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## IN TRIBUTE: Gerald Hodges, a True Friend to Support Staff

By Jennifer Kutzik



Gerald Hodges, Associate Executive Director for Communications and Marketing for the American Library Association, passed away on Jan. 10. Honoring his wishes, there will be no formal funeral services.

Library support staff are indebted to Gerald for his tireless recruiting efforts, resulting in our increased participation and visibility at all levels of ALA. Gerald and the ALA Office of Membership aggressively promoted the \$59 LSSIRT/RUSA/ALCTS Special Membership Initiative, and later spear-headed a new member category enabling support staff to [join ALA for \\$35](#).

He had a smile that could light up a room, and his southern-gentleman charm guaranteed a successful resolution to almost any problem.

For more information about Gerald, visit this link: <http://tinyurl.com/aamlk>.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Gerald Hodges Fund, in support of intellectual freedom issues and legal challenges to legislation such as the Children's Internet Protection Act and the USA PATRIOT Act. Make checks payable to the American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611, and send to the attention of Judith Krug, director, Office for Intellectual Freedom.

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## Keep Your Job Growing

By Cheryl Teresi

*Editor's Note: This is the first submission vetted by our new volunteer editor, Catherine Hakala-Ausperk, Deputy Director of the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library, Ohio. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer editor, please contact [ALA-APA](#).*

You finally got the job you've always wanted (or needed) as a library support staff employee! Everyday you arrive at work happy to be there, learning the job, making new friends. Day after day you are doing the same thing—if you are a circulation clerk, you're checking in and checking out; writing up reserves and unpacking delivery. The magic is gone. After awhile you start to think, "Is this all there is?" Where did the joy and job satisfaction go? You also come to the realization you are not going to move up the "corporate" ladder, either because you don't want to or can't. How do you make your job more interesting and like it more?

My journey through the support staff world started out as a way to get out of the house a few hours a week. I was hired as a 20-hr. per week circulation clerk. I was ecstatic! I finally had my dream job working in a library. I was surrounded by books and meeting new people every day. Dressing up and being away from my home duties made me feel like an adult and I had a very important job—taking care of patrons!

After a while I realized I needed to challenge myself a little because this wonderful job was starting to get a little boring. Granted, there was plenty of work to do, but the work was not challenging enough for me. To alleviate the doldrums brought about by the rote tasks of a circulation clerk I asked my supervisor if there was anything I could do to help her. Periodically, I was given different tasks that could be delegated to a clerk.

In addition to turning to my mentors for help, I took some steps on my own to prove I could take on new tasks and learn new skills. For example, in order to become an Administrative Assistant, I knew I needed some supervisory experience. Being a circulation clerk did not afford me the opportunity to supervise. So, I asked to join our Staff Development Day Committee and volunteered to be in charge of the catering for more than 900 employees. Talk about being out of my comfort zone!!! But, because I was successful at this task, I was asked to remain on the committee for the next few years and to continue being in charge of catering. My leadership and supervisory skills became evident and having my committee work on my resume surely helped.

Computer classes have given me the opportunity to show my ability to keep track of budgets, substitute hours, etc., as well as online scheduling, which showed my supervisors and others my organizational skills. I was able to convince the managers that keeping schedules online in public folders would keep our staff schedules current.

Two years later I was hired as the branch “receptionist.” Once again I was elated. I was the one answering all calls coming in as well as satisfying all of the other duties of the position. I was going to be very busy with all my new tasks. But as I mastered the skills of the position I realized I wanted more. At this time I developed relationships with the managers and supervisors in my building. These managers eventually became my unofficial mentors. The mentoring was more through friendly conversations rather than anything formal. Through these relationships I learned how to be more professional as well as learning new skills by helping them with projects in a support staff capacity.

Many years have passed and I am now an Administrative Assistant, which is a managerial position in our system. I cannot climb the ladder any further, but using my relationships with all the staff I learn each day how I can do my job better.

I have realized to get job satisfaction you need to be proactive. Ask questions. Offer your help. Seek out a mentor in your building or your library system. Choose someone you admire and respect and who has shown you and others how to be successful.

Show your supervisors as well as their supervisors what you are capable of—don’t keep it a secret! Test yourself everyday. See if you can add one new task to your everyday assignments. Set goals. If you don’t know where you want to be, how can you get there? The goals could be as simple as completing a task before the end of your shift or getting on a committee when the opportunity arises, as well as long-term goals.

Leave your mental and physical comfort zone. Sign up for workshops. Get to know your computer better. The excitement of the unknown will keep you coming back for more! As Jack Canfield said in the book *The Success Principles*, “When you take action you begin to attract others who will support and encourage you.”

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