Up-and-Comers: News for Student Archivists—Kevlin Haire, Assistant Editor, The Ohio State University

Please submit "Up-and-Comers" items to Kevlin Haire at kevlinhl@yahoo.com.

Finding the Perfect Match: My Job Search Experience

By Ryan K. Lee, Indiana University Archives

My recent job search was an educational and enlightening experience that I would like to share with other budding archivists graduating and entering the "real world," or anyone that may be in need of advice or guidance in looking for a new career path in archives. I can break down the most important things I learned into four major categories: education, practical field experience, interview preparation, and luck/timing.

Higher Degree of Success

While some archives jobs currently do not require advanced degrees, more and more are leaning toward this requirement as the profession increases in importance and complexity, due in part to advances in technology. The majority of jobs advertised during my search required master's degrees in either history, library science, or other related fields, with the majority preferring an M.L.S. or M.L.I.S. with an emphasis in archives and records management. So finishing that graduate degree from an accredited institution, with an emphasis in archives if possible, will give you the most opportunities for employment.

Learn While You Earn

Although education is essential to even be considered for most archives jobs, I learned quickly that *experience* is what sets you apart from your peers. I was fortunate to have chosen early to pursue a career in archives as an undergraduate at Utah State University, where I gained two years of experience in an archives and special collections setting. This, added to the three years of experience I gained as a graduate student at Indiana University, gave me a total of five years experience upon graduation—an invaluable asset, and dare I say advantage, over much of the competition coming out of graduate school. Practical experience will aid in applying what you are learning in your courses and can provide context for abstract theories and ideas that might otherwise be difficult to grasp in the classroom. These experiences, whether student jobs or internships, will aid in learning and enhancing the necessary skills to be a successful employee, not only in archival-related tasks, but in the general work environment. Finally, they can provide you with a network of people you may use as references in your job search, or, as in my case, potential employers. Experience in a variety of settings related to archives will give you a definite advantage in the job hunt.

Preparation Makes the Difference

For many of you reading this, a professional interview is likely a new experience, as it was for me, and you probably have no idea how to prepare yourself for the types of questions you will be asked. While all interviews will be different depending on the job and the interviewer, I observed some patterns in the interviews in which I participated. Most interviewers used the skills and requirements of the job description in their questions. So I prepared for interviews by creating short answers about how I qualified for each skill set or requirement mentioned in the job description. In these short answers I tried to emphasize my experience by stating specific examples of projects I had worked on where a certain skill set, or knowledge of a certain principle of archival science, was used.

One important aspect of the interview process, I learned, was the need to practice beforehand. Creating "mock" questions and practicing answering them really aids in getting a feel for the interview. Practicing with another person also will help you understand your mannerisms that may become distractions during the interview, such as stammering or other nervous habits. Obviously, you can never plan for every question, but the more you prepare, the more confident you will be in answering the easy questions, which will inevitably lead to confidence and poise when the surprise questions arise.

Timing is Everything

The final point is the importance of realizing that often, landing a job simply comes down to timing and a little bit of luck. I believe these factors played a significant role in my being hired as assistant archivist at the Indiana University Archives. Just one month before I began looking for jobs, a position at this institution opened and I was asked to apply. Since I had worked here as a student for the past three years, I was comfortable with the staff and work environment, and vice versa. I had also worked on several projects in which the past assistant archivist had been involved, giving me an advantage over other potential applicants. While I often feel the stars were aligned just right, and I was in the right place at the right time for this job, this would not have been the case if I had not made a concerted effort to gain experience through student jobs and internships at places where I could potentially be employed. This is something to consider for those applying for internships this summer. You never know … this could happen to you, too!

I hope this advice based on my experiences will help as you begin your job search. Have fun with it! It is an adventure, similar to finding a spouse. When you begin the courting process, you focus on people you share interests with, those with whom you feel comfortable and want to spend a considerable amount of time. All in all, my job search was about making the right *match* for me, as well as the employer, and fortunately I was offered a job that I feel was perfect for me. May you all be as successful in finding your perfect match!

Editor's note: Ryan K. Lee earned his master's of library science degree, with a specialization in archives and records management, from Indiana University's School of Library and Information Science in May 2006. He can be reached at rlee@indiana.edu.

Up-and-Comers News Bytes

Wayne State Student Creates Oral History Database

Ronee Francis, a graduate student in the Library and Information Science, Archival Administration Program at Wayne State University, is one half of a two-person team implementing the Michigan Oral History Database (MOHD). MOHD is a statewide oral history description database that will be available on-line and free to any institution in Michigan.

The database, created using FileMaker Pro, also will include oral history descriptions from out of state, as long as they are related to Michigan. An important feature is user sustainability—each institution will be given a code to change or update its oral history descriptions. The project began in August 2006 and is expected to go on-line by summer 2007. Francis' partner in the project is Bill Gulley, automation specialist and archivist at the Reuther. Project sponsors are the Walter P. Reuther Library and Archives at Wayne State University and the Michigan Oral History Association (MOHA). Francis is a board member of MOHA and a part-time processing archivist at the Reuther Library while she attends school. She is set to graduate in June. Francis is scheduled to speak at the Local History Conference in April in Detroit, and to present the database in June at the Michigan Archival Association annual conference. Francis also has created a Web site to help distribute downloadable documents and administer an on-line survey. http://www.beyondarchives.com/index_files/MOHD.htm

UW–Milwaukee Archival Studies Scholarship Winner Announced

The School of Information Studies (SOIS) at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) has selected the first recipient of the Timothy L. Ericson Scholarship in Archival Studies. Katie Blank, a graduate student in the coordinated degree program for M.L.I.S. and M.A. in history, was named the winner of the scholarship in a blind review process. The $500 scholarship honors the founder and long-time director of the SOIS Archival Studies Program, Timothy L. Ericson. Donations can be made to the scholarship fund by visiting the UWM Foundation's on-line gifts page at http://www3.uwm.edu/org/alumni/foundation/epay.cfm and specifying the Timothy L. Ericson Scholarship fund in the designation field. To learn more about the UWM's Archival Studies Program or Certificate of Advanced Study in Archives and Records Management, contact Program Coordinator Amy Cooper Cary at amyccary@sois.uwm.edu.

Wayne State LISP Takes Charge of Archival Administration Curriculum

Wayne State University's Library and Information Science Program (LISP) has assumed the direction of the Archival Administration graduate certificate program. Founded in the 1960s by Philip Mason, a history professor and former director of the Reuther Library and Archives, the certificate program was part of the College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs until Mason's retirement in 2005. Since then, Mike Smith, director of the Reuther, has coordinated the program. The LISP is now

(Continued on page 30)