TRANSITIONING BY DEGREES: BECOMING A SUBJECT LIBRARIAN THROUGH ADVANCED EDUCATION

WENDY JO GIRVEN
BUSINESS LIBRARIAN, UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

PANEL: NARROWING THE SCOPE: TRANSITIONING FROM GENERAL LIBRARIANSHIP TO SPECIALIZED SUBJECT LIAISONS
CAPAL-ACBAP 2018, UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
INTRODUCTION

As part of the “Narrowing the Scope: Transitioning from general librarianship to specialized subject liaisons” panel at CAPAL18 - Community, Diversity, and Education: Academic Librarianship in Challenging Times, this talk looks at the experiences of one librarian’s transition from working as a generalist librarian to a subject specialist position at a public research university, with a focus on the educational experience that guided the transition.
RESEARCH ON ADDITIONAL ADVANCED DEGREES

• The presence of literature on additional advanced subject degrees is somewhat dated; Mayer and Terrill noted in 2005 that much of the research and writing was conducted in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.

• Research published by Smith and Oliva in 2010 regarding attitudes toward generalist and subject specific reference and professional development.

• Jennifer Ferguson published a study in 2016 on advanced subject knowledge in libraries which explores the occurrences of dual master’s degree options and the prevalence of additional degree requirements in librarian job advertisements.
ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

• B.A. Penn State University (2004)
  • Comparative Literature, Japanese, East Asian Studies

• M.S. Clarion University of Pennsylvania (2007)
  • Library Science

• M.S. Maine Maritime Academy (2016)
  • International Logistics Management
LIBRARY EXPERIENCE

• Penn State University (~42,000 students)
  • Library Assistant
• University of Alaska Southeast (~4,000 students)
  • Public Services Librarian
• Maine Maritime Academy (~1,000 students)
  • Director of Library Services
• University of New Hampshire (~15,000 students)
  • Business Librarian
OTHER EXPERIENCE

• Maine Maritime Academy
  • Adjunct Professor, Loeb Sullivan School of Business
  • Intro to Research Methods
  • Research Methods and Management Consulting
DIFFERENCES IN POSITIONS

• Public Services Librarian (UAS)
  • Generalist reference work (8-10 hours per work)
  • Training of circulation staff and part time reference librarians
  • Knowledge of regional resources, including Alaska Native Studies and language resources

• Director of Library Services (MMA)
  • Generalist reference work (5-8 hours per week)
  • Administrative duties
  • Maritime knowledge, Coast Guard license exam support

• Business Librarian (UNH)
  • Generalist reference work (2.5 hours per week)
  • Instruction, Outreach, Collection support for Peter T. Paul School of Business and Economics
DAILY LIFE AS A SUBJECT LIBRARIAN

• Instruction sessions across all business disciplines from first year through graduate levels
• Collections issues, usually related to databases and course reserves
• Develop research guides
• One-on-one research consultations
• Outreach and out-of-the-building
  • Entrepreneurship programs
  • First Year Research and Innovation Program
FERGUSON’S 2016 STUDY

• Ferguson noted that 33 percent of the 800 job ads surveyed “either required or preferred a second advanced degree or advanced subject knowledge.”

• Of those, only 53 required a second degree while the remainder stated it as a preference.

• Of the 263 positions that required or preferred a second advanced degree, the most frequent functional areas asking for advanced subject knowledge were subject specialists (89 positions).
NUMBER OF JOB OPENINGS BY AREA THAT REQUIRED OR PREFERRED A SECOND ADVANCED DEGREE

Source: Ferguson, 2016, page 728
MAYER AND TERRILL (2005)

• "Having an advanced-subject degree is important to my career advancement."
• "Having an advanced-subject degree is beneficial to my job performance."
• "I would advise a person interested in becoming an academic librarian to pursue an advanced-subject degree."
• "If I were doing it over, I would get an advanced subject degree again."
THE VALUE OF THE SECOND MASTERS DEGREE

- Understanding of curriculum within the college/department
- Familiarity with business research resources used for undergraduate and faculty research
- Empathy for students
- Eased transition to subject librarianship
- Factor in promotion for tenure track positions
- More competitive in the job market
IMPOSTER SYNDROME

• “Imposter syndrome can be defined as a collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success. ‘Imposters’ suffer from chronic self-doubt and a sense of intellectual fraudulence that override any feelings of success or external proof of their competence. … some researchers have linked it with perfectionism, especially in women and among academics.”

CONCLUSION

• Holding an additional advanced degree in a subject area was highly beneficial for making the transition to subject librarianship after nearly a decade as a generalist librarian

• Increased ability to qualify for more positions

• More research should be done on existing positions and their requirement for additional advanced subject degree
REFERENCES


