

Marissa Antosh
December 2, 2009
ILS 561 S70
Dr. Bielefield
Final exam

1. You have been the Library Director of the medium-sized public library for the town of Abington for 5 years. Your Library Board of Trustees is a governing one. They have adopted all of the ALA Intellectual Freedom documents, including the Code of Ethics, the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, the Right to Read statements, etc.

Beth, your Community Service Librarian, has started a film series open to all—this is the 6th such series since you arrived in Abington. It is to be held on Thursday nights at 7 pm, beginning next week, with most showings over fairly early. Experience has proven this series to be popular, mainly because the films are shown on a large screen, so the experience is similar to going to a movie theatre. And, the library furnishes popcorn, too! After the films are shown, experts from the local colleges (there are two nearby) will comment on the film's content, meaning, symbolism, etc., and they will answer questions from the audience.

The films were chosen via a survey of library patrons. The titles of the films were listed in the local paper over a week ago. For the first time ever, two people have protested the only "R" film on the list, "Little Miss Sunshine." They object to the language and also to some of the insensitivity in the film. As it happens, it is the film that got the most votes in the survey—the one most people wanted to be part of the series. As you may know, it's become somewhat of a classic.

George Foster, the Chairman of the Board, called you yesterday and said that he spoke with several Board members, and he wants the Community Service Librarian to check the age of anyone she thinks may not be 17, and to not allow those under 17, including groups of high school youngsters, to attend the film showing.

Yesterday, when you spoke to Beth*, she objected strongly to the request from the Board Chairman. Today she came into your office and told you that she refuses to act as the movie police, and she reminded you that the library has always opened up its programs to everyone.

Of course, the local newspaper has gotten wind of the controversy, and a reporter has been calling your office and leaving voicemails requesting to speak to you.

What will you do now? Tell me what your action(s) will be? What will you do and say? To whom will you speak? In what order? Be thorough and make sure to justify everything.

*Beth does an outstanding job and the whole town loves her.

My first step in determining what to do about the protestations against showing *Little Miss Sunshine* at the library would be to research the movie. I've seen the film, but I'd want to refresh my memory by watching it again and checking the Internet Movie Database for its rating and parental advisories. The Internet Movie Database (imdb.com) stated: "Since the beliefs that parents want to instill in their children can vary greatly, we ask that instead of adding your

personal opinions about what is right or wrong in a film, that you instead use this feature to help parents make informed viewing decisions by describing the facts of relevant scenes in the title for each one of the different categories: Sex and Nudity, Violence and Gore, Profanity, Alcohol/Drugs/Smoking, and Frightening/Intense Scenes.” While the information added to the Parents Guide is created by users and not monitored by IMDB, it gives an overview of the potentially objectionable content in the film. I would also take a look at the shooting script that was released for publication in 2006. By looking at the actual script, reviewing the film, and checking advisories and warnings, I would have a lot of commercially available information about the film. Anyone would be able to get the materials I looked at to get a well-rounded picture of the film.

After my review, I would recall Beth to my office so we would be meeting on my terms instead of her walking in to my office. I would ask her why she objects so strongly to checking ages of attendees. Is it because she likes the film and she wants children to be exposed to its message or content, or is she objecting based on the value of free and open access? I would listen to what she had to say and make note of the reasons for her objection to checking ages. By inviting her to come speak with me, I would be acknowledging her and her concerns, giving her time to talk. I would also get a clearer picture of why she objects to being the “movie police” and be able to articulate her concerns to the Board of Trustees, if need be.

My third step in this scenario would be to meet with George Foster and hear his concerns regarding *Little Miss Sunshine*. Is he personally offended by the film, or does he object because he thinks it may set a bad example? Does he speak just for himself or for other members of the Board? Has he seen the film? If not, has he researched the film? Like I did with Beth, I’d be acknowledging George’s concerns and showing that I care about what he has to say by offering

him the time to speak to me directly. I would also be able to understand his concerns, and those of the Board, better.

Next, I would consult the American Library Association website to see what they say about showing films in the library. Since the Board of Trustees accepted the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, I'd want to see which interpretations apply to this specific situation. The ALA (2004) asserted: "Recognizing that librarians cannot act *in loco parentis*, ALA acknowledges and supports the exercise by parents of their responsibility to guide their own children's reading and viewing." Furthermore, "Librarians and governing bodies should maintain that *only* parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children's—and *only their children's*—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children" (ALA, 2008). These interpretations indicate to me that the ALA would be against Abington checking ages at *Little Miss Sunshine*. Only parents can restrict what their children view, and it is not the library's job to do so.

After all my research and conversations with Beth and George, I would call a meeting of the library staff and the Board. I'd present my findings, especially the Library Bill of Rights interpretations, and open the floor for an orderly discussion of what to do next. For my part, I'd indicate that the library is not just showing the film, but conducting a discussion with college professors after the showing. The audience can ask questions and speak about issues the film raises, such as suicide and complex family relationships. Since the Board of Trustees is a governing one, they could mandate that the library not show the film and I would have to comply. However, I hope that my presentation would sway them to allow the showing without checking ages. I think the Board would act in favor of showing the film because they accepted

the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretations, *Little Miss Sunshine* was the film that most people wanted to see, Beth is an excellent Community Service Librarian, and I presented a clear argument as to why the film should be open to all. No matter the outcome, I'd wait for the matter to be settled before speaking to the newspaper reporter.

In his introduction to the shooting script for *Little Miss Sunshine*, Michael Arndt (2006) said: "What I would recommend—and this is the central hope of the movie—is that we make an effort to judge our lives and the lives of others according to our own criteria, distinct from the facile and shallow judgments of the marketplace" (p. xii). I would recommend the Abington Board of Trustees do the same when deciding whether or not to show *Little Miss Sunshine*.

2. Go to LIS Jobs.com at (<http://www.lisjobs.com/jobs/results.asp?search=public+library&submit2=Search&anyallexact=all>) and type in "public library" in the search box. Select any professional job in any state (Don't forget to tell me which state and job you picked, so I can look at the listing if I need to. And include the job information, with the job description, in the material you send me.).

a. For this exercise, select a job that you really would like to get and that you have a realistic chance at, but don't worry about location at all--assume you can go wherever it is and that all interview expenses will be paid for by the hiring library.

b. Once you've selected the job you want, apply for it, supplying the documents and information asked for (But you don't need to bother with furnishing reference names, or letters of reference, for this exercise—just assume you gave great references of the type sought.).

c. If there's an application to fill out, get it from the net and fill it out (if you can't get it there, don't bother about it), supply your resume (tailor it, if you can, to the job you're seeking) and write a cover letter.

d. Assume you get an interview:

- i. What steps will you take in preparation for the interview?
- ii. What 3 questions do you anticipate you will be asked?
- iii. What 3 questions will you ask?
- iv. How will you follow up afterward? Be thorough.

- a. The job I'd like to apply for is Reference Librarian I: Adult and Young Adult Services at the Field Library in Peekskill, New York. The description is: **The Field Library, the public library for the City of Peekskill, New York and a member of the Westchester Library System, is seeking a flexible, creative and energetic individual for the entry-**

level position of Reference Librarian: Adult and Young Adult Services. The successful candidates will be customer-focused, familiar with emerging technology and service trends, value teamwork and enjoy working in a diverse community.

Recent MLS graduates are encouraged to apply.

Key responsibilities of the position include: Providing reference and readers' advisory services to adults and young adults, assisting patrons with the online catalog and other electronic resources, and guiding patrons in use of the Internet, selecting and ordering materials for a portion of the adult non-fiction and all of the young adult collection, providing programming for young adults including hosting a regular poetry slam series, teaching a weekly computer class, assisting with Interlibrary Loan requests

Position requirements include: MLS from an ALA-accredited library, excellent customer service skills, comprehensive knowledge of library-related technology, ability to communicate effectively with individuals and groups of varying ages, education and experience levels

Preferred experience: SIRSI Workflows; Experience working with Young Adult / Teen population; Spanish-language proficiency is highly desirable

Hours: 35 Hours / week; Schedule will include one to two evenings per week and some Saturdays.

Salary: Commensurate with experience; Benefits include New York State Retirement System; Health Benefits; 20 days of vacation after 6 months.

Here is the listing for this job: <http://www.lisjobs.com/jobs/details.asp?ID=41912>

b./c. The documents requested are a resume and cover letter, supplied below.

MARISSA J. ANTOSH

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EDUCATION

- Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT
Candidate for Master of Library Science Expected completion in 2011 Cumulative G.P.A.: 3.67
- Stonehill College, North Easton, MA
Bachelor of Arts, cum laude Double major in English and fine arts May 2006
Cumulative G.P.A.: 3.66 Dean's List, seven semesters

EMPLOYMENT

- **Wilton Library Association**, Wilton, CT
Circulation and Children's Assistant, Shelver/Shelving Supervisor (February 2008-Present)
Check materials in and out, call patrons with materials on hold, interact with patrons, collect fines. Provide reference service for children and their caregivers, assist with children's programs, maintain children's collection. Properly shelve all materials. Promoted to Shelving Supervisor in June 2008, manage staff of approximately 10 shelvers, maintain library collection, locate missing items.
- **Brookfield Library**, Brookfield, CT
Circulation Assistant (August 2007-February 2008)
Checked materials in and out, called patrons with materials on hold, placed books on reserve, interacted with patrons, collected fines, prepared items for transit to other libraries.
- **Starbucks Coffee**, Danbury, CT
Barista (October 2007-December 2007)
Provided excellent customer service, made all beverages to standard for customers, upheld cleanliness and food handling standards.
- **Society of Plastics Engineers**, Brookfield, CT
Online Program Coordinator (January 2007-August 2007)
Planned schedule and solicited presenters for online presentations at non-profit professional society. Conducted online presentations through an online vendor. Developed promotional materials for department of Training and Education. Troubleshooted technical problems with vendors and presenters. Worked with the department of Event Management in planning Annual Technical Conference.

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

- **The Center for Book Arts**, New York, NY
Intern (June 2005-August 2005)
Worked on production of hand-bound artists' books and handmade portfolios, setting and distributing monotype; assisted with printing broadsides and custom designed stationery on Vandercook printing presses. Also assisted in installing broadsides and books for the 30th Annual Artist Members' Exhibition and the Work-Study & Intern Exhibit, collating broadsides, and mailing out publicity to members.
- **Carnegie Hall**, New York, NY
Corporate Fund Intern (February 2005-May 2005)
Drafted and sent correspondence and acknowledgements to corporate sponsors regarding donations, sent tickets, and researched and developed potential donors. Responded to inquiries of corporate

employees about their membership benefits, mailed Playbills, attended dress rehearsals to greet Corporate Fund members, and attended weekly meetings.

COMPUTER SKILLS

- Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, and Outlook, and SirsiDynix Horizon
- Acquainted with Microsoft PowerPoint, Publisher, Access, Adobe Photoshop, Dreamweaver
- Proficient in using the Internet
- Familiar with Windows and Macintosh operating systems

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

- **Committee for a New Library**, Brookfield, CT (November 2007-January 2009)
Work with like-minded town residents to brainstorm and plan for a new library for the Town of Brookfield. Serve on the subcommittees for Public Relations and Fundraising
- **Bethel Public Library**, Bethel, CT (February 2007-February 2008)
Shelve books and videos, stamp date due cards, read shelves for accuracy, restock paperback rack, collate new patron folders, prepare new library cards, file new patron cards, pull patron requests for shipment to other libraries.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- **American Library Association** (August 2008-Present)
 - **Connecticut Library Association** (April 2009-Present)
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November 30, 2009

Mr. Bob Boyle, Head of Reference
The Field Library
4 Nelson Avenue
Peekskill, NY 10566

RE: Reference Librarian I

Dear Mr. Boyle:

My public service skills and my familiarity with library technology are just two of the qualities I possess that make me the ideal candidate for your recently posted position of Reference Librarian I: Adult and Young Adult Services on LISjobs.com.

I am very familiar with Microsoft software and I am comfortable using both Windows and Macintosh operating systems. In addition, I am proficient in SirsiDynix Horizon and a regular user

of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Furthermore, I have two and a half years of experience at a library circulation desk and one and a half years in children's services, making me well-informed in the unique needs of library patrons and honing my customer service skills. Finally, I am involved in children's and young adult programming. I was the driving force behind a party and vampire-themed scavenger hunt celebrating the release of the last book in the *Twilight* saga and I'm currently working on a program for young adults and their families regarding eating disorders.

My résumé is enclosed with this letter. I look forward to meeting with you soon to further discuss what I can offer the Field Library. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marissa Antosh

d. The interview process

i. My first step in preparing for the interview will be to learn all I can about Peekskill and the library. If possible, I'd like to get my hands on the library's annual report so I know how they did in the last year. I will also scour their website to get a feel for the library and their OPAC. If time permits, I will drive out to Peekskill so I'm familiar with how to get there and to get a first-hand look at the library. In short, I will give myself a crash course in all things related to the Field Library. I will also contact a former co-worker of mine who now works at a library on Long Island. She'll be able to give me the scoop on how libraries work in New York State.

ii. I anticipate I will be asked the following:

Why do you think you're the ideal candidate for this job?

What will you do to reach out to local teens, making the library relevant for them?

Name a particularly difficult interaction you had with a patron and how you handled it.

iii. I will ask the following questions:

What's the best thing about working at the Field Library?

What sets your library apart from others in Westchester County?

What new technology are you using to reach out to your patrons and serve them better?

iv. After the interview at the Field Library, I would immediately send a handwritten thank you note to the people who interviewed me. It has a personal touch and stands out in a world of electronic communication. A handwritten note figured large in my getting my current job, so I will definitely use it again. In my note, I will thank the interviewers for taking the time to speak to me, reiterate my interest in the job, and indicate that I look forward to speaking to them soon. I would then continue gathering information about the library. After five days or so, I would call the primary interviewer and follow up on the interview, asking if they needed anything further from me. This way, I would show I still want the job and I want to make sure they have everything they need to make the best decision.

3. Your library, in the center of a small Connecticut municipality with a population of around 49,000, is having a lot of trouble with disruptive and unruly patrons—in a range of age and gender categories. There was one incident where rival gangs claimed the library as their territory, but the police were called and no further incident of that kind has occurred for over a year.

Your Director has decided that it's time to employ security personnel during all of library's open hours. She has contacted some agencies that provide such services and has found several that have experience working in libraries. She is in the process of asking for cost estimates from three such agencies. She is planning to bring this matter to the Library Board at its June meeting.

The one question that she has not been able to answer to her own satisfaction is this one: **Should the security guards carry guns or not?** She is requesting cost estimates based on both possibilities—with guns and without guns. However, she will have to make a recommendation for the Board on that issue. In anticipation of that recommendation, she has convened a meeting of all staff tomorrow at 2 pm. All staff will be able to express their views—and you know already that there are some people who hold strong opinions pro and con. You know your Director well enough to know that she will want not just people's gut feelings about this, but she will want facts in support of the divergent points of view.

You know that you're going to express your opinion about this issue at the meeting. **What will you say and what rationale will you provide? If you can find articles, statistics, etc., on this kind of situation, your Director would be very grateful.**

I'm very grateful that the director is taking the issue of staff and patron safety so seriously. Although there hasn't been an incident of gang activity in quite awhile, hiring security guards is a proactive step in preventing a similar incident from occurring. Furthermore, security guards can help staff with unruly patrons and protect staff and library property. *American Libraries* (2000) noted: "'I'm not interested in learning how to take someone down. That's not why I'm here,' staffer Edith Harris told the board. 'This can be a scary place sometimes, and we want some backup'" (p. 28).

While I believe security guards need some sort of weapon, I'm not sure a gun is the way to go. As mentioned before, the gang activity seems to have ceased, and we're basically dealing with disruptive people. In an incident in South Carolina, a library security guard shot at a fleeing patron and the library subsequently revised their policy and hired a new security firm. *American Libraries* (2007) stated: "Emphasizing how important it was that patrons feel 'they're all protected,' [Director Carl] Stone told *AL* that while [new security firm Anderson County Park Police] are armed, they are trained to handle confrontation by the South Carolina Justice Academy, and so are far less likely to draw a weapon. 'Nothing in this library is worth shooting somebody for,' he asserted" (p. 19). If the presence of security personnel doesn't deter crime in the library and we see a reoccurrence of gang activity, I would support reevaluating the policy and arm the security staff with guns. After all, "[...] many of the behaviour problems experienced in libraries do not rise to the level of crime; rather they may be classified as, incivilities, incidents arising from "problem patrons:" street-people, loud and raucous juveniles, computer misuse, and others whose behaviour is disturbing and sometimes even threatening, but not immediately criminal" (Cromwell, Alexander & Dotson, 2008, p.1). At this point, I think guns are (excuse the pun) overkill.

I suggest a compromise to the gun/no gun issue. Perhaps the library's security guards could carry pepper spray or even Tasers to deter criminal activity. I know the goal is to supply security guards sooner rather than later, so research on alternative deterrents will have to wait. At the present time, I think we should forgo the guns and reevaluate at a later time. The presence of security guards may be an effective deterrent in and of itself.

4. You are the Head of the Children's Department in a small public library. There are 5 full-time (2 with an MLS—the Director and you) and 3 part-time employees, plus 2 volunteers. The library is open 37 hours a week—Mon and Tues from 1-9 pm, Wed, Thurs and Fri from 10 am-5 pm.

As with most small libraries, it's considered by the patrons to be a very friendly place. Most of the patrons are familiar to the staff, with friendly exchanges taking place as a matter of course.

However, the newest full-time employee, a circulation desk worker who has been there about 7 months, is icily efficient. She is often the only person at the adult services desk. She does exceptional work in terms of checking things out quickly, putting information into the computer, locating materials for interlibrary loan, generating statistics, etc. However, she does not engage in conversations with patrons, never makes suggestions about books or videos or audios to the patrons, never initiates an interlibrary loan, and doesn't even look people in the eye. She has her back to the patrons more often than not.

You, as Children's Department Head, have begun to get people coming to your area and saying, "I came to see you because I wanted to see a friendly face." They make it clear that there was no friendly face at the adult desk, and you know full well what they mean.

However, you haven't said anything to the Director (She spends most of her time preparing materials for the shelves and in dealing with budget and board issues, so she is rarely at the desk.) because you feel uncomfortable doing that. This is a library where the employees get along and don't criticize each other. You've encouraged the patrons to say something to the Director, but they are reluctant to do that.

You don't want to be the library tattletale but you also don't want the library's image to suffer further damage. You have spent a lot of time thinking about this lately and you've come to a decision. What will you do and why?

Gertzog and Beckerman (1994) declared: "A good staff breathes life into a library; a poor one saps its energy and strength" (p. 437). In this case, it's clear that the full-time circulation employee is not only sapping energy from the library, but is replacing a friendly environment with an air of negativity. This is a slow disaster in the making because if patrons are turned off enough, they will find another library to go to and if they are inclined to make donations,

they will give their money to the library that they use. What may be a molehill today could be a mountain by the end of the year.

What to do? Since I'm the head of children's services, I'm responsible for my staff and not necessarily that of the circulation department. However, since the issue has been brought to my attention, it is my responsibility to try and resolve it. The circulation department is the hub of the library, so even though I don't work in that department, the employee's behavior affects patrons' perceptions of the library as a whole.

My first step is to discreetly keep an eye on the employee's behavior. I need to see her actions firsthand before I can form an opinion. After a period of observing her cold demeanor, I will approach her and ask if everything is okay. Although she has behaved this way since her first day, I have no way of knowing if something unfortunate happened to her before she started. Also, if I mention to her that it seems that something is bothering her, she might be more aware of her actions and straighten up her behavior.

Since she is often the only person staffing the adult services desk, she may be stressed which "...can be traced to a number of causes including work overload, feelings of inadequacy, work "underload"—lack of sufficient challenge—unsatisfactory inter-personal relations with staff and/or the public, lack of effective positive feedback from supervisors, lack of effective supervision, and career concerns..." (Gertzog & Beckerman, 1994, p. 466). By acknowledging her perceived unhappiness, I may be able to convince her to bring some of her concerns regarding work overload or other stressors to the director without my intercession.

Assuming that does not work, I feel I have to bring my concerns to the director. This circulation employee is potentially damaging the library's reputation. Patrons, especially at a

small library, want to be engaged, not served by an automaton. While it is great that she is accurate and efficient, that is only half of the equation when serving the public. I may be uncomfortable with speaking to the director about another employee, but I think it is less of being a tattletale and more of trying to preserve the positive image that patrons have of our library.

I will set up a specific meeting time with the director so we can have a real discussion instead of one shoved in between our respective duties. I will mention that patrons have indicated to me that the new circulation employee is rather brusque and I have observed the behavior myself. I will make clear that I'm concerned about patrons' perceptions of the library and I'm not looking to get the employee in trouble, but I am looking to maintain the high level of service the library is known for. Hopefully, the director will take it from there.

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