

1-1-2007

No One Ever Told Me My Job Would Include...

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Recommended Citation

Langer, Christian, "No One Ever Told Me My Job Would Include..." (2007). *Library Faculty and Staff Publications and Presentations*. Paper 11.

<http://digitalscholarship.tnstate.edu/lib/11>

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No one ever told me my job would include.....

There have been two library jobs in which I found myself doing things that were not part of my original assignments, nor were they in my job descriptions. In 2002 I became User Services Librarian at Tennessee State University in Nashville, my job description was basically for a reference librarian. True, I had a degree from Computer Tech's (Fairmont, WV) PC/LAN program, which I had gotten at night school, but I did not think computers would be one of my tasks. However it turned out that it was one of my tasks, for I found that I had to use my knowledge from Computer Tech when it was called for, and it was called for. This was because our campus was the small one, for which it was often to get services, such as computer techs. So, I found myself doing all sorts of computer type things, including removing floppy disk shutters from floppy drives, trying to diagnose computers that would not start, removing paper jams from printers, reinstalling printers on computers that would not print, reseating power cords in monitors and cpus, thus "fixing" them, reseating network cables to make the internet connection work again, attempting to recover the term paper on the floppy disk which was suddenly going bad, explaining to students why their files had disappeared from their public use computers overnight (IT removed people's profiles on machines on which the profiles were getting too numerous), informing students of the existence of the Z: drive a network drive on which all students have a slice, and which allows opening of files on any computer on campus, showing students how to email pictures scanned into the computer. The vast majority of questions I have gotten in this library have involved computers. Looking back I should have expected such a situation since nowadays libraries live and breathe via computers, and I did have some computer training. So as it turned out, I found my study of computers to be highly relevant to my reference librarian's job.

I had a similar experience at in the library of Salem-Teikyo University in Salem, WV., where I worked from 1992-2000. My starting job description was "Media Technician." I was charged with checking out and checking in media equipment, doing minor repairs on them, cleaning vcr heads, etc. As time progressed, this became a small part of what I was be doing. The library was small, and anyone who has worked in a small library knows that it is necessary to wear many hats. My first extra job came when I was assigned to do more and more things with computers. The Director noticed that I would take computer manuals home with me to study on my own. Before I knew it, I found myself installing printers, setting up a Macintosh network, being system administrator for our new DRA library software, partitioning drives and writing a small webpage, (which was never published.) By the way, my on the job learning did not stop with non-Media Technician type tasks. My Director sent me to school in a RESA repair shop, in which computers, vcrs, and other equipment were repaired. So some continuing education helped me on my job. Here I learned how to clean vcr heads not with a cleaning tape, but with the superior method of using a chamois tipped rod. I also saw how much dust can accumulate inside a computer never cleaned for 10 years. These computers were blown out with compressed air.

I then was assigned to cataloging serials and media. I found I enjoyed the work. I learned to work with the LCSH, then how to look up books in the Library of Congress. Then the

book cataloger quit, and I was asked to do her job. So I found myself doing almost all the cataloging.

One characteristic of my tasks was that they accumulated, in other words when another task was assigned, the previous ones still were required. This introduced me to the concept of efficient time management. An example was the way I developed to deliver TVs and VCRs to the classroom. I noticed that in my delivery practice I tended to deliver the TV/VCR right at class time. This would put me into the crowds of students heading for class, and it slowed me down. So I began delivering things a couple hours early, avoiding the classroom rush. Another technique was to develop workforms for cataloging. We had one workform for serials, one for books, one for media, etc. Thus nonsential fields in the blank records were already cut out. (Our library was too poor to have OCLC cataloging; it all had to be done by hand!) I did original cataloging only when necessary, generally for locally published items.

This tells the story of the difference between my original job descriptions and the real work I came to be doing. Really on the whole I think it is good to go beyond one's job description because you learn more, which makes the job more interesting.