

CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

Anne Rimmer

(Anne Rimmer is the Personnel Officer, Indiana University Libraries.)

Recently, a member of a Search and Screen Committee asked if we were all going to visit the candidates selected for interviews on "their home turf" or were we going to bring them here. "In the good ol' days," he said, "those hiring did the traveling, not the candidates. Nowadays, the candidate comes here, all dressed up and you don't know what he's really like—and you can't go around and talk to the people he works with to find out."

Admittedly, there's some truth in what he said. However, as imperfect a tool as it may be, the interview, properly executed, can aid us in getting the information we need to make an effective hiring decision. Following are a number of points regarding interviewing in general, with information on the individual and the group interview.

One should always keep in mind that an interview is a two-way process; the hiring institution interviews the candidate and the candidate interviews the hiring institution. A clear understanding of these two roles will facilitate the process. It is important that the employer tell candidates the names and positions of the people with whom s/he will be interviewing and their connection with the available position. Informing the candidate as much as possible about the interview and the interview process beforehand not only allows the candidate to come prepared, but may also aid in reducing the anxiety in this inherently tension-filled process.

Before the Interview

Think through the upcoming interview carefully and specifically. Prior to the interview, review all appropriate materials available, such as the vita, the cover letter, references, and so on. Note questions and concerns related to this material. For example, you might want to pursue information on the vita that is unclear, confusing, or needs amplification. You should understand the position description thoroughly and anticipate questions the candidate may have regarding it. Know and understand the qualities required to do the job well. It is essential that you establish the goal of the interview. In other words, ask yourself, "What do I need to know?" A list of questions or areas to cover will ensure that you make the best use of the time and that no important areas are overlooked. Conversely, do not waste valuable interview time asking questions for which you are already certain of the answers or spend time verifying information that is already clearly provided.

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



Kristine Brancolini

(Kristine Brancolini is the Media Librarian and the Circulation Librarian of the Undergraduate Library, IU-Bloomington.)

Season's Greetings from InULA's 1984-85 Publications Committee

Kris Brancolini, chair	Pamela Sandstrom
Julie Bobay	Marilyn Shaver
Wendall Johnting	Pat Steele
Anne Rimmer	

I have increased the committee from five members to seven, in order to improve our representation from the statewide IU Libraries system. In addition to the Bloomington representatives on the committee, I am happy to welcome Wendall Johnting, from the School of Law Library-Indianapolis, and Pamela Sandstrom, from the IUPUI-Fort Wayne Library. Thanks to your continuing support of InULA, this year we will be publishing six issues of *The InULA Innuendo*.

In previous issues, *The Innuendo* has featured articles on salary inequity between library faculty and teaching faculty, faculty status for librarians, problems encountered by librarians who also teach, and the IUPUI University Libraries. These articles were written in response to suggestions by InULA members. The Publications Committee is compiling a list of topics to be addressed in articles during the coming year. Please contact any Publications Committee member with ideas for articles. We encourage you to share your concerns with us. *The InULA Innuendo* is your forum.

As an ex-officio member of every IU Libraries search and screen committee, Anne Rimmer, Personnel Officer, possesses unique insights into the conduct of a successful interview. In our feature article, Anne reviews the kind of information you will want to gather during an interview and techniques to insure that interviewer(s) and candidate communicate effectively.

Fred Musto, Reference Librarian, has always been somewhat secretive about what goes on in his Q161 Library Skills and Resources class. All we have known—until now—is that he receives consistently high marks from his students in the annual *IUSA Faculty-Course Evaluation*. In this issue of *The InULA Innuendo*, Fred finally reveals the secret of his success. Just how does he manage "to make a boring class funny?"

The InULA Innuendo is a publication of the Indiana University Librarians Association. Letters and comments should be addressed to Kristine Brancolini, Media Librarian, Library W121, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405. Publications Committee: Kristine Brancolini, editor, Julie Bobay, Wendall Johnting, Anne Rimmer, Pamela Sandstrom, Marilyn Shaver, Pat Steele.

Designed/Printed by Western Sun Printing Co. Inc., Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

NOTES FROM InULA

Barbara Dewey, President

(Barbara Dewey is Director of Admissions and Placement, SLIS.)

The InULA board and committee chairs have met several times this fall and committees are starting their work for the year. We still need more members on both the National Library Week Events Committee (Pat Steele, Chair) and the National Library Week Booksale Committee (Emily Okada, Chair). Our membership drive has been very successful this year and I am happy to report an increase over last year.

Work is progressing on a major spring conference, "The Politics of Information," cosponsored by InULA and BLFC Continuing Education Committee. Speakers will include Nat Hentoff, noted writer and lecturer on censorship; Patrick Baude, Professor, IU Law School; Joan Hoff-Wilson, Executive Director of the Organization of American Historians, John Swan, Wabash College Library and ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee member, Lynn Foster, Director, Ohio Northern University Law Library, and a representative from the Office of Management and Budget or Senator Lugar's office. The conference will be held April 4 and April 5 at Shawnee Bluffs Alumni Camp near Bloomington.

InULA will be assisting with another event this spring. Bloomington has been selected as the site of the 1985 Arbuthnot Lecture, a lecture program which honors May Hill Arbuthnot for her commitment to excellence in children's literature. The 1985 speaker is Patricia Wrightson, noted Australian author. She combines realistic characters with original folklore and legends in her books for children and young adults. The lecture will take place April 16th at IU. InULA plans to sponsor an exhibit and provide publicity to its membership for this exciting program.

Once again I would like to ask you for ideas for ways in which InULA can support its membership's professional development. Also we are very interested in more involvement and support of our members on various campuses. Remember to contact us if you have a project you feel is appropriate for InULA sponsorship. Last month we published a form for this purpose. Also we do set our budget for the 1985-86 year later this spring so you might be thinking about bigger projects you feel InULA could sponsor next year. Please contact any of the Board members or Committee Chairs with these ideas or requests.



1984-85 InULA Executive Board

Top row Pat Riesenman, Andrea Singer, Roxanne Sellberg
Bottom row Barbara Dewey, Fred Musto, Gail Oltmanns.
Not pictured Joanne Bailey

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW Continued

While preparing questions and noting areas to cover in the interview, it is helpful to recall someone who performed well in the position and ask yourself, "What qualities, experience, education, and so on, contributed to that person's success?" Or on the other hand, in the case of someone who was not successful in the position, "What did that person lack?"

If the interview is to be conducted by a group, it is important to select someone to be in charge of the interview session *ahead of time*. If no one is in charge, the candidate may feel that s/he must step in to fill that gap. Do not let this happen. The interviewers should be in control of the interview. The "chair" for the group should know the names of all those in the group and be responsible for maintaining the progress and focus of the interview. Each person should have reviewed the materials and come prepared with questions. Depending on the group, it might be preferable for the members to meet prior to the interview to discuss what each will cover, in order to avoid duplicating questions. Each member of the group should be introduced and their interest in the position briefly explained.

Finally, review the questions that should *not* be asked, including age, marital status, whether the candidate has children, religious affiliation, occupation of spouse, and so on.

During the Interview

Conduct the interview in a quiet place where there will be no interruptions. Be on time for the interview. A casual attitude about being punctual may communicate that you do not feel that the interview, position, or the candidate is important. Come prepared with all the materials you need.

As an interviewer, you have two roles. You have a public relations role, in that you are representing the institution. Your second role is an evaluator of the candidate. It is important that you communicate effectively. Try to establish rapport with the candidate by doing the following:

- Be yourself.
- Be polite and courteous
- Try to put the candidate at ease. Intimidating someone will not ensure that you get the information you need to make an informed recommendation.
- Demonstrate a respect for the candidate
- Try to avoid disagreeing with or disapproving of a candidate's statement.
- Be aware of your prejudices and resolve to set them aside.
- Maintain eye contact with the candidate.
- Allow the candidate to do the talking. A general rule of thumb is that the interviewer should talk about 25% of the time; 50% is too much.
- Concentrate your attention fully on the candidate. Do not work on other things during the interview.
- Listen carefully. Try to avoid analyzing the interview while it is still in progress. You are likely to miss some of what the candidate says.
- Allow the candidate time to ask questions.

Be consistent with your questions so that you will be able to compare candidates, but try to avoid "on-the-spot" comparisons during the interview. Do not ask long, involved, hypothetical questions. They may only confuse the candidate. Although some hypothetical questions may be helpful, remember that the answer is based only on that brief bit of information you have given the candidate.

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Listen carefully and probe when necessary. Do not intentionally produce stress. If you ask questions that will require some thought on the candidate's part before responding, be prepared to be comfortable with silences. Although 30 seconds of silence may seem an eternity in that type of situation, avoid jumping in with the answer yourself, rephrasing the question, or rushing on to the next one.

Ask open-ended questions. Do not ask questions that can be answered yes or no. Avoid asking leading questions. This tempts the candidate to slant answers to suit you. A well-worded question should 1) be phrased clearly and concisely, 2) require the candidate to draw on his or her own experience; and 3) usually begin with "what," "why," "how," "describe," "tell me about."

Always allow time at the end of the interview for the candidate to ask questions. Conclude the interview gracefully. Thank the candidate for his or her time and indicate what will happen next.

After the Interview

Take some time to think about the interview and to digest what you have heard. Look over the position description again, review your notes, the vita, and other materials, then carefully analyze the interview. Evaluate the whole interview, not just your first impressions.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that you will remember the candidates and the interviews without notes. You probably will not. Things begin to blur in your mind and you may not be able to recall who said what. If you did not take notes during the interview, jot down some of your impressions and facts afterward, before you forget. Now is the time to compare candidates and to evaluate them in terms of what is required for the position.

Although interviews are costly, they are well worth the expense if they enable you to make an effective hiring decision.

(References may be requested from Anne Rimmer. Her address is Library Administration C-2, Main Library, Bloomington.)

Some Things You Will Want to Learn: A Checklist

- _____ How the candidate applies aptitudes and skills
- _____ How the candidate relates to others
- _____ How the candidate solves problems
- _____ What motivates the candidate
- _____ How the candidate would apply past experience in this position

Some Things You Will Want to Discuss: A Checklist

- _____ Educational background
 - _____ Experience
 - _____ Personal characteristics—interpersonal skills, management style, and so on
 - _____ Job expectations and career goals
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InULA PEOPLE

Pat Riesenman, CARS Co-ordinator at IU-Bloomington, will be visiting the People's Republic of China from April 12 to May 3, 1985. Pat was invited to join a Library and Information Science Delegation sponsored by the Citizen Ambassador Program of People to People International. Dr. Robert C. Stueart, Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College, will lead the delegation, which will visit Beijing, Xian, Shanghai, and Hong Kong. Delegation members will spend about 20 hours per week in technical meetings and discussion sessions, institution and facility visits, and informal gatherings with Chinese colleagues. Using resumes submitted by delegation members, The Society of Library Science of the People's Republic of China will arrange meetings and visits related to the members' interests and expertise.

The invitation to join the delegation came as a complete surprise to Pat—"a happy bolt out of the blue." Because she was unfamiliar with the People to People organization, Pat immediately contacted Gail Oltmanns, Assistant Head of UGLS at Bloomington, for information. Gail and her husband Tom visited China with a similar delegation, comprised of psychologists, in August 1982. Pat has just begun preparing for her trip, starting with the basics—looking at maps. Over the coming months, as Pat learns more details about the itinerary, she plans to do additional reading and preparation, both for sightseeing and professional activities. She suspects that her work in training librarians to search online data-bases may be of interest to her Chinese hosts.



RANDOM THOUGHTS OF A Q161 INSTRUCTOR

Fred Musto

*(Fred Musto is a Reference Librarian in the
Reference Department, IU-Bloomington)*

Too much exposure to undergraduates in the library can be hazardous to a librarian's mental health. En masse, they seem to have no redeeming qualities. How can they collectively be so loud, so ignorant, so lacking in the social graces, so insensitive to the pleasures of the printed word? How can their attention span be so limited, especially on those tours where we know we can impart everything they need to know to survive in the library in just 45 minutes? Occasionally, they don't seem like such yahoos when dealt with on a one-to-one basis. A perceived need on the part of the student, coupled with a librarian who has the time and the patience to give, can create that all too rare situation where the student feels some understanding, perhaps even gratitude—and the librarian feels a sense of helpfulness, accomplishment, and a "this-is-what-it's-all-about" feeling.

The "Library Skills" class stems from good intentions. How can we get them before they're totally turned off by the library, before they become seniors and sheepishly admit "this is my first time in the library"? How can we give them (what we think are) the "basics," get them started on the road to self-confidence and competence in finding information?

The class presents new problems. You have a captive audience (most of the time), but how to motivate? You can't tell them the class is necessary to gain entry to law school or to get an interview with a Fortune 500 company. They know it's not going to change their lives. The practical considerations have some impact—it might help them in their other classes and the one credit that may get them to the magic 12-credit-hour mark for financial aid can be a powerful incentive. You do have the power of the "final grade" over them, although poor grades are given rarely and reluctantly and with the unstated guilt that you must have failed somewhere along the line.

You get to know them as individuals. Some you like instantly—their personality, enthusiasm, brightness destining them for success. Some have the opposite effect, and you struggle to find some redeeming qualities. You envy their youth, their freedom. You cluck at their excessive concern with

the trivial. But was it really that long ago when you worried about grades, resented the perceived quirkiness in the instructor's teaching style, talked endlessly about "all-nighters" and 5-page "research papers," and let only an occasional bout of test anxiety interrupt the constant focus on the opposite sex?

You cringe at their ineptitude. You wonder how some of them can possibly make it, but know that they'll all go on to become management trainees. Time for such speculation is limited. You're too busy correcting the endless assignments, working up class presentations that won't be too deadly, trying to think of a few contemporary references that you can throw in so they won't think you're completely out-of-it. (You too have heard of John Cougar Mellencamp and The Psychedelic Furs.)

What can you hope to accomplish? What you can do is affect their attitudes toward the library. You can show them that librarians are OK; that we are not all stereotypical, that we can be concerned and empathetic, have a sense of humor, can help without pontificating, can reduce their frustration level without making them feel "really dumb," and can appreciate the fact that college is for learning and growing—and very little of that is going to come from inside the library. If you can accomplish that, and have them show up next semester, find the *Readers' Guide* on their own, and remember your name, then perhaps you've accomplished a great deal.

BOOKS, ETCETERA

Pat Steele
SLIS Library

In 1982 the Office for Library Personnel Resources of ALA began a new publication devoted to current issues in library personnel. Called T.I.P. Kits (Topics in Personnel), these folders are a collection of papers, bibliographies and resource lists appropriate to each individual issue.

SLIS Library now has four of the kits with two in the order process. Kit #1 on unionization and collective bargaining is typical of the way in which the information is organized. There is a basic introduction setting parameters—kits are generally designed to serve those unfamiliar with the topic but can also be utilized by the practitioner and the educator. The introduction is followed by nine papers on unions for library employees, labor law, bargaining procedures, and so on. The final content is an excellent bibliography of over 300 citations.

Other kits in SLIS include *Pay Equity: a comparable worth action guide* (#2), *Equal employment opportunity: basic concepts and current issues* (#3) and *Humanizing the work place: quality of work life in libraries* (#4). The kit on humanizing the work place is particularly interesting, with articles on various quality of work life programs, the state of the art for alternative work schedules, part time employment, the quality circle, and job enrichment, among others. The issues covered in the upcoming kits are administering staff cutbacks and employee selection. If you are interested in any of these topics, the T.I.P. Kits are a good place to begin investigating. (SLIS Z682.T46)

