

Hiring A New Public Library Director

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Gathering and Evaluating Existing Information | 2 |
| Who to Interview | 2 |
| Expenses | 3 |
| Should the Library Hire a Search Firm? | 3 |
| Beginning the Search | 3 |
| The Interview Process | 4 |
| Expenses | 4 |
| Closing the Interview | 5 |
| Be Discrete | 5 |
| The Director | |
| Choosing the Winner | 8 |
| The Job Offer | 8 |



The most important decision a library board will make is who will lead their library into the FUTURE.

COVERING THE GAP

After the library director has set the date for his/her leaving, the board should prepare for the transition, the search for, and the hiring of a new director. Allow one to three months to prepare for the director search.

In the meantime, the board should appoint/hire an interim director to lead the library, fulfill legal and financial requirements, work with staff to accomplish library goals, prepare reports for board meetings, and generally keep the library afloat during the new director search. This should not be a trustee.

OPTIONS:

Temporarily promote someone on the staff to Acting Director. A temporary raise should go with the job since their responsibilities will be greatly expanded. If the board is looking to maintain the status quo, this could be the best option if there is someone with the necessary skills.

Hire another director from a nearby library to temporarily oversee the library on a part time basis. It would be best if the person worked in a library of the same type, i.e. a district library would need someone with district experience. He/she would obviously be part time after or before their own work. This neutral party would keep the library up on the minimum legal and financial requirements.

Hire someone from an outside firm or a retired director to be the interim director. This type of interim director would probably have the necessary training and skills to institute needed change before the new administration begins. The schedule could vary as needed.

GATHERING AND EVALUATING EXISTING INFORMATION

Before writing a job ad or job description, the board needs to think through where they are and where they are going. Now is the time to regroup and decide if the library needs a change of direction, a different type of leadership, or a different set of skills, education, or experience. Everyone needs to be on the same page and agree on priorities.

Long Range Plan, Mission, and Vision. What type of director is needed to lead the library in the direction it needs to grow. Is there a building project in the future? Is the library going to need a technology over-haul? Are there issues like morale, staff development, or re-organization to address.

State and System Requirements. Library system, state, and standards indicate education requirements for libraries serving larger populations.

Division of Responsibility. Look at the director and board relationship and decide who has responsibility for what. TRUSTEE FACTS FILE , 3d ed. and other resources including your Library System can walk you through this discussion. This controversial issue leads to more disagreements than any others on this list.

Budget. Is the budget adequate? How will this affect the board's ability to grow the library? What types of skills are needed to develop and grow the budget?

Director Evaluation Tool. If there is one in existence, it will help the board in their development of the job description.

Benefits Analysis. Can you hire someone to work in this library in this town for these benefits? Can the library afford to offer more?

Job Description. Is it up-to-date, complete, appropriate? Does the board want someone who is very active in the community as well as the library? What education, abilities and experience are needed to address priorities identified above?

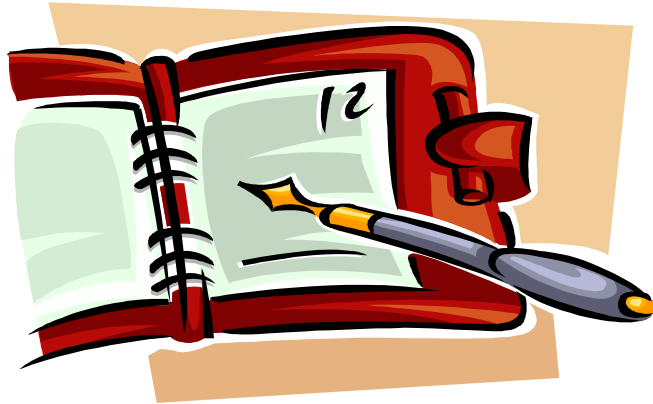
Salary Schedule. Is the salary the library has been paying competitive? Is it appropriate for the job responsibilities and education and experience being asked for? It is very unlikely that the board will be able to hire someone for less than they have been paying. To get an idea of competitive salaries, look at job ads on the Illinois Library Association Jobline at <http://www.ila.org/jobline/index.htm>.



SHOULD THE LIBRARY HIRE A SEARCH FIRM?

A search firm can help the library board articulate their needs, develop and place the job ad, recruit candidates that fit the ad, and plan and implement the interview process. The Alliance Library System can help identify search firms.

Search firms can cost 25% of the position's salary or more, depending on services utilized. Is there money budgeted for this process?



BEGINNING THE SEARCH

Search Committee: Who writes the job ad? Who will be on the search committee? Some libraries use a diverse committee of Friends, staff, community leaders, and board members to begin the selection process. Then they follow up with more board involvement in the process.

Job Ad: Look at advertisements on your system website (www.alliancelibrarysystem.com), on the Illinois Library Association Jobline (<http://www.ila.org/jobline/index.htm>), and in other professional journals. The larger the library, the more extended the search. Newspaper ads are generally briefer and the Illinois Library Association ads are longer. The ad should include at a minimum the job title, a brief overview of responsibilities, the salary range, benefits, and where and how to apply. Most ads ask the applicant to submit a resume and three references. They may indicate a link to the library website where a complete job description is located.

Information on the Community: Some libraries include information on the library and the community in their effort to attract the best candidates. Example: Thriving diverse community of 25,000 in suburban Chicago seeks dynamic, service oriented professional to lead library. New 45,000 square foot building, circulation of 200,000, new automation system. . .

Where does the board advertise: The job ad should at least appear in the local paper, in the newspaper in the largest nearby city, on the library system's website, and on the library's website. Advertising on the Illinois Library Association Jobline would be next in the priorities followed soon by other regional library systems' websites, graduate schools, and professional journals.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Should the board want to do multiple interviews? Many libraries like to interview four or five candidates and then narrow the field to two to three candidates for a second interview before a final selection is made. At some point, the final candidates should meet the staff and tour the library and the community. They should receive copies of the budget, the job description, the long range plan, an explanation of benefits, and the most recent annual report. Coming in to talk to the board for an hour does not begin to tell them what the job is about. Both the library and the candidate are deciding if they are well matched.

The interviews should be carefully planned. The board must articulate what it is looking for and ask questions that get the answers needed to make a decision. A good start includes an overview of the interview process and a description of the job. Interviewers elicit information from the candidate and encourage questions. They should ask open ended questions that force the candidate to elaborate on a response. Including hypothetical or situational questions helps determine how the candidates might respond in different situations. The board should be open about problems in the organization but not overstate them, and answer the candidate's questions as openly as possible. The chairman should stay in control, and members should be active listeners and take good notes.

Some libraries set up a one day or multiple day interview process where the candidates come in together but follow a different schedule. While one is interviewing with a community committee, another may be discussing personnel issues with library department heads, another meeting with city officials, and another talking to the board.

If the committee does a second interview, the first interview may focus more on general issues like management style and service philosophy as well as experience. The second interview may focus more on issues specific to this organization and use the opportunity to pick the minds of the candidates about issues that affect the library.

WHO TO INTERVIEW

Read the submissions carefully, check the facts, read *between the lines*. Have definite criteria to match resumes against. Is their experience really applicable to what you need? Do they have experience that will serve you in the future? Do they look like a match for your library? Do they job hop? Are there unexplained gaps in their work history? Have several people sort the candidates and compare notes. Have a pile for the definite interview candidates, the maybes, and the absolute nos. Do keep in mind the legal ramifications for the criteria you choose for selection.

EXPENSES

The library should pay the candidates' expenses to travel to the interview if they are over a few hours away. Don't dismiss a candidate if they live states away. A phone interview may determine if the candidate is worth bringing in for a full interview. Don't settle for someone just because they are near and/or less expensive to interview or hire. The library could pay for that "savings" in unexpected negative ways.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW



Have an end time in mind. Keep control of the situation. Thank the candidate for their time. Tell them the time frame within which the board is working. Promise them (and follow through) that the chair will let them know the status of the hiring. Even if the library decides to re-open the search, let the candidates know that the search has been extended. Tell them when someone has been hired. If the library is still looking but is not going to hire them, let them know that. This is basic hiring courtesy.

Do not hire the person on the spot. Check references. Sometimes it is easy to become so interested in a candidate that obvious drawbacks are missed. Plan time to confirm that the candidate's quality.

Try not to drag out the interviews over a long time period of time because the library may lose their chance at the best candidates. If candidates are not treated with respect and care, the library will probably lose them to someone else.

BE DISCRETE

Throughout this process, **everyone** should be discrete about the candidates and the progress of the selection process. In most cases, the candidates have other jobs. **Ask** them if you can call members of their library board, their supervisors, city officials, or whomever. Barging ahead and doing this without asking them may cost them their jobs or the goodwill of their community. Discourage unprofessional discussions and stick to job related requirements. **Do not talk to the press** except in very general ways.



THE DIRECTOR INTERVIEW

It is important to ask about a candidate's work history, gaps in their employment, their job related skills and knowledge, and education. Questions should be consistent from interview to interview.

1. Have you ever worked with a board? How?
2. Tell me about the people you hired in your last job. How long did they stay, and how did they work out?
3. What do you consider the single most important idea you contributed or your single most noteworthy accomplishment in your present job?
4. What specific strengths did you bring to your last job that made you effective? What specific strengths do you think you can bring to this position?
5. Can you tell me a little bit about how you go about making important decisions?
6. What are some of the things your library might have done to be more successful?
7. Why have you decided to leave your present position?
8. What risks did you take in your last few jobs, and what were the results of those risks?
9. Would you please describe a typical day in your current job for me?
10. How do you handle interruptions to your routine.?
11. How would you choose the books, videos, etc. to buy for the library? *(They need to know to use reviews and how to limit buying for a small budget. They need to also understand that they are buying for all ages, both fiction and nonfiction, and for everyone in the community.)*
12. What would you do if someone came in to complain about the content of a video or book?
13. Have you ever fired someone? Describe the situation and how you handled it. Were there unexpected repercussions? How were those handled?
14. Describe how you have handled employee evaluations? .
15. How do you help the staff adjust to change?
16. Have you ever applied for a grant? If so, was it funded? Please describe how you developed the grant application and managed the project.
17. Describe one instance when you made a presentation to a group.
18. We sent you our long range plan. How would you begin to implement it?
19. The library's budget is lower than it needs to be to accomplish our long term goals. What would you recommend to raise the money to reach these financial goals?

20. We are going to do a building project (or a referendum)next year. What would you recommend as our approach in selling this idea to the community, the city, and the library users?
21. We want to start a Friends group. How would you begin to plan for this?
22. What would be your first priority when you started this position?
23. What appealed to you about this position when you saw it advertised?
24. Describe your public speaking experiences.
25. What are the three most important issues facing public libraries today?
26. Describe your management style.
27. Describe your experience with preparing and administering a budget.
28. What techniques would you use to improve employee morale?
29. What kinds of partnerships and/or collaborations do you see as advantageous for a public library to establish within a community?
30. What techniques would you use to evaluate service quality and customer satisfaction with services provided?
31. Tell us how you anticipate potential problems and develop preventive measures.



WHAT NOT TO ASK

You can not legally ask about

AGE

NATIONALITY

RELIGION

RACE

MARITAL STATE

CHILDREN

CHOOSING THE “WINNER”

Sometimes the candidate who looks the best on the surface is not necessarily the best candidate for the job. Do not let one dominant committee member force a decision on the group that the whole group does not support. A pre-determined rating scale will help the committee reach a more objective answer. Decide what the key areas are to rank the successful candidate. For example, rankings or point values for appropriate education, appropriate library experience, management style, financial/budgeting experience, grant writing, personnel supervision, ability to work with the board, ability to relate to the community, communication skills, and other skills that seem especially appropriate for your particular library. It is important that everyone agree on the ranking scale and are consistent in its application. Members must agree on what the different rankings mean. Allow a category for unexpected bonuses for extra credit. Rank them separately and then discuss them. This thoughtful discussion will lead to a good decision.

If the staff is to be included in the hiring decision, set out the parameters ahead of time about how their input will be considered. They should not make the decision or be lead to believe that they have more power than they do. After all, the person who is hired will have to evaluate, hire, fire, inspire, and lead these people. Although the staff will have some insight as to what a director should know about libraries, they can have no true understanding of the full depth of the job unless they themselves have been a director. Help them also to understand the importance of being discrete. This is a critical time for the board to work carefully and professionally together.



THE JOB OFFER

Whoever is chosen to make the job offer should plan the discussion before the call. Is more information needed before an offer can be made? What initial salary offer should be made? Can the caller negotiate without going back to the whole board or the committee? Be prepared to discuss and negotiate other points.