

CAREER

Five Brand-New Jobs for Today's Librarians

Candidates looking for work, or to change fields, may find some surprising new positions in the job listings to lure them

By Lisa Peet

Roles for librarians in today's public, academic, and special libraries keep shifting. The changes, however, aren't always about technology, as these five new jobs demonstrate.

1 Immigrant Services Librarian Between 2000 and 2013, the immigrant population of Kentucky rose by 86 percent, putting it among the top five states for immigrant growth in the 21st century. In 2002, with the help of local funders, the Iroquois Branch of the Louisville Free Public Library (LFPL) created the position of Immigrant Services Librarian, and Sophie Maier has been developing the role ever since.

The first and most crucial component of the job, says Maier, is outreach. She regularly goes out to meet the immigrant and refugee community where they are—in workplaces with high immigrant employee concentrations, immigrant-owned businesses, religious institutions, and schools with large English-language learning programs. She visits each of two local refugee resettlement agencies once a week with library cards and language-learning materials. Maier reaches out not only to new residents but to potential volunteers to help make up her workforce: teachers, retirees, and local university students.

Within the library, Maier, who holds an MLIS from the University of Kentucky, Lexington, creates programs around the interests of the foreign-born community, including English conversation clubs, Arabic and Nepali salons, and film festivals. Finally, she works with branch librarians on collection development, including sourcing appropriate materials from vendors.

The position would be valuable in many communities nationwide, Maier notes, but any library wishing to do so should commit to supporting a full-time staff member in the role. It's not only a matter of devoting time and resources, she adds, but

of having a person who can build trust with new community members. "It's a delicate relationship," says Maier. "You have to nurture empathy."

2 Innovation Catalyst Librarian When the Trenton Free Public Library (TFPL), NJ, advertised for an Innovation Catalyst Librarian in fall 2015, the description called for "a passionate, creative, type-A professional who will be instrumental in helping lead our organization into significant and meaningful Change!!" It went on to add that the job would address the library's mission of "overhauling everything from policy to staff training, from technology to programming and more immediately."

The posting caught the attention of librarian Ian Sloat, who had previously pictured himself exclusively on an academic track. Sloat earned his MLIS from Simmons College in 2013 and had graduated that spring with a second master's from Duke University. As he read the description it occurred to him that his lack of public library experience might actually lend him the new perspective the role required. "I had worked in medical, legal, special, and academic libraries," says Sloat, "but I had never actually done anything with public libraries. And because of that I didn't really have any preconceived notions about how they should work."

Sloat's day as an innovation catalyst librarian involves moving among the library's various departments and finding opportunities to improve service in ways both large and small. He has been building a new website for the library; developing its social media channels; working on promotional material; and keeping up with the blogs, academic journals, and trade publications that help him brainstorm and track trends.

Much of what he does, Sloat says, is similar to his former work in the Duke library's assessment and user experience department. The difference is the setting: a public library in a midsize urban city with a strong need for forward-looking public service.

Sloat eventually hopes to improve TFPL's assessment process, bring in a social worker and legal aid advisors, and institute a Wi-

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As this quartet of essays attest, from today's groundbreaking titles to tomorrow's essential skills, what it means to be a working librarian is expanding. This can drive changing job descriptions—sometimes a ticklish process to negotiate with unions but successful if embarked upon with a collaborative attitude. To get those new, improved positions, learn to navigate one of the trickiest aspects of the hunt: the group interview.

Fi lending program. While he was concerned at first with getting buy-in from longtime staff, he finds coworkers are receptive to his ideas and glad for fresh eyes. “There’s just so much going on and you work so much, it’s easy to rely on old practices.”

3 Concierge When the Rangeview Library District, CO, rebranded itself as Anythink Libraries, it reinvented not only its approach to what a library should be but the roles of its staffers as well. While many libraries have taken a chapter from the world of retail and made customer service a priority, Anythink has brought the culture of the hospitality industry into its branches with the role of Concierge.

A Concierge’s duties, according to Anythink’s description, are “part customer service, part technology troubleshooting, part product promotion.” In practice, says Elsa Coates, who has worked at Anythink’s Wright Farms branch since it opened in July 2010, the concierge’s first responsibility is to greet everyone who walks in the door. Rather than sitting behind a reference desk, she explains, “the concierge goes to the customer, makes that first connection, makes the first move.” Patrons may want help finding a book or placing a hold, or they may prefer to fend for themselves; it’s the concierge’s job to gauge their comfort levels, all the while remaining available to answer a question or guide them to what they need.

Although Coates does not have an MLS, she holds a BA in communications and loves the active, involved nature of the position. “I know whenever I’m visiting somewhere, if I ever have a question I’m always looking to the desk near the entrance of a hotel,” she says. “I feel like we are those people for our customers as well.” People ask questions about materials and program hours, Coates notes, but also for directions and where the nearest UPS pickup is. “We are information holders and givers for the library but [also] for our community.”

4 Wikipedian in Residence for Gender Equity After hosting an event on Wikipedia’s gender gap in March 2015, West Virginia University (WVU), Morgantown, and dean of libraries Jon C. Cawthorne worked together to create the role of Wikipedian in Residence for Gender Equity, partially funded by a \$27,100 grant from the Wikimedia Foundation. While in recent years a number of institutions have appointed Wikipedians in Residence—an editor or librarian who adds and revises Wikipedia articles related to their organization’s particular mission—Kelly Doyle is the first to focus specifically on the site’s notable gender inequity, both among editors—only nine percent are women—and in terms of subject matter.

Much of Doyle’s work involves outreach, recruiting and training volunteers from WVU and the surrounding community to research and write articles. She also coordinates social media around her efforts, plans campus edit-a-thons, and engages with professors and department heads, encouraging their use of Wikipedia to help spur student interest.

With a master’s in English lit focusing on post-colonialism and feminist theory and a background in archiving, as well as a long-standing fascination with Wikipedia from a social justice viewpoint, even without an MLS Doyle is well positioned to help tip the scales. Her current goal is to generate articles on prominent West Virginia women who haven’t been written about on Wikipedia, or whose coverage is short or incomplete. Eventually she hopes to expand her subject matter to women in greater Appalachia and wants to see more scholarly research on Wikipedia. But the focus, she says, “needs to start small, so as not to be overwhelmed with all the information that’s lacking.”

5 Director of Knowledge Curation and Innovation The recent job listing for a Director of Knowledge Curation and Innovation at the Westport Library (WL), CT, called for a candidate with “respect for the past and the ability to see the future of library collections and services.” When WL’s former director of learning and discovery retired in June 2015, explains executive director Bill Harmer, that job’s scope was deemed too broad and not quite in line with the collaborative collection development process he envisioned for the library. “We want to see the community taking more of a lead in building a collection that reflects their needs and interests,” Harmer says. “I’d like to see a more collaborative approach in every step of that process.”

The new position will make this possible through an outreach-heavy, outcome-based approach, with an emphasis on building relationships with patrons and stakeholders and gathering information on collection needs through focus groups, surveys, and feedback.

Harmer sought a tech-savvy library leader with experience in innovation who was also a “people person”—a strong communicator and a good listener. After reviewing some 60 applications, Harmer hired Tom Bruno, formerly associate director for resource sharing and reserves at Yale University, who will step into the role this month. Bruno, who holds an MLIS from Simmons College, considers the job “a rare opportunity to take the hands-on, experiential learning philosophy of the Maker space” and apply it to quality content creation for the WL community. Says Harmer, “It’s just a matter of looking outward.”

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—Elsa Coates, Concierge, Anythink Wright Farms, Rangeview Library District, CO

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