



How I learned to  
stop worrying and

# LOVE THE PROCESS

James Wilson

**Y**ou've just got your new LIS qualifications – now what? Recent graduate **JAMES WILSON** outlines how he networked and researched his way to his current position as a Graduate Library Officer at a university library.

Looking for work is hard. You hear stories of people who find work on their first application, but for most of us that is never the case. I had been lucky in the past. I would transition easily from one role to another. That was until I was made redundant in February 2016, when the retail chain I worked for closed its operations. It took me five

months to find work but I have never been happier than in the workplace where I am now. I had just completed my undergraduate degree and initially thought the timing had worked out well. Even though I was sad to be finishing in a role I had loved for seven years, I was excited about the prospect of starting anew. I applied for jobs – a lot of jobs. I sent out as many applications as possible, thinking that the more I sent out, the more likely I was to find work. This, however, was not an efficient method.

I put a lot of time and effort into networking. I thought about the types of roles I would enjoy working in and others I would like to know more about. I joined a professional association and attended industry events to immerse myself in the company of other professionals. There I met great people who were willing to give up some of their time to have a coffee and a chat. I used LinkedIn to see the types of roles they had worked in so that, when we met, I had questions prepared.

At first I felt intimidated when speaking with these people. I didn't want to come across as someone desperately seeking a job – which is exactly what I was. But once I started talking with people, I realised that most of them had been in a similar position at some point in their careers too. The ideas that kept recurring in these conversations were to network, tailor your application and do your research. It's remarkable how a short discussion and a different perspective can really make a difference.


By this stage, I had been out of work for about four months. I felt I was just going through the motions with my applications and I needed to change my tactics. When I sent out applications I wasn't tailoring them as well as I could have. I would cut and paste ideas from previous applications and try to make them fit together. I took on board what I had learned through networking and, with a fresh viewpoint, I began again to look for a new role.

That role finally took form as a Graduate Library Officer at the University of South Australia. They had been at the top of my preferred employers list for a while; I obtained my degree there and I loved the organisation. I meticulously read through the position description and the job advertisement. I took notes and found out as much information as I could about the university library and the role. I spent a long time preparing my answer to the selection criteria and I probably spent almost two weeks just on this one application.

The difference between this job and others I had applied for was that this was the job I wanted. The more I learned about the role, the more excited I was about it. I thought that it fitted well with my work history and where I wanted to take my career. This meant that I put more

effort into writing the application, and I started to enjoy the process. I like to think that the time I put in to research and preparation made my resume stand out and allowed me to answer interview questions more confidently.

So I'm new to libraries and I have been in this role for only five months, but already I feel that I am home. I am not sure why it took me this long to discover this, but I guess sometimes we take the long way round (for me that was 20 years in retail). I feel very fortunate in the opportunity I now have at the University of South Australia and I have already met many incredible, passionate people through my studies and work-team rotations.

Looking for work is hard but you will find it enjoyable when you are passionate about the role you are applying for. Make that apparent to prospective employers. If you are like me and you are looking to change career, then always put value on your other experiences; they are full of transferable skills. And remember that there are people out there who will spend time to have a coffee and a chat with you, including me. 

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