Hiring Library Technicians in Academic Libraries
Revising, Rejecting, and Reclaiming the Process

Recrutement de techniciens de bibliothèque dans les bibliothèques universitaires
Réviser, rejeter et récupérer le processus

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Citer cet article

Résumé de l'article

En utilisant le métissage comme méthode d'enquête, cet article est le fruit des réflexions d'un comité d'embauche d'une bibliothèque universitaire canadienne composé de bibliothécaires et de techniciens en bibliothèque qui visait à perturber les pratiques de recrutement locales dans le but de créer un processus plus centré sur l'humain, plus inclusif et plus réfléchi lors du recrutement pour deux postes vacants de techniciens de bibliothèque. L'écriture et le mélange de textes font émerger trois thèmes qui reflètent l'expérience partagée par le comité et qui servent de modèle sur comment une pratique réflexive peut se faire parmi divers types d'employés d'une bibliothécaire universitaire très active. Ce processus a contribué à la responsabilisation des membres du comité d'embauche à questionner et contribuer au processus de recrutement d'une nouvelle manière. Quoique limité par le temps, ce projet révèle que des efforts peuvent permettre la création d'un espace pour qu'un comité d'embauche, composé d'employés de divers niveaux de pouvoir, puisse critiquer et modifier les pratiques pour améliorer les approches de recrutement. Ces améliorations vont au-delà de la création d'un environnement accueillant pour les candidats et comprennent des changements quant à la façon dont les employés actuels se sentent par rapport à leur contribution et leur engagement dans le travail.

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Abstract / Résumé

Using métissage as a method of inquiry, this paper is the outcome of reflections of a Canadian academic library hiring committee that consists of both librarians and library technicians that disrupted local hiring practices in an effort to create a more human-centred, inclusive, and thoughtful process when hiring for two library technician vacancies. Through the writing and mixing of texts, three themes emerged that capture the shared experiences of the committee and serve as an example of how reflective practice can take shape among different types of employees in a busy academic library. This process helped to empower members of the hiring committee to question and contribute to the hiring process in new ways. Despite the limits of time, this project reveals that efforts can be made to create a space for a hiring committee, comprised of library employees with different levels of workplace power, to critique and modify practices to improve approaches to hiring. These improvements go beyond creating a welcoming environment for candidates and include changes to the way current employees feel about their contributions and their engagement in the work.

En utilisant le métissage comme méthode d'enquête, cet article est le fruit des réflexions d'un comité d'embauche d'une bibliothèque universitaire canadienne composé de bibliothécaires et de techniciens en bibliothèque qui visait à perturber les pratiques de recrutement locales dans le but de créer un processus plus centré sur l'humain, plus inclusif et plus réfléchi lors du recrutement pour deux postes vacants de techniciens de bibliothèque. L'écriture et le mélange de textes font émerger trois thèmes qui reflètent l'expérience partagée par le comité et qui servent de modèle sur comment une pratique réflexive peut se faire parmi divers types d'employés d'une bibliothécaire universitaire très active. Ce processus a contribué à la responsabilisation des membres du comité d'embauche à questionner et contribuer au processus de recrutement d'une nouvelle manière. Quoique limité par le temps, ce projet révèle que des efforts peuvent permettre la création d'un espace pour qu'un comité d'embauche, composé d'employés de divers niveaux de pouvoir, puisse critiquer et modifier les pratiques pour améliorer les approches de recrutement. Ces améliorations vont au-delà de la création d'un environnement accueillant pour les candidats et comprennent des changements quant à la façon dont les employés actuels se sentent par rapport à leur contribution et leur engagement dans le travail.

Keywords / Mots-clés

library technicians, hiring practices, métissage, staff; techniciens en bibliothèque, pratiques de recrutement, métissage, personnel

Introduction

The limited availability of published research focusing on library employees who do not have a master's degree in library and information science hinders the field's ability to assess and confront the distinct issues and opportunities that face this numerically significant group of library employees. Drawing on a recent experience of changing processes in the hiring of two full-time library technicians at a small academic library,

this paper offers some insight into how a locally restructured hiring process can improve the quality of the hiring experience for both candidates and committee members and addresses some inclusion issues that have been highlighted in the library profession but are often grounded in the experience of librarians only. Using the collaborative and iterative writing method known as métissage, two library technician supervisors, a library systems analyst, a librarian, and the university librarian collectively share their experiences in challenging hiring norms by thinking critically about the role of inclusion when hiring staff. This process was considered using three themes: rejecting, revising, and reclaiming. Strengthened by our distinct experiences throughout the hiring process, these themes enabled us to collectively navigate and resist problematic workplace norms to improve our area's recruitment efforts. Further, this work serves as an example of how, despite other structural constraints such as working in a unionized environment with two different bargaining units, it is possible to find ways to challenge hiring processes that reinforce systems of power that favour white privilege.

Institutional Context & Positionality

This paper considers the hiring practices within a small Canadian university library that consists of twenty-three employees, including the university librarian. Within this context, there are credentialed library technicians, the occasional student library assistant who is studying to become a library technician, and faculty librarians with master's degrees. For clarity, this paper will refer to those who do not have a master's degree relating to library and information studies as library technicians. Apart from the one excluded manager (the university librarian), employees are represented through two distinct bargaining units, a staff union and a faculty association. Faculty coordinate their work, including hiring, with the inclusion of the university librarian on the selection committee, whereas hiring for library technicians is directed by the hiring manager, in this case the university librarian. Librarians and technicians work together on discrete projects and activities, but technicians report directly to the university librarian. These employees do not have agreement language that specifically attends to notions of collegiality like that of faculty.

Hiring technicians had been an inconsistent process that lacked transparency, often falling under the direction of the university librarian with occasional (and sometimes last-minute) participation from library technician supervisors. Librarians did not recall being specifically invited into the process. With turnover in human resources and in the library, there was a great deal of ambiguity about the hiring process. This prompted the new university librarian to question the process and recommend a transparent and more collaborative endeavor.

The collaborative hiring approach and the method of inquiry used in this paper enabled this group to see greater connections between our various work responsibilities. A common theme in our reflections is that this process created a shared direction in selecting who works with us. As Cole and Mross (2022) have noted in their work on inclusive hiring practices, it is essential for a hiring committee to "take stock of the members' identities and positionalities," as this informs their views (p. 511). Given our own varied perspectives as both hiring committee members and the authors of this

paper—each with quite different lives and roles within the library—we believe it is essential to begin with our positionality statements:

G: I am a descendant of European settlers of multiple Western and Northern European ancestries. I identify as an able-bodied neurodiverse cis-gender male father and stepfather. Educated as a Library Technician, I've worked thirty years in libraries, predominantly in Technical Services and currently as a Library Systems Analyst.

D: I identify as an able-bodied cis-gender female of European heritage and acknowledge the privilege that I have and strive to be aware of my biases and not make assumptions based on previous experiences. I am a supervisor who has worked as a Library Technician for 14 years in an academic library in circulation services.

A: I am a settler of Punjabi descent; a cis-gendered, able-bodied and racialized woman. Professionally, I am a librarian and faculty member at a predominantly white institution.

S: I am a white, able-bodied female of European descent. I have worked in libraries for five years but am a recent hire to this institution as a library technician supervisor. Before working in libraries, I taught learners of English both within Canada and internationally.

C: As the university librarian, I hold a particular position of power among the library team, and I also benefit from the privileges of being white, middle-class, and having an extensive educational background.

Together, we formed a hiring committee seeking to incorporate our varied experiences in libraries and bring these unique lenses to our writing. Despite the challenge of sharing our personal thoughts in the workplace as part of a writing project, the activity introduced a new way for people with various roles to slow down and consider their relationships to one another and to the hiring process.

Literature Review

Scholarship in the library field is rich with publications focused on librarians. However, the same cannot be said for other library workers who do not bear this designation. In a recent article that considers issues of library workplace morale, Glusker et al. (2022) pointed out that there has been little focus on the experience of staff. This is emblematic of a general absence of literature that considers library workplaces in the context of library technicians. Often, the term "library staff" collapses library workers into a single and generalized group of people working in libraries or, in other cases, references librarians who have a library-related master's-level education. Both approaches fail to acknowledge the hierarchical organization of most library work environments. These practices contribute to making library technicians and other library workers invisible in the literature, despite their prevalence in libraries (Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO, 2021; Bradley-Ridout & Epworth, 2020; Ingles et al., 2006; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021).

Despite often making up the majority of a library's workforce, library technician staff are given limited opportunity to provide their perspectives on how they are recruited and retained. This is also true for academic libraries. There is little literature concerning non-academic staff in post-secondary institutions (Avenali et al., 2023; Reimer, 2004; Smith et al., 2021). Library-specific literature continues to focus on the circumstances of librarians. This is likely a reflection of who has the power and capacity to write and research such matters. Academic librarians, for example, consider research integral to their practice (Sorensen & DeLong, 2016). While the workplace expectations for other kinds of library employees may differ, there is a general lack of attention to library technician representation and training needs for libraries trying to diversify the field.

Despite the lack of published material centering library technicians, it is possible to draw on scholarship that attends to inclusion, diversity, and equity matters more generally. Cunningham et al. (2019) considered how the ACRL Guidelines for Recruiting Academic Librarians presents a way "in" to more inclusive hiring practices but also points out that little is known on "how academic libraries conduct recruitment and hiring and which, if any, of these guidelines are actually in use" (p. 13). Further, they argued that these guidelines may have limited value given that library search committees are not trained on effective hiring. This reality, combined with overwhelming silence on hiring practices for other library workers, indicates that there is a limit to the field's ability to openly confront and address the social and political conditions that may be informing workplaces and workers. The importance of exploring these conditions is evident in work like that of Litwin (2009), who looked at deprofessionalization and the transfer of duties from librarians to support staff for the purposes of advancing a business framework and gaining managerial control over the workplace. By considering the underlying reasons for structuring library workplaces in particular ways, Litwin (2009) demonstrated how social struggles, including the quest for improving social status of librarianship, translate into material workplace issues.

Hiring new employees presents an opportunity for organizations to consider how their practices and power structures shape employee morale as well as perpetuate various "-isms" including racism, ableism, and colonialism. Interviewing a range of academic library staff, Glusker et al. (2022) applied grounded theory to reveal the often-detrimental impacts that inequitable library practices can have on staff morale. They suggested that "respect and equity for all staff regardless of position or organizational level" (p. 177) can, and should be, incorporated into the recruitment stage. Brooke et al. (2015) advised that library leaders must critically examine their recruitment, hiring, and promotion policies to ferret out unintentional bias, discrimination, and other barriers that negatively impact racialized workers. These authors underscored the importance of such work in that without it, libraries fail to address differences that also negatively impact the people they set out to serve. Further, there is no published evidence that the systems that enable the reproduction of whiteness, for example, are any different for library technicians than for librarians. As Cunningham et al. (2019) asserted, addressing problematic power relations in libraries requires an "ongoing effort to change the culture" (p. 18). This includes hiring. The responsibility in addressing this rests with privileged (and white) library workers who must endeavor to create more inclusive workplaces (Galvan, 2015).

With a focus on our relationships and respect for one another, this paper contributes to library scholarship in several meaningful ways. By collaboratively writing this paper, library technicians and librarians create a space to reflect on hiring practices through varied perspectives. Recognizing that library technicians do not have the same opportunity to perform scholarship, the university librarian provided space for the library technician members of this group to write as part of project work. However, this act, not enshrined in collective agreement language or institutional policies and practices, points to the ongoing power structures and the precarity in its disruption. Taken together, our collaborative research provides a constructive example of how inclusion in library recruitment and hiring can be structured. This work also adds dimension to a narrow body of literature that considers the role of library technicians in libraries.

Methodology

Following a positive outcome in hiring two new library technicians, the committee engaged in conversations about the changed process and feedback we received from candidates. Despite being in different places in our own heart-work, all five of us began this journey interested in unsettling colonial thinking and practices when we approached hiring. Given the lack of scholarship on hiring library technicians in libraries, the group expressed interest in sharing their experiences with the broader library community. There was a desire to incorporate each of our perspectives, honouring our different identities, and inviting greater insight into the power relations that inform hiring processes. Throughout the hiring, we were committed to being inclusive, respectful, and open with candidates and with one another. While we had discussed the possibility of sharing our experiences with a wider audience, it was only once we had completed the hiring that we focused on the possibility of writing. We then met to discuss how this might happen and determine if everyone involved in hiring was interested. Writing for publication was not a shared experience. However, after a meeting with careful and supportive discussion, everyone was open to giving writing a try. We sought a collaborative writing method that would reflect all voices in the group. Having engaged with métissage in a past project, the university librarian offered it as a way to include varied perspectives. Derived from the Latin term mixtus, métissage is an autoethnographic method of inquiry that enables us to consider our identity and our "self" through a relational process by "mixing" texts and dialogue together to produce new insights (Cox et al., 2017). Post-colonial scholars like Lionnet (1989) and Hasebe-Ludt et al. (2009) have argued that although it is not possible to escape from the "processes of cultural encoding" (Lionnet, 1989, p. 248) that we all experience as members of the social world, métissage offers a way of reformulating meaning by privileging the unique experiences of the individual to reveal the "subjective nature of the world we live in" (Cox et al., 2017, p. 43). These multiple "life-writings" (Cox et al., 2017) are woven together to generate new meaning about the world without dismissing the "relational character of our lives, experiences, and memories" (Chambers et al., 2008; Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2009, p. 200). This process results in the creation of new texts that simultaneously embody new insights while honouring the distinct identities of its authors. Métissage enabled us to engage in the reflective writing process in a way that honoured these commitments and created a space to challenge and, potentially, denaturalize the power dynamics that inform our hierarchically structured workplace.

The process began with meetings where we discussed what we hoped to accomplish through a writing project and committed to capturing our initial thoughts about the hiring process. We then journaled about our experiences with the hiring process throughout the construction of this paper. We navigated the sharing of experiences by posting our journals to a collaborative writing tool, discussed our reflections in regular meetings, and invited verbal and written comments between gatherings. Similar to the hiring process itself, this activity was slow to play out. We collectively acknowledged the demands we faced in our work and committed to making space for people to write and think while sharing responsibilities and understanding in trying to meet contribution deadlines that we set for ourselves. Later, we drew on these thoughts as a way of understanding our relationship with the hiring process and our evolving perspectives around inclusion. We worked on several iterations of a document, inserting elements of our previous journaling as a way of maintaining a focus on our unique perspectives. We collaborated on reviewing drafts but were careful to preserve the voice of our colleagues' contributions throughout the process. Throughout this work, statements expressed by individuals are preceded by the author's initials, while the broader use of 'we' is intended to express ideas that the authors shared collectively.

As the group reviewed and shared their personal findings and journaling in one of our meetings, we agreed that three themes had emerged: rejecting, revising, and reclaiming. Each one of us had rejected existing processes, each referencing different problematic observations or experiences, including lack of transparency and insufficient input from library employees. Some of us were interested in becoming part of the process as long-term and experienced employees. Through our regular meetings to discuss our writing and ideas, we also discovered that we were all deeply committed to moving forward and contributing our unique experiences and voices to create revisions in which we could all feel invested. Our work together also revealed that through the rejecting and revising processes, we had moved into an empowered state of interaction where the entire group felt that they had reclaimed some power in the staff hiring process. Despite the uneasy space this power occupies, as the systems of authority and control that organize library technician hirings are unchanged within the broader organization, it serves as an important example of how resistance is complex and woven into the granular realities of everyday practice.

Theme 1: Rejecting

The need to hire two technicians presented an opportunity to bring a broader cross-section of library workers together in a way that acknowledges the overlapping nature of work and challenges the siloed hiring processes for different kinds of employees. New to the institution and coming from her own faculty-led recruitment experiences, the university librarian initiated the rejection process when she chose to form a mixed committee of faculty and staff. Doing so provided the space for the committee to express its further rejection of the existing hiring processes. This involved leveraging the group's collective discussion to negotiate the entire process. Indeed, one of the most troubling aspects of the previous hiring practice was its lack of transparency with the entire department. It is important to acknowledge that the opportunity to effect change was dependent on questioning existing procedures and inviting others to engage in an

inquiry around local hiring practices. As volunteers in a new process, the committee members took some time to gain momentum in their questioning, but when it became clear that there was space to be heard, members grew increasingly confident in questioning past practice.

A more inclusive hiring process that involves greater perspectives and contributions from existing employees can serve as a crucial step in diversifying the homogenous field of library work. Indeed, Shah and Fife (2023) asserted that "there is no single way to fix the barriers within the hiring process, [and that] we must look at every single step from the conception of a position, to hiring, onboarding, and induction" (p. 56). The lack of documentation on specific hiring practices for staff generated a space for the university librarian to question and lead the development of processes that could be more inclusive.

C: Being new to my role and new to the organization, my initial efforts in leading the hiring process felt awkward. I was reluctant to dictate how the process should unfold.

The absence of transparent and well-documented processes fueled an unease in working with the existing/inherited process. This was further informed by the university librarian's previous activism and scholarship relating to labour (Neigel, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020). Using this discomfort as catalyst for change, the university librarian reached out to staff supervisors, curious about past practice and process. This inquiry revealed that the composition of hiring committees for library technicians had been unclear, but there was a keen interest in understanding and uplifting hiring in ways that would benefit the entire organization.

G: Re-examining and radically changing the goals of the hiring process (by all involved) and the hiring experience of the applicants for library technician positions is possible, necessary, and overdue. This will result in both a decrease in harm and an increase in benefits for the candidates, the library, coworkers, and the communities served by the library.

In addition to limited participation from library staff, librarians had also been typically excluded from staff hiring processes. This lack of internal representation could easily perpetuate a lack of understanding between the work of the library technicians and librarians within the unit. Even more troubling is the potential for personal bias from committee members to inform the entire hiring process, which necessitated an examination of how committees were formed.

C: I learned that past hirings were often only performed by a couple of people. I considered our committee of five to be a strength of varied perspectives and contend that, done thoughtfully, this helped to ensure that candidates had a positive interview experience. The critical element was an understanding that we were all there to provide the best experience possible to candidates.

Once the decision was made to modify the hiring process, the university librarian and two library technician supervisors discussed the vacancies and later brought in the

library systems analyst, who has a long history of service to the organization. These conversations were exploratory and focused on how things had been done previously, including who was involved, how choices were made, and how information was shared. Together, this group began navigating a new way forward.

Hiring continues to rely on persistent power structures within the organization, and the process continues to rely on the willingness of the university librarian to structure meetings and invite participation rather than having this be a formalized part of the process.

C: I realized that we would also benefit from a member of the faculty team, and of particular interest was representation from someone who had recently been hired and had performed scholarship on her own hiring experience as a racialized librarian. She graciously agreed to participate in the remainder of the selection process.

This new, shared space became a site for possible tension, and it is important to note that multiple structural powers continued to exist throughout the process and informed how the committee engaged in its work.

A: As a racialized librarian, and the only racialized committee member, I was keenly aware that critiquing the problematic whiteness of librarianship that leads to inequitable library practices may not be supported and that there was a potential risk in voicing suggestions. I questioned if my perspective would be shared—especially as a guest on this committee, as faculty representation is not required for library technician hiring—and if I could enact meaningful change during this process.

Indeed, this tension manifests in one committee member's reflection, and this "guest" status alludes to the problem that the hiring process had not been structurally changed to require such participation. Still, there was an energy and an interest in our unit to actively reject past practices. Gaps in institutional documentation and process created opportunities to create solutions locally, which offered a way to disrupt past practice. Despite the discomfort and vulnerability we experienced doing this work, there was a strong desire to try.

D: I felt empowered to challenge the existing hiring processes that I had participated in many times but had not been given the opportunity to question.

Creating an environment to question existing practices and find "ways in" to identify, evaluate, and cast aside processes began within the library and was informed by our local sense of urgency in improving the quality of the selection process. This work energized and empowered us because it enabled us to take concrete steps in making hiring decisions that better align with our field's evolving expectations around diversity and inclusion (Brooke et al., 2015; Cole & Mross, 2022; Galvan, 2015; Shah & Fife, 2023). While structural and procedural constraints persist, there is power in resistance that opens possibilities for positive change.

Theme 2: Revising

Rejecting past practice gave way to revising our hiring processes. Collaborative change involves significant effort and a sustained commitment. Further, this work requires time. Collectively, our reflections frequently referenced time and collaboration as barriers to transparency, inclusion, and opportunity. Our writings reveal how existing processes left little space for discussion, deconstruction, and input that lead to us having to walk back our past practice to understand how we would develop ways forward.

G: The hiring process and the interview questions remained the same and weren't questioned or considered for revision for many years. When the process was reviewed, it seemed to be incremental fine tuning.

D: No training or preparatory information was provided to the staff, other than being provided with the resumes and cover letters ahead of time. … Information was provided on a need-to-know basis by either the human resource department or the manager, and the overall process felt opaque.

With input such as this from a variety of library employees who are fully included in hiring, we were able to better see how existing practices would require time and effort to address. At the time of this project, we realized that a key characteristic of the hiring process is how it needed to move at an intentionally decelerated pace. Anne Gillies, in conversation with Weak (2022), recommended that to make positive changes to recruitment processes and reduce biases, libraries must slow down—to "approach [hiring processes] more slowly and thoughtfully, and really pay attention" (p. 9). Adopting this, we saw it as thoughtful resistance to the hurried nature of hiring and urgency that characterizes white supremacy culture and makes it challenging to engage in considerate decision-making (Okun, 2023).

S: I like that we are slowly moving to a more conversational, human-centered approach to interviewing and hiring where there is sincere interest in getting to know each other and learning each other's stories.

As Shah and Fife (2023) have pointed out, "academic libraries work best for people who understand the unwritten rules of higher education" (p. 56), which privileges those fortunate enough to have gained such knowledge. Therefore, to provide an orientation to removing barriers in hiring, their top recommendation to those responsible for library hiring is to encourage hiring committees to "focus on the humanity of candidates" (p. 57). This requires hiring committees to bring their full selves into the hiring process. Care was given to forming the committee, crafting the job posting, revising, and reimagining the shortlisting criteria, developing meaningful and relevant interview questions, and adopting greater accessibility into the interview process.

S: We wanted to consider how we could break down these traditional barriers that existed in the hiring process that may have prevented more diverse candidates from being successful in the past, while at the same time ensuring we are identifying qualified, capable candidates.

In addition to changing discrete activities and processes, revising the hiring process called for making space for those who may not have regular access to power and information, which required us to ensure committee members had time to share input and access information. This required allowing the process to unfold at a pace that suited the entire committee.

C: Our initial meetings became exploratory – driven by questions like, "what do we want this person to do? How do we want them to be? What is important to the library?" rather than focus on specific job duties. We identified things like

- *Is curious/inquisitive*

- *Takes responsibility for their work*

- *Enjoys working with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives*

- *Communicates effectively in groups and individually*

- *Is a critical thinker*

- *Has a willingness to learn*

- *Is familiar with library trends and technology*

This reshaped the manner in which we developed our posting in that we used language that signaled our values as a workplace because we understood that many of the problems candidates had experienced in the past often related to communication and problem-solving abilities rather than knowledge or adeptness in using library-specific tools. We realized that we were looking for people who were willing to ask for support, offer ideas and input, and help us diversify our approaches to our work.

Adopting an inquisitive approach to the hiring process allowed for richer discussions about the framing of the job posting, how it mapped to the job description, and how it was possible to make the posting more inviting and inclusive as we considered how "systemic biases are part of the process and may manifest in things like outdated job descriptions" (Weak, 2022, p. 9). Historically, job postings were too specific, jargon-ridden, and filled with inherent, systemic assumptions that end up being biased toward either those with more experience in libraries or those from certain cultures or linguistic backgrounds. Revising the job postings to emphasize soft skills that could bring out compatibility with roles and expectations (e.g., curiosity, and responsibility) over specific previous experience and templated descriptions of skills was prioritized. This reflects our awareness that "crafting a job description for potential candidates can either attract a strong, diverse pool or alienate potential candidates" (Martin et al., 2020, p. 6). Further, "complex job descriptions and application processes impede the newly initiated" (Shah & Fife, 2023, p. 56), meaning that these important steps can pose barriers to library workers new to the field. From previous experience, the two supervisors noted that these postings did not always lead to the ideal candidate and the

candidate pools had been quite small. Additionally, postings were recycled with only small changes made to fit the specific role. The committee rejected this process and opted for a full review of the posting to address these barriers.

Considerations such as the location of the candidate, other education outside of the library technician diploma, and the number of years of library experience were all reviewed. To work towards a fairer process, we approached candidate selection as a collaborative process to ensure all members of the committee were heard. We agreed that candidates geographically further away should not be overlooked because of distance, recognizing that individuals may (and have) relocated for library technician positions. Additionally, we looked at other types of experience outside of libraries to identify candidates with comparable skills. This meant we had a large pool of candidates to interview for the two positions.

A: During shortlisting, I was struck by an established practice where applicants' addresses were noted in a shortlisting table—a piece of information that is commonly included in applicant documents but that can privilege applicants from certain geographical areas over others. The historical reasoning had been that applicants living nearby would experience fewer commuting issues; however, the reality is that using this information as a shortlisting criterion introduces socioeconomic information that is biased and unnecessary, especially given the high costs of living in the area the institution is situated in.

Historically, interviews began with a brief introduction of the members of the committee and a description of how the interview would be run before proceeding directly into questions. The committee reflected on how this approach did not give the candidate a chance to know us or our institution or really express why it might be appealing to the candidate to work with the team. To offer fuller context about our institution, this previous practice was rejected and the interview time extended so the committee could use the beginning of the interviews to introduce each member, their roles in the institution, and how long they had worked there. Additionally, the committee shared insight about the organization, the library's vision and culture, and the work being done by the library team.

S: I liked the idea of sharing what it's like to work at Capilano University Library by describing the team, the work, and the culture. We are trying to get the candidate excited about working with us while building realistic expectations.

Records suggested that interview questions in the library were usually recycled versions of questions from previous interviews. This committee rejected such a process and took the time to revise questions to better illuminate the candidates' qualities and be more inclusive. For example, drawing on research from Manhas and Wong (2022), who are members of our librarian team, a question related to probing an applicant's equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) fluency was edited and evolved to move from a question that presumed an applicant's whiteness to one that thoughtfully began with first sharing the library's own commitments to EDI and Truth and Reconciliation. Applicants were invited to share how they would see themselves engaging in these commitments in the

position and what areas of growth they see for themselves. The committee also worked through an ableist question about engaging in physical work and decided to remove the question altogether.

In addition to modernizing questions, the group also questioned the interview process. Broader institutional practice had been to withhold interview questions until actual interviews. This was a familiar experience for many on our library team that stems from a broader assumption that such secrecy prevents candidates from having an unfair advantage in interviews. Again, drawing on our own critiques relating to such practices, the committee was enthusiastic in providing candidates the questions 48 hours in advance of the interview. Later, informal feedback from all the interviewees, including those who were not hired, revealed that they were less anxious about the interview. Further, several expressed their surprise at the gesture, and all indicated that they had never been given such an opportunity. This suggests that advancements in hiring practices seen in literature speaking to librarian experience may not be translating into library technician experiences.

While the group conducted many more revisions, including considerations over the format of communications with candidates, room set-up, and offers for remote and in-person interviews, these steps illustrate some of the ways that seemingly granular changes can open new dialogue and possibilities for applicants to engage with the hiring process. Cole and Mross (2022) have noted that candidates commit significant resources to the application and interview process and that these efforts can be reciprocated by the hiring committee in offering a "fair and equitable" experience (p. 513). They also highlighted that everyone on a search committee has "the ability—and the responsibility—to speak up when they notice something problematic" (p. 513). As one of our committee members describes, these efforts are necessary to disrupt our assumptions and disrupt problematic practices.

G: We must be brave and take ownership and responsibility for meaningful change in the hiring process. If we don't, we support the status quo and continue to burden the process and fail our communities with unexamined biases and lack of imagination.

While much work remains for our small department, there is a strong commitment to continue the work of evaluating our practice, creating space for voice and critique, and making change.

Theme 3: Reclaiming

The significance of reclaiming is rooted in finding a path and an ability to overturn and reimagine practices that could easily be left to others within the institution. Resisting the urge to problem solve quickly by using existing processes and reusing past practice as a template is difficult. There is a powerful sense of urgency to fill unexpected vacancies. This hiring project and the self-reflection we applied following the actual hirings enabled a small but mighty team of people with different life experiences to find a way to reassert our own area's best interests within a larger organization.

This group worked to address weaknesses, biases, and unfounded assumptions bound into existing hiring processes. Our collaborative approach enabled us to address shortcomings that failed to consider or accommodate candidates as complex individuals who bring varied life experience to interviews and workplaces. We feel empowered to better confront our institutional systems because we have learned to navigate around certain barriers and can point to our project as evidence that change is possible, even within a larger organization that may not actively or constructively support such work.

Finding ways to resist and push back against dated or problematic hiring practices is possible if there is a genuine interest from leaders to invite employees into spaces where these practices are notably absent and create a comfortable space to share. This hiring journey allowed us to reclaim some control over how we invite new members to the unit and, hopefully, improve representation from under-represented groups in the process. This experience has given agency and a voice to a diverse group of library employees and, ultimately, has also brought the team closer because we have had time to work and to *think* together to solve problems in which we are all greatly invested.

Reflections & Recommendations

The opportunity to review the entire hiring process for library technicians at our institution has revealed areas of key importance. Four broad themes emerged from this process as recommendations to bring into future library technician hiring: forming an intentional search committee, carefully revising the recruitment process, offering an interview with increased accessibility, and slowing the pace of each stage to build in greater equity and inclusion while codifying these changes as best practices.

First, thoughtful consideration must be given to the composition of the search committee. Rather than defer to practices outlined by our university's human resource department, the library was able to center its needs as a unit in the hiring process, including the formation of the committee. In making these changes, committee members felt more confident in the hires because they were able to express their voices in the selection process. Including a librarian in the hiring process also helps to enhance the understanding of roles between staff and librarians that differs from other day-to-day operations where the groups may not have opportunities to discuss broader roles and functions. Further, as Cole and Mross (2022) recommended, search committees can "interrogate any assumptions that could negatively impact applicants whose experiences may not match those of the people on the committee" (p. 511). By establishing a diverse and representative selection committee to review and evaluate applicants, there is more possibility for confronting issues relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion because there is more lived experience at the table. Discussing the positionality of the committee members during this process can ensure that "their experiences and assumptions will not negatively impact candidates from other backgrounds" (Cole & Mross, 2022, p. 511), and careful attention must be paid to this. However, the hierarchical structure of libraries means that there must be an authentic interest in inclusion from management or there is risk of the process being performative. Those responsible for hiring may choose to ask not only who has been involved in

hiring, but who should be involved so that a range of perspectives and experiences are considered in the decision-making process.

Next, it is essential to revise the recruitment process, beginning with the job description, and to develop a clear and specific posting that outlines the qualifications, skills, and experience required for each position but also clearly invites alternative experience where possible to be more inclusive. This ensures that applicants are aware of the expectations and requirements of the job and that they can effectively evaluate their own suitability for the role but do not eliminate themselves unnecessarily. Consultation on the posting beyond the search committee enhances the process and ensures that positions make sense to the whole unit and avoids role development that may live in the mind of one person, like the manager. In the case of this project, the posting was shared among the search committee and librarians but not other library technicians, leaving space to consider this in the future. As Shah and Fife (2023) have noted, "working toward dismantling barriers through clear, concise, and honest job descriptions" is essential, but "ultimately, it's about power: how much are we willing to cede to guarantee the flourishing and thriving of these library workers?" (p. 58). The job description is the first impression a candidate will have of the institution and is a powerful tool to not only communicate commitments to inclusion but to also enact them.

Relatedly, shortlisting criteria should be developed in connection with the job posting. During the selection and interview processes, we were able to identify candidates that may not have had as much direct experience in library work, but they had a plethora of related experiences that identified them as great choices for the job. The use of a predetermined rubric can bring committee members into agreement on how candidates are being both shortlisted and then assessed in the interview. Cho et al. (2022) have suggested that further consideration be given for libraries to adopt the Rooney Rule, which originated in the National Football League and requires "ethnic-minority candidates" to be interviewed. They state that "as hiring committees are political by nature, such policies can be effective against unwritten rules that tend to otherwise permeate hiring processes" (p. 8). Building in this awareness before shortlisting is essential and can obstruct the idea of hiring for a "good fit".

For the interview, it is essential to build in any accessibility accommodations possible, without candidates having to first disclose a need. As mentioned, candidate feedback revealed their appreciation of this gesture and that it allowed them to feel less nervous during the interview. As Shah and Fife (2023) have described, "making the recruitment and hiring process more transparent and humane benefits us all" (p. 58). By clearly communicating all expectations and sharing the questions in advance, we found that all candidates interviewed performed well during the interview, which made the final selection more productive.

Finally, this work cannot be done without intentionally revising the process, which takes time. Where possible, we recommend slowing down and shaping the role to allow for greater equity and inclusion throughout the recruitment process and codifying all best practices and intentions into clear, required hiring procedures and training. Hiring is an opportunity to demonstrate to candidates that "their humanity matters, and that equity is

a priority. The policies and processes within our control are a great place to start" (Shah & Fife, 2023, p. 58). By slowing down, we were able to move towards a more candidate-centred process that showed we were genuinely interested in these potential future colleagues.

A: Being the only racialized member of the committee, as well as the youngest, and the only precariously employed person, made me acknowledge the potential risk in voicing suggestions in an all-white panel.

Anyone truly wanting to unpack the hiring processes of those most subjected to the hierarchical systems of power that exist in academic and non-academic libraries alike must always remain aware that consultation must first be grounded in providing space for people to express themselves *safely.*

Conclusion & Future Considerations

This paper demonstrates the value of critically examining and changing library technician hiring practices. By taking the time and making the effort necessary to effect change at all stages of the hiring process—rejecting existing practices, assumptions, and bias; thoughtfully revising processes; and reclaiming agency to drive change—we can advance hiring practices and hiring experiences for library technicians. The hiring process should function not as a gatekeeper, but a way in and a way forward.

S: I appreciated that members of the hiring committee were given agency to question the process and the power to inform change. Most importantly, we were able to centre the hiring process on the humanity of everyone involved, giving voices to both members of the committee and the candidates themselves. During this process, I was able to examine my own assumptions and biases through conversations with other members of the committee and then work with the group to do better.

As much as we accomplished, we were not working with an unlimited amount of time. Though each improvement we made seemed to reveal more necessary changes, the initial scope was limited. The time invested to advance the hiring process, procedure, and culture will continue to pay dividends. Yet, whatever cannot be accomplished within a reasonable time must be revisited post-hire and next hire to ensure the reimagined process continues to evolve, improve, and expand in scope. There is more to do.

Being hired is not a destination for the new employee but a beginning. As this process has created new expectations within our library culture, it would be disingenuous to reclaim a truly equitable and inclusive hiring process without continuing to interrogate existing systemic inequities, biased hierarchies, and historically entrenched power structures within employee spaces in libraries.

D: Creating a more humane and human hiring process for both the candidates and employees involved in the hiring process was a meaningful experience for me and I look forward to continuing to make improvements.

While this particular example reflects the experience of hiring library technicians, there are aspects of this work that may be translated to other categories of library workers. Continually seeking input from a wider web of individuals can make hiring processes more transparent and invite insights that may not otherwise be shared. The hiring process changes could model further necessary changes as a call to expand safe spaces to challenge systemic hierarchies and cultures within libraries, enabling technicians to be "viewed as equals" (Glusker et al., 2022). Doing so can maximize individual contributions, acknowledge skills and abilities, and provide opportunities for growth, retention, productivity, and happiness. Hierarchies that do not support this need to be examined. Ceding power and seeing other perspectives is a big ask of library leaders, but it should also be an expectation and could be supported at the grassroots level through professional education and evolved library workplaces and spaces. We must also strive to ingrain changes into policy, practice, power structures, and culture to protect them from being removed by the very hierarchies within which we work and live.

Radical change that goes beyond the performative requires believing it is possible, knowing it is necessary, and acting. We must do the heart-work and hard work to achieve change.

G: This sometimes-difficult work challenged me, centered me, and also brought a sense of vulnerability as the oldest and only cis-gender male on the committee. I was relieved to feel accepted, heard, and empowered. This committee created the agency to advance library technician hiring processes, uplifting the hiring experience, and moving the library forward.

An unexpected outcome of writing this paper is how the collaborative writing method increased our expectations and magnified our voices. Coming together not as scholars but as a unique group with common interests allowed us all to find our voices and shed light on hiring library technicians, a group not well represented in academic literature. Additionally, library technician staff had an opportunity not usually part of their work to engage in library scholarship. The space, time, and encouragement library technicians in the group were provided was one step towards empowering them and addressing historic power imbalances. This path is but one way. What this looks like will vary as it is contingent on the degrees of power and privilege that individuals hold in their workplaces.

C: Trying new approaches in hiring and trusting the work of the committee created an interesting space for different kinds of conversations that went beyond day-to-day operations. I learned so much about these members of our department including their perspectives about work and their approaches to collaboration. I continue to see these folks growing in confidence and developing a sustained interest in questioning practices and processes. This endeavor required me to avoid "taking over" and control the process, the decisions, and the dialogue. This conscious act as a leader enabled me to form strong, trusting working relationships and it continues to inform the way we all work together. This writing project further strengthened us as a team, and I hope that my staff feel empowered to incorporate more writing and reflection into their work. Despite the pressures of time, ambiguity, unhelpful policies, etc., we successfully hired people who

continue to embody the kind of service excellence and thoughtfulness that is valued by our organization.

Both the revised approaches to hiring and the project of writing about it involved significant commitment from participants, requiring extensive time and energy. However, the effort enabled us to reclaim some control over the hiring process so that we feel more empowered to exert our expertise and knowledge, particularly as it relates to creating more inclusive hiring practices.

A: There is much work to do in addressing the homogeneity of libraries and the humanity of those that work in them. Directing attention to more equitable hiring of technicians—who make up a significant portion of the humans in libraries—is an extremely worthwhile place to devote time and resources.

Changing the hiring process involves making the time to do the work right, enabling and supporting safe spaces for all voices, and giving or taking agency to empower people to resist and challenge bias, barriers, and hierarchies and structures of power in the hiring practices, within the library, in HR departments, and in the community—all actions that will positively impact candidates, library employees, library services, our institutions, and our communities.

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