

## **Case Study Analysis**

Based on: "The Director's Dilemma" by S. Slate and H. Samsa

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MLIS 7200

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July 27, 2008

**The Set-up**

Heather Samsa and Selena Slate have presented a case study revolving around the Library Director of The Bob Wickman Library and her dilemma in choosing between two candidates for a newly approved Reference Assistant position. The current Reference Librarian and the Library Operations Manager have interviewed the candidates separately from the Library Director. A third person that did not interview the candidates, the Media Services Coordinator, has been asked her/his opinion in hiring. Each candidate has exemplary skills and abilities, appropriate education and background, and the ability to work well with and help patrons.

**The Problem**

The problem in this hiring situation occurs in that the Library Director, the Library Operations Manager, and the Media Services Coordinator differ in their opinion with the Reference Librarian as to which candidate should be hired as the new Reference Assistant.

**The Causes**

One candidate, Susie, is related to the Vice-President of Operations at the small college campus that houses the library and has been rumored to be domineering. The other candidate, Andrew, expects a higher salary than is being offered and has health problems. The Reference Librarian will be expected to work with a Reference Assistant for the first time in fifteen years, is uncomfortable with change, and is intimidated by Susie. The reasons why the Reference Librarian chose Andrew as her candidate for hire were stated in the Case Study, but the reasons that the Library Director, the Library Operations Manager, and the Media Services Coordinator preferred Susie were not included.

Another aspect of this Case Study that I think should be considered is that it is included in the case study that the Reference Librarian is retiring in three years. Another problem in

regards to the Reference Librarian is that she has handled her interviews with the two candidates very differently. With Susie, she implied that they would work as equals. With Andrew, she implied that she would work as his superior. The beginning of the Case Study clearly states that the new Reference Assistant would not have the Reference Librarian as his/her supervisor, but the Library Director instead. It is also stated in the Case Study that this small college campus in Wisconsin has been rife with nepotism.

### **Alternative Solutions**

- An obvious first step would be for all four librarians involved in the decision making – the Library Director, the Library Operations Manager, the Media Services Coordinator, and the Reference Librarian – to call both candidates back for a second interview with all parties present. The four librarians should plan the interviews together and compile a list of questions and follow-up questions to be included in the interviews.
- The Library Director should make it clear to the Reference Librarian that the Reference Assistant position is not within her authority and that she, the Library Director, will be the person directly supervising the Reference Assistant. The Library Director should assure the Reference Librarian that her role will remain unchanged and any problems or questions should be brought to her attention.
- The Library Director should take into account that she cannot disqualify a person for a job simply because of whom they are related to or because of health reasons and make her final decision based on merit and need.
- The Library Director could re-advertise the position of Reference Assistant and make a blanket rule for The Bob Wickman Library that excludes family members of any college

employee from applying for the job and that stipulates certain physical requirements for the job as it is one that requires constant face-to-face time with patrons. These new rules would need to be approved by the board and become part of the library policy across the board.

- The Library Director should take into consideration that the Reference Librarian is going to retire in three years. The library will need a replacement and the candidate that is most likely to take a leadership position, be committed to a career with The Bob Wickman Library, and be committed to the community should take preference.

### **The Decision**

I believe that the most obvious solution is to choose the candidate that would be the best long-term solution for The Bob Wickman Library. The Reference Librarian's insecurities should not prevent the Library Director from hiring the candidate that will be a long-term solution. From the information provided, Susie seems the most likely candidate to make a long-term commitment to the library and would be able to easily transition into the Reference Librarian position once she has retired in three years. The Library Director should still conduct a second interview that includes all four librarians in order to better evaluate which candidate would be the best hire and to observe the interactions between the candidates and the librarians. However, from the information provided, I would want the more dynamic person with ties to the community and no hesitancy about the salary to fill the Reference Assistant position. The Library Director should also take care to help the Reference Librarian ease into the transition of being solo for fifteen years to working with another person and do everything possible to make the expansion of the staff a success.