, job shadowing, and informational interviews) and/or the re-calibration of personal circumstances (including being willing to move, work part-time, or pursue a career in a different sector). As a result, new graduates often start their first position feeling burned out, overwhelmed, and unsure about what lies ahead.[5]

This singular emphasis on attaining a first position is not only personally taxing but also professionally short-sighted. It is well-known that the first professional position does not represent the totality of experience. Given the propensity of the LIS field to rely on precarious (contract, part-time, and other short-term) labor arrangements,[6] the first position is often only a first (and sometimes short) step. Thus, new librarians must continually consider their career trajectory beyond their first job. This is especially true in light of the current job market, where roles are continually diversifying and thus requiring new skill sets and competencies.[7] In short, the ways that a new LIS professional capitalizes on their first position (or fails to) can set the tone for the rest of their career.

Unfortunately, in the absence of mentorship or access to a strong professional network, information about how to successfully move beyond the first job is rarely conveyed to early-career librarians. This chapter aims to fill that gap by providing tangible strategies for leveraging opportunities to make the most out of one's first job, even when there are constraints that make that position less than ideal.[8] From there, the chapter hones in on what makes the transition to a second position possible: developing projects to diversify your skill set, strategies for making your work visible, effectively finding and utilizing various communities, embarking on and improving the subsequent job search, and crafting a graceful and professional exit strategy. By discussing the importance of and interplay between these stages—as well as the role that introspection and reflection occupy within them—this chapter demonstrates how career success is a holistic, iterative process, rather than the final destination it is often portrayed as.

Our Context

As we are both early-career professionals who have recently transitioned into new roles, we are well-positioned to speak on successful strategies for making the most out of one's first professional position. However, this positioning requires some context. Context does and ultimately has shaped the strategies and perspectives that we offer here.

By way of an introduction to who we are, we are both cisgendered, heterosexual, white women. We both enjoy the support of a partner and close-knit familial network, both of which are close in geographic proximity. Neither of us has any

significant illnesses, disabilities, or pre-existing conditions. We transitioned to our second roles from permanent, full-time positions that we were lucky enough to land shortly after graduating (due in part to the fact that we had almost no geographic constraints factoring into our job searches). Although we both come from working-class backgrounds—which has tended to cause friction when we have attempted to assimilate to the upper-middle class ethos of librarianship[9]—the benefits that we enjoy through these other signifiers of privilege have shaped the way we can and do move through the world.[10]

Naturally, these accumulated levels of privilege underpinned our first positions, our subsequent job searches, and our ability to transition to our next positions. They also underpin the advice offered throughout this chapter. We note our privilege here because no didactical or "how-to" strategies (for job-seeking or otherwise) should come without such acknowledgment.

Making the Most Out of Your Current Position

The amount of time that a new LIS professional will spend in their first job will vary greatly by personal circumstances, geographic constraints, finances, institutional culture, and professional goals. Essentially, you will want to strike a balance between your personal circumstances and the optics of a move. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to timeframe, but the suggestions and timelines that are provided below are appropriate for new graduates interested in staying in their first professional position for two years (although they can certainly be adjusted to account for a different timeline). Two years is generally considered to be an appropriate minimum amount of time to stay in your first professional position, provided that it is a full-time, permanent one.[11] This allows you sufficient time to figure out the intricacies of the position and workplace and provides you the opportunity to initiate projects and see outcomes. Two years should also enable you to explore different professional directions and interests, which might guide your second job search.

That being said, career growth and progression look different for everyone. You may find that your first job is ideal and, as such, you may be content to stay there for quite some time. Alternatively, you may find that staying for a full two years would be a professional misstep. Please keep in mind that the decision to move is an individual one that must be based on context. Thus, what follows are general recommendations that should be adjusted to accommodate your individual circumstances.

Moving Past Political Challenges to Gain Trust and Propose New Projects

There may be many difficulties inherent in your first professional position. You

may feel a disconnect between your job responsibilities and your interests or skill set. Circumstances may not be positive: to find your first LIS job, you may have relocated away from your family, partner, or other support networks. The culture of the institution or the library may not be complementary to your personality. The position itself may be a contract or temporary one, forcing you to consider its endpoint even on your first day. You may be balancing multiple part-time positions with other commitments, including caring for children or other dependents. Further complicating all of these structural challenges is a very real economic one: like the vast majority of new LIS graduates, you may be carrying large amounts of student loan debt.[12] These challenges can manifest in myriad ways, making your first professional LIS position feel overwhelming and sometimes impossible.

The hardest (but arguably most important) thing to do when starting your first position is to navigate its associated cultural, political, and organizational challenges. These are always challenging factors to contend with when one begins a new role, but are doubly so for the early career professional, who may lack both confidence and experience working in an academic library. Adjusting to the culture of the library may be the largest hurdle to overcome, especially if you are arriving with little or no context about working in academia. Policies may be confusing or nonexistent, while the politics may seem opaque or oblique.

Sometimes, the nature of work in the academic library is such that people can have very specific skill sets and job responsibilities. Personnel changes, which are exacerbated by budgetary or strategic redirections, are felt very acutely by existing staff members, who in turn may feel isolated or insecure.[13] This means that the addition of a new, unknown face can precipitate territorialism, apathy, or even hostility. To curry the favor of your new colleagues, invite them in whenever possible. Reach out to them and extend an invitation to join you for coffee or lunch. This will allow you to connect with them on a professional and personal level. Physically shifting the conversation away from the library space helps people get more comfortable: they may be more apt to open up about their job, career journey, or personal life. The key to making the most of your first position is building trust and collegiality with your team. This trust will become increasingly integral as you begin to navigate political challenges and take professional risks.

These conversations with colleagues may reveal a lack of leadership or communication by high-level or middle management. They might also expose historical precedents that affect organizational structure and internal relations within the library. A lack of strategic direction, combined with complex historical conflicts, can breed mistrust. First and foremost, it is essential to remember that it is not your responsibility to mend relationships or to provide a strategic plan for the library. Nor is it within the realm of possibility that you be able to do so. Reminding yourself that your work is important and significant but only one piece of a much larger structure is essential, particularly when setting realistic expectations for yourself.

One practical strategy that you can employ in the absence of clear direction is to use "guiding documents" to shape your work. Guiding documents can include the library's strategic plan, departmental goals, your own goals for the fiscal year, external reviews[14] of your unit or library, liaison departmental goals, and even the general literature on higher education and librarianship. It is important to remember that these documents should always be used as a "starter," meaning they are most effective when used to begin discussions and add new perspectives to a conversation instead of end others' thought processes.

When your colleagues seem hesitant to try a new initiative (or to eliminate an outdated or unuseful one), using these documents can help you approach reticence or potential conflict in a politically savvy, strategic way. Citing guiding documents in your proposals and suggestions illustrates that you are thinking about the future direction of your department or library rather than only your own interests or skill set. Utilizing guiding documents also reminds your colleagues of larger goals. It positions you as someone who is critically engaged in the profession. While these documents will not be relevant to every conversation you have, they should continually guide the vision for your position.

Using these documents to lay out a visionary path may also help you overcome systemic or organizational conservatism. Sometimes, colleagues will be hesitant to try new programs or kinds of work because they are not encouraged or rewarded for taking risks. So, how do you propose new ideas, particularly complex or costly ones, in an organizational culture that may be built on fear and skepticism? Addressing colleagues' (and potentially your supervisor's) hesitation is often a first step in this process toward launching special projects and eventually improving or expanding your job responsibilities.

There are several strategies you can utilize to address fear or hesitation. The effectiveness of these strategies is often dependent on institutional culture, campus size and context, existing relationships and rapport with faculty, and the openness of your colleagues. One approach is to anticipate criticisms and provide solutions as you are preparing to pitch a new idea. When proposing something new, problematize the issue thoroughly by acknowledging context, citing literature, and providing data. This will provide a more finalized, contextual answer for how your proposal might better serve users or solve a specific problem.

This tactic can be utilized for almost any scenario: proposing a new assessment method, asking to experiment with a new kind of faculty outreach, starting a new initiative, or revamping an existing workflow. Unfortunately, this strategy is time- and labor-intensive and can feel wasteful if the proposal is not successful. Attempting to get formative feedback throughout the process from both internal and external colleagues can improve the final proposal. Additionally, securing colleague or supervisor buy-in before proposing a new project in a group setting can not only enhance the development of the proposal but also improve the quality of your pitch. Even if the proposal does not end up getting

accepted, this exercise allows you to develop expertise on the issue throughout your process.

Other tactics include proposing a pilot or trial period for your idea or gaining faculty support before suggesting something within the library. Offering to start small with a pilot or proof-of-concept can often ease others' fears that a new project will be too time-intensive or offer little reward. Giving yourself a shorter timeline can also help you iterate and improve upon your original idea quickly. Gaining outside support before proposing an idea within the library can be valuable, but it is politically risky and can backfire if not approached thoughtfully and strategically. While rallying support of others—particularly administrators or powerful faculty members—can often mean that your initiative will be guaranteed a pilot, it can also be seen as underhanded or uncollegial. We recommend using this strategy wisely, infrequently, and only as a last-ditch effort. Remember that you only have so much political and social capital available, so you will want to consider if this is a circumstance worth exhausting a large amount of it.

↳ Try This:

- Use the first six months of your first professional position to adjust to your institutional context and culture.
- Learn more about your colleagues and your team.
- Understand the basic functions and responsibilities of your position.
- Establish a good working relationship with your supervisor.
- Contribute to existing initiatives and projects.

Expanding and Reflecting on Your Professional Practice

The strategies that we provide above are only useful if you have identified areas that you would like to see your library, your team, and yourself grow in. Once you better understand your institutional culture and its constituent parts, you will want to start thinking about how you can expand your job responsibilities and/or develop projects that can diversify your skill set. Creating and executing additional projects can be incredibly advantageous for your second job search since doing so will enable you to showcase a broad skill set and a range of tangible experiences. These new experiences often serve as talking points for challenging questions about project management, successfully collaborating with others, and addressing conflicts or challenges. Developing new projects will be especially important for your second job search if you hope to shift specializations or move to a different kind of institution.[15]

It is crucial that reflection and introspection drive your process for broadening your skill set and identifying new projects. While this might seem obvi-

ous, intentional reflection is more purposeful than simply thinking about what is going well and what is going poorly. True reflection will prompt you to think deeply about context and which aspects of your work environment encourage you to thrive and which aspects seem to stunt your growth. More important, reflection moves us beyond visceral feelings toward the *why* or root of experiences.[16]

Reflection prompts us to think critically about the systems and structures in place and our role in our greater work ecosystems. Continually reflecting on why our institutions function, communicate, and collaborate the way that they do helps us to better understand our own needs constructively. Reflection should also lead to personal introspection. This is inextricably linked to self-improvement and the ability to articulate your strengths, weaknesses, professional needs, likes, dislikes, and preferences, whether they are related to management style, institutional culture, institution size, and even type(s) of colleagues. To this end, you should keep a job journal nearby. Take note of things like successes (even if they are small), ideas, and feelings after you participate in meetings, teach classes, or complete a project.

This journal will help you hone in on potential areas for growth. Some questions to consider include:

- Where are there gaps in your knowledge in terms of soft or hard skills?
- What are the issues within your communities (the library, the institution, or the profession) that you could contribute to?
- What are the types of projects or tasks that you tend to find fulfilling?
- What other roles in academic libraries do you find intriguing or challenging?

You may not know the answer to all of these right away, and that is okay! Just start jotting down responses about how different situations and tasks make you feel, physically and emotionally. The intentionality of writing about these experiences is preferable to simple reflection alone. Upon a later re-reading, you may notice that patterns or tendencies emerge, even if you did not happen to notice them at the time.

Once you know where your interests lie and where to direct your efforts, start exploring self-directed learning opportunities to fill in any gaps. Online courses on specialized topics such as data management, instructional design, and systematic reviews are available through Coursera, Lynda.com, and Library Juice Academy for free or a modest fee. Many tutorials are freely available online to help people learn technological platforms and skills such as GitHub, Omeka, WordPress, and various coding languages. For those who prefer learning in person, regional workshops such as Software Carpentry or Canada Learning Code exist, offering a supportive learning environment with knowledgeable instructors and supportive peers. Learning from these opportunities is maximized when approached with a tangible project or idea in mind, as you will be required to immediately apply your skills. Try to pair coursework and tutorials with projects or ideas that need solving in your practice to maximize their usefulness and retention. Toolkits in core areas

such as marketing, scholarly communication, and assessment can be valuable for understanding what tools and approaches are tried and tested in strategic areas. While some toolkits are published as edited books, they can also take the form of electronic resource collections created by ALA or ACRL section committees that are available on the respective organization's site.

After you have enhanced your knowledge in an area, there are two options for finding and/or developing projects to extend your experience. One is to expand the scope of your current position. Another is to pursue projects and relationships that are related to your interests but are outside of your current institution. A mix of both of these strategies is probably most effective, but starting by expanding the scope of your position is advantageous in that it can be more strategic and less daunting. However, new LIS professionals may have little or no autonomy in defining their current role and, as a result, may be forced to look for external opportunities.

If you are able to develop new projects internally, a first step to expanding your current job is to grasp the scope and job description as it was written. See if you can locate organizational documents, such as job fact sheets, unit reviews, or reports. These will help you understand how your role was conceived, how it looks now, and how it has changed over time. Finding similar documents for your colleagues will help you see where your roles intersect or diverge. Orienting yourself with the context and history of your role will help you think through how you might balance existing responsibilities with new projects and how you can better advocate for yourself.

The second step is to figure out how much flexibility you have to build upon the scope of your current position. Has your supervisor expressed an interest in new initiatives? Has library administration encouraged staff to take ownership of their positions or job responsibilities? Are there other examples of library staff pursuing projects outside of their job's official scope? Every library has different protocols for entering other staff members' domains and proposing shared projects. Ask others about their procedures for collaboratively helping faculty in other librarians' subject area(s), for example. Again, it must be emphasized that building trust is essential for taking on any new projects internally. Without trust, you will not be able to get buy-in or make change efficiently or effectively.

If this is not an option, you can also pursue new opportunities outside of your institution. In order to do so, you will want to start developing some external networks. External communities can be categorized in three main areas: peer, aspirational, and practice. Each of these communities serves different functions, and you may find that one is more pertinent than the others, depending on what stage you are at personally and professionally.

Developing these communities is functionally important for several reasons. First, they can act as a support structure, particularly for those who are in precarious or challenging work environments. Second, these communities can also

"push" opportunities to you, which is imperative if you do not have the resources to develop a new project on your own. Third, they can play an invaluable role in both the dissemination of your work and the success of the second job hunt. Essentially, connecting to others will shape your own ideas and practices as they pertain to your existing role and future opportunities.

For most new professionals, creating a peer network is what feels most natural and immediate. By peers, we refer here to other individuals who are in a similar career stage or position. The purpose of your peer network—and how you go about creating it, for that matter—will depend on what exactly you require support with: skill development, job-seeking advice, morale-boosting, and so forth. While developing a peer network is covered elsewhere in this book, general advice for building this network might include following people on Twitter, reconnecting with alumni from your LIS program, or seeking out other early-career librarians at your workplace, at conferences, or in your geographic region.

Similar to how you created your network(s) of peers, you will also want to start building an aspirational network of colleagues from other institutions. This can be thought of as an aspirational community, as it refers to the idea of directing your efforts to connect with others who are doing the types of work you hope to do (whether that is in terms of job responsibilities, career development, institutional setting, or some other criteria). Targeting your participation toward certain communities allows you to get involved in a more active, meaningful way. Participating in these communities in a reciprocal manner (that is, by both listening and talking) can bring about several key benefits. Contributing to dialogues, whether on the regional or national level, helps solidify your presence as an engaged, enthusiastic professional. Getting on others' radar often means that they will start to share ideas and opportunities with you, which may include involvement in authorship, special projects, and other forms of collaboration. These people can also be invaluable sources of insider information once you begin exploring job postings. For example, they may have experience in a particular field or knowledge about a particular institution. If they do not, they may be able to connect you with someone who does.

You will also want to connect with useful communities of practice. Communities of practice are individuals who actively participate in the development of skills and/or knowledge in a particular area. This could be a group of teachers, librarians who are interested in technology, or those who are hoping to push advocacy forward. The usefulness of said communities will be determined by what exactly you are hoping to seek from them. You may want to join a community of practice to become familiar with the issues, learn how to use specific tools or technologies, or better understand service models.

Communities of practice are a great way to learn about the developments in a particular field in an accessible, engaging way. They will help you speak to this area more authoritatively, which is advantageous in an interview setting, where

demonstrating fluency with particular domains is expected. Participating in these communities also fosters experiences that can attest to those harder-to-qualify "soft" skills—working with people, problem-solving, communication skills, adaptability—often asked for by hiring communities. However, the value inherent in these communities is not just through the learning that happens in them but also through the connections that are created. By connecting with like-minded individuals in a meaningful, substantial forum, you constantly build social capital within that community.

A question that new professionals often ask is where they might find a rich, active, external community. While there are formal networks in place, including organizational task forces and working groups, conferences, and mentoring programs, informal, serendipitous opportunities to connect are often most effective and inclusive (as their organic nature presupposes both a genuine shared interest and less pressure). Conferences and even organizational memberships can also be costly and inaccessible to new professionals, particularly if they do not offer discounted or virtual participation options.

In terms of developing external communities, this can be done virtually or in-person. Virtual venues for connecting with others might include social media groups (such as those on LinkedIn or Facebook) or listservs. Potential listservs include large national communities of practice, such as those listed on the American Library Association's website. Similarly, Twitter can be an invaluable resource. In addition to offering community, Twitter also showcases library and higher education readings constantly. While it does take time and energy to curate the communities that you find valuable and interesting—including following others, deciding how much to engage, and potentially participating in Twitter chats—the payoff is significant. Twitter has transformed both Sarah and Ali's professional practice, connecting them with people and ideas that they would not have access to otherwise (including each other).

Joining state or regional interest groups or chapters, such as Code4Lib, the Progressive Librarians Guild, and the Art Libraries Society of North America, is an affordable way to participate in face-to-face conversations. These groups will often have in-person meetings to complement their virtual activities, offering an alternative way to comfortably network around an area of shared interest. Participating in more targeted opportunities in a strategic area, such as ACRL's Information Literacy Immersion Program, Dartmouth College's Librarians Active Learning Institute, OpenCon's conference and satellite events, or ALA's Emerging Leaders program, can help you build skills and relationships. If your organization offers professional development opportunities, consider asking them to cover the full or partial cost of attendance, as registration fees are often lower for organizations that already have a membership. Professional associations tend to have modest grants available to their membership and accessing these funding opportunities usually only requires a short application.

If the prospect of intentionally seeking out or developing a community seems daunting, a more manageable alternative may be to reach out to specific experts or potential collaborators directly. Generally, librarians have a strong ethos of sharing, whether that is of their time, expertise, or perspective. Many librarians are happy to answer cold calls about projects or initiatives they have completed. It can be humbling to hear that others, particularly new professionals, are interested in your work or would like to partner with you in some way. If you reach out, have specific questions ready and do your research. Be explicit about why you contacted them, demonstrate your understanding of the topic, and ask them direct, educated questions about their work.

Another approach to this, especially if you cannot identify specific people to contact, is to email an entire listserv and then follow up in more detail with those that respond. Ali went through this process when she started a position as an engineering liaison librarian. Having some work experience but no educational background in STEM, she sent out an email to ELDnet-l (a listserv discussing issues of interest to engineering librarians and other professionals), explaining that she was new and did not know where to start. She received an overwhelming number of private responses (approximately thirty) that provided congratulations, targeted training opportunities, suggested readings, and offers to connect in-person or remotely. These communications gave her a solid foundation with which to begin her outreach initiatives and resulted in the establishment of numerous professional relationships that persist to this day.

It is worth reiterating that taking on new projects can also be useful because they provide opportunities for intentional reflection. As you complete these projects, prompt yourself to continually evaluate your preferences, both personally (likes, dislikes) and professionally (priorities, type of institutional culture you need). Not only will this help you flourish in your current role, but it will also be crucial to identifying second positions that might be a good match for you.

↳ Try This:

- As you approach the end of your first year, start proposing new initiatives and collaborations that align with your professional interests and goals. These will be vital for your next interviews and for gaining potential references that can attest to your work.
- Remember to work within the structures and culture that exist at your institution, heeding territorialism and conservatism when needed.
- New projects should be driven by introspection, institutional needs, and your external community.

Intentionally Preparing for the Next Step

Preparing for your second job search starts long before you apply for another position. In the months leading up to applying elsewhere, you should be continually thinking about the story or narrative you would like to tell. Intentionally working toward a specific story can act as a litmus test for you. It will help you decide what kind of community to build, what work to take on, which projects you should turn down, and even how you should organize and present your online portfolio.[17] Questions that might help you start to consider your own story include:

- What area are you most interested in becoming an expert in? How can you demonstrate expertise in that area? For example, if you want to be seen as an expert in open educational resources (OER), you might join some OER listservs, follow and use the #textbookbroke hashtag on Twitter, ask to attend OpenEd or other OER conferences, or attempt to start an OER conversation at your own institution.
- What kinds of experiences are most transferrable to the work you would like to do in the future: teaching, organizing, outreach, management, technical work? Where are there opportunities to do this work?
- What are some contexts that you thrive in? What are your strengths and how can you develop them further?
- Where do you see yourself in the future? Are you interested in library leadership? A specific specialization?
- What "slice" or area of LIS work are you most passionate about? If this area is an intersection of two specialties (for example, cataloging and instruction or scholarly communication and metadata), how does that make your story unique and make you stand out from others?

This narrative should be aligned with job postings that you have been taking note of, but it should also be uniquely yours.

Making Your Work Open and Visible

Once you have articulated the story that you would like to tell future employers, you need to consider making your own work both open and visible. In addition, it will be important to share your work with the communities we discussed previously in order to facilitate readership and engagement. Your professional community can share your work with their respective network(s), which will be integral to making your work have a larger impact.

There are several strategies for crafting your online presence and sharing your scholarship openly. One useful framework comes from Barbour and Marshall[18] on the different types of personas that academics might embody. They identify six styles or academic personas, including a more formal or static self that is fixed in one's curriculum vitae (CV) or professional pages, a networked self that focuses on

sharing ideas and creating community, and a comprehensive self that mixes personal/social life with professional updates. In addition, Donna Lanclos, Lawrie Phipps, and David White have written and presented about a "Visitors and Residents Process" for better understanding how individuals engage and interact online.[19] Their V&R mapping is another way that you can explore your digital presence and evaluate which space(s) you would like to be in and how you would like to grow.

Having a presence on multiple platforms (Twitter, blogs, institutional sites, etc.), often with a different kind of presence tailored to each unique venue and audience, can be the most effective. For example, you might share more personal details on your Twitter posts than you would on your LinkedIn or institutional website. How much you should share, what you should share, and what the balance between personal and professional should be is contextual and completely up to you. However, what you share and where you have a digital presence should be intentional and strategic.

An essential piece of your online presence is your online or ePortfolio. You should use your ePortfolio as a space to showcase tangible examples of your work, rather than as an online version of your CV. For example, you might share lesson plans you have created, policies you have drafted, any GitHub code you would like to share openly, assessments you have done, recordings of presentations, or even PDF versions of posters. These are tangible manifestations of the lines on your CV and enable potential employers to see your work firsthand. Remember to organize your ePortfolio space in a way that reflects the story you have articulated and differentiates you from other candidates in your area of specialization.

If you do not already blog for an organization, your ePortfolio can also be a space for publishing blog posts, particularly if you use WordPress as your platform of choice. Blogging can be a space for the regular reflection we have encouraged you to incorporate but it can also make your work and philosophy of librarianship visible to others. If you are not able to keep a regular blogging schedule or are intimidated at the prospect of starting a new blog from scratch, consider trying to guest blog for a regional or national organization. Both ACRLog and Hack Library School welcome guest posts from library students and new professionals. Some ALA divisions and ACRL sections also have their own blogging space, such as the Library and Information Technology Section (LITA) blog. The commitment for blogging for each of these spaces varies and you will need to inquire about guest blogging beforehand, but doing so will make your ideas accessible to a large audience.

Finally, sharing your work openly and quickly is important for visibility. While librarians have an ethical commitment to support open access,[20] it is also strategic to either publish in an open access journal or share a preprint of your scholarship to increase your impact.[21] Sharing a preprint enables you to timestamp your work while attracting feedback and readership sooner, enabling you to refine your ideas more quickly. There are several repositories that accept LIS preprints, including the LIS Scholarship Archive and e-LIS. Regardless of whether you share a preprint

or not, you should consider negotiating any publishing or speaking agreement you sign to permit you as the author to share an open access version of your work.

Making your work available and accessible extends beyond articles. You can also share your learning objects, data, posters, and recordings openly. Project CORA is one example of a repository devoted to sharing research assignments specifically for information literacy and instruction practitioners. If you have access to an institutional repository (IR), you can also share your data, preprints, and grey literature there. While many IRs will maintain faculty and staff work after they leave the institution, you should inquire about your institution's policy before submission. Once you have shared your materials openly, either through an institutional or disciplinary repository, you can integrate links or DOIs to these materials into your CV and your cover letters for your next job search. This means that tangible examples of your work will be readily available for potential employers to peruse.

↳ Try This:

- As you embark on the second year of your position, pay attention to new job postings, even if you do not plan on applying just yet. What skills are they asking for? What kind(s) of positions would you be a strong applicant for? Where do you need to develop in the next year? Are there any required qualifications you do not meet (competencies, years of experience, etc.)?
- Keep a running list of examples of your work (projects, committee work, professional development). Use this list to examine where you have developed specific skills as well as areas that you would like to get more experience in.

Embarking on Your Second Job Search

A common question that new professionals have is how they will know when it is time to move on and start their second job search. Despite the prevalence of this question, the literature offering guidance related to subsequent job searches is scarce.[22] This is likely due (in part) to the uniqueness of the second job search. Someone may be searching for a position with different responsibilities, higher pay, more security, or in a different location, rather than searching for any job at all, which makes it harder to provide practical, useful advice of a general nature. However, as mentioned previously, this may also be due to our field's preoccupation with the first job search above all others. Whatever the reason for this gap may be, know that having one short-term position at the beginning of a professional career is not usually seen as problematic. However, there are both internal and external factors that must be considered before you begin to undertake a second search.

In terms of internal factors, you will want to consider your personal circumstances. As an example, perhaps you are a liaison librarian at a small institution. Even though your subject areas offer many opportunities, your suggestions for small, discrete initiatives have been stonewalled by conservativism and micromanagement since your arrival. For many people, this situation would likely precipitate a subsequent job search. Shifts in collegiality and organizational culture can take years or even decades to occur, and potential damages to your self-esteem or professional opportunities are not worth the risk of staying.

Conversely, there are also external factors to consider. Remember that search committees are composed of people, replete with biases and fallibility. Even if individual committee members have empathy, their organization may still be biased. Recruitment is a costly endeavor, and the reality is that some institutions do have expectations about an acceptable timeframe for remaining at a job. Biased structures and politics may not be clear to you, but it is important to be aware of and to anticipate these as much as possible. Try to account for these biases in cover letters by taking the time to explain what excites you about this new position.

Generally speaking, running toward a new position and the opportunities that it offers is a more effective strategy than running away from your current position. You have an incredible opportunity to build upon what you have learned about yourself from your first position to find something that better aligns with your goals, strengths, and overall career trajectory. It is imperative to utilize the reflection that you have consistently done throughout your first position to evaluate job postings and potential positions rigorously and systematically. Most new LIS professionals can be more selective with their second search because they have more professional experience and often meet more minimum requirements.

Therefore, a suggested strategy for starting your second job search is to look at job postings at least once a week—even if you are not actively searching yet—just to get an idea of what jobs are being posted and what kinds of positions interest you. Sources for job postings include ALA's JobLIST, the Partnership Job Board, HigherEd Jobs, INALJ (I Need a Library Job), and state job boards. For example, RAILS (Reaching Across Illinois Library System) is useful for applicants seeking a position in Illinois specifically. Compiling a list of requirements and preferences might be useful when reviewing new job postings. As an example, Sarah's list of requirements for her second search included a specific area of specialization, a geographic region, and additional support for research and scholarship. She was willing to be more flexible on institution size and type, making it a preference. Articulating a list of requirements and preferences in this way will give you a systematic starting point for deciding to apply for a specific position.

Once you have decided to apply for a position, it is important to utilize everything you learned from your first job search—and your first position—to make your application materials and interviews stronger. You will also want to think through and refine your responses to questions to include new experiences that

you have had. There are some general principles that every new professional on the job market should be familiar with.

First and foremost, research the institution you are applying to. After you have more information, you can tailor your application materials to the specifics of the job and context of the institution. Thorough research enables you to determine where there might be challenges. It also better prepares you to ask informed, pointed questions if you are invited to do a phone or in-person interview. The most impressive questions that candidates ask are specifics about organizational structure, job responsibilities, or policies and strategic plans that they have located online. Such questions illustrate that a candidate is serious about the position, takes initiative, and is already thinking critically about potential barriers to success. Remember that sometimes the questions that you ask are just as important as the answers that you give.

It is also important to secure references that can speak to your work, ideas, and ability to collaborate with others before you start applying. The best practice is to ask potential references whether they can provide a strong recommendation before you list them on an application. This gives them time to confirm that they feel comfortable talking to others about your qualifications. A challenging situation might arise if you would like to list your current supervisor as a reference for a new potential job. The decision to ask your current supervisor to be a reference should be informed by your rapport and working relationship with your supervisor. While not every search committee expects your current supervisor to be a reference, it is generally a good idea to have at least one reference who has supervised you in some capacity, even if it was only for one project or internship.

Finally, it will be helpful to break down the academic library job search process into smaller pieces. In other words, think of your cover letter as a stepping stone to getting a phone interview. The cover letter does not have to get you the job and, thus, does not have to be the authoritative record of all of your accomplishments. It does, however, have to illustrate that you are qualified for the job and that your accomplishments align with the responsibilities of the position. Likewise, think of the goal of the phone interview as getting invited to an on-campus interview. Breaking the search into smaller pieces with smaller goals makes the process more manageable and puts less pressure on you. While everything you do is for the ultimate purpose of receiving an offer, focusing on the step that you are currently on can give you a more realistic scope.

Crafting a Graceful Exit Strategy

Once you have accepted an offer, you will need to notify your current employer. This is often a daunting task for new professionals. It is a natural source of angst, partly because you may not have done it before. You might also feel like you are letting your team down or you could have mixed feelings about leaving. Remaining

graceful and professional throughout the process can be challenging. The library community is small; maintaining bridges whenever possible is imperative, as you never know how doing so might affect your career later.

When strategically exiting, you should aim to be as intentional and transparent as possible. Withholding information and making sure that your new employer is able to keep your acceptance private until you can notify your current employer is often the biggest challenge of this process. Ask your new employer when they plan to announce your acceptance so that you can ensure that your current supervisor and administrators know about your intention to leave before that date. The timing of this process can sometimes be complex. Generally, you should wait to tell your current employer the news until all negotiations are complete and the final offer is confirmed. Of course, you should also avoid sharing the news publicly or with co-workers before you inform your manager and/or administration.

If you are asked to give feedback on why you are leaving, either through a human resources exit interview or some informal mechanism, remain honest but professional. Keep this conversation framed around what attracted you to your new position: additional benefits, better pay, a more focused scope, an investment in professional development funding, institution size, etc. This will empower HR or your library to better understand changes they might need to make to retain talent in the future. If you do provide more focused critiques, try to avoid naming specific people if possible. Your goal should be to help your institution grow, but it is important to remember that one conversation will not address everything. Remind yourself that it is not your responsibility to find or suggest complex solutions as you are leaving.

As a form of collegiality, document all your work for the next person that will be in your position. Save important e-mail or correspondence as PDFs and upload them into a shared space. Write out and screenshot specific workflows that the next person will need to know. Create lists of people who you have successfully worked with, including faculty, administrative assistants, and other key staff on campus. Share your lesson plans, guides, policy drafts, and marketing materials with your colleagues so that they are able to share these items with the next person in your position. Essentially, provide the documentation that you wish you had when you entered your position as a new professional.

Finally, you should celebrate this new opportunity and new stage in your career! The process that we have outlined above is specifically for leveraging your first position to attain a second position, but it can, of course, be adapted for the rest of your professional practice. It is important to continue to use reflection, introspection, and collegiality as a foundation for progressing and growing throughout your career.

↳ Try This:

- Before announcing that you are leaving your first position, craft a graceful and professional exit strategy.

- Try to give as much notice as possible.
- If asked, give constructive feedback on why you are leaving your institution. Emphasize what is attractive about your new position (better pay, benefits, more professional development or management opportunities, flexibility, different kinds of work, etc.) so that you maintain a positive relationship with your first institution.

Conclusion

Since this chapter started with a discussion of context and privilege, it is fitting that it concludes with a continuation of that same conversation. When you attain your second position, you inevitably accrue more experience, a larger community, and, quite often, additional power and privilege. This is particularly true if you move into a permanent or tenure-track position with more autonomy, professional development support, or other encouragement or incentives to be active in the profession.

As you become more established, you have the ability to help others navigate the challenges associated with early career librarianship. You have much to give to LIS students and new professionals: perspective and encouragement for the difficult employment environment, advice about navigating political and interpersonal challenges, and mentorship that is invaluable for growing and thriving in librarianship. Additionally, while you have wisdom and experience to draw on that can be used to help others, you also have much to gain by surrounding yourself with early-career professionals. They can bring enthusiasm, creativity, and often a new and much-needed perspective to the profession in general and your work in particular.

With this shift in circumstance comes responsibility. As you move into your second position, it starts to become possible to change the structures that may have hindered your own progress. In her 2017 Annual American Library Association presentation on "How to Be an Influential Librarian," Madison Sullivan argued that it is imperative to recognize the challenges you faced as a new professional (either personally or structurally) and to actively work on mitigating those challenges for the next generation.[23] To be impactful in this profession, you must care deeply and completely about the success of others and the communal growth of the profession as a whole. This is precisely why this chapter has emphasized the importance of networks and external communities throughout. Giving back to the communities that facilitated your own growth is paramount for the continued success of the LIS profession.

In summary, using the opportunity and space that you have to mentor and advocate for new professionals and LIS students is important on both an individual level and a structural level. Part of this charge inherently includes working to shift the narrative away from the first position as the endpoint. As roles diversify and library work becomes increasingly more precarious, helping early-career librarians conceive of their first position as a potential first step instead of a final

destination is both ethical and necessary. Shifting this narrative will help those new LIS professionals who find a less-than-ideal first position navigate challenges while locating other spaces, communities, and opportunities to refine and grow their professional practice.

Endnotes

1. Kyle Shockey, "Crawling to the Starting Line," *Kyle Shockey* (blog), October 13, 2015, http://kyleshockey.info/crawling-starting-line/.
2. Callie Wiygul, "The Perils of Seeinga Job as Your Endgame," *Hack Library Schoo*l (blog), January 7, 2016, https://hacklibraryschool.com/2016/01/07/the-perils-of-seeing-a-job-as-your-endgame/.
3. For specific examples, see "Salary and Employment Outcomes," *University of Michigan School of Information,* accessed July 20, 2017, https://www.si.umich.edu/careers/si-salaries; "Student Achievement Data," *University of Illinois School of Information Sciences,* accessed July 20, 2017, https://ischool.illinois.edu/degrees-programs/ms-library-and-information-science/student-achievement-data. Being transparent with job placement data is important; the point here is to highlight that job placement is imperative for LIS schools and their recruitment practices reflect this fact.
4. Teresa Neely, ed., *How to Stay Afloat in the Academic Library Job Pool* (Chicago: ALA Editions, 2011).
5. See Wiygul, "The Perils of Seeing a Job as Your Endgame"; Shockey, "Crawling to the Starting Line"; Dorothea Salo, "Can We Block the Pipeline Out? Peer to Peer Review," *Library Journal* 139, no. 6 (2014): 16. ProQuest ABI/INFORM Global.
6. For additional discussions on precarity in LIS, see Jacob Berg, "The Adjunctification of Academic Librarianship," *BeerBrarian* (blog), April 29, 2013, http://beerbrarian.blogspot.ca/2013/04/the-adjunctification-of-academic.html; Canadian Union of Public Employees, "Fact sheet: Precarious Work Threatens Library Workers' Security and Service Quality," accessed August 20, 2017, https://cupe.ca/fact-sheet-precarious-work-threatens-library-workers-security-and-service-quality; Anna Ferri and MTE Whyte, *The On-Call Waltz* (zine), Volume 1. Vancouver, BC, 2015; Myron Groover, "On Precarity," *Bibliocracy* (blog), January 6, 2014, http://bibliocracy-now.tumblr.com/post/72506786815/on-precarity; Allana Mayer, "Crowdsourcing, Open Data, Labour, and Precarity," *Allana Mayer* (blog), October 7, 2015, http://allanamayer.tumblr.com/post/130682960383/crowdsourcing-open-data-labour-and-precarity.
7. For additional discussions on this trend, see Andrew M. Cox and Sheila Corral, "Advances in Information Science: Evolving Academic Library Specialties," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 64, no. 8 (2013): 1526–42, https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.22847; Janice Jaguszewski and Karen Williams, "New Roles for New Times: Transforming Liaison Roles in Research Libraries," Association of Research Libraries (2013), http://hdl.handle.net/11299/169867.
8. It is recognized that there exists a spectrum of "less than ideal" jobs, including those where employees are put in emotional, physical, or otherwise abusive situations. These situations require professional intervention and as such, they remain outside the scope of this chapter. The focus of this chapter is on jobs that are not ideal in terms of setting, responsibilities, or organizational culture.
9. For an extended explanation, see Sarah Crissinger, "Still Lost in the Academy: The Importance of #LIS and Other First Generation Initiatives," *ACRLog* (blog), August 10, 2015, http://acrlog.org/2015/08/10/still-lost-in-the-academy/; Kelly Keitur, "Repost: Class Feelings and LIS," *She Blinded Me With Library Science* (blog), December 2, 2015, https://sheblindedmewithlibraryscienceblog.wordpress.com/2015/12/02/repost-class-feelings-and-lis/.

10. For more information on privilege and professionalism, see Angela Galvan, "Soliciting Performance, Hiding Bias: Whiteness and Librarianship," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* (2015), http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/soliciting-performance-hiding-bias-whiteness-and-librarianship; April Hathcock, "White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* (2015), http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity/; Carmen Rios, "You Call It Professionalism; I Call It Oppression in a Three-Piece Suit," *Everyday Feminism*, February 15, 2015, http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/02/professionalism-and-oppression/; Gina Schlesselman-Tarango, "The Legacy of Lady Bountiful: White Women in the Library," *Library Faculty Publications* (2016): 667–86, https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2016.0015.
11. Note that this timeline does not apply to part-time, contract, or other precarious forms of employment or underemployment, as employers tend not to have the same expectations regarding employee commitment in these cases.
12. Jennie Rose Halperin, "A Contract You Have to Take: Debt, Sacrifice, and the Library Degree," *Medium*, August 11, 2017, https://medium.com/@little_wow/a-contract-you-have-to-take-debt-sacrifice-and-the-library-degree-5dbdfe1f6661.
13. Shin Freedman and Dawn Vreven, "Workplace Incivility and Bullying in the Library: Perception or Reality?," *College & Research Libraries*, 77, no. 6 (2016): 727–48, https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.77.6.16553.
14. Also referred to as self-studies, external reviews are optional or mandated processes that academic libraries periodically undertake with the intention of strategically improving various aspects of their operation (service delivery, staffing models, workflows). This process is often initiated by administration and involves individuals working both within and outside of the institution. These external individuals often work in other academic libraries and are selected for participation due to their expertise and perspectives. They spend several days studying the library in question, collecting data through some combination of observation, staff interviews, and consultation with key stakeholders. The culmination of the review results in a final report with recommendations, which the library under review may decide to adopt in whole or in part. For an abbreviated example of the information contained in a self-study, see "University Library: External Review Report," *University of Saskatchewan,* accessed August 30, 2018, https://www.usask.ca/ipa/documents/Reviews%20-%20University%20of%20Saskatchewan%20Library%20External%20Review%20Report%202016-03-10.pdf.
15. Of course, the advice to take on more projects and/or think critically about improving your existing job responsibilities is undoubtedly a symptom of our privilege. We were able to do so because of our positions as full-time permanent librarians with colleague and personal support. We recognize that balancing existing duties (let alone taking on additional work) is unrealistic for many librarians in their current roles. We also recognize that our current class status enabled us to take on additional uncompensated labor outside of our library jobs, which is not a reality for everyone.
16. For a longer discussion and review of reflection in LIS professional practice, see Maria J. Grant, "The Role of Reflection in the Library and Information Sector: A Systematic Review," *Health Information and Libraries Journal* 24, no. 3 (2007): 155, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2007.00731.x; Anne Jumonville Graf, "Learning from Teaching: A Dialogue of Risk and Reflection," *Library Faculty Research* (2016): 9–15, https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/lib_faculty/67/.
17. An online portfolio or ePortfolio is an online collection of one's work, including completed projects and links to scholarship.
18. Kim Barbour and David Marshall, "The Academic Online: Constructing Persona through the World Wide Web," *First Monday* 17, no. 9 (2012), https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v0i0.3969.
19. See Donna Lanclos, "Ta Dah! The Hitchhiker's Guide to Doing a Visitors and Residents Workshop," *The Anthropologist in the Stacks* (blog), April 17, 2014, http://www.donnalanclos.com/tag/cognitive-maps/; Lawrie Phipps, "Mapping for Change," *Lawrie: Converged* (blog), August 16, 2016, http://lawriephipps.co.uk/?p=8305.

20. Chealsye Bowley and Micah Vandegrift, "Librarian, Heal Thyself: A Scholarly Communication Analysis of LIS," *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* (2014), http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2014/healthyself/.
21. See Stephen Curry, "Peer Review, Preprints and the Speed of Science," *The Guardian*, September 7, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/science/occams-corner/2015/sep/07/peer-review-preprints-speed-science-journals; SPARC Europe, "Open Access Citation Advantage List," accessed August 20, 2017, https://sparceurope.org/what-we-do/open-access/sparc-europe-open-access-resources/open-access-citation-advantage-service-oaca/.
22. The only literature that could be found on this topic is a blog post: Sarah Keil, "Further Questions: When Is It Time to Leave Your First Professional Job?" *Hiring Librarians* (blog), October 23, 2015, https://hiringlibrarians.com/2015/10/23/further-questions-when-is-it-time-to-leave/.
23. American Library Association, "How to Be an Influential Librarian: Leading and Mentoring from Wherever You Are," 2017, https://www.eventscribe.com/2017/ala-annual/fsPopup.asp?-Mode=presInfo&PresentationID=250937.

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