

June 2022

"I Survived": Navigating a Fully Virtual Hiring Process

McKenzie M. Lemhouse
University of South Carolina, Lancaster

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/scl_journal



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lemhouse, McKenzie M. (2022) "I Survived": Navigating a Fully Virtual Hiring Process," *South Carolina Libraries*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 9.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51221/sc.scl.2022.6.1.9>

Available at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/scl_journal/vol6/iss1/9

This SCLA Annual Conference Proceeding is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in South Carolina Libraries by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

“I Survived”: Navigating a Fully Virtual Hiring Process

Abstract

The hiring process in academic libraries is often complex. The COVID-19 pandemic only complicated things further, causing the customary full-day interview and job talk to shift towards fully virtual or hybrid models. After graduating in 2020, I secured a tenure-track academic librarian role. This poster features lessons learned from my experiences in pandemic-era interviews that may help job seekers and established professionals looking to refresh their toolkit.

Keywords

interviews, job market, early career, academic libraries, professional development

“I Survived”: Navigating a Fully Virtual Hiring Process

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged us to re-examine nearly every aspect of living and working. Pandemic aside, the hiring process for academic positions is already arduous. Given that many institutions pivoted to fully virtual or hybrid learning and working models during 2020, the customary full-day interview and teaching demonstration were often shifted to a virtual format. I graduated into the pandemic job market in August 2020 and have since received an appointment in a tenure-track academic librarian role. I have compiled the greatest lessons learned during my job search to assist those looking to refresh their toolkit.

Application Stage

Keep an open mind and stay positive.

- The job market is saturated with qualified candidates right now.
- Expect to submit many applications and be prepared to wait for updates.

Find a mentor.

- Help with networking, finding openings, and interview prep.
- Guidance on your CV and other supporting documents.

Advocate for yourself.

- Never lie on your application, but master the art of “the spin” – did you T.A. in grad school?
Present student research? That counts!

Tailor your application.

- For every application, show why you'd be a great candidate for THIS job, not just ANY job.

Day of Interview

Zoom etiquette:

- Log on ~10 minutes early.
- Attire should match in-person interview.

- Look into the camera when speaking.
- Pay attention to questions and ask for clarification when needed.

During your presentation:

- Pace yourself and save time for questions.
- Know your target audience.
- Anticipate questions about content, your qualifications, and yourself from faculty, staff, and students.

After interview:

- Reflect on the experience.
- Send thank-you notes – a small but impactful gesture. Committee members dedicate a lot of time and energy to these searches!

What if?

... My dog barks, or a train comes through?

- Limit interruptions whenever possible, but some may be unavoidable when interviewing in your home.
- Remember: Search committees are human, too!

... I have technical difficulties?

- Consider a Plan B in case the Wi-Fi goes out or if you can't access certain databases.
- You can explore mobile options, ask (if appropriate) to send a copy of the slides to your HR contact, or request to reschedule.

... I don't have the right answer?

- It's OK to say "I don't know **but** here's how I'd look for an answer."

General tips

- Carefully read the job description and prompt for the teaching demonstration.

- Find a quiet, well-lit, tidy space with reliable Internet and power source.
- Check your tech – arrange to use a reliable computer with the necessary software (Zoom, PowerPoint, etc.) and hardware (webcam, mic, etc.).
- Practice all aspects of your presentation with a timer to ensure time for Q&A.
- Do your research – make it clear you want THIS job.
- Ask for access to databases, etc. to include in your demonstration (tailor these to the institution and the prompt).
- Prepare to “translate” for non-librarian search committee members.
- Prepare questions for interviewers, and have examples/scenarios ready for common/likely questions (“tell us about a difficult time...”).
- Know the plan: Communicate with your HR contact to understand your schedule for the full-day interview(s) and demonstration.