

2023

Chapter 3: ISBN Thinking about Public Library Careers

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Original Publication Citation

Hayes, M., & Mullis, A. (2023). Chapter Three: ISBN Thinking about Public Library Careers. In S. C. Kimmel (Ed.), *A Guide to Library Careers: Choosing Your Path* (pp. 1-8). Old Dominion University Libraries.

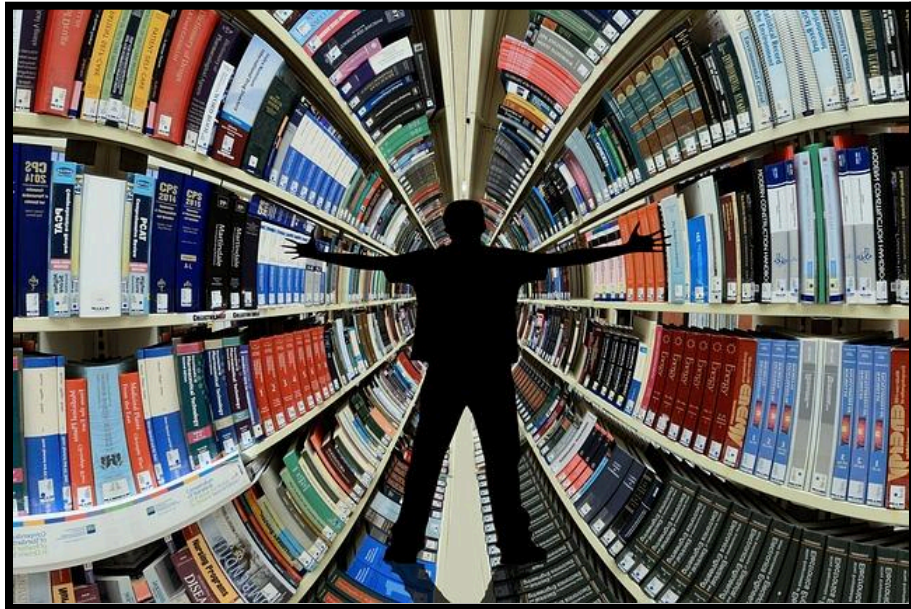
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A Guide to Library Careers

Chapter Three : ISBN Thinking about Public Library Careers

By Molly Hayes and Ashlee Mullis

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Altmann, G. (January 13, 2019). *Library books knowledge information*. [Image]. Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/photos/library-books-knowledge-information-3926899/>

Although there are several specialties a future librarian can choose, one of the most rewarding is that of a public librarian. Out of all the choices such as art, music, law, school, and academic librarians, the public librarian is the only profession that can serve children and adults of all ages. People choose to visit the public library to find

books they enjoy, find unusual collections, do research for school or personal use, utilize free wifi, or join in on reading groups. Local libraries provide free resources and materials as well as items in special collections that one would never think a library would offer.

According to the ALA, there are a plethora of job titles and opportunities for a librarian in a public library including Archivist, Cataloging Manager, Circulation Manager, AV/Media Specialists, Branch Manager, Information Specialist, and Library Manager, just to name a few (Davis, n.d). The opportunities are endless, and so are the rewards of being in a position to be able to help people in your community open up new worlds and possibilities.

The best way to find out more about a profession is to talk to a person who has experience in the field. Ms. Rich is a local librarian who serves as a cataloger, works in programming, and in circulation. Some of her duties include processing all of the books, DVDs, chromebooks, and hot spots. Ms. Rich has been employed as a librarian for 10 years. She explained that she uses an Integrated Library System called TLC, which is a module on her computer where she inputs and modifies records. The Online Computer Library Center claims records and downloads them into TLC. From there she catalogs and processes everything. If anyone in the country wants a book, they can borrow it through an interlibrary loan. She talked about how each branch requests books, making sure to pay special attention to collections or niches they feel are underrepresented. They work hard to make sure the choices of materials are diverse and inclusive. Public Librarians have such an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the people they serve. Ms. Rich explained why she loves her job so much. She gets to do something

she enjoys. She said she is fortunate at this library system because she has been able to move outside her normal job duties. There is also something that bothers her in her job as well. She spoke of the struggle with advocacy and trying to communicate to people what librarians are and what they do. There are some people who can't understand that it isn't just dealing with books (M. Rich, personal communication, April 5, 2023).

What Are Public Libraries?



Lawford, Herry. (2007, Oct. 9). *Earlsfield public library*. [Image]. Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/32662631@N00/1554426306>. CC-BY 2.0

Public libraries serve a very wide range of patrons and their information needs. Mission statements for public libraries show that they provide all things to all people: leisure-reading for everyone from toddlers to senior citizens, and information needs for first-graders to scholars. The typical public library comes under the jurisdiction of a municipal governmental agency (city or county). But the specific mission of each individual public library must take into consideration the particular needs of their community. Different hours may be required, different collections of materials may be necessary to fulfill the information needs, and different services may be crucial in providing what is demanded by patrons.

A public library may be a single facility or many branches throughout their service area. Public libraries in rural areas may be in the form of a bookmobile that makes regular rounds to a dispersed population.

As the information needs of communities change, so must the objectives of a public library to keep pace. Throughout the nineteenth century, adult education was seen as the primary objective. But as the twentieth century came, recreational reading and reference were added to the list of objectives. By the 1960s, when a wave of social consciousness took hold, public libraries increased their efforts to help poor and uneducated people fit into the more highly scientific and technical society. With the advent of the Internet, the way that Americans view information has changed. This phenomenon has caused all types of librarians to question, "Is a library a place or a

function”?

An additional function of the public library is to provide Internet access – often the only place for some patrons to access information that is only available online. The digital divide is another example of the information “have” and “have nots.” It is an objective of the public library to help those on the wrong side of the digital divide to bridge the gap.

Patron Services, also called public services, include any function of the library that facilitates patron-librarian interactions. These sometimes overlap with reference and circulation departments. In fact, sometimes **Circulation** is considered a subset of Patron Services. Other examples of Patron Services include programming, booklist creation, computer labs, informational videos, and other initiatives.

Technical Services includes cataloging, collections development, acquisitions, and other aspects of the library that occur without much direct patron involvement.

The purpose of **Cataloging** involves two separate activities. First, a shelf address or location must be assigned to each book, CD, video, pamphlet, or other item. Second, specific information for each item must be entered into the library holding’s database.

Within the activity of providing specific information about each item, there are two types of cataloging taking place:

- Descriptive cataloging describes the physical characteristics of the item, such as size and physical dimensions, number of pages, or length of running time.
- Subjective cataloging focuses on identifying the primary subjects and assigning the most appropriate subject headings. Subjective cataloging enables a searcher to locate specific items of which they are interested (Hepler and Horlek, 2023).

At one time, cataloging was accomplished one item at a time (original cataloging). This was very labor intensive and the work was duplicated by each library. With the advent of the Library of Congress' catalog card distribution system and then cooperative catalogs and worldwide bibliographic utilities, copy cataloging became the routine avenue for most items. Today, a cataloger is able to search large, reliable databases, such as OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) and download the information into their own records. This saves many hours of work for each item. Original cataloging must still be performed on unique items.

Over the last 25 years, cataloging processes have changed dramatically. Most libraries perform original cataloging on less than 10% of their acquisitions, and many small libraries are able to find acceptable cataloging for all except 1-2% of their new items.

Acquisitions can be considered the “business” part of Technical Services. This department's purpose is to obtain selected items and provide payment. They

work in coordination with book vendors, publishers, and license providers to secure access for library staff and patrons. Acquisitions often works in tandem with the Collections Development Department.

Preservation is a technical facet of librarianship usually reserved for special libraries, like archives or government repositories. However, it can, and is, also performed at public, school, and academic libraries for items that are worn down, especially if these items are high in circulation. Preservation can occur through taking steps to preserve the physical item, transferring the information-containing parts from their original binding to a new binding or physical format, and digital preservation.

Hepler, R. and Horalek, D. (2023). *Introduction to library and information science*. College of Southern Idaho. <https://csi.pressbooks.pub/lis/> CC BY NC 4.0

What's it Like to Work in a Public Library?

Public Library Careers

There are many different careers in the public library setting. Whether you enjoy management and directing, kids literature is your passion, or you have a love for helping others in your community, there is a place for anyone who has a calling to surround yourself with books, information, and service to your patrons. Public Librarians must hold a Masters Degree in Library and Information Science in order to be considered for a position. Some of the possible careers one can pursue are Library Director or Manager, Reference Librarian, Outreach Librarian, Children's and Young Adult Librarian, Tech Services, and Support Services.

PUBLIC LIBRARY CAREERS



LIBRARY DIRECTOR/MANAGER

Manages departments, implements daily activities and operations, and provides guidance and direction.



REFERENCE

Recommends, interprets, and/or uses information resources to help patrons find what they are looking for.



OUTREACH

Provides equitable delivery of services to all community patrons through program development and practices.



CHILDREN'S/YA LIBRARIAN

Creates educational and recreational programs for children and young adults.



TECH SERVICES

Acquires, organizes, and preserves materials. Jobs include: Acquisitions, Collections Development, Cataloging, Preservation/Archives, and Metadata.



SUPPORT SERVICES

These jobs include working in the director's office, finance, HR, and communications/marketing.

Hayes, M. (2023) Library Careers. [Infographic]. Adapted from: ALA. (2023). Library careers. <https://www.ala.org/educationcareers/libcareers>