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Congratulations! You've Landed an Interview: What Do Hiring Committees Really Want?

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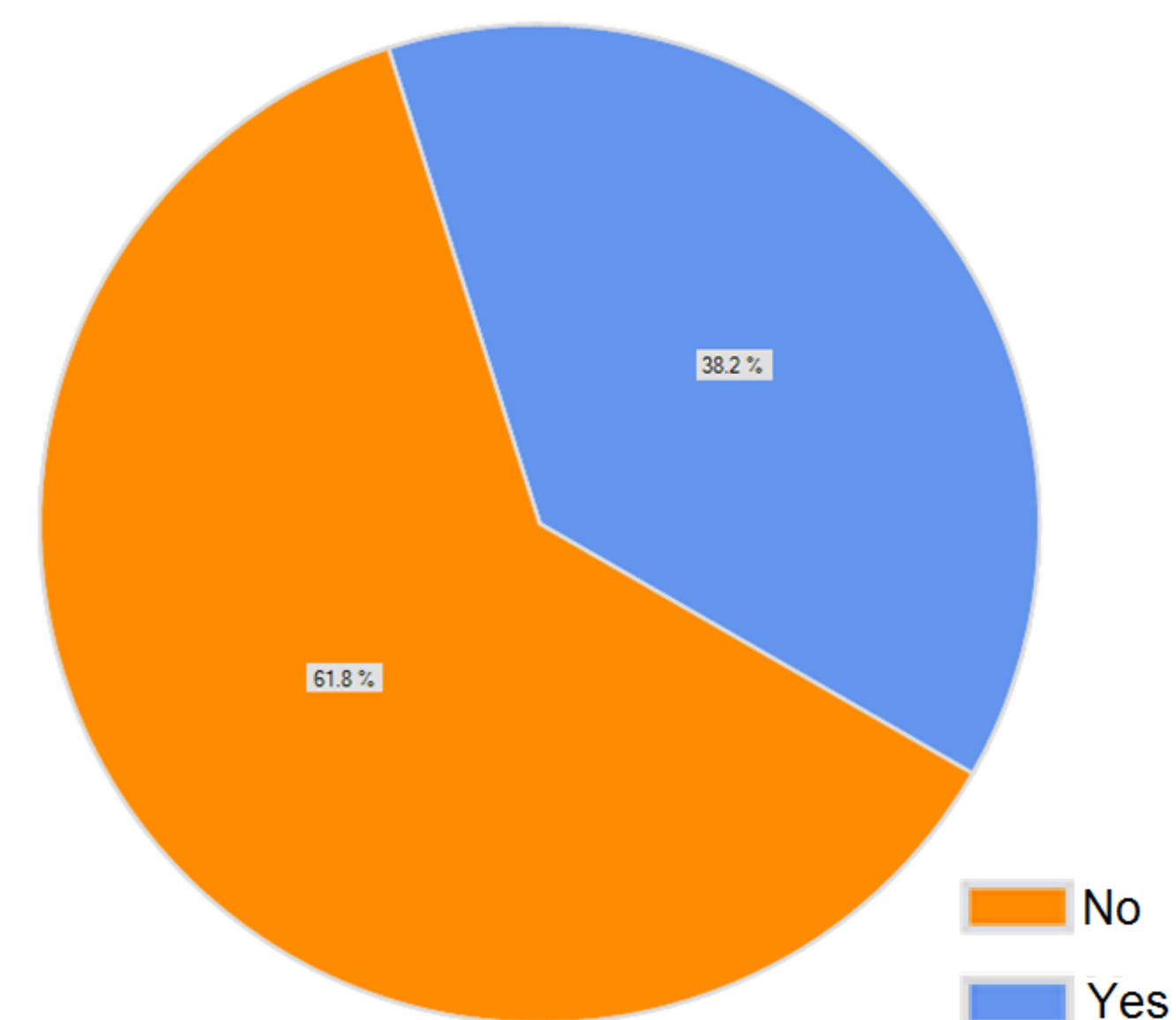
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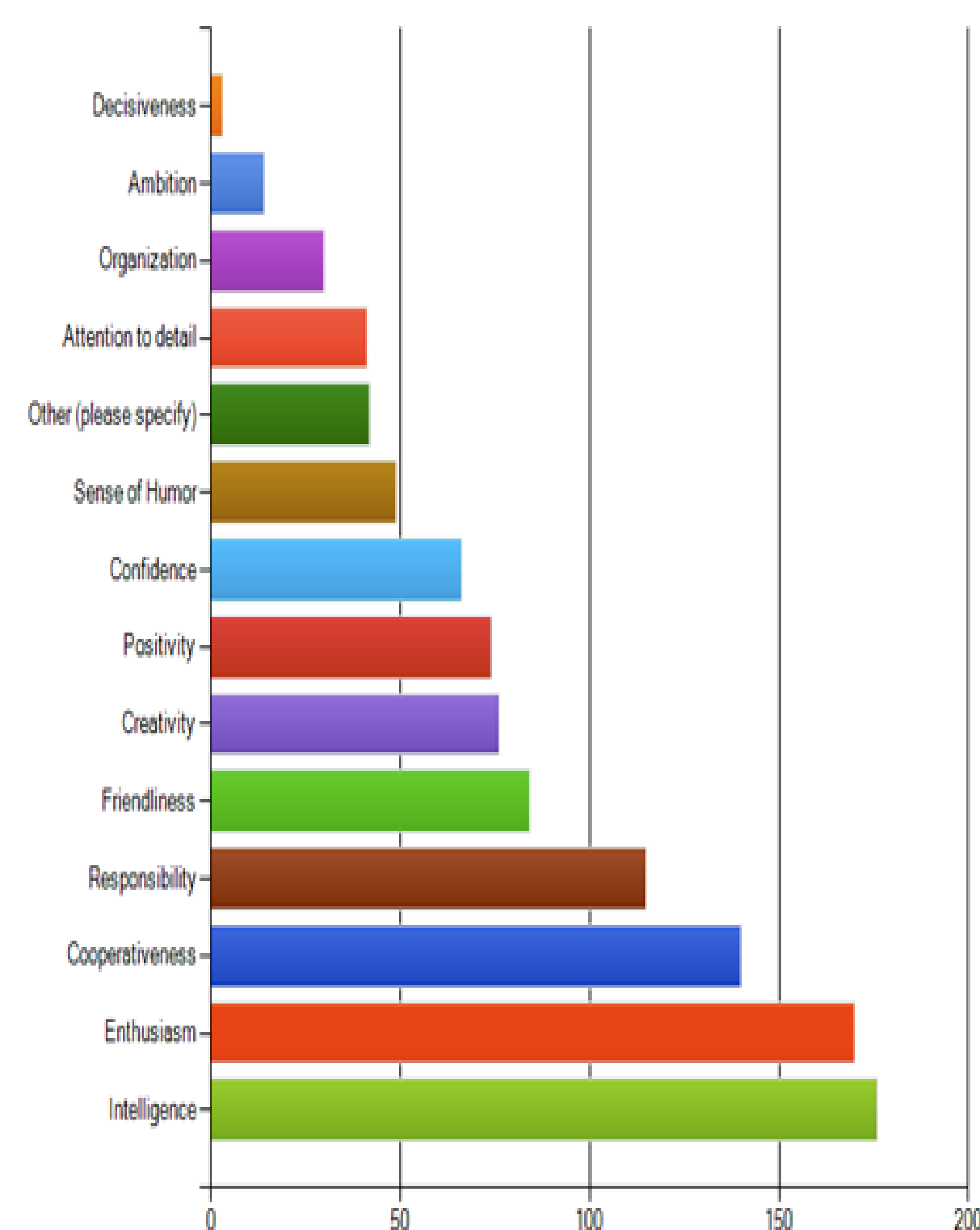
Nicole Spoor, Hampton University & Megan Hodge, Chesterfield County Public Library

Are you automatically out of the running if you live far away?



- “Applicants who wish to pay for their own travel are welcome, but few really do that.”
- “If we have a lot of good local candidates, it does tend to raise the bar for candidates whose long-distance travel expenses we would have to cover.”

What is the most important trait for an ideal entry-level librarian to have?



What questions should you be asking—but aren't?

- “What do you not like here?”
- “I wish candidates would ask more questions about the classroom environment - class sizes, teaching styles and philosophies. Applicants are too focused on the library, and not enough on why our institution has a library.”
- “What is the culture like? What is expected of the librarians in terms of a work schedule/balance?”
- “Sometimes the questions that candidates [sic] ask seem forced or over prepared, not genuinely asked out of a desire to learn something.”

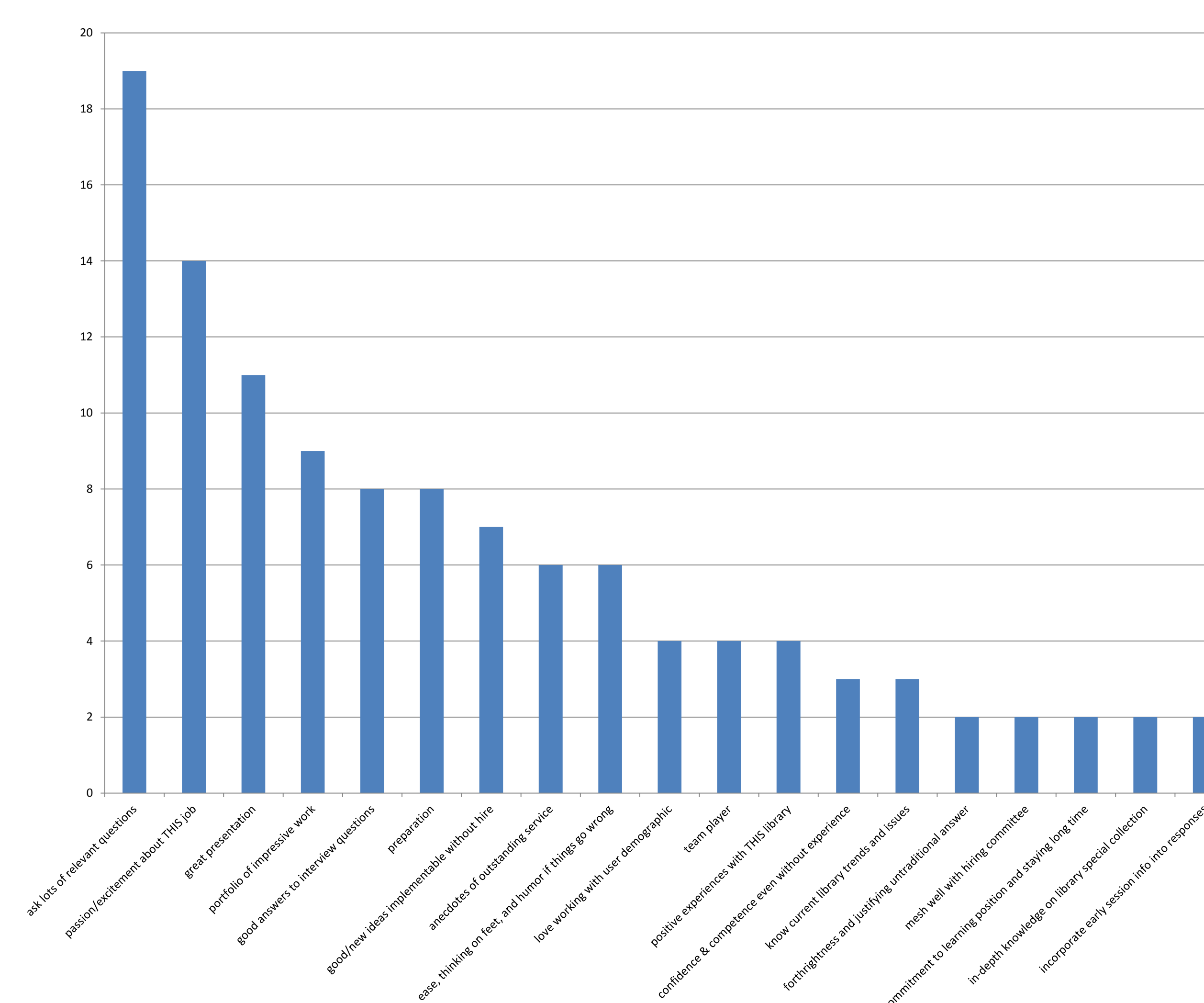
What are the most important competencies for a new librarian to have?

	Unimportant	Of Little Importance	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important
Communication skills	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.5% (9)	23.8% (86)	73.7% (266)
Customer service skills	0.0% (0)	0.8% (3)	2.5% (9)	19.9% (72)	76.7% (277)
Familiarity with technologies used in the library	0.0% (0)	1.1% (4)	18.3% (66)	48.2% (174)	32.4% (117)
Expertise with technologies used in the library	0.6% (2)	6.9% (25)	41.6% (150)	36.0% (130)	15.0% (54)
Demonstrated commitment to the profession (through interest in continuing education, professional organizations, committee appointments, etc.)	1.4% (5)	11.6% (42)	30.2% (109)	34.6% (125)	22.2% (80)

What should you find out *before* your interview?

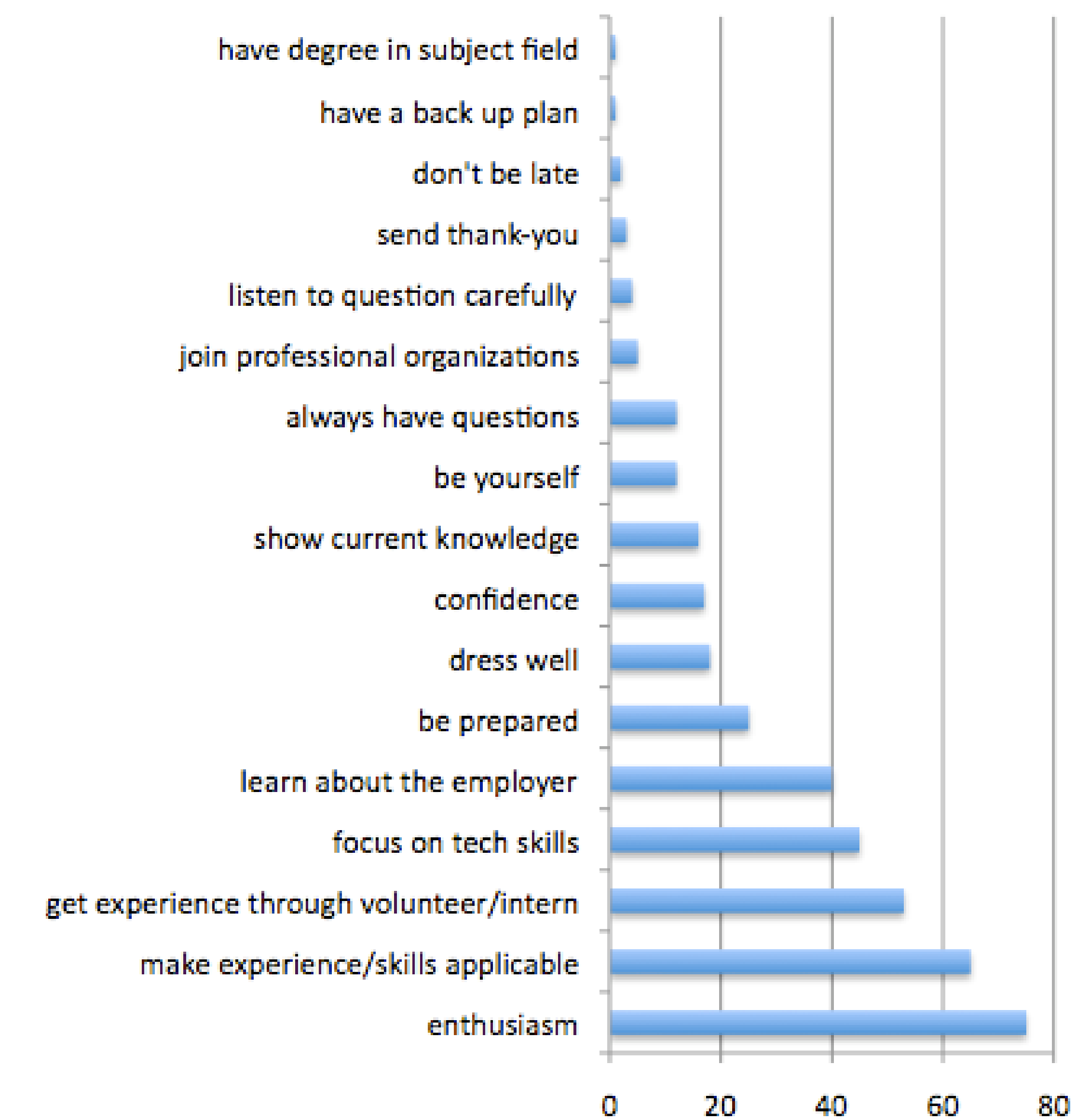
- “Applicants who can identify our strengths/weaknesses (and solutions) pull ahead of the pack.”
- “I would find out as much as possible, and find a way to casually drop that knowledge into the interview. I am impressed when people can discuss recent news articles about the library, for example.”
- “They should be able to answer the question ‘Why do you want to work at my school?’ not just why do you want a job.”

What's the best way to knock the socks off your interviewers?



- “At the end of the day, the candidate summed up her impressions of the library and then gave several strategies about where and how her skills would fit in and be of benefit to the library.”
- “A candidate for a part-time circulation assistant knew that our children's librarian was trying to increase program and came into the interview with three programs prepped.”
- “[Bring] samples even if [they] have zero experience, make a bib of our library resources on a topic, do a flier or send us a sample ppt. Show some initiative with[out] being overly-assertive.”
- “Turned the tables on the librarians and asked why we continue to stay at this institution.”
- “One candidate thoroughly did her homework and was able to ask each of the committee members something specific to their work or to a presentation or paper they had written.”
- “Had a detailed plan for how they hoped to grow in the job, solve our current problems with our catalog, etc.,”
- “Prepared a two-page handout with plan for approaching the job, broken down by time.”

How can a new library school grad compete against an experienced library professional?



Some final words of wisdom (and encouragement!)

- “Put your best foot forward,” because “personality plays a bigger role than most people think.”
- “We are trying to find somebody who is a good fit for our library.”
- “I think that brand new librarians can be the person to beat. They bring a fresh energy and viewpoint.”
- “Many of the hires I have been involved in during the past 12 years have been new grads, who brought energy and new ideas to the library. I cannot imagine not hiring new grads!”
- “I feel lucky to already have a job, because some of the candidates we get are so smart and creative I don't think I would be able to compete against them!”