

Library Technician interview questions

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What to expect

Library Technician interviews typically blend process questions about circulation and cataloguing with behavioural questions about customer service and scenario-based questions about handling tricky patron interactions.

- **Process and workflow:** Questions about how you handle cataloguing, interlibrary loans, or collection maintenance from start to finish.
- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask you to describe a past situation, often about a difficult patron or a competing deadline.
- **Scenario:** Questions that put you in a hypothetical situation, such as a patron disputing a fine or a system outage.
- **Technical:** Questions about specific systems like Koha, Ex Libris Alma, or metadata standards such as RDA and MARC.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about how you support patrons with research enquiries or digital literacy.

The interview usually starts with a brief introduction from the panel, then moves through a mix of process and behavioural questions. You may be asked to complete a short practical task, such as cataloguing a sample item or responding to a written patron enquiry. The interview often ends with time for your questions.

1. Walk me through your process for cataloguing a new item from arrival to shelf-ready.

Why they ask

Tests your technical knowledge of cataloguing workflows, your attention to detail, and your familiarity with systems and standards.

How to structure your answer

A step-by-step walk-through: describe the sequence, mention the systems and standards you use, and note how you check accuracy.

Example answer

"When a new item arrives, I first check it against the packing slip and order record in our library management system, such as Koha. I then create a provisional catalogue record, adding MARC fields for title, author, ISBN, and subject headings following RDA. I check the record against the existing collection to avoid duplicates, then assign a Dewey number and add spine labels and security strips. Finally, I mark the item as available and shelve it in the correct section. I also do a quick quality check before it goes out, which keeps the catalogue accurate for patrons and staff."

2. Tell me about a time you helped a patron who was frustrated or confused. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

Assesses your customer service skills, empathy, and ability to resolve problems calmly.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, the task, the action you took, and the result.

Example answer

"At my current library, a regular patron came in upset because she could not access an e-book on her tablet. I listened without interrupting, then asked her to show me what she was seeing. I realised the

issue was an expired library card, so I renewed it on the spot and walked her through logging in again. I also printed a short step-by-step guide for her. She left happy and came back the next week to say she had finished the book. That situation taught me that patience and a clear explanation can turn a frustrating moment into a positive one."

3. Imagine a patron insists a book was returned but the system still shows it on loan. How would you handle the situation?

Why they ask

Tests your judgement under pressure, your knowledge of library policy, and your ability to balance patron relations with procedure.

How to structure your answer

Show empathy first, then outline your steps: check the shelf, review the return bin, ask a supervisor about waiving fines, and follow library policy.

Example answer

"I would start by acknowledging the patron's concern and assuring them I will look into it. I would check the returns bin and the shelf where the item would be, then ask a colleague to double-check. If the item is found, I would discharge it immediately and apologise for the confusion. If it is still missing, I would explain the library's policy on lost items and ask a supervisor whether the fine can be waived while we search further. Throughout, I would keep my tone calm and solution-focused, because the patron's trust matters more than the fine itself."

4. What experience do you have with library management systems? Which ones have you used, and how do you learn a new system?

Why they ask

Checks your technical adaptability and familiarity with the tools named in the job description.

How to structure your answer

A brief inventory of systems, then a specific example of learning one quickly, and your general approach to picking up new software.

Example answer

"I have used Koha daily for cataloguing, circulation and patron records, and I have some experience with Ex Libris Alma during a temporary project. When I had to learn Alma, I started by exploring the test environment, then worked through the help guides and asked a colleague to walk me through the acquisitions module. Within a week I was processing orders independently. I generally pick up new systems quickly because I focus on understanding the underlying workflow first, then the specific buttons and menus."

5. How do you prioritise your work when you have multiple tasks, such as processing loans, answering enquiries, and preparing a display?

Why they ask

Assesses your time management, ability to juggle competing demands, and understanding of what matters most in a library setting.

How to structure your answer

Explain your method: triage by urgency and impact, communicate with colleagues, and use quiet periods for project work.

Example answer

"I start by checking what is most urgent for patrons: loans and returns at the desk come first because people are waiting. If I am on the desk and an enquiry comes in, I handle it immediately and then return to processing. For project work like a display, I schedule it during quieter periods, such as mid-morning or early afternoon. If I am ever unsure, I check with my supervisor to make sure I have

the priorities right. I also keep a running list so nothing gets forgotten."

6. Give an example of how you have contributed to a library program or display that engaged the community.

Why they ask

Looks for creativity, initiative, and your understanding of how libraries connect with their users.

How to structure your answer

STAR, focusing on the idea, your role in executing it, and the outcome in terms of patron engagement.

Example answer

"At my last library, I noticed that our young adult collection was not getting much attention. I proposed a display around a popular graphic novel series and worked with a colleague to create themed bookmarks and a small quiz. I set up the display near the entrance and mentioned it during school holiday programs. Over the next month, we saw a noticeable increase in young adult loans, and several teens asked for similar titles. The experience showed me that a simple, well-placed display can connect people with the collection."