

# **Enhance Your Chances: How to Shine Brightly in a Tough Job Market!**



# Three Goals for This Session

- 1) Gain new perspectives on writing a cover letter.
- 2) Learn useful tips for making the most of your interview.
- 3) Have fun!

# Introductions

**April Ritchie**

Adult Services Coordinator

Erlanger Branch

Kenton County Public Library

Erlanger, KY

[April.Ritchie@kentonlibrary.org](mailto:April.Ritchie@kentonlibrary.org)



# Introductions

**Mark Shores**

Assistant Director/Regional Campus Librarian

Miami University Hamilton

Rentschler Library

Hamilton, OH

[shoresml@muohio.edu](mailto:shoresml@muohio.edu)

Rentschler Library  
Miami University  
*Hamilton*

# Who are we?

## ***We are practicing library professionals***

- Real-life experience sorting through piles of resumes/cover letters
- Real-life experience selecting candidates for interviews
- Real-life experience conducting interviews
- We are not HR professionals – we may not be able to answer every question

# Part I: Cover Letters

## *Is your cover letter doing its job?*

- What is the purpose of a cover letter?
- Are you maximizing the *full potential* of your cover letter?
- How can you make your cover letter stand out from the crowd?

# Cover Letters

## *15 Tips for a Better Cover Letter*



# Tip #1

## ***Write a full letter***

- A few sentences or even one or two paragraphs are not enough.
- This is your chance to sell yourself—use the letter to market yourself.
- Hint: An email is NOT a cover letter.

## Tip #2

### ***Proofread, proofread, proofread***

- Have someone else proofread
- Do not rely solely on the spell-check feature of your word processing software. Spell-check programs do not catch every mistake.
  - Example: **“I am well-versed in the principals of information literacy instruction.”**

## Tip #3

***Your cover letter is more than just a cover letter; it is a writing sample***

- Your potential employer will need for you to write things such as:
  - **grants, reports, proposals, board reports, newspaper articles, book reviews, etc.**
- Your future supervisor will not want to correct your grammar and writing errors.

## Tip #4

### ***Avoid over-using the same words throughout your document***

- This is a common mistake and it makes for tiresome reading.
- Commonly over-used words:
  - experience
  - opportunity
  - library
  - librarian
  - position

## Tip #5

***Do not begin every paragraph in your letter with the word “I”***

- Too many sentences beginning with “I” will make you look like a less than stellar writer.
- “I have”
- “I would”
- “I am”
- “I will”

## Tip #6

***Your cover letter should not be all about you and your needs***

- Talk about what you can do for your potential employer.
- The employer wants to know how you can help make his or her library a better place.

## Tip #6 (Cont'd.)

### *Real-Life Example:*

#### *Readers' Advisory Librarian*

- “As an avid reader, one who often has half a dozen books from different genres on the nightstand so I can read by mood, I am dedicated to assisting and encouraging bibliophiles, casual readers, and reluctant readers, in their literary pursuits.”

# Tip #7

## ***Do your research***

- Before you write your letter, do some research on the library.
- Try to find a way to work some of your newfound knowledge into your cover letter.
- Look for opportunities to demonstrate how your experience or skills match up with the employer's needs.

## Tip #7 (Cont'd.)

### *Example:*

- “From viewing your website, I noticed that your library is beefing up its outreach to non-traditional students. I have a keen interest in services to this group; I planned and presented a program for older students as one of my class projects.”

## Tip #8

### ***Your cover letter should not be a recital of your resume***

- It should offer an intriguing glimpse of who you are and what you can do.
- It should pique the employer's interest enough that he will want to then read your resume
- The cover letter and resume combined should provoke the employer to want to bring you in for an interview.

# Tip #9

## ***Put it on paper (unless...)***

- If you send a cover letter and resume via email or fax, be sure to state that you will also send a print copy.
- Make sure you send the print copies promptly



# Tip #10

## ***Quality counts***

- Use high-quality cotton bond resume paper.
- Use the same type of paper for your resume, cover letter, references, and thank-you note.

# Tip #10

## *Quality counts (cont'd.)*

- Make sure the printer you are using makes clear, clean, crisp printouts.
- Watch out for smudges from ink, food, makeup, coffee, etc.



# Tip #11

## ***Don't be sloppy with the details***

- Never hand-correct (with pen or pencil) a typo on your cover letter.
- Print out a freshly corrected copy.
- Corrections matter – otherwise, the employer might think you would turn in similarly untidy assignments if hired.

## Tip #12

### ***Make sure the font size is legible***

- The employer should not have to squint to see the font.
- Generally, a size 11 or 12 font will work well.



# Tip #13

## ***Typewritten letters only, please***

- Do not submit a handwritten cover letter.
- Ever.



## Tip #14

### ***Make sure your cover letter and resume are in agreement***

- Do not make a statement in your cover letter that conflicts with the facts on your resume, or vice versa.
- Discrepancies could cost you an interview!

## Tip #15

***Do not state in your cover letter that you will call to arrange an interview***

- The risk of alienating your potential employer is not worth it
- You will come off as pushy, and not many employers will want to bring someone like that on board

# Part II: The Interview

*Going from nervous to*

**confident!**

- Do interviews make you nervous?
- How can you overcome nervousness so that your true personality shines through?

# Invitation for an interview: Now what?

*Prepare, prepare, prepare . . .*

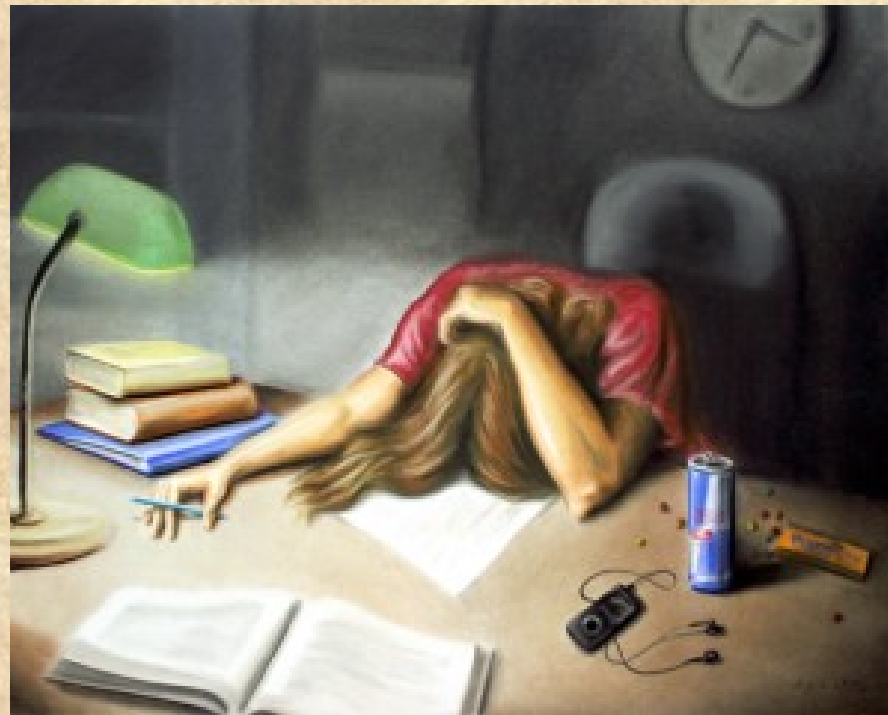
*And then prepare some more*

- Can you really ever be prepared for an interview?
- Yes! Next up: 5 Tips for the preparation process

# Preparing for an Interview

## *Overcoming the Dread*

### *5 Tips for Success . . . Really!*



# Tip #1

***Be absolutely sure that you are interested in the job***

- Why waste everyone's time?
- It's hard to muster enthusiasm if your heart isn't in it
- Can be awkward to turn down a job offer – this is a close-knit field

## Tip #2

***Devote as much time to the preparation process as you can***

- There is no substitute for this part of the process
- You help shape the interview by the amount of preparation you put into it



# Tip #3

## ***Research the library***

- Find out as much as possible about the library, company, university, or organization
  - Web sites, annual reports, newspaper or journal articles, professional contacts, friends
- Visit the building beforehand, if possible

# Tip #4

## ***Research yourself !***

- The better you know yourself, the easier to talk about yourself
- Review your resume and know the details
- Spend time looking at interview questions:
  - online sites
  - books

## Tip #4 (cont'd)

### ***Research yourself! (cont'd.)***

- Spend time writing out answers to as many questions as you can
- Review the answers you have written several times



# Tip #5

***What do you want to know?***

***Prepare your questions***

- This is a key element of the interview, yet it is often not given any thought
- Arrive at the interview with no less than five questions in hand
- The questions should *not* focus on salary, benefits, schedule, etc.



## Tip #5

***What do you want to know?***

***Prepare your questions  
(cont'd.)***

- Under no circumstances say: **“No, I don’t have any questions -- I think you’ve answered everything already.”**



## Tip #5

***What do you want to know?  
Prepare your questions  
(cont'd.)***

- Ask questions that get to the heart of what you *really* want to know:
  - **“What do you like about working for the Main Street Public Library?”**

## Tip #5

***What do you want to know?***

***Prepare your questions***

***(cont'd.)***

- More examples:
  - ***“What are some of the biggest challenges this library is facing?”***
  - ***“How can someone step into this position and make an immediate impact?”***

# The Interview Day

***Congratulations! You have an interview AND you've prepared for it***

➤ **Next up: 10 Tips for the Interview Day**

# **The Interview Day**

## ***10 Tips to Help You Get the Job You Really Want***



# Tip #1

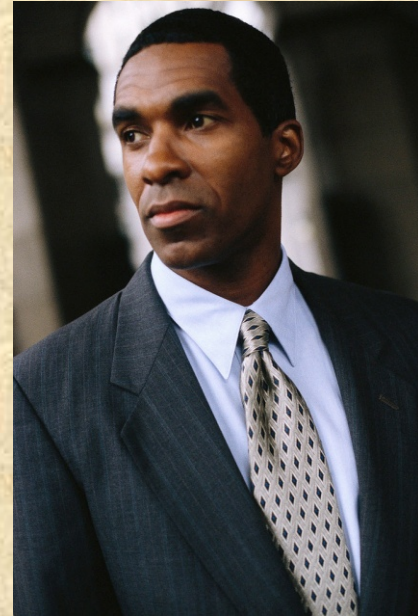
***Be early!***



- Drive past the building the day before, if possible.
- Allow plenty of extra time for traffic or unexpected events.
- Remember that you are “on stage” the minute you walk in the door.

## Tip #2

### *Dress professionally*



- Demonstrate your seriousness as a candidate by what you wear
- Check out books on the topic if you are unsure how to dress

## Tip #2 (cont'd)

***What NOT to wear!***



***Real life blunders:***



## Tip #3

***Show enthusiasm and let your personality show through***

- Smile
- Put some energy in your voice

## Tip #4

***Keep jokes to a minimum and pick your moments carefully when using them***

- Be careful with self-deprecating humor!
- When in doubt, say nothing....

## Tip #5

***Be as honest as possible about your qualifications without damaging your candidacy for the position.***

- Some employers like that you “know what you don’t know.”

## Tip #6

### ***Make eye contact with the person who asks you a question***

- It's creepy when candidates don't look at their questioner
- Avoid the "stare down" if in a group interview
- Don't stare off into space, either.

## Tip #7

***Go with the flow and respond positively to any unexpected events that may occur during the interview.***

- Confrontational interviewers
- Interviewer is late!
- Remember: you're "on stage"

## Tip #8

***Find a moment to work in a comment that shows you've done some research ahead of time.***

➤ Example:

**“I noticed from your website that you have conducted focus groups with students...”**

## Tip #9

***Practice the fine art of not making your answers too brief, while at the same time not digressing into a rambling hodgepodge of thoughts.***

- Too brief? Shows you haven't thought about the position....or maybe nerves?
- Too long = lack of focus

## Tip #10

***Be positive about everything,  
even if you experienced  
difficulties getting to the  
interview.***



- Remember you're under a microscope
- Even a minor meltdown...

## **\*Bonus Tip\***

### ***Write a thank-you letter ASAP***

- This is another chance to sell yourself
- According to a 2005 CareerBuilder survey, almost 15% of hiring managers won't hire a candidate who didn't send a thank-you letter.

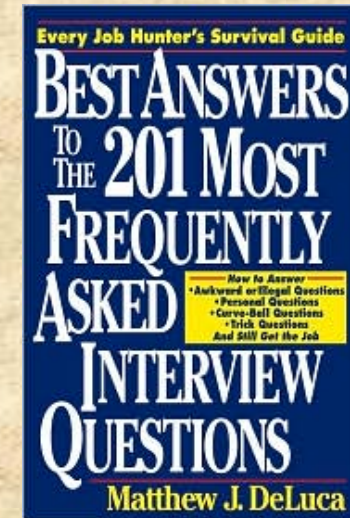
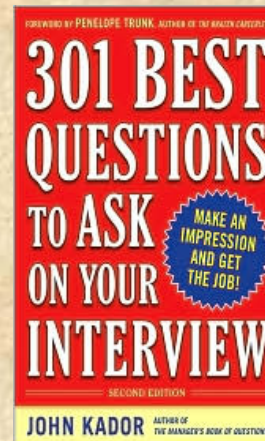
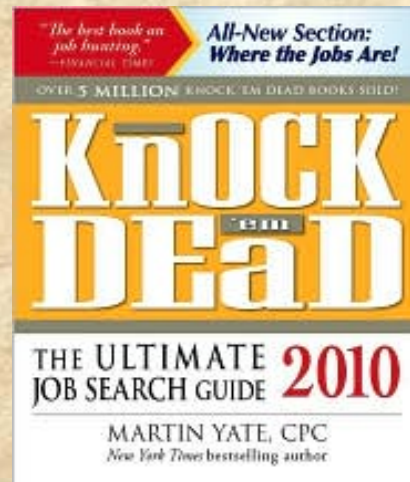
## **\*Bonus Tip\* (cont'd.)**

### ***Write a thank-you letter ASAP***

- Accountemps survey:
  - 76% of respondents said thank-you letters influenced their evaluation of candidates
  - Only 36% of applicants send a thank-you letter

# Recommended Reading

## Great Books:



# Review of This Session's Goals



- 1) Gain new perspectives on writing a cover letter.
- 2) Learn useful tips for making the most of your interview.
- 3) Have fun!



Questions?



*Merçi*



Ευχαριστώ

Thank you!



Gracias



*Grazie*