

University of Missouri School of Law Scholarship Repository

Faculty Publications

Faculty Scholarship

1-2024

Recruiting the Right Candidate

Cynthia Bassett

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/facpubs>



Part of the [Law Commons](#), and the [Law Librarianship Commons](#)

ASK A DIRECTOR

Recruiting the Right Candidate

Q

With a limited pool of job applicants, how are you rethinking your approach for recruiting quality candidates?



CYNTHIA W. BASSETT
DIRECTOR OF LAW LIBRARY AND TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES
 University of Missouri School of Law
 Columbia, MO
 bassettcw@missouri.edu

The market for hiring a law librarian has changed significantly over the last few years. Those on both sides of the equation are a little uncertain about

the whole process, wondering when the job search should start, how much to expect in pay, and what aspects of a position are up for discussion. The challenge of a limited pipeline of law librarians requires new approaches to recruiting.

One approach we have used is to reach out to communities of professionals who would be well suited to law librarianship but may not have considered it as a job option. At the University of Missouri, we recently recruited and hired a great new reference librarian. As a smaller state school in a typical college town in the Midwest, we knew we would have to work harder to attract candidates than a school located on a coast would. We posted our job ad in places law librarians would expect to see it—such as on

the [American Association of Law Libraries \(AALL\) Career Center](#)—but we also pushed beyond the law library community. We sent the ad to state library school job listservs to target MLS students who were not necessarily thinking about joining a law library but may be open to the idea. We also pushed the ad out to the American Library Association (ALA) and the Black Caucus of ALA's Career Center.

If possible, the library hiring committees would be smart to be flexible about credentials and

support employees to fill in credentials while on the job with library support. During our search, a candidate with a foreign equivalent to the American JD applied for our position and we found him to be an excellent fit. If it had been possible for us to do so, I would have advocated for considering candidates with a JD and supporting them to get an MLS while working, particularly since our school has an MLS program that is completely online. Other libraries that are more flexible could take advantage of

programs like these to target practicing attorneys who are ready to make a change into a fulfilling and related field.

Hiring a candidate is only the start of the process. No job search will really be successful if candidates accept an offer but don't stay. To that end, it is in my best interest to make our library an excellent place to work, where staff are welcomed and supported financially, personally, and professionally. ■



THOMAS SNEED
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR / LAW LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Washburn University of Topeka School of Law Library
Topeka, KS
thomas.sneed@washburn.edu

This is a timely question for my library as we recently had a retirement and are in the process of preparing the job posting for a new reference librarian. We also have the added issue of anticipating a smaller pool of applicants due to not being in a metropolitan area. Getting creative is a necessity. I have been carefully following discussion boards and attending conference talks on the hiring conundrum. After lots of conversations—with more to come—these are our plans for trying to boost our number of job applicants.

First, we are planning to loosen the traditional job requirements regarding education. The JD/MLS combination is great, but it can weed out great applicants with strengths outside those criteria.

I hope to post our position with several education and experience options. These include allowing for JDs who are currently in an MLS program, or even just interested in an MLS, along with candidates who have an MLS with legal experience but no JD. Hopefully, this will open the door for recent law grads with an interest in librarianship (more on this later) and experienced law librarians who do not have a JD. I know this second option can be an issue in some schools regarding teaching. However, I have a very supportive administration at my law school, and one of our best teachers in the library has an MLS plus many years of experience working in law libraries, thereby setting a positive example.

Second, I am hoping to be able to offer an educational stipend to cover an MLS for those who have

yet to complete the degree or who are in the interest stage. I am still working on this one, but HR has been very receptive and, again, I have a supportive law school administration. If we as law libraries are hoping to build the profession for the future, we should be willing to try and put our money out there to help.

Finally, I am planning to work with our law school's career services office to see if there are recent grads who may be interested. Being creative with the MLS requirement, along with the possibility of a stipend for educational expenses, will hopefully make the position more attractive to a number of recent grads who have at one time or another expressed interest in law librarianship. These are a just a few of the new approaches I plan to take for recruiting new librarians. With changing times, being willing to pivot and think outside the box is necessary and will, with luck, bring us a great new reference librarian. ■

P+L Professionalism + Leadership at Every Level

M+O Marketing + Outreach

M+B Management + Business Acumen