

Information Overload

Volume 5: Issue 50, October 2006

Welcome:

To the latest edition of Information Overload. This month we have a look at what constitutes "relevant experience" when looking for work, and perhaps as importantly where to find work as an information professional.

We would like to thank you in advance for forwarding this edition onto friends, colleagues and other interested readers. Please note that all back issues of this edition, as well as our registrant resources edition can be read and/or downloaded from our web site – <http://www.iea.com.au> should any of the topics be of interest and use.

Lorraine Bradshaw
Marketing Coordinator and Projects Officer

In this Issue we will be looking at:

- What is relevant experience?
- And talking of Job Titles...
- Where to find Job Information
 - Newspapers
 - Employment agencies
 - Online Job Boards
 - E-lists
 - Word of Mouth and Networks
 - Internal job boards
 - Organisational websites
- A Thought to ponder.

What is "relevant" experience?

It can be a little disappointing to find yourself newly graduated, qualification in hand, only to find there aren't too many job opportunities out there as you thought there were going to be. And to add insult to injury the ones that are being advertised, are for qualified professionals with a minimum of 2 years of "relevant" experience.

With an endless round of mergers and acquisitions in the private sector and beyond, new graduates are finding themselves competing against seasoned professionals for the few jobs that are available. Even the higher education sector, often seen as the professionals starting platform have not been exempt from re-organisation, down sizing, right sizing, re-structuring or whatever else management have decided to call the current round of head cutting.

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So what do you do when the jobs are simply not there? Or if you don't have the right kind of experience and can't get a foot in the door so that you can gain some?

The first thing to do is make sure that the experience you do have is on your CV, your covering letter and the answers to the selection criteria. Related fields of experience can be translated into many different areas. No you don't have to be a whiz at creative writing, just willing to think laterally.

I can hear people from here – just give us some examples....

In my 20 odd years since I left school, I have held a number of positions, most of which I have to say have been in the information sector, with one or two notable exceptions, namely - check out chick, and paper round delivery person, and it could be argued my current position is a far cry from the traditional roles held by a Librarian.

However, there are some things that (in my opinion) every person needs to have – regardless of the position they hold in any organisation they work for.

For example: Time management, project management, written and verbal communication skills, ability to deal with challenging behaviour, ability to handle money and other types of responsibility (opening and closing of a premises for instance); able to work with other people, able to prioritise tasks effectively, staff supervision, creation of rosters. If you look at any job description, or selection criteria, most (if not all) of the above will be listed in some form or another. And if you are still in doubt talk to friends and members of the family – ask them what skills they need to have to do the jobs that they do.

Granted there will be some job specific requirements, for example – ability to use a piece of software or knowledge of how to catalogue and classify materials. But lets face it, those skills can be taught, after all we were. It is the “life” skills that we most often take for granted, yet it is these essential criteria that can make the difference between whether you can do a job (and keep it) or not. Can you imagine turning up for work late every day, fail to complete work on time, fail to return phone calls, being rude to customers and bring your emotional baggage to work? Can you imagine how long you would last in this or any position for that matter if you did?

So if you are struggling to answer selection criteria because you don't think you have the right kind of experience, remember to relate everything that you have done in the past, to the position that is on offer.

For those of you who have been following the debate in the Library Literature recently – and the appointment of the new State Librarian and CEO of the State Library of NSW, will know that the position didn't go to a person with qualifications as a Librarian – but to someone who had the relevant experience....in a related field. Of course the arguments are still raging as to what title the person should actually hold, given that to be officially called a “Librarian” one should have the right qualifications, but that is by the by for this particular edition. But we will note that sometimes it is not the qualifications that are important, but having the right kind of experience.

And talking of Job titles....

These days' job titles can be a little misleading. Be prepared to read between the lines and get as many application and information packages as you can get your hands on. Be prepared

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to think laterally when conducting your search. Remember not all librarians are called "librarians" today even if they do have the right kinds of qualifications, they are known as information professionals, knowledge workers, information scientists, research scientists, database managers, support personnel, and some administrative roles have library and records management elements to their job descriptions, especially in small organisations.

If you are serious about working in the information industry, be prepared to accept that not all organisations can afford to employ a dedicated "librarian" or information professional. But if you can prove that you have the right kinds of skills that can benefit an organisation – and we all know that as Information Professionals we do have those skills, if only we were "brave" enough to tell everyone. As we have seen in the Records Management world, it has been the downfall of many of the large organisations that have caused the biggest stir. Fines of many millions of dollars for not being able to produce "documents and records" in a court of law, has made other organisations start to take notice of the problems associated with the management of information, especially electronic information, and as the electronic problem grows bigger, and with few tried and tested long term solutions still in place....with a few notable exceptions that seem to be leading the way (see Issue 19 and Issue 19.1 for a rundown of these organisations and measures being adopted), the need for people with the right mix of skills and abilities will increase.

Where to find Job Opportunities:

Newspapers:

State based papers (for example the West Australian has job information listings on Wednesday's and Saturday's), Local or community papers; National papers – for example – The Australian all contain job listings, and an intensive read of these pages will provide many opportunities.

A word of caution – be an avid reader of the small print – sometimes the position title may not seem to be the one that you would ever consider to be related to the library and records management industry. However, you should not limit your reading to the job section - the business sections also contain useful information that may lead to new job opportunities– are new companies moving into the area? If they are then chances are excellent that they will need new staff, as not all present employees will relocate. Are companies merging or being taken over? Again, new staff may be required, as not all existing staff will remain with the new entity.

You may be interested to note that Information Enterprises sends out a list of potential jobs abstracted from the local papers – mainly The West Australian and Community papers. If you would like to be included in this weekly email, please send an email to training@iea.com.au with subscribe job information in the subject line, and we will add you to the distribution list. Alternatively – become a member of the list serves (available through the Records Management Association of Australasia, Australian Society of Archivists, AliaWest or WAIN) to receive the information when it is published. (details follow).

Employment agencies:

These can be niche specialist agencies such as Information Enterprises Australia (IEA) or One Umbrella (now Candle), or generalist agencies such as Zenith Management, Kelly's or Drake. There are advantages and disadvantages for registering with both kinds of agency. Some generalist agencies are listed on government and/or large organisational preferred supplier lists, whereas smaller agencies may not be. If you do have specialist skills and

abilities and you decide to register with a generalist agency, chances are good that you will find work through them. However, the downside is that some generalist agencies may not appreciate the finer points of what a job may entail, they may be vague on details, and you may find yourself not being paid the correct rate for the job that you are being asked to do. However, if you have kept an eye on the job market and know what a particular position may be worth, you may be able to negotiate. However, when doing so – please remember that you rarely get paid for holidays and days off sick, so these calculations should be taken into consideration when negotiating your hourly rate.

Online job boards:

Site	Publisher	Unique Browsers	Page Impressions	Frequency
http://www.seek.com.au	SEEK	1,973,083	78,572,903	2.86
http://www.mycareer.com.au	Fairfax Digital	1,033,310	22,793,231	2.04
http://www.careerone.com.au	News Interactive	744,640	17,428,806	2.02
http://www.jobsearch.gov.au	Australian Government	631,530	41,477,681	2.71
http://www.defencejobs.gov.au	Australian Government	76,923	1,377,070	1.55
http://www.careers.vic.gov.au	Victorian Government	37,311	119,736	1.79
http://www.manpower.com.au	Manpower Australia	36,152	320,565	1.27
http://www.jobnet.com.au	Jobnet	27,111	628,612	1.16
http://www.volunteerssearch.gov.au	Australian Government	11,257	161,289	1.16

NB: For those of you who are looking for work within the West Australian Public Sector you may also wish to go to <http://www.jobs.wa.gov.au>.

Unique Browsers: The number of browsers visiting a web site within a designated reporting period - in this case – 01/01/06 – 31/01/06. A browser is identified by a unique cookie associated with that browser. A browser may equate to multiple users of the same machine. Alternatively an individual utilising several different machines will equate to multiple browsers.

Page Impressions: The total number of web pages viewed by all users within the period selected. An impression is recorded each time a page is displayed in a browser window.

Frequency: The average number of times a unique browser visits the site within the reporting period.

Source: Nielson/Net Ratings Market Intelligence Employment, Domestic Traffic for audited sites.

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E -lists –

Most professional organisations will have an e-list, or discussion list that can be used to advertise positions. For the library / records / information management fields the following web sites and /or discussion lists are well worth subscribing to:

- **Australian Computer Society (ACS)** – <http://www.acs.org.au>
- **Australian Institute of Management (AIM)** – <http://www.aim.com.au>
- **Australian Library & Information Association (ALIA)** – <http://www.alia.org.au>
- **Australian Society of Archivists (ASA)** – <http://www.asa.com.au>
- **Institute for Information Management (IIM)** – <http://www.iim.org.au>
- **Intersector (Government jobs WA)** – <http://www.jobs.wa.gov.au>
- **Records Management Association of Australasia (RMAA)** – <http://www.rmaa.com.au>
- **West Australian Information Network (WAIN)** - People working in the library and information profession in Western Australia should subscribe to WAIN (Western Australian Information Network). WAIN is intended to facilitate the dissemination of information to members of the profession (including job vacancies), and to provide a forum for the discussion of important issues. You can subscribe to WAIN by sending an e-mail message to: listproc@info.curtin.edu.au with the following message in the body of the mail: SUBSCRIBE WAIN *yourfirstname yourlastname*. Mail sent to the list should be addressed to wain@info.curtin.edu.au. [Peter Green](#) is the creator and moderator of this list. Students who subscribe to this list using their student accounts should remember to unsubscribe when their course is complete; otherwise Peter is bombarded with bounced mail. To unsubscribe, send a message to listproc@info.curtin.edu.au with the message 'unsubscribe wain'. Your name is not required

Once you are registered on an e-discussion list, interested parties (including yourself) can make postings to it, and has included personal requests for work (however, I am not sure how well these work, and you may have to try it and see). You will receive a steady stream of industry related information throughout the day (or some lists do provide a daily digest), as well as some job advertisements, but you will only receive messages after you have registered (it is not retrospective). As a matter of interest though, the Records Management Association of Australasia does have an archive of postings which can be searched – worth doing for a couple of days prior to your joining the list as your perfect job may have been listed.

Word of mouth and networks:

Both word of mouth and networks (personal as well as networking events) are an excellent way to find work. Remember though that your “fame” can precede you, so please make sure you make a good impression at industry events. Always dress appropriately for the occasion and be prepared to talk to lots of people. However, don't use the opportunity to just dish out your business card, networking is a two-way street, and you should listen as well as speak. Don't be remembered for being the person who drank too much and monopolised the conversation by telling everyone how bad your previous employer was. The person who may be listening may not actually be the person you were talking to, and it may be this person who had the job that was on offer.

At the recent Library Lecture at New Norcia it was noted with interest that a lot of the positions never get to the newspapers as they are filled by people who have taken the initiative and sent in their CV's. Again it is important to think laterally when you are looking for job opportunities, as they may come from very unexpected sources.

Internal notice boards:

Are you reasonably happy where you are, but looking for a new challenge? **Internal notice boards, Intranets and Company newsletters** are a great way to see if there are any internal positions/promotions available. Whilst jobs have to be advertised (by law), it doesn't say where these positions have to be advertised.

Organisational websites:

If you have always wanted to work for a particular organisation, it is worth checking the organisational website for job vacancies, and follow this with a speculative letter and CV as they may be able to keep your information on file if there is nothing currently on offer.

And just a final thank you and an apology. October is a busy time for me at IEA. As the current editor of the Australian Record Retention Manual (ARRM) I am in the middle of writing the 2006 edition, and consequently didn't get to the October edition of Information Overload in time for release in October. Apologies and I hope to be back on schedule for the next edition. And why a "thank you", well I'd just like to thank you for not reminding me that I was behind schedule.

Kind Regards

Lorraine

A Thought to Ponder:

"We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes"

John F Kennedy (1917-1963)

President of the United States of America (1960-1963)

Your comments and suggestions on the subject of this newsletter are most welcome. Or if you would like to see other issues covered in future editions, please email me at training@iea.com.au. Please feel free to pass on this newsletter to your colleagues' friends and associates. To subscribe they should send an e-mail to training@iea.com.au with "subscribe newsletter" in the subject line.

If you have any suggestions as to what should be included in future editions, then please send an email to training@iea.com.au. If you would prefer not to receive this newsletter, please send an email to training@iea.com.au with "unsubscribe newsletter" in the subject line.