As most of us are, I was excited beyond measure when I got my first real job as an Honest-to-Goodness Librarian about three years ago. I’d spent six months searching after grad school and I found a job that I was (and still am) really excited about. My God, was I excited. When my first day finally came around I could hardly contain my enthusiasm. More than anything, I wanted to prove to everyone how capable and awesome I was. I wanted to DO ALL THE THINGS!! Aren’t you glad you hired me??!! I’m so good at everything.

As a noobrarian, I read a lot of blogs and kept track of rockstar librarians and was constantly on the lookout for cool things that cool librarians were doing. No doubt, it’s great to keep abreast of what’s going on in our field, and these days I prefer following a lot of librarians on Twitter and reading a few key publications to keep track of awesome ideas. But the more you read, the more insecure you might feel-especially as a noobrarian. You can start to think that if you’re just doing your job, you’re failing at being an awesome librarian. And I don’t want you to feel that way. If you’re reading this, I THINK YOU’RE AWESOME!

There are three main reasons I want to encourage noobrarians not to fall into the trap of trying to Do All the Things. First of all, you’re new! People are thrilled that you can sit at the reference desk unattended without drooling or falling asleep and that you know where to send people when they need to fax something. For the first few months, the very best thing you can be doing for your library is learn how to do your job really well. Don’t try to give yourself extra work. Once you’ve learned how to do what’s actually assigned to you, then you can branch out. You can be a tremendous librarian without putting so much stress on yourself. You don’t have to be a rockstar. A much better use of your energy is trying to be the kind of librarian you’d want to work with. Put your energy into that, my friends. And try to be the kind of librarian your patrons want. Maybe that means working on your business reference skills instead of getting on an ALA committee before your 30th birthday [Editor’s note: or even before your 40th]. So be it!

The second reason for taking things slow at first is that, if you don’t, you run the risk of steamrolling the librarians who’ve been working hard at your library for years and years. You don’t yet know what the culture is like. Sit back in your first few meetings and just observe what happens. Find out who is
generating new ideas and who is resisting them. Try to get a sense of what’s been tried before. The
coolest idea ever that you want to start doing today might have been a catastrophe at your library
because the service didn’t fit your clientele. Wait to propose major changes or new services until you
figure out who will be happy to help you implement them and who will dig their feet in and try to thwart
your ideas. Things might get ugly if you try to bring “new and awesome” changes to your library before
you have a good grasp on the scene.

Lastly, if you try to Do All the Things, people will start to think of you as a sucker. Yes, you’re being nice
and awesome and getting shit done. But your colleagues might see the situation differently. Undesirable
committee appointment? Ginger will do it! Teach an instruction session this afternoon with no notice?
GINGER. Cover a weekend shift when another librarian is sick? GINGER. Tell someone to stop
masturbating in the library? GINGER. You see how this is going? Try to be a team player and do
awesome things without getting taken advantage of and without getting burnt out. It’s a fine line, and it
starts with saying no every once in a while. It starts by telling your colleagues you can’t Do All the Things.

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