



Things to know and things to do to get a job in the cultural sector (rare books, special collections, museums, historical societies, etc.)

1. Almost all jobs are given to people known directly or indirectly to the hirer.

This personal link is necessary in part because of the high value of collections and the need for a preliminary vetting of the candidate for a record of honesty. The other part is that people who hire are looking for a cheerful, dedicated, willing candidate and they'd like to have seen those qualities "in the flesh" before moving ahead with the hiring process.

2. Most curatorial jobs are never advertised or are advertised only in a pro-forma way. Temporary jobs often lead to full-time positions.

3. Personal contacts are essential. Here are some tips for creating or reviving your personal contacts. Make yourself do some of these things every day while job hunting.

- a. **Create a list** of every institution in your region that would be a possible match for you. The *American Library Directory* is the best source. (See wotan.liu.edu/blog for a list of NYC-area libraries with rare materials.)
- b. **Set up a "rolodex"** of people employed in the field whom you've met, whom you've heard speak in class, whom you've gotten to know when they were fellow students and you now know they are professionally employed, whom you've heard speak in conferences, whom you met when they were your instructors/adjuncts, and whom you've chatted with at bookish events.
- c. **Contact two people** from your "rolodex," and email them citing your earlier "meeting," asking if you can have an "informational session" about career development and involvement in professional organizations. Meet them, and be sure to say that you are beginning your job hunt in as careful of a way as you can -- "to follow your passion to work in a rare book library, etc." Now contact and meet with 2 more. Repeat as often as necessary.
- d. **Fix up your resume/CV.** Expect to revise it FOR EVERY JOB POSSIBILITY, emphasizing the skills and experience that relate to specific job opportunity in question.
- e. **Ask four people** if you could list them as references during your job search. Stay in touch with them every few weeks to report your progress. Always tell them beforehand when you are listing them for a specific job application. They may come up with some possibilities or contacts you didn't know about. From the four or so, list the pertinent three or so for the job in question. These should all be people who know your work (employment, study, interning, or community volunteerism).
- f. **Thank everyone** for meeting with you with a hand-written note (not a tweet). Thank your references. Thank your friends. Thank everyone.

- g. To the most likely and sympathetic “advisors” from the informational sessions, **send a follow-up note** several weeks later indicating that you are still in the process of looking for the right opportunity. (The thank-you note, of course, must go out right away.)
 - h. In the meanwhile, **volunteer** to do something for the local chapter of a professional organization -- set up chairs, bake brownies, edit the newsletter -- anything that lets you get to know and interact with people in the field that you want to work in. Tell them openly about your hunt for the "right" job. (Network, network, network.)
 - i. **Don't** sound desperate or pathetic. **Do** dress professionally. Show up at lots of professional events. KIOSK lists lots of free ones or almost free events.
 - j. You can also check the listservs (KIOSK, EXLIBRIS) and the job sources on the blog (<http://wotan.liu.edu/blog>), and **apply wherever possible**. Whenever you apply, be sure to tell someone you might know who is on that staff that you're applying. And tell your referees how much you'd like that particular job. Your referees might know someone on the staff where you are replying and might make a call on your behalf.
 - k. **Edit your Facebook page**. (I personally am ambivalent about LinkedIn. I don't think it works for this field, but it might for business and other fields.)
 - l. **The rest** -- the interview, etc. -- should be obvious. You've been over this ground in your internship.
4. If you see something possible, **go for it**. Don't rule it out beforehand with fears that it would be too far away, or too hard, or too boring, or too low paid. Try to get the offer! Then see how you feel. Once you have the offer, you can negotiate the salary -- not before! Once they decide they really want you, they might be more flexible than you think. You may feel quite differently about the possibility with the offer in hand.
 5. It might help to have **a job hunting partner** (with a somewhat different career objective -- not a competitor) to keep you moving forward, and with whom you can share leads and information. Find someone cheerful and make every effort to remain positive about the experience.
 6. Don't expect to get a rare book job from finding an ad in a newspaper and simply sending the resume/CV and cover letter via email -- all by your lonesome! **You need to get "out there" and be "out there."**

Note: In most cases, you cannot work as a volunteer in a collection after graduation because of insurance issues. Interns usually have to be enrolled in for-credit courses. (The Palmer internship is **the** essential way to gain collection experience and get to know collection staff.) You can, however, volunteer for conferences and professional meetings after, and before, you graduate from Palmer. – D. C. Stam 2011