

Summary



Employers, Apply Here! / How the Shortage of Professionals Is Forcing Changes – and Opening Up Chances for Libraries (Alexandra Simtion)

(pp. 098 – 103)

Traditionally, logic dictated that organizations offer the positions and job-seekers apply. But the shortage of professionals is causing this to change. Job-seekers are sought after, while employers have to court their favor. As is often the case, scarcity of goods determines the market prices. Hence, new strategies are being invented, roles put to question, and target groups are seen as stakeholders with their own expectations. Employers have become applicants.

Well-endowed companies have begun wide-ranging employer-branding campaigns in order to position themselves on the market. Smaller organizations with limited resources were not able to do this to the same extent, especially those in the public sector, which underlies stricter regulations. So this new situation provides them with unanticipated opportunities. Young professionals may not heed those expensive marketing campaigns, but instead look for guidance from the people closer to them. A recommendation from a friend counts more than an unknown face on an advertising banner.

Libraries are looking for young, well-trained junior employees, who are aware of their newly found power. When posed the classical job interview question »why should we chose you?« they self-assuredly turn the tables and ask »why should I decide in your favor?« This requires libraries to react, with long-term, dialog-based perspectives which begin with the needs of the stakeholders and generate enthusiasm and excitement among their own staff and their clients. Bolstered with regular press releases, an up-to-date webpage, and appropriately chosen networks, any library can be successful in recruiting new professional staff.

Highlighting Positive Working Conditions / Job Market Expert Lutz Bellmann Advises Libraries On More Aggressive Marketing for Personnel – Training and Professional Development As Key Incentives (BuB Interview)

(pp. 108 – 110)

Libraries have already been hit by the demographic changes. When recruiting highly capable personnel they are faced with strong competition from other attractive fields of employment. In an interview with BuB's editor, Bernd Schleh, the job market expert Lutz Bellmann explains how libraries can be successful: »By pointing out that they offer opportunities for further training, interesting projects, flexibility in working schedules, and the social benefits of civil service such as a supplemental retirement fund, libraries can be very attractive employers.« But this occurs much too seldom in real-life, according to the professor of labor economics at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg.

Bellmann recommends that libraries pay more attention to the demographic changes in society when looking for new staff. »The fact that the average age of library users is rising, or that they are often women, or come from a family in which there are immigrants, are not the only reasons libraries should focus on these groups during recruitment; for such groups the opportunity of flexible working hours is especially important for family reasons (child care, care for elderly parents, etc.)«.

Furthermore he points out: »In general it is true that libraries, as part of the public services sector, cannot keep up with the salary levels in the private business sector. But it is also a fact that libraries need to improve their digital media services. For this they need staff members such as computer experts, who could earn more in jobs in other sectors. This differential between sectors remains even after taking into account the better retirement benefits for civil service jobs.«

Join the Hubbub! / Questions, Observations, a Few Small Ideas and a Big Proposal – to Help Libraries Make Better Use of Their Potential (Anna Mauersberger)

(pp. 122 – 127)

Anna Mauersberger works as a consultant in youth training, adult education training and as an idea generator for online platforms. In this article she deals primarily with the question of what teenagers and young adults do on the Internet – and what librarians could learn from this with respect to how libraries may look in the future.

In the area of extracurricular education one of the burning questions of the day is how to protect teenagers (and adults) from falling for information on the Internet that has been manipulated, how to handle hate speech in online commentaries, and how to come to grips with xenophobia and sexism. The Federal Ministry for Families and Youth, the Federal Agency for Political Education, the Robert Bosch Foundation – pretty much everyone is pre-occupied with these topics at the moment. So why aren't librarians sitting around the table when these topics are being discussed? Who else is a specialist for information and knowledge, if not the librarian?

Hence Mauersberger has touched on a delicate issue: librarians are probably not perceived as experts (anymore). As is often the case, their strength is both a curse and a blessing at the same time. People enjoy libraries because they associate them with happy memories from the past – a blessing! At the same time, libraries stand for the past, not the future. And who wants to invest in the past? Mauersberger's counter-suggestion is: the strength of libraries has often lay in preserving things, in continuity, in providing stillness. But now it is time to be the opposite: to undertake an outwardly oriented transformation – to join in the hubbub!

Translated by Martha Baker