

# LIBRARY ISSUES

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## Hiring a Library Director

by Tom Kirk

A search for a new library director is a time-consuming, difficult, and expensive process. Therefore, doing an effective search and integrating the successful candidate into the community is important to the college.

Some of these ideas come from a survey of recently recruited college library directors. These suggestions are the result of the unhappy experiences of candidates in some searches and the pleasant experiences in other searches, regardless whether they resulted in a successful match.

- Communicate clearly the expectations of the new director. This goes beyond a general position description. A committee or consultant could be charged to prepare a statement of library needs to which the CAO and other important administrators agree.
- Include broad representation from the academic community in the search process, including the search committee. The absence of important constituent groups (e.g., students, library staff, faculty) from the process conveys the wrong message to candidates.
- Advertise for the position to take advantage of the avenues available, including the American Library Associations JobLIST, *The Chronicle of Higher Education's* ChronicleCareers, various listservs for academic libraries (e.g., COLLIB-L@ALA.org) and employment sites maintained by schools of library and information science, state libraries, and/or state library associations.
- Maintain a well-organized process for handling applications and the review process.
- Keep candidates well informed through a timeline for the process that is conveyed to the candidates. Keep the candidates informed of any revisions in the timeline.
- Request of the candidates a statement (2-3 pages) about their view of the role of the library and the library director in supporting the academic program. This statement provides the institution clues about the candidates' level of interest in the position, commitment to a philosophy of library service, and their written communication skills.
- Ensure that during the interview process candidates are informed and comfortable with physical arrangements, such as housing, travel, Internet access, and dietary requirements or preferences. Attention to personal needs of a candidate is an important indicator of the institution's concern for its employees.
- Provide the candidates ample opportunity for an extensive tour of the campus to develop an understanding of the social culture of the campus and the community in which the institution is located. Candidates often welcome a tour of the area with a local real estate agent, which furthers their understanding of the institution and community.
- Ensure that candidates have the opportunity to meet important groups of the community, e.g., faculty members (including opinion leaders), library staff (both professional and hourly), students, library committee members (if there is one), and others with whom the library director is likely to work closely (e.g., head of computing, assistant dean of general studies, vice-president of finance).
- Treat internal candidates equitably during the interview stage as with "outside" candidates. Do not take anything for granted.
- Provide candidates the opportunity to develop an understanding of the full range of campus activities and to ask questions. Remember, the candidates are interviewing the institution, as well as vice versa.
- Ensure that the candidates are informed in a timely manner when the appointment is made, including a telephone call to candidates interviewed but not selected. Remember, you want all the candidates to have a positive attitude towards the institution.