

Salary Negotiation Success

Putting (New) Knowledge into Practice

By A Delighted Library Director

Editor's Note: ALA-APA hosted a program at the Annual Conference called "Negotiating Your Next Compensation Package: Tools You Can Use", which featured Mary Pergander, Lake Bluff Public Library (IL) and John Keister, John Keister and Associates. It was billed as an "interactive session to give you the opportunity to learn the principles of negotiation. You will leave the session excited and empowered with tools you need to make your next offer your best offer!" Well, one participant used the tools from the program and got a significant offer with a new job in an academic library. Here is a true story of someone who put the workshop into practice. We respect the author's request for anonymity.

Stepping Up to the Plate

A week prior to ALA in Chicago, I had my second interview for a director's job at a small academic library and was preparing myself to negotiate my contract if an offer was made. I was thankful for the session at Annual Conference on negotiating your contract and the helpful advice from the presenters.

First a little bit of history about my situation. I am the Head of Library Systems at a mid-size university library. Frustrated after five years over the lack of leadership, I interviewed for another position last year. I was offered the position but the location and distance from family and friends weighed against taking it. My library director became aware of me applying for and turning down this position. I naively thought that he would give me a raise to encourage me to stay. Of course, no raise was offered. Why would he offer me a raise if I was not going anywhere?

In this director's opening, I would not have to leave the area and it would allow me the authority to make decisions to develop an academic library of the 21st century. At the same time, I also entertained the idea of getting a large raise to keep me in my present position. After the session at ALA, I understood things better.

Here is what I learned. Let's be honest. If you are looking for a job, you are looking for a way out of your present position. You should NOT be looking for a job to start a bidding war with your current employer. It became clear that I was ready to move on, so I began to focus clearly on this new opportunity.

The other good bit of advice that I took back with me was to put everything on the table that I wanted and not to undercut my salary expectations. The unspoken rule of 10% above my current salary was not unreasonable and decided to make it my baseline in my negotiations.

I spoke after the sessions with one of the presenters and she suggested that I take some time to sit alone and put down everything positive and negative about each position on paper. I took her advice and after returning home from the conference, I spent an afternoon in my kayak with pencil and a notebook. With vigorous honesty, it became clear to me that I was not happy in my current position and that this director's job would enable me to implement the changes that I wanted with an administration that was 100% behind me, as I learned from my interviews. Although the staff was not 100% behind my vision for their library, a majority realized that changes in the function of an academic library are inevitable. And now I would have the authority to implement change, which is what I did not have in my current position.

After making my decision to move on, I looked at my salary. I was just awarded promotion and tenure with a raise and so I added 10% to this new salary and made this my baseline for negotiations. In addition to my salary, I wanted to keep my rank as Associate Professor. Tenure was not that important and during my interview, the University President told me that tenure was not negotiable. The librarians are tenured faculty but my position as director is an administrative position without tenure. The rank was important since I am regularly called on to lecture in another

discipline in which I am a recognized authority.

I was offered the position at a salary that was only a few thousand dollars over my promotion. I asked them for a few days to think about their offer. My current director found out about my interest in this job and asked to make a counter-offer if that time came. We sat down and talked at length about what would keep me. He could certainly outmatch any salary offer from the other university. I had already come to terms with the fact that money and even another title would not change the fact that most of my unhappiness was due to the lack of his decision making and reluctance to confront librarians with tenure who were constantly sabotaging my attempts at advancing technology in the library. I surprised myself when I did not hesitate to make it clear that I was ready to leave. This affirmation boosted my own sense of self, which later helped me in my negotiations with the library where I really wanted to go and where I knew they wanted me.

One thing that I have learned over the last fifteen years in this profession is to ask for help and that is what I did next. I emailed one of the presenters at ALA and three library directors who I met at conferences and kept in contact with over the years. I asked their reaction to what I was seeking. Talking to these colleagues clarified my feelings even more.

Rather than go in blindly, I wrote down exactly what I wanted to say to the Provost about their offer. Reading it over the phone prevented any pauses and my needs were at once out on the table. I said that I felt the salary offer was too low for what I was bringing into the position and only a few thousand dollars over what I was currently making. When the Provost asked me for a salary figure that I wanted, I kept in mind what I learned in the session at ALA about NOT giving them a figure. I asked for a salary that would honestly reflect my exceptional qualifications, which included my budget, supervision, IT and exceptional grant writing experience. He said he would come back with another offer.

I also added that I wanted to keep my faculty rank and was told that he would have to discuss this with the President. I was given a date when he would come back with another offer.

This was their next offer. Their new salary offer was well above 10% of my current promotion, which was very satisfying. They would also honor the hard work that I had put into my promotion and tenure, which he heard about from one of my references. I would keep my faculty rank as Associate Professor and if I left the university, my tenure would be honored so that I could take the years of service with me if I went to a tenure position at another institution. I told them I wanted to think about it further and would call him the next morning. I gave myself the time to think about their offer and make sure that this was agreeable to me. I accepted their offer the next morning.

I feel good about this negotiating process. By being honest with myself and my needs, I am going into this position feeling that I am receiving a salary that reflects the challenging work that I look forward to carrying out with my staff, who, by the way, all signed a card welcoming me to their library after the news became public.

We would love to have your [feedback](#) on this article!

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