

New EDC [Earll Development Community] for Early Career Librarian

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EARLL [Early career Academic & Research Librarians in London] is a professional network based in and around London, that aims to support ECLs (Early Career Librarians) in their ongoing development within the sector. Free membership is open to any library and Information professional that consider themselves as an ECL. This could mean an individual that is within the first five years of their library career, or the first five years of library work since graduating with a library qualification. Alternatively, we are open to those who

may have been working in libraries for a while, but are thinking about changing division or are looking to move into a different type of library environment.

EARLL historically has offered various events, webinars and newsletters full of resources and opportunities, which provide CPD opportunities to our members. Our events have tended to focus on providing insight into roles that ECLs may aim to apply for, providing tips and advice about career progression from experienced Information Professionals, and networking opportunities. Previous events have ranged from Career Pathways webinars to social get-togethers and networking evenings for new members.

This year, EARLL have gone one step further. We have created the EDC (EARLL Development Community) network. This contains **three main strands** of opportunity, that we hope would allow our members to take control of their professional development: Practice Interviews, Job Shadowing, and Events. We have kick-started the EDC by advertising for the mock interview scheme. Having now recruited a body of hugely experienced interview panellists from a range of library backgrounds, and holding various managerial, supervisory or leadership posts, we have now opened the scheme to our members, and other ECLs across the UK.

The drive behind the practice interviews is predominantly to address the collective need to attain interview experience at an ECL stage. Having all started out in the Library & Information sector with limited or no prior library or interview experience, the EARLL committee strongly believe in offering mock interviews to our members, as an attempt to encourage, inspire, and motivate ECLs to progress into their first professional posts. Commonly in academic libraries we are face to face with interviewees hoping to secure a post as a Library Assistant, and who may thrive in the role, providing they could pass the interview. Common hindrances in early career library interviews include not having a prior understanding of the types of questions that may occur, or the assessment measures and activities used. Additionally, without prior knowledge of how the panel will assess the interviewee's answers, marking schemes, and the initial vetting process, interviewees can encounter a barrier to progression at an early stage. Coupled with the strain and potential anxiety around the interview experience itself, being in an unfamiliar environment, in front of a highly experienced panel of managers, supervisors or Heads of Teams, leaves all too much room to miss out on valuable opportunities.



The EARLL team have decided to engineer mock interview scenarios by allowing ECLs to choose what role title they would like to interview for, (without prior need to apply for a post). We will then coordinate an interview panel consisting of two experienced interviewers based within that division and one other EARLL Committee member. Typical interview questions for these chosen posts will be agreed between panel members and conducted in a life-like interview, which will initially take place virtually, at a time and date convenient to interviewees and interviewers. Extensive feedback will then be provided to the ECL post interview, with reasons for theoretical acceptance or

rejection. Interviews will be structured in a way that represents many Academic library recruitment practices and will be a formal activity.

By pairing up ECLs with talented and experienced interview panellists, from **NHS**, Academic, Private and Museum backgrounds, the EARLL group aim to instigate a unique and invaluable, professional development opportunity for those looking to enter the Library and information sector. With diversity, equity, and inclusion in mind, the EARLL group have additionally committed to advertising the EDC directly to networks that have a focus on increasing the diversity of our sectoral workforce, including CILIP Bame network, @Dilon, Jisclists, and directly to Information schools across the UK, via tutors and Programme Leads.

We aim to disseminate knowledge of recruitment practices within the sector, and hope to increase the diversity of our workforce by advertising widely, and providing this pivotal insight and experience at an early stage. We seek to change the playing field in Academic library recruitment. Whilst much discussion is needed in the long run about how these recruitment practices should be changed, to encourage diversity within libraries and academic institutions in general, we hope that this attempt to assist ECLs seeking library jobs right now, will do justice. Whilst wider decisions are made at a senior institutional level, EARLL can provide an opportunity for ECLs to familiarise themselves with interviews for junior library posts.

Extensive feedback will allow for ECLs to reflect and learn from their time interviewing with an experienced selection of panellists. This is a great chance to network, learn and grow. We are hugely thankful to all volunteer interview panellists for opting to give up their time to guide and encourage the next generation of librarians. To all ECLs, good luck!

You can find out more about the EARLL (Early career Academic and Research Librarians in London) network by [visiting our website](#). EARLL are supported by UKSG and are the recipients of the [UKSG Innovation Award 2019](#).

These views are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the views of UKSG.



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