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I must be going now

Reflections on how to leave a job

Inevitably at some point in your library career you will leave your job. Maybe you get promoted or find a job in another organization, or maybe you are retiring or leaving the profession altogether. Certainly not all good-byes are joyous ones, and some can be quite fraught. Regardless of the reason, how a practitioner leaves their job can have as much impact on the organization as what they did while in the role.

As a library administrator I have found myself on both sides of the leaving equation: both starting a job at a new organization and trying to pick up the pieces after a member of my team made a less-than-graceful exit. Like so many things, we are not taught how to leave a job in library school, nor are there often workshops or training on how best to do so.

My philosophy about how best to leave a job was shaped by two experiences. The first was watching one of the last episodes of *The West Wing* when the chief of staff implores her team to write a memo documenting what they were working on and minute things like where the pencils were kept. I remember watching that episode (not yet in the work world myself) and being struck by the logic behind creating such documentation.

The second event occurred on the first day of my first job working in a library. I was shown into my workspace and immediately became overwhelmed by how much stuff was still on the shelves and in the desk, left by my predecessor who had worked there for 45 years. I therefore spent a good part of my first week cleaning out the office so I could begin to establish myself in the role.

What follows is a call to action for both employees and library leaders. Regardless of the context, please find it within yourselves to set up your successor, your colleagues, or your organization for success by investing the time to thoughtfully leave a job rather than doing so in a blaze of glory.

First steps

Around the same time that I announce my departure, I make a list of my current tasks and projects divided into four categories:

1. To finish before my last day.
2. To delegate to others (including my boss).
3. Unable to finish before my last day.
4. Past or current work to be documented.

No matter what your position, there will be tasks you need to wrap up. A couple of strategies that I've kept in mind were how to exit a job so that someone else can pick up various

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parts of my portfolio after my departure. For example, were my lesson plans saved in a central location? Did I transfer permissions for any security systems? Did I look ahead on my calendar and make note of upcoming events or dates that may require others to participate? Have I cleared out my office?

As a manager, I have coached departing employees to create a list like the one described above. The focus of this coaching was to identify what that person did or was responsible for that others may not know how to do.

Doing the work of leaving work

After thinking about my departure and making these categories, I then prioritize each type of task to be sure that those with the greatest impact on others get done first. Such prioritization gave me time to get feedback on what I had done so that my work could be as helpful to others as possible. Depending on the position I've left, I have worked more or less closely with my supervisor and direct reports to finalize this list of priorities.

One example from this phase was writing a budget strategy document that outlined how to spend endowed funds. The document included lists of fund codes, current expenditures and commitments, and details about what software systems get renewed at what time of year. Another example was connecting vendors with new contacts in the department and finding someone to take my place for an upcoming outreach event. I provided frequent updates to my boss and direct reports or colleagues as I completed items on the list so that others knew of my progress and what may still be outstanding on my last day.

When managing departing staff, I regularly checked in with them to ask questions and sought clarification to make the transition until I filled the position or reassigned the work as seamless as possible.

Final days

I have found that work winds down pretty quickly once I have given my notice. I have aimed to give at least four to six weeks' notice and then built in some vacation time to recharge and shift my focus to my new position. However, your mileage may vary, and I'd encourage you to think about what is best for you and *then* what is best for your current and new organizations when deciding on end and start dates.

As my final day approached, I set aside time for contemplation and reflection about my work and accomplishments. It is all too easy to feel guilty about leaving or to let feelings of frustration get in the way of taking this time. As I reflected, I wrote a letter to my successor. The letter was brief—maybe just one page—and provided my perspective on the job and office they would be stepping into. My letter addressed topics like the intangibles that I would have wanted to know when I started, quirks of the office space or building, names of key stakeholders to engage with, words of encouragement, my contact information, and the invitation to talk at any time. And as I finish my final days at the organization, I thank those who I have worked with and who have supported me.

No departure, whether it was my own or a member of my team, has been perfect. Perfection in this context is very much the enemy of good enough. Rather, I encourage practitioners to bring intentionality when planning for their departure to set the next person up for success.

ACRL Board of Directors' actions, February–August 2022

Highlights of the Board's Annual Conference meetings and recent actions

The ACRL Board of Directors met virtually on June 3, 2022, and held an informal face-to-face Board Update meeting on June 24, 2022. A face-to-face meeting was scheduled for June 25, 2022, but because of a lack of a quorum, this meeting was rescheduled as a virtual meeting on August 1, 2022. The Board also held a face-to-face strategic planning meeting on June 23, 2022. The Board met with the leaders of its five goal-area committees—ACRL Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee; Value of Academic Libraries; Student Learning and Information Literacy; Research and Scholarly Environment; and New Roles and Changing Landscapes—to assess progress on ACRL's strategic plan, the Plan for Excellence. With feedback from the Board, these committees will finalize their reports and develop their work plans for 2022–2023.

The Board also received updates from the liaison from the ALA Executive Board and ALA Treasurer, as well as representatives from the ACRL Diversity Alliance Task Force and ACRL/ALA/ARL/PLA Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity Task Force. The Board reviewed the FY23 budget for ACRL and Choice, and, for the third year in a row, chose to postpone action to later in the summer. This postponement will allow the Board to fully consider actuals from delayed financial reports and to consider its directives to steadily move in the coming fiscal years from a planned, spend-down budget that invested ACRL's net asset balance in strategic programs and services to a two-year, net-positive budget as directed by the ALA Executive Board.

Board members whose service ended on June 30, 2022—Jon E. Cawthorne, Carolyn Henderson Allen, Jacquelyn A. Bryant, Faye A. Chadwell, and April D. Cunningham—were recognized and thanked for their service.

The ACRL Board of Directors took the following actions between February and August 2022.

Strategic Goal Areas

Information Literacy

- Approved the Companion Document to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; Companion Document to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education: Journalism; and Companion Document to the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education: Visual Literacy.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- Approved ACRL/ALA/ODLOS/PLA's Cultural Proficiencies for Racial Equity: A Framework.
- Approved program recommendations for the ACRL Diversity Alliance, which included two new levels, Foundational and Bridge, and an updated Letter of Commitment. These updates will be implemented in 2023 when membership renewals occur.
- Created the ACRL Diversity Alliance division-level committee.

Enabling Programs and Services

Strategic goal areas will be supported by financial and operational planning and will guide the development and implementation of programs and services that target education, advocacy, and member engagement.

Advocacy

- Approved the 2022 ACRL Legislative Agenda.
- Approved the ACRL Statement on Academic Freedom to continue in force without change as originally approved in 2015 for the next five years, at which time it would be placed under the review processes of the ACRL Standards Committee.

Education

- The ACRL Executive Committee and ACRL Executive Director approved a virtual-only RBMS Conference with the dates of June 21–24, 2022.

Publications

- Extended the ACRL/ALA/ARL IPEDS Advisory Task Force and ACRL National Student Engagement Survey Information Literacy Module Review Task Force.
- Approved the ACRL Budget & Finance Committee's recommendation regarding a FY22 expenditure of $44,312 to cover ACRL's share of Benchmark improvements.

Member engagement

- Created the Awards Processes Implementation Task Force. Prior to approving Awards Processes Implementation Task Force, the Board approved, at its ACRL Spring Virtual Meeting held on April 6, 2022, a continued pause of ACRL's current award program for the length of time it takes to fully consider and implement the Awards Task Force recommendations.
- Renewed the Access Services Interest Group, Contemplative Pedagogy Interest Group, and Technical Services Interest Group.
- Dissolved the Michigan MLA Chapter.
- Approved that the ACRL Budget & Finance Committee Chair appointment term be exempt from the five-year limit to consecutive service on the same group and be updated to a ten-year limit to consecutive service on the Budget & Finance Committee if serving as chair.

- Amended the ACRL Guide to Policies and Procedures 2.4.2 Open Sessions to, "The final fifteen ~~thirty~~ minutes of the first Board meeting is set aside for an 'open microphone' session when any ACRL member may address the Board."
- Confirmed virtual votes approving proceedings from virtual meetings held during the 2022 ALA LibLearnX Conference as well as proceedings from the 2022 Executive Committee Fall Virtual Meeting and 2022 Spring Virtual Meeting.