

Making “Information Magic” Happen

In former SLA (Special Library Association) President Deb Hunt’s latest webinar titled [“Where the information Magic Happens – Hint it’s Outside Your Comfort zone”](#), she talks about going outside your comfort zone when it comes to career development, encouraging people in our industry to examine their roles and titles in order to make their titles future ready. That way you can be seen as invaluable as old librarian roles and archivist stereotypes are shredded or abandoned. She also stressed the need to knuckle down and do the work required to earn increased respect and value.

Deb has an MLS, but never introduces herself as a librarian because she gets stereotyped into the typical public librarian role when she does. She prefers to introduce herself as a Knowledge Strategist or Knowledge Curator because job titles do a lot to demonstrate the strategic value someone has to an employer. Here is a slide from that webinar with suggested titles for MLSs in the corporate world:

What do You Want to be Called?

Librarian	Information Professional
Knowledge Manager	Strategic Knowledge Professional
Knowledge Curator	CKO

Inspired by her webinar, we sat down to have a conversation with Tzofit Goldfarb, Vice President, Information Center/Archives at HarperCollins Publishers.

Background

With two hundred years of history and more than 120 branded imprints around the world, HarperCollins publishes approximately 10,000 new books every year in 16 languages in addition to a print and digital catalog of more than 200,000 titles.

Tzofit (pronounced sofeet) has been with HarperCollins for 25 years, moving from an entry-level assistant in the information center up the ladder to Manager, then Director, then Sr. Director, eventually reaching the level of Vice-President. But achieving that position was not easy. The culture of the publishing industry values best-selling writers,

their platforms, best-selling titles, creativity, and sales revenue. Management of company information typically is not appreciated as much. However, that isn't true at HarperCollins. The organization supports the operation of an online information center and archive, in addition to a physical archive, both of which are managed by a high-level professional, ensuring valuable information and publishing history is stored and accessible, enhancing the organization's book marketing. As Tzofit's value to the company became more apparent, she was promoted to Vice-President and officially given responsibility for the management of information and archives at HarperCollins North America.

Responsibilities

As VP of the Information Center/Archives, Tzofit is responsible for Research Services. With the promotion came added responsibilities, and as such Tzofit wears many, many hats as she assists HarperCollins employees with their research requests. Examples of these requests include help locating and accessing book reviews, finding background on books published by other imprints, author background bios, whether a title has ever hit the *New York Times* bestseller list and for how long, in addition to being asked to research strategic marketing opportunities.

Under the Research Services umbrella, Tzofit is responsible for managing the electronic resources used for research purposes, which includes licensed subscriptions. Tzofit also manages the HarperCollins corporate archives containing the company's history in addition to records management of offsite files. To help her oversee all of that, Tzofit manages 3 sites on the corporate intranet:

Research and Subscriptions

Licensed subscriptions to publicity databases, book review sites and others are managed by Tzofit with an eye towards creating efficiencies. For example, if multiple departments are using a particular resource separately, she will proactively negotiate to bring those contracts together under one umbrella and manage the subscriptions companywide, helping with on-boarding and answering questions. For subscriptions that are used infrequently, Tzofit maintains her own contracts for research purposes, such as LexisNexis, which creates more cost efficiencies.

Records Management and Research

In addition to subscriptions, Tzofit is also in charge of all of records management for HarperCollins, responsible for helping employees get access to over 15,000 boxes and off-site storage files. Tzofit recognized a system was needed so that

people could search for the files offsite and order them, so she independently researched what was available, and created a records management system.

Business History Research

Tzofit is also responsible for the corporate archives, where she uses Soutron to capture the history of over 200 years' worth of the company's business, making for an enormous, but easily searchable archive collection.

The online collection features divisional and imprint histories alongside records for more than 135,000 books, always with new titles to be added. In addition to book titles, the archive collection holds approximately 6000 historical book catalogs, thousands of photographs, author profiles and other title artifacts.

Tzofit uses Soutron to track original publication date anniversaries to share with the publishing teams for potential marketing campaigns or special anniversary editions.

Career Development

Q: Deb says that to be perceived as valuable, you should be aligned with the organization's vision, mission values and goals. What have you done at HarperCollins to align yourself with the company's vision, mission, and values?

A: At HarperCollins authors and their work are at the center of everything we do, and we want to expand their audience to the broadest possible reach. My role aligns with this perfectly as the caretaker of our collective history. A lot of our sales come from what are called Backlist titles, those older titles that are still selling, such as *Goodnight Moon*, by Margaret Wise Brown, which came out in 1947, and was number one on the best seller list recently. It has sold over 48 million copies.

Backlist brings in a lot of revenue. So, I try to position myself as the backlist resource, because that is ultimately what the archives is, it is generating a backlist database that can be searched to support the company's mission expanding our authors reach. We recently celebrated the 75th Anniversary of *Goodnight Moon* in 2022. In addition to the marketing, editorial and publicity teams, I was also asked to contribute to this project.

Q: Deb says that to meet people at their point of need and information consumption, you have to really listen. And so, my question to you is what do you do to listen to your users, do you call meetings? Are you reading reports? You said you just go to meetings, but do you have to be invited? How does that happen? How do you go about going out

of your comfort zone and getting yourself invited to meetings? What makes that magic happen?

A: It took a long time and like I said, I have been with HarperCollins for 25 years now, so I know a lot of people and I feel a lot more comfortable than I used to. After I gained that confidence, I was able to call someone or to e-mail someone and say, hey, I want to discuss this idea with you. That conversation would oftentimes lead to being asked to join their meetings. There are a few major meetings that I sit in every week that I saw were important that I just asked if I could attend. After that it has been cyclical – I join meetings, and hear tidbits about upcoming projects and news, and then reach out to the various groups/teams/individuals about those projects and let them know how I can help (or how they can help me!) It is all about being proactive.

My boss, the Senior VP of Corporate Communications, has been amazing. I am very, very, very fortunate to have an incredibly supportive boss. She recognizes that a lot of the work I do is behind the scenes, yet she realizes the impact my work has. She very often suggests strategic areas to research that would be of benefit to the company, like the market for podcasts. She is not in the library or information world at all, but reports to the CEO, and often has a broader view of projects going on around the company. That perspective is often very helpful to me. We have a weekly department meeting where the Communications team discusses company issues, projects, and needs. That helps me fine-tune who I should reach out to.

People are extremely appreciative of the services I offer because it is rare in the corporate world to find someone whose full-time job is to look out for you and think about what knowledge or new information they could provide to you. When I do provide that information, people feel very appreciative, and in return want to help me in the same way. It creates a great foundation for a working relationship.

Q: In her webinar, an area Deb stressed for professional success, is to take risks and be proactive. That when we think we are too busy, we shut out opportunities. How do you go about taking risks, not shutting out opportunities, and being proactive?

A: A lot of the things that I have done have been because a project needed to get done and there were no other internal resources available to do it. I really view my role as not just answering questions. I try to be very proactive. I sit in on different meetings, and I hear things that are going on. And then I reach out to people, and I say, do you know about this? Do you know about that? Usually, they do not.

Q: Can you give an example?

A: Right now, #BookTok is a hashtag on TikTok which has become enormous. With millions of views, it is having a tremendous impact on book sales. TikTok users are recommending books and the books are going viral. Books that had not sold before are selling hundreds of thousands of copies. From attending meetings, I saw that people were trying to learn more about #BookTok, so I set up alerts on #BookTok to inform marketing which books they should be pushing, how they should be pushing them, et cetera. I took the initiative with that and started finding information and just sending it to different people. As a result, I ended up working directly with the consumer insight team. They recognize that work in company meetings. You must take the initiative. You cannot just sit back. You have to always prove your value.

Q: It sounds like you are being proactive all the time, demonstrating your value to the company and people you work with.

A: Absolutely. I have done many newsletters over the years too. No one asked for that. I just started sending them to employees just to get the Information Center name out there.

Our current newsletter, which is very well liked, is an events and anniversaries newsletter sent two months in advance of the event or anniversary. This way, marketing can build a campaign around that information. I pull from the Soutron archive to get that information. In the last issue, we did a spotlight feature on the title, *Wuthering Heights*, with links back to the Soutron database to the materials stored in there. The September issue focuses on Picture Book Month, so we have highlighted some of our most successful and valuable picture books in the archive.

I also list author birthdays and items marketing can build campaigns around, like National Ice Cream Month in July. So, someone in marketing or sales could think “Ohh we have a book about ice cream coming out. Let me pitch that book for promotion in July.” I also list themed events like the Moby Dick Marathon, because HarperCollins was the original publisher of *Moby Dick* in 1851. I highlight that it is Harper related, and link back to all of the materials in the Soutron database. The marketing people really love this newsletter. I am also working now on integrating content for Harlequin and our Christian teams. This new responsibility was given to me when I was promoted to Vice President – all of North America, where previously it was just the New York headquarters.

Q: That is interesting because Deb says communicating your value is very difficult and that you need to communicate and demonstrate your value and make yourself

indispensable. And it sounds like with those newsletters and information you are sending out, you have made yourself indispensable.

A: I have an MLS, but really everything is self-taught at this point. I do not have a specialization in archives or records management - that was all self-taught. That is how you keep yourself indispensable. Just do not be afraid. Whatever they throw at you, you say YES. Then upskill yourself. Again, I am one person, but I never have said NO, even if it is a task that I really do not enjoy.

Q: In her webinar, Deb also talks about upskilling and going outside your comfort zone. What are some of the key skills that you think are important for success in your current role?

A: You must be able to communicate effectively and to write effectively. I also think, as difficult as this is for many librarians, you need to be a people person. You have to try to put yourself into the shoes of the company where you are working and get to know your users. You have to think: What are my users looking for? You have to understand people. And you have to get a sense of their personalities and how to best approach them and how to help them. A lot of times when people come to me, they are at a frustration point, saying: "I cannot find this. I cannot do that." You have to know how to finesse that situation. I think it is all about people skills -- whether that is drafting an e-mail, talking to someone in the hallway or on a Teams call. It is critical.

One thing to keep in mind is that a corporate environment is very different than a regular library. Nobody is looking at you as a librarian. They are looking at you as a member of the corporate team, and that is how you need to present yourself.

We hope you have benefitted from Tzofit's observations on the strategies Deb says should be employed for career success. To listen to Deb's webinar, visit:

<https://www.soutron.com/webinar-with-deb-hunt-on-where-the-information-magic-happens/>