

CALL Student SIG Survey Results April 2014

Below are the results of the survey created by the Student SIG. The goal of the survey was to gather anecdotes, suggestions and words of wisdom from the CALL community to student members on a variety of professional development topics. We had 14 respondents and 13 completed surveys. Our respondents remained anonymous. Since no identifiers were provided (such as name, place of employment or location), we did not feel it was necessary to paraphrase the responses and so, are providing exact.

Thanks to those who completed the survey!

Question 1: In what type of institution do you work?

Total Responses: 14

- academic law library: 2 (14.29%)
- private law library (firm or other): 4 (28.57%)
- courthouse law library: 1 (7.14%)
- prison library: 0

Question 2: What advice would you give a student interested in pursuing law librarianship in terms of course selection and extra-curricular activities during their library science program? (such as: valuable courses, courses to avoid, valuable activities, your own experience)

Total Responses: 11

- Knowledge management, project management, and of course research. Any additional knowledge you can pick up in substantive law would be an obvious asset, of course - any amount of legal knowledge and vocabulary that you can bring is a huge help when you're getting started.
- I would suggest taking more practical courses in reference and research, cataloguing, IT related courses, management. Less theory courses.
- I'd take courses on govt documents, any law or business courses and management courses. Join all possible law library associations and sign up for their listservs. You'll get an idea of who the people in the area are and often there are job ads posted there. If you don't have a legal background, familiarize yourself with the basics of the legal and legislative system in Canada.
- Take any course that gives you access to law librarians in your school's community.
- Valuable courses: law librarianship (if offered), business librarianship, special libraries, management, database searching and design, anything that improves your computer skills
Extra-curricular:

volunteering in associations related to the area where you want to work. You get useful experience for your resume and you make connections.

- take a legal librarianship course at library school if offered - use your course work for the legal librarianship course to create a solid portfolio that can be presented during interviews - take a business librarianship course at library school if offered - take an advanced reference course at library school if offered - take an instructional strategies course at library school if offered -learn about internet broadcasting and how to create online videos - read a variety of Canadian legal blogs and law librarian blogs during your time at library school - visit a law library near you - network/talk with law librarians - join a variety of student groups at library school - Join CALL - develop an interest in legal research and legal issues - have an online presence
- Take the government documents course. If a law libraries course is available, it would be worthwhile. If job shadowing is a possibility in your program, it would be worthwhile to try to land a position with the type of law library that interests you - firm, corporate legal department, government/courthouse/tribunal libraries. All function differently, and all can be useful experiences.
- It will be important to take any courses regarding legal bibliography and at minimum, government documents. Courses in management, teaching, database management and many others will also be valuable, as many law librarians are soloists. CALL's New Law Librarians' Institute would be very helpful.
- If the student has opportunities to take courses outside the usual stream: - budgeting course - human resources course, managing people - reading contracts - negotiation skills - business writing skills
- Courses don't matter; connections do. I'd look at who is teaching the course. If they're an adjunct or sessional instructor and are working in an area you're interested in, you're better off taking that course and making a good impression with the instructor. Also, take courses that interest you and you'll do well in. The most important thing is networking and work experience. Get involved in associations and make industry connections. Take advantage of any practical work experience opportunities available.
- Valuable courses: -Legal Information Sources and Services -Business Information Sources -Management of Special Libraries

Question 3: What advice would you give to students regarding networking and job searching?

Total Responses: 11

- CALL conferences are certainly a good way to meet people, as are summer placements. With law being so niche, people who I know have worked in law libraries or who are engaged in the community are a good sign for hiring.
- Networking is very important in your job search. People recognize your name, get to know who you are, let you know about new opportunities, and can sometimes put a good word in for you when job searching.
- Do a lot of it. This is a small group of specialized professionals and they often hire based on who they know is available rather than just general job ads and lengthy interviews. Associations like TALL and CALL are very good sources for job ads.
- Start early. Take practicum courses and classes with special projects in the real work world. Attend local law library or special library association events. Lurk on listservs, twitter and/or LinkedIn.
- Volunteering can be incredibly valuable. (It got me my first professional job.) If you're a raging introvert (not uncommon among librarians) offer to help edit an association newsletter or be a webmaster. That way, you get to meet people and get your name out there without too much stress.
- - apply for jobs even if you are not qualified and no where near qualified - email your resume out to any library you are interested in working at, even if there is no posted job ad - be very aggressive and assertive in your job search -be proactive, create your own opportunities
- Don't send out boilerplate applications. Craft a cover letter which is unique to the position you're applying for - speak to the requirements in the ad directly, drawing examples from your resume. e.g. if the ad asks for customer services skills, try saying something like: "I developed excellent customer service skills while working for 3 summers at the Dairy Queen in my home town. In fact, I won the President's Award for Customer Service in 2008, which was a huge honour." Use the student rates of local and national associations to get introduced to the profession. Write articles - even book reviews - to get your name out. Volunteer for committees, or offer to stuff envelopes. Attend resume workshops and join mentorship programs - another great way to get in front of experienced librarians, and to get the benefit of their experience and contacts. You can make it clear right from the start that you're using them to help develop your network for job hunting - that's not a problem.
- Going to conferences and volunteering for committees is probably one of the most important ways to raise your profile. Having a blog,

writing articles and taking speaking engagements is another important way to increase your networks.

- -targeted volunteer work, make sure you identify what you hope to gain. If it is a good manager, or guide they should indicate if they can deliver in the area - lots in the websphere about selecting the right question for a targeted networking event. You want to learn something, share something, make a connection and make a lasting impression
- Don't be afraid to contact people already working in the field for advice and insight. Offer to take them out for coffee. People love talking about themselves and their jobs. Be willing to move above all else. It's difficult to get that first professional job out of school, but it gets a lot easier afterward. If you're flexible with locations, you'll have a much better chance at landing a decent job.
- Networking is critical. Search for individuals in the field, and invite them out for coffee or lunch. Express your interest in finding a position in a variety of places. Contact law firms/ courthouse libraries, etc. directly and inquire about available or upcoming opportunities.

Q4: If you could give a student feedback or advice about resumes and cover letters, what would it be? (for example: content, format, what to highlight). If you have been involved in hiring and have examples of what to do and what to avoid in a cover letter and resume, please provide your own experience.

Total Responses: 10

- Show enthusiasm in the cover letter; highlight legal experience if you have any, and if it's in submission for a front-facing job, emphasize as well your interest in working with clients.
- Don't submit a general resume that you reuse for every job. You have to tailor your resume for the specific job you are applying for and highlight the experience and qualities that you have that match what the employer is asking for.
- Different firms or govt employers will have very different hiring procedures. Some are very formal and others very casual. Customize your approach for the specific employer.
- Obvious (but important) tips: Avoid cutesy email addresses. Read your cover letter out loud to help you spot any mistakes. Turn off track changes. Spell the name of the person you are addressing the letter to correctly. If you don't have a lot of experience, keep your resume short. You don't need to pad. Send your resume as a PDF so that the formatting stays consistent. If you have chosen an uncommon font, make sure that it is part of the PDF so your resume doesn't display in courier.
- - I have not been involved in any hiring - Use the experience and assignments from your law librarianship course to create a portfolio that can be presented during interviews - Be very specific and concrete in your resume and cover letter - Your resume and cover letter should explain why you are the ideal candidate and why the employer needs you -Do not be humble or passive
- AVOID BOILERPLATE. Make sure you proofread your application before sending it out. I refuse to read applications which are clearly recycled from earlier job hunts (e.g. applications which say how exciting the opportunity at another employer sounds). Don't make me guess how your experience applies to my advertisement. Tell me how your temp job at a dentist's office gives you the skills that I'm looking for. Draw lines between what the employer is seeking, and what you have to offer.
- For some positions, the HR department (and not the Department Head) is the one reviewing the resumes. So make sure your coverletter is very clear on how your experience matches the job advertisement. Be sure to highlight any relevant experience, no matter how small. Hiring is often about timing; whomever has the best qualifications in the pool will be successful.

- Note: I am a library manager Use your cover letter to show that you have an understanding of the industry you are applying for (e.g. law) and the organization you're applying with, and why you'd be a good fit. If it's an entry level librarian job, I don't expect you to have several years of experience, but I expect you to understand what law is, what law librarians do, and to tell me why you want to work as one. Unless you have a degree in law, I don't care about your bachelor's degree, so don't bring it up in your cover letter. If I'm curious, I'll see it on your resume. Also, keep in mind that everyone applying to the job will have an MLIS, so that is equally unimpressive. Regarding resumes, don't put a career objective. I assume your immediate objective is finding a law librarian job, otherwise you wouldn't be applying. It's redundant and takes up valuable space. If you're just starting out and don't have a lot of work experience, list your education first. Listing courses taken is fine when you're coming straight out of school, but I would only include it for your first professional job. Don't fudge dates or inflate responsibilities. I can tell, and it's offputting. Try to list accomplishments in your jobs as opposed to tasks, but sometimes that's not always realistic for student-level jobs.
- The cover letter gets you in the door but needs to be accurate. You should be able to tell a story using an example from your experiences to back up the points in the letter.
- -design each cover letter for the specific place to which you are applying -Begin your resume with a "Summary of Qualifications" section

Q5: What advice do you have for a student interested in pursuing law librarianship in terms of interview Dos and Don'ts? You may list tips, anecdotes from your own interview experience (both as interviewer or interviewee), or other comments.

Total Responses: 9

- I respond well to confidence in interviews. Lawyers and/or legal information services can be intimidating, and I like to see people who can handle it calmly and professionally.
- It depends. In a govt interview for example it pays to say anything and everything you can think of. If they ask for computer skills, you are better off listing every single program or app that you have ever used because they are checking things off a list. In my experience, if you are interviewing at a firm, it will be a more conversational interview.
- Dress professionally - preferably a suit, but dress/skirt/pants and a jacket work well too. Be enthusiastic about the job. Show an interest in current events. Ask questions. (The answers to "Why did the previous incumbent leave?" / "Why are you hiring?" can quite often be illuminating.)
- - I don't have any don'ts really.... - Be aggressive and assertive during the job application - Be confident, keen, and eager during the interview - Even if you do not have a lot of concrete experience, you have lots of potential - Lots of employers are willing to hire on potential - Any kind of co-op experience is great, academic, government libraries, it is all applicable - Know something about providing reference service - Know something about web development, internet broadcasting, instructional strategies, or new technology
- Do a little advance work. You should at least know the progress of a bill, what the difference is between a court order and a court decision, and maybe a little bit about the potential employer. Do some rehearsal. There are standard questions that almost every employer will ask (strengths and weaknesses, why you want this job, what makes you think you're qualified....). Prepare answers for these and practice them. You can research other "standard" questions on the web. Take your time - stop and think before you start to answer. if a pad and pen are provided, take notes (especially if the question is long). Stay on point and don't wander.
- Just breathe. Ask smart questions that show you understand the industry and our organization (or that you've at least managed to read through our website). Fit is really important and I would give an applicant high marks for trying to assess whether or not a particular job/organization is a good fit. You might not have the luxury of turning down a job when you're first starting out or know what you're looking for in a job, but try to get a sense of the organization's culture, your manager's style, etc., to see if it's going to be a good fit.

- Sit down and create a sheet that helps you remember the experience that you have. Good interviewers will ask for your experience with particular skills and projects - you need to have a good selection of examples. Also be prepared with experiences relating to interpersonal communication, such as conflict in the workplace, initiative, etc.
- be on time have your references ready and offer them even if you are not asked. (I still cannot believe how many show up unprepared, etc.) Reference should be neatly typed. You should always confirm that your references will say positive things about you - have you asked them about what they are going to say? Ask them about any negatives they might say and be prepared in the interview to provide concrete examples that you have learned from your mistakes - Don't chew gum. Come with a pad and pen to jot down questions, etc.
- -go prepared to talk about the different aspects of the job posting (e.g. collection development, KM, etc.) -show your enthusiasm -emphasize how you are willing to bring the employer's library into the next generation of law libraries (e.g. electronic, etc.)

Q6: What advice do you have for a recent grad who cannot find a job in the law library field? (i.e. how to stay connected and engaged, what other types of job are valuable)

Total responses: 9

- Definitely be on the listservs - I don't know that all the jobs that get posted to that service get to the FIS site or Partnership board. It's also good to keep abreast of things that are going on that way, and also to see the culture of the profession. If you can get to the conference, going there and meeting people would be an asset as well.
- I would say try volunteering. It gives you more experience as well as a chance to network. I don't like seeing gaps on people's resumes when they're weren't working and I always wonder why. I'm impressed when I see lots of volunteering.
- I would say that business and corporate experience is valuable. Read the legal and business news.
- Volunteering. Informational interviews. Find a non-law library job - a lot of the skill set is transferable.
- - Any kind of job experience is valuable: government libraries, special libraries, academic libraries... basically any opportunity to develop basic reference librarian skills is great - Being willing to move to another province is helpful - Don't wait for job ads to be posted. If you find a law library you want to work at, just email them your resume and tell them you are interested in employment
- Get some kind of experience - volunteer, work in a different type of information organization. With more experience, you may eventually become a credible candidate for the job of your dreams. If you sit around waiting for the opportunity to come to you without adding to your skill set, you'll never get the job. Subscribe to the law library listservs, and keep a membership with at least one law library association - and stay active - participating will keep your name fresh.
- Try to find jobs in other allied fields, especially in other kinds of special libraries. Many law librarians started out working in positions outside of the legal industry. Depending on the particular organization, having a legal background might not even be high on the list of qualifications; knowing systems or having managerial experience might be preferred. Be willing to move. It's difficult to make the transition from public librarianship to other kinds of librarianship, so keep that in mind.
- The most important thing is to find work, but while you are working in any environment (even on a contract, etc) stay involved with CALL so that you continue to increase your networks and to raise your profile.
- keep up a library membership in the field that most interests you. Attend events from that association. Volunteer for the association. Keep taking courses in the field. Broaden the range of skills you have.

Q7: What, in your opinion, is a key issue in law librarianship that you recommend new graduates should know about when applying for jobs in this field?

Total Responses: 7

- That it is a field very much in change - a lot of libraries are closing, or systems are downsizing. I'd say there are still jobs out there in major markets, but less so in smaller ones.
- Competency and familiarity with all the electronic services.
- - Reference librarianship skills - Collection development skills - Basic Legal research skills - Basic understanding of how the law works - New grads have lots of potential. Highlight your potential - E books are a big issue and law libraries have been slower than most to respond. It would be helpful to know a bit about this
- Most organizations are facing reduced budgets. Where are some of the places that libraries can save money without destroying the level of service to clients? Some possible answers: - making the choice between Lexis and Westlaw - most firms are going single source now for online - reducing print collections - how do you choose?
- Understand what knowledge management is, why it's so important, and why lawyers often roll their eyes when they hear about it.
- Keep track of what is happening with government publishing. Be familiar with the main legal publishers and their new product offerings. Keep up to date with changes and improvements to government publishing or free sources of legal information online (SCC Lexum, CanLII, e-Laws, Justice Laws, LegisInfo).
- familiarity with legal tools - start with Canlii it is free. know the legal tools for the province you are in.

Q8: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Total Responses: 1

- There are some great books out there to help: Legal Information Specialists: Guide to Launching and Building your Career (LexisNexis, 2012). The Comprehensive Guide to Legal Research, Writing and Analysis (Emond, 2013). The most important thing that you can do is study - you will be most successful in this career if you gain the knowledge and expertise necessary to handle questions and teach lawyers in a most competent manner.