

6-10-2022

The Dos and Don'ts of Zoom Interviews: A New Librarians Navigating a New Normal

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The Dos and Don'ts of Zoom Interviews

A new librarian navigating a new normal

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Introduction

For nearly the last two years, we have faced new challenges in unprecedented ways due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to current technology, however, we have been able to get creative to keep things moving as much as possible and find new ways to do things, including searching for jobs. Like many others, I found myself having to traverse a job search process that involved doing only virtual interviews.

Having to do this completely virtually added a whole new level of difficulty. Along the way, there were a lot of lessons learned and experience earned that I want to share with both interviewers and interviewees.

The Search

Between March and June 2021

- 17 applications
- 5 preliminary interviews
- 1 accepted offer
- 7 other requests for interviews after job was accepted

I attribute my good fortune in responses to the time I took with customizing my cover letters and CVs, and making sure that my website and LinkedIn profile were updated and matched what was on my CV. I did spend about two hours per submission and while that felt like a full-time job, I am glad that I took the time to do it right.



Initial Interviews

Four of the five initial interviews I had were on camera, the fifth took place over the phone.

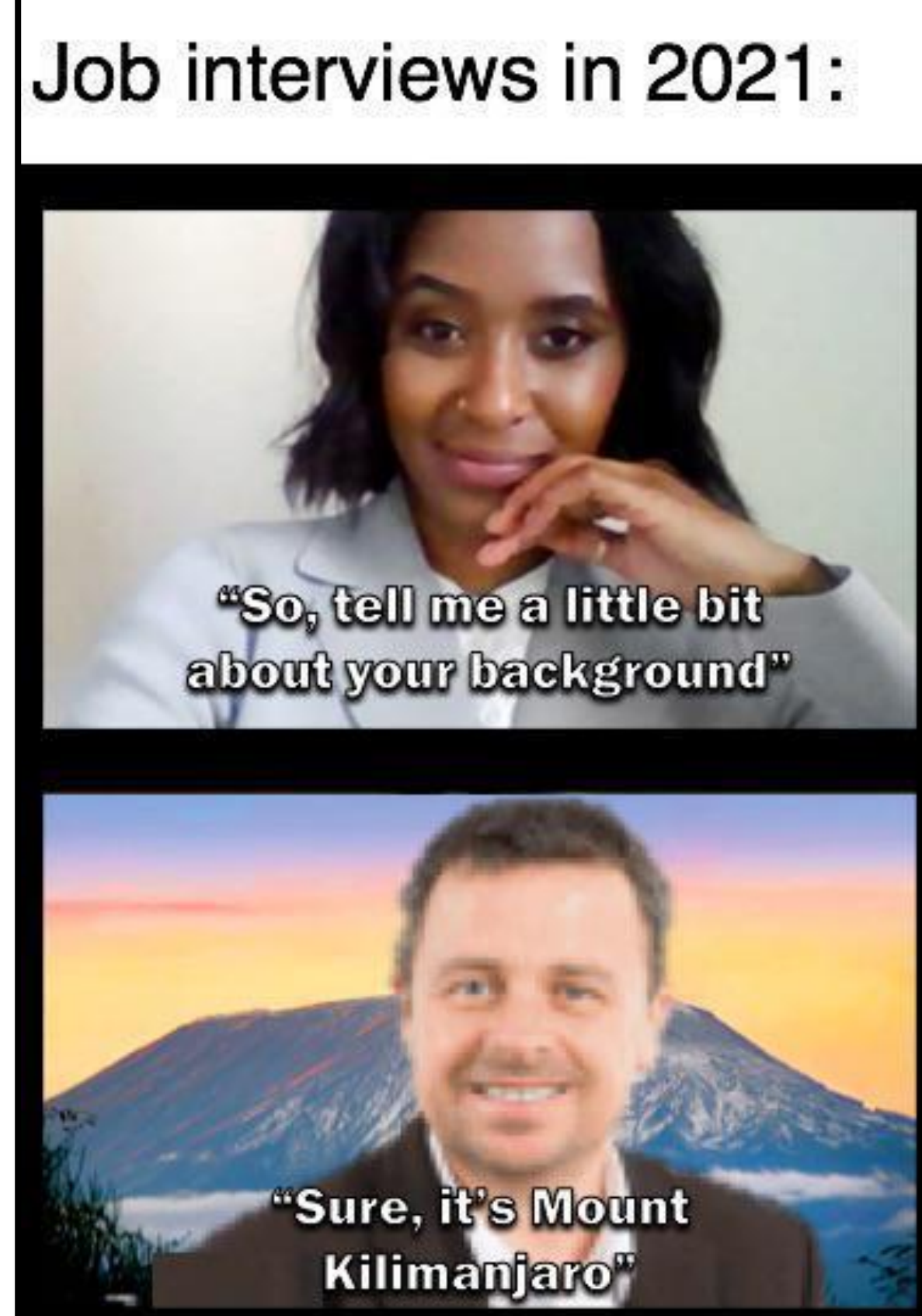
For these short interviews I did some of the standard prep that you would normally do, but also had other prep to think about for a virtual setting.

- **Job Descriptions and notes on Screen** – have your notes and job description on screen, they'll be easier to find and check as needed
- **Backgrounds and Filters** - have them ready ahead of time, at the very least blur your background
- **Distractions** - make plans to keep all distractions at bay

Final Interviews

I had four final interviews during my job search, and even though I did not have to travel for them, they still took up a lot of energy and time. The fact that they were virtual did not make them any easier, it just made for different challenges.

- **Presentation** – this is the perfect opportunity to show off your tech and online instruction skills
- **Questions** – I found these questions to be perfect for an online interview setting where you don't get to gauge the environment in person:
 - *Why did you pick (institution) and/or why do you stay?*
 - *What are some of the priorities this position should focus on in the first six months?*
 - *What do you like/love about the community you live in?*



- **Distractions** – keeping kids/pets/etc. at bay for a full day will be hard, make sure you have backup
- **Temperature/Lighting** – this will change throughout the day depending on the room you are in, keep that in mind when picking your spot
- **Dressing for the interview** – even online, dress to impress, it'll put you in the right mindset
- **Breaks** - have quick meals and snacks ready ahead of time, breaks go faster than you realize

Full Article

If you are interested in reading the full article for all of the insights and experiences I had during my job search it is available in the UNO Digital Commons. You can scan the QR code below or follow this link: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/crisslibfacpub/45/>



What Worked and What Did Not

Interviewee Advantages

There were a lot of things about the virtual interviews that went right for me, and I think for the institutions, along with several things that I would have changed, on both sides. I noticed these advantages as an applicant:

- **No traveling** – this always takes more time and money than you think, it removes that pressure
- **Breaks** – real breaks where you can turn off the camera and mic
- **Ability to look things up in the moment** – research on the fly, it shows your skills and makes it easier to answer questions

Things to Keep In Mind on Both Sides

From my experience, I would recommend that institutions, and candidates, keep the following things in mind when doing virtual interviews:

- **Schedule** – keep time zones in mind when scheduling meetings and breaks
- **Timing** – even online, give yourself time between interviews to prepare
- **Questions ahead of time** – send the questions to your candidates ahead of time, no need for gotchas
- **Zoom links** – create new links for everyone, you don't want to accidentally give away another candidate's details
- **Virtual lunches** – meals are awkward enough for everyone when they're in person, virtual makes it worse, let your candidate have a break for lunch
- **Virtual or in-person** – don't have your candidate come in only to have them sit in a room with a laptop
- **Pets** - pets are cute, but they don't belong in an interview, especially if it's not their cute nose that they're showing off

