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## Keeping Pace with Career Change

By Mari Marsh

There's a good deal of talk out there about librarians feeling that library jobs will not exist in 10 years. New librarians feel that they are facing limited opportunities for entry-level jobs and wonder if there will be prospects for advancement once they are employed; seasoned librarians are concerned about burnout. Reference stats are going down and various Technical Services functions are being outsourced.

As a Human Resources professional, I read and think a lot about our changing workforce and know that these issues affect not just librarians, but all workers in today's society. Technology has changed EVERYTHING, our workforce is aging, and new workers are not prepared for jobs we need to fill. We are all, workers and employers, wondering how we will navigate these tough work realities. The bottom line is that no one really knows what the future state of our work will look like. The only guarantee is that work in all professions – business, medicine, politics, and parenting will look different in 10 years.

One thing I do know is that there will always be a need to employ people in organizations to select, organize, preserve and disseminate information. While that may sound simplistic, it is my belief that if those are the skills you want to use, you will always have a job doing something. It may not look like the job that you have today, but as long as you know what you want to do, as long as you stay professionally engaged, as long as you are willing to be flexible and take opportunities as they arise, and as long as you are willing to develop the aptitude needed to learn to do different things in your work, you WILL have a job. And, probably a very good job at that because WE want to hire people like YOU.

The question then becomes, "How do I shape my career for the future?" The answers might come from the thought that goes into asking several questions – keep asking yourself these questions and modify your goals as times change.

### TOP FIVE QUESTIONS

#### 1. What do I want to do right now?

Take a look at what you like to do in your current work. What motivates you and what do people tell you you're good at? Look at vacancy announcements – what kinds of jobs look interesting to you? What do you like to do in your spare time; what do you read; and what kind of movies and television do you watch? Could those interests possibly be translated into a more refined career focus?

#### 2. What skills, knowledge, and abilities do I need to do what I want to do?

Vacancy announcements can assist with this question. Informational interviews with people who have your dream job can give you ideas on how you can achieve your goals. Volunteer for projects and committees in the library. Take online courses. Volunteer for community agencies or for events that will add to your skill base.

#### 3. Where are the jobs I want?

Can you find opportunities for growth within your own organization? If not, are there opportunities in your area – maybe in another type of organization or a private company, for example? Can you work there for a while and get back into libraries? How geographically mobile are you? Sometimes moving away to get experience and then applying for work in your former geographical area can make you more marketable.

#### 4. Who what are my resources?

About 80% of midlife workers cite a strong desire to mentor someone as a source of career satisfaction and renewal, so there's a large pool of people looking to mentor younger, talented people. Find a mentor or career coach – use informational interviews to find potential mentors in your area of interest – they don't always have to be other librarians. Mentors and coaches can provide leads to jobs of interest in or out of library work, self-awareness, support and guidance, development of self-confidence, and encouragement.

Read journals, websites, and books in your area of interests. Ideas from this material will often spark ideas of directions in which to turn.

### **5. How do I establish my reputation?**

Each day you go to work or attend a conference you are building your professional reputation. This is a very small profession and although we have our own specializations, everyone pretty much knows everyone else through some connection, so conduct yourself professionally at all times. Perform your best work everyday, take credit for your work, write, speak, and network like crazy.

SO, my advice to you in this changing world: stay mindful, stay centered, be flexible, be open, refocus your energies when needed, connect with others in the field, skillfully navigate day-to-day challenges, do a good job wherever you are and you WILL always be challenged in your current and future work.

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