

So You've Got a New Librarian: Helping First-year Librarians Thrive  
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Introduction:

After working in temporary positions for 18 months I accepted my first permanent job as a librarian. I moved to a new library, role, system, state, and culture. I had minimal training, which led to stress, confusion, and an unhealthy dose of imposter syndrome.

Looking for a way to better understand my new role, I joined Project SET, an initiative of the Massachusetts Library System (MLS). This research is a culmination of my time in SET, and my desire to help other librarians learn to navigate their new roles.

Research:

Research shows that significant time, effort, and resources are invested in the hiring process. Additionally, it can cost a company up to the equivalent of one year's salary when an employee does not work out(1). This, plus the number of retirements on the horizon, and the projected 9% increase in librarian positions by 2026(3) means that libraries without a strong onboarding process in place could face costly hiring disasters.

Survey:

Using the ARL SPEC Kit 344 as a guide, a Google Form was created and distributed electronically to a variety of libraries, librarians, and library staff. The survey inquired about employee retention, onboarding processes, and overall job satisfaction. Over a period of 11 days, 112 anonymous responses were received.

Key Findings:

A strong onboarding process is crucial to saving time, money, and stress (Knight, 2013).

- However, 68% of respondents reported that there were no onboarding activities used at their libraries
- This could lead to missed opportunities & loss of productivity (Knight, 2013)

Staff pairings can be pivotal to training and maintaining quality employees.

- New employees need to have someone to turn to with questions or concerns.
- Can be formal mentoring, peers, or the buddy system
- Think about pairing with other libraries/groups.
- Maintain a cohort of helpful, positive mentors

No matter how well prepared you are for a new employee, or to be a new employee, it can difficult. I urge you to listen to my respondents, and do everything with "kindness, grace, [and] respect."

## Key Takeaways

For supervisors, managers, and directors:

- Mentoring is key
- Position-appropriate training materials make a world of difference
- Professional development should be supported whenever possible
- Encourage your librarians to get involved

For new librarians:

- Build relationships, not walls
- Be inquisitive, the questions won't get answered if you don't ask them
- Self-evaluate, give yourself props
- Remember that no one is perfect, and tomorrow is a new day

## Library Training Guide:

A reflection meeting with an understanding supervisor led to the creation of an internal LibGuide that will be used to aid in the training of new staff at my library.

Feedback was solicited from library staff members and their affiliates; changes were made accordingly. The guide contains information and interactive content related to the college, the history of the libraries, standard operating procedures, administrative information, our CMS & ILS, a unique icon pack, and more.

## Next Steps:

Ultimately, the apex of my collaboration with the MLS will be the publication of a template version of this LibGuide that will be freely available for use by libraries and librarians around the Commonwealth and beyond.

Moving forward it is essential that I interview more individuals, that's where you come in.

- Do you feel that something like this would be beneficial to your library?
- What would you like to see added or removed?
- If this tool were available to be customized, would you use it?
- Would you spend the time to populate it with your library's information if the template was there?
- Who would you have build it, and why?

I would love to hear your feedback and/or suggestions. Please contact me at [www.lizteoli.com/contact](http://www.lizteoli.com/contact).