ASK ELLEN – follow up after phone interview / how long to fill academic librarian position?

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Q: I recently had a telephone interview for a position that I am very interested in as an academic librarian. Of course, I followed up with a thank you note, but it’s been a week and a half and I still haven’t heard anything from them regarding whether or not I will be invited back for the in-person interview. I realize the placement procedure can move slowly in academia, so my question is two-fold. A) What would be considered the average “wait time” for each step in the hiring process for academic librarian positions? B) Would it be appropriate to send a follow-up inquiry after two weeks of hearing nothing?

A: Congratulations on getting a phone interview! These days with so many applicants for each position, getting any kind of interview is a real accomplishment.

Re: following up, two weeks is a good interval; I would make one inquiry, a gentle one, stating again your interest in the position and asking if they can give you an idea of what the next step would be and when that might be happening.

You are right that filling academic librarian positions can take a long time – there are many things that can hold up the process, not least of which are winter holidays! I don’t know if there would be an “average wait time”; it would depend on the school, the hiring manager, paperwork moving through different hands, availability of those on the hiring committee, if they have other positions they are trying to fill at the same time, when in the semester it is, etc. So, once you have contacted them, there is not much more you can do but wait (which can be very difficult). Also, they may not be able to tell you beyond a guess as to when the face-to-face interviews will be, so if they say they don’t know, I wouldn’t read anything into that.

You may be interested to read this blog post from ‘Ask A Manager’, about applicant time vs. employer time; she describes it very well and gives good advice: http://www.askamanager.org/2010/01/employer-time-vs-candidate-time-2-very.html

Good luck to you!

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Thank you,

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