Librarians & Library Technicians: Alternative Careers

A guide for newcomers to British Columbia
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In BC, librarians plan, develop, organize and maintain library collections and provide programs, instructions and advisory services for users. Library technicians help users to access library resources, assist in describing new acquisitions, help users with interlibrary loans and online reference searches, as well processing the checkout and return of books and other library materials. Both librarians and library technicians may work in public, academic, school or special libraries. You may find that your international training and experience as a librarian or a library technician are not immediately accepted in B.C.

The skills you have acquired as a librarian (instructional, communication, research, organizational, computer and customer service skills) can be used in these alternative careers:
- Policy researchers, consultants and program officers
- Researchers
- Post-Secondary Teaching and Research Assistants

The skills you have acquired as a library technician (meticulous, well organized, interpersonal, strong communication and computer skills) can be used in these alternative careers:
- Library Clerks
- Records Management and Filing Clerks
- Administrative Clerks

Alternative Careers – Librarians:

Researchers

Researchers find, evaluate, and summarize information for banks, insurance firms, ad agencies, and many other types of companies.

Duties include:
- develop strategies to navigate the Internet, databases, publications, and other sources to find information
- evaluate sources and check facts
- find and organize information on markets, government regulations
- write summaries or analyses of their findings

Requirements:
- Bachelor’s degree is minimum requirement
- many positions also require a master’s degree, either in an area related to the organization’s work or in library or information studies

Skills
- Highly organized
- detail-oriented
- analytical and have strong writing skills in order to synthesize and summarize their findings

Source: Career Cruising database (Profile for “Researcher”)
http://www.vpl.ca/extDB/login.remoteDB?CareerCruising

Wages
- median hourly wage: $25.00+

Last updated: February 21, 2014
Policy Researchers and Program Officers including: Natural & Applied Science Policy Researchers (NOC 4161), Economists and Economic Policy Researchers, (NOC 4162), Business Development Officers and Marketing Researchers (NOC 4163), Social policy Researchers (NOC 4164), Health Policy Researchers (NOC 4165), and Education Policy Researchers (NOC 4166)

Researchers and program officers research, prepare reports, analyze information, give advice and manage programs in a variety of areas. They work for federal, provincial and municipal governments, educational institutions, research organizations, and consulting firms.

**Natural and applied science policy researchers** (e.g. energy policy analyst, environmental impact analyst) may work for environmental and conservation organizations.

**Economic policy researchers** may work for unions, banks and investment firms.

**Business development officers** (e.g. community economic development or industrial development officers) and **marketing researchers** may work for marketing firms and business associations.

**Social policy researchers** (e.g. social policy development officers, housing policy analyst) may work in hospitals, professional associations, non-government organizations and international organizations.

**Health policy researchers** (e.g. health care planner, health promotion program officer) may work for hospitals, community agencies, professional associations, non-governmental organizations and international organizations.

**Education policy researchers** may work for school boards, post-secondary institutions and research institutes.

Duties include:

- **Natural & Applied Sciences**: promote public awareness and education on issues such as the use of natural resources, the environment, and reprocessing and reduction of waste
- **Economics Policy**: develop models to analyze, explain and forecast economic behaviour, forecast production and consumption of specific products and services, prepare forecasts of income and expenditure, interest rates and exchange rates, analyze factors that determine economic growth, and labour force participation, employment, wages, and unemployment
- **Business Development**: develop policies and manage programs to promote industrial and commercial business investment; carry out social or economic surveys on local, regional or national areas to assess development potential and future trends
- **Marketing**: design market research questionnaires, do surveys and analyze data on the buying habits and preferences of wholesale or retail customers; develop social and economic profiles of urban and rural
- **Social Policy**: develop questionnaires, coordinate and conduct surveys, analyse data, and compile and interpret statistics on social issues and policy areas
- **Health Policy**: help develop government health policy by reviewing written material, doing interviews, collect and analyze statistics provided by private and public health-care institutions and produce reports, monitor and evaluate health-care programs
- **Education Policy**: do quantitative and qualitative research, produce reports, manage education or post-secondary education policies and programs, evaluate program curriculum and recommend improvements, do statistical analyses to determine the cost and effectiveness of education or post-secondary education policies and programs

**Requirements**:

- Bachelors (undergraduate) degree in a science or social sciences field related to the program area
- Masters degree may also be required
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**NOC 5111 & 5121**

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**Skills**
- analytical
- able to understand complex issues
- communication skills
- knowledge of current social, economic, and environmental issues

**Wages:**

- median hourly wages:
  - $28.72 (applied & natural sciences researchers)
  - $31.87 (economic researchers)
  - $27.69 (business development and marketing researchers)
  - $24.62 (social policy researchers)
  - $30.77 (health policy researchers)
  - $26.75 (education policy researchers)


**Post-Secondary Teaching and Research Assistants (NOC 4122)**

*Also look for this job title: college teaching assistant*

Post-secondary teaching and research assistants help university professors, community college teachers and other faculty members in teaching and research activities.

**Duties as a Teaching Assistant** include:
- organize reference materials, visual aids and other materials as required by university professors or college professors for lectures
- conduct seminars, discussion groups and laboratory sessions to supplement lectures, as well as help with the preparation and administration of exams, and grade examinations, term papers, assignments and laboratory reports

**Duties as a Research Assistant** include:
- do literature reviews, surveys, laboratory experiments and other research for use in scholarly publications
- compile research results and help professors with analysis of results and preparation of journal articles or papers

**Requirements:**
- usually currently enrolled in university or college program
- teaching assistants usually have a Bachelor’s degree and some previous teaching experience and experience in the course’s subject area

**Skills**
- strong organizational skills
- able to communicate ideas, motivate students and be creative
- able to work autonomously, as well as work in a team environment

**Wages**
- median hourly wage: $19.23

   Source: [http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4122](http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/4122)

**Additional alternative careers for librarians:**

You may wish to investigate these additional careers that require information management skills:

**Indexer:** devise suitable index terms to express the concepts in a text concisely and precisely and organize the index so that users can easily find what they are looking for while working to a very high standard of accuracy

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Last updated: February 21, 2014
Information architect: design the conceptual structure and logical organization of websites, intranets and online communities

Information Brokers (also known as Independent Information Professional): provide a variety of research services for clients which may include analysis, design, review, and strategy.

Competitive intelligence professional: work in the legal and ethical collection and analysis of information regarding the capabilities, vulnerabilities, and intentions of business competitors

Knowledge management specialist: capture knowledge, especially the knowledge which resides in the heads of people, and organize it in a way that makes it readily usable and shareable.

Usability specialist: make sure that products, especially technical ones, are easy to use

Sources: http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/careers/paths/jobtypes/privatesector
http://aiip.org/discover
http://www.scip.org/
http://indexers.ca/
http://www.indexers.org.uk/

Alternative Careers – Library Technicians:

Library Clerks (NOC 1451)

Also look for these job titles: library assistant, circulation clerk, periodicals clerk, serials clerk, acquisitions clerk, library page, shelving clerk, shelve

Library clerks issue and receive library materials, sort and shelve books, provide general library information to users and perform clerical duties

Duties include:
- issue and receive library books and other materials
- reshelve books and other library materials
- perform clerical duties such as manual and electronic filing, word processing and typing
- maintain journal subscriptions
- help library users in finding basic library materials and making interlibrary loans

Requirements
- completion of secondary school
- some specialized clerks positions may require prior library experience (e.g. acquisitions clerk, periodicals clerk)

Skills
- detail oriented
- clerical skills

Wages
- median hourly wage $20.11

Source: http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/1451

Records Management and Filing Clerks (NOC 1413)

Also look for these job titles: file clerk, records clerk, records management clerk, technical records clerk

Records management and filing clerks process, code, store and retrieve records and documents and apply retention and disposal schedules according to established policies and procedures. They file papers, records, documents and other material according to subject matter or other filing system.

Duties include:
- classify, code, cross-reference, log and store records
- maintain indexes for classification systems
- operate information retrieval systems and respond to requests for records
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- label files according to retention and disposal schedules
- prepare files for disposal
- compile statistics and reports on activities within records services
- sort material that is to be filed according to specific filing systems
- file material in drawers, cabinets and storage boxes
- find and remove materials from files when requested
- keep records of materials filed and removed

Requirements
- completion of secondary school
- records management clerks may require completion of a program in records management; they usually require prior experience as a filing clerk

Skills
- clerical ability
- detail-oriented
- numerical ability
- finger dexterity

Wages
- median hourly wage $18.00
Source: [http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/1413](http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/1413)

Administrative Clerks (NOC 1441)
Also look for these job titles: documentation clerk, office administration clerk
Administrative clerks organize, verify and process forms and documents, such as applications, licences, permits, contracts, registrations and requisitions. These clerks work in the private and public sectors in places such as banks, government offices, insurance companies, hospitals, colleges and universities.
Duties include:
- organize, verify and process applications, licences, permits, contracts, registrations, requisitions, and other forms and documents using computerized and manual processing systems
- approve and issue licences, permits, registration papers, reimbursements or other material
- prepare reports and presentations and provide information to staff and general public regarding company and program rules, services, regulations and procedures
- communicate with the public and answer inquiries
- help with the coordination of administrative procedures such as budget submissions, contracts administration and work schedules

Requirements
- completion of secondary school
- typing and computer skills
- may require business office training courses and work experience involving general office procedures, computing, filing and dealing with public

Skills
- strong organizational and time management skills
- good keyboarding and computer skills
- strong communication and interpersonal skills
- detail-oriented
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NOC 5111 & 5211

Wages
- median hourly wage $20.25
Source: [http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/1441](http://www.workbc.ca/Job-Seekers/Career-Profiles/1441)

Employment Outlook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career</th>
<th>Expected Annual Demand Growth Rate, 2010-2020</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate 2010</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate 2015</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration clerks</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library clerks</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post secondary teaching &amp; research assistants</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Researchers</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://www.workbc.ca/Navigator/occupations/](http://www.workbc.ca/Navigator/occupations/)

Administration Clerks:
Workers with good computer skills (i.e., knowledge of Windows, records management, etc.) will be in more demand in this occupational group. More opportunities will be available in urban areas, where centres of government and educational institutions tend to be located. While technological advances may reduce some clerical tasks, the public requires administrative clerks to support them in using automated administration services. In future years, less routine work and more decision-making and judgment may be required of individuals in this group.

Retraining
You may want to consider upgrading your skills to increase your employment options in this field. The following courses may improve your current skill set:

**Douglas College: English for Foreign-Trained Professionals**
Program will enhance your speaking, listening and reading skills, develop an understanding of idiomatic and workplace language in a professional setting, practice telephone techniques, workplace meeting skills and teamwork abilities, develop your writing skills for presentations, correspondence and reports, increase awareness of business culture and workplace etiquette and develop expertise and confidence in social situations at work [http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/english-second-language/foreign-trained-professionals.html](http://www.douglas.bc.ca/programs/english-second-language/foreign-trained-professionals.html)

**Vancouver Community College: English for Professional Advancement (EPA)**
This is a multi-level program for internationally educated professionals. The focus is on language and socio-cultural competencies required for success as a professional in the Canadian workplace. EPA is a flexible program that incorporates seminars in speaking and writing, with reading and listening offered as online courses. EPA may be taken full-time or part time [http://eslprograms.vcc.ca/pace/PACE.html#EnglishforAdvancement](http://eslprograms.vcc.ca/pace/PACE.html#EnglishforAdvancement)
You may also wish to browse workshops and courses announced through:
- BC Library Association, events & continuing education: https://www.bcla.bc.ca/page/events.aspx
- Special Libraries Association, Western Canada Chapter, Programs at: http://wcanada.sla.org/category/programs/
- University of Fraser Valley, Library & Information Technology Program, Continuing Studies at: https://www.ufv.ca/libtech/programs/continuing-studies/
- University of BC, School of Library, Archival & Information Studies: http://www.slais.ubc.ca/
- Libraries Branch, BC Ministry of Education, Events Calendar http://commons.bclibraries.ca/events/

**Searching for Jobs:**

**AdminJobs.ca**
http://www.adminjobs.ca/en
Administration positions in a variety of levels and experience

**BC Government Job Postings**
https://search.employment.gov.bc.ca/
British Columbia public services employment opportunities

**Federal Government of Canada Job Postings**
http://jobs-emplois.gc.ca/index-eng.htm

**LibraryJobs.ca: The Partnership Job Board** *(Network of provincial and territorial library associations)*
http://www.libraryjobs.ca/
Jobs from across Canada in the library and information sector

**UBC School of Library, Archival and Information**
http://blogs.ubc.ca/ischoolnews/
Employment and placement opportunities in libraries

**Indeed.ca**
http://www.indeed.ca

**Positions as library clerk (library assistant, library page, shelver)**
These positions may only be posted on a library’s website, not on larger job boards. Check the “careers” or “jobs” section of your local library’s website. Complete list of BC libraries’ websites available at: http://www.bclibraries.ca/home/

**Volunteering in the Field**
Volunteering in work related to libraries and information management can help you to explore a new career and learn more about the health care system in BC. You will meet new people and build a network of contacts that can lead to information on job openings and inside connections with potential employers. The following organizations accept volunteers in community and institutional settings.
Canadian Red Cross
http://www.redcross.ca/where-we-work/in-canada/british-columbia-and-yukon
see ‘Community Support Initiatives’

Go Volunteer
http://govolunteer.ca/
not-for-profit organizations across BC post volunteer positions

Vancouver Green Volunteer Opportunities
http://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/green-volunteer-opportunities.aspx
Links to a variety of environmental and green organizations who accept volunteers

VOLWEB.ca
http://volweb.ca/volweb/

Volunteering in Libraries
Many public libraries accept volunteers; check your local library’s website for further details, look for ‘Friends of the Library’ or ‘Volunteers’. Complete list of library websites available at: http://www.bclibraries.ca/home/ Some examples are:
- Friends, Vancouver Public Library, http://www.friendsofthevpl.ca
- Friends, West Vancouver Memorial Library, https://westvanlibrary.ca/friends-library
- Friends, North Vancouver District Public Library, http://www.nvdpl.ca/about/friends
- Friends, Richmond Public Library, http://www.yourlibrary.ca/content.cfm?lev1=134

Also, community based libraries, non-profit organizations, and social services resource centres often accept volunteers. Try searching for ‘volunteer’ and the type of organization or service that interests you. For example, search ‘volunteer’ ‘library’ ‘your city’ and ‘non-profit’, or ‘volunteer’ ‘your city’ and ‘resource centre’.

Volunteer in Public Institutions
Many public institutions accept volunteers; consider volunteering for your local school district, your local municipality, your local recreation/community centre.
- School Districts/Boards: complete list of school districts available at: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/Home.do, an example is:
  - Vancouver School Board, http://www.vsb.bc.ca/apply-volunteer
- Municipalities: complete list of BC cities and towns available at: http://www.ubcm.ca/EN/main/about/ubcm-members/municipalities.html examples are:
  - City of Richmond, https://icanhelp.richmond.ca/custom/501/
- Recreation/Community Centres: check your local municipality’s website for links to recreation and community centres. Examples are:
Helpful Resources

Association of Administrative Assistants
http://www.aaa.ca/

BC Library Association (BCLA)
http://www.bcla.bc.ca/
provincial library association includes librarians, library personnel, library trustees, and other interested individuals working in corporate, government, school, and academic libraries, publishers and library supply companies.

Canadian Library Association (CLA)
http://www.cla.ca/
national library association includes librarians, library technicians, and the organizations that employ them.

Library Technicians and Assistants Section (LTAS) of BC Library Association
http://www.bcla.bc.ca/ltas/

Special Libraries Association - Western Canada Chapter (SLAWCC)
http://wcanada.sla.org/
Western Canada chapter of international organization, includes information on networking and educational opportunities.

Resume and cover letter help:

Networking and accessing the hidden job market:

Getting Canadian work experience:

Transferable Skills:

This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada with support from the Province of British Columbia