

INTERVIEWS

- Interviews provide opportunities for the institution to evaluate the candidate and the candidate to learn more about the job and the institution.
- Include key persons with whom the position interacts and representatives of the library's constituencies in the interviews as well as the search committee.
- Provide interviewers with information about the position requirements, the library, and the candidate.
- For candidates, provide information about the institution the position requirements, and the library.
- Virtual screening interviews may be conducted by the search committee for selecting applicants for in-person interviews.
- Interview structures should parallel those for other senior leaders and involve formal and informal meetings, typically taking place over the course of one or more days.

Interviews are a two-way process. They provide the best opportunity to evaluate candidates, and they also allow the candidates to learn about the job and the parent organization. To be effective, interviews should involve the key persons with whom the position interacts and representatives of the library's constituencies. The savvy candidate expects to meet with the key leaders who determine the future of the institution and are most responsible for the library. These may include the president, vice president, deans, university librarian, and budget and information officers. Examples of key leaders include but may not be limited to the search committee, the person to whom the position reports, deans or representatives of professional schools and hospitals, library staff, and library users should be included in the interview schedule. The interview is also the opportunity to include those who may have partnerships with the library, such as: other libraries, library school, area hospital libraries, regional network, institutional peers, information technology departments, and disciplines that may be important locally such as telemedicine or virtual learning. The incumbent director usually is not involved in the evaluation of candidates.

The structure of the interviews should parallel those for other senior leaders. They will usually require one or more days and should include both formal and informal settings. Both small group and one-on-one sessions may be employed as appropriate. Typically, the candidates will be asked to make a presentation or lead an open forum, where they can demonstrate their leadership acumen, areas of expertise, and public communication skills. These sessions will also allow more people to participate in the interviews.

The interviewers should be prepared with information about candidates, desired characteristics, and awareness of basic protocols for interviewing. Also provide interviewers with procedures for collecting evaluative comments from other participants for review by the search committee.

Prior to the interview, candidates should be provided with comprehensive information about the position and the community, including a detailed itinerary for their visit to the institution. During the interview, make them as comfortable as possible including courtesies such as transportation, introductions, accompanying candidates to meeting locations, and breaks in the schedule.

The most important trait for interviewers is the ability to listen. Interviewers should focus on relevant past performance, ask follow-up questions, keep the interview on track, and allow candidates to do most of the talking. Pritchard provides examples of topics for inquiry that will elicit information on management, leadership, and political skills of library director candidates [12]. Fear's work is a helpful source for further discussion of interviewing technique in general situations [30], and Arthur discusses competency-based interviewing [31].

Search committees need to be sensitive when there are internal candidates for the position [32]. Internal candidates should be treated in the same manner as external candidates, as part of a national search, with the same interview and equal consideration. Care also needs to be taken before, during, and after the interview about what is said in public about the search. In most cases, internal candidates should not participate in interviews of other candidates.

Interviews are successful when they help both the institution, and the candidate decide whether their partnership would be successful. In addition to the two-way evaluation process, interviews can promote a positive message about the role of the position and the library as well as about the institutional culture and faculty support and development, involve library constituencies, and begin building future relationships with the director.