

# TAKING THE JOB HUNT ON THE ROAD: MOVING TO A NEW STATE AND FINDING WORK YOU LOVE



I wish I could put “experienced job hunter” on my resume, but I worry that makes me seem fickle. I am a survivor of the job hunting process in three states within six years. I have crafted countless cover letters and snazzy email introductions. I have waited (and waited) to hear back one way or another about jobs I applied for. It is staggering to me how few employers take a minute to simply tell you “No, thank you.” I have faced countless rounds of interviews as well as rejection letters. Though I was never a Girl Scout, I want a badge to wear proclaiming to the world that in this one area, I am skilled!

As I write this article I am into my seventh month as a school librarian at an independent school in Cincinnati. It took eight months of job seeking before I was able to sign a contract. Prior to this job, I worked as a school librarian at an independent school in Delaware. That job involved over a year of job seeking in which I accepted two part-time positions (both at academic libraries) to help pass the time before I got the “real” job. You are probably getting the picture: Landing the job that will offer you stimulation and rewards, either financially or intrinsically, will take time and more patience than you ever knew you had. As grim as the outlook seems, you can find a new job that introduces you to a new area of the country as well as offer your career a fresh start.

## LESSONS I LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

Packing up your house and moving to a new state where you then unpack everything all over again is an overwhelming process. Add to that trying to find a job, and the stress ratchets up. I made moves because of my husband’s job, so while we were financially sound as I was between jobs, being stuck at home in a new city can be a real challenge.

If your circumstances allow, see what you can accomplish online before you take the plunge and move. Know what jobs are even possible in the area you are thinking of. Search the job opportunities on state libraries’ databases or check in daily with ALA’s JobList (<http://joblist.ala.org>) and narrow your search to the area of the country you want to explore.

If you find yourself in a new city, state, or region without a clear handle on how to even begin to find a job, here are the top ten lessons that I learned.

- 1. Volunteer:** Not only does volunteer work at your local historical society or public library help to fill your suddenly empty schedule, but you will also begin to meet other librarians or archivists or people who love libraries. This is an easy way to start networking and to keep your hand in the library world.
- 2. Network:** As a complete introvert, networking to me is synonymous with skydiving. Sheer terror! However, in a tight job market or as a newcomer to an area, networking is a tremendous asset. In a January 2013 American Libraries Live webinar, “Landing Your Ideal Library Job,” it was estimated that 75-80 percent of library positions are found through networking. Look for regional library groups to join, find online networks on Ning, or follow librarians in the know on Twitter. While you are job hunting, don’t forget that other librarians can be tremendous resources.
- 3. Online Associations:** Join every possible listserv associated with professional organizations in your area: state library, regional library associations, local library, county and consortium library systems, museums, NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools), and the Department of Education. Your inbox will certainly be full of extraneous information but you’ll soon be able to cull the data. Try to identify trends and needs in your new community. You are also honing in on the economic realities of salaries.
- 4. Join Monster and Indeed:** While these large mega-search sites can bring back some rather strange matches based on your profile (insurance sales agent? account manager? data entry clerk?), they do offer customizable searches that you can create to the tightest or loosest specifications. You can have multiple searches looking for different types of library work in different areas of the state or region. Any jobs that meet your criteria will get emailed to you for consideration.
- 5. Online Portfolio:** While it may seem self-aggrandizing, create an online version of your resume, work accomplishments, relevant photos, and letters of recommendation. Free website

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By Suzanne Dix

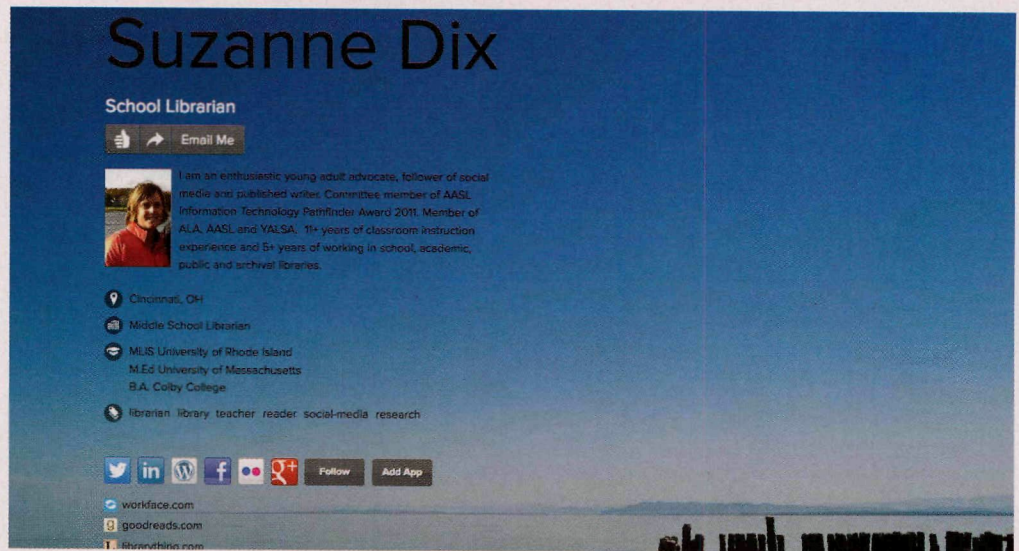


While you are job hunting, don't forget that other librarians can be tremendous resources.

creation sites (Google Sites, Wordpress, Blogger, Weebly, etc.) are easy to use and give you a fresh, modern look. Try to give your URL a name that represents you—either your full name or perhaps something that identifies your job title like TeacherLibrarianSuzanne. Don't go overboard with too much personalization. Think of this as your online resume. You want the site to promote you as professional, technologically savvy and interesting. Avoid being too cute or too silly. My online resume is at [suzannedix.wordpress.com](http://suzannedix.wordpress.com) and may offer you some ideas of how to get started.

**6. Email Signature:** Even while you are without a job title, make your email signature have importance. Use this area to add the link to your online portfolio (see step 5), your Twitter handle, your LinkedIn account, etc. Avoid bringing prospective employers to sites that better define your personal life (Facebook, Instagram, your Pinterest recipe board). Reputation management is everything. It is rare these days to snail mail a print resume, so take advantage of the free advertising space your email signature allows.

**7. E-Business Cards:** For another opportunity to brand yourself, create a free online



e-business card from About.me

business card at About.me or Workface.com. You will be able to share the link to your page with prospective employers, add it to your email signature, and perhaps take advantage of the site's users for networking and job seeking advice.

**8. Twitter:** Whether you are a social networking demon, a casual user, or rarely care who or what is trending, you need to have a Twitter account for professional reasons. Create a username that identifies you clearly (don't hide behind an alias). The Twitter-

verse is a fabulous arena for networking and learning. With your Twitter account comes great responsibility in that you can not just create the account and walk away. You must cultivate conversations and find smart people and interesting, relevant library trends to follow. You need to be a participant in worldwide discussions. Connect with librarians, teachers, and authors, follow the Library of Congress or your state library, get resume writing tips at #resume, and job hunt @ALA-JobList, #libjobs, or @libgig\_jobs. In many ways, Twitter helps distract you on the long road of job hunting, but it also keeps you up to date about what is happening in libraries and education. Don't worry if you don't have a lot of followers. Just be authentic, share interesting advice or ideas, retweet the great thoughts of others, and use your Twitter account as a tool to be a life-long learner. (Catching the gossip of your favorite celebrity along the way is an added bonus!)

**9. Pinterest:** If you haven't yet become addicted to your Pinterest account, it must be because you don't have a Pinterest account! Get one and think about how you can use it for professional purposes. For instance, I have School Libraries, Teaching, Books, Banned Books, and PLNs (Professional Learning



Wordpress online expose



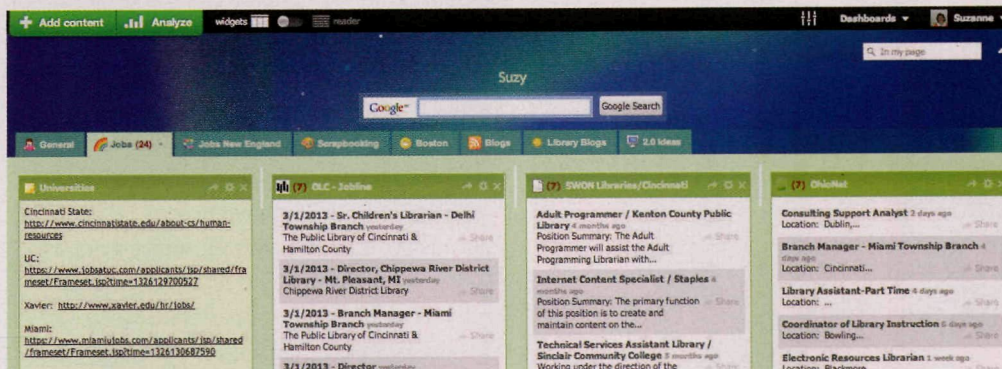
Example of a Pinterest Teaching Board

Networks) boards intermixed with my House Decor and Recipes to Try boards. Teachers, librarians, and libraries are everywhere on Pinterest and you'll find that collecting great articles on intellectual freedom and learning about the Common Core has never been so visually stimulating.

**10. RSS Feeds:** Funnel daily posts and announcements to one central page that you can peruse in an organized way. There are many feed reader sites out there, and I have been using Netvibes for years. My Netvibes page has the latest jobs posted on ALA for my region and my state's library agencies. These feed into my account (not my inbox) for easy monitoring. If potential employers do not have a feed, just create a notes-type box and hyperlink the websites. This way you can bounce in an organized and efficient way to every school to check if they have posted anything new. I have tabs in Netvibes for Library Info. I have feeds from blogs of libraries and librarians that I like to follow, and articles from professional journals. I also have A Media Specialist's Guide to the Internet, AASL, YALSA, Mashable, and Lifehacker feeds on another page because I find that they help me stay up to date with technology and new trends. RSS feeds make the prospect of daily or weekly monitoring much more manageable.

There are many other fabulous online tools out there. I haven't even discussed LinkedIn's networking power or mentioned how Goodreads can connect you with readers and authors.

Don't feel that you need to use every possible platform. You'll become overwhelmed with the conversations and will not be able to find real meaning in what you are reading, let alone find a way to contribute in a purposeful way.



Netvibes

Twitter helps distract you on the long road of job hunting, but it also keeps you up to date about what is happening in libraries and education.

### IT'S NOT YOUR MOTHER'S JOB SEARCH

So you are now armed with great weapons to attack the job market. (Why does job hunting feel like such a battle?) Never forget that you need to be very patient through this entire process. Your self-confidence is bound to take a hit from time to time. Stay positive and alert. The people who are making decisions about who to hire are very often just like you and me. That is to say they are not professional resume readers, and human error can play a great deal on whether your brilliant cover letter even gets a once over. Don't take it personally and don't give up. The new job you are looking for is out there, so use some of these great 21st century tools to find it!

Suzanne Dix is the middle and upper school librarian at The Seven Hills School in Cincinnati, Ohio.

## Works Cited

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## Suggested Reading

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<http://connectedprincipals.com/archives/6792>

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