Public Librarianship

The Public Library Manifesto developed by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) defines the public library as the local gateway to knowledge that nurtures fundamental conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision-making, and the cultural development of individuals and social groups (UNESCO, 1994). “Public librarianship as practiced in the twenty-first century is the occupation that provides access to books and all varieties of media to meet the needs of people for education, information, and personal development” (McCook and Phenix, 2010, p. 4340). The Public Library Association’s “New Planning for Results” model identifies the focus of public librarianship practice in the twenty-first century United States on the processes related to managing change that are implemented in 18 service responses each defining a unique specialization such as: adult services, career guidance and planning, collection development, community services, information services, information technology, literacy educator, programming, and youth services, amongst others (Nelson, 2008; Nelson and Garcia, 2006).


Public Librarians: Recent Position Titles and Descriptions

These are but a few of the many found in recent job position announcements for public librarians (alphabetically listed). Positions maybe at the individual agency level (e.g., branch library, metropolitan library), system level, or at the regional (or state) library level. For more position titles and job requirements, consult the ALA JobList.

- **Collection Management Director** contributes, collaborates, and connects customers to information in a variety of formats—when they need it and where they want it—by applying traditional and nontraditional collection development and management practices. The work involves selecting and preserving a variety of items to meet needs of particular users, conducting community analysis, developing policies and procedures, and evaluating and purchasing collection materials.

- **Community Relations Librarian** plans, implements and coordinates community relations with the public. Responsibilities may include creating services and programs in collection development and programming, public relations, web design and management, computer literacy, and electronic communication. Plans and coordinates comprehensive public relations/marketing outreach program for the library agency or system. The work requires considerable skill, initiative, independent judgment, professional ethics, and follow through
capability. An ability to exercise mature judgment and maintain confidentiality of administrative matters is important. [Related title: Outreach Librarian].

- **Information Technology Manager** supports the successful analysis, design, and implementation of all library systems including networks, servers, telecommunications, integrated and automated systems, Internet, hardware, and desktops. Is responsible for meeting the technology needs of the library and constituencies by evaluating requirements, selecting and purchasing software and hardware to support the library and its programs. Anticipates and fulfills future needs for software and hardware upgrades including acquisition of new technologies. Coordinates the implementation of all automated library systems and upgrades. Maintains the wired and wireless networks. Supports managers and employees with training, documented procedures, and troubleshooting technical problems. Develops and supports all technology efforts necessary to maintain a vibrant and welcoming library. Provides day to day supervision and guidance to department staff. Makes decisions on hiring and disciplinary actions. Evaluates work objectives and staff effectiveness. Resolves complex issues related to areas of responsibility. The Information Technology Manager functions under broad administrative direction, sets standards for the department and is directly accountable for results.

- **Library Assistant (e.g., Adult Services Position)** provides paraprofessional library services. The person is responsible for: Performance of advanced bibliographic searches in interlibrary loan; Acquisition or circulation functions and/or information services using all available library sources and tools; Provision of research and/or assistance in public service areas involving extensive public contact in advising patrons in the use and location of materials or data bases; Development and maintenance of an audio-visual collection. Desirable to have some public library experience. Requires experience with library organizations or other related fields. Some proficiency in use of technology is expected. [Related titles: Administrative Assistant, Circulation Assistant, Clerk, Library Associate, Library Page, Shelver].

- **Library Business Manager** is responsible for all general ledger preparation, input and reporting (including management of accounts payable obtaining invoice approval, audit and deposit circulation cash register receipts, preparation of entries for tax revenue and interest income, balance of bi-weekly payroll summary and deductions to the payroll check register, monthly reconciliation of bank accounts, and preparation of all financial reports). Maintains accounting system vendor files and distributes/reports annual 1099’s, payroll processing (shared with H.R.), informs Board Treasurer of required bank transfer amounts for payables and payroll, tracks all expenditures for and income received from Grants, Friends of the Library, and other gifts, maintains the postage meter, tracks all membership payments and petty cash accounts bond payments. Assists the Director and Library Board Trustees with the preparation of the fiscal year budget. Monitors expenditures, along with the Director to ensure that expenditures stay within budgetary limits. Prepares Interlibrary Loan invoices for lost/damaged items and tracks receivables. Annual audit-preparation based on requested financial reports and organizes detailed documentation for the independent auditor.

- **Library Director (or Assistant Director)** should be a visionary, strategic leader with passion, creativity, and innovation to lead a public library organization and community forward by providing quality services and programs. Should have the energy, enthusiasm, and ability to recognize and contribute to the agency’s successes and solid foundation. S/he brings a talent to engage staff and the public in showcasing and expanding the library’s role in the community. These include (not limited to) developing a “library without walls,” a
welcoming, warm physical space for community members to connect with each other, collaborative external partnerships, and a strong, clear leadership voice and direction. [Related titles: Executive Director, Assistant Director, Library Manager, Branch Manager].

- **Public Services Librarian** assists users with information needs, instruct patrons in the effective use of information resources, act as liaison to one or more community agencies and not-for-profit organizations, and manage one or more areas of the collection. The individual adopts a compassionate, customer service focused and user-centered philosophy. [Related title: Public Services Assistant Manager].

- **Supervisor (e.g., Mobile Library Services)** operates in a diverse environment to help fulfill the mission of the agency by supervising the daily operations of Mobile Library Services. This position oversees the library services and materials provided to the community served by Mobile Libraries including information services, reader’s advisory services, circulation, and programming.

- **Technical Services Librarian** might catalog new additions to the collection, or oversee ordering and processing of new materials. Because technical services typically employ more staff members than degreed librarians, this type of position frequently includes supervisory responsibilities. [Related titles: Technical Services Assistant/Manager/Supervisor].

- **Web Developer** is a professional and technical position that helps develop comprehensive services for the web environment including the development, organization, content and maintenance of web-based public and staff services. [Related titles Virtual Branch Manager].

- **Youth Services Librarian** works with a range of ages, from birth through high school graduation. In certain cases, they may be called “children’s librarians,” “young adult or YA librarians,” or “teen librarians,” and have responsibility for collections, programming and outreach. In some instance they may also work with older teens, or “emerging adults,” ages 18 to 22 years. [Related titles: See Youth Services Librarianship Pathway].

### Preparing to Enter the Profession of Public Librarianship:

**Professional Development:  **

**Public Library Association (PLA): A Division of the American Library Association**

(URL: [http://www.ala.org/pla/](http://www.ala.org/pla/)).

**The Association for Rural and Small Libraries (ARSL)**

(URL: [http://arsl.info/](http://arsl.info/)).

Other ALA divisions depending on interest.
Conferences: PLA Conferences and Continuing Education (URL: http://www.ala.org/pla/education).

The biennial PLA Conference, PLA 2018 Conference (URL: http://www.placonference.org/).


ARSL’s Annual Conference (URL: http://arsl.info/annual-conference/).

Others, depending on interest area.
Publications of Note:

- *Public Library Quarterly* (URL: www.tandfonline.com/toc/wplq20/current).
- *The Library Quarterly* (URL: http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/toc/lq/current).

Externally Funded Programs at SIS:


Recognition:

Prestigious "S" designation for service-learning assigned to 554 (Public Library Management and Services) at the University of Tennessee for 2014-2015. Service-Learning Profile, Office of the Provost, University of Tennessee: http://servicelearning.utk.edu/service-learning-profile-bharat-mehra/

| Required Courses (in SIS) | Everyone | 510 – Information Environment  
520 – Information Representation and Organization  
530 – Information Access and Retrieval |
|--------------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommended Courses (in SIS): | Everyone: | 554 Public Library Management and Services  
559 Grant Development for Information Professionals  
560 Development and Management of Collections  
574 Resources and Services for Adults  
599 Practicum |
| Strongly recommended, regardless of interest area: | 505 ePortfolio  
550 Management of Information Organizations  
581 Information Network Applications |
| Technical Services/Information Technology: | 521 Cataloging and Classification  
522 Cataloging of Non-print Materials  
565 Digital Libraries  
584 Database Management Systems  
585 Information Technologies  
597 Information Architecture  
598 Web Design |
| Other Public Services: | 534 Government Information Sources  
571 (Resources & Services for Children)  
572 (Resources and Services for Young Adults) |
| Rural Libraries: | 590 Rural Library Management |
| Recommended Courses (Outside SIS): | Courses in other disciplines offer unique insight into public library life: | POLS 514 Research Design and Methodology in Public Administration  
POLS 539 - State and Local Government and Politics  
POLS 562 - Public Management  
POLS 564 - Human Resource Management in Public Organizations  
PBR 540 - Public Relations Management |
| Real-World Experience: | Recent Practicum Settings: | East Ridge City Library, East Ridge, TN.  
Johnson City Public Library, Johnson City, TN.  
Nashville Public Library, Nashville, TN.  
Richmond Public Library, Richmond, VI. |
### Recent Placements of UTK-SIS Alumni/Students:

- Assistant Regional Library Director, Clinch River Regional Library, Clinton, TN.
- Library Director, E. G. Fisher Public Library, Athens, TN.
- Director, Jefferson City Public Library, Jefferson City, TN.
- Adult Services System Manager, Rockbridge Regional Library, Goshen, VI.

### Where to find jobs and other prospects:

- ALA Jobs list (URL: http://joblist.ala.org/).
- State jobs lists.
- Careers in Public Librarianship (URL: http://www.ala.org/pla/tools/careers).
- PUBLIB listserv (publib@oclc.org).