

The Lost Art of Interviewing: How to Hire without Regret

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Abstract

How do you know if someone is a good fit for your library? Even if they dress for success and say that they left their last job because they “needed a growth opportunity”... How do you evaluate if their needs and skills fit your needs, not to mention company culture? Will they be a poster child for superior customer service or have a meltdown when confronted with a problematic patron?

Having the right people on your library team is critical. Hiring the wrong person for the job can diminish staff productivity, affect morale and damage the overall reputation of the library’s services. Although librarians understand better than those outside the library community what skills are necessary to deliver the best service and what personality traits are needed to keep productivity up and morale high, they often do not know how to determine if other professionals have these qualities.

Generally, library professionals are not trained in the art of interviewing. However, most librarians, at some point in their career are required to interview someone. This paper is a primer on interviewing techniques that will guide librarians through the interview process, suggest questions to ask and not to ask and present information on testing for library specific skills.

Because many librarians are unfamiliar with basic interviewing techniques, they may be unsure how to ask questions that elicit more than the dead end “yes” or “no” responses.

Additionally, they may be unaware of how to ask questions designed to demonstrate a candidate's past behavior and future performance. And what about those questions that legally, they are not supposed to ask?

Librarians need to be able to interview candidates about their library-related skills. Librarians must also be able to determine a candidate's hard and soft skills instrumental to the position, such as attention to detail, the aptitude to quickly gain subject expertise, and the ability to satisfy their customers while still meeting research deadlines.

They need to be able to pose questions that best determine if an applicant can conduct an effective reference interview or understand how to provide good customer service. They must ascertain if a candidate is capable of seeing the big picture when asked to perform a given task. It is also very helpful for the librarian to pose hypothetical library scenarios in order to evaluate an applicant's ability to handle themselves in these situations.

Librarians need to have tools or exercises so that applicants can demonstrate what they know. They need to be sure that candidates can really perform as well as they claim. There are tests that can determine a candidate's attention to details, customer service focus and research skills.

This paper will provide the tools and techniques to enable library professionals to conduct successful interviews to fill special library positions. These interviews can result in finding the person who is the right fit for your organization. Session attendees will walk away with simple, easy-to-use guidelines that tie the art of interviewing to finding the right candidate for your libraries.

Conducting a successful interview needs to be done in conjunction with the other steps in the hiring process. This paper outlines the entire hiring process and explains how the other steps relate to interviewing. The paper is divided as follows:

- Introduction
- Pre-Interview
- Interview
- Post-Interview
- Last Words: Hire Without Regret

Introduction

Hiring the right person for the job is crucial to the operation of your library. Regrettable hiring decisions can be costly mistakes in terms of negative impact on morale and management time as well as reduced productivity and the potential for litigation if a decision is challenged as discriminatory or in some way in violation of federal or state regulations.

This paper is intended to be a best-practice overview for hiring for any position in a special library. It will help you do it legally and will allow you to evaluate multiple candidates equitably. The processes explained here can be applied to anything from a clerical position to a library director. While references to all the steps in the hiring process are touched on in the paper, the focus is only on interviewing and preparation for interviewing.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN THE HIRING PROCESS

It is important to understand how interviewing relates to the entire hiring process. Below are the nine critical steps that we have gleaned from a combination of experience and best-practice research. The areas where the supervising manager (listed below as Library Manager) must be most involved are the job analysis, the actual interview and the final evaluation. Human Resources (HR) typically takes on several of the remaining steps. HR refers to either your in-house Personnel Department or whatever outside services you may use such as Placement Services.

Pre-Interview

1. Conduct a Job Analysis – Be very clear about the job responsibilities, expectations and the organization’s culture. Effective interviewing is not possible without a thorough understanding of the position. – Library Manager
2. Recruit and pre-screen applicants. Human Resources cannot conduct their part without step number one. - HR
3. Do your homework – plan an effective, structured interview process and techniques – Library Manager
 - a. Become familiar with established hiring processes and procedures.
 - b. Read candidates’ resumes before interview.
 - c. Choose or prepare testing tools as appropriate (see Testing section for details)
 - d. Establish major questions to ask each candidate. Review legally inappropriate questions. (See Pre-Interview section for details).
 - e. Prepare evaluation criteria that will predict an effective job fit.

Interview

4. Conduct the interview – Library Manager.

Post-Interview

5. Check references – Library Manager or HR.
6. Conduct background check – HR.
7. Evaluate candidates – Library Manager.
8. Make job offer – Library Manager or HR.

Entire Process

9. Be consistent and as unbiased as possible at every step – Library Manager and HR.

Pre-Interview

Librarians do not usually buy equipment or choose a vendor without preparation. Why not take a little preparation time to stay out of legal trouble and increase your odds of hiring without regret? You could save your organization a lot of time, money and frustration.

There are basically two types of interviews: structured and unstructured. Structured interviews require preparation. It means having a set of questions you follow with each candidate; a scoring or rating method of some sort to compare candidates (very important if you conduct more than one interview per day); and with preparation, avoidance of biased opinions. The traditional, unstructured interview is more like a conversation than an interview and has no plan, no strategy and no prepared questions. This format has only a 15 – 25 percent chance of accurately predicting job performance.

The more focused and structured interview, one based on a specific strategy and prepared questions related to a job analysis, has an 80+ percent probability of accuracy. We highly recommend structured over unstructured for the following reasons:

- It articulates what the organization perceives as critical behavior and core competencies required for the specific job.
- It facilitates the evaluation process which is especially important if there are multiple interviewers.
- It lends legal validity to the interview process which an unstructured, conversational interview would not.

Unprepared interviewers are more open to biases and are more likely to hire someone most like himself or herself or to make impulsive conclusions and generalizations based on assumed characteristics. Below are the most important preparation steps.

Significant Preparatory Steps

1. Work with Human Resources
2. Conduct Job Analysis
3. Recruit Candidates
4. Pre-Screen Candidates
5. Prepare Schedule
6. Create Scoring System
7. Structure Interview Plans
8. Develop Interview Questions
9. Understand Legal Considerations
10. Plan for Testing

Work with Human Resources

Check with your Human Resource Department for organization-recommended processes and procedures in the hiring process. Your job is to ensure that enterprise-wide policies can be applied appropriately to your library position. HR may want to handle several of the steps. This

is good, but you should be sure, at a minimum, that the person to whom the position reports interviews the candidates.

Conduct Job Analysis

Know why you want to hire someone. Clearly defining performance expectation criteria for success on the job is crucial to best practice interviewing. Even if HR generally does the recruiting and pre-screening, you have to be able to communicate exactly what you need in terms of knowledge, skills, experience, education and personality. You also need to be able to list the criteria - both tangible and intangible - that you believe will insure a candidate's ability to be happy and effective as an employee in the position. The job description is an excellent start, but make sure it is current and accurate.

You will want to focus on the critical expectations of the job – choose about five - eight – not the whole list of duties. You also want to look at performance expectations for each of the key responsibilities and what competencies are required. If possible, talk with incumbents or observe people in the job.

Alternatively, you may have the incumbent list major job-related functions, skills and knowledge required for successful performance. Be sure that the immediate supervisor has input as well. Become thoroughly familiar with the job requirements and specifications. Be prepared to discuss the most positive and negative aspects of the job. Also be able to describe a typical day on the job.

Below is an example of a job analysis form:

Position Title:				
Directly Reports to:				
Number of Direct Reports – Full-time:			Part-time:	
Job Overview				
Required				
Top 5 Major Duties and Responsibilities	Skills or Competencies Required	Years Experience for each	Personal Traits for each	Education
Desired				
Next 3 Major Duties and Responsibilities	Skills or Competencies Desired	Years Experience for each	Personal Traits for each	Education

Exhibit 1: Job Analysis Form

Recruit Candidates

This step includes locating sources of potential employees, posting and advertising the position and taking applications. The more precise and complete your job analysis is, the easier this step will be, especially if HR or a recruiting firm does it. Make sure HR is aware of the various resources that you, as a librarian, have for posting jobs such as SLA local listservs or national online career centers.

Pre-Screen Candidates

Often, the HR department performs pre-screening. For them to do their job well, you must provide them with a clearly defined job description -- what is *required* and what is *desired* for the candidate to be a successful match. Resumes and/or applications should be reviewed to ensure the candidates meet the minimum requirements.

Whether or not someone else does the pre-screening, you should personally review resumes ahead of time. Reading them in front of candidates appears very unprofessional. You do not want to spend the entire interview reviewing a candidate's work history.

When reviewing resumes, learn to read "between the lines". Applicants are not always completely honest. In fact, "Fortune magazine reports that 66% of all job applicants stretch the

truth on their resumes. Candidates "forget" to list jobs from which they were fired, they adjust employment dates or they embellish job responsibilities.”¹

If you have a large number of applicants from which to choose, you may want to use telephone interviews to eliminate those that do not meet minimum requirements. This can save a lot of time. HR may also help with preliminary telephone interviews.

One technique for pre-screening is to provide applicants with a “Skills Self-Ranking Form” in which each applicant is asked to rate their level of expertise on each of the skills you determine critical for the job.

Prepare Schedule

Set a schedule and follow it. Allot the same amount of time for each person, even if you do not use it.

Create Scoring System

The best way to create an effective, objective evaluation process is to develop a consistent method of measuring how well each candidate meets each of your pre-determined critical criteria. A popular one uses a 1-3-5-point scale where 5 is outstanding, 3 is acceptable and 1 is unacceptable. Some people prefer to use a matrix so you can visually compare candidates. You may need to weight answers to the most critical criteria.

- Using the list of critical criteria developed in the job analysis, plan what measurements you will use to evaluate the candidates and what answers to questions you believe will predict their ability to meet or exceed performance standards that are necessary for the specific job. Define *required* versus *desired* criteria. Creating a scoring guide may take extra time upfront, but the time spent can pay off by lending increased reliability and validity to both interview and test questions.
- Create benchmarks for what is outstanding, acceptable or unacceptable. Use high performers to determine what is exceptional or outstanding. If time permits and it is applicable, conduct a pilot study with incumbents to test the questions. Drop questions that everyone gets right or wrong.
- For resumes, you can assign scores to resumes, based on education, years of experience using each area of knowledge or other critical criteria.
- For interview questions, answers can be scored if you know the responses you believe will predict a successful job match. For example, “Describe how you have handled (or would handle) a situation where you are covering the reference desk or hot line and everyone is asking for their information at the same time.” Two things you expect the candidate to cover are 1.) Negotiating a turnaround time that is acceptable to both the candidate and patron; 2.) Being courteous.
- For test questions, the correct answers are more obvious.

Structure Interview Plans

Before the interview begins, determine the interview process to be used.

- Become familiar with the legalities of interview questions.
- All questions should relate to the job and the applicant's ability to perform on the job. Questions involving personal information not related to the job are usually prohibited. For more details, see Appendix 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONING DO'S AND DON'Ts. Also check with your HR department for organization-specific standards.
- Prepare a list of questions in advance that are designed for consistency. Asking each candidate the same questions, preferably in the same order, will make your job of analyzing the results a lot easier.
- Determine appropriate testing tools based on job requirements. (see Testing section below for details)
- Decide on the interview team. It is better to use an interview panel or at least 2 interviewers depending upon level of job.
- Use an interview team if the position level is high enough. If you choose this method, make sure it is organized. Divide up questions among the team – maybe have each team member cover a different line of questioning, such as education and skills vs. actual past experience.

Develop Interview Questions

The main purpose of the interview is to elicit information that, when combined with test results, references, and background checks will predict how well the candidate will perform on the job and fit into the organization's culture. Structure your questions to get the most information from the candidates. Be careful not to spend too much time – no more than a couple of minutes on questions like “tell me about yourself.” You also will not get very far if the applicant responds to all of your questions with “yes” or “no” answers. Open-ended questions serve this purpose well. Rather than ask “have you ever done _____ in your previous job(s)?”, say “tell me about an occasion when you _____.”

Be sure you know beforehand what responses you are looking for. A person who is a detail-oriented, steady worker will respond very differently than one who is out-going, enthusiastic, or competitive person would. Use of your job analysis and evaluation criteria can make a tremendous difference here.

Two major types of questions are behavior-based and situational, and both can easily be open-ended questions. The difference between the two is that behavior-based is founded on past events and situational is based on a hypothetical event in the future. It is best to have more behavior-based questions because candidates have an opportunity to describe what actually happened, is harder for them to “fake” and easier to give more details. You should have a few situational questions as well to see how adaptable the candidate is. You might need to use situational questions if the candidate has no experience in the particular area you are addressing. Here is an example of the difference:

- Behavior-based: Describe how you typically go about learning a new skill needed on your job.
- Situational: If you found out that you had to learn a new skill, how would you do it? What is the first thing you would do?

The more interviewing you do, the easier it becomes to uncover very useful information. For example, you may notice things like “I did _____” rather than “we did _____”. You can learn their specific role on a team project rather than what the team accomplished. You can gently lead them through the process of telling you the situation, what they did and what were the results. Below are some types of questions you may consider asking, depending upon how they apply to the job-specific criteria you have outlined.

General Questions

These types are those that relate to the candidate’s resume and general information about the candidate’s education, career goals, and ability to show up and perform the job. These questions should take only five to ten minutes.

Examples:

Introductory

- Why are you applying for this job?
- If we had two openings, one part-time and one full-time, which would you prefer?
- The job hours are from ____ to _____. Is there any reason why this might be a problem for you?

Education

- What courses – either school or continuing education – have you taken recently that you think would be most applicable to this job?

Difficult Questions

If applicable, determine how and why the applicant left his/her last job. You may not want to start off with a direct question like “why did you leave your job?” because it might be too threatening. You could lead into it with a transition from a comment about the last job to “...and then you left this position?” If you get a brief answer like “I resigned”, then you need to clarify by being more direct. Try to determine if they left on their own or were asked to leave. What was the relationship with their supervisor and co-workers at the time of leaving? You may even want to ask, “if we contacted your immediate supervisor, what might they say about your reason for leaving?”

Character -Based Questions

These questions are used to predict how well the applicant will fit in the organization’s culture and be happy as an employee in your library. Here are a few traits that may apply and examples of questions for each one:

Flexibility

- Describe a past work situation in which you experienced some changes in how you did your job. How did you handle it and what was the result?
- Tell me about a past work experience where you finished a task or stayed with a job you really did not like. How did you handle it and what was the result? (also addresses commitment and ownership of the job)

Multi-tasking, Planning and Organizing

- Give me an example of a time when you had multiple tasks to complete within deadlines. How did you approach this challenge? How did it turn out?
- When have you had to respond to more than one person at the same time? Which job was that and what tasks were involved? How did you handle the tasks and relate back to those people? How did it end up?
- You have been on vacation for two weeks, you return to your desk and your inbox is full, you have 100 emails and your voice mailbox is full. What do you do?

Maturity/Self-Awareness/Dependability

- What do you consider your top three accomplishments in your current or last job?
- Tell me about a couple of situations in which your work was criticized. I would be interested to know how you corrected your work in one of those situations.
- When you are looking for a job, what are the three most important things to you?

Motivation

- What is your professional goal? Has that goal changed in the last couple of years and if so, how? Did you achieve your last goal?
- How do you determine what makes up your top priorities in performing your job?
- What would your last boss or co-worker say if I asked them to describe you?

Coping skills

- Describe a situation on the job where you had to handle a rude, difficult or unhappy customer. I am interested in how you handled this and what the result was.
- Tell me about a job situation that was very frustrating to you. What made it so frustrating? How did you handle it and what was the result?

Team Player

- Relate to me a situation in your current or last job where you were part of a team or team project. What was your contribution to the team and what were the results?
- Give me an example of a past situation on the job where you had to sell your ideas to other team members who were of peers and people who held higher positions. How did that work out? Why do you think it resulted in success/failure?

Skills Based Questions.

Here are sample questions to identify skills, knowledge and abilities:

Attention to Detail

- Describe a past situation when you were responsible for the details of something. What was it and how did you make sure it was accurate and complete? What was the result?

Research

- Have you ever had to answer a research question in a subject area outside of your core industry knowledge? If so, what steps did you take to answer the question? What sources did you use?
- Regarding information resources, what are your favorites and/or what do you use most often?

Customer Service

- Suppose a library user calls, is apparently having a bad day and is taking it out on you by demanding that you give him what he needs within the hour. How might you handle this situation? [This type of questioning is not ideal because it is not based on facts. Be careful how you use information gathered using this method.]
- Give me an example of a time when you had two or more people asking for information at the same time – each of whom said they needed it ‘yesterday’. How did you handle it and what was the result?

Cataloging

- If appropriate for the job, you can ask the candidate for examples of his/her work.
- Let’s say you are cataloging new material and one comes across your desk in a foreign language you are only barely familiar with. How would you go about cataloging this work?

Supervisory

- Did you every supervise anyone? If so, how many part-time or full-time? How long?
- What were your supervisory responsibilities? Hire/fire; evaluate; train; discipline; scheduling
- If you had to fire someone, what did you do to prepare for it? Would you do it differently next time? If so, how?

Role-playing

More involved than the question-and-answer format, role-playing can be used for either behavioral or situational questions. When using the Role-playing technique:

- Give candidate a moment to read or think about the scenario so he/she can get into character.
- Make sure candidate clearly understands the scenario.
- Allow candidate to ask questions before starting.
- Debrief candidate afterward by asking how he/she thought she did and how might she do it differently.
- Conclude the exercise in a positive way.

Example of a role-play exercise:

- Set up a scenario in which the applicant is pretending to be answering the reference hot line. The Patron calls and says “I want information about the automobile industry. I need anything you can find by tomorrow.” (It is now 3:30 p.m.) You may choose to make the patron belligerent, depending upon what specifically you want to learn about the candidate.

In this example, look for the applicant to address as many of the following as possible:

- Negotiate time frame.
- Set parameters: high-level, general vs. details in specific areas; geographic areas; specific components of the industry (e.g. new/used car sales or aftermarket sales)
- Ask how the information will be used.
- Determine format needed (data dump, bibliography, summarized or analyzed information).
- Clarify delivery method (e.g. email or hard copy).

Understand Legal Considerations

Learn what questions are acceptable and how to avoid any questioning that may get you and/or your organization into legal trouble. In general, questions should relate directly to the open position, and personal questions are almost always out of order. Appendix 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONING DO’S AND DON’TS is a chart that includes general information to be used as a basic guideline. This guide should not be considered a substitute for legal advice. *When in doubt, check it out* with your organization’s legal counsel.

Plan for Testing

Once you have identified the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary for the individual job and its component functions, then you can determine which elements can or should be tested. You might choose 3 – 4 tests/exercises based on applicability to the position. Test scores are an estimate of predicted job performance and provide impartial data to be used in conjunction with other information collected from the interview process.

This step is particularly important for the support staff and technical positions. Testing trainability, as well as specific skills, is very important in this age of ever-changing technology. Tests, for example, can measure attentiveness to details and ability to follow instructions. This is particularly useful if a person has not had experience doing exactly what is required on the job.

When designing test instruments, you should:

- Provide clear indicators of skills and ability, based on relationship between test performance and job performance.
- Make sure the tests have consistent and clear instructions.
- Represent sample activities of the job.

Significant Steps in Testing Process

1. Work with HR
2. Develop Test Instruments
3. Administer Test(s)
4. Analyze Test Results
5. Do Not Discriminate

Work with Human Resources

Check with your Human Resources Department for any policies or guidelines.

Develop Test Instruments

Once HR approves testing (if necessary), develop or use tests specific to the position, covering knowledge/skills necessary for the job (see Appendices 1 and 2 and “job analysis” for examples).

- Review and validate the test instrument; HR or acknowledged experts can help. Test should be reliable, accurate, and easy enough to be properly interpreted, avoiding unfair discrimination to any protected group or individual. Remember test cannot have any adverse affect on any protected groups.
- Keep it short enough not to waste your time or the candidate’s or cause the candidate any unnecessary anxiety.
- Develop instructions and expectations in a clear, concise and consistent manner, preferably both written and oral. Exercises should be easy to understand and be simple enough not to overwhelm the candidate.

Administer Test(s)

Be consistent with environment, instructions and time. Try not to cause any more anxiety to candidates than necessary. You might refer to these tests as exercises rather than test to put them more at ease.

Analyze Test Results

Make sure your analyses take the following points into consideration:

- Criteria for scoring/evaluating should be set in advance. Pass/fail? Minimum score? Relativity to other applicants? (See Preparatory Section)
- If a series of tests is given (based on functions), you may need to weigh each one according to its applicability to the job.
- Results should be used as one element of evaluation in conjunction with the complete interview process.

Do Not Discriminate

Tests must be evaluated in terms of their validity and legal defensibility. “Alternative testing procedures should be considered whenever there is doubt about the validity of the test or

if the test appears to screen out members of protected classes.”² (e.g. ask for examples of work if applicable)

Test Samples

See Appendix 1 for examples of paraprofessional tests and Appendix 2 for researcher tests. In addition to tests for specific skills, knowledge and abilities, you might also:

- Ask for work samples – e.g. a research paper to evaluate writing style as well as resources used.
- Use “tryouts” where applicable. A “tryout” is used in a situation where the applicant can actually spend a short time doing part of the job such as cataloging or filing.

The Interview

Using the right interview techniques is essential if you want to hire without regrets. Some techniques apply to certain types of jobs more than others. The purpose of the interview is to learn as much about the candidates as possible so that you can successfully match the candidates’ skills, knowledge and abilities with the job and the organization. In general, research and experience tells us that the behavior-based interviewing is more likely to result in successful hires. Assume you are properly prepared with your job analysis, structured interview process, pre-determined criteria, testing, rating methodology. You have also scheduled several prime candidates. Now comes the part that some people may find the most difficult: the interview!

According to Dell Still, author of ‘High Impact Hiring’ and president of Management Development Systems in Dana Point, Calif., “most job failures can be prevented by looking beyond the resumes and references and concentrating instead on identifying a candidate's work habits. ‘Eighty-five percent of all job failures have to do with a lack of appropriate work habits, not technical skills,’ said Still. ‘Technical skills are very easy to identify. On the other hand, how the person does the job and what kind of habits they bring in is in many cases more important to identify than technical skills.’ ”³ A high percentage of bad hiring decisions could have been avoided with better interview techniques.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. Stay on Schedule
2. Greet Applicant
3. Gather Information
4. Provide Information
5. End Interview

Stay on Schedule

Respect the candidates and their time, as you would expect them to do for you. Try to stay on schedule and always follow-up with candidates.

Greet Applicant

Make the candidates feel as comfortable and at ease as possible. You are selling your organization while interviewing the candidates. The more comfortable they are, the more information you are likely to get from them.

- Establish rapport and introduce the hiring process. Start with friendly conversation to put candidate at ease.
- Try not to form any judgments at this stage when candidates are most nervous.
- Have candidate complete any required forms. - HR

Gather Information

The purpose of the interview is to predict the candidate's ability to be successful in the open position.

- Administer test if applicable – the point at which you do this step is not a make or break issue, so do what is best for your circumstances.
- Conduct interview(s) using open-ended questions so the applicant can provide more detailed information.
- Ask only job-related questions. Be objective; don't judge simply on appearance, body language and intuition. Impressions are helpful, but they cannot replace effective interview techniques and questions.
- Be a good listener; do more listening than talking. This is a key to effective interviewing.
- Ask one question at a time; give applicants time to comfortably answer before going on to the next question.
- Watch applicant's body language and facial expressions for unspoken clues.
- Maintain eye contact as much as possible. If you take too many notes, you give the candidate clues about what is important. TIP: Create a scoring system ahead of time, use your own shorthand for notes, and then write more complete information immediately after the interview while it is fresh on your mind. Do not let candidate see your matrix.
- Take brief notes during the interview and summarize as soon after the interview as possible while the responses are still fresh in your mind. Immediately after each interview, pull out and complete your evaluation matrix or other scoring system you devised beforehand.
- Use a rating guide, such as a form with a check-off for Meeting, Exceeding or Failing, to have the ability/characteristics pre-determined to predict success in the specific job.
- Be objective; don't judge simply on appearance, body language or intuition. Subjective impressions may be helpful, but they are difficult to prove and cannot replace effective interview techniques and prepared questions.

Provide Information

Make sure when to do the following during the interview to the candidate –

- Describe the job and organization.
- Answer questions and ask applicant if they have anything to add – but *do not allow candidate to dominate the interview.*

End the Interview

Toward the end of interview process, let applicant know what to expect/next steps/ when decision is expected. You may also find these types of questions helpful:

- Do you have anything you want to tell me that we have not covered that you think would apply to this job?
- Do you have salary range requirements?
- If we were to offer you the job, when could you start?

Post Interview

Having done your pre-interview homework, you must use the information you have gathered wisely. You should be able to determine how well your candidates' competencies match the job. Keep in mind that if you stretch out this step too long, you may lose your best candidates. Choose your first, second and maybe even third preferences because you don't know what might surface during reference and background checks or between the interview and the job offer.

Even though this paper focuses on Interviewing, making the right hiring decision includes other key pieces of information such as checking the candidate's background and references. The library manager should do the job of evaluating the candidates. Using the tools and techniques outlined in this paper should make the job easier.

To evaluate the candidates, use the information gathered and your pre-established method of evaluation. You can quantify interview results along with test scores and even resume scores. Resumes are scored by counting the number of requirements (5 for example) for the job and giving each candidate a score based on how many of the requirements are listed (e.g. 3 of 5). Be as objective as possible. Evaluation should be based on behavior as well as skills, knowledge and abilities.

After the interview, check your top candidates' background and references. HR or the Placement Service will probably conduct background checks. If you are comfortable with the task, you may choose to handle the references to get a better feel for the candidate.

Make the job offer. It is preferable to do this in writing to ensure everyone clearly understands the details - what is expected, start date, etc. This is more professional and gives the

applicant the message that he/she is valued by the organization from the beginning. HR often handles this.

Follow-up with unsuccessful candidates. In most cases, HR will perform this task.

Last Words: Hire Without Regret

While the task of interviewing may not be simple or easy, following a structured format using tools and techniques outlined here insures a much better chance of hiring without regret. When you hit your target and get the best candidate for the job you get:

- Higher employee morale
- Increased productivity
- Less time spent on performance issues
- Reduced potential for litigation
- Avoidance of high cost of employee turnover

In summary, hiring the right person is essential to the success of your library. Following each step and developing a hiring plan for each position becomes easier with practice. You will find the extra effort made to hire the right person will be a lot easier than dealing with the aftermath of hiring the wrong person, not to mention the time and cost associated with the mistake. The potential employee should be a good fit, not only for the position being considered, but also for the work environment, company culture and management style of the supervising librarian.

Endnotes

¹ Fleming Ford. “Working Smarter: Common Hiring Mistakes — and How to Avoid Them”. Omnia Group (May 2000), <http://nma1.us/manage/2000-05/Workingsmart.htm>

² Richard E. Rubin. *Hiring Library Employees, A How-to-do-it Manual*. (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc, 1993)

³ Marlene Siering. “Hire the Best: Interview Techniques Can Separate Prime Candidates from ‘Wannabes’.” *The Denver Business Journal* (November 14, 1997), <http://www.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/1997/11/17/smallb2.html>

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Appendix 1: PARAPROFESSIONAL TESTS

Exercise for receiving serials

[Instructions for interviewer or test giver]

--Demonstrate accessing and searching the database.

--Show examples of languages library receives materials in (emphasize that when working with foreign language materials, it is possible to locate and identify title and volume information)

--Show examples of where publishers routinely place or hide information such as ISSN, frequency, issue numbering, etc. with different formats of serials.

e.g.,

- Newspaper: often found in a box on the editorial page
- Magazine: often found on the Table of Contents pages, or in a box on one of the last pages of an issue, or on cover or spine
- Loose-leaf: on the verso of title page, or on filing instructions

[Written instructions and test]

The person in this position searches and adds holdings information in the Library's online serials control database.

The Library's serials can include: magazines, journals, newspapers, newsletters, updates and revisions to loose-leaf services, annuals and yearbooks, pocket-parts, and other formats.

A serial title usually has a unique identifier, the ISSN (International Standard Serial Number), associated with it. This eight digit number is in the format XXXX-XXXX, and may typically appear (or be hidden) in a variety of places.

The frequency or regularity with which a new issue or release of a serial appears can vary across a wide spectrum: daily, weekdays, weekly, fortnightly (biweekly), semimonthly, monthly, bimonthly, quarterly, semiannually, yearly, irregularly, 10 times a year, etc.

A serial may sometimes combine issues or publish special issues outside of its regular schedule, as well.

Numbering conventions that serial titles may use to keep track of issues also can vary widely.

For example:

Vol. 9, no. 4, part 2
Release no. 2007-3
Issue 1465
2006 cumulative supplement no. 2
Aug/Sep 2006

Bd. XXII

The great variety with which a serial may present itself can make the process of identifying and accurately recording the receipt of serials in an automated serials control database surprisingly challenging.

The following exercise will provide you with a sampling of the kinds of information that you might encounter when working in this position. It will also provide us with an idea of how you might approach and handle this kind of task.

You will be given eight sample “issues” of serials to receive. Locate and record below the title and ISSN each of the eight pieces that you have in hand. Search and find the appropriate corresponding record in the database, and record its ID number. Record the numbering and date of each piece, using as a model the format for previously checked-in issues.

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____
DATE: _____

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____
DATE: _____

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____
DATE: _____

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____
DATE: _____

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____
DATE: _____

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____
DATE: _____

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____
DATE: _____

TITLE: _____
ISSN: _____
DATABASE ID: _____
NUMBERING: _____

DATE: _____

Exercise for claiming from serial invoice (also tests written communication ability)

Attached is a copy of a sample letter with a suggested format. If you are more comfortable with another standard business format, feel free to use that format.

Compose a letter to address the following factual situation:

Per the attached purchase order no. 061115-02, we placed a standing order for two copies of Florida rules of court from West Publishing Co., to begin with the current edition.

There is a new edition of this title every year, and it is published in three volumes:

Florida rules of court. State

Florida rules of court. Federal

Florida rules of court. Local

We received one copy of the State volume and one copy of the Federal volume (updated as of Jan. 1, 2007), accompanied by West's invoice no. SO35974a. The invoice only charges us for the two volumes we received.

Please write a letter to West's customer service explaining the situation and requesting fulfillment of our full order. (Copies of the original purchase order and the invoice are attached.)

Exercise for filing with numbers

Put these numbers in ascending order:

90301.500

110070

1025322

102532

102532.200

110599

101334

102532.040

90301.0050

88249.222

101334

95400

88249.002

110202

95001

10327

Appendix 2: **RESEARCHER TESTS**

1. Using free sources available on the Internet, find the section of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated that specifies the laws regarding drivers' licenses. Find out if there were any bills introduced in the 2007 legislative session which amended this law that dealt with the use of cell phones by people holding instruction permits.

Provide the numbers for the title and chapter of the drivers' license law. Provide the bill number of any applicable legislation and list the last action on the legislation.

Do not spend more than 1 hour on this request.

2. Using news, government or corporate resources available on the Internet, please find 5 different types of sources that talk about a merger between Paragon Health Network and Mariner Health Group. Provide the date that the merger took place, the name of the resulting company and a synopsis of what was written in each source. Provide a citation to the sources which you document.

Do not spend more than 1 hour on this request.

Appendix 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONING DO'S AND DON'TS

Subject	You may ask	You may not ask
Age	If state child protective and safety laws apply, you may ask if the applicant is over that minimum age. “Are you over age 18?”	No other questions or inquiries are permitted. “How old are you?”
Birthplace		About birthplace; birthplace of spouse, parents, or other relatives.
Citizenship	“Do you have the legal right to work in the United States and do you have documentation of that right?”	“Are you a U.S. citizen?” “In what country do you have citizenship?” “Are you a naturalized U.S. citizen?” “When did you become a citizen?”
Criminal history	“Were you ever convicted of a felony?” <i>(This question can be asked only if the inquiry is job-related and there is a significant business necessity.)</i>	“Were you ever arrested? If so, when, where, and what was the disposition?” “How many traffic tickets have you received?”
Disability/handicap	“Here are the job requirements of the position. Is there any reason that you cannot perform all the activities of the job?”	“Do you have a disability?” “Have you filed any workers' compensation claims?” “Have you been treated for any of the following diseases? ” (e.g. AIDS, etc.) “Have you had recent or past surgeries or past medical problems?”
Education	About academic, vocational or professional education or public or private schools attended.	“Did your parents pay for your education?” “When did you attend college?” (Dates may provide information about applicant's age.)
Experience	About applicant's work history, experience, strengths and weaknesses.	
Language	“What foreign languages do you read fluently? Write fluently? Speak fluently?” “Do you speak and write English fluently?” (Only if job-related.)	“How did you learn to speak (foreign language)?” “Do you speak (foreign language) at home?” “How did you acquire the ability to speak (foreign language)?”
Marital status		About marital status, living arrangements, spouse's occupation, children, child care arrangements. “Do you have children?” “What are your child care arrangements?”
Military experience	This area is not clear because some case law has found that using military service or type of discharge may have a disparate impact upon minority servicemen. (It is advisable to use military service as work experience.)	General questions about the applicant's military experience.
Name		Have you changed your name? What is your maiden name? Have you ever worked under another name?
National origin		About lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, parentage, nationality or nationality of parents or spouse.

Subject	You may ask	You may not ask
Organizations	Are you a member of any professional organization that is relevant to the position for which you are applying?	About the clubs, societies, and organizations of which the applicant is a member.
Photograph		An applicant may not be asked to affix a photograph to an application or a resume at any time before actual employment.
Race or color		About complexion or color of skin
Relatives	Do you have any relatives employed by the company?	Names, addresses, ages, number or other information concerning children or other relatives not employed by the company.
Religion or creed		About religious denomination, religious affiliation, church, synagogue, parish, pastor, rabbi, or religious holidays observed.
Sex		No questions or inquiries are permitted.
Smoking	(Depending on State Law...) “Our smoking policy is _____. Can you adhere to it?”	“Do you smoke?”

Source: HR Now! December 2004 and SHRM.org