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We're Honored That You Applied Here

Terry Ballard
Gill Library, College of New Rochelle, tballard@cnr.edu

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The Systems Librarian
by Terry Ballard

‘We’re Honored That You Applied Here’
In librarians’ employment searches, some things change, some never will

Five years ago, I wrote an article for Wilson Library Bulletin called "We’ll Keep Your Résumé on File," concerning my initial round of job hunting after library school, which led to my first job as an academic systems librarian. Anybody who read that article knows that by interviewing me for a job, they were opening themselves up to cheap shots in a future article. In spite of this, there were plenty of people who interviewed me when I was on the job market again in early 1997.

Round One: The Early Interviews

The first thing I did was call a headhunter who had phoned me a few months earlier. I had explained to her at the time that I wasn’t ready to move on yet, but said I’d save her number. “So why are you calling me back?” she wanted to know. “I changed my mind,” I said.

The next week after the pre-interview, the headhunter sent me to a prestigious law firm in midtown Manhattan. The interview went extremely well. The library had just bought a new online catalog, but hadn’t really utilized it yet. That is my specialty, so I knew I would be invited back for the final interview. I was, but it turned into a disaster when they were more concerned with my facial hair than my potential for managing their online system.

A second early interview was in uptown Manhattan—far uptown. After a 45-minute subsurface ride, an interview at a heavily depressed neighborhood to get to a large special library that needed an INNOPAC specialist. I had been excited about this interview until I actually got it. I railed into the building 5 minutes before I was due and explained to my potential boss that I am very fuzzy about punctuality. “Good,” she said. “Around here we send people home without pay if they are 5 minutes late.”

The rest of the day, the warning lights started going off. The director was resigning. The library was constantly at odds with the parent organization, which had almost thrown them all out and hired a rival agency to run the library. At the end of the day, I knew that I just had a learning experience. My confidence was starting to slip just a bit.

Round Two: The Job Room

Then it was time for ALA Midwinter. I had registered in advance, so there was a handful of slips from prospective employers for this experience. “We’re honored that you applied here.” This phrase, or the similar “We’ve used your research in our work here,” became the sure sign that I would not be getting an offer. This position was for a librarian/Webmaster, and the director wanted to know what experience I had with the advanced Web programming such as Java and CGI. Apparently, she found someone with those skills.

Round Three: The Choice

In late spring, 3 months into the job hunt, things started happening. I turned into a horse race between two colleges. Both of them made a fuss about my Web graphic records) will be an additional cost element.

Paul McCarthy, president and CEO of WLNL, said of these new products: “This is yet another step for WLNL in implementing new products and services that meet the needs of libraries. We are delighted to be able to provide WLNL’s sophisticated bibliographic system through the World Wide Web. Libraries are major contributors to fulfilling the information needs of people through the World Wide Web. We at WLNL are thrilled to be able to contribute to the satisfaction of this need. This is yet another step forward for us and libraries.”

Authority Processing Services

In another release, WLNL has announced a contract with the Research Libraries of The New Public Library (WNL) to perform authority processing services for the online bibliographic database of approximately 6 million bibliographic records. When the initial 6 million records are finished, WLNL will process new records daily, placing them under authority control before they enter the NYPL online database.

The NYPL Research Libraries add approximately 140,000 new bibliographic records each year. The records from their major retrospective conversion of the library’s holdings before 1972 will also be included in the 6 million record total.

The services provided by WLNL include normalizing subject, uniform title, and series headings to conform to the latest Library of Congress (LC) practice; as well as correcting tagging and spelling errors, returning corrected records in MARC format, and providing matching Library of Congress name and subject authority records. Where headings do not match or LC headings, WLNL’s professional cataloging staff will manually review records, correcting the headings to conform to LC form if appropriate. In addition, WLNL will provide notification of changes and updates to authority records held by NYPL and provide NYPL with a copy of the updated authority records.

The Research Libraries’ four centers have combined collections of 38.8 million items, including 11.8 million books, and annually serve nearly 1.1 million people. CATNYP is the online catalog of the New York Public Library representing the Research Libraries holdings cataloged from 1972 to the present. Materials from the Center for the Humanities; the Science, Industry, and Business Library; the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture are included. CATNYP contains information on books, periodicals, manuscripts, maps, microfilms, music scores, sound recordings, visual materials, and multimedia materials in the library’s vast collection of library materials.

Source: WLNL, Lacey, WA, 800/DIAL-WLN, 360-923-4000; Fax: 360-923-4099; http://www.wln.com.