

## SCREENING APPLICANTS

- Evaluation of candidates must consider leadership abilities and knowledge of libraries and information policy issues.
- Candidates' experience and background should reflect the knowledge and responsibilities required by the position.
- When a library degree is not required, the candidate's understanding of library and information technology environments should be carefully evaluated.

Search committees and recruiting firms will want to evaluate applications for these positions by emphasizing different criteria than they might use for other senior administrative positions in the academic health center. Search committees and recruiters may be accustomed to making the first cut of applicants by examining CVs for academic degrees, record of publications and grant awards, and education and experience at peer institutions.

More important for library director positions is evaluation of how the candidates evidence leadership ability, their capability of relating to constituencies, knowledge of information and technology issues, fit with the institution's vision of the future, and the specific requirements and responsibilities of the director's position. This requires an in-depth review of CVs and other sources of information.

Candidates need to have an overall mastery of library functions and involvement in broader information issues. The content of their technical expertise is not as important as the ability to lead and to negotiate the place of the library in the institution and the community. They need to be good managers of people and technologies, and their familiarity with issues such as scholarly communication, information licensing, information costs, and copyright will enable them to position the library effectively. Their ability to secure institutional and external funding, to manage a complex budget, and to communicate a funding plan with a high return on investment will help determine the library's success. They must be able to speak the languages of the communities the library serves, including understanding issues relevant to clinical and research information systems and data curation. If the institution is seeking candidates with a medical informatics rather than a library background, it is important to consider the person's service and teaching orientation and knowledge of the acquisition, management, and utilization of information resources.

Search committees and recruiters should look at the range of areas and the breadth of responsibility that candidates have had in their current and prior positions and at their experience in interacting with groups outside the library. The candidates' record of professional activities can be reviewed for evidence of further involvement with information issues and leadership in professional associations. These are valuable not only for the experience candidates gain but also as evidence of their visibility to peers. Candidates can also demonstrate leadership and contact with constituencies through university service. The relevance and depth of these activities ought to be evaluated, not just their existence.

The conventional career path to an academic health sciences library director position may progress through a deputy or associate director position at a comparable library or may move from another director position, such as from a smaller to a larger library. In some

libraries, division or department heads may have had a level of responsibility analogous to deputy or associate director positions. Libraries are tending to create flatter organizational structures which may not provide the conventional growth opportunities described above. Depending on the organizational structure of the library, leadership roles may be defined in other ways as well.

Search committees and recruiters should be open to consideration of candidates with other, more diverse, backgrounds or with nontraditional career paths to a directorship. Hospital library directors have expertise in information services in clinical and education settings and have made successful transitions to positions in academic libraries. Candidates may also come from other settings in the health environment or university library systems. In some cases, committees will want to be open to candidates without traditional experience or positions at the top level of leadership.

When positions do not require a library degree, more scrutiny should be paid to the candidates' understanding of both library and information technology environments. The decision to structure a job in this manner depends on the institution, including the areas of responsibility assigned to the position, as well as the qualifications of the individual. Librarianship is a good field, but not the only one, for developing senior managers. Librarians may also have degrees with an emphasis in information science or postgraduate education in informatics or have additional degrees in these areas.

Checking candidates' references is an essential part of evaluating applications. Inquiries can be made to references supplied by the candidate, with candidates' permission obtained to contact others. Structured conversations with references should be conducted for the top group of candidates, in addition to written letters of reference that may be available. Further recommendations for telephone and online interviews, and credential checks are available from the American Association for Higher Education [9].