ASK ELLEN – switching from one kind of library work to another

6/10/12

(I have had a few similar questions in the past few weeks, on switching from one kind of work to another; this is a composite/generalized Q&A on the topic. This was also discussed at yesterday’s “Insider Tips…” career event at the LIU Post campus.)

Q: I have an MLS and am interested in switching to a different kind of work within the library science field. What are some steps I can take to do this?

A: For switching careers or focus within the field, I would recommend first examining job postings for those kinds of jobs to see exactly what kind of training/experience/certification they require. Think of skills you already have (transferable skills) which could be applied to a different kind of info-pro work and what skill/experience/education gaps you’d need to fill to be qualified for hire. Then look into what local or online schools may be offering such training, and check them out as to reputation, cost, etc. You may want to post a request for recommendations for training programs on a listserv or LinkedIn group of those who work at those jobs, or see on LinkedIn where people already working in those jobs got their training and experience, or ask a former professor who taught related courses when you were in grad school.

Talk one-on-one with someone who is doing that kind of work, if you can, to get his/her advice on what is really needed to get hired. Formal classes may or may not be necessary, depending on exactly what you are interested in. Consider people already in your network who are doing similar or related work, and develop new contacts, as networking is still and always the best way to get a job. You’ll really need new contacts in order to switch career focus, even with the right training and experience, with the job market the way it is. Volunteering is another way to gain experience and expand your network – and please keep in mind that all this takes time.

______________

Thank you and good luck!

Ellen Mehling
Director, Westchester Program and Internships
ellen.mehling@liu.edu