

DSG Part 8: Starting a Lab from the Ground, Up. Again

“Now, what?” turned into another job. I literally got a redo on my working life: another library was starting a mobile training program - guess where! This library system never had a mobile training lab, and had many ideas as to how it would work. I had practical experience in the libraries on the ground!

This time, I'd start with years of experience under my belt and ideas to implement *immediately*. It was a sea-change from what I started with all those years ago!

I'm getting ahead of myself now. I left this out of the last post as a nod to clarity; what I'm writing about here actually took place at the *same time* I was getting laid off. As I mentioned in the last post, I'm no saint and am not looking to portray myself as one - I could afford to be magnanimous to my successor because I had already put in a resume at another library, and had an inkling I could be a good fit there, professionally, at least.

If the new library didn't hire me, I was also slated to become a part-time librarian in the Lab - I'd keep my old job, minus the management part. I'd lose my benefits, too, but I essentially had a job no matter what happened. This put me in a very good position to find out who would succeed me and subsequently offer to train her. She did not have to work with me if she didn't want to, and after all, it's a strange position to be in, training your replacement. But, it worked for us, and I was glad to be able to do it. It was of utmost importance that the Training Lab be left in good hands!

I can't thank the library administrators enough for this. Without their support, the Lab might have folded during this particular budget cut. If they didn't take a chance on me venturing out to our member libraries to teach digital literacy, the whole Training Lab would never have reopened after the *last* budget cut. They put the library's reputation on me, trusting that I would deliver a timely service in an excellent manner, and they were not disappointed.

As mentioned in the last post, scuttlebutt started around August, and I had a current resume handy for one of my workshops, so I figured I'd investigate a building near my home. The sign said, “Nioga Library System,” so that appeared inviting. I walked in one morning and talked to the clerk at the front desk. She was nice, but provided a cool reception, as the building is literally the system offices, not an actual public library. She thought I came in to look for books, as people sometimes did.

After we cleared that hurdle, I asked if they were taking any resumes. She said, “No,” so I asked if they kept them on file for future reference. That answer was, “yes,” and so I left it at that. I wasn't certain what, exactly, I was doing and didn't want to make her mad.

A week or more later, I walked in again, said “Hello,” and asked about addressing a letter of introduction. Since the system didn't have any current job postings, I would offer a letter and my resume to be kept on file. She told me the details, I thanked her and left.

Now we are firmly into late September, and I finally stopped by the office with my packet. I talked to my bosses (both my middle manager and administrator) and both agreed that I should put my resume out and they would be references. I took my time with this process, because I was busy, and I was

scared. I did not want to lose my current job, but the writing was definitely on the wall by this time. It was a delicate situation, as I wanted to keep my bosses happy - we all know how that goes!

So, after I dropped off my resume and introductory letter, I would stop by the system office and see if the director was there, just so I could introduce myself in person. I stopped by about three to four times with no luck.

It was late October and I had just finished grocery shopping that unseasonably warm day, and was wearing shorts, a tee shirt, and flip flops. My hair was messy from the wind, but I stopped at the office on a whim.

Of course the *director was in. Great* - doesn't it just figure!

Embarrassed but determined, I spoke with him anyways, and since the libraries are quite close, geographically, he knew my current administrator. Since I had spoken to her, I said he could give her a call. Good thing I asked her earlier!

One thing led to another, leading to an interview, and a temporary job hiring under a grant. I was able to build another training center, this time 100% mobile. We also benefited from my previous experience, as we were able to get things up and running quickly and efficiently. The ideas from my previous job were implemented immediately.

This is where my experience in the "digital sandwich" really comes out. Thanks for sticking with me this long. Let's get started where the rubber meets the road and dig into this topic!