

ANALYSIS OF VACANCY

- Use the vacant position to analyze current information and library service needs.
- Seek advice on these needs from the incumbent director or other consultants who are knowledgeable about libraries.
- The chosen candidate -- external or internal -- should be chosen to enhance the status of the library and the institution.
- Consider compensation based on institutional peer levels as well as comparisons with similar positions at peer institutions.

A vacancy in the director's position affords an opportunity for the institution to assess its current needs and the future direction of library and information management services. Rather than assuming continuation of the status quo, it is a worthwhile exercise to examine and articulate the institution's current view of the role of the library and the position. This analysis will determine the background and skills needed in a director as well as help the institution describe the environment clearly to candidates. If the analysis is done before the appointment of the search committee, it is important that the committee has an understanding of the outcome.

Administrators and search committee members should seek expert advice in their analysis of the position. The incumbent director can be a valuable source for information on library activities and resources, trends in the field, and potential candidates. Depending on individual circumstances, a consultant may fill the role of the incumbent or may supplement it with an independent perspective. It is important for the committee to reserve for itself the tasks related to evaluating candidates.

A consultant may be asked to perform one or more functions, depending on the particular needs of the institution:

- evaluate the library, current resources, and expectations of clientele
- advise on the future vision for the library
- help define job requirements to achieve the vision
- identify qualified individuals
- communicate with potential candidates.

Consultants may be identified through a recommendation by the incumbent director or by contacting colleagues in other institutions, who can ask for suggestions from the directors of their libraries. It is important to check the background and reputation of potential consultants.

The agreement with the consultant should spell out what assistance is desired and guidelines for time and compensation.

Recruiters or search firms are another possible source of assistance. Their services include promoting the vacancy to potential candidates, packaging information about the institution and library, and conducting preliminary interviews [12]. Some institutions find that search firms are helpful in identifying candidates who are most likely to match the institution's

needs; and in meeting the institution's timeline. If this option is considered, the institution should decide whether it will be more effective for the search committee or the search firm to perform these functions.

Another facet of the vacancy analysis is review of the status and salary of the position. Establishing these at an appropriate level will affect the quality of the candidate pool. Salaries should be considered in the context of peer positions in the institution as well as norms in the profession. A summary of salary data for AAHSL institutions provides overall information. It is included in this guide and is updated annually. Salaries, of course, are influenced by geographic location, institution, and other factors, as well as individual qualifications.

Some institutions choose to appoint an internal candidate without conducting a full recruitment process. The goal of such a promotion should be the same—to find the best person for the position. The institution should still take advantage of the opportunity to reconsider goals and direction and the kind of leader needed. It should also weigh giving up the potential benefits of a search process in strengthening the national standing of the library and the successful candidate. A search can benefit the institution and enhance the new director's perceived competence on campus and in the external library community. If the institution ultimately feels that the best course of action is to appoint from within, it can still take advantage of this guide in coming to that decision and in negotiating with and appointing the director.