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Job Searching In The New Millennium

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JOB SEARCHING IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

As you consider seeking another library position for whatever reason, you should know that library jobs are increasing and salaries are rising, although they do reflect the current economy.

Sooner or later it happens. The job you had thought perfect is not and you realize you need to look for a different rung on your career ladder to success. Or perhaps you've outgrown the challenges of the current position, or the requirements have changed, or personal needs, tangentially related to your job, have become more pressing. Whatever the reason, you find the time has come to look for a new place.¹

But, this is a new millennium. If you have not followed the job market for a few years, you might find enough changes to warrant some re-education. Furthermore, you might have heard the rumors that library careers are dying, or ageism is rampant, or you feel you're too inexperienced, not a public librarian, not an academic librarian. Whew! If that weren't enough you discover that you probably need to know HTML after all! Should you post your resume on the web? Should you create a snazzy web page? That new rung suddenly seems unreachable. Has the New Millennium really meant a new type of job search for librarians?

In addition, changes in jobs with accompanying personal upheavals in moving family and pets as well as any financial changes—good or bad—create stress, which you might (vaguely or vividly) remember from the last job change. Losing a job for instance is ranked #13 in the Stress Scale (2001), while changing a career is #33 (par.2)

These issues and stresses can make us wonder if looking for a new job is worth the hassle. Before you make the final decision, you need to consider issues such as those mentioned by Richard Ream (2000) in "Changing Jobs, It's a Changing Market:" Will your skills be worth more or less to your current employer in 5 years?

- Have you had opportunities to learn and grow?
- Are your co-workers committed to doing quality work?
- Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
- Does the mission of your company make you feel like your work is important?

People who change do so because they perceive they gain greater autonomy, challenge and income (par.3).

Ream adds that you should "stay with a company where you feel you can make a difference; otherwise leave" (par.3). Carole Kanchler (1987) in her book, *Questors: Dare to Change Your Job*, mentions that if you seem to have lost enjoyment in your life and your work, you might want to consider changing jobs (p. 151). Ream further reminds us that we shouldn't let barriers such as fear of failure or success hinder us from obtaining the job we would truly love. "In the end, the road that takes you there [to the job] is often the one that is not easily recognized at the beginning of the journey" (par 17).

This paper will examine three areas of the job search: the statistics and demographics for the future and current market, the "tried and true" methods to getting a job, and the changes the Internet has brought to the job search. Wherever you are on your career ladder, you will find the boundaries have truly expanded, not contracted.

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STATISTICS, DEMOGRAPHICS, AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Library careers are alive and well. Face it, we have never been a huge profession; we're too specialized. Several articles in the past three years have given a positive note to the increase in job opportunities. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2000) identifies 149,000 jobs held by librarians in 2000 although the projected growth rate is slow. (<http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos068.htm>). However, the number of jobs is not going to shrink. In his article, "Not an Endangered Profession: Looking it up," Larry Keller (2001) shows that during the 90s, reference specialists, for instance, increased in public libraries by 56% and that numerically, reference librarians employed by public libraries had increased from 2,634 in 1995 to 4,100 in 2000 (par 7). Kelly Gates (2000) in her article for *Career Journal*, also noted the strong demand for librarians in all specializations and even non-traditional areas such as recruiting and consulting. "The profession owes this boost largely to the growth of the Internet, which has caused an information explosion that must be managed" (par2). The Winter 2000/01 issue of the *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* (OOQ) devoted an entire article to the library profession. Author Olivia Crosby reported the projected growth for librarians at 5% with 7000 new jobs opening up between 1998-2008 (p. 9). Further encouraging information came from Mary Jo Lynch (2002) although we may think of it as good news/bad news. The bad news is that a shortfall in our profession is coming by the year 2015 (pp. 55-56). This shortfall as described in Olivia Crosby's article will reach 39,000 jobs (p. 9). The good news for job searchers is that with the newly created jobs, they will have a potential of over 45,000 professional positions opening up in the next 10 years. Certainly, those just entering the profession and those who are in mid-

career will find many opportunities, if they desire them and are prepared.

If a strong job market is projected, then why are people so pessimistic about looking for library positions? Probably the one reason is salaries. In a survey by the Jones E-Global Library (2001) 62% of the respondents believed that salaries were the third most significant challenge, and 85% ranked low salaries as the number one reason people would not enter the profession (http://www.jonesknowledge.com/eglobal/ala_survey_academic.html). In *Library Journal*, Carol Brey (2002) describes the need for better salaries in public libraries. As she notes public library starting salaries are woefully less than comparable professions such as computer science degrees, which start with \$61,453 at the master's level and \$52,723 at the bachelor's level while the starting librarian can expect roughly \$34,871 (p.38).

On the other hand, the *OOQ* article by Crosby (2000-01) stated that the average librarian's salary—public and otherwise—in 1998 was up about 5% and starting salaries also showed similar rises. Nontraditional jobs for librarians rose 11% at the same time (p. 10)!

Furthermore, *The Occupational Outlook Handbook* noted that the average librarian's salary is now around \$38,700. The middle 50 % earned between \$30,440 and \$48,130. The lowest 10% earned less than \$22,970 and the highest went over \$67,610 (par 1 under Earnings). Terrell and Gregory's (2001) recent survey of library jobs noted that salary growth was down somewhat because of the current economy, but placements were still strong with salary negotiations varying depending on the type of library.

As disconcerting as the problems of salaries and shortfall in job applicants may be, this paper's goal is to give a word of encouragement to those who are interested in this career. Certainly these job search problems are issues worth exploring for Christian Academic Libraries. As shown library jobs are

available, salaries have risen, and the reasons to seek other professional positions are still the same reasons we have encountered before. Additional studies on job satisfaction are also not part of this paper. Anyone interested in this rather complex issue would do well to read "What Keeps Librarians in the Books?" by Lanieri, Carson, and Carson (1997) which identifies the implications to our profession when librarians become entrenched and discontented.

When job change comes—whether voluntarily or involuntarily—if we look at the state of the profession, we can make plans for our next move in this exciting field.

END NOTES

¹Job satisfaction is discussed in greater detail than given here. If interested, please read Carol Kanchler. (1987) *Quester's Dare to Change Your Job and Your Life*, Saratoga, Calif.: R & E Publishers, as well as the following articles address the issue of job and professional satisfaction in greater depth. Frank, Donald G. (1997) Activity in Professional Associations: The Positive Difference in a Librarian's Career, *Library Trends*. 46, 307-318. Retrieved January 8, 2002 from Ebscohost Academic Search Elite database; Detlefsen, Ellen Gay and Olson, Josephine E. (1991) The Librarian and the Leaver: Who Leaves the Profession? *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*. 31, 275-293. .

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