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Finding Your Proper Niche in the Bibliotheca Academiae: Or, The Study of Elephant Hunting Behavior

Richard Hacken

Determining which library position is best for a candidate, and for a library, is no longer an easy matter. For those fresh out of library school, or those in the throes of a mid-career change, the hurdles to be faced in the elaborate processes that academic institutions, and their libraries, now impose seem, at times, almost insurmountable. For the library the process is equally time-consuming and, in any case, resumés, references, and the like are no longer necessarily the best indicators of a candidate's true qualifications.

A fresh new approach, which has been developed at one of the western outposts of The Molesworth Institute, has already proven in just a few tests to be a remarkably accurate means of matching candidates to positions. Each candidate is sent, with a camera, to Africa to participate in a politically correct elephant hunt. His or her behavior is carefully recorded with a video camera and the tape is flown back to the United States. By the time the candidate has returned, the tape has been analyzed by the local EHC (Elephant Hunt Committee) and a decision made.

The following are some of the amazing results reported by the first libraries to test this system:

- You arrange for the shipment of African elephants to India: Order Librarian
- You keep track of herds that march single-file but get upset when the space between any two elephants is too great: Serials Librarian

- You cage up the elephants but release them in two hours or less: Reserve Librarian
- You inspect other hunters' licenses and punish poachers: Circulation Librarian
- You try to reconstruct the history of elephant hunting: Archivist
- You try to bring a stuffed elephant home with you: Rare Book Librarian
- You don't hunt any elephants but categorize types of elephants for those who do: Cataloger
- You devise rules by which elephants change names on a regular basis: Subject Authority Librarian
- You try to stuff an elephant into a photocopy machine: Copy Cataloger
- You feed steroids to an antelope, tie on a false trunk, and try to pass it off as an elephant: Reclassification Librarian
- You write the letters e-l-e-p-h-a-n-t on the side of the beast in chalk: Labelling Unit Supervisor
- You help round up the elephants: Acquisitions Librarian
- You refuse to go to Africa but research whether or not elephants really exist: Bibliographic Searcher; or, Subject Specialist in Philosophy
- You invite yourself to other elephant hunters' homes to find out what type of elephants are in vogue this season: Collection Development Librarian
- You reach for an elephant's tail and try to plug it into the nearest currant bush: Media Librarian
- You reject any elephant older than six months: Science Librarian
- You import elephants and then export them again before the other hunters can find them: Interivory Loan Librarian
- You spend all of your time trying to locate elephant graveyards hoping you can sew the elephant hides you have brought with you to some bones: Conservationist
- You interrogate other hunters about whether hunting something other than an elephant would be equally satisfying: Reference Librarian

- You insist on telling other hunters how to do their job: Bibliographic Instruction Specialist
- You systematically traverse Africa by foot in east-to-west passes of the continent comparing each animal you see to a picture of an elephant: Systems Librarian
- You follow the elephants about and argue over who owns their droppings: Law Librarian
- You write a treatise relating the hat size and bullet color, or film speed, of elephant hunters to the efficiency of various elephant hunting strategies: Library School Faculty
- You take it upon yourself to divide up the elephants among the hunters: Library Administrator
- You spend your time observing and categorizing all of the other hunters: Personnel Librarian
- You fail to recognize an elephant when it strolls by: No job for you!