

Job Hunting Like a Boss

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Library Research Service

<https://www.lrs.org/jobhunting>

LRS conducted a survey of job seekers. Respondents were more likely to have applied for how many positions?

- Less than 10
- 10 to 20
- More than 20+

Objectives

You gain a better understanding of how employers view the hiring process.

You talk with colleagues about ideas for how your library can better support patrons who are job hunting.

You are better prepared to compete for your dream job!

60 Second Survey

Those looking for a library job were **more likely** to say they had **applied to more than 20 positions** - some had applied to **up to 100!**

Those who **are employed** were **more likely** to say that they **applied to 1-5 jobs** before getting a position. However, a significant portion also said they applied for more than 20.

Most people who **are employed** in a library position **interviewed one time** before getting their job, while **hardly anyone who is seeking a library position has had the chance to interview.**

1914



Shackleton & The Endurance

- 28 crew members
- Several months stranded on ice and remote, uninhabited islands
- Two lifeboat journeys over hundreds of miles of open seas

**Every.
Single.
Person.
Survived.**

MEN WANTED

Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success.

**Library job ads
are generally...
terrible**

Library Job Ads...

Tell you **what you need** in order to be hired.

DO NOT not tell you **what you need in order to succeed**.

DO NOT convey **meaningful info** about the **culture** of the organization.

Sailor Tech Wanted

- Must be able to push a cart weighing 50 pounds.
- Occasionally bend, stoop, kneel, crouch, crawl climb or balance.
- Must have rope tying skills.



**Research Makes -
or BREAKS - Your
Chances**

It's not You, It's Me

Bosses look for “**good fit**,” because excellent bosses know that **skills can be taught but personality cannot**.

The **least compelling** thing you can demonstrate to an employer is that you **meet the requirements** of the job.

The **most compelling** thing you can demonstrate is that you **understand the the role** of the position and how it fits within the **organization**.



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Know the Position

Research **conferences and workshops** relevant to the position. Find **presentations, handouts, publications**, and other materials by **professionals** in similar positions.

Research **job ads** for the same/similar positions. Look for keywords and concepts that you should research further.

You are building a vocabulary that will create dialog that goes beyond you simply parroting the job ad.

Know the Organization

Find the organization's **blogs, social media, newsletters**, and, if you are really hardcore, their meeting minutes. **Find presentations and publications by potential managers and colleagues.** Be prepared to answer questions like...

How many employees are there?

How does the position's unit fit within the organization's hierarchy?

What are the mission and vision of the organization?

What major projects are in the works?

Casually mention a project, area of interest, or idea that you found in one of the aforementioned sources and you are guaranteed to set yourself apart from 99% of the other candidates.

A Job Interview is Not a Pop Quiz

Anticipate **insightful** questions.

Bosses ARE NOT looking for **off-the-cuff responses**.

Bosses ARE looking for **good conversation**, and that only happens when you are well-prepared.

Anticipate Smart Questions

Create a list of **20 questions** that, based on your research so far, **you anticipate being asked**.

Show, don't tell. Draw from your **experiences** and come up with real-world examples of how you make a difference. If you are **new to the profession**, tell me how you **would** do something.

Hand write your responses until you can repeat them from memory.



SHE HAD NO IDEA SHE WAS BOMBING
THE JOB INTERVIEW.

The hardest question to answer is, “How does this position fit with your short- and long-term career goals?”

Your response should demonstrate that you and the organization will benefit from your continued professional growth.

The easiest question to answer - and one that 99% of candidates screw up - is, “What is one of your weaknesses”

Your response should NOT including anything personal, significant, and/or potentially devastating, but should instead focus on some trivial part of the job description.

“I see your library uses Library of Congress. I only have experience with Dewey, so...”

Tell Your Story

Your questions are **not really questions**, but are opportunities for **further conversation**.

Since your question time is always at the end of the interview, use the additional conversation time to **emphasize what you can do for the organization**, and to discuss skills and/or experiences that were **not addressed by the questions** they asked you.

Give the organization opportunities to **showcase their success**. *“I noticed on your website that you are currently doing X and Y; how are those projects coming along?”*

**Boring candidates ask
boring questions
which make for boring
conversations.**

Your Questions Must Demonstrate...

You are excited about the position. “What are 1 or 2 projects that will want me to tackle in my first 6 months?”

You have a good understanding of the position. “I see the position requires web development skills. Tell me about your use of open-source frameworks or other types of content management systems?”

You understand that work is about people and relationships. “How do you all, as a team or organization, celebrate your successes?”



Your Application Materials (in General)

Outsource Your Proofreading

You usually have **grammar, spelling, and situational awareness** issues in your documents.

If you are doing it right, you spend so much time staring at your own work that your **perception and reality...diverge**.

Identify **two reliable proofreaders**: one “**in**” the profession and one **out**. You will find that they focus on different, but important, aspects of your work.

Please Stop Designing Your Documents

Are you applying for a graphic design job?

YES



Feel free to be
creative with
typography, color,
etc.

NO



**Don't even
think about
“designing”**

The One and Only Rule for Application Design

Be consistent.

Body text is 12 pt Arial

Headings are 24 and 36 pt (no more than 2)

1" margins

Black and white

Always submit your application materials in PDF format.

When I open your .doc[x] files, there is no guarantee that I will experience the formatting and layout that you intend. (P.s. you also sometimes have metadata, “tracked changes,” and comments that, while often humorous, are not relevant.

I am not interested in...

Your social media, personal blogs, hobbies, college clubs, reading preferences.

You almost never submit (but I would love to see)...

Portfolios, publications, and other relevant professional works.

Your Resume

Choose a consistent format (Googling is perfectly acceptable here).

Relevance is more important than length.

Focus on your WHAT.

Keep it up-to-date.

https://www.irs.org/documents/job-hunting/sample_resume.pdf

Your References

Assume nothing. **Interview your references.**

When choosing a reference, go for **substance over title**. A “Director of...” who cannot speak directly to the quality of your work is less effective than a colleague with whom you have worked closely.

You should provide every reference with a copy of the job description, and the cover letter and resume you will submit.

Give your references talking points.

It is not “cheating” to help your references help you. Period.
End of sentence.

Your Cover Letter



GREGORY

"This is the part of the job that I hate."

CN
COLLECTION

**It is (painfully) obvious to us
when you have simply
Googled “cover letter
example.”**

Cover Letters are Hard

To whom it may concern,

Please accept this letter in application for the position of Librarian at Pebble Brook Library, as advertised on LibraryJobline.org. I believe you will find that I am well qualified for the position. You will also find attached my resume and a list of 5 references.

I have 10 years of experience working in public libraries. My current and previous duties include working at the reference desk for 20 hours per week, processing interlibrary loan (ILL) materials, and supervising 5-10 student shelvees.

Your cover letter is not an annotated version of your resume. It is the start of a conversation.

**An excellent cover letter is
almost always one-time-use
only.**

Elements of an Excellent Cover Letter

Open with enthusiasm

I am excited to apply for the position of Research Assistant currently open at the Colorado State Library...

Share vision/beliefs

I believe that harnessing data and making it accessible is essential for helping libraries to demonstrate impact in their communities, and my communication skills and sharp attention to detail would make me an asset in furthering this cause.

Elements of an Excellent Cover Letter

Reflect on your success/experience

Through this combination of theoretical and practical training, I have learned the importance of data and emerging technologies for helping libraries to both engage with their communities and understand how to better serve those communities as they evolve.

Elements of an Excellent Cover Letter

Show ambition

I was drawn to a career in libraries because I know it is a rapidly changing profession and want to be a part of redefining the role of libraries in all the kinds of communities that they serve.

I also would like to strengthen my leadership abilities by working with library stakeholders in a variety of forums to become an effective voice for how libraries can use data to demonstrate their impact on and importance to 21st century communities.

Elements of an Excellent Cover Letter

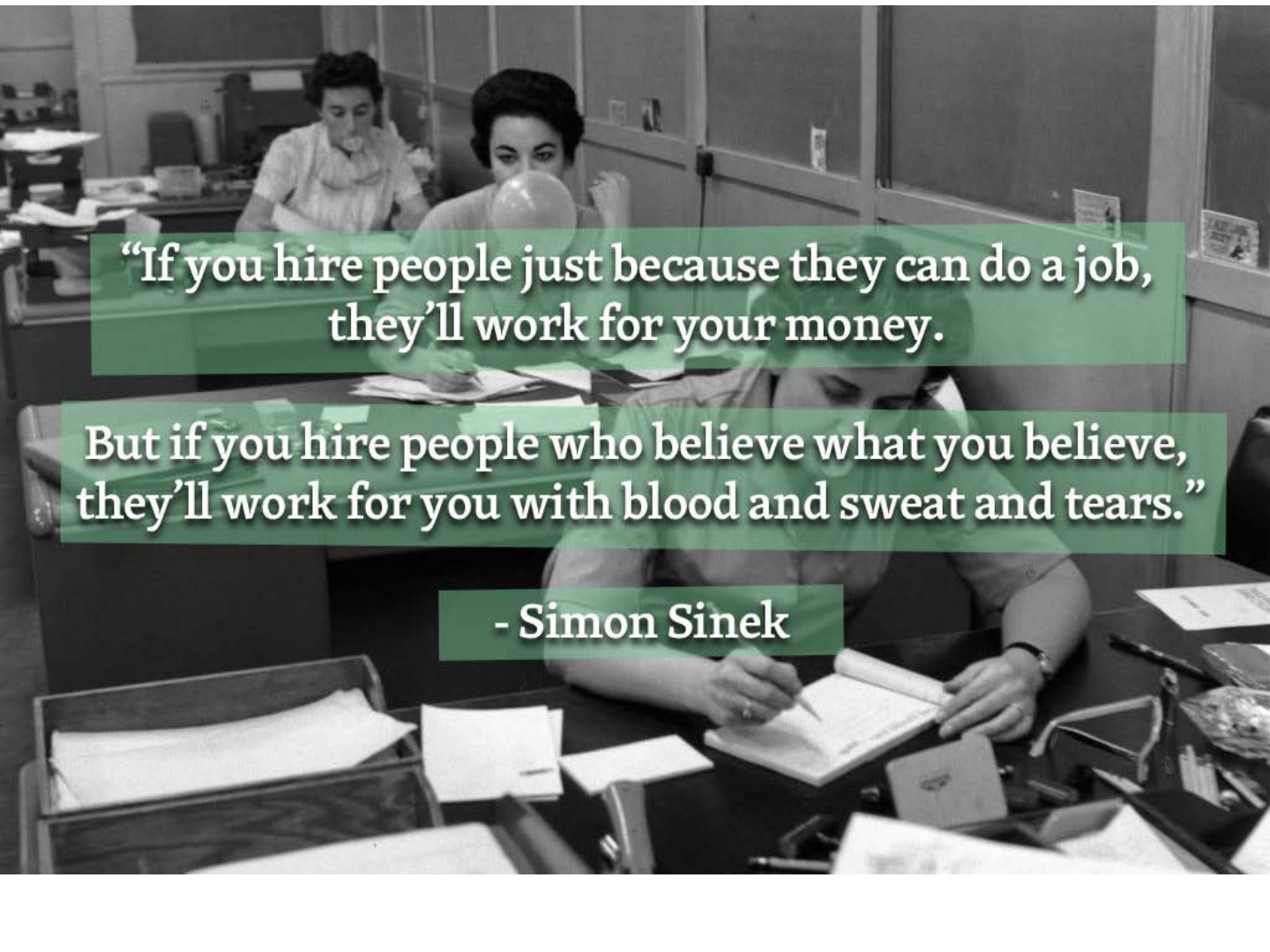
WHY, not WHAT

What I offer is a strong foundation of theory and practice in research and data analysis, coupled with a vision of how advocating data-driven evaluation initiatives can enrich conversations about the role of libraries today.

https://www.lrs.org/documents/job-hunting/outstanding_cover_letter.pdf

WHY do you do what you do?

Everyone has a WHY. Your WHY is the purpose, cause or belief that inspires you.

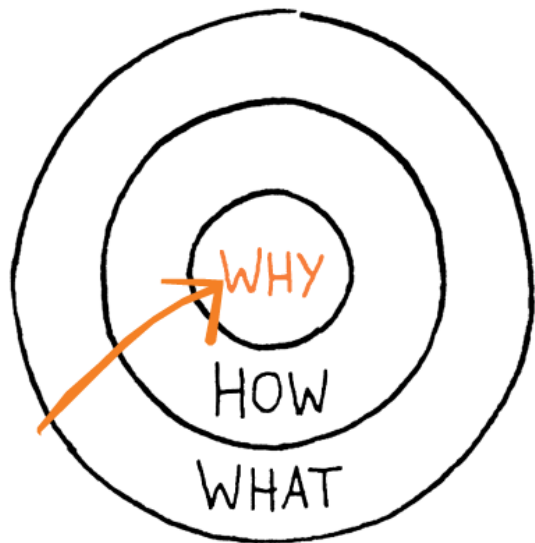


**“If you hire people just because they can do a job,
they’ll work for your money.**

**But if you hire people who believe what you believe,
they’ll work for you with blood and sweat and tears.”**

- Simon Sinek

The Golden Circle



WHAT

Provided reference service for genealogy

Worked at the welcome/circulation desk

Maintained the library website

In charge of toddler storytime

vs.

vs.

vs.

vs.

WHY

Connected my patrons to their past

Created a welcoming environment for my community

Provided access to the library for those who can't make it to the physical premises

Passionate advocate for the importance of early childhood literacy

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<https://www.irs.org/jobhunting>