

Kalon Ridley  
LIS 707  
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### Interview Strategy

The person I plan to interview is Jenny Denen, the adult services Librarian at my Library branch. I chose her because she is the first person I complimented on her leadership style because of how she set tones and offers clear expectations. She also has graduated from a leadership initiative that Columbus Metro Library held and holds a position I would like in the future. I believe I am looking for a mix of information and inspiration. Usually, when I hear from veteran Librarians, I get inspired, so I think this interview will be the same. Also, I want to learn what skills I need to develop, how she describes her leadership style, why she got into/stays in Librarianship, and what she believes the future of the library is. Some questions I plan to ask are:

1. How do you describe your position and leadership style?
2. Do you feel that the misconception of libraries limits what the library can do?
3. What is your favorite part of your job? Least favorite?
4. Can you walk me through your process of solving problems?
5. What drew you into this career?
6. Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years?
7. How have libraries changed since the start of your career? Are there any changes that have excited you? What does the future of libraries look like?
8. What's the most important lesson you've learned since you started this career?
9. How have you overcome a situation you feel you've failed at?
10. What experiences have shaped how you do your job?

With questions like this I hope to pinpoint areas of development, how I can better lead from where I'm at and gain insight on what the future of the library looks like (so that I can prepare). Also, this could be an opportunity to gain more trust to take on some collection work, which would be invaluable.

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LIS 707  
5 October 2022  
Interview Write-Up

### I Have Much To Learn!

The purpose of my interview was to gain insight on a leadership style I admire, the future of librarianship, and to find out areas of professional development; and I achieved these goals. My questions can be broken into four categories: (1) gain an understanding of Jenny Denen's professional journey, (2) learn about her tendencies and feelings towards her role, (3) Librarianship, and (4) general advice.

Jenny's professional journey is one that was solidified by trying different things. She has two masters: one in English and one in LIS; she knew English was not for her after teaching a freshman English class, where she found out she hated teaching. Because of this experience, wanting to stay in academia, and a recommendation from her advisor, she got her MLIS to go into academic librarianship. There was still a lot of teaching, so she returned to public librarianship at the Columbus Metropolitan Library, a part time job she took right after getting her MLIS, and has been here since.

She stated that working with the public - specifically the customer service aspect- can be tough, but remembering the moments where your help may have helped someone achieve something is important to hold onto. I found that outside of introversion we shared parallels with our professional journey. I used to want to be an English teacher but found it was not for me, so I shifted to Public Librarianship as my career goal; but I am starting to gain interest in academic librarianship as well. So, I think I will take a similar approach to figuring out what I want to do by trying out various parts of librarianship.

Again, one of the main reasons I wanted to interview Jenny was because of her leadership style and how well she does her job. She describes her leadership style as Democratic, which I think points to her being aware that she is not a manager. She does not want to step on any toes when directing employees and is very strategic about how she presents feedback. Which after working with her for over a year is evident in her approach to odd situations and how she talks with library staff. She also points to her personal life as a strength for building empathy and directing how she approaches situations. To her it is important to use past experiences to direct interactions, to overcome mistakes, and try different things.

Jenny is very insightful, so it came as no surprise to hear that her favorite part of her job is working with the collection and analyzing data to bring out the best of it. She loves to analyze data to find out community trends and highlight parts of that collection. Which sounds intimidating and fun to me. The acts of highlighting displays, weeding books, and managing the collection all sound great to do; but effectively highlighting parts to help patrons feel heard and seen based on data is intimidating and sounds draining.

The things that surprised me were how uneasy she feels about random situations because of how well she manages them, but she said, “you have to be okay with being uncomfortable”. Which is sound advice, it is not good to be paralyzed by what-ifs or fear, sometimes you have to act and learn from your decisions.

Overall, this experience was amazing, I learned a lot and picked up areas I need to develop in. One thing I learned was that I need to try different avenues of librarianship, especially since I have been so gung-ho on public librarianship without giving any real thought into other walks. Also, I learned that I need to be proactive

in my development, jumping at opportunities where I may feel uncomfortable because they may be the things that push me into growth. I need to develop my leadership approach and be more confident in leading from my position. This does not mean I have to be in authority to lead, but I have to be clear with communication and take a more collaborative approach because it's okay to not know everything. The other big lessons I learned were to be accountable for my actions and this really solidified my choice to learn more about user experience.

The interview was a success, and I achieved the goals of my strategy and was able to articulate why I respect Jenny so much. Having an established relationship allowed some of the advice I received to be more tailored to my personality than if it was an outside source. Also, because of the interview I pushed myself to join a resource group, sign up for a leadership forum, and because of this experience I am going to choose an interview option for another class I'm taking.

### **Interview Discussion Board Post**

The purpose of my interview was to gain insight on a leadership style I admire, the future of librarianship, and to find out areas of professional development; and I achieved these goals. My questions can be broken into four categories: (1) gain an understanding of Jenny Denen's professional journey, (2) learn about her tendencies and feelings towards her role, (3) Librarianship, and (4) general advice.

Some of the key takeaways I got from it were that I need to try different avenues of librarianship, I need to be proactive in my development, it's okay to not know everything and I need to be accountable for my actions.

Jenny's professional journey is one that was solidified by trying different things. She has two masters: one in English and one in LIS; she knew English was not for her after teaching a freshman English class, where she found out she hated teaching. Because of this experience, wanting to stay in academia, and a recommendation from her advisor, she got her MLIS to go into academic librarianship. There was still a lot of teaching, so she returned to public librarianship at the Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML), a part time job she took right after getting her MLIS and has been here since.

Here are some of my favorite quotes with a little analysis:

"A good manager puts as much thought and effort into serving [their] staff as we do into serving our customers."

This is an amazing leadership approach especially for morale and growth. Working with the public library you get so many random requests that helping coworkers overcome weaknesses (for something you feel they should already know) can feel daunting, but it usually only comes up when they're asking for help so why not treat them like a customer that came in with a question? Also, at CML one of main pillars is customer first, so transitioning that language to staff makes them feel valued and supported with decisions they make.

"Don't be the manager you think you should be, be the manager you are.', which to me means to know your strengths and values and play to those

rather than try to live up to your image of what a manager is 'supposed' to be".

One of the main reasons I was so excited about working at CML was because I didn't have to be a manager anymore, it was the worst. I was not playing to my strengths or being true to myself; instead, I was trying to appease the owner by being the authoritarian which is not my style at all. As I'm learning more about leadership style the more, I credit that experience with building my empathy for people in charge and changing my leadership to a more transformational approach rather than servant.

"I've learned that it's ok to not know everything and to not always have the answer. Especially in a leadership position, I feel like I need to be able to answer every question and solve every problem. I'm afraid that I'll look incompetent or lose trust with the team if I can't. I'm learning more and more to be able to say 'I don't know, but I'll find out.' or 'I'm not sure, but let's figure it out together.' No one knows everything and no one expects you to know everything! I've gotten better at doing this as I've seen it modeled by leadership at every level. I still have this inward cringe when I can't answer a question right away, but I also understand that not knowing the answer doesn't make me look bad at my job, and no one else is thinking that either!"

What a lesson for aspiring librarians or knowledge managers! It is okay to not know everything, don't feel insecure about being human. Instead, learn how to find answers and learn to be okay explaining that you'll find out!

"I do think that the misconception of libraries limits what libraries can do in some ways. The people who use libraries regularly know about everything the library has to offer. It's the people who don't use the library that we really need to reach. Often, the people who don't use the library have no idea what we actually do. They see the library as an outdated place where people check out books. That's it. I can't tell you how many baffled looks I got when I told people I was in grad school to become a librarian ("You need a Masters degree to check out books??") Because of this perception, people don't think of the library when they're in need of things like social services, entertainment, educational opportunities, etc. They just don't equate these types of things with the library. Because of this, we can sometimes struggle

to get attendance at our programs or see low use of our resources, which can sometimes result in these things falling by the wayside. If people aren't attending a program, we're not going to be able to keep offering the program. A big part of the library's work is marketing and outreach. Making sure our communities know about everything we have to offer and connecting with new library users. If we want to be able to serve our communities well, we have to be able to build strong relationships with our communities and help them understand what we can do for them."

I think this answer speaks for itself! We are constantly battling a misconception about libraries so it's important for us to market our services, what we do, uphold standards, and help people no matter what. Which can be difficult when you get comments like " I thought librarians just sit here all day" or "nah, I don't need a card, I don't even read like that". No matter what you're working at a library because you know the value of the services offered so spread that enthusiasm.

Overall, this was an amazing experience for me, and I really want to dive into all the answers I got but these answers offer great advice and showed me that I have a lot to learn. We also talked about collections, changes in librarianship, overcoming failure, and Jenny's favorite/least favorite parts of her job. One aspect that has me intimidated is analyzing data to build a better collection- so I'm going to be intentional about overcoming this anxiety. Also, it was cool to see her process for solving issues and how she's okay with being uncomfortable even though she makes it look effortless. I typically remain calm in most situations but it's because I'm always unsure of what to do, but so is one of the people I look up to.