

Employment specialisation is the way to go!

Helen Astell, staffing services manager, Zenith Information Management Services Group

The library and information management (IM) employment marketplace is a small, specialised and varied arena. It includes public libraries, educational institutions, legal firms, banks, state and federal government departments, multinational corporations and not-for-profit organisations. The variety of positions, titles and skill combinations is extensive and even a little confusing. When you join any employer, it is crucial that your qualifications and temperament match the role and work environment being offered. For busy managers, a recruitment agency can save their time and resources when hiring staff.

Which agency should a LIM employer use?

The agency chosen should understand the needs of library and IM roles, to ensure that the new employee will be effective in the job. This is as true for a permanent position as it is for a two-week contract to cover an existing staff member's leave. Specialist agencies have this understanding: they employ personnel consultants from the industry they serve. (See the Zenith focus group page at the URL below for more information.) Who better to find that new children's librarian, business information researcher or legal library technician than someone with an IM qualification who has worked in the industry? They understand exactly the needs of the vacancy and are able to discuss the role with employers and potential candidates based on knowledge built over years of direct personal industry experience.

How do you find the right agency?

These days, the first step you will probably take is an internet search, or a recommendation from a friend or colleague. When you find an agency that seems to fit the bill, look a little closer.

Do they have a team that can help you? Don't be afraid to ask some questions. Make an appointment to

meet them. A specialist IM agency should offer an insight into employment opportunities and market activity, support candidates with career advice, review their resumes and discuss various career options, including the benefits of enhancing your qualifications, specialist training or using short term 'temp' positions to improve your skills and experience.

Is the agency actively involved in the LIS sector? A good specialist agency will have a wide knowledge base and an extensive network within the professional community, participating in TAFE and university advisory panels, industry events and conferences. You should have a good rapport with the agency and feel happy with their professionalism, whether you are a candidate for a job or an employer seeking help with staffing needs. It is important you understand the agency processes for short-listing and forwarding candidates for a position. For example, the confidential information contained in a candidate's résumé should only be forwarded to an employer once the role has been fully discussed with the candidate and their permission received for their résumé to be presented for that role.

The recruitment industry provides guidelines to employment agencies. Is the agency you are considering a member of their professional body — the Recruitment and Consulting Services Association? Look at the breadth of the organisation. Some specialist agencies provide other IM services, or may themselves be direct employers.

So what's the next step?

You might not be a candidate for a job move today, but why not explore the market? Registration with an agency ensures you are considered for appropriate roles. An agency may have a position board on its website and may advertise in the newspapers, but some positions will be filled directly from the candidate database. Maximise your opportunities: register, and keep in regular contact with your specialist agency.

<http://zenmgt.com/staffing/fogroups.php>, <http://www.zenmgt.com>

YES, there is another option



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Keep on blogging...

Web logs (blogs) are chronological journals or publications that allow you to share ideas, information, weblinks, decisions, discover new trends... a quick and easy way to publish information on the internet and a perfect communication tool for you and your organisation.

Blogs reputedly came into being in 1998 and rapidly proliferated on the internet. You can start your own blog, contribute to blogs, and read blogs for fun, educational and work-related purposes on any genre — your family; libraries, literacy and literature; business; famous people, places and events; science, medicine, law, pop culture, sport, hurricanes...

Is blogging classed as a professional development (PD) activity?

Yes, if you believe you are extending your skills and knowledge.

Members of ALIA's PD scheme can accumulate points if, when starting your

own blog you find maintaining the blog encourages you to reflect on professional practice; read blogs to keep up to date with sector issues, and co-ordinate content or prepare non-refereed articles for publication in electronic format. Check out the *Professional reading, personal study project* and *publications* categories in the PD Summary of activities table <http://alia.org.au/members-only/education/pd/userguide/activities.html>.

Do you want the tools to establish a blog and participate in the blogosphere? (William Quick's term for the evolving universe of blogs), then a good place to start is the 'Tips and Tricks' article published in the August edition of *Quill* by Rachel Cobcroft AALIA (CP), the ALIA Queensland Interlibrary Liaison newsletter <http://alia.org.au/groups/quill/issues/2005.7.tips.and.tricks.html>.

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