

Librarians in Adjacent Careers

*Stories from fellow professionals
who have made a shift,
using their skills in novel
(and sometimes unexpected) roles*



Pharmaceutical &
Health Technology
Division



SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

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The Pharmaceutical and Health Technology Division (PHT) of SLA provides a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among individuals interested in the collection, storage, retrieval, analysis, and dissemination of information in all aspects of the pharmaceutical, biomedical, biotechnical, cosmetic, medical device, and other health care fields. PHT division members are involved in all aspects of information science, as related to education, research, business and marketing in the health care field.

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Librarians in Adjacent Careers

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“What do I do next?”

Whether we have a job or not, it's a question we all face, a question which guides what we do both in the short and the long term.

This is especially the case as we are navigating our careers amidst a time of great change; globalization, outsourcing, health care reform, and a slowing global economy have caused us to rethink our career paths.

As research librarians / information professionals, we are finding that traditional librarian jobs are harder to find. Even the newer “information professional” title runs into ambiguity as employers may be uncertain of its meaning, especially in contrast with our friends in IT.

In this environment, it's easy to be discouraged and pessimistic... but instead, I believe there is plenty of reason for optimism.

The need for quality information has not changed; in fact, with the preponderance of information noise, the need for good information has only increased. Not only that, but information is being more tightly integrated with other job functions; instead of information being a discipline tied to one person, it's now more embraced and integrated into the functions of many.

As a result, our job titles have changed. We are no longer just “librarians” - instead, we have job titles such as “social media team leader,” “director of strategic account planning,” and “consultant.”

For many, this brings up a natural question - how do I get there from here?

That is our purpose - to help tell the stories of others who have made a similar transition from librarian to an adjacent career. Using the same skills we already have, these people have successfully made the transition to new careers - and in many cases, more impactful careers!

Best wishes as you make your own journey!

Regards,

Alexander Feng

2011-2012 PHT Division Chair

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Position:

Training Specialist, PsycINFO

Most Recent “Library” Position:

Loyola/Notre Dame library

What was your last “library” position and how does it relate to what you do now?

I worked at the Loyola/Notre Dame library in Baltimore as a research and instruction librarian/marketing person. The library is a little bit unique in that it serves two legally separate academic institutions, Loyola University Maryland and Notre Dame of Maryland University. In total, I believe when I was there, it was about 6500 full time equivalent students that the library served between the two.

I was hired into a newly created position that was envisioned to be about 50% standard research instruction position, 50% marketing and outreach for the library. So I had reference desk hours, I taught instruction sessions, worked on keeping our instruction guides up to date and those typical sorts of things that a reference librarian would do. The other half of the position was intended to do marketing and outreach for the library onto the campuses and I was also responsible for scheduling some of our meeting rooms and for helping to plan some of our special events. I did that for about 3½ years and that was my very first job out of library school and my first job as a librarian. I think it set me up really well for what I’m doing now.

Now, I’m in an adjacent career. I’m a step back from the students in that I interact mostly with other librarians these days, showing them how to get the most out of APA’s databases like PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES, so I do training sessions mostly online. I give a lot of webinars, walking people through how records in PsycINFO are created and then doing a few demo searches to highlight the things that we talk about during the introductory portion of the webinar. I also get to go to conferences and do a training presentation. I’ve done those at several different conferences now and it’s really fun.

How did you wind up making that transition?

One of the big things for me was that I didn't actually like being a reference librarian. It wasn't exactly what I was looking for when I was job searching at the end of library school but most of the public relations/marketing & outreach positions that I was seeing at that point were hybrid positions. What I wound up learning over the course of those 3½ years was that I like interacting with people, doing presentations, and giving training sessions but being on the reference desk and being the captive audience for the questions about "where's the bathroom" and "the printer is broken" was not for me. It was sort of typical undergraduates working on papers for their classes who needed to find peer-reviewed empirical journal articles on the topic they had chosen and for me I just found constantly answering different versions of that same question kind of burned me out.

So when I thought about what I liked and disliked about that job and other jobs I'd had, I decided to look for something that kept that training aspect but subtracted the reference desk part of it. As I looked at job descriptions over the course of probably about a year, what I found was that in most libraries - with the exception of some of the really, really large research systems - if you were an instruction librarian you also had reference duties and responsibilities. So I started expanding what I was looking for a little bit more and I think I actually found out about the job at APA on LISJobs, because while the MLS wasn't required by the position they were really looking to hire a librarian so that they could have someone who had that experience and perspective right in the office next door.

When you saw the position a librarian was "preferred". Now that you're in the job right now, what do you feel that a librarian can bring that somebody else equally qualified wouldn't be able to bring?

What I had was that insider knowledge of libraries and of what exactly happens on campus. I have co-workers who will come to my office to ask me questions related to things like link resolvers and discovery services - because these are things that we all have to deal with but they've never really used them. In theory they know what a link resolver is and they know what it looks like when it's broken when they are

going to some library's webpage to see if they can help them figure out what's gone wrong, but they don't necessarily know exactly what should happen when you click that button. I'm sort of there to act as a clearing house for all those sorts of questions.

Also in meetings I like to try and make sure that I'm really thinking from a perspective of librarians and students about whatever it is we're talking about - new initiatives or new products. I try to bring out anything that I think might be something that a librarian would look at and say "that's really not going to work for us" or "we don't like this restriction" because typically I'm the only librarian in the room when we're having these discussions. There are other librarians who work at APA but just not in my particular area.

You mentioned that you're pretty much the only one who has a library background. What are the typical backgrounds of people who don't come from a librarian background?

There are four of us who have the same position of training specialist that I'm in. We have someone who used to do training for another database publisher. We have two people who have worked at APA for a very long time, who transferred to my department from working in the APA journals division. They were both copy editors and I think one of them worked on the publication manual at one point so, they have a lot of the knowledge of the organization of who to go to with this particular question. I think it works pretty well to have a mix of people from different backgrounds in my department.

Objectively, what are the key skills that you think are necessary to succeed as a trainer?

You definitely need to be comfortable presenting, both online and an in person format. I'd never given a webinar before. I had attended webinars, but that was a new medium for me. But I found that ultimately it wasn't that much different than being part of a classroom in front of a group of 20 extremely uninterested undergraduates where you don't really get any kind of reaction or feedback from the audience as you're going along. People can call in and ask questions as they're

listening and people can use the chat box but typically we don't get a lot of questions during those sessions, especially if there's only four or five people in on them. I think for me once I learned how to use the software that we license for webinars it wasn't that much different, because you're used to barreling onward as long as people aren't stopping you with lots of questions.

Another thing that I think is important is customer service - one of the other things that I do in addition to giving training sessions is I help answer email and telephone inquiries from librarians and also from members of APA, some of whom subscribe to the databases. So that can involve everything from "I can't log in," to "I'm doing this really complex search for a paper that I'm trying to write and something is screwy with my search results, can you help me figure out what I'm not doing correctly?" And so being able to talk to people and figure out what they're really asking is important - because as is the case with the reference desk sometimes people aren't asking the questions that they really want answered and being able to figure that out is extremely helpful.

Also - having a good knowledge of how people access the Internet and all of the different things that go into that. If someone is having a problem accessing PsycINFO it could be anything from the platform is momentarily down to a bug. So walking through that basic tech support troubleshooting to figure out if it's that or if it's something on your end with your connection or your browser or what have you. So having at least some knowledge of those kinds of concerns is definitely helpful.

The other thing that I found very helpful is time management skills and being able to have multiple balls in the air in terms of different projects. I've got several different things going on right now and what I'm working on the most in any given week depends on which deadline is coming up sooner, which projects appear to be more important based on what I'm hearing from my supervisor and from her boss and keeping that awareness within the department about what else is going on and if the priority has shifted from last week.

For the uninitiated, one might say all you do is train people. What else is there that goes on that people may not be aware of?

One of the things I've been working on in the last couple of weeks is we put out a newsletter that updates people on what's happening with the databases. I've spent some time writing articles for that, which can sometimes involve talking to other people around APA, other times it's just synthesizing information available elsewhere..

This has been a very long-term project but I've been working on a series of screencasts about one of the databases that will cover what it is, what's in it, how to use it, showing off some of the different features. So I wrote scripts for that and got them approved by all of the people who need to approve them. I finished recording one of them recently and got that posted online, and will start on the next one soon.

Right now the big focus is on putting together the presentations for the lunch and learn that we will do at ALA Midwinter. So that involves trying to make sure that I have the correct statistics from different people, in terms of how many articles are actually in the database right now, how many journals were added to PsycARTICLES last year, was it this number or this number? I've spent a lot of time taking screenshots of the search demos I've planned in case the internet isn't working at the venue. I'm also managing the registrations and working with a colleague on other details.

We have things like weekly staff meetings so that everybody knows what is going on with everyone else. I am involved with the Maryland Chapter of ACRL and so lately we've been working on our programming for this year. I think those are all of the major things so far at the moment, this week at least.

Are there any certifications or educational pieces that are useful to have?

I don't know that there are standards really but there are definitely skills that are useful. I mentioned earlier about webinars and being able to troubleshoot when something is going wrong with the webinar software so I guess having a relaxed

attitude towards technology -- “if I poke around with this long enough I can hopefully figure it out, I’m not going to break this by trying to do the search in this way” -- is really helpful. I know in our case we do a lot of screencasts so being really good with screencasting software is important for us whereas for another organization if they’re not doing that kind of work then that wouldn’t be as much of a concern for them.

But I think for someone who wants to be a trainer, the most important thing to focus on is your presentation skills and being comfortable getting in front of a bunch of people, whether it’s virtually or in person, and knowing that even if you aren’t the subject expert, you’re the expert on helping them to get to the information that they need and so having both the confidence to plough forward and show off what you need to show off and also the willingness to say “now I don’t really know a whole lot about this subject so I don’t know if the search results are super relevant, you’re going to have to tell me that” and if they are then that’s great we’ll move on to the next thing that you need to learn how to do, and if they’re not we’ll keep poking at this until we get you what you need to be looking at and reading.

I also find that it really helps me personally at least to try to have a relaxed style to my presentations. I know some people are more comfortable with a more formal style but I think taking some time and doing presentations in maybe a less high pressure environment like in library school is a really great way to figure out how to make sure that you are comfortable in front of a roomful of strangers. I pushed myself way out of my comfort zone in library school doing presentations to my classmates and that really took my career in a direction that I think if you had told me 10 years ago that I would be standing up in front of 50 strangers at a library conference and giving an hour and a half presentation I would have looked at you like “what are you talking about? I don’t do that, I can’t talk to a group of people.” But just knowing that you’ve made the plan, they’re there to hear you talk about whatever you said you were going to talk about and being able to roll with the punches of any kind of technical difficulties is really important.

In my experience the longer your presentation is the more likely it is that something will not work the way it’s supposed to work or the way it worked when you tested it the night before and everybody understands that, especially instruction librarians. Everybody knows I ran through it yesterday but no, it’s not working today. “I don’t know why, it will probably work in half an hour when we’re done here” and not

letting that derail you is very important. I don't know if it's a skill or a mindset or what it is but you've got to see if you can quickly figure it out and if not move on and offer to come back to this later if anybody really wanted to see it and then we can try it again.

Finally, if there was somebody who came up to you was interested in learning more about this role - what would you recommend to that person to learn more about what this is like?

I guess if someone really wanted to research what it's like to be a trainer in different places, I would say that I know all of us are very much open to answering questions. That's part of our job so you could certainly call or email and ask to talk to someone. I think for someone who is interested in doing this kind of work it's important to have more of the ability to teach and learn quickly than it is to have a really deep knowledge of one particular subject area.

For example, I don't know that much about psychology. I'm definitely learning more about psychology just in the course of whatever is going on in my organization. There are presentations and things over lunchtime sometimes and of course I'm in the databases all the time so I'm occasionally reading bits and pieces of articles, but there is not an expectation at all that I would be a subject matter expert or that I would become a subject matter expert. What they were looking for from me was the ability to teach the subject experts how to get what they need as quickly as possible. So I would say just being comfortable in terms of online searches, being comfortable navigating around different interfaces and different kinds of websites and being to able to figure out where to go to get the information you need and that willingness to play around and try things out and see "what happens when I do this or what happens when I do that" is really helpful. Just focusing on those sorts of skills rather than on specific knowledge is probably the most important thing.

Nancy Groves

Position:

Social media team leader, United Nations

Most Recent “Library” Position:

United Nations, CNN



Do you mind starting by talking about how you got to where you are now?

I started out after library school working in news libraries, both at CNN and National Public Radio. I had always been interested in international affairs - I was a French major as an undergrad - so I applied to take a UN exam which is an exam they offer for different occupational groups within the UN because they need people from a wide variety of geographical locations.

It's basically to see if you can get on a roster so that if a post opens up in the UN, then they pick people from the roster. I took that test and I got on to the roster - then I was offered a post at the headquarters library here in New York City, where I worked doing reference work for about a year and a half. When you do reference at the UN you have to be aware of how the entire UN works. You have to know all about the documentation, the mandates of all of the different arms and entities and programs and you also have to be aware of current affairs and that sort of thing so it really fit my interest.

During that time there was what is known as the “Oil for Food” scandal. At that time there were a lot of questions about the UN and what was going on - and the senior management at that time noticed that morale was very low. It's very disconcerting to see your employer maligned in the press, whether it's accurate or not, so senior management at that time decided that UN staff needed to find out about UN issues from the UN because there was no internal communications really apart from emails. For the most part people were getting their information about UN work from the external news sources. Even though it's a huge organization with thousands of employees so you can feel very isolated. There are a lot of silos and new information doesn't always go from department to department.

At that point they decided that we should have an intranet. There was an intranet already but it was not information focused., basically just –a list of links. There wasn't any communications aspect to it and it wasn't updated very often so nobody really had a reason to go there. At that time it was decided that management of the intranet should go to the library. Since I had worked on the CNN intranet and before I went to grad school I had worked at an NGO where I'd done a lot of web work, I thought that would be a good fit for me. I really enjoy organizing information and helping people find things and one of the reasons they wanted the library to do it was because they knew that librarians had in-depth knowledge of how the UN works. Librarians are aware of the questions people ask whether it's delegates , the general public or staff members.

So, I was part of a team that launched the intranet and I worked there for five years. So that was still sort of a library related position although I was doing a lot of communications by writing stories posted on the intranet home page. I was interviewing staff about their work; I was writing articles, posting information online for UN staff around the world and helping organize the infrastructure of the site. At the UN you're encouraged to be mobile every five years so I decided that it was time to move on. I felt I had done everything I could do on the intranet.

I knew that social media was starting to be more and more important in terms of communications and so when there was an opportunity to move to the strategic communications side I was offered the post and that's where I am now. So now I'm working on social media and I think it's related to librarian work because I'm still answering questions from people who write in to us on social media platforms. I know what people are saying online about the UN. I help decide what we post online by noting what people are saying on social networks - so if I see people are talking about Syria, it lets me know we need to find new information about Syria and format it so our audience can know where to get the latest UN statements on this or a report or upcoming meeting.

I wear two hats – listening and writing. I think of myself still as a librarian in that I'm answering questions and paying attention to where the latest online information is related to the UN but I'm also tailoring the content for social media platforms so that's more the communications side -- keeping track of the top line messaging, keeping track of the communication campaigns that my colleagues are organizing and running. I'm giving my colleagues advice as they're planning their campaigns

on how to incorporate social media into their campaigns and then we brainstorm a lot about how we can improve the UN website to make it more interesting and user friendly to everyone but in my particular focus is social media users.

From a reporting structure, how does that work out? Is it through a centralized communications group or PR?

We're in the Department of Public Information and within that there are different divisions and I'm a part of the Strategic Communications Division. However, one of my tasks is to lead a departmental social media team, which has members from all the divisions in it. So I'm only working on a few of the social media accounts and there's a lot of different UN social media accounts that are managed by people in different divisions within the communications arm but also in the substantive arms they also have communications people. For example in the peacekeeping department, they have communications people that are working on their web pages and their social media accounts and I work closely with them. We're always calling each other, sending emails, sharing information but our communications structure at the UN is a bit decentralized. There's a lot of communications people embedded in all the arms and the Department of Public Information - in some ways - acts as a coordinator.

When you moved from the library/intranet to this social media role, what were the skills that you emphasized in the interview process?

When I was in the library and first started on the reference desk, a lot of the questions were the same every day - and so we realized that rather than making people do all the work and call us so we could tell them when a highly-anticipated report came out, we would tell them to check the blog or to subscribe to an RSS feed so they could stop spending their time calling us. So, in some ways, I'd already done what some people could say was the first sort of social media project at the UN. People had heard about that and that was definitely something I emphasized.

One of the skills is that I can figure out how to apply technology to a task, to take a

look at the way that things are working and see if there is a way to use a more recent technology to make it better or make it easier or more efficient. I've been, at least in the past, someone who has tried to play around with technology personally, to figure things out, to stay abreast of the latest in technology. I think that's another skill that librarians are usually on top of - whereas traditional communications people might not be so interested in it.

From a web standpoint, most of the communications people in the UN aren't actually maintaining the websites, they're working with a web team and they're giving advice to the team as to how it should be laid out within strict guidelines for accessibility. A lot of people have a lot of ideas as to how these websites could be better and I think that was something I also emphasized when I was selling myself for the post, that I had a lot of ideas about how web pages could be better. My focus in graduate school was on special libraries but I also worked in the Office of Information Technology at the University of Maryland doing usability studies, so I mentioned that.

Also - the skill of paying attention to what people want to know is a bit different from communications because when you're in a communications role you think about what you want people to know but it's a bit backwards for a librarian because as a librarian you're paying attention to questions and you're trying to anticipate people's needs. I think that's partially why the social media accounts my colleagues and I are maintaining are as successful as we are because we are anticipating people's needs. We're not just putting out messages that are talking points. We're really thinking about what people want to see on social media platforms and posting in it.

Of course being the UN, we do put out official information and we are putting out our messages but we've tried to contextualize it and make it interesting in line with what people want to know.

What are the key [librarian] skills that somebody has to be good at in this type of role?

Knowing where to find information and starting out in the library was very important for that because I always had to find an answer to questions. Now it might not be my job *per se* to find the answer to a question but I just have that drive

within me to find it and I think most librarians are willing to go the extra mile to find the answer to a question so I think that's an overall skill.

Also, you communicate in a different way by explaining the context behind things. When I post on social media I don't try to just launch a report online. I try to explain the context behind it and pull together related documents, web pages, previous reports that would help people understand it better. Librarians are constantly scanning and making notes of new websites and looking for authoritative useful information. That's another skill.

What about non librarian skills?

Being able to multi-task and also the general interest in technology. It's not only a librarian skill. It's a bit of multi-tasking but you have to take in a huge amount of information and see very quickly what is important and what isn't. I'm following all of the accounts from around the system. I'm part of the secretariat, but the UN system is much broader with UNICEF and World Food Program, World Health Organization, and others, so I have to pay attention to everything they're doing but then curate the best of what all of my colleagues are putting out around the UN system which we then sometimes post on our own UN account. So that's another skill which I think is a little bit more general although I think most librarians would be pretty good at that.

And also knowing the difference between a question that can be answered and a question that can't be answered; obviously people ask a lot of questions that are not related to the UN on our accounts because they don't really understand what the UN is. You have to have an understanding of how the UN works and what kind of questions actually have an answer and screen out questions that aren't about the UN, so - sound political and editorial judgment to know what to post and what you can answer and what you can't is critical.

What is the "typical" background of a typical social media person? (Is there one?)

I don't know if there is one. That's a good question. I think around the UN system

per se, a lot of people came from the communications side and they just have added it on as one of their skills or as an additional task. I know some of my friends have journalism degrees that work on social media but I don't think that's the necessarily always the case. For example, human resources people are using social media and they probably aren't communications people. I think social media is becoming broader and broader and is not just a communications tool. Depending on the organization and why they're using social media, I think you don't have to be on the communications side. I think it could be really anywhere. I think a lot of PR people work in social media and sometimes I see the people who are maintaining websites (technically and otherwise) are starting to do it just because it's all online information and they're very familiar with what's online already so I think those are the backgrounds I'm seeing.

Are there any certificates or are there any qualifications that people have to have for this job?

At the moment there aren't any that I know of. There are some journalism schools that are offering classes in social media and there are also some continuing education programs. I'm only really familiar with what's in New York but Columbia University has very active programs for professionals that want to take an evening class or an all day event or a weekend event to focus on understanding the latest on social media and that sort of thing. I haven't seen that there are any requirements in terms of degrees or certificates so far. I think it's still pretty new. People are still figuring out where social media teams should sit, should it be on the PR side, should it be on marketing, should it be in the library, should it be in the web team? Probably each organization is making that decision for themselves at the moment.

How do you keep up generally in social media?

To be honest now that I'm actually working on social media, I feel like I don't have as much time to keep up with the latest which is a bit frustrating because there's just so much work but I do follow a lot of my colleagues online on Twitter and Facebook and I follow accounts like Mashable and other people who are proving themselves as savvy about social media online.

I try to keep up with articles. When I have interns I ask them to send me things that they think I should be interested in and sometimes I don't have time to read all the articles and so sometimes I'll send them a bunch of articles that I've saved and ask them to read through and let me know if anything is new or interesting. I need to carve out more time to stay on top of it because it's a bit overwhelming to stay abreast of what's going on. We had social media week, I think it was two weeks ago in New York City, and I couldn't go to any of the events because I was just busy working on social media so that's a bit frustrating.

What would you recommend to somebody to find out more about what it's like doing social media as a profession?

It sounds obvious but I think they should be active users of social media and once you start following people in certain fields, look through their followers, see who they're following, see if there's anything interesting or useful.

The first time I used Twitter (it's a while back), I didn't think it was that useful and I kind of let it sit for six months. This was back in 2008 or something like that. I came back to it six months later and then all of a sudden realized once I put a little effort into finding the people that I need to follow that it was an essential tool for doing my work. So I would say - scan around, find people that are interesting and there's no shortage of interesting articles, reports, case studies that people are sharing online. If I see an interesting article that someone has sent to me, I'll often look to see if that person is on Twitter so that's basically how I've built up a bit of a network. I think that's how they should start.

On my personal Twitter account, every time I see a job posting or vacancy that's somewhat related to mine I post it. I tweet it for people because people are always asking me if the UN is hiring or what they can do after graduating from school, so rather than emailing everyone I say just follow me on Twitter. I tweet lots of internships, jobs, whatever I see. They should put in some time to get a group of people they can start following and that's probably the easiest way to stay on top of it.

What kind of experiences or qualifications are people in social media looking for?

I am looking for people that don't need a lot of supervision for one thing because I'm in a lot of meetings and I have a lot of my own work to do. I'm looking for people that can learn quickly and people that understand when they need to ask a question and when they can just go ahead and make a decision themselves and it's not always easy to tell from an interview how people can deal with that. I'm interested in people obviously who are using social media already because I don't have a lot of time to train them on it because they pretty much have to hit the ground running.

I would be also interested in looking at skills that I don't have myself. I'm not a video person; I don't make my own videos. I can take photos but it's not something that I particularly enjoy doing, for example going behind the scenes photos at events, so I'm also looking for people that are willing to run around UN headquarters and cover events and upload the pictures. Some people are really good at that and others are not so comfortable with that.

I'm also interested in people who are detail oriented because we need to report on our work a lot and explain how we're making a difference and so I need somebody who can analyze our user analytics and statistics from our social media content . People often call on me to say "what's the best way to write a tweet?" and this way I can have some statistics and examples to say "here's one that got a lot of re-tweets" or "here's a Facebook post that had a lot of likes. Here's one that wasn't so effective." I don't always have as much time as I would like to pay attention to what's working and what isn't. I think my colleagues would give similar recommendations.

One last question - how would you characterize the field?

It is exciting and I've said before I literally work seven days a week and I'm only not working when I'm sleeping so you really have to be driven. That's why I have mentioned to my boss before that I would probably be using Twitter this much even if I wasn't working on it. That's just who I am. I'm constantly looking for more information but it has to be someone driven and who doesn't mind staying abreast of important topics or someone who doesn't mind getting an email late at night. Hopefully as time goes on we can flesh out our team. There are more people on the

team than just me but I'm kind of the one who is the most actively involved in the day to day running of the accounts so hopefully we'll get to the point where we can split up this burden a bit more.

I would say it's really kind of a tiring job. I don't know if I want to say fun, I think it's kind of exciting. I like to see the impact that we have. I like to see which posts are the most popular. I like to try experiments because a lot of it is experimentation. We just did an experiment where we tried to get people to post about a topic related to a concert that's going to be at UN headquarters tomorrow on social media and to give them some tickets. It was a total experiment. We didn't know what kind of interest we would get but you have to be someone who wants to experiment a bit too and see what works and what doesn't. I would say that's how I would describe the job. A lot of times people will tell me when they hear I work on social media they think oh that's fun. It's not necessarily fun because there's just so much work. It's not like I'm sitting around playing on Facebook. I'm not playing games or things like that. And it's a bit stressful. I always worry is somebody going to hack into our account or am I going to make some kind of political mistake that I'm going to have to answer to so you have to have a bit of a thick skin as well.

Would you say all those words that you've used of experiences that you have, would you say they are characteristic of everybody else who is doing similar things to you?

I would think it's probably pretty characteristic. If you were working at a different company or a different organization, it might be different. At the UN we cover the whole world, so there's never a down time. There's always something happening somewhere. People are always awake overnight in NYC in different time zones. Our Secretary-General is always traveling so the time frame is different. Information might be coming in when I'm asleep. I think it might be less hectic some places if you were focused on a certain geographic region or a certain language. Maybe then it wouldn't be quite so intense depending on where you work. Obviously the UN is a very polarizing organization. Some people really love it, some people really hate it, they're afraid of it for some reason. I don't think all organizations have those types of people writing in on social media platforms, people who don't understand how their organization works or have a complaint about how something is not working. If you

were working for a different field it might be somewhat less stressful, I don't know, I imagine they might have their own stressful tasks that I don't know. I've always kind of worked in stressful news environments -- at CNN there was always breaking news -- so I don't really have a perspective on what it's like to work some place where things are a little bit quieter.

Sandhya Malur

Position:

Manager, Digital (Technical) Marketing, FM Global

Most Recent “Library” Position:

Johnson & Johnson

Do you mind starting off by describing your experience as a librarian and how you got to where you are today?

I started off as a librarian. I got my MLS from Simmons and right out of school I ended up working at the Winchester Public Library for a few years. I actually got hired as a reference librarian at the Winchester Public Library. Later on my title was Coordinator of Reader Services at Simmons College Libraries, where I ran the reference desk and the circulation desk working for Daphne Harrington who is now the Director of Libraries at Simmons.

I was there for a few years and then my husband at the time had a CFO position down in Mississippi and we moved to Meridian, Mississippi. I called Jim (*Matarrazo, Dean Emeritus at Simmons*), said I’m moving to Meridian, Mississippi and he says how am I going to help you make this work?

It turned out to be very interesting because I did a couple of different library jobs in Mississippi and it was really interesting because it got me into a completely different area of librarianship that I wouldn’t normally have gone into.

In Meridian I began looking for a job. This is how I did it....I took out an atlas (I’m talking about the late 80s now....) - I took a little compass and I drew a circle representing a 50 mile radius of the town that I lived in and I ended up getting a job in a town called Quitman, Mississippi which is a one stoplight town. I ended up as the assistant director of the library system in Quitman, a nine county, 11 library system. We would drive from town to town and provide service to people who lived in these tiny towns; people who were doing PhD degrees and were depending on us to get them what they needed to complete their PhDs. I really learned a lot about the way librarianship works; I’m of Indian origin and I made the front page of the

paper as the new assistant director in town. I was an exotic bird in that small town, ...it was interesting experience. It was a great place to run a library. I got exposed to a lot of different things and because the community is so small in that area, public librarians, academic librarians, college librarians, community college librarians, all of us used to mingle together. Even though you had your separate events, it was not as separate as it is in a big city like Boston.

When I came back to Boston from Meridian I called Jim again, as I always did, telling him that I'm back, and that I'm looking for a job. That's when he told me about the opportunity at Johnson & Johnson, and asked will you go to Raynham? I said, I've no idea where Raynham is and he said that's what everybody said; but I said I'm willing to drive anywhere.

I went and interviewed at J&J. They wanted to start a library, a technical and business information center supporting the research, quality and marketing groups, and that's what I did.

Then while at J&J I wanted to go get an MBA because I was really interested in the business. I did my MBA for two years full time while I worked. When I finished the degree, I got promoted to the next level, into management at J&J and got to continue to support the library, do patent research, and was moving into the market research arena. I was going to get another promotion, reporting to both the VP of regulatory and the VP of new business development doing market research and was going to absorb the market research function as well. That was in the 1998 time frame – and at that time we did the big DePuy acquisition and they wanted to move a lot of people out to Indiana where DePuy headquarters is located. J&J offered a really generous package, if the job they offered you was out in Indiana and you didn't want to take it, they would give you this great package. Many of us took the package and we left to pursue other opportunities.

At that point, I then shifted industries. I started working for Emerson Electric in the software division of Emerson known as Intellution and I got hired to basically do pretty much what I was doing at J&J except they called it market intelligence. They wanted me to start a marketing research/ competitive intelligence business unit. While I was at Intellution we got acquired by GE, and I worked there for over 10 years, five years for Intellution and about six years for GE.

I did a number of things there. While leading the competitive intelligence function,

I worked for the VP of Product Marketing, where I did market research and worked with a lot with the engineers. I learned a lot about the software industry, as Intellution was a leader in the industrial automation business, when GE acquired us. While in the competitive intelligence function, a part of my job started expanding into things that were more straight marketing, doing product marketing work and doing product marketing launches but the cornerstone of that was always the CI work.... that CI expertise is what enabled me to learn all these businesses so well.

All this time, please understand that I'm not running a library any more but I still held on to my dialog account because people came to me for research. I held on to the Dialog and Lexis-Nexis accounts and kept all of the research activities going, while I also did marketing work with the sales team. CI uses essentially the same skills (as in library research)... Intellution did not have a corporate library function and the CI function covered that need for Intellution. GE had a corporate library but all of their satellite libraries had all been closed down so they didn't have anybody to offer any of these functions so I did it and it was work that I loved doing anyway. So I got to do the CI work, and also some marketing work, and I got to work with the sales team doing lead generation and sales support activities. However, we had to do the company research before we could do the lead generation work. I also got to get involved in strategic planning work because of my involvement with the CI research; so my CI work just opened up so much that I could move into.

So when you had left J&J, you had your MBA; and the last item on your resume said "competitive intelligence" which enabled you to get that position in market intelligence because it was virtually the same as what they were looking for?

Exactly. When I interviewed at Intellution, at Emerson, with the VP of product marketing - that's what he said. He said "I would never have thought about talking to a librarian except that it had caught his attention that I had said, that I did competitive intelligence when I sent in my application....and that's what we want to do here". During the interview he asked me to tell him what I did, give some examples. So I told him about the patent research, I told him about doing market research and competitive intelligence, how you use the patent information; so it's

really finding the information regardless of whether it's scientific, business or patent - but then it's a question of how you take that information, analyze it and package it...thus, taking it to that next level.

Librarians who do that analysis and packaging of information as a part of their jobs just add a whole lot of that value to their function above and beyond what is normally expected. People often don't realize that most librarians have great analytical skills and they have great skills to read vast amounts of information and synthesize it.

Now not everybody does it. I find a lot of librarians who don't do it and will do the research, and not that they don't have the skillset, but they think that their job is simply to deliver everything they find. But I find a lot of librarians who do a lot of research, who synthesize everything, who do that analysis and deliver the package with their recommendation – saying this is what I think and by the way if you want all the detail, here's all the detail. They have now done that synthesis and the analytical work and added a lot of value. I enjoyed doing that and I think getting the business degree certainly helped me do that well, with the business context.

So you left GE...

By the time I left GE, I had been leading a competitive intelligence group. We went through various cycles in the course of 10 years; I had people who worked for me in Foxboro at one point and by the time I left I actually had a team of people who worked for me in India doing secondary research, and I used to work with a lot of outside vendors doing the primary competitive intelligence work. I will say that it's a lot of those very similar skillsets that I use here at FM Global, although my job is now a straight marketing position. It's a technical marketing position but a lot of the courses that I took at Simmons were computer-based courses, database courses and market research courses. That's what I really enjoyed doing and when I did my MBA, I took market research courses, strategic marketing courses, and things like that.

I remember actually once, we had a competitive intelligence segment, in our strategy course and I actually talked about what we offered at J&J in the library in terms of the services that we offered. I had classmates who worked at Fidelity and IBM, a lot

of those type of companies; they would call me and say can you do this research for me and sometimes it would be school work and sometimes it would be work related, and I would say you guys have a library at your organization, go ask so and so. This is how you should ask the question and they'll be able to give you the answer. It was really interesting, I discovered a lot of my classmates said that they never knew that their (corporate) library could do this for them.

My title right now is manager of digital marketing and I run a technical marketing team. We support websites, extranets, we're the bridge team between marketing and IS, and I work for a VP of sales so I continue to support the sales team in this job. I still think that a lot of the library skills are the things that inform me in the decisions that I make and the research that I can do. Again during the interview at FM Global, I said that I can learn this new (insurance) industry because competitive intelligence and analysis is the skillset that I bring.

In fact, as part of a product launch, I'm writing up a competitive landscape white paper. This is one of the things I did at Emerson, Intellution for our product launches, and I even did it a little bit at J&J in terms of working with the marketing managers because marketing teams always seem to run so lean. Librarianship skills teach you to do the research, analysis and write up a competitive landscape positioning statement.

Even though we have a pretty big staff, everybody has a day job already, nobody had time to monitor 15 companies in support of the on-going competitive product work, and there was discussion around hiring an outside vendor. However, I also said that we should go to the FM Global TIC, the technical information center and ask them if they have time to help us. My boss was a little unsure that they were going to be able to help us. I pointed out that this is what they do and that they're a very under-utilized group. We spoke to them, and they said that they could absolutely do this work for us.

Just to backtrack a little to make sure that those who might be reading this understand what you mean by technical marketing. Can you define that?

Technical marketing is essentially digital marketing. Basically it involves running

websites. We own the .com public websites; we have extranets for our clients and our brokers and we support those as well. We work with the IT team building applications for the company, things like the client relationship management application, that is the MS Dynamics CRM system, the extranets, and other digital marketing projects. Part of what we do in support of the extranets for our clients and our brokers is that my team actually manages the extranets like a product line and we do the product marketing for the extranets. We write marketing collateral, we work with the engineering team and with the IS team and we lead digital product marketing launches; so it gets into social media a little bit, gets into product marketing but done in a very digitized format.

Think about sales training - even 10 years ago someone might have been doing sales training, creating a book for the course. Now you do sales training and you deliver it via the web or in a digitized format. Options such as sending everybody a flash drive and creating online courses and delivering webinars, etc. When I say technical marketing it's digital marketing when you think about systems and processes like that.

When you were applying for this job at FM Global, what was the role you had last when you left GE? Was it a marketing job or was it still CI?

I was supervising a CI team, while I was the director of strategic alliances where I managed relationships with systems integrators. I managed the Microsoft relationship, large companies like Wipro, Tata Consulting, EDS, those software company relationships; so again I was the bridge person between engineering, the software division, marketing and the outside software vendor. I did that and I also supervised the competitive intelligence role and I worked for the VP of product marketing at the time.

So to get your position at FM Global in technical marketing, which do you think was more valuable to those that were hiring you - the strategic alliances experience or competitive intelligence?

It was the director of strategic alliances job but it was also the fact that I had done a lot of the product launches; so it was that mix of strategic marketing - product launches where I talked about competitive intelligence and creation of sales tools as part of creating a marketing collateral kit. A lot of the (interview) questions were really around topics such as “how did you run this product launch”, “how did you get the product out the door”, what did you do, how did you create the press for it, what kind of webinars, how did you get leads for it, what was the business process around it, so the CI component became part of a much larger program. It was competitive intelligence, product marketing, and strategic marketing.....I would say it was the mix of these that helped me get this job and the fact that I have a technology background and that I worked in software; I think most librarians have the technology background these days.

Thinking about your experiences in marketing, if somebody from the library were to come up to you and say, “I think I want to get to marketing, how do I get there, what would you say?”

It’s interesting because Jim Matarazzo, the dean at Simmons a few years ago, asked me to come speak to his class about this very thing. He asked me to talk about my career and how I had made some shifts and the different jobs I had at GE. I would definitely say that, speaking for myself and for most librarians, one of the things that you first need to do is learn that business savvy and learn the language of business. You’ve got to learn the industry that you’re in, whatever company you’re working for, learn that product and understand the business.

When I was at J&J it was matter of understanding the orthopedics business. I couldn’t turn into an engineer - a lot of them were mechanical engineers and had PhDs in that area - but you want to know enough so that you’re able to speak

the language of the business and understand it and speak to things that matter in the industry; learn to understand the industry trends. So whatever industry you're working in, whatever company you're working in, start learning the cyclical nature of the industry that you're in.

In terms of getting a paper qualification, I think the business degree definitely made a huge difference for me because the combination of the library science degree plus the business degree puts you in the perfect spot for competitive intelligence. My library degree helped me a lot in actually doing well in my MBA. I enjoyed library school and I enjoyed my MBA. I will say the difference is that going through the MBA program, you start understanding financial analysis better, you start understanding what matters in business better and just the way companies work, and you start learning about marketing and sales processes and things like that a little bit better; so you become a little less theoretical and a little bit more business minded and I think that shift has to be made.

Then I think a really great way to get into marketing is literally through market research. I hesitate when I say straight, pure market research because sometimes market research jobs can be very statistical analysis based, and that's me. I'm not going to be doing anything in SPC any time soon. There are a lot of librarians who have that capability and would be really good at it but I think if you're not interested in that pure market research and mathematical analysis, then you want to consider going into more business related analysis - thus CI / market intelligence is a better angle.

Regarding market research, what are the qualifications that a librarian would need to be able to break into market research? Is there a prerequisite of having an MBA?

I don't think there's a prerequisite. It depends on the company that you're in. If you're trying to interview for a market research job in a different company from the one in which you are currently employed, then you would probably need a business degree or even something like a mathematics degree, some kind of background like that that said that you had the analytical skills in addition to your research skills.

Now if you were like me and you were working at a place like J&J where people have

had an opportunity to observe you for five or six years, and they see how much you have grown in the business and they see how much you know about the industry then it might be an easier move. I happened to be doing patent work at J&J as well. I think that was really it.....taking those core library services and using those library skills to branch out in terms of what you can do for your company will support your intended move. People began seeing that I could take the research and could apply it to market research, competitive intelligence and marketing positioning, and that I could apply that same research facility to patent research. People would be willing to see you in a different light if you are able to demonstrate that you are able to apply your skill set to the various business needs.

As long as you can bring in some of the other industry knowledge and have a little bit of the analytical skills and perhaps other background that might help. This matters whether you're a librarian or you're sitting in the job I've got today in marketing. You want to be thought of as adding enough value that people (across the organization) want to bring you in on the ground floor.

At J&J when we ran the library, we were at such a place where I think we were offering enough value add that when a project team started work on a project, we were part of that project team. People knew that they were going to come to ask us to research (the product) right at the beginning. They didn't come to us after the fact or as an afterthought. We were in on the project right from the very beginning and so we were a crucial part of the business process.

I think if you are in a company where people have had an opportunity to see you grow and to know that you have a deep knowledge of the industry, you will have opportunities. When I say deep knowledge I mean, that you are interested in that industry and that you have an opinion on things within it, that you can learn certain things, then I think you might be in a situation where they might be willing to give you that opportunity before you got an MBA. They might want you go to and get the MBA because you need to augment some of those skills to bring in certain new skills, because you learn different things with different degrees. They gave me a lot of opportunity before I got my MBA. They (J&J management) didn't come to me and say get an MBA. I went to them and said I'd like to get a business degree because I'm doing the patent work and I'm doing the marketing research and I'm doing the CI and I feel if I could understand a little bit more in terms of business I could add more value. I felt this because in terms of getting feedback from everybody I

went to my bosses and other VPs and I said - if I wanted to do X job, what do you think I'm lacking in? They said probably the one thing you're lacking in is just your comparative inexperience with business, because you've come from academia and you've now been in the corporation for five or six years. The fastest way to get some exposure to business is go get a business degree so that was my thought process, but making an internal move within your company may not require an MBA. I think if you plan to go interview outside your current company then you may need to have paper qualifications just because the external parties do not know you or the expertise that you have, thus the MBA lends some credibility.

A related question. What's the best way for somebody who has perhaps not done much marketing to dip their toe or to try marketing and to figure out if they're interested in it?

The best way to come into marketing for a librarian is coming in through competitive intelligence. You (the librarian) already have a lot of skillsets that you're bringing to the table so you have something to offer. I'd say you are on equal footing because you have something to offer and then you could also say that you want to learn how to do X. Because you have that research skill to offer and the analytical skill, etc, that's an opportunity for that person to get exposed to the business. Once the person gets exposed to the business that's the opportunity to ask if they can sit in on a new product development committee, for example, essentially asking if they could get involved in something beyond the business intelligence function, or asking if they could get involved in strategic marketing within the company.

I did that at Emerson. I went to my boss, the VP of marketing at the time, because I was doing CI and I said I want to get involved in the strategic planning process for Emerson. Intellution was a 300 person software company and the president said, "I'd like you to project manage the strategic planning process for the Emerson planning conference this year." He said, "...you're going to be doing the research anyway and he said you do the research and then basically herd all the cats, get the project done, do all the project planning, help us storyboard it and figure it all out, etc." In this scenario, I was now one of the supporting cast members because I was going to give them my research anyway and now I was project managing the whole project. I got to be in all the meetings, I was running the meetings, I was working with all the VPs

and that's how I got involved. From there I got the opportunity to manage a product launch. They acknowledged that I was good at project management; I kept things on target, I demonstrated that I knew the business well enough because I was doing the CI work and I helped them a lot at the strategic planning conference....and they then said that they would like me to project manage the next product launch. And that's how those building blocks got built up and that's how I made the shift into marketing.

I think if I'd just shown up and said I want to be in marketing, the response would have been OK....but you have no marketing background. Rather, I took on little by little and I started learning things. As you do it, you learn it and then you get exposed little by little. It didn't all happen overnight. It happened over the course of probably about three to five years in a company I'd already worked in. It was half the career that I had there and I got to add on different things to expand the job.

I'll be honest, the library degree also helped a lot in being a patent administrator because obviously it helps in doing patent research, and we became experts at patent research....because in the orthopedics industry you really need to know your patents. Before a new product goes out the door, legal has to approve it and the J&J lawyers approved everything that was done before it went out to make sure we weren't infringing anybody else's patent. If you are interested, that's a great area to segue into as well; from librarianship to doing patent research.

Finally - now that you're a step removed from the librarian, what should the corporate librarian be doing these days to make them more significant, to add more value?

It's interesting because it's such tight budgetary constraints now for everybody. Depending on the industry that you're in, definitely being aligned with your research group is key; so if you're in a pharma library or you're in a medical device library, any of those areas, you definitely want to be aligned with your VP of R&D. And I would say you definitely want to be aligned with your VP of marketing or regulatory affairs or new business development; those are all of the areas to focus, where the R&D group is basically making the product and the marketing group is typically addressing marketing and sales functions; so you are aligned with the people who are making the product and the people who are selling it and those are

the two most important functions in this type of company within the regulated healthcare markets.

If you are in a regulated industry with healthcare, then obviously you want to understand what the regulatory and quality function is all about. I also think learning about how to research regulatory standards and understanding those kinds of things makes you a valuable player in a regulated industry. I find that a lot that I learned at J&J, I was actually able to bring over to Emerson, not specific to my job but it helped me so much in terms of the competitive intelligence that I had to do when we were making a piece of software for the pharma industry when 21 CFR 11, the regulatory standards related to electronic signaturing came into being. So, knowing regulations, being somebody in the know in the business, and not being the back burner kind of person, I think that's a shift in mentality I'll say that the librarian needs to make. The work itself is the same set of skills being exercised; it's just the difference in the way it is presented.

The other thing I would say is definitely analyzing and packaging the information better. I remember one of my MBA classmates saying that to me when they asked me to research something. They said to me they had asked their librarian (at their company) to do it and received a list of references in return rather than the packed information that they got from me that was very direct and pertinent to their question. They said we asked you for the same search; you gave me five things and you gave me a synopsis and said here's the synthesis of what I read and this is what I think. I said "To be fair was it a junior person or was it a senior person?" They actually didn't know and that makes a huge difference. I told my classmate that I had the advantage, because this classmate was somebody who was in the biotech industry, so I knew the industry a little bit but she said so should this person (the librarian at their company) because this person works for my company. "They gave me 25 articles and I've got to do the work and slog through it and that's the whole point I don't have time", and I said I don't think they understood that you expected them to go through the materials, synthesize it and analyze it. Her response to me was that I knew that it would add value, and at that point I said I've been a librarian now for almost 10 years so that's the difference – my experience. I said you ask somebody right out of school they're not going to know that due to inexperience.

Can I say one more thing?

I will say that I think the library field in general should be a little bit more open to people circling back. I would love to go back into librarianship. I wouldn't be averse to that at all. I would want to go back into management because I run a business team now. I have a staff of over 10 people and a big budget and all of that and I would love to be the director of a college library or a director of a large corporate library. I think the library profession and maybe this is no different than any other profession, is they would look at somebody like me and say you've been away from it for 15 years; I don't know if you remember anything. From my perspective, I don't need to remember everything because I'm coming in with a different skillset to help run the place, I can help market the library, and I can help make the library a value add and make it a business unit that the company wants to keep or that the college wants to keep.

The college needs to keep it anyway (due to accreditation needs) but to bring it to a different level because when I see some of the trends in digital marketing I really think that they would help the library industry today too just in terms of being a social enterprise. I think librarians know a lot about websites. I think librarians were some of the first people to learn about websites long before marketers or anybody else really knew about stuff like that. Indexing, understanding databases all of that, this is what librarians are fantastic at but I don't think other people realize it unless we're able to bring that to the forefront. I think the industry needs to be more ready to take back people like myself because I would love to circle back in my career and go back and do that (library work) at a different level in a different way.

Barbra Rosenberg

Current Position:

Senior Director, Strategic Account Planning (Sales)

Most Recent Library Position:

Senior Manager, Library Director (2007)

How did you get to where you are today?

I've never said no if someone asked me to take on a new assignment, because I was always writing my own job description - which I think is helpful. I've also always been a big believer in marketing myself because I've often been a solo librarian. Whenever there was somebody new that came into the company I always made a point of trying to introduce myself at least if they were local.

I did that with the person who ended up changing my life - he's my corporate mentor. Shortly after he was hired as the head of the division that I reported into, I set up a meeting to discuss the services I provided and how that could help him. I said, "what can I do to help you? Here's the kinds of things I do..." He'd come from a consulting environment and thought that was great - so within a few months he asked me to help him with a marketing war room.

Working in a "war room" was nothing I'd ever done before, but I ended up helping him by doing competitor profiles and it turned out well. He included me in the meeting and our relationship developed from there. Over the years, he kept asking me to take on different projects while still in my role as a librarian. Along the way I also was asked to take on knowledge management. I got involved in improving the employee intranet and was doing all these things that were really outside my core set of library skills.

In January 2007, he called me into his office and said, "Barbra would you be interested in doing something outside of being a librarian?" And I said "Sure!! What is it?" (I said yes before I knew what it was!)

When his initial answer was sales, I thought, "Hmm, I'm not really good at sales." But that's how I made that first step outside of the library profession. When I look

back, I realize that I always offered to do things other than what was standard, no matter how busy I was. Actually the other stuff was what made the standard stuff more interesting to me, so I never said no.

That first year, my job was managing the sales operations process and helping with process development for a CRM system. So it was doing process analysis, line management, and system design with the CRM. And I also managed the people who did sales analysis.

Now - I remember that six months before taking that position, I would receive the weekly sales forecast and I couldn't comprehend what I was looking at; it really made no sense to me since numbers were not something that I really focused on. Six months later, I was managing the person who put that report together and running the meetings where that report was discussed and responsible for analyzing the data that came from that report.

I decided that numbers were just another form of information - but it took me a while to realize that. I forced myself to actually look at spreadsheets and become comfortable with them. I can't deny that it was scary. But it energized me to do something new. It was really fun even though I had no idea what I was doing and felt like a complete fraud at times. But I got over my fear of Excel as I started playing around with it more.

I also had to learn how to become proficient in PowerPoint because in the corporate world, nobody writes Word documents anymore - they do it all in PowerPoint. In fact, one of the things that attracted the attention of this vice president to me, and made me more valuable, is my writing style and my writing skills. He figured out that I could write very clearly and succinctly (an important organizational skill in my opinion) and he kept leveraging that. I actually sat in on the quarterly management meetings and knew what the whole big picture was and presented trends to them on an ongoing basis and actively helped write the slides. So in leaving the library, I moved from supporting strategic activities to directly contributing to them.

A year later, my role expanded to provide these services for another division as well. It was a lot of process planning and doing process management - and what I've discovered is that I think being organized, a critical skill for most librarians, also makes you very good at organizing processes - and most people don't look at things that way, so that's one of the skills from library-land that I brought to the table.

I remember looking at someone who had a similar job and thinking, “I bet I could do that role ” but I don’t know that I would have known how to sell myself. But from my mentor’s point of view, he needed people he could rely on to get things done. He was willing to see that I had skills and that I can do more than what I’m doing. He was willing to see me outside of the library box in a way that I didn’t have to sell myself to him. He saw it which was great because it helped me see it in a way. I knew I could do things, I just didn’t know how to get there.

A few years later, my mentor began leading the effort to introduce strategic account management as a discipline in the company. He came to me and he said, “what do you think of this position?” So that’s how I moved into my third post-library job – the position that I’m currently in.

What I’ve discovered is that anybody that has a job that’s hard to describe (the position I’m in now) – is often doing something that they weren’t initially trained to do. Most companies have roles which require good people who can be responsible, who can try to deliver on time and who are willing to step back and see what needs to be done and be OK with uncertainty. Like I said, if I look back at my career, other than my very early job, I was always in a situation where I was selling them something, introducing a role, being a corporate librarian to a company that didn’t know that they wanted it or only some people knew they wanted it and I had to convince the rest. So I never was following a clear path that was established by others. I was always creating that path and that’s the same skillset that I’m continuing to use.

So what is strategic account management?

It involves managing your most important customers and looking at things from both the sales and an operational perspective. The goal is to fundamentally change the customer/supplier relationship in a way that’s beneficial to both parties. Strategic account planning is one part of that process which requires the team to identify their goals and long-term objectives. It’s not just about increasing your numbers, your revenue.

I think a generic title for me is senior director in strategic partnership office because I do account planning and I run the process where we develop a strategic account

plan. But that's just one part of what I do. I also developed and manage the process of getting quarterly meetings done where we talk about what's happening with those accounts.

The first year in this role, I really was focused on helping to define the process and the program for the company. As the program has matured, I'm now working on managing best practices for our strategic partnerships. At this point I feel like I'm doing knowledge management again because everyone is doing things slightly differently and I'm gathering all that information together. I'm identifying what I think is the best way of doing things and going back with the subject matter experts and helping to train people - so it's capturing and developing our intellectual property around these topics and training people on them and then continuing the cycle by doing lessons learned.

Thinking about your role in sales operations, Let's say somebody has been asked to move into this position or is considering interviewing for this position that comes from a library background. What advice would you give to them?

Highlight anything you've done with processes; processes are everything. If you set up a library, you've identified and built processes. If you manage a function or a department, you have built and managed processes - sales ops is really all about process management. It's looking at the steps that need to be done and making sure that they're being done and making sure they're being done consistently. Other skills to brush up on are Excel and PowerPoint. I can't say that enough that I wish I knew more about Excel. I used to say Excel was just for numbers, that's just for accountants and it's not. I find when I create a table for just capturing words I do it in Excel now. Excel is like my working document and PowerPoint is my final version.

Any print publications that you would recommend?

In sales ops I never found anything. It's more understanding your company's culture because there's no association of people who do sales ops things. I wanted

an association and I wanted that kind of body of knowledge and didn't find it. It's really understanding your own corporate culture and being aware of what your company does. That's a really critical thing. I don't know if I could have made this career change by going from one company to another company. What made it possible was that I was a known entity within my company and people trusted me.

Now for strategic account management. What about the key skills for success?

In strategic account management there is this association, SAMA. I think it's really useful to join and at least read what other people are doing. A lot of it comes from a sales background but it's fascinating to see a different professional perspective.

In term of skills for my current role, it's really about organizing information. For a strategic account plan, there is a lot of information you want to capture about your accounts and it's not just sales numbers. It's also what are we doing operationally, what are we delivering? If you're in a product environment, what are the products and then what are the account's goals and how can we help the account to meet those goals? Basically, I'm organizing information again in a strategic fashion.

I think if sales ops is more about processes, I think strategic account planning is process-focused and about capturing information and how you're going to share that information within whatever your team is. It definitely helps that as a librarian I always felt I looked across all the parts of the company And developed a big picture view. I never was looking just at one slice of things and that's critical to strategic account management because you are not just supporting one group.

Can you give an example of how those big picture skills are leveraged?

Every company has probably a primary product line that consumers or customers will think of but if you only look at that as what you're selling to your strategic account then you're not really leveraging all the parts of the company. So my ability to know everything about my company and all the things that we do and to have networked within my company - even if I didn't know the people before I get to

know them, it's really being able to step out of the box because strategic account management is a different way of doing things for most companies.

As a librarian, an analogy I might draw is because the library service has many clients and has perspective on what's worked in different scenarios, that's something that can be applied to strategic account management because you have the larger picture of being able to understand it's not just about a widget it's about a widget and applying practices from other value drivers in the company to a specific account. True?

Yes. I think that's a good way of looking at it because when you're a librarian you're working with lots of different entities within your company and you're also looking at trends so you know the bigger picture of things that are impacting your client.

Rebecca Armitage

Position:

Emergency Medicine Information System Specialist / Change Agent

Most Recent “Library” Position:

Pfizer, Inc. (2010)

How did you get into the job you’re in today?

My position was eliminated amidst a round of layoffs at the end of 2010.

I’m in a geographically challenged area of the country (Rhode Island), and with three library schools within a hundred mile radius, there were very few positions. So I knew I had to get creative in the next job adventure, especially since I knew there wasn’t another pharmaceutical job.

So I started with my circle of contacts and worked outwards, doing informational interviewing for other potential positions that would be a fit for me. In addition to friends and relatives, I went back to URI and spoke to the professors there too. I made appointments and went wearing a full suit every time and said, “here are some of my skills, do you have contacts that I could speak to about their industry? What’s going on and how do you see my skills transferring? And what would it be called?” I wasn’t looking for a job, I was looking for information - I ended up doing 36 informational interviews around the state in about three months.

The ironic thing is that my job didn’t directly come from there; it actually came from a friend of mine in one of my sewing groups. I let all my friends there know I’m looking, and one day I got a phone call from a friend of mine who said “I just wrote and posted a position and ... I don’t know if you qualify but I know you’re smart so I think you’ll do great.”

To be honest, if I had read it online without talking with my friend, I probably wouldn’t have posted for it because it’s very IT sounding. But when I spoke with her, I realized that it’s a brand new role and it’s in an area that I heard about a lot in my informational interviewing - health IT – and it is a liaison position between,

in this case, the emergency department and the IS/IT department. So I thought, “I have those skillsets.”

Tell us more about the job that you're in now.

It's a hybrid position. I report into emergency medicine but I'm an employee of Lifespan – a non-profit foundation that is the overarching governing body of five hospitals. The reason I'm a Lifespan employee is because a Lifespan employee has access into the back end of these healthcare IT databases - the emergency medicine department is not, because they are a Foundation contracted to Lifespan, so not Lifespan employees.

Originally, they wanted more of an IT person, but then they realized that this role requires a tremendous amount of communication – so they needed somebody who not only understands IT but can also communicate with healthcare providers.

That's where I come in. The big project right now is adding a module on to the emergency department information system. In library-speak, it's the catalog. If a patient comes into the emergency department, their information goes in there so it's the electronic patient record from the emergency department. If you get admitted to the hospital, you use a different system. These systems then all talk to each other behind the scenes and tie into a big back end system.

One of the big items is a module that was added for electronic charting or physician documentation; it's a huge step to go from paper documentation to electronic and we just went live last week with the first roll out. We're rolling it out in sections so that's the big project I'm on. I am not the project manager - IS is project management but I handle all other aspects of it dealing with the emergency department. So I handle all the training, scheduling the training, getting feedback and working on edits - all of the soft management items that need to be done. I'm guiding the emergency department through the roll out.

Aside from understanding the back end and being able to communicate with both the IT department and end users, what are other key skills for success?

The reference interview - requirements gathering in IT-speak. I need to understand in the user's terminology what they need this item to do for them, and I might have to ask them three or four different ways to get that information.

Seeing the larger picture, similar to collection development. You look across your collection and you see where this fits in with the larger goal. Now I don't have a collection but what I see is different projects going on and I can check if this person knows that this project is going on and that they can be helped by this other one. It's looking at the whole and seeing how we can get the best use of people's time and people's money; that's sort of like viewing the collection.

Being detailed oriented and organized. There might be five or six things running at the same time and I've been given access to three or four different shared drives of different teams - I have to stay very organized.

Training as a change agent. You can't create change if you can't tell people what they're changing to. Usually we're super users on some databases and we're average users on the other ones but we are similar to where the vendor trains the trainer and trains us to then train other people.

And being the point person for information. As in the reference desk, I position myself to be a point so people have this one point of contact they can come to. Even if I don't deal with hardware, I'll put them in touch with the person who does deal with hardware. It's keeping that information community and continuity going.

Is something you feel that librarians can easily slide into?

Yes and I'm giving an emphatic yes, because I've been to symposia and conferences where the speakers have actually said that as part of health IT, we need information workers who can do exactly what I'm now doing. To give you an example, my supervisor was called by another physician group who said, "I hear you have a new role, tell me about it." She did and they then said "we want one of her."

The job sounds IT but you have to read through it. I would also give the advice that I never really found anything like this on Monster. What I'm hearing from recruiters is some of these positions are only being posted on the specific companies' websites - so if you've narrowed your search down to say the health field and you're just looking at hospitals or clinics, look on their websites directly because they may not be posting these on the big job boards.

*Are there specific credentials that are typically in demand?
What would you say to librarians interested in a similar job?*

Good question. I was told the little IS on the MLIS got me in the door.

This position wanted a bachelor's degree in information systems, computer science or related fields. Information science, that's the selling point. It's not the library, it's the word information and some of them may want a little bit more IT specific. Instead of saying, for example, the Voyager ILS system, you can say it's an integrated library system/relational database. Use the IT wording.

Before you start looking, get familiar with the names of the different EHRs and EMRs (electronic health records and electronic medical records). We say platforms - so it might be IT platforms, enterprise wide IT platforms, department specific IT platforms - they're using these terms but electronic health record and electronic medical record are the big buzz words right now. Even if you're not familiar with those or haven't used them specifically, I think we can use our knowledge of an ILS as a relational database to understand that it's specific data that is held in tables in a different way and with these, it's just patient specific data, for example.

*Are there any other resources or things that you would suggest
as far as getting fluent in that language?*

Talk to your local health IT person, find out what's in health news. ICD-9 is going to be changing very soon to ICD-10 which is a huge, huge project. Read about health law changes, health regulation changes, anything along those lines to get ahead of the curve to understand how the industry is changing, both short-term and long-term. (The short term change is probably where they're going to be needing

the most help to implement some of these new systems that have been mandated.) They'll teach you what you need to know on a detailed level but understand what their problems are and how you can help get solutions to their problems or issues or challenges.

I think it's a really exciting time. I think it's a little bit scary to move out of your comfort zone, out of an information center; I know it was scary for me. I'm at my mid career; I had to make a decision and the support I'm getting from the information community is great, so whether it's SLA or some of my local information groups, they've been very supportive in this change to something new and so I'm going to continue to learn and learn from my colleagues.

