



## Chapter Council Presents Sharing Roundtables

MLA Annual Meeting

Chicago IL

Sunday, May 18, 2008

## Final Report Form

### Librarian as Consultant Table #18

#### Participants:

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#### Topics Discussed:

- Various applications of the term “Consultant”
  - Consultant as Teacher
  - Consultant as Career choice
  - Consultant as part of job responsibility
  - Consultant independent of job responsibilities
  - Consultant to a non-profit organization
- Potential conflict of interest
- Preparation to serve as a Consultant
- Marketing one’s self
- Creation of a Business Plan

## Ideas Shared:

- The term “Consultant” conjured up different meaning for each member of the Roundtable, and each interpretation raised its own set of questions and concerns.
- As a teacher, concerns such as time spent preparing a syllabus, or creating an online tutorial that could be shared with others or contracted out raised questions of who will need/want these materials and at what cost?
- Consulting as a career choice allows for challenges, flexibility and diversity of activities/projects. However, if consulting is your livelihood it could lead to a more uncertain lifestyle and regular income stream. Consequently, it may be necessary to assertively market one’s skills and services to become known and sought after. If consulting is a career choice it raises additional questions of health benefits, travel expenses and other hidden costs that are not readily apparent.
- A downside of consulting is that you may not be accepted by the staff of the organization from which they are asked to consult. This may make it difficult for you to gather needed information.
- The group did agree that prior to serving as any type of consult it is imperative to have prepared a personal Business Plan. As part of your plan make sure that you can respond to central questions about what you are doing, why, for whom, how you plan to accomplish your goals, and what contingency plans do you have.
- Consulting independent of job responsibilities highlighted a different set of concerns. It was believed that under these circumstances an individual may be invited to consult as an expert, provide input on a project, contribute to a report etc. Considerations under this scenario might include, will one be paid or not for their contributions/time/expenses, how much time will the project take, does one need to seek approval from his/her employer to participate?
- If you have concerns that your consulting is creating a conflict of interest between you and your organization, talk with your employer. Be prepared to assure your employer that the work will be conducted on your own time and that you will not be using employer resources. Many tools are often in the public domain and readily available for seeking health care information.
- If you serve as a consultant, make sure to do your homework prior to beginning you work. Ask for, or retrieve from the web pertinent documents that will assist your consulting. Be prepared to ask relevant and soliciting questions so that you can gain a greater understanding of the organization/problem(s)/issue(s).
- Marketing and networking are important components for achieving visibility and obtaining consulting work. Participants suggested several ideas to assist in this area:
  - Talk to people in your profession, organization, etc.
  - Create a website, use social networking tools to communicate
  - Create and hand out business cards freely
  - Try to make contacts within government organizations
- Past successes opened additional opportunities

- Serving as a consultant is an activity that can be conducted from almost anywhere. One need not be in the same location as the organization seeking service(s).
- Participants agreed that consulting can provide very interesting and exciting opportunities.

**References:**

1. Stryker, Steven C., *Guide to Successful Consulting*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1984.
2. Biswas, Sugata and Daryl Twitchell, *Management Consulting: a Complete Guide to the Industry*, New York, NY, John Wiley, 2002.