

Redesigning Staff Recruitment for the 21st Century: A Case Study from the University of Chicago Library

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Abstract

The University of Chicago Library acquisitions department experienced a significant amount of clerical and supervisory staff turnover between 2016 and 2019. Viewing this period of change as an opportunity to recruit a highly skilled and diverse staff poised to sustain the department for the future. We knew that we had to think differently about what skills we needed and what skills would be transferable from industries outside the library or academe into the library. This paper provides an outline of the potential benefits of non-library industry hiring by looking at current departmental needs and anticipating future industry developments and changes through hiring, and why considering applicants new to the Library may address each of those challenges, why and how to reframe job descriptions and interviews to focus on transferable and soft skills, in the absence of relevant library experience, and looks at needed training and development to acclimate new hires into library work.

Introduction

Over the past four years, the Acquisitions Services section at the University of Chicago Library redesigned its hiring practices and procedures in order to attract a wider range of candidates to fit this new climate of flexibility and diversity. After assessing both the needs of particular positions in the department and the skills actually required to succeed in these roles, we discovered many potential candidates resided outside of the library environment. We were looking for various skills including rigorous experience with management and collaboration, as well as other “soft skills,” which would become vital to moving the section forward. This paper, based on a presentation done as part of the 2020 online conference, *The Exchange*¹, details the processes by which we identified the possibility for recruiting from retail and other non-library industries and how we restated and implemented this desire; it also explores the experience of orienting and training new library employees who came from non-library backgrounds and entered the University of Chicago at both the supervisory and clerical levels. Additionally, we include information and reflection on the hiring process. We seek to provide a model for casting a wide net in a candidate pool without sacrificing fidelity to vital library-specific objectives and tasks.

Background

The University of Chicago Library serves a diverse university community in an urban setting. Located in the Hyde Park neighborhood on Chicago’s South Side, the Library’s holdings include over 11 million print volumes, 62,000 linear feet of archives and manuscripts, and 153 terabytes of digital materials.

Acquisitions Services is one of four sections under the umbrella of the Library’s central Technical Services Department. Acquisitions comprises three units: Monographic Orders, Receiving and Rapid Cataloging, and Electronic Resources Management. These units are responsible for the ordering, receiving, and rapid cataloging of all monograph and electronic materials in all languages, except for Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and in all subjects except for law. Together, these units handle a high volume of work which includes ordering approximately 40,000 firm and approval selections, receiving over 50,000 items (both paid and

donated), as well as managing over 3.8 million e-books and streaming media and 198,434 electronic serial titles (active and inactive). The section is staffed by two librarians (MLS), two supervisors (non-MLS), 13 clerical staff, and 4-6 student assistants. The clerical staff are unionized and are members of Local 743 International Brotherhood of Teamsters².

Changing Work and Focus in the Section

Beginning in early 2016 and continuing through the summer of 2019, Acquisitions underwent a lengthy period of significant changes in staffing and the types of work assigned to the section. In terms of staffing, the section experienced position reductions and staffing fluctuations which were due to position attrition, retirements, the transfer of a position to another technical services unit, medical leaves, and general staff turnover.

Acquisitions went from a traditional print-based unit to a print and electronic hybrid. In early 2016, the Acquisitions section was primarily print-focused, and its various workflows heavily relied on a large staff. Moreover, the prevailing work culture was not one of customer service; the staff did not view their work as an outward-facing service with “customers.” This viewpoint was not uncommon throughout the library’s technical services department. It reflected an “old school style” large, research library model where collection selection, and the corresponding technical services work are centered around the “just-in-case” model of collecting.

In 2015 and 2016, the section saw a sharp increase in requests for unowned materials. These requests came directly from patrons via the “Suggest a Purchase” form on the Library’s web page, as well as from the Library’s subject selectors on behalf of a patron. Patron requests were an overlooked aspect of the acquisitions process. We needed an expedited customer-service focused workflow that put the patron and their information needs first, with a quick turn-around from request to receipt, and we needed staff who understood the patron-centered service implications of this type of workflow. In addition to this increase in patron requests, Acquisitions had recently resumed the ordering and receiving responsibilities for materials requested from the Library’s Special Collections Research Center (SCRC). Rare books and manuscript collections were a high-profile workflow and needed special and expedited attention. The dealer would hold the materials for us on request of the selector, but would not process, ship, or invoice until we sent an official order. The selection to order turn-around time had to be quick, precise and cordial. Staff who were tasked to process patron requests and SCRC materials needed to be able to correspond with tact and clarity with the Library’s subject specialists, vendors, and, at times, patrons.

The final and perhaps largest change occurred in 2018 when a separate Electronic Resources Management unit joined the section. In addition to print materials, Acquisitions was now responsible for ordering, receiving electronic books (single and packages), databases, streaming media, data sets, as well as maintaining and troubleshooting electronic resources. Additionally, with an ILS migration on the future horizon, there was a greater emphasis within Technical Services on quality control and database clean up.

At first the solution seemed simple: look for more efficient ways of doing the work and maximize any economies of scale in order to keep up with the volume. Acquisitions collaborated with a fellow Technical Services unit, Data Management Services and created a simple, yet effective print ordering workflow which took advantage of readily available technology: Google Sheets, MarcEdit, and the ILS’s robust batch loader³. The success of this more automated workflow reinforced the concept that tasks had to be automated in some way in order to keep up with the volume. However, automation would rely on rethinking and reworking existing

workflows and would most certainly introduce new technology. With the addition of a new unit, a change in the types of materials the section was handling, as well as the need for incorporating a customer service focus to work, the section's workflows were becoming increasingly dynamic and complex. There was also a strong need for cross-training and succession planning and sustainability. The section staff was small and needed to be nimble in order to maintain high volume. The staff needed to be skilled in order to produce quality work in a changing environment. The section needed supervisors who were strong in logistics, training, and management; the section needed staff who possessed computer, critical thinking, and customer service skills. However, the current skill sets and job descriptions reflected a now antiquated environment.

Although challenging in terms of keeping tasks covered and the work flowing, this turnover and period of change provided the opportunity to rethink the work of the unit: what was done, how it was done, what else needed to be done, as well as look to providing a depth of coverage and back-up on tasks across the three units which would help in times of need. Most importantly, we needed to identify the skills that were needed to build for the future. Before recruiting for an open position, we took the time to rework the job description and recruit for those future tasks and needed skill sets.

In 2016 non-librarian job descriptions were rife with library-specific requirements. Although some of the union positions attracted a large pool of applicants, many did not meet the outlined requirements. Their resumes often indicated the necessary skills for the position, but lacked the very specific required library experience. For example, one required skill that was listed was "Library database searching." Candidates often would not have this skill unless they had previously worked in a library. However, candidates with retail or general office experience had database searching skills, but not library-specific ones. We were restricting ourselves by assigning an emphasis on the content of the database instead of the skill - searching.

"Making great hires is about recognizing great matches—and often they're not what you'd expect. -- Patty McCord"⁴

Former chief talent officer for Netflix wrote a piece in the Harvard Business Review in 2018 about Netflix's successful recruiting processes which focused on finding the right candidate based on transferable skills regardless of industry background. We knew we could do this as well. We could make great hires if given the right candidate pool, but we were struggling to attract viable candidates who possessed the skills we needed. To correct this, we started with the job description, which at University of Chicago doubled as the job advertisement.

The two positions impacted the most from our myopic job descriptions were the two non-librarian, non-union supervisors who headed up the Ordering and Receiving units. These positions were the critical pieces of the staffing puzzle. The two supervisor positions had historically been occupied by staff who were attending library school. They would leave soon after graduating and securing a MLS librarian job. When advertised, these positions also attracted recent library school graduates who possessed the requisite library education but lacked the job experience to be competitive on the MLS market. These candidates were willing to trade their library education and skills to gain the work and crucial management experience to become competitive in the MLS job market. A two-year turn-around time was the norm -- long enough to either establish a firm managerial foundation to round out their portfolio or to finish their Master's degree and find a position that required an MLS.

Supervisors for these units possessed solid library skills, such as OCLC searching, a firm knowledge of MARC, library systems and structures, and many tended to have a

background in academia. But they often lacked strong supervisory and management skills. This revolving door of supervisors was not healthy for the section. Strategic goals and work planning were continually set aside during these vacancies, as the section head focused on the units' immediate needs, in order to free up the necessary time to recruit, hire, and onboard a new supervisor. These vacancies were stressful on the unit staff who needed a stable presence and advocate.

Given the section's challenges of the changing work and staff turnover, we needed supervisors who were strong, experienced managers, who could manage staff, who had a variety of abilities, skills, and learning styles, and who could be effective recruiters and trainers. We also needed candidates with superior critical thinking skills, well-versed in logistics, and who could re-examine and re-imagine current workflows. Finally, we needed candidates who possessed a strong customer service focus, as these positions liaised with the section's clients: vendors, the Library's subject specialists, and increasingly with patrons. Since change happens at all levels, we wanted supervisors who could approach their work through a customer-service lens and help impart that perspective throughout the section. Any library-specific skills could be taught and were secondary in importance.

When the ordering supervisor position opened, we wanted to expand and improve the candidate pool by re-writing the job description. We started with the job title: Supervisor, Monographic Orders⁵ became Supervisor, Library Orders⁶. We learned from a previous failed search that many candidates, even those with MLS credentials, were puzzled by the term "monograph." The candidates would ask "what exactly would I be ordering? What is a monograph?" We believed that the title alone was deterring potentially qualified people from applying. We removed the library-specific jargon and went for a transferable function instead - ordering. We hoped to attract candidates from bookstores, library vendors, stores, corporate procurement, and any other position that had a strong ordering component. We changed the required education level from requiring only a Bachelor's degree to "Bachelor's degree, or an equivalent combination of education and experience, required."

We made additional changes by emphasizing the managerial requirement for supervisory experience and removing as much library jargon as possible focusing on the function and skill needed. Accordingly, "Supervise mono orders staff and workflows" became "People and process management." We included library and book industry specific qualifications but made them "preferred" with the reasoning that these additional qualifications would assist in identifying highly qualified candidates.

In 2018, we were able to successfully recruit, hire, and onboard a supervisor for the library orders unit. Our new supervisor joined us with a Bachelor's degree and several years' work experience from retail. They brought demonstrated experience in managing - from hiring, onboarding, and training, to conducting those uncomfortable and difficult conversations associated with performance improvement and discipline issues. Additionally, they had extensive experience in ordering, receiving, and paying for merchandise, vendor relations, and customer service. With a solid supervisor who had transferable skills, it was up to the library to provide the on-the-job training for the library-specific tasks, as well as provide an introduction to and encouragement to grow within the library profession.

The 2018 Orders Supervisor recruitment and resulting hire was successful, and we were optimistic that we could find an equally qualified candidate when the Receiving and Rapid Cataloging Supervisor position re-opened in 2019. We encountered a new challenge due to a new university job architecture rubric and structure for non-union, non-academic positions.⁷ The two acquisitions supervisor positions were classified within this new architecture scheme. Every

position that fell within the job architecture purview was assigned a career band and then a job level within the band. Each classification had its own required levels of education and work experience that could not be changed or altered.

The two acquisitions supervisor positions were assigned into the leadership band and assigned a job level as M1 (Manager 1). These positions required a Bachelor's degree as the minimum education credential, with the work experience requirement being between five and seven years. We were unable to customize the required experience and had to use the generic "Minimum requirements include knowledge and skills developed through 5-7 years of work experience in a related job discipline." We were able to add in "preferred qualifications" one of which was "Supervisory Experience."

We hoped that the phrase "work experience in a related job discipline" along with a preferred "supervisor experience" would attract a wide range of candidates, as the language was vague. Our concern was that we would be able to convince our Library Human Resources department that a particular candidate's experiences were relevant if they were not strictly library-related.⁸ We were prepared to make the case for a wide variety of experiences including, but not limited to general experience within higher education, library vendors, general retail, as well as library experience.

The candidate (and eventual hire) who possessed our highly desired skills came from retail management. Like their supervisory counterpart in orders, they did not possess any library-specific knowledge outside being a library patron. Instead they came with something better; they possessed the highly desired soft skills of people management and leadership, customer service, and critical thinking that are difficult to teach but are crucial for the success of the department.

Tina Erikson joined the acquisitions section as the Receiving and Rapid Cataloging supervisor. She provides her insights on what attracted her to the job and what she knew she could bring to the position.

Tina's Perspective

When I stepped into the position of Receiving and Rapid Cataloging Supervisor, I came from a strong retail background as a general manager for a cafe chain based in Chicago. My experience with retail and customer service has been invaluable in my transition to libraries. Due to a number of life changes, I wanted to change job settings but continue to use the skills I developed almost exclusively in retail. When the RRC Supervisor position was initially posted, I was unsure of some of the library-specific preferred and required qualifications, but I felt extremely confident that I would be able to manage all other aspects of the job as they were listed.

In terms of unit operations, I was unsure of what exactly "rapid cataloging" would entail, but the detailed day-to-day responsibilities such as handling invoices, receiving shipments, managing people, quality control, as well as approaching library-user interactions with a customer-service mindset were intimately familiar to me. As a retail manager in a small company, I managed my own inventory, ordering and receipt of product on a weekly basis, contacted and maintained vendor relations, and hired, onboarded, and trained my own team. I was accustomed to the world of high turnover, thus the need for clear, concise documentation that would be easy to understand for employees from a variety of different backgrounds and education levels, while still maintaining a high standard of the products and experience we provided to customers. Learning how to perform all necessary cafe operations while understaffed, or during especially busy periods, without getting flustered or thrown off track,

convinced me that whatever shape my unit was in at the Library, I could handle with relative ease. Being able to pivot from taking care of my staff to taking care of customers was a talent I learned I had and desired to develop more.

Working in a smaller retail company afforded me both the challenge and the opportunity to perform the majority of hiring, performance, and succession planning functions on my own. I learned how to identify strengths and weaknesses of my individual team members, how to recruit based on the team I already had and what skills or desired qualities I wanted to add to the mix to improve my business. Because retail turnover is chronically high, I approached team building with the fact in mind that at any point I may lose a team member due to school schedules, graduations, medical events or otherwise personal situations, or through the dreaded no-call no-show that happens all too frequently in retail settings. While the company's central HR provided support for each of these scenarios, the responsibility to adequately staff and train my store landed squarely on my shoulders. Transitioning to a team of new hires and library veterans, while updating documentation and learning the procedures for myself as well proved to be a challenge I was eager to meet. The product itself (tea, on the one hand, and books on the other, both precious to me indeed) was secondary to the expertise I had to offer from another industry.

With the two supervisors in place, we began looking at the tasks of the units and rewriting the classified staff job descriptions to reflect skills-based language. We also began rethinking what was needed for the units in terms of skills and tasks. We were able to obtain two higher level classified positions (C-9) for the ordering and receiving units. These two positions provided a depth of skills that we lacked. When filled, these positions would provide back-up to already existing C-9 positions in the three units. The C-9 positions are able to do all the tasks allocated to the classified staff of the units, including training and supervising student assistants. They handle the high profile, customer-service oriented tasks, as well as assist the supervisors with quality control.

Job Descriptions

Crafting a job description for potential candidates can either attract a strong, diverse pool or alienate potential applicants. When hiring outside of the library world, we realized we needed to organize and prioritize job responsibilities and skills differently in our job descriptions as they related to the changing work in our units. This involved several key focal points for retooling our job descriptions:

- Reassessing the type of language used.
- Managing our expectations and being realistic about which skills were preferred, strongly preferred, and required for a clerical position.
- Focusing on which technical skills could be taught, if lacking, and which soft skills we were really looking for that would be more difficult to teach on the job.

The following language has been pulled directly from real job descriptions, and we intentionally broadened some language to attract diverse talent from across many different industries:

“Assists with training and management of students including hiring, training, payroll, and performance management” This qualification is used for our two Principal Assistant positions (Principal Ordering Assistant and Principal Receiving Assistant). We want the applicants for these two positions to be able to demonstrate their abilities to train or lead others in some professional capacity, while not necessarily requiring that our applicant has “supervised the work of students in a library.”

“Checks and resolves invoices, working with payments and monographic orders staff to resolve problems” In the Receiving and Rapid Cataloging unit, we want to ensure that our staff are capable of interacting across units, and that they have some experience with handling incoming materials. Handling in-coming merchandise is common within the retail industry. The types of merchandise were immaterial, as we are looking for a transferable skill: ensuring the invoice was correct for the piece in hand and able to resolve problems.

“High priority and complex materials” this language is used for our newly created higher level, specialist roles (Ordering Specialist and Receiving Specialist). This language covers a range of industries and experiences. The ideal applicant should be able to demonstrate attention to detail and a sense of urgency, as well as an ability to adapt in a dynamic environment.

After re-tooling our job descriptions, we saw a more diverse mix of applicants for positions. We saw, interviewed and hired candidates with experiences in the second-hand book market, campus accessibility services, recent college grad who came with a strong background and interest in languages, a laboratory research assistant, an experienced law library serials assistant, a musician, and a video store assistant. We have had searches fail for numerous reasons: not finding any qualified candidates to interview, having qualified candidates withdraw, and having candidates decline a job offer. Although we knew we were not able to foresee when a candidate would withdraw from the process or decline a job offer, we knew we could mitigate some of the other issues. We hoped that by designing better more appealing job descriptions, improving the interview process, as well as highlighting some of the benefits of working at the university, we would be able to retain candidates’ interest. As you will learn below, Philip Stefani’s experience was in a video store, but his skills were easily transferable to the Receiving and Rapid Cataloging Assistant position.

Philip’s Perspective

From creating a film rental database to receiving books and database clean-up

When I saw the posting for Receiving and Rapid cataloging assistant, I jumped at the opportunity to apply because it seemed like the perfect way to apply skills I acquired working at a video store and to position myself for further growth in a library science / tech services direction. Most of all, I was excited by the prospect of working with materials in multiple foreign languages - I had experience with two European languages and wanted to push myself through exposure to new languages. This unit’s high-volume intake of materials also appealed to my abilities to work in a complex and busy environment. Further, the job posting mentioned more technical aspects of library work including the use of MARC language and the OCLC interface, things I knew just a little about at the time, but that excited me because of the skills that I would be able to learn surrounding their use.

Moreover, at Odd Obsession⁹ I participated in a large-scale database cleanup and reorganization project. It was a pet project of mine where I recognized the possibility, and later the need, to consolidate our record data with the patron request system we had been developing. It all consisted of extensive spreadsheet management and also some creativity in how best to organize the massive amount of standardized as well as unorganized information. When I shared this project at my Regenstein interview, I was excited to learn how cleanup projects like this were an important part of the RRC unit in which I hoped to work.

Decoding Resumes

Resume language does not often match up to how we have described the needed skills. The terminology used in different industries varies from library-speak. It is crucial that we learn to decode non-library language in order to match up demonstrated skills from our candidates' resumes.

We looked for resume job task descriptions such as “searched inventory” or “maintained database of” as a sign of transferable skills. Libraries utilize numerous databases to manage their bibliographic, order, license, and patron records. While the data is different, the concept is the same - searching and maintaining data. We also looked for language that addressed collaboration and the ability to work across units such as “worked on the office planning team” and “worked closely with the firm’s accountants to reconcile invoices and resolve problems.” We wanted to hire staff who were familiar and comfortable working with others and in groups. While work in the section had been relatively solitary, it was increasingly becoming collaborative. Additionally, we wanted to foster a collegial environment.

Oftentimes these transferable skills do not surface until the interview when candidates could provide concrete examples from their experiences and demonstrate their problem-solving abilities and highlight their skills.

The Interview

We approached the interview with this as the framework: ask the questions that will get you the answers you really want. It seems simple enough, but it's worth looking at each interview question with this in mind. We discovered that the best questions allowed candidates to showcase the skills they do have, but not at the expense of ignoring skills that they don't. For instance, if you already know that none of your candidates have a library background, you might want to take that question about MARC/BIBFRAME and include it as a follow-up, but prioritizing another skill set in the main question.

We created a master list of sample questions which were pulled from different industries and organized them based on what kind of skills/experience/qualities they were meant to quiz the candidate on. Many of our questions fall within the skills-based and behavioral categories, as they have worked for us; we found that the best candidates are able to link their past experiences and take on solving problems with the job's listed tasks. While we have a master list of questions to use and reuse, we are always on the lookout for additional questions, as well as pruning the list of questions that we found did not work so well when put into practice.

You may want to include specific situational questions as part of your interview repertoire. We stopped using the one situational question which had been used for years as part of the interview process for almost all of our union classified staff positions within Technical Services. We replaced the question in favor of two behavioral questions that elicited better responses and provided better insights into the candidates' skills and perspective behavior in this area.

The original question was “*Describe how you would handle a situation if you were required to finish multiple tasks by the end of the day, and there was no conceivable way that you could finish them (no, you can't work overtime).*” This question always made candidates laugh nervously. Instead of obtaining the needed information on how they would manage priorities and time, it frightened the candidates and conjured up an unpleasant image of a workplace with unrealistic workloads and expectations. We replaced it with: “*Can you give an example of a time when you have had to handle a variety of simultaneous assignments and describe the results?*” and “*Can you tell me about a time when you had competing priorities and deadlines.*”

How did you handle the situation?” These questions worked better and did provide an unintentional poor impression of the job and institution.

When thinking about questions, we opted not to shy away from more outside-the-library-box ones. A question we started to ask was, *“Name a product that you think is exceptionally well-designed. Tell me what makes it well-designed. Follow up: what you would improve about it.”* We found that the question was successful about 60% of the time. Either candidates embraced it or they did not. The ones who embraced this rather off-beat question were able to share an opinion about something and articulate in detail why it was good, but also examine it critically and provide feedback on improvement. We learned how detailed oriented a candidate could be as well as how well they could apply critical thinking.

Another outside-the-traditional-interview-question box was *“What makes you happiest and most effective when working with others?”* We categorized this question under “Teamwork.” We hoped to gain insights on how the candidate interacted with others, and it would also provide an insight on what the candidate would need in terms of being managed. What would our management team need to do to ensure this person is an effective and happy employee?

Aside from having good questions, we felt that we wanted to make the interview process as humane as possible. Job interviews are stressful, but we tried to make the candidates feel as comfortable and conduct the interview more like a conversation, taking questions as they naturally arose, although we made sure to leave ample time at the end of the structured questions for candidate questions. The best question we received from a candidate was “What book would you want to have with you on a deserted island?” By answering this question, we provided a sense of ourselves. It was personal, but not private. It proved to be an excellent ice-breaker and could be added to our master list of questions.

Philip’s Perspective

Transferring Skills to the Library

From my previous work as an undergraduate and working at Odd Obsession Movies, I was able to transfer my comfort and knowledge of working with spreadsheets, especially organizing bibliographic material across forms. I also found a resonance between the video store and the Regenstein library in that both places are patron-based lending library environments. There are patron requests and varied workflows for different materials so I have found much continuity in my work in that sense. Additionally, previously working in circulation in Penrose library I managed the receiving and distribution of our daily Interlibrary loan and regional exchange network, which is similar though not identical to much of the physical receiving I do at the Regenstein in the form of unboxing and routing books. Echoing Leo Lo’s ideas in “No More Square Pegs for Square Jobs,” that considering “[candidates] with non-traditional background, skills, and experience” better positions librarianship to meet the challenges of changing technology and reimagining an evolving profession,¹⁰ outside-library experiences have given me a perspective on the connection between patron and technical services and further allowed me to quickly make sense of the institutional networks at play in a university setting. Something that was not transferable was my extensive customer service experience from the video store and other work. At UChicago, I do not work directly with the library’s users. Also at Penrose Library, we used Alma for our library system while at University of Chicago we use Quali OLE. There is some similarity but at Penrose Library I mainly dealt with the front end for circulation while at University of Chicago I work entirely with specific item records and purchase orders.

Onboarding and Training

The final step was our onboarding and training processes within the units. We have developed some best practices to help set up our new hires for success from day one. New hires without library work experience need library-specific training and development. This training and development is more than learning new procedures and systems. It's learning about a new industry and profession. One of the main learning curves for someone coming in from a non-library background to library work is understanding the specific nomenclature and terminology, as well as the library-specific software and organization, such as MARC record structure and OCLC. We have had great success using the Association of Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) Fundamentals Web Course series¹¹ with new non-library hires. These courses provide both a practical and theoretical introduction and overview of department-specific work. We use these courses to augment a job and task-specific training plan, but they enable the new hire to gain all-important context for their work.

Here we offer some guidelines for orienting and training new hires without any or with little previous library experience. It is not an exhaustive list, but captures some of the most crucial elements of this process.

Always be available. Our new hires caught on quickly and were eager to learn the ropes, but we needed to be available to explain library-specific topics that were new to them. Limit meetings and other work commitments in order to be in the work space and available during the first few weeks. For our new supervisors, we scheduled training sessions and one-on-one meetings throughout the week to ensure there would be adequate time to touch base.

We cannot stress enough the need to have up-to-date, written documentation to which all staff members can refer. Our documentation was not in the best shape. It was out-of-date and confusing. We used this time to simplify and update our documentation and procedures.

Encourage collaboration! We have experienced much success from reaching out to more seasoned library veterans to help conduct tutorials on library practices such as advanced serials and series searching from our Serials Supervisors and OCLC training from our Head of Copy Cataloging. We included more seasoned staff in these training sessions as “refresher” courses, even the staff with the most longevity learned something new.

Supervisors, as part of their training, were encouraged to set up meetings with the other supervisors within Technical Services. These meetings would serve as an introduction between the two colleagues, as well provide an introduction to the work of the other unit. After the supervisors met with their departmental colleagues, they branched out to meet with supervisors, specifically interlibrary loan, reserves, and bookstacks. The work of these units intersects with acquisitions.

“Many people think that if something worked yesterday and is still working today, it will work tomorrow. That’s wrong...” Garry Kasparov¹²

Like chess grandmasters, who are always examining and improving their games and strategies, we, as library professionals, need to continually look back over our processes and adapt them based on experience, technology, and the environment. How we recruit, hire, onboard, and train staff will certainly need to be re-examined in “new normal” brought about by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

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Published: December 2020

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¹ The Exchange: an ALCTS/LITA/LLAMA collaboration. May 4, 6, 8, 2020.
<https://exchange2020.learningtimesevents.org/>

² In June 2017, the Library's student assistants voted to unionize as the Student Library Employees Union (SLEU), represented by Local 743 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. After a lengthy legal battle, in December 2019 the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the National Labor Relations Board's (NLRB's) decision to deny the University a hearing and that the University must recognize the student library workers' collective bargaining efforts. A contract has not yet been formalized.

³ Susan J. Martin and Christie Thomas. "One library's collaborative approach to simplifying the ordering process with spreadsheets" Let's Get Technical, *Against the Grain*. November 2017.

⁴ Patty McCord, "How to Hire," *Harvard Business Review* 96, no. 1 Jan/Feb2018 : 92.

⁵ <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/supervisor-monographic-orders-university-chicago-0>. Accessed 11 September 2020.

⁶ <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/supervisor-library-orders-university-chicago> Accessed 11 September 2020.

⁷ At the University of Chicago, librarians are considered "other academic appointees" and fall under the purview of the Provost for appointment. The new job architecture was implemented for all non-union, non-academic positions. In the library this mainly applied toward the library supervisors and IT staff.

⁸ <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/receiving-and-rapid-cataloging-supervisor-university-chicago-0> Accessed 8/28/2020 2:20pm

⁹ Odd Obsession was an independently owned and operated video store focused on rare and cult films. It was located in the Bucktown neighborhood of Chicago. Unfortunately it closed its doors on April 28, 2020. If you are interesting in learning more about this unique store, you may read about here: <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/odd-obsession-farewell/Content?oid=79867115> and <https://blockclubchicago.org/2020/04/28/odd-obsession-closes-wicker-park-video-store-after-16-years-25000-films-put-in-storage/>.

¹⁰ Leo S. Lo, "No More Square Pegs for Square Jobs: A Proposal for a New Recruitment Mindset for the Future of Libraries," *Library Leadership and Management* 28, no. 2 (February,2014): 2-4.

¹¹ For list of available courses see: <http://www.ala.org/alcts/confevents/upcoming/webcourse>

¹² Alison Beard, "Life's Work," *Harvard Business Review* 93, no. 4 (April 2015): 116.