

June 17, 2021 Muse-ings

For all those in the midst of job hunting, this month's Muse-ing features a short transcript of an interview with two recent Master's Degree graduates who have been navigating the late-pandemic job market. Ashley Buzzanca managed MuseWeekly's job listings during the 2020–21 academic year, and Kyle Parks joins her in graduating with a Museum Studies Graduate Certificate from the University of Delaware this spring. If you have had a training, work, or job search or hiring experience that you think could benefit others, propose a Muse-ing by sending us a short one-paragraph email that describes your angle at museumstudies@udel.edu. Commentaries no longer than 600 words.

What has surprised you the most about job hunting during the pandemic?

Ashley: Well, I'm still very much in the middle of my job search process, which started in January. As the MuseWeekly editor, I've been keeping track of job openings all year, and honestly I'm surprised by how many jobs continue to be posted, even though there's been COVID and closures. It's just hard, because the job pool is larger and more competitive and saturated than it would be without the pandemic. So many people who graduated last year, or who lost their jobs last year, are searching right now, along with this year's graduates.

Kyle: Can I just be honest and say I didn't anticipate how soul-crushing it would be? It caused some existential questions for me, about whether this field would work out and whether I needed to expand my search. Part of that is this trend where places are only hiring for part-time positions when those positions were full-time before the pandemic. It's just that until they get a sense of how many visitors will be coming in again, they don't feel like they can commit to the full-time position.

What skills have been most useful to you in the application process?

Ashley: I want to work with collections, and the answers that have resonated with my interviewers are ones where I address how different museum departments would work together. So, for instance, education and collections management. The key is drawing on your wide range of experience and applying all those skills and connections to the position you're interviewing for.

Kyle: I agree. What appealed to the places that were interviewing me, and the one that has hired me, was that I could relate the job to nonprofit administration more broadly. But let me just say, if you need to look further afield in your search, all experience can be valuable and in museum work. There are so many transferable skills. So many jobs are basically looking for someone who can make things happen, and you can demonstrate your ability to do that in all kinds of settings.

What is one piece of advice you'd offer that might not appear anywhere else?

Kyle: Just be aware that some institutions are not so transparent about their financial situation. I think we'd all like to avoid a sinking ship, but here's the thing... people get credit for things that happen while they're there, for good or bad. So, look at museums' tax documents, and try to understand their financial health before you take a job.

Ashley: Find a good living wage calculator website so you can think about how you can afford rent, food, and what you need in the place where the job is. I turned down a position that paid pretty well for part-time, because I would have needed another part-time job just as good in order to make ends meet in that location.