

Facilitating the Move to Competency Based Staffing In Academic and Research Libraries in the Globalised Era

Tella, Adeyinka, Akande, Titus Olufemi, Orim, Faith & OLANIYI, O.T

Abstract

Libraries are evolving rapidly from physical spaces providing on-site services and resources to providers of electronic resources and virtual services. Globalization has enable librarians moving into dramatically different roles as new services are implemented. This implies that the move to competency based staffing in both academic and research libraries are germane. It has become more important than ever to have flexible and motivated librarians who possess the skills, attitudes, and traits that enable them to meet multiple informational needs of global age information users and adapt as those needs change. Encouraging those librarians to continue growing as professionals over their careers is equally important. Competency-based hiring and evaluation can enable information organizations including academic and research libraries to: “recruit employees who can meet the organization’s current needs and who are willing to fulfill the required job duties; evaluate employees based on their current activities as well as their professional development efforts; and set benchmarks for employees’ continued professional development and learning that are beneficial to the organization. The fact that competency-based recruitment of personnel is essential in this age, culminated into the discussion in this paper. Therefore, the paper discussed competency as relate to the recruitment of librarians, what are involved in using competencies in the selection of library personnel, the process, and the creative approach/approaches to recruitment of personnel into libraries. The paper recommends based on the discussion that an empirical investigation version of this discussion should be considered. This could be focused on examining the intriguing question of how users in academic and research libraries in this global era cope with the absence of an endorsed competent librarian.

Keywords: Library personnel, Hiring, Recruitment, Globalisation, Competency Based Staffing,

Introduction

Libraries are evolving rapidly from physical spaces providing on-site services and resources to providers of electronic resources and virtual services. In this globalized era, technology is now, and technology is the future (Youngman, 1999).

Similarly, it is noted in this age that technology has forever changed the way that librarians serve their patrons, and all indications are that this change will continue. Globalization has enable librarians moving into dramatically different roles as

new services are implemented. The human resource is essential to the success of any technology-based service, and libraries are challenged to develop and implement those services while maintaining traditional services, often with no increase in staff. The support of electronic services requires special skill sets and in many cases more, not fewer, staff hours. Each library must develop individual solutions to this dilemma, but many will find useful a model that incorporates three basic elements: utilization of experienced librarians targeted recruiting of entry-level librarians and creative supervisory practices.

In this global era the move to competency based staffing in both academic and research libraries are germane. Restructuring both library education and the library workforce are also vital to meeting the ongoing needs of the profession in the midst of dramatic change. It has become more important than ever to have flexible and motivated librarians who possess the skills, attitudes, and traits that enable them to meet multiple informational needs of global age information users and adapt as those needs change. Encouraging those librarians to continue growing as professionals over their careers is equally important. Competency-

based hiring and evaluation can enable information organizations including academic and research libraries to: “recruit employees who can meet the organization’s current needs and who are willing to fulfill the required job duties; evaluate employees based on their current activities as well as their professional development efforts; and set benchmarks for employees’ continued professional development and learning that are beneficial to the organization (Rutledge, LeMire, & Mowdood, 2015; Gasper et al., 2015).

However, competency-based recruitment/hiring and evaluation is a common topic in management and business literature. Applying these tools in libraries where librarians are faculty members is less common (Mech, 1989) particularly in this global era where users are diverse with several skills and most of whom usually seek for immediate answers to their informational queries. Therefore, there is need to help library administrators staff this modern organization. This can be accomplished by defining competencies, outlining appropriate job descriptions, developing training programs, and exploring partnerships and outsourcing as part of the staffing solution to facilitating the move to

competency-based staffing. It is on this note, that this paper, discusses the issue about move to competency based staffing in academic and research libraries in the globalized era. To achieve this, the paper considers what are competencies? Why use competencies for recruitment and selection? What differentiates skills and competencies?, and what is involved in using competencies in the selection process?, etc.

Concept of Competencies

Competencies are particular qualities that a company's recruiters have decided are desirable for employees to possess. During interviews and assessment processes, *competencies* are used as benchmarks that assessors use to evaluate candidates. Competencies reflect behaviour patterns which distinguish highly effective performance in a role. There are nine behavioural competencies, split into three overarching groups: *Working with Others*, *Delivering Results* and *Focusing on the Future*.

Why use competency?

Experience with a range of organisations shows that, when combined with an assessment of knowledge and

experience, using competencies improves accuracy in assessing people's suitability or potential for different jobs. They help prevent interviewers and selectors from making hasty decisions or from assessing interviewees on the basis of characteristics that are not relevant to the job. They can be used to help structure the selection process - interview and tests. Assessing a candidate against specific competencies clarifies their strengths and weaknesses; making it easier to target any development that may be needed should they be appointed.

Difference between Skills and Competencies

Jobs have three components (NTU, 2010):

1. **Knowledge:** This is necessary to do the job and tends to be job related. It includes professional knowledge, institutional knowledge (e.g. knowledge to be an accountant, academic, engineer, IT specialist, librarian etc.). This is what people need to know to do their jobs.
2. **Skills:** Skills are needed to perform your functional role and include technical skills, management skills i.e. to manage resources and people (e.g. project management, time management, planning processes, budget management and appraisal).

3. **Competencies:** These are the attitudes and behaviour patterns that underpin how people do their jobs. Competencies influence how well people apply their knowledge, technical and management skills.

What are Involve in Using Competencies in the Selection Process

The key documents here are the Job Description for the role and the Person Specification. These should already be available. Developing a Job Description involves gathering information about the nature of the job, thinking not only about the content (i.e. tasks) making up the job, but also the job's purpose, and how the post fits into the organisation's structure. It is also important to consider the skills and competencies needed to perform the role effectively. Please refer to the Recruitment and Selection Guidelines for Librarians for further information on scoping a role and recruiting to it.

The Process:

Job Description: Identifies the purpose, main responsibilities and tasks of the job.

Person Specification: The person specification flows from the job description

and answers the question "What skills and qualities would someone need to carry out this role?" The person specification identifies the qualifications, skills, experience and competencies needed for effective performance. Using competencies clarifies the personal qualities and workplace behaviours expected of the post holder. However, not all competencies are important in a role. A maximum of 5 core competencies would normally be identified as being appropriate. Some Person Specifications already contain generic competencies or may contain competencies drawn from previous frameworks; libraries will need to check that these are still appropriate.

The Matrix: It is important to strike a balance between assessing every possible criterion on the Person Specification and the time and resources available for the recruitment process. It is good practice to identify the key criteria needed to carry out the role successfully and identify two possible areas of evidence to assess the suitability of candidates against each criterion. The application form or CV will outline previous experience and qualifications; the interview and any other assessments will test for previous experience

in relation to the job role, knowledge, skills and competencies. It is good practice to complete a matrix to identify which criteria will be assessed and how.

The following example is for the selection of a Cataloguer in Libraries and Learning Resources

Table 1: Matrix to identify how the Person Specification will be assessed During the Recruitment Process

| | Criteria | Sources of Information | | | |
|----|---|------------------------|------|------------------|-----------------|
| | | Application | Test | In tray Exercise | Panel Interview |
| | KNOWLEDGE: | | | | |
| 1. | Thorough knowledge of cataloguing standards | | | | |
| 2. | Understanding of principals of classification of materials using standard classification scheme | | | | |
| | SKILLS: | | | | |
| 1. | Excellent verbal, written and interpersonal communication skills | | | | |
| 2. | Good analytical and problem solving skills | | | | |
| 3. | Ability to work independently and as part of a team | | | | |
| 4. | Good personal organisation and time management skills | | | | |
| | EXPERIENCE OF: | | | | |
| 1. | Online Cataloguing, preferably in an integrated LMS, using appropriate standards e.g. AACR2, MARC21 and Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) | | | | |
| 2. | Classification of stock using internationally recognized classification scheme | | | | |
| 3. | Experience of cataloguing using Aleph or similar integrated Library Management System | | | | |
| | QUALIFICATION: | | | | |
| | Professional Library/Information Science qualification at first degree level or above | | | | |
| | COMPETENCIES | | | | |
| | Communicating & Influencing – Level 2 Communicates information effectively to wide range of diverse stakeholders, influencing events. | | | | |
| | Organisation and delivery – Level 1 | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| | Plans time effectively to achieve results in day to day work. Organised and prioritises work appropriately. | | | | |
| | Team working – Level 1 Works effectively as a member of a team. Takes responsibility for getting things done as part of a team. | | | | |
| | Adaptability – Level 2 Responds positively to change, supporting others in managing transition and being flexible in approaches to job role. Is aware of own strengths and areas for development. Seeks feedback on own work. | | | | |

Source: Nottingham Trent University, 2010

The wording of an advert is critical as it will influence the type and quality of candidates who will respond. There should be enough information in the advert to enable people to screen themselves out if they are not suitable candidates. A competency based advert for an Administrative Assistant would need to include skills and experience as well as competencies. It might include the following:

Key requirements of the job are:

Fast and accurate typing

Proficient in using Microsoft Office

Excellent administrative, organisational and delivery skills

Good communication and influencing skills

Ability to adapt to new situations

Good team worker

Psychometric Test and Questionnaire

Psychometric tests and exercises may be useful in recruiting to some roles. It should be noted that psychometric instruments are expensive and time consuming and are rarely used apart from recruiting to senior roles. If psychometric tests, questionnaires or exercises are used as part of the selection process they must be related to the job and provide information that is relevant.

Assessment and Exercises:

Assessments can involve the use of a number of exercises and tests in order to build a more comprehensive picture of the candidates. Assessment centres have the highest predictive validity of all selection techniques. Typically an assessment centre will last a day – some may be longer, others (with online testing done in advance) may be shorter. Some of the exercises and tests

can be brought together in a ‘mini assessment centre’, consisting of an exercise, a personality questionnaire, ability tests and interview. These are shorter and easier to run than a full scale assessment centre. Exercises usually take about an hour. Some are group exercises; others are completed on an individual basis. The table

below is an example of typical exercises and the competencies they can measure. Assessment Centres can be expensive and require significant planning. Talk to your HR team if you wish to consider using an assessment centre as part of your recruitment and selection process.

Table 2: Typical Exercises and the Competencies that can be Measured

| | Team Work | Fact Find Exercise | Analysis/ Scheduling Exercise | In box/ In basket Exercise | Oral Presentation | Group Exercise | Interview Simulation |
|----|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Customer Focus | | | | | | |
| 2. | Communication and Influencing | | | | | | |
| 3. | Adaptability | | | | | | |
| 4. | Making Informed Decision | | | | | | |
| 5. | Creativity and Innovation | | | | | | |

Competency Based Interviews

Familiarise yourself with the competencies to be assessed during the interview. The definitions and positive behavioural indicators are available in the (NTU (2010) Competency Framework. Ensure you are familiar with questions in this guide and the suggested probes. These questions are examples you will need to add in context to annotate the question, you should develop further questions based on your expectations

of the role. You may want to consider adding further probes of your own.

Remember the questions are purely a tool to help you to elicit relevant information. Therefore, it is more important that you probe deeply around the examples to understand a candidate’s behaviour and experience. Part of the interview will be

general information gathering and a discussion of experience, for example:

“Tell me about the responsibilities you have in your current role”

“Tell me about your experience of planning conferences”

Competency-based interviews (also called structured or behavioural interviews) are systematic, with each question targeting a specific skill or competency. Candidates are asked questions relating to their behaviour in specific circumstances, which they then need to back up with concrete examples. The interviewers will then dig further into the examples by asking for specific explanations about the candidate's behaviour or skills. They also give candidates plenty of opportunity to talk. Since the purpose of the interview is to obtain evidence from the candidate it follows that the candidates should do most of the talking. The candidate should be talking for 75% - 80% of the time. Typically, competency based questions will ask candidates for examples of how they have dealt with situations in the past. The rationale in asking for past examples is that past behaviour is a strong predictor of future behaviour in similar situations. Hypothetical questions (such as “What would you do if

...”) should be avoided as they gather information that is a poor predictor of future behaviour. Very often a candidate's answer to a question will give you some information but not enough to make an assessment of the competency you are assessing. What is needed are probing questions to follow up the initial question. The funnel below shows how this can work:

Tell me about
Give me an example of
When
Why
How
What did you

Examples of questions

Tell me about the last time you worked as part of a team

- What did you do?
- How did you encourage other team members to co-operate?

Give me an example of when you helped improve the performance of your team

- What improvement did you identify?
- How did this improve team performance?

Give me an example of how you have used your leadership skills to manage and improve team performance

- How did you get team buy in?
- How did you handle any difficult situations that arose amongst the team?
- What was the outcome?
- What, if anything, would you do differently next time?

Give me an example of when you have identified an opportunity to enhance a service/ practice by collaborating with another team

- How did you identify that this was an opportunity?
- What was your role in developing effective partnership working?
- How did the team benefit from this collaboration?

Interviews should follow a clear structure; however the questions should not be followed slavishly as this will interrupt the flow of the interview. It is good practice to explain to the candidate how the interview will be structured, and that you will be asking for specific examples of when they have demonstrated the competencies required for the role. Ask them to bear in mind that you'll be interested in:

- ❖ Examples from their work life
- ❖ Recent examples preferably – the last 2-3 years
- ❖ What they specifically did or said, not the team as a whole

if they need time to think of an example, The questions and probes should be structured as follows:

- ❖ Situation – What is the example?
- ❖ Action-What did they do?
- ❖ Result-What was the outcome?
- ❖ Reflection-How did it go/what would they do differently?

Assessing Candidates:

As the panel asks their questions you should make your notes in the relevant area on the Interview Assessment Form. You are looking for evidence that the criteria have been met in the responses to the questions and the examples that candidates give.

It is important that there is no discussion between interviewers at this stage of the process. Once all candidates have been interviewed and all interviewers have completed their interview assessment form they can share information and are ready to make a decision.

Decision Making:

At the end of the process, there will be several sources of information about each candidate.

Each candidate should be discussed in detail, assessing experience, skills and competencies and the performance in any tests or exercises. Each interviewer will have his/her evidence to bring to the discussion. It is to be expected that panel members will have differences of views about the candidates. Discussions and judgments should be based on discussing the evidence of facts gathered during the selection process.

Evaluation:

Once you have made the decision and given feedback to the candidates it is important to evaluate the whole process without delay. There are always areas where improvements can be made:

Start with the competencies – are they still relevant and did the behavioural indicators help you to gather relevant evidence?

- ❖ The advert – was the placement right? Look at the number of responses and their quality
- ❖ Did the sifting of application forms/CVs go well? If not, why not?

- ❖ Did any psychometrics and tests / exercises provide the evidence you needed? Were they too easy or too difficult?
- ❖ The interview – did the questions work as well as intended? Do interviewers need more training? Are further questions needed?
- ❖ Finally, what did candidates (both successful and unsuccessful) think about the process? Was it too time consuming? Were they given the opportunity to show what they are capable of? What impression did they get of this academic or research library? Would they apply again if another opportunity arose? Equality & Diversity monitor the outcome of recruitment and selection processes for signs of adverse impact on sections of the population covered by equality and diversity legislation.

Creative Approach to Recruiting New Librarians in Academic and Research Libraries

On occasions when recruiting new staff is possible, careful consideration should be given to those applicants who can bring critical new skills directly from library school. Those responsible for recruiting can

reasonably have high expectations of today's entry-level librarians. Many recent library school graduates bring to the employment market specific technology skills that did not exist just a few years ago. These specialized skills can allow an entry-level person to quickly become productive in a new, non-traditional role while taking time to develop expertise in more traditional subject-based tasks. In some cases a synergy may develop where the fresh skills and enthusiasm of a new librarian can catalyze the interest of experienced librarians and help them see the value of acquiring and applying newer skills.

Raschke (2003:62) challenged the existing search process in academic libraries and argued for “creativity from search committees”, noting that entrenched or traditional practices do not highlight a librarian’s potential or their ability to fit in the organization. His argument has proven true; librarianship is a dynamic career, and libraries need to hire persons who fit into the culture and identify with the organizational values. When an employee shares the values and culture, they are more likely to be flexible and able to train for new tasks.

The opportunity to add a position or recruit to fill a vacated position also presents a

chance to re-think the organization and staffing patterns in a library or department. Too often, libraries have slipped into staffing practices that, while effective in the past, may not be the best arrangement for current and future circumstances. The recruiting of a new librarian can be an excellent time to review the organization chart and revamp position descriptions of existing staff. Careful analysis of current and projected staffing needs can result in a recruiting effort that will produce a truly effective new staff member.

Engage in Competency Based Interview

Competencies Are More Encompassing than Experience Alone. Competencies Are Not Restricted to Specific Work Experiences. Competencies Are Determined Through a Thorough Job Analysis. Competencies Are More Directly Linked to Successful Job Performance.

Competency Based Interview is always in four part:

- ❖ Introductory Conversation
- ❖ Preliminary Questions (if needed)

Ⓟ Clarification of Resume

Ⓟ Closed-ended Confirmations

- ❖ Prepared Questions

PMain Questions

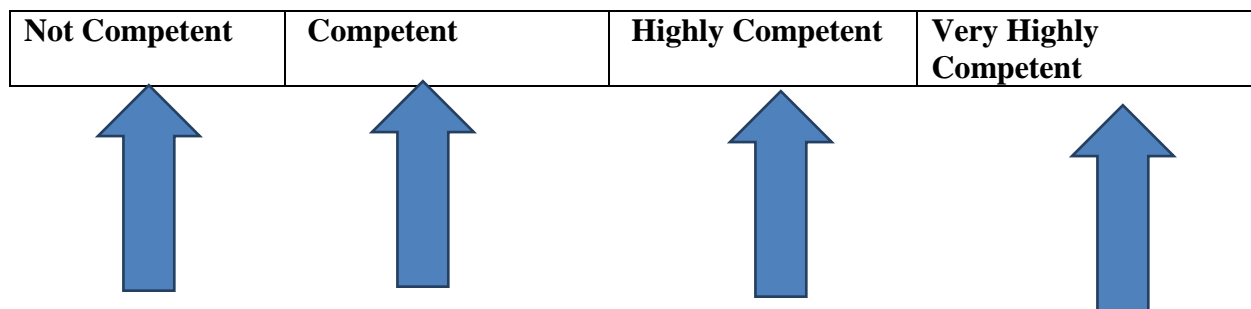
❖ Closing Conversation/Questions

PFollow-up Questions

from the Candidate

The Process of Developing a Behavioral Interview (Maile, Jeff, 2014).

- ❖ Develop a Competency Profile
- ❖ Design Open-ended Questions that Target those Competencies
- ❖ Develop a Standardized Rating System or Scale.



This Scale with Behavioral Descriptors that Link Back to the Job Analysis.

Recruitment of the fit candidate: The concept of hiring for “fit” is well known in organizational theory. Articles and books abound on why likely candidates with exemplary credentials and the desired skill set may meet the stated needs of the job description but not meet the needs of the organization. It is important to note that hiring for fit does not hinder diversity nor squash innovation; rather, it enables the existing group to grow and change with the addition of a new perspective that matches yet extends the existing culture (Gasper and Brown, 2015). Haslam (2004:25) asserted that “common social identification among group members should (a) encourage free

and effective knowledge sharing; (b) ensure better coordination of their efforts; and (c) enhance mutual trust”.

Sutarjo (2011) detailed the expense of ignoring fit, as turnover and professional development programming cost both time and money. His review of international literature demonstrated that compatibility between a new hire and the existing organizational values increases the likelihood of long term employment and healthy socialization within the working group. He made a strong argument for communicating to job candidates the values and attitudes of the organization throughout

the hiring process in order for the candidates to make an informed decision about how well they would fit with the organization. De Cooman et al. (2009) surveyed graduates from nine institutes, and their findings also argued that it is incumbent on hiring committees to convey the values and culture of the organization to potential hires. “The pre-employment phase is very important. Attracting and selecting individuals who perceive a good P-O fit is a fine indicator of future retention and should be strived for” (DeCooman et al., 2009:106).

Recruit People with Core Competencies in Research and Information Services

Routledge et al (2015) emphasized that candidate should be recruited based on core competencies in research and information services. This could be done following these three processes:

1. To accomplished this, academic and research libraries can create job advertisements that list required and preferred core competencies for new librarians. For instance, the most recent job posting should include a job description requiring competency

in being able to learn and teach new learning technologies effectively.

2. Integrate core competencies into the division by having the supervisors meet annually with employees to discuss whether their job descriptions still matched the work they were doing and whether they could meet the core competencies required in each job description. For example, by discuss a revision to annual job description will enable newly recruited librarians able to adjust the description to accommodate their new supervisory responsibilities.
3. The third way is to successfully paired competencies with the process involved collaboration between the department and division heads to create required competencies in the form of best practices documents for specific areas of job positions. For instance, updated best practices documents that describe appropriate ways of relating to patrons face-to-face, via phone, or online. These documents will form the basis for several of the public services core competencies that are integrated into job descriptions and enable

supervisors to have productive discussions with each employee on areas where they can continue to build skills.

Moreover, academic and research libraries can embark on using Marriot Library Organisation Competencies model (2012). Marriott Library is committed to its employees and will provide guidance and training to help them achieve success in the three competency areas:

Patron Focus—

Keeps patrons as the focal point of activity. Understands and meets the needs of patrons and addresses their interests and concerns in a timely and professional manner.

Demonstrates commitment to patrons by maintaining standards of accuracy, excellence, and professional conduct.

Understands the organizational structure of the library. Seeks to achieve results across disciplines, departments, and functions.

Understands the library's collections and core systems such as the catalog, website, and online research

databases and can assist patrons in using them.

Effectiveness—

Demonstrates initiative and a willingness to increase knowledge for personal and organizational growth. Achieves

institutional, professional, and personal goals.

Adapts to changes in direction and priorities and accepts new challenges, responsibilities, and assignments.

Assumes accountability for one's work, actions, results, and risks.

Follows through on a consistent basis.

Plans and organizes well by managing time and priorities to accomplish tasks.

Anticipates changes and trends to effectively allocate resources and implement library initiatives.

Maintains skills in current tools and technologies necessary to complete job tasks.

Follows University and library policies and procedures.

Supports the University's adherence to the College and University

Presidents Climate Commitment
(<http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org>)

Communication—

Listens effectively and transmits information clearly and accurately.

Communicates constructively and respectfully with patrons and colleagues.

Builds working relationships and partnerships at all levels and across departments and functional lines.

Employs the library's communication technologies such as e-mail, social media, online calendar and staff intranet to effectively and efficiently collaborate with colleagues and address patron needs.

Conclusion

The most important element in the successful operation of any academic and research library is the people that work there. The quality, dedication and competency that these individuals bring to their position is directly related to the success of the organization. A vacant or new position provides the library with an

opportunity to bring new talent and new perspective into the organization.

Recruitment, if well done, has three elements essential to the process (Defa, 2014). The first is preparation; have a staffing plan that provides an analysis of what the library needs for the future are. Know where the libraries' strengths and weaknesses are and work to support the weakness and improve the strengths. Be prepared internally to act quickly once a vacancy is announced. Have potential search committee members trained and ready. Ensure the members know they will be called upon so you do not have to conscript "volunteers".

The second is posting, advertising and interviewing for the position. As part of the preparation process, know and understand the labor markets for the various employee positions in the library. Know where the best resources are for contacting potential applicants. Professional/faculty librarians have a different labor market than administrative/professional or paraprofessional employees. Clerical and part-time employees will have yet a different labor market than all the other employee types. Post the positions as required by the

campus Human Resource Office but go beyond the tradition journals and online sites. Use social networking sites like “LinkedIn” and engage in personal contact. Build relationships with library schools in your region and personally contact individuals in professional or community organizations. Often, the best applicant does not know he or she is even looking for a job. Do not depend upon the passive approach of waiting for someone looking for a position to find your vacancy notice. Be proactive, identify potential candidates and let them know of the employment opportunity.

The third is on boarding. Once the library goes to all the expense and time to find and hire someone, make them feel welcome and a part of the organization. Recruitment does not end when someone is offered and accepts the position. On boarding is more than ensuring that the new member of the library is scheduled for new employee benefit orientation. These new employees are now part of your community and it is the community’s responsibility to provide a welcoming and supporting beginning to what is hopefully a long relationship.

Recommendations

An empirical investigation version of this discussion should be considered. This could be to examine the question of how users in academic and research libraries in this global era cope with the absence of an endorsed skillful and competent librarian. This is because it is observed that, some libraries manage to have successful information services, despite the fact that they appear to be inadequately staffed with competent librarians.

The need for new LIS graduates will likely depend on how closely changes in the LIS curricula match needed skills and competencies in a specific library environment. It is observed that, libraries continue to value LIS credential but increasingly hire non-credentialed employees and assign them tasks formerly exclusive to librarians, this practice must be stopped. Shifts in hiring priorities to meet needs for new skill sets and competencies are resulting in movement from “traditional” library preparation and LIS education in general. This should be promoted.

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