10-5-2018

Transitioning from a Paraprofessional to Professional Librarian

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Recommended Citation
McRae, Jerry, "Transitioning from a Paraprofessional to Professional Librarian" (2018). AUC Robert W. Woodruff Library Staff Publications. 28.
http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/libpubs/28
Transitioning from a Paraprofessional to Professional Librarian

Introduction
Transitioning from a paraprofessional (library assistant/technician) to a librarian is a very interesting experience. Library support staff usually work under the supervision of a librarian, but some may also work independently. Paraprofessionals in small libraries handle a wide range of duties. Those in large libraries usually specialize. The work of library support staff includes (but is not limited to) directing library users to standard reference resources, organizing and maintaining periodicals, preparing volumes for binding, and interlibrary loan requests. Successfully completing graduate school starts the transition.

Objective
This poster is designed to describe some of the ways roles and responsibilities might change when paraprofessionals transition from being support staff to the role of an academic librarian. Advancing to librarian from a paraprofessional position is certainly a big change that comes with added responsibilities, and duties. The reality of the new day-to-day schedule of instruction, reference desk shifts, research consultations, office hours and scholarly pursuits is a shocking “eye-opener” to say the least! Some of the new duties include:

- collection development
- website maintenance
- ongoing professional development (skills enhancement, technology and subject liaison duties)
- faculty & student outreach
- membership in professional organizations and campus committees

This poster will provide a comparison of roles and responsibilities before and after the transition.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities &amp; Differences in Duties</th>
<th>Paraprofessionals</th>
<th>Librarians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public service desk time</td>
<td>Daily shift duties at public desks.</td>
<td>Daily shift duties at public desks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology skills</td>
<td>Technology skills must stay current to navigate the library’s website &amp; databases</td>
<td>Technology and research skills must be current for basic service delivery and in-depth research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written/oral communication skills</td>
<td>Good verbal and written communication skills</td>
<td>Excellent verbal and written communication skills the patron can understand is key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service.</td>
<td>A high level of customer service is required.</td>
<td>A high level of customer service is required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committees</td>
<td>May be required to serve on organizational and external committees.</td>
<td>May be required to serve on organizational and external committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional memberships &amp;</td>
<td>Membership in professional organizations is encouraged but not required.</td>
<td>Membership and active participation in professional organizations expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference Attendance</td>
<td>Research skills are required.</td>
<td>Advanced research skills are required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Collection</td>
<td>Collection maintenance (e.g. shelving books.)</td>
<td>Collection development (selecting library resources).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits of Transitioning

- More time to focus on specific subjects of interest
- Love of the work and helping others
- Passion for research & information literacy
- Communicating clearly with faculty and students
- Improved responsibility & organizational skills
- Achieving professional, collaborative projects with faculty
- Personal workplace
- Lively, noisy & Busy
- Increased responsibility & organizational skills
- Shining new light on valuable contributions
- Making an impact & Difference
- Love the work and helping others
- Good communication
- Organizational skills
- Collaborative projects
- Personal workplace
- Inner Circle
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- Love of the work and helping others
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References

