

Guidelines for conducting searches for professional librarians  
by Melinda Flannery for Sara Lowman

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I. PREAMBLE

The purpose of conducting searches for professional positions is to bring the best available professional talent to Fondren Library, in order both to support its fundamental services and to develop resources and programs to meet its emerging needs. Except in cases of severe budgetary constraint, the library administration can be counted on to support the search process with sufficient resources of time and money to guarantee that the best librarians are added to the Fondren Library staff. Three principles should guide each search process: confidentiality, collegiality, and creativity. Not only within the library, but also on a national scale, discreet handling of confidential information is critical to a successful search and is the responsibility of every member of the Fondren Library staff. In practice, the smooth performance of the many roles and responsibilities in the search process depends as much on collegiality as on stricter principles of hierarchy and organizational structure. And finally, rather than following a single, invariable pattern, each search process should be tailored in a flexible and creative way to the current needs of that position and the staff. The search process is always a two-way street. Having a smooth and efficient process ensures that candidates think well of Fondren, and that Fondren has the best possible chance of hiring the candidates it prefers.

II. SEARCH PROCESS

### 1. Position description and advertising

Upon the resignation of a librarian, or the creation of a new librarian position, the supervisor must obtain permission from the Vice Provost and University Librarian (VP/UL) to recruit for the position.

The Supervisor of the position, in consultation with the relevant Assistant University Librarian (AUL) and others as appropriate, determines the current relevance of the position, reviews and adjusts its description and creates a draft position description in RiceWorks, Rice's online hiring database. For each position, there is a chain of approvals from the supervisor through all others with signoff responsibilities, but ending with the Fondren Library Business Manager, who serves as final Fondren signoff for the RiceWorks system. In addition to being posted in RiceWorks, the position is posted on the Fondren website. All non-RiceWorks postings include a direct link to the formal RiceWorks application process for the position, the RiceWorks "quicklink".

The Search Coordinator and Supervisor agree on a date for first consideration of applications. Informed by the Supervisor's special knowledge of the position, the Search Coordinator sees that the position is advertised in appropriate venues, including electronic fora, the ARL website, state joblines and selected library school websites. Specialized positions, such as a music position or an archival position, may warrant additional postings to specialized venues. If the various postings are done by different people, the Search Coordinator is responsible for providing an authoritative version and for keeping a record of posting venues. A short version of the ad, with a link to a URL on the Fondren website, may be used for paid venues. Generally, only one paid venue is used per search. A list of possible venues is kept by the Search Coordinator.

### 2. Creation of the Search Committee, Initial Meetings, & Budget Guidelines

Shortly after or concurrent with the review and advertising of the position, the supervisor of the position prepares for the VP/UL a list of names of suggested members of the search committee, including a suggested chair. The VP/UL approves a list of names, including a chair. The supervisor then approaches each person's supervisor before approaching the individual with the request to serve. The committee is drawn from a representative group of staff and includes at least one person from the hiring department, who generally does not serve as chair. The committee is comprised of a minimum of three members; the chair should have some experience serving on search committees at Fondren. The VP/UL advises the chair and the Search Coordinator of spending guidelines and budget sources for the search.

Sometime between the posting of the position and the first consideration date, the chair should call one or more meetings of the committee with appropriate parties, such as the supervisor of the position and the Search Coordinator, to ensure the committee's understanding of the position and its requirements. The Search Coordinator shares with the search committee the job description and the list of venues in which the job ad has been posted. Such a meeting may offer a good opportunity for the committee to establish the parameters of the search, such as a timetable, probable participants in interviews, and availability of those participants.

### 3. Collection of Applications

In the RiceWorks posting, the supervisor includes notes to candidates that they must submit a cover letter, résumé, and contact information (including e-mail addresses) for three professional references. The Search Coordinator's contact information is provided for inquiries. When necessary, the Search

Coordinator refers technical problems with application submission to the Fondren Library Human Resources recruiting contact. For example, HR may need to intervene to assist candidates completing applications, as RiceWorks has limited updating capabilities. However, individual applications for librarian positions at Fondren Library are not reviewed by HR staff, nor are HR staff responsible for screening questions. A note to that effect is placed in the posting. The Search Coordinator reviews applications as they are received, checking them for completeness and seeing that an initial paper response letter is promptly sent for each complete application. The Search Coordinator confers with the supervisor before rejecting any candidate. If candidates submit additional materials, the Search Coordinator passes them directly to the search committee chair, as these generally cannot be accommodated in RiceWorks.

The Search Coordinator is responsible for maintaining a confidential log sheet for specific points in the search, e.g. names, dates applications received, dates initial response letters are sent, etc. It is generally most convenient for the committee that this log sheet is maintained in the secure online environment being used for the group's activity. As of 2016, OwlSpace is the preferred environment. The Search Coordinator requests an OwlSpace for the committee as soon as applications begin to arrive. In OwlSpace, the log sheet is maintained in the group's wiki.

In OwlSpace, the Search Coordinator and staff assisting the Search Coordinator have access only to the wiki. The VP/UL, AUL, Supervisor and Search Committee have full access to OwlSpace. Those in the administrative chain are encouraged to use their access on an as-needed basis only, to get full benefit of the independent judgment of the Search Committee.

The Search Coordinator, staff assisting the Search Coordinator, search committee members, the supervisor, the VP/UL and the Business Manager have access to the RiceWorks file of applications. Because they do not need write privileges in the file, committee members are given a guest account and password unique to the position.

The search committee may review applications prior to the deadline and devise some system of organizing the applications file into pools, such as hot/warm/cold. The committee should ask the Search Coordinator to solicit any required or missing materials from candidates' applications, if s/he has not already done so.

#### 4. Review of Candidates by the Search Committee

As soon as possible after the deadline, the Search Committee checks a first reference for selected applicants. Further references are contacted based on committee review of the initial reference. Reference checking is usually done by telephone and divided up among the members of the committee. Conference calls are not advised. It is often easiest to contact references via e-mail and arrange a time to call. For staff otherwise lacking it, a telephone with long distance capability is provided in the Technical Services shared office (B52E). A set list of questions should be asked to ensure fairness. Written reports of the conversations with references are added to the candidate's file in OwlSpace. References are encouraged to send any additional material to the committee.

At least three references will be sought for serious candidates before interviews are scheduled. If the candidate supplies more than three names, the search committee will decide which three to contact. If the immediate supervisor of a candidate is not listed as a reference and the committee feels it is

important to have that perspective, the committee may ask the candidate's permission to contact that individual at a later date. The candidate's permission should be documented.

Preliminary telephone interviews with candidates (in conference or with individual committee members) are not required but may be conducted if the committee needs more information to decide on on-site interview candidates. A set list of questions should be asked to ensure fairness. Written reports of the conversations are added to the candidate's file in OwlSpace.

Screening interviews may be conducted with candidates at professional conferences by the immediate supervisor, members of the committee, the Search Coordinator, or other informed staff member designated by the committee.

Transcripts are usually not required for the search process unless there is a question requiring verification of degrees listed on the résumé.

After contacting at least three references and conducting any telephone or conference interviews, the committee creates a list of candidates to be interviewed on site. Between two and four candidates are usually interviewed. The supervisor reviews the list of candidates and confers with the chair before interviews are scheduled. The VP/UL should be consulted if a fourth interview is being requested.

## 5. Arranging Interviews

Usually, interviews include dinner with the committee and up to a day of interview sessions. Higher level positions may require a day and a half of interview sessions.

Based on the availability of key participants, the committee establishes possible dates for interviews. The chair calls candidates selected for interviews, confirms their continued interest in the position, and negotiates times for interviews. To maximize ability to compare candidates, interviews should be scheduled relatively close together. To minimize confusion, it is important that chairs coordinate dates if there is more than one active search.

The chair arranges flights and other necessary details with the candidates. Library administrative staff are consulted about current hotel and ground transportation services favored by the library, purchase any plane tickets, make hotel and ground transportation reservations and otherwise assist as requested.

The committee creates a schedule for each of the candidates to be interviewed, verifying availability of all participants. Avoiding conflict with standing library meetings is desirable. All interview slots, both individual and group, should be placed in Fondren's calendaring system, currently Google Calendar. The supervisor should review and approve a draft version of the interview schedule. An interview schedule should include:

- \* the search committee (may have both early and later slots);
- \* the unit in which the vacancy exists;
- \* the immediate supervisor (may have both early and later slots);
- \* other administrators as appropriate, including the VP/UL;
- \* individuals with whom the candidate would be working closely, including staff and faculty outside of the candidate's department or outside the library;

- \* an opportunity for the staff to meet the candidate such as a break in the staff lounge or department, a question and answer session or a presentation by the candidate, with reception;
- \* library tour;
- \* time with the Search Coordinator to provide opportunity for candidate feedback about the interview and to arrange for any reimbursements for travel;
- \*one or more breaks for personal needs, presentation preparation, etc.

In the interest of time, Cohen House is the preferred site for lunch. Lunch partners may include any potential co-workers and others who may want or need personal time with the candidates; they should ideally be the same for all interviews in a search. The designated host of each lunch should turn in to the Library Administrative staff a receipt which specifies the purpose of the meal and those attending. Dinner(s) are held at local restaurants where it is possible to become better acquainted with the candidate over a pleasant meal with audible conversation, within University guidelines (see below). Discreet arrangements should be made to avoid paying state tax on the meals. A list of appropriate restaurants recommended by previous search committees is available.

The schedule contains flight information, names and titles of people listed in interview sessions, escorts, room locations, etc. It should include the name of each candidate, the position title and the date(s). It should not include details such as the names of non-Rice restaurant(s) selected for meals. Sample schedules may be provided on request. The Search Coordinator can arrange for help with receptions.

The schedule is included in a packet sent to each candidate by the Search Coordinator. The packet includes a letter from the search committee chair with all pertinent details about the interview. Sample letters are available. The letter should clarify that the library covers basic hotel charges, any meals not part of the interview schedule and local telephone calls. The packet also includes a copy of the job posting, a copy of the CAP document, memo 817-99, information about the search process, and other pertinent information about the city, university, and library, including references to online sources. The Search Coordinator ensures the packet contents are current and appropriate.

Several days before the interview, the chair of the committee invites all library staff to participate in the open session, making available in a staff-only online space copies of the job posting, the candidate's cover letter and resumé, and the interview schedule. Around the same time, paper copies of these documents are delivered by the chair or a designate to each person included in an individual or small group meeting interview time slot. A reminder to all staff can be sent on the day of the interview. Each library department should also print and circulate a set of documentation. In addition, the committee chair should see that one set of documentation is posted on the bulletin board in the staff lounge, another near the mailboxes in Technical Services, and a third provided to the VP/UL. The committee ensures that staff and faculty participants in interviews are informed about their role, the position and the candidates, and that any non-staff participants receive the same documentation as does the staff. The Search Coordinator makes available guidelines for interview protocol, drawing on University policies such as:

Business Meeting and Entertainment Policies

[http://www.professor.rice.edu/professor/Business\\_Meeting\\_and\\_Entertainment.asp](http://www.professor.rice.edu/professor/Business_Meeting_and_Entertainment.asp)

Guidelines for Interview Questions

[http://cohesion.rice.edu/CampusServices/HumanResources/jobs.cfm?doc\\_id=7340](http://cohesion.rice.edu/CampusServices/HumanResources/jobs.cfm?doc_id=7340)

The Hiring Process at Rice p. 13

<http://cohesion.rice.edu/CampusServices/HumanResources/emplibary/The%20Hiring%20Process%2011307.pdf>

## 6. Interviews

Committee members usually assume responsibility for escorting the candidate between sessions, providing any refreshments, any needed transportation to/from the hotel and other amenities.

If there are internal candidates, their interview schedules should be generally consistent with those of the other candidates but any library, campus or city tours should be omitted.

The committee should formulate a set group of questions that will be asked of all candidates.

To ensure fairness to candidates, internal candidates and immediate predecessors in the position should exclude themselves from the interview process, unless specifically invited by the Search Committee.

To ensure independence of thought and opinion among staff, the person to whom a group directly or indirectly reports should generally not attend meetings of that group with candidates.

## 7. Hiring Recommendations

After each interview, the committee seeks formal and/or informal input from the staff. In addition, the hiring department may meet and produce a separate recommendation, which is forwarded to the committee. Staff input to the committee is confidential. When all interviews are completed and staff input received, the committee meets to produce a list of acceptable candidates. The committee presents that list to the supervisor, along with any ranking, reasoning regarding candidates not recommended and a summary of staff input general enough to protect confidentiality.

The supervisor makes a hiring recommendation and forwards the committee's recommendation to the VP/UL, with copies of both to the appropriate Assistant University Librarian. The chair and the supervisor inform the Search Coordinator when hiring recommendations have been forwarded.

The VP/UL makes the hiring decision.

## 8. Offer of Employment

The supervisor and the chair collaborate to submit the required affirmative action documentation through RiceWorks. The Search Coordinator ensures that affirmative action documentation is processed in a timely manner. The Search Coordinator and the Business Manager can answer questions about this step.

Once the affirmative action approval has been returned from that office, the VP/UP or her designate extends the verbal offer and negotiates salary, starting date and any other hiring conditions (e.g. moving expenses).

At the request of the VP/UL, the Career Advancement Program (CAP) administrative liaison notifies the CAP Review Committee of the Librarians' Assembly that they need to meet and determine the rank at

which the new librarian will enter. Their written decision is forwarded to the VP/UL with a copy to the supervisor.

The VP/UL sends an electronic written offer to the candidate, covering all of the above details. The candidate is to sign and return it as acceptance of the offer. The candidate should be asked to coordinate with Rice publicizing the hire; generally the Rice announcements should come first.

## 9. Close of Search

Once the written offer has been made and that offer has been accepted, the following should occur in a timely manner:

- \* The VP/UL or the supervisor notifies the Search Coordinator, search committee, and the hiring department.
- \* The Search Coordinator notifies unsuccessful candidates.
- \* The Search Committee is discharged.
- \* An announcement is issued by the supervisor to the rest of the staff.
- \* The Search Coordinator notifies library media of the appointment.

It is acceptable to proceed with these steps on receipt of a faxed or scanned acceptance from the successful candidate..

## APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. The Search Committee

The search committee plays an advisory role in the search process. Committee members review applications, check references, and recommend candidates for interviews. Once selected candidates are approved by the Supervisor, the committee arranges candidates' schedules on interview days; ensures that staff and faculty participants in interviews have the appropriate information; distributes copies of the job posting, candidates' résumés, and interview schedules; serves as hosts for candidates; and answers candidates' questions about the Library or the University. In order to conduct the search successfully, the committee has budget authorization and authority for its arrangements. After interviews are completed, the committee evaluates the candidates' qualifications, gathers impressions of staff and submits a list of acceptable candidates to the Supervisor.

### 2. The Chair of the Search Committee

The chair of the search committee schedules meetings of the committee, monitors the committee's progress, coordinates interview schedules and travel arrangements with the Search Coordinator, manages resources allocated to the search, compiles a list of questions to pose to all candidates and assists the supervisor in preparing the affirmative action documentation . The chair keeps the supervisor and the VP/UL informed about the progress of the search and consults with the relevant AUL as appropriate.

### 3. The Supervisor of the Position

The supervisor of the relevant department writes the position description in consultation with the VP/UL, recommends membership of the search committee and may meet with the search committee to clarify job requirements. The supervisor reviews and approves the list of candidates and the interview schedule, participates in interviews and makes hiring recommendations to the VP/UL and appropriate AUL.

#### 4. Assistant University Librarian

The AUL reviews and approves the position description, recommends committee membership to the VP/UL, and consults on hiring recommendations after the interviewing stage.

#### 5. Search Coordinator

The Search Coordinator oversees the search process, maintains relevant information resources, and tracks hiring documentation through the university. The Search Coordinator is responsible for coordinating with Rice Human Resources and the Fondren Business Manager during the search proper, but is not responsible for HR matters preceding the search or following the Search Committee recommendation. In coordination with the HR recruiter, the Search Coordinator may troubleshoot problems with RiceWorks. The Search Coordinator maintains files on past committee membership, interview schedules, hiring timeframes, general financial guidelines, potential advertising venues, and other files. While travel information, lists of hotel prices, and lists of businesses with current Rice accounts are properly maintained for all library visitors by the administrative office, the Search Coordinator should give input on these matters based on the impact they have on successful professional recruitment. The responsibilities of the search coordinator include: setting a timeframe for the search in consultation with the supervisor; coordinating the posting of the announcement in appropriate venues; receiving applications; making sure applications are complete; maintaining log sheets tracking the search process; sending initial response letters to applicants; distribution of information packets to candidates; providing receptions during interviews; correspondence with candidates; assisting as needed with interviews, including soliciting candidate input on the search experience, documenting out-of-pocket expenses and candidate Social Security number if reimbursement is needed; tracking hiring documentation; acting as a resource for hiring practices and other information about the search process; notifying the library media of the appointment. The Search Coordinator may delegate specific tasks to an appropriate staff member.

#### 6. VP/UL

The VP/UL obtains permission to recruit for the position, reviews and approves the draft position description, appoints a search committee and advises on spending guidelines and budget sources for the search. The VP/UL makes the hiring decision based on the recommendations of the supervisor and the search committee; extends the verbal offer and negotiates salary, starting date and other hiring conditions; asks the Career Advancement Program (CAP) administrative liaison to call a meeting of the CAP Review Committee, who will determine the level at which the new librarian will enter; and sends a letter to the candidate confirming the offer. The VP/UL may delegate specific tasks.

#### 7. Administrative Staff

The administrative staff assist with travel arrangements and hotel reservations. They also process any documented reimbursable candidate expenses.

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