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## People Profile: Rob Withers

Editor

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positions in the 2003-04 sample tend not to mention phrases such as "contract negotiation"; they do often request some form of licensing experience (see below). "Licensing" may simply be the twenty-first century equivalent of "contract negotiation."

In addition, need for good interpersonal skills is a constant. Oral/written communication skills are desired or required for 57% of 1993-94 positions and 46% of 2003-04 positions, and public service experience is desired or required for 21% of 1993-94 positions and 23% of 2003-04 positions. Supervisory experience increases (desired or required for 14% of 1993-94 positions and 31% of 2003-04 positions). This increase may reflect a trend toward assigning tasks to paraprofessionals that were once restricted to librarians, and relying on librarians to oversee some aspects of processing rather than performing all aspects of it.<sup>5</sup> "Collegiality" is specifically mentioned in 16% of 2003-04 advertisements and "analytical skills" appears in 8%. Foreign language experience, mentioned in 9% of the 1993-94 sample, holds steady at 8% in 2003-04.

Other constants are the **ALA-accredited MLS**, required for all positions, and cataloging experience (7% in 1993-94, 8% in 2003-04). Advertisements for some professional positions with a technical emphasis have ceased to require an **ALA-MLS**; however, despite the increasing frequency with which some technical skills are required or desired (see below), this trend appears not to have affected serials positions.

Several new items appear as desired/required qualifications in the 2003-04 sample. The ubiquity of e-journals is responsible for the appearance of many of these, including knowledge/familiarity with managing e-resources (23%), managing e-journal holdings (8%), e-journal licensing (16%) and emerging technologies/standards (16%). In addition, experience with Web development, EDI and electronic ordering, SFX and Open URL each appear in 8% of positions. These findings mirror those of a recent study of cataloging positions, which noted that experience with emerging metadata and tools (38%) and Website development (4%) were required.<sup>6</sup>

Experience with a specific integrated library system appears in 30% of 2003-04 advertisements. The emergence of this qualification likely explains the slight decline in experience with *any* ILS (down from 21% in 1993-94 to 13% in 2003-04). As increasing numbers of people have had the opportunity to gain experience with individual systems, it is now possible to screen successfully based on experience with the ILS currently in use. Experience with productivity software and/or spreadsheets appears in 23% of advertisements. This rate is consistent with **Khurshid's** 2003 study, which noted that 29.13% of cataloging skills have this requirement.<sup>7</sup> Other items present in the 2003-04 advertisements include experience with scholarly communication trends (8%), budget experience (8%), and experience with consortia (8%).

## against the grain people profile

Assistant to the Dean, Miami University  
219 King Library, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056  
Phone: 513-529-9556; Fax: 513-529-2136  
<rwithers@lib.muohio.edu>

### Rob Withers

**BORN & LIVED:** Columbus, OH; Cincinnati, OH; Chapel Hill, NC; Baltimore, MD.

**FAMILY:** Parents, sister and four nephews and nieces.

**EDUCATION:** B.A. **College of Wooster** (1989); M.A. **University of North Carolina** (1995); M.L.S. **North Carolina Central University** (1995).

**FIRST JOB:** Circulation Desk Supervisor, **UNC-Chapel Hill**.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** Assistant to the Dean & University Librarian, **Miami University** (2001 - ); Electronic Information Services Librarian, **Miami University** (1998-2001); Systems/Technical Services Librarian, **McDaniel College** (1996-98); Technical Support Manager, **University of North Carolina** (1995-96); Order Receipt Expediter, **University of North Carolina** (1994-95); Desk Supervisor/Searcher, **University of North Carolina** (1991-1994)

**IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO:** Read, listen to music, buy books and music.

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** Never met a book I didn't like. My favorites would probably be **Andrei Bely's Petersburg** and **Mikhail Bulgakov's Master and Margarita**. They can both be read on many levels and have stood up to repeated readings since my college days. Current reading includes *The Stars in Their Courses*, a history of the Gettysburg campaign; *Dream Palace of the Arabs*, about Arab literature and society; and **Jack London's The Sea Wolf**.

**MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** Distinguished Service Award from State Library Association (2004).

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Continue to evolve my interests and skills to match the ways in which librarianship is evolving.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** Different. Possibly in ways that I don't anticipate, but different.

### Position Titles

Changes in duties are reflected in position titles. The most frequently occurring type of title in 1993-94, "Serials Librarian or "Periodicals Librarian," occurred in 38% of advertisements. By 2003-04, the most frequently used title, occurring in 46% of advertisements, was some permutation of "Serials/Electronic Resources Librarian." Variants include "Serials/E-Resources Librarian," "Serials/Electronic Resources Librarian," "Serials/Web Resources Librarian," "Serials/Electronic Resources Cataloger," and "Electronic Resources/Serials Librarian." One position, Business/Electronic Access Librarian, entailed experience with supervising staff, working with an integrated library system, and providing access to electronic resources. Use of other titles declined slightly, including Serials Catalog Librarian (13% in 1993-94, 8% in 2003-04), and Serials Department Head (19% in 1993-94, 8% in 2003-04). Combinations of serials with other functions (Access Services, Documents), present in 13% of 1993-94 ads, disappear completely in 2003-04. The decline in Department Head positions may be explained by consolidation of technical services departments. Positions described as "Unit Head" increase from 13% in 1993-94 to 18% in 2003-04.

### Conclusion

Position descriptions for librarian positions

with a serials emphasis reflect changes created by the proliferation of electronic journals over the past decade. While some duties and desired qualifications have remained roughly constant, many others reflect the transition from providing access to serials in a physical environment to providing access in an electronic one. Although not all position titles have changed, a significant number of titles have.

The most interesting changes are not necessarily the most wide-ranging ones. Although many new desired or required qualifications have emerged, there is not yet a clear consensus among advertisements on necessary technical skills. The current variety of skills listed in advertisements reflects attempts by libraries to figure out how serials work is changing and will change in the near future. It will be interesting to see over the coming years which of these desired/required qualifications become dominant. Likewise, a series of position titles has emerged, analogous to what **Khurshid** describes as "emerging position titles" in his review of cataloger positions. Most are related, but the specific wording varies. It will be interesting to see if these titles become standardized in coming years, or if working with electronic resources becomes so ingrained in serials processing that use of words like "electronic resources"

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