Chapter 11

The Career Development Compass:
Roadmap to Building a Diversified Portfolio of Professional Capabilities for Information Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Due to constant change and intense competition within the information environment, developing a diversified portfolio of professional capabilities ensures employability and career mobility for future Information Professionals (IPs). Capability development begins with career development planning. However, without the proper navigation device to guide future IPs, career plans can go awry and career opportunities may vanish. Because the IP's role is constantly changing, unforeseen opportunities exist for those who address career development planning beginning the first day of graduate school. This chapter provides future IPs with a navigation tool and roadmap to develop career plans in an unpredictable environment and discusses implications for the future viability of the profession.

INTRODUCTION

Initially, future Information Professionals (IPs), sometimes referred to as nontraditional librarians, may feel lost or confused about career direction primarily due to the transitional nature of the library and information science world. Dority (2006) states "that familiar MLIS designation signifies that we possess a stunning diverse skill set, that can be deployed in an equally stunning number of places, positions, and opportunities"(p. 1). Many IPs graduate disillusioned and ill prepared to manage their careers effectively because, while in graduate school, they neglected career development planning. Some were too busy to plan; some waited too late to plan; some did not know where to begin; and some were unsure of the path to follow. As a result, possible career opportunities may have vanished. Just as navigational devices, such as the compass, the map, and the GPS were created to help travelers find their destinations, the objective of this chapter is to provide future IPs with a navigation tool and a roadmap for developing career plans by developing a portfolio of professional capabilities to ensure

career success. Additionally, this chapter assists future IPs in plotting a course to respond to changes in an unpredictable environment, by utilizing a career development compass that directs them to their desired destinations.

BACKGROUND

Career development planning in the information profession, a new flexible profession, should begin prior to obtaining the Master of Science in Information Science. The Special Libraries Association states that:

An Information Professional (IP) strategically uses information in his/her job to advance the mission of the organization through the development, deployment, and management of information resources and services. The IP harnesses technology as a critical tool to accomplish goals. IPs include, but are not limited to, librarians, knowledge managers, chief information officers, web developers, information brokers, and consultants. (Special Libraries Association, 2009)

To take advantage of opportunities in this diverse profession, information professionals must chart their career paths through a sound career development plan. Gordon (2008) suggests that career planning should not be happenstance but that one must take time to plan and study the possibilities that exist to map out a successful career. Priscilla Shontz (2002) suggests that assessing one's goals, skills, and the job market are important components of career development planning.

According to Gordon (2008), "LIS career choices and potential career paths are now continually expanding to encompass new skills, new knowledge, new generational viewpoints, and myriad new opportunities" (p. xi). By developing a diverse portfolio of professional capabilities, an information professional ensures employability, career mobility and guards against environmental

threats. This cannot be accomplished without career development planning. Pantry and Griffiths (2003) suggest that career development begin at the onset and should be assessed regularly to determine where you are going, and advocate developing a portfolio career, a tool to give employers an in-depth picture of one's skill sets. Simonsen (1997) states, "just as organizations need to do strategic planning to anticipate and prepare for market changes and competition, so do individuals need to plan their careers strategically. Career development planning is the first step in managing one's career strategically" (p.7).

THE CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Librarianship is often characterized as reactive, complacent, and obsolete. Ross and Sennyey (2008) discuss how in the midst of increased competition, the profession continues to tweak outdated service delivery models based on old assumptions, rather than reexamining assumptions and redefining delivery models based on the current environment. The implication is that not only are new models necessary to address changing customer needs and burgeoning competition, but new skills are required for effective implementation. Additionally, Campbell (2006) asserts "given the events [the technological revolution] of the past decade, academic librarians perhaps know better than anyone else that the institutions they manage – and their own roles – may face extinction over the next decade" (p.28). However, the competitive challenges faced by the profession are not unique. The need to refine and redefine traditional business models has affected every profession and every industry. All professions that exist to provide products or services to customers must continually deliver increased value in an unpredictable marketplace to maintain a competitive advantage; this applies to libraries as well. As new business models for delivering information services have emerged, libraries have

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