
Planning A Transatlantic Job Exchange

Donna Flake

From time to time accounts of librarian exchanges appear in the literature. Usually these accounts are very brief and the issue of *how* the exchange was arranged is barely mentioned. From March 1984 through August 1984 I participated in a job exchange with Oren Stone from the Wessex Medical Library at the University of Southampton, England. The actual exchange was preceded by a great amount of searching and planning. During my initial investigation of the possibility of a job exchange, I searched the literature for the advice of other librarians who had gone through the experience. I found the literature on this topic to be meager indeed. Hence, this article is intended to add to the literature by presenting an overview of the steps involved in planning a job exchange.

In June of 1982, I was returning home to North Carolina by train from a national library meeting in California. I met a British teacher who enthusiastically told me she was participating in a one-year job exchange with an American teacher from Chicago. At that time, I had been employed at the Health Sciences Library at East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C. for six years. During those years, I had been given increasingly greater levels of responsibility; however, I felt I needed a stimulus and a change. My husband and I were well settled into Greenville, our home town, and we did not want to leave permanently. Therefore, a temporary exchange in another country sounded like just the stimulus I needed. By participating in a job exchange, I could have all the benefits of changing jobs and living in another country and yet return home to my own house and job.

The first step was to discuss the idea of the exchange with my husband, a political science student at East Carolina University. After much discussion and consideration, he agreed to go.

Step two was securing the approval of Dr. Jo Ann Bell, director of our library. To my great delight she said it seemed like a good idea. She made several telephone calls to university administrators and, in a couple of days, told me that the

exchange was approved if a librarian with my same educational credentials exchanged with me.

The third step was to find an exchange partner. I poured through books such as *The World of Learning*, *Directory of Medical and Health Care Libraries in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland*, and several other reference books to pick out possible British libraries. I wrote to thirty-five British libraries. Although many of these librarians replied with kindness and encouragement for my far-reaching endeavors, none was personally able to participate in an exchange.

I also wrote to many British and American agencies for help and advice. Some of these included the British Library Board, the Library Association, the Bureau for International Library Staff Exchange in Aberystwyth, the Council for International Exchange of Scholars in Washington, D.C., the Medical Library Association's International Cooperation Committee, the Medical Research Council in London, the Council on International Educational Exchange in New York, the Association of College and Research Libraries in Chicago, the Medical Library Association in Chicago, and the ASLIB.

I found *Leads*, the journal published by the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association, to be particularly helpful. It contains articles on topics such as the Fulbright program, British Libraries, and perceptions of United States librarians on their visits to foreign libraries. This single journal contains a wealth of helpful information for librarians pondering a job exchange.

Several people suggested that I advertise in the *Library Association Record: Vacancies Supplement*. This was more fruitful than all the other efforts combined. I received responses from four librarians who wanted to investigate a job exchange. I decided to swap jobs with Oren Stone from the Wessex Medical Library at the University of Southampton. I based this difficult decision on the following factors: a) I wanted to be in a medical library; b) I felt I could relate better to a married librarian; c) I perceived Southampton to be an ideal location due to its closeness to London

Donna Flake is Head of Reference, Health Sciences Library, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834.

and to the Continent; and d) I preferred a southerly climate.

I received the first letter from Oren in May 1983, and we continued to correspond until he arrived in the U.S. in February 1984. Each of us wrote twelve letters during this period. There were almost countless issues to resolve in doing this exchange. My first concern was to determine whether Oren and I had the same educational credentials. I have a masters degree in library science, and he has a diploma of librarianship. After some initial confusion on my part (we do not have diplomas of librarianship in the U.S.), I discovered that our degrees were, in fact, equivalent. Additionally, Oren was concerned that my job as Head of Reference was on a much higher level than his work as a cataloger. This issue was resolved when my library director agreed to delegate my supervisory duties to other librarians in my department. This arrangement then allowed Oren to work as a non-supervisory reference librarian at the East Carolina University Health Sciences Library. It was planned that Oren would also spend time in all the other departments in the library—particularly Cataloging and Serials. As for me, I was to do some of Oren's cataloging in addition to some expanded duties.

I was faced with many decisions to make—both professional and domestic. For one thing, both of us agreed to keep our own salaries from our home libraries. By accepting this agreement, we obviated the need for work permits; we were simply sent on assignment to work in another location for six months. As for vacation, we further agreed to retain the vacation earned from our home libraries and to take the vacation days during this exchange. Coincidentally, we each had about thirty days' vacation.

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In order to enter and then remain in each other's country for the desired length of time, there were arrangements to be made with the American and British Embassies. I had to get a "Letter of Consent" from the British Consulate General in Atlanta, Georgia in order to stay in England for six months. To secure this letter I sent the Consulate General (a) a letter of endorsement from East Carolina University Medical School to support the exchange, (b) a letter of invitation from the head of the library at the University of Southampton, (c) my passport, and

(d) ten dollars. Oren had to get and exchange visitor visas for himself and his family. This involved getting an IAP-66 form which is a "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor" from East Carolina University.

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Another obstacle to the exchange was the necessary clearance for my husband to spend six months in England with me. At the outset of planning for the exchange, I assumed that my husband would need only a passport to stay with me during the six-month exchange. Ten months before we were due to fly to England, I decided that I needed to make official inquiries. I wrote to the U.S. Embassy in London and was told that a dependent husband can receive a three to six-month visitor's visa and this can be renewed only at the discretion of the immigration authorities in Britain. I certainly did not want my husband to be forced to leave me halfway through the exchange. To bypass this possible pitfall, my husband entered England as a full-time student and secured a work permit through the BUNAC (British Universities North America Club).

As for domestic arrangements, each of us agreed to live in the other's house while the owners continued to pay the respective house payments. Each visiting family paid for the water, utilities, and telephone charges accrued during the stay. We also agreed to swap automobiles for the duration of the exchange and for the owner of the automobile to pay the appropriate insurance. Then we arranged to put the names of our exchange partners on each other's automobile insurance policies. We even agreed that if minor breakdowns happened to the house or to the automobile, then the visiting family would pay for the repairs. However, if a repair expense was over \$100, then the owner of the house or automobile would pay the repair bills.

Needless to say, there were many other financial arrangements to make. I arranged for my monthly pay check to be deposited automatically into my bank account. I calculated the amount of money that should remain in the American account to cover my bills at home and then arranged for my bank to send the remainder to me in England. Once the check arrived, I had to take it to a Lloyds bank and convert the dollars to pounds. I also had to arrange for my monthly bills

to be mailed to my English address for the six-month period.

We left very specific written directions to cover the workings of such common things as the car, the appliances, bathroom fixtures, the sometimes leaky refrigerator, and the mail. We left numerous names and phone numbers of people the visiting family could call upon for advice, general help, and friendship. Without a doubt, both families found these contacts invaluable.

I have attempted to present an overview of the methodology that I used in carrying out this job exchange. If I can be of assistance to any librarians contemplating such a job exchange, please feel free to contact me.

References

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Stine, Diane. *A Librarian's Directory of Exchange Programs/-Study Tours/Funding Sources/and Job Opportunities Outside the United States* Chicago: American Library Association, 1982.

The World of Learning London: Europa Publications Limited, 1986.

Other Helpful Journal Titles

1. *Leads* (Published by the International Relations Roundtable of the American Library Association).
2. *The Footloose Librarian*.

Checklist of Steps in Planning A Job Exchange

1. Consult your spouse.
2. Secure approval of your supervisor.
3. Begin looking for possible locations.
4. Get a passport.
5. Write agencies which might be helpful.
6. Run an ad in the appropriate journal saying you are interested in a job exchange. (I wrote to *The Library Association Record: Vacancies Supplement*.)
7. Begin receiving responses from individuals interested in an exchange.
8. Correspond with individuals interested in an exchange.

9. Choose exchange partner.
10. Inform your supervisor of the credentials of your potential exchange partner. (In addition to securing approval for your exchange, you must secure the approval of your supervisor for the specific exchange partner.)
11. Secure approval from the proper Embassy or Consulate. (I received mine from the British Consulate General in Atlanta, GA.)
12. Decide on specific details concerning: house payments, water bills, utility bills, telephone bills, swapping cars, repairs, etc.
13. Arrange for automatic deposit of your paycheck in your bank. (Otherwise, it takes seven days to receive your check; and then seven more days to mail it to your bank for deposit. Your bills may become quite late.)
14. Arrange for your bank to send money to you regularly during the exchange.
15. Arrange for your mail to be sent to your new address during the exchange.
16. Leave specific written directions to cover "everything" for your exchange partner.

Helpful Organizations

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| American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Ill. 60611 | Fulbright Fellowship
United States - United
Kingdom Educational
Commission
6 Parker Street
London W1M 2HR
UK |
| ASLIB
3 Belgrave Square
London SW1X SPL
UK | A. Hillier, Co-ordinator
Bureau of International-
College of Librarianship-
Wales
Llanbadam Fawr
Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3AB
Wales
UK |
| Association of College and
Research Libraries
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Ill. 60611 | The Library Association
7 Ridgmount Street
London WC1E 7AE
UK |
| The British Consulate-
General
Suite 912
225 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303 | The Library Association
Record
The Library Association
7 Ridgmount Street
London WC1E 7AE
UK |
| The British Library
Bibliographic Services
Division
7 Rathbone Street
London W1P 2AL
UK | Medical Library Association
919 N. Michigan Avenue
Suite 3208
Chicago, Ill. 60611 |
| British Universities North
America Club (BUNAC)
58/60 Berners Street
London W1P 3AE
UK | Medical Research Council
National Institute for Medical
Research
Mill Hill
London NW7 1AA
UK |
| Council for International
Exchange of Scholars
Suite 300
Eleven Dupont Circle
Washington, D.C. 20036 | Council On International
Educational Exchange
205 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017 |