

Be an Employer of Choice

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What does it mean to be an employer of choice?

An employer of choice is an organization that is widely perceived as an attractive place to work. An employer of choice:

- Supports its staff
- Offers competitive compensation
- Encourages professional growth and leadership opportunities
- Provides a stable and productive work environment
- Recognizes the hard work and contributions of employees
- Has a positive reputation in the community

But my library is small!

That's okay - everything on this list can be scaled to the needs of a small library.

But you will need:

1. Your long-range plan
2. Sufficient funding to meet your goals



Hiring Now vs. Hiring Eventually



Let's look at how to approach two different scenarios:

1. Hiring Now: Your current employee has just handed in their notice.
2. Hiring Eventually: Your library will have an opening for a current or new position someday.

Hiring now!

So, you've got an opening at the library.

Before you go writing your snappy job advertisement, consider:

- What the job requires
- What your organization needs
- What the library can offer
- What the competition is offering
- Legal obligations

Ready? Let's go!



What does a small library director do?

- Selects and maintains library materials, including books and media
- Oversees and/or plans library programming for a variety of ages
- Coordinates outreach programs and services to underserved audiences
- Provides technology help to patrons, and troubleshoots library devices
- Oversees building repairs, maintenance, and layout
- Manages staff and volunteers
- Oversees the library's web presence, including social media
- Promotes library services to a variety of audiences, including legislators
- Works with library trustees to develop policies and planning documents
- Submits reports to the community, the library board, library system, and DLD

What does your organization need?

This is where your long-range plan comes into play. What are the library's strategic goals, and what does it need to get there?

Goal: Raise the library's profile in the community

Plan: More marketing

Activities: Send press releases, newsletters, program flyers; increase social media presence

Skills needed: Writing, graphic design, technology

An ideal candidate for our job:

- Has excellent communication skills, including public speaking
- Can organize and present information to a variety of audiences
- Is comfortable with and adapts to changing technologies
- Is knowledgeable about literature (and other resources) across ages and interests
- Has excellent customer service skills
- Has experience managing people
- Has experience managing a budget



How to attract great candidates on short notice

If you currently offer:

- Competitive pay
- Benefits (insurance, retirement)
- Paid time off (holidays, sick, vacation)
- Flexibility (flexible schedule/remote work option)

Be crystal clear about all of these things in your job ad - especially salary range.

If you do not currently offer those things...

Two things you can do right away to make your compensation package more attractive are:

- Raise the salary
- Offer benefits

If you don't have the resources to put together a competitive compensation package in time, then you'll be relying primarily on:

- The library's reputation in the community
- How appealing you can make the job sound

Your job advertisement

A compelling job ad shouldn't be a straight rehash of the job description. You have the opportunity to highlight the library here, as well as its successes and values:

- What's your library budget? Is it stable?
- What is the board's vision for the library?
- What recent milestones or accomplishments has the library achieved?
- What is the community/region like?
- What's the library's work culture?

[Assistant Director, Chelmsford Public Library, Chelmsford \(MA\)](#)

[Head of Youth Services, Gloversville Public Library, Gloversville, NY : SLIS Jobline : College of Organizational, Computational, and Information Sciences](#)

But what about civil service?



Your library may be required to comply with civil service requirements. (Yes, even if you're a tiny library with a part-time director.)

Contact your library system or civil service board for more information.

Hiring... Eventually

So, you haven't got a job opening.

You can put your library in a great position to recruit and retain qualified staff in the future by:

- Developing/enhancing the library's public image
- Being intentional about your organizational culture
- Updating your strategic plan and policies
- Making sure the library funding is sustainable

The library's image

How is your library perceived in the community?

- Does it reflect your actual programs and services?
- Does it reflect your actual values and culture?
- Are you happy with it?
- If not, how to change it?



Combating Stereotypes

Libraries have some tough stereotypes to fight, and we're not always great at telling our stories. Do people in your community know that your library:

- Has Wi-Fi?
- Has e-books?
- Has an early literacy space for families with young children?
- Is open nights and weekends?
- Offers curbside service?
- Is fine-free?
- Can borrow books from other libraries?

What are the library stories you want to tell? What's the message behind them?

Telling the Library's Story

Library staff and trustees can work together to share the stories you want your community to know with:

- Traditional media (news coverage)
- Paid spots (advertising)
- Public service announcements
- Social media posts
- Library newsletter
- Report to the community
- Visual tools (branding, merchandise, signage)
- Word of mouth (inside and outside of the library walls)

Organizational Culture

“An organization's culture defines the proper way to behave within the organization. This culture consists of **shared beliefs and values established by leaders** and then communicated and reinforced through various methods, ultimately shaping employee perceptions, behaviors and understanding. Organizational culture sets the context for everything an enterprise does.”

–Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)

<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/understandinganddevelopingorganizationalculture.aspx>

How does organizational culture manifest?

How can we tell that a library has developed a work culture that values:

- Access?
- Customer service?
- Innovation?
- Professionalism?
- Sustainability?
- Safety?
- Social responsibility?
- Teamwork?



Strategic Planning

Take some time during your next strategic planning session to identify your library's values - or what you would like them to be.

Then ask, how are your library's values reflected in your:

- Policies and procedures?
- Programs and services?
- Physical space?

If you need inspiration, you can check out these core values from the American Library Association:

[Core Values of Librarianship | Advocacy, Legislation & Issues](#)

Best Practices: Recruitment & Retainment

Best practices for recruitment

Be clear about what you're offering and what you're asking for.

- Know the job
- Always, always advertise
- Comply with civil service requirements
- Clearly communicate the values of the library
- Clearly communicate the skills you're looking for
- Make the job and your library sound compelling
- Offer a competitive salary and benefits package

Best practices for retention

Employees stay when they feel like their job is the right place for them to be. Make your library too good a workplace to leave!

- Adopt personnel policies that reflect a modern workforce
- Support opportunities for staff to develop professionally
- Create an environment that encourages feedback and innovation
- Develop a responsive board that trusts and respects the staff
- Identify and clearly communicate organizational values
- Keep those salary and benefits competitive!

The Money Talk

Library Funding

It is the board's responsibility to make sure that the library has the funding it needs for the library to:

- Hire a qualified director
- Ensure the library has the staff it needs, including coverage for planned and unplanned absences
- Carry out the programs and services outlined in your strategic plan

Library directors should do everything they can to advocate for the funding the library needs to be properly staffed.



In defense of better salaries...

Libraries that can afford to pay library staff competitively:

- Are walking the walk
 - Demonstrating the value they place on hiring qualified staff
- Have a better chance at a wider applicant pool
 - May see a greater number of applicants
 - Won't miss out on qualified candidates who can't afford to accept the job
 - Increase the diversity of their candidates
- Are more likely to retain current employees
 - Won't lose staff to better paying jobs
 - Will be able to concentrate on growing (not just maintaining) library services

Minimum Wage vs Living Wage

Minimum wage is **the lowest possible wage allowed by state law**. As of December 31, 2022, the minimum wage in New York state is \$14.20/per hour.

[Minimum Wage | Department of Labor](#)

“Living wage is a theoretical income level that allows individuals or families to afford **adequate shelter, food, and other necessities**... Economists suggest it should be enough to ensure that no more than 30% of this income gets spent on housing.” - Investopedia

[What Is a Living Wage? Definition, History, and How to Calculate](#)

A Competitive Wage

Libraries hiring for a full-time, degreed (MLS-holding) librarian should expect to pay well above a living wage.

The median pay for Librarians and Library Media Specialists in 2021, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics was:

\$61,190/annually

\$29.42/hourly

[Librarians and Library Media Specialists : Occupational Outlook Handbook](#)



“What do other libraries pay their staff?”

System staff are often asked this question, especially when the position is part-time and does not require an MLS. The answer is typically NOT a good yardstick.

- Public libraries, in general, are underfunded
- Library directors are not always recognized for their status as the head of a nonprofit organization
- Part-time staff are not always paid for the additional hours it takes to adequately perform their duties

What we are never asked is, “What is the entry-level wage of a non-managerial part-time job in my community?”

The Competition

Your local competitors for jobseekers probably won't be other libraries - especially if your position is part-time.

Consider what you're offering as compared to other part-time jobs in your community. If you're hiring for a director, also factor in the responsibilities of running a non-profit organization. Adjust accordingly.

WE'RE HIRING!

BARISTA, BAKER AND LINE COOK

WE ARE LOOKING FOR RELIABLE, ENERGETIC AND ENGAGED PEOPLE WITH EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE TO JOIN OUR CREW!

PART TIME AND FULL TIME POSSIBLE. WEEKENDS ARE REQUIRED.



- **COMPETITIVE WAGES + TIPS**
- **FREE MEAL AND DRINK DURING SHIFT**
- **THOROUGH TRAINING**
- **EVENINGS OFF**
- **25% EMPLOYEE DISCOUNT**
- **5% DISCOUNT FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY**
- **PAID TIME OFF**
- **RETIREMENT OPTIONS***

“They won’t need the money...”

Beware of trying to keep staffing costs down by making assumptions about candidates you may know personally:

- “They’re retired; they won’t need the money.”
- “Their spouse has health insurance; we don’t need to offer it.”
- “They love libraries; they’d work here for free.”

The salary range and benefits of a job are tied to the position, not the applicant. Prepare your budget with the expectation that every candidate will be paid the top of your salary range and take you up on every benefit you offer.

“But it’s only part-time...”

Your library can make any job the kind of job that people line up around the block for. Offer all staff:

- Competitive wage and benefits
- Practical hours
- Paid time off
- Paid training opportunities and travel expenses
- Opportunities for growth, leadership
- Meaningful tasks
- A positive and stable work environment
- The tools they need to succeed



Questions?