Social Science Division "What I'm Learning in Library School" Series

May 16, 2018

Student members of SLA from library and information science programs across the United States shared their thoughts and experiences in response to a monthly themed prompt. In the second year, the series was coordinated by first year participant Brianna Marshall.

Introducing the students

01 November 2012

Amy Frazier

I'm currently a second-year student in the Emporia State University SLIM-Oregon program in Portland, as well as the student liaison for the [Oregon chapter of SLA](). I work at the Oregon Health and Science University library writing metadata for the Historical Image Collection, and intern in Collections Information at the Portland Art Museum. I'm interested in digital collections, digital humanities, information literacy, and thinking about the Internet. Whatever happens next, I bet it's going to be pretty cool.

Brianna Marshall

I'm a second year dual-degree Master of Library Science/Master of Information Science student at Indiana University's School of Library and Information Science in Bloomington, IN. I currently work at the IU Digital Library Program, the Cyberinfrastructure for Network Science Center, the Kinsey Institute for Sex, Gender and Reproduction, and the Wells Library Teaching and Learning department. I am also Managing Editor for the blog Hack Library School. After graduating in May 2014, I would like to work with digital projects at an academic or special library. I blog at [Not So Stern Librarian]() and post any projects I work on to my [website](). When I'm not doing library things, you can find me thrifting, quilting, or reading psychological thrillers.

Chealsye Bowley

Hi, I'm Chealsye. I am a MLIS and Museum Studies certificate student at Florida State University. I define librarian as being a curiosity curator. Currently I am a Graduate Assistant in Digital Scholarship working on open access projects at FSU, and am a Curatorial Assistant at Gadsden Arts Center. I've previously worked as a Library Assistant in a public library and as an archives intern at The Revs Institute for Automotive Research. My interests are museums, archives, and storytelling. I'm hoping my career takes me to the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, fingers crossed!

Esther Jackson
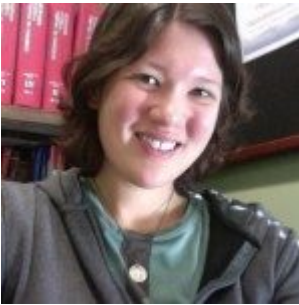
I am in the middle of my final semester, working towards my Master of Library Science at the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York. My focus is on special libraries, with an emphasis on special collections, cataloging and preservation. I also have interests in both social media and digital libraries. I currently work in the Interlibrary Loan Department at SUNY Buffalo, as well as in the Preservation Department. I am also employed by my program for marketing work and desktop publishing, and serve as the president of the Special Libraries Association Student Group at SUNY Buffalo. My other position is at the Western New York Book Arts Center where I am working to organize and their on-site library and archive, which includes a large collection of prints and artists' books. I am active in both SLA and ARLIS-NA, working with members of the later group on a thesaurus project for artists' books to be presented at the annual conference in March of 2013. When I'm not in the library, I'm in the workshop, pursing my interests in book arts and bookbinding, and working on the construction of my first book.

Samantha Barry

I am working on a Master's degree in Information Resources and Library Science at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona. In my previous career, I was a marketing communications professional for 15 years, working as a writer and project manager. I am currently participating in an internship with the Pima County Public Library in Tucson. My project involves social media and storytelling, and I am working under the leadership of the Social Media Librarian. After my graduation in May 2013, I would like to work with public libraries in a

marketing/social media capacity. I volunteer as the Home and School President of my children's school, and in what little spare time I have I read, crochet, and tweet.

Our Library Projects

27 November 2012

Talk about a library-related project you are currently working on (either for class or for work). How does it relate to your post-graduation goals?

Amy Frazier

With the winter break finally approaching, I'm wrapping up work on a couple of big school projects. I've just put the final touches on my first attempt at a digital humanities project for my Information Retrieval and Customization class. I used some basic text analysis tools to search for patterns in the use of color words in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and then I compared those results to the correlations between colors and chapters he proposed in his [Linati schema](#). And then finally I pulled all of that data together in a tidy little heat map-style graph. I'm not sure that my results would stand up to scrutiny by Joycean scholars, but it gave me a chance to dip my proverbial toe in the digital humanities waters and play around with some new toys.

And then for my Digital Collections class, I'm working on constructing my very own little digital collection of 19th century *[carte de visite](#)* portrait photography. It has let me work with concepts of preservation, organization and classification, metadata design and implementation, all kinds of stuff. And it's let me put into practice everything I've been learning in my courses and in my work as an assistant and intern for a couple of other digital collections. I'm deeply interested in how digital tools are going to change our work — not just in the sense of duplicating traditional library services in a digital milieu, but also how we'll be using these tools to do things that weren't possible before. And since I like to learn this stuff by just sitting down and trying it out, I look for opportunities to approach these ideas in every assignment I'm given. Honestly, ever since I began library school I've never had fewer than three or four projects going at once between my classes, my jobs, and my own independent study on the side. At this point, I don't think I'd even know what to do with myself without a few big projects in the works!

Brianna Marshall

Like Amy, I have also been juggling multiple projects. Lately the project that has been foremost for me has been my volunteer work reorganizing the [Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center](#) Library in Bloomington, Indiana. I have been working on this particular project for the past year with my friend and fellow library student Courtney Brombosz.

This special library faces its own set of challenges. It's a browsing collection in multiple languages (the majority in English, Tibetan, Chinese, or Mongolian, with a small percentage in other languages) and the previously unorganized collection exists in a freely accessible space, without a librarian or steward for the materials. Originally, Courtney and I had grand plans for the library: we wanted to catalog each title and implement some type of checkout system. We soon found that the effort it would take to do these things just wouldn't be feasible, as we are both still full-time students with jobs and other responsibilities. In the spring of 2012, we decided to take a different tack by planning an organizing session to utilize the language skills of the community. With their help, we sorted each book in the library by language and by subject (history/culture, religion/spirituality, language/education, children's, miscellaneous). With the library collections organized and more usable than ever, we held a library re-opening to reintroduce the space to the TMBCC community. We hosted an open house where a local Tibetan book expert spoke and brought manuscripts and artifacts for attendees to see. Courtney and I were even honored with a [khata](#), a Tibetan scarf symbolizing respect and sacrifice, by [Arjia Rinpoche](#), Director of the Center and Tibetan high lama.

While this project is fairly removed from my educational focus of technology in libraries, I think I've enjoyed it all the more because of that departure. It has been gratifying to work with such a fantastic community of individuals. The TMBCC placed a lot of trust in us and our ideas for the space–truly a library student's dream. Courtney and I presented on this experience at this month's Indiana Library Federation Annual Conference; you can view our presentation [here](#).

Chealsye Bowley

Currently I am working on two library-related projects within my jobs that I find exciting for very different reasons.

In my work as a Graduate Assistant for the Scholarly Communication Librarian at Florida State University I am consistently given opportunities to learn, discover, and get involved. Frankly, my supervisor is awesome! In October, my supervisor launched OANow.org, which was inspired by digitalhumanitiesnow.org. Along with my supervisor, faculty and staff from institutions like MIT and Princeton, I help curate the Open Access news source. I select, write up relevant news items, and hit the publish button. I get giddy when my own name appears in my RSS feed! It is exciting to be involved in the conversation as a student. So far in my graduate school experience Scholarly Communications is rarely, if ever, discussed. If it wasn't for my GA position I probably wouldn't be aware it was a possible choice for a librarian career. Although OANow.org primarily serves individuals already interested in open access and scholarly publishing, I really hope some students take advantage of the source.

My other position as Curatorial Assistant at [Gadsden Arts Center](#) requires information organization but rarely involves library projects. However, a recent opportunity to break out my librarian metadata skills presented itself. Every year the Arts Center hosts a Gala, a ticketed dinner party that includes a silent art auction to fundraise for the local museum and education center. The art for the auction is donated from local artists or collectors. As the Curatorial Assistant one of my recent projects is to catalog all the auction donations and put the metadata for the object in museum software called PastPerfect. PastPerfect is also where we organize our membership information, small library collection, and new acquisitions for the permanent collection. I've drawn a lot from my Museum Informatics class for this project, and it is great to use it on a collection of materials I feel passionate about. The experience with using PastPerfect and cataloging the auction items will be useful whether I end up in special collections, museums, or academic libraries.

These two projects offer me a way exercise what I am learning in graduate school. I still have some time to decide which path of librarianship best suits me, but right now I'm thankful for the opportunities to apply my education in tangible ways that will be useful post-graduation to show examples of my work.

Esther Marie Jackson

As part of my coursework towards my MLS, I am working on a directed study at the [Western New York Book Arts Center](#) (WNYBAC), a not-for-profit cultural center in the city of Buffalo dedicated to printing and the art of the book through "education and access for individual artists and underserved communities." It's a fantastic place to work, especially since I also have a personal interest in book arts and bookbinding.

My work at WNYBAC is in their library of commercial books and serials, and also with their collection of prints, broadsides, and artists' books. While called the archives, this is really more of a museum collection, as I am working on cataloging all of the materials on an individual item level. To do this, I have worked with the metadata standards created by the student who previously worked on this project. Based on Dublin Core, some of the fields included deal with attributes such as typeset and other physical descriptors, as they will be of use as searchable fields to the artists and researchers who may use the collection.

I have faced several challenges with this project, with the largest ones being questions of sustainability, simplicity, and legacy. As a library student, it is relatively easy for me to organize a collection using software such as CONTENTdm, Drupal, or Omeka, but as WNYBAC does not have a permanent librarian or archivist, concerns of budget, time, and ease of use for future builders of this collection must be considered.

After graduation, I would ideally like to work in an arts library or a special collection. My work at WNYBAC has given me the chance to make decisions in areas including naming conventions and classification systems, as well as processing, presentation and housing of materials. I have also really enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with an arts organization, as it presents a unique set of challenges for a librarian. I have very much enjoyed my time at WNYBAC, and look forward to applying what I have learned as I move into the professional world.

Samantha Leigh Barry

I am currently working on a social media storytelling project for my internship with the [Pima County Public Library](#) system in Tucson, Arizona. The project involves interviewing patrons, volunteers and library staff to find stories to share in an online format.

Libraries have a million stories to tell and not just through their books. Staff, volunteers, and customers all have their own stories to share. After all, the library exists for and is held together by these people that dedicate their lives to the library, share their community through the library, and enrich their lives through the library.

I am interested in library marketing and PR, so working on a social media campaign is perfect. Since social media is becoming a required tool in the marketing world, I am excited to be more involved in the process and learn how I can use social media as a tool in the library marketing arsenal. I have worked for a semester in the U of A library, but I really would like to focus on public libraries. Through this internship I will get to visit and learn about a variety of library branches and get to discover their unique qualities.

For me, the project will help with the following post-graduate goals:
1. Use my marketing background in a library setting
2. Work in a variety of libraries
3. Create and execute a successful social media program
4. Create new partnerships and buzz about the libraries
5. Develop social media skills and techniques

As an Information Resources and Library Science graduate student at the University of Arizona and an intern with the Pima County Public Library, I am learning more everyday about the wonderful people that embody the library community and the stories of how the library has changed their lives. I have been humbled, gratified and amazed at the loyalty and commitment in the library community, whether it be a volunteer that comes in once a week, a customer that has found an outlet to unlimited resources, or a staff member that has spent 40 years in the library.

Our Classes

29 December 2012

What courses did you take in Fall 2012? Were they required or electives? What were some of the assignments like? What courses did you sign up to take in spring 2013?

Amy Frazier (Emporia State University)

I took three courses for the fall term: a class on management in libraries, a class on information retrieval, and a class on digital initiatives. The management class was the standard required course for the term, so just about everybody in my cohort was there. The other two were electives that I chose to go along with the digital librarianship track I've sort of devised for myself.

By far my favorite assignment of the term was for the digital initiatives class. Each student produced a small digital collection of their own using [Omeka](#), and I took the opportunity to put together a collection of some 19th-century *[carte de visite](#)* photographic portraits handed down in my family. I already work in a couple of digital

collections for my job and my internship, but this was an opportunity to try out some of the higher-level aspects of a digital collection. I wasn't just digitizing the items or writing the metadata, I was also devising the metadata scheme and writing the [DTD](#), and working out the collection's structure and architecture. Even now that the assignment is complete and the course is over, I still hope to do a little more work on it — there's always stuff I can do better.

Brianna Marshall (Indiana University)

This fall, I took the classes Introduction to Information Science, Public Library Management, and Metadata. Each was a required course: Introduction to Information Science for my Master's in Information Science, Public Library Management for my Master's in Library Science, and Metadata for my digital libraries specialization.

Introduction to Information Science covered a broad array of career paths for someone with the degree, including user experience design, strategic information management and information retrieval. As the title conveys, it's intended more or less as a survey course for the MIS degree. My final project was a presentation on the job of Chief Information Officer.

I am required to take a management course to receive my MLS. My program offers a general library management course that focuses more on academic libraries, but instead I opted to take Public Library Management–even though I have no plans to go into public librarianship. I had heard excellent things about the course and the professor, a local public library director. Most importantly, it was offered in the evening, which is vital to maintaining my full-time 8-5pm work schedule. Without this class I probably would have graduated from library school with very little understanding of public libraries. For our final project, we were required to create and respond to a management situation using outcome-based planning and evaluation. My idea centered on building a [Makerspace](#) and developing programming to encourage girls to get involved in STEM-discipline activities.

My metadata class expanded upon what I learned in workshops on [XML](#), [EAD](#) and [MODS](#) that I took over the past summer by delving into the world of [RDF](#). Joy of joys, it was also offered at night. Our final project was to create a schema on the subject of our choice. My topic? The abundance of dresses in my closet! While I originally planned to work on something more professional, my professor urged us to create a schema about something we knew well, and I know dresses.

I'm looking forward to my classes for the spring. I'm taking 9 credits toward my MIS requirement: Information Architecture, Organizational Informatics, and Systems Analysis and Design.

Chealsye Bowley (Florida State University)

For the Fall 2012 semester I took Information Organization, Museum Object and Museum Informatics. Information Organization is a required course for LIS students, Museum Object is required for the Museum Studies certificate at FSU, and Museum Informatics was an elective course that counts toward both the MLIS and the certificate. Information Organization was all about evaluating search methods and Dublin Core vs. Library of Congress… it felt like a true library course. For Museum Object I curated my own exhibit on the appearances of Halley's Comet in art and history. The exhibit covered historical annals like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and art from the Bayeux Tapestry to recent comic strips. The exhibit is definitely an impossible one, but was a fun one to research. Museum Informatics offered a nice blend of libraries and museums. We worked with a [scrapbook from FSU Special Collections](#) that was made by Gertrude Gilliam who was a Florida State College for Woman student from 1925-29. I learned a lot about Omeka, was introduced to new museum informatics techniques and technologies each week, and developed a a small project,[@Gertrude1929](#), as part of the social media outreach group.

I am so excited for Spring 2013! I am registered for Digital Libraries (got a cool project idea brewing), Copyright Law, and a science literature internship at the [National High Magnetic Field Laboratory](#). I am considering adding a fourth course, either the required Research Methods in Information Studies or the Grant Writing elective. I'm definitely in store for a great Spring semester with a lot of learning.

Esther Marie Jackson (State University of New York-Buffalo)

My fall 2012 semester was a very interesting mix of coursework and internships. Since this was my last semester of library school, I had already completed the majority of my required coursework. During my last semester, my formal classwork included one management course (required), a course on collection development, and an advanced archives course. Outside of the classroom, I did a directed study in the library and archive at the Western New York Book Arts Center in Buffalo, NY, (which I wrote about last month), a special project in preservation work on circulating collection items with Peter D. Verheyen of Syracuse University, and a special project implementing the use of QR codes in the library at Daemen College in Amherst, NY.

The assignments for my classes were as diverse as the courses themselves. A few highlights were in my collection development class (taught by Rand Bellavia of D'Youville College), and in my special project with Peter D. Verheyen.

The final project in my collection development class was to work with two other students and create a collection development policy for a library of our choice. The other members of my group are also interested in going into special libraries, and so we drafted a policy for a fictional collection for a library interested in the freethought and secular humanist movements. Since group work has been so heavily emphasized and encouraged at every step in my program, this final project was a great way to finish up my coursework. Working with my fellow students on this project, I truly appreciated the power that collaborative thinking and a team comprised of thoughtful and intelligent colleagues can really accomplish.

The other part of my semester that I really enjoyed was in a very different area. The special project I did at Syracuse University was uniquely structured. Having met Verheyen during a tour taken by the UB SLA Student Group the semester before, I approached him over the summer about the possibility of doing a special project. His suggestion was to create a course involving preservation work on circulating collection repairs (including spine repairs, recases, etc.). The course was centered on instructional sessions held via Skype. Both of us were excited to try the experiment of applying distance learning techniques to an area as hands-on as preservation repairs, and, thankfully, the experiment was very successful. Through my work on this project, I was able to compile a portfolio of my repair work, and also begin to explore the realm of bookbinding.

Since I am done with my degree, I have not signed up for any courses in the Spring of 2013. However, I will soon be starting a short cataloging internship in the Cary Graphic Arts Collection at the Rochester Institute of Technology as I apply for jobs. Beyond this internship, I hope to begin volunteer work with the Theodore Roosevelt Center in their digitization project, doing both transcription and metadata work. Spring 2013 promises to be a very exciting time, to say the least!

Samantha Leigh Barry (Arizona State University)

This semester I took two classes along with my internship: Information Resources and Services and Information Seeking Behaviors. For me, both of these classes were electives. They complimented each other nicely. The first class focused on services in the library tailored to helping customers seek the information they need, and the second one focused on what drives people to seek information in the first place and how they accomplish finding what they need.

I learned a lot about what drives people to seek information. I really enjoyed the discussions in both classes about information seeking, misinformation, information overload, and how the path can end abruptly. I did not have a lot of library experience prior to seeking my MLS, so also learning how the reference desk has changed and evolved was important to me.

I had to complete a pathfinder for each class, which is something I have never done before. I also had to conduct an information seeking self survey where I chose a topic and tracked and recorded the process and methods I followed to find information on the topic. Both classes also required reflections throughout the semester.

I am excited to be taking a seminar in the Spring titled "Misinformation & Disinformation."

Balancing School and Jobs

29 January 2013

Are you working while going to school? How did you find your job/s, and what are your responsibilities? How do you achieve balance between work and classes?

Amy Frazier (Emporia State University)

I spent most of my first year in library school working the circulation desk at the Oregon Health and Science University Library, doing the usual sort of circ desk things: slinging books, serving patrons, and working on a few special projects. It was a lovely job for which I remain grateful. Students from my school have sort of handed down a couple of those student jobs from cohort to cohort, and I was lucky enough to be given the good word by a friend who preceded me there. I still had to win the job on my own, but having a trusted person give me the tip on the job and then vouch for me was an enormous help. (I have successfully handed it down to another young library student since then. No way that chain breaks on my watch!)

A few months ago, as I transitioned into my second year of school, I was offered a student position in another part of the library, working in the digital collection of the OHSU library's archives. My primary function is to write metadata for the archive's image collection, but I also do a bit of reference support and research, and I help with any other odd jobs that need doing. And then I'm also interning at the Portland Art Museum doing similar work, so I'm definitely learning my way around digital collections this year! The quiet concentration of a more technically-oriented job is such a counterpoint to the busyness of circulation, I feel lucky to have had a range of experiences so early on. Choosing a favorite would be tough, though!

Balance is still a challenge for me. There's so much I want to do, and I want to excel at all of it. But I've had to learn that maybe I can't do everything all at once; one of my big goals for the new term is to get better at measuring out my time and energy. **But I can't imagine going through library school without a library job.** I have genuinely learned at least as much from my work as I have from my courses; my education would be so much poorer without it. The capacity for real-world application, and the opportunity to learn from professional librarians in a living, working library, has totally transformed my time as a student.

Brianna Marshall (Indiana University)

I have always felt that the my real library education occurs when I go to work. In that spirit, I have a whole glut of jobs–five, to be exact, totalling 40 hours per week. (I have to be careful not to go over 40 hours; since I work for IU, I'll find myself in hot water with HR if I surpass that amount.) I work for the Digital Library Program as the Avalon Media System Project Assistant (20), the Kinsey Institute for Sex, Gender, and Reproduction as the Digital Projects Assistant (8), the Cyberinfrastructure for Network Science Center as the Center Assistant (6-10), the School of Library and Information Science as a Faculty Assistant (5-7.5), and the Wells Teaching and Learning Department as an Instruction Assistant (0-2). An assistant wearing many hats! I found out about some of these jobs through my program's listserv and the others from friends and colleagues. I won't go over my exact responsibilities for each, but here's a summary of all the stuff I get paid to do: manage social media and communications for an IMLS-funded open source software project, work on editorial projects and MOOC usability testing, digitize and create metadata for an archival collection, supervise volunteers, assist with organizational/administrative tasks for information science courses, and teach information literacy classes to undergrads (and try to get them to laugh at my nerdy library jokes). My schedule can be a circus but I have so much fun! As you can see from my total hours, there is some fluidity to my schedule. Classes don't always need to be taught and there aren't always projects for me. This suits me just fine. It usually works out to just about 40 hours anyway.

For me, balancing work and classes means two different things: actually being able to fit them into my schedule and not getting burned out. The former has been much more challenging for me in the past, when all of my jobs required 8-5 M-F in-person work. In my new position as a Faculty Assistant, I have the flexibility to work nights

and weekends, and I am extremely grateful for this. To avoid burnout, I've developed good habits that help me stay productive. I prioritize and ensure that I am expending my energy effectively. I know my limits. And **I genuinely love my jobs and the work that I do, which makes the long days worthwhile.**

Chealsye Bowley (Florida State University)

This prompt has such good timing! Last semester I was working as a Graduate Assistant and as a part-time Curatorial Assistant, which worked great for my Fall schedule. Unfortunately, due to scheduling conflicts I was forced to choose between my second job and classes for the Spring semester. I ultimately decided to resign from my Curatorial Assistant job in favor of an internship and on campus law course. It was a tough decision, and I wrote about it in a [post](#) on my personal blog.

I briefly mentioned the jobs that I held during my first two semesters of library school in our [introductory post](#). I found those positions through [College Central Network](#), [GovernmentJobs](#), the FSU SLIS program website, and a university listserv. I worked two part-time jobs during the traditional work week and took online classes at night, and I felt pretty comfortable with the time commitment and schedule. I prefer on campus courses, but online courses are definitely more flexible for a work schedule.

My position as a Graduate Assistant in Digital Scholarship and Technology Services comes with a variety of responsibilities. I primarily assist the Scholarly Communication Librarian with managing [DigiNole Commons](#), FSU's institutional repository. I have regularly written up assessments on the scholarly publishing record of various faculty, currently am writing the DigiNole Commons Annual Report – 2012, and am crossing all my fingers and toes for the FSU Law Review to begin publishing through the repository. It is a great experience, and I've been looking into Digital Initiatives Librarian and Repository Manager positions because of it. Previously I have coordinated plans for Open Access Week and TEDxFSU: Digital Directions in October 2012, developed LibGuides, and created how-to videos for students. Additionally, I cover open access news for [OANow.org](#), which I discussed in our [first post](#).

Balancing work and classes is pretty easy for me, since I prefer to stay busy. But **balancing work, classes, relationships, and sleeping can be tricky!** I plan ahead to get homework done the weekend before, make sure I have me time for relaxing and cooking in order to maintain my sanity, and especially choose realistic projects for class that I have a sincere interest in. Often what I chose for group projects has grown out of something I've learned as a GA. I think what helps the most is to enjoy where you work, since it takes up the majority of your time. I'm a night owl, so having to be at work or my internship by 8:00AM isn't my favorite thing but I'm happy once I get there. It is a great gig.

Esther Marie Jackson (SUNY-Buffalo alum)

I made a point during my time in library school to gain as much experience working in different library settings as possible. Some of these positions were volunteer, [such as my project at WNYBAC](#), and a few were paid. Balance between work and school could be tough at times, but my employers were very understanding about my many and varied time commitments, and, so, thanks to that fact, I was able to work roughly 30 hours a week. **The line between work and school started to blur at a point**, which I think is probably a challenge that many students face! I coped with the workload by having a very detailed calendar, an addiction to OmniFocus, and trying not to procrastinate… within reason.

My main goal with the positions I sought out was diversity; I wanted to try out a few different areas of librarianship, not only to learn about different aspects of the profession, but also in order to be a very strong applicant for jobs that might include a variety of tasks. To this end, I very much feel that I was successful. While I volunteered at several cultural sites, worked for the Department of Library and Information Studies at SUNY Buffalo, and also worked in the Preservation Department at UB, I am going to focus on my work in the InterLibrary Loan Department for the purposes of this blog entry, as it was my primary job.

Getting a feeling for a layered and powerful software such as Illiad, as well as understanding best practices in terms of document delivery, (including promptness, quality of scans sent, and an emphasis on customer service –

both in terms of internal and external patrons), really allowed for me to gain experience of how interesting and complex an access services position can be. Though this is not my focus in terms of my current job-hunt, I feel that it is crucially important for anyone working in a library to have an understanding of the jobs and workflow of his or her institution. This position also gave me the experience of being thrown into a situation where I was required to learn, use, and master a variety of software products that I had no experience with on my first day. **While it was a bit nerve-wracking at first, the experience led me to value my ability to learn and adapt quickly in difficult and challenging situations – a vital skill in library land.**

Since my time at library school has ended, I have been working in a volunteer capacity at several libraries and archives in the hopes of building my resume and making myself a more well-rounded and viable candidate as I hunt for jobs. It should be exciting to see where this goal takes me in the next couple of months. I'm on the hunt for more digitization projects and hope to study more about database creation and management. In library school or out, there is never a dull moment!

Samantha Leigh Barry (University of Arizona)

While in the IRLS program at the University of Arizona I have worked two student jobs. I searched and applied for both positions through the University of Arizona's job network online.

My first position was as a Student Web Worker with the University's Main Library in their Instructional Services group. I worked on a team to improved the library's website presence, including the University Libraries and the Center for Creative Photography (CCP) websites, as well as the mobile website. Most of the semester I worked on the CCP's site, which was a great challenge and a lot of fun. My team worked on a new organization for the site, and I also worked individually on new copy for the site. I was able to work with many staff members at both the library and the CCP, and have kept those contacts. You can see the final site redesign at http://www.creativephotography.org/

The next semester I was lucky to get my internship at the Pima County Public library, which I wrote about in a previous post.

This semester I am working with the Marketing and Communications department for the Chief Information Officer at the UA. I will be writing stories about University Information Technology Services (UITS) and research being conducted through the university's high-performance computing services and virtual lab.

Working on campus definitely has its benefits. Even though I take my classes almost exclusively online, being on campus, especially in the library, has given me the opportunity to make many connections. **I have worked with a lot of wonderful people who have given me great recommendations and their help has led to other opportunities**. In fact, I have now applied for two long-term positions through this network, both at the university.

Another benefit of working on campus is that they are flexible with scheduling, since they depend on student workers. I have been able to plan and schedule study time, and since I am also a mother, time to be with my kids.

I hope to continue working at the university after graduation.

Our Productivity Apps, Tools, and Resources

06 March 2013

As a follow-up on last month's post about balancing work and school, what are some productivity tools, apps, or resources that you use to manage your time?

Amy Frazier (Emporia State University)

I use a lot of lists. A LOT of lists. I've tried a few different list-making apps over the last couple of years, but I finally settled on one called Clear because it's simple and functional, and pretty as well. Relying on lists is the one habit I made stick from David Allen's *Getting Things Done*, but it helps a lot. As soon as I know something needs to happen, I put it in a list just so I can get it out of my head; it's when things don't make it onto the list that they drop off my radar. I'm also an avid user of Google Calendar. I can get to it anywhere, and I can keep stuff color-coded and orderly so I don't have to think about it too hard when I refer back to it. Every assignment, every work shift, every meeting goes on that calendar, along with all the personal dates I want to remember.

I keep trying to get in the habit of using something like Zotero or Evernote to organize my academic work, but none of them have really taken hold for me. I do, however, maintain a private subreddit on Reddit where I stash interesting links when I come across them. I spend so much time there anyway, I might as well use it for something productive, right? And Dropbox is fantastic for holding all those pdfs of assigned readings and MLS artifacts for my capstone, and for sharing documents between study group and association members.

The key elements for me are getting everything down in a place other than the inside of my head (where it's sure to go astray), and then making sure that I can access those places from anywhere. It helps me avoid that awful "I feel like I'm forgetting something important" sensation.

Brianna Marshall (Indiana University)

I'm a lot like Amy–lists and my calendar keep me sane! I rely on Wunderlist and Google Calendar to manage my schedule.

I am a Wunderlist devotee. I used to use 37signals Ta-Da List, but when they discontinued development on it I started vetting new list apps. Contenders included Astrid and Teux Deux, but ultimately Wunderlist was the one for me. The development team recently updated it at the end of January, and while it was initially buggy, they've sorted out all the issues and it's back to working great. Wunderlist lives in the cloud so I never have to worry about not having access to it. I am constantly tweaking my lists.

Sometime last year, I made the choice to keep the number of emails in my inbox as low as possible. Now I never have more than ten in my inbox at the end of the day. I respond quickly and archive them, immediately noting any events or deadlines on my Google Calendar and/or Wunderlist. I have been really inspired by Merlin Mann's Inbox Zero. While I don't follow all of his suggestions, his tips have made my inbox a much happier place.

I'm a frequent reader of productivity and lifestyle blogs like LifeHacker, Inc., 99U, and Brazen Careerist. I will openly admit that I go to these sites way more than I go to library blogs and websites–they give my brain a bit of a break from library overload while still keeping me energized and motivated.

Although my next tool isn't for time specifically, you know what they say: time is money. So I'll also mention that I use Mint to track my finances. This is a godsend as far as managing my budget and I still can't believe it's free!

Chealsye Bowley (Florida State University)

Oh, I wish I had a good answer! I don't really use any apps or extra resources to manage my time. I've attempted to try integrating new tools into my routine, but it always feels like something extra to do. So, I stick to classic methods. My syllabi is stacked on my desk, I make weekly homework lists, and take my notes by hand. I will admit that I am particularly talented at oversleeping and am very fond of naps, so the alarm clock app with multiple timers is pretty great!

When it comes to managing my time in the work-school balance, I just aim to keep my time sectioned off. Weekdays are work and internship, two weeknights are online classes, and weekend afternoons are time for homework. If I maintain that schedule, then everything gets done well and on time.

Esther Marie Jackson (SUNY-Buffalo alum)

As soon as I saw the blog prompt for this month, I got very excited. A long-time user of Apple devices, I *love* apps in general, and have a special place in my heart for productivity apps. I have a friend who is an iOS developer, and, as a result, I get to hear about many new and interesting applications as they become available. I've test-driven quite a few productivity apps, and here are my picks. Some are free, some are cheap, and some are an investment. All of them are wonderful, and all of them make my life a lot easier.

1) OmniFocus

Looking for a high-powered and easy to use to-do app? Look no further. This app allows for quick entry, incredibly detailed organization, and syncing between iOS and OS X devices. OmniFocus is the app I use to jot down a quick note about an action item from a meeting, save a link for an article to read later, and set timelines and deadlines for more in-depth projects. All action items are saved in a database, which also allows for restoration of past to-do lists. The catch is the cost. The desktop version is $79.99, the iPad version is $39.99, and the iPhone version is $19.99. It is an investment, but it is worth it.

If you're looking for a cheaper to-do app, Clear is $9.99 for the Mac version and $1.99 for the iPhone version. Not as robust, it has a very nice user interface and a bevy of loyal users.

Falling somewhere in the middle, Things 2 is slightly more robust than Clear, but also pricy. The desktop version is $49.99, $19.99 for iPad, and $9.99 for iPhone.

2) Evernote

Simply put, I love Evernote. It's free, it works well, and it's a nice place to store synced information between devices and the web that can be accessed online. I tend to use it to keep track of things like hours for work, schedules for other people, wireless logins, and books I am interested in reading. I have also used it to take notes for classes, since I found the iPad app to be more user-friendly than GoogleDrive. Evernote is my version of the text documents that used to live in the "misc" folder on my desktop.

3) Google Apps

A cop out! This is not just one app, but, rather, a whole heck of a lot of apps. GoogleDrive in particular makes my life enormously more easy. I use it to collaborate with others, (multiple users can work within a single document), to create polls, and to take notes in documents that will sync between devices. A great thing that I have also recently discovered is that you can download GoogleDrive as an app, (not just as a web service), and keep your Drive documents synced to your hard-drive as well as to various devices. Be still, my heart! If you have the opportunity to take a workshop on Google Apps, (there are various ones offered at my university), I highly recommend it. There are many features in Google apps that even the most savvy user may not discover organically. These apps are free to use if you have a Google account. What's not to love?

4) Agenda

I love the regular old iCal app that comes with Mac OS X, and I even use it on the iPad as well. However, on the iPhone, it is an absolute pain to navigate. Meet Agenda. It syncs with your iCal calendar, looks nicer, and is much easier to use on the iPhone. It's only $1.99, and worth the price. Sometimes it can take a while to load, leading me to resort to Omnifocus as a quick solution, but, for the most part, Agenda is great.

5) Sparrow

Google just bought Sparrow, so you know it's got to be good. Sparrow is an elegant and stress-free way to keep email accounts organized and synced. When I was in school, I actively monitored and maintained five separate email accounts – all through Sparrow. I'm the type of person who likes to keep an inbox at "zero", so this app is

great because it allows me to do that pretty easily. For those who don't archive emails, however, the user experience might be different. It's $9.99, and a bargain.

I could go on about the other apps I'm obsessed with, but, in the interest of space, I'll stop here. I'll also mention that Doodle is great for scheduling, Paper is wonderful for doodling and drawing, (aka brainstorming), Papers is a fantastic (though pricy) PDF manager, and, an oldy but a goody, Dropbox is my favorite remote storage service.

If you're not sure of which apps are right for you, I would suggest asking your peers what they use, and test-driving a variety of products. You may spend a few extra dollars finding the perfect to-do app or calendar app for you, but it is well worth the time and slight expense, in my opinion.

Conferences

02 April 2013

How do you decide whether you will attend a conference or other professional development event?

Amy Frazier (Emporia State University)

I base almost all of my participation in professional activities upon the degree to which I can be actively involved. There are exceptions — sometimes a topic is so compelling that I'll attend just to be able to listen, fly-on-the-wall style. But the great majority of the time, **I want some connection to what's going on: a chance to participate, to talk to people, to engage in some give-and-take of knowledge or ideas.** What's the point of getting together with all these other people if there's not some communal or collaborative element? When a event is great, it's usually because I got to meet some awesome people; when it's disappointing, it's usually because I couldn't find a way to connect to either the people around me or the topic of the event. Not surprisingly, perhaps, I've found so far that I enjoy local/regional events a lot more than national-level ones.

Brianna Marshall (Indiana University)

Whether or not I will be presenting is a large component of whether I attend a conference. I have chosen to present as much as I can at conferences as a student. I have presented at six conferences since starting my graduate program–and I will be presenting at four more conferences just this April! It may seem a little crazy, but I have put a lot of energy into conference presentations for several reasons: 1) To build my CV and get an edge on my classmates, 2) To gain confidence as a public speaker and professional, and 3) To try out different conferences on the cheap so I'll have a better idea of where I will fit post-library school.

Cost–which is hugely tied to proximity of the conference–is a large factor for me. I'm located in southern Indiana currently, so I feel lucky that there are so many conferences within driving distance. It cuts down on the cost a great deal. I also appreciate conferences that are generous with scholarships. I am attending two conferences in April that have funded my attendance (ACRL and the Midwest Archives Conference)!

The conferences I've really enjoyed in the past all included lots of opportunities for socializing. I can only listen to so many talks (and as an introvert, with all the other things going on, if I'm asked to engage in lots of structured professional interactions I'll wilt). But when you take me out of talking about libraries all day long and we can grab a beer in a less formal way, that's where the real connections happen. **I also enjoy seeing mentoring programs and special attempts made to invite graduate students to conferences.** Conferences can be extremely intimidating for graduate students, so I think professional organizations need to be much better in supporting student chapters who can then get students to attend conferences. Having a peer group can make the ordeal of attending a conference seem much more doable.

Chealsye Bowley (Florida State University)

My first instinct when reading about a conference is, *Yes, please. That sounds magical*. I really enjoy conferences. The first conference I ever attended was the Sanibel Island Writer's Conference when I was a sophomore in college. It was a great opportunity to learn, get outside of my personal and school bubble, and connect with other like-minded people. Now as a MLIS student, I know that attending conferences will enhance my education and give me professional development. I wish I could attend even just half of the ones that interest me.

The main factor in deciding whether I will attend a conference is the cost. Flights from Tallahassee, FL to 2013 national conference locations have been in the $350-600 range. Student member registration costs are usually $100-200 and then the hotel prices push the cost higher. Unfortunately, if a conference is outside of the South, I'm not able to afford that on my graduate student budget. Thankfully many conferences offer student scholarships to offset the cost of travel and registration. I will be attending ACRL 2013 thanks to ACRL's Student Scholarship program. This will be my first professional library conference, and I am very excited!

Now the factors in determining if I *want* to attend a specific conference are a lot more positive. I ask myself, *what is special about this conference? How will it develop me as a student and professional?* I want to make sure I get the most out of the conference and that it will help me achieve my professional goals. ACRL 2013 was the perfect opportunity for me, since within my Graduate Assistantship I work in scholarly communications and am interested in continuing within that field after graduation. The conference has many sessions about scholarly communications and its future in libraries. Then, *what am I missing in my program*? Every MLS/MLIS program, no matter how great, cannot provide a student with everything. So, **I ask myself, what would I like to learn that my program doesn't offer? and look for panels or workshops on those topics.** Additionally, my program is 100% online and my only face to face experiences are at work around a small pool of librarians and handful of other GAs. Conferences provide me with the needed personal interaction within the profession and the opportunity to network. Next, *are there hands on opportunities*? I understand the importance of panels, presentations, and talks, but I am a big fan of doing. Librarianship isn't a spectator sport. I have ideas, skills, and a desire for collaboration. Hands-on opportunities at conferences, such as [THATCamp ACRL](), are my favorite aspects of conferences. Finally,*what kind of support is provided by a student scholarship?* Of course there is financial support, but I also look for experience support. Does the conference have a session or breakfast for scholarship recipients? Is there an opportunity have a conference partner or industry mentor? When I attend a conference I seek a collaborative learning experience in order to better myself as a student and librarian.

Esther Jackson (SUNY-Buffalo alum)

When it comes to conference attendance, one of my biggest deciders is money. How close is the conference? How much will travel costs be? Since I am involved in a number of professional organizations, I have been fortunate in that I have had many opportunities to attend regional and national conferences on varying levels of funding. For example, I had the opportunity to attend ALA annual as a Student-to-Staff program participant, receiving free boarding and conference registration in exchange for sixteen hours of work with RUSA and ASCLA. My academic department has offered financial support for conference attendance, as have various student organizations I am involved with.

I really feel that organizations offering scholarships for conference attendance really tend to prioritize participation amongst students and new professionals, and that environment is one I am particularly receptive to. For example, I have had the opportunity to attend two Upstate New York SLA Chapter meetings on student scholarships, and felt warmly received and professionally encouraged on both occasions.

Perhaps I am in the minority when I say that although I certainly have preferences for specific topics in regards to workshops, panels and roundtables, **I don't tend to decide on conference attendance based merely on content.** I have learned through the various meetings and conferences I have attended that I'll always get something out of every session I sit in on – the unexpectedly engaging topics are sometimes even the best ones! In this vein, I try to attend as many sessions as possible whenever I go to a meeting or conference. I like feeling like I have gotten as much as possible out of my time, and, again, I always walk away with something from workshop, roundtable or panel.

At the end of the day, finances aside, the main reason I attend conferences is to network with professionals and to learn about trends and standards within the fields of libraries and archives. (RDA, anyone? Are we excited?) Even events I have attended alone and without funding have given me great networking opportunities, and I feel that this face-to-face contact with people I might not otherwise come interact with is reason enough to attend meetings and conferences. As a student, **networking done during meetings and conferences has led to a collaborative thesaurus project, an internship, and a scholarship**. As a young professional, I am excited to see what will come next.

Our Online Presences

14 May 2013

What type of online presence do you have? Specific areas to discuss include your use of social media, whether you have an e-portfolio, and if you use tools like LinkedIn.

Amy Frazier (Emporia State University)

My web presence is one of the things at the top of my "needs improvement" list once library school is over. It's not that I don't have one — I pop up here and there (case in point, here I am). It's just that I inevitably seem to spend all my energy elsewhere before my blog and Twitter even make it onto my radar.

I do have a pretty thorough LinkedIn profile, and I do have a blog, and I do have a Twitter account, even if I remain uncertain exactly what I'm supposed to do with the latter. 140 characters just isn't enough! The bulk of my web presence currently exists courtesy of the [Hack Library School blog](#), but I hope that as my time as a library student draws to a close, I can start hacking on my own time. **Once I'm no longer cranking out text for grades, I can hopefully get back to writing for the sake of communication and the community it helps sustain.**

Brianna Marshall (Indiana University)

I have tried to be thoughtful about my online presence. I maintain all of the usual suspects: [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and a [website](#) that functions as my online portfolio. I've reserved Facebook for personal use, although that is a blurry line these days since I am Facebook friends with plenty of colleagues and folks in the library world.

It still astonishes me when my fellow students don't have LinkedIn. Many of my peers have just graduated and are now on the job market, so they're signing up and I'm getting a rush of new connections. **As soon as I had a few library jobs I created a LinkedIn page. I wanted my name to be easily findable and knew that LinkedIn would help make that happen. I also needed a virtual rolodex to keep professional contacts handy**, especially since I do not use Facebook for that task. I really appreciate LinkedIn for letting me maintain a complete CV online.

I have a huge amount of respect for Twitter and Twitter users but I haven't yet taken advantage of it. Yes, I have a Twitter handle ([@notsosternlib](#)) and yes, I tweet for my job as Avalon Media System Project Assistant ([@AvalonMediaSys](#)), but it doesn't come easily to me–I'm a rambler by nature. I will say that Twitter is an incredible place to find information and make connections in the library world, as Chealsye notes. I've learned about a lot of opportunities, though I'm not particularly participatory.

Online presences. What a can of worms. When I first decided to go to library school I felt this bizarre, uncomfortable pressure to sanitize any version of myself that could exist anywhere. I thought I needed to be a blank slate so as to not offend someone with my personality. To clarify, I don't think I have a particularly offensive personality–but I heard all the horror stories of "Lock down your social media! You will be judged!" True to some extent, certainly, but also unduly alarmist. If you use common sense and don't put anything online you wouldn't want to be public knowledge, you're good to go. By now **I am confident enough in what I bring to the table through experience that I am comfortable with my online presence as a living, growing,**

dynamic, quirky thing. If that bars a potential employer from wanting to hire me, it probably would not be a good fit anyway. I'm very transparent, an open book, for better or worse.

Chealsye Bowley (Florida State University)

I have a pretty active online presence. The internet is my first love. I'm on [Twitter](#), [Tumblr](#), [LinkedIn](#), and have a [WordPress blog](#) and [personal website](#). I will admit that it can take up a lot of my time. As I'm writing this, it is finals week and I have three blog posts to prepare. But the time invested in my online presence worth it, because I really enjoy being able to connect with other library students and libraries through social media. Recently I used these tools to connect with other library students during [Hack Library School's Day in the Life](#) (#HLSDITL).

My favorite social media tool is definitely Twitter. It provides a way to connect, learn from others, be kept up to date on issues and also have friendly encounters with people across the field. I connected with [Katie Fortney](#), Copyright Policy and Education Officer at California Digital Library, on Twitter through my GA supervisor and because of my interest in copyright. I recently attended ACRL and was tweeting about the conference, and got a tweet from Katie along the lines of, "I didn't know you were here! Are you going to be at Battledecks later or want to get coffee tomorrow?" This is the professional benefit of Twitter. **My favorite part about Twitter is that you can insert yourself into a conversation and begin to establish new relationships. Where else can one ask a question of a world renowned scholar and get an answer within 5 minutes**, or receive (joking) permission from the [Dan Cohen](#), the Executive Director of the DPLA, to break into his house for a DPLA launch party? There are also library conversations on Twitter, such as #libchat on Wednesdays from 8:00-9:30p EST that are beneficial.

Also, if I'm being honest, I wouldn't be in library school without Twitter. In May 2011, I received an e-mail from Change.org informing me of the petition "Tell HarperCollins: Limited Checkouts on eBooks is Wrong for Libraries." The petition was organized by New Jersey public librarian [Andy Woodworth](#) and I started following him on Twitter. Andy is fantastic and is a Twitter user that interacts with his followers. Following and talking to Andy and other librarians on Twitter informed my decision to pursue the MLIS.

My strategy when it comes to my online presence has been that of a concerted battle plan of sorts. Though I have been careful of my virtual footprint for years, entering the job market as a recent LIS graduate presents a unique set of problems. Not only must one be professional, but also informed, networked, tapped-in, and active. It's a little overwhelming! My solution was to attack my online presence in steps. This made everything less overwhelming, and made me more focused on each step.

Esther Marie Jackson (SUNY-Buffalo alum)

1) The most important thing for me as a jumping-off point was to have a [current LinkedIn profile](#). This required a couple of hours of my time, made a lot easier thanks to the setup of the website. LinkedIn will suggest areas of one's profile to add, improve upon, and clarify. As of right now, I don't actively post on LinkedIn, but I'm relatively happy with my profile content, which I feel is a good start. LinkedIn is also my favorite tool **by far** for connecting with people professionally. I do a cursory sweep of my content on this site every month or so, and follow a handful of groups with regularity.

2) Who hasn't done a Google search of themselves? I started using my middle name during undergrad so that I would be easier to find via Google. [A search for "Esther Marie Jackson"](#) turns up 8/10 articles or links about me on the first page, and 5/10 on the second page. [If you add "library" to the search string](#), everything on the first page is about me. While no one really understands Google Analytics, (other than Google, of course), I made an effort to emphasize the pages I really wanted people to see by adding an authorship credit for myself [on my Google+ page](#). (You can read about this initiative [here](#).) I update this profile every time there is a new webpage I want to link to, (such as this blog!), and also periodically search my name on Google to see if there is anything new that I can link to.

3) I have recently joined Twitter, but am not highly active on the site. After being an early adopter of the service in 2007, I lost interest until recently. I have been having fun with the site, and hope to engage more with other users moving forward. I use Twitter exclusively for professional purposes, but I get more library-related news from Facebook, generally-speaking.

4) Someone once said to me that a social media footprint is just as much about what you **do** share as it is what you keep private. For that reason, I've made some of my Facebook profile public. I interact with a lot of classmates and colleagues through Facebook, (I'm lucky to have a very engaged group of friends!), and it is the site I am most active on by far. I'm still working out the kinks of what to share publicly, but I am happy with my choice to maintain an active and public presence on the site. **I feel that this publicness allows for people to get a feel for my personality, which is an important part of any relationship with employers and colleagues.**

5) The area that I have most struggled with is my personal website and online portfolio. I tried out Carbonmade, but didn't feel that it had the customizability that I really wanted. Fairly recently, I created my own website, or at least the framework for one. Right now, it's fairly plain and functional, (thanks, Bootstrap!), but it's a good starting point for future projects. My goal over the next few months is to create a more in-depth portfolio of work products, because this is something I haven't yet done, and something that I feel would be a really great addition to my online presence.

When it comes to one's virtual presence, there is always a new project on the horizon!

Year Two

13 September 2013

Meet this year's bloggers: Brittany, Joel, Brandie, Kenya, Elizabeth, and Timothy!

Brittany Austin

I'm Brittany, and I'm in my second year in the MLIS program at San Jose State University. I also work as an Assistant Librarian in the San Francisco Library at FIDM/Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. I'm active in social media both at work (@FIDM_Library) and at my library school as the SJSU SLIS Social Media Student Assistant. I'm passionate about instruction and information literacy, but I'm also drawn to technology and digital collections. I'm especially excited about the the opportunities for innovation in the LIS field – it's a great time to be working in libraries and with information! When I'm not working in, talking or thinking about libraries (ha!), I'm cooking in my tiny kitchen, satiating my new YA fiction obsession, or taking modern dance and ballet classes. I tweet @DeweyDoofus.
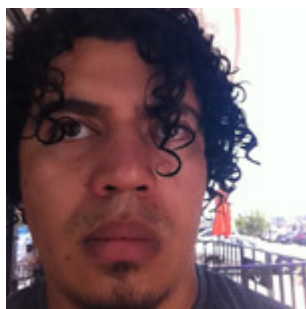
Joel Bowlin

I am a University of Denver student with a heart to serve the underserved community. I plan to work with prisoners in the US prison system after obtaining my MLIS. A mixture of various life events sparked my interest in the prison library system, and I believe my passion for sharing knowledge, books, and writing would be of great value to inmates. I will graduate in the spring of 2014.

Brandie Burrows

I am in my final year as a GSLIS student at Simmons College. Though I attend classes in Boston, I currently live in Portland and work at the Portland Public Library, the Falmouth Memorial Library, and also help coordinate the Friends of the PPL. My interests are information literacy, international librarianship, and gender studies. When not studying, I'm traveling, knitting, photographing, reading, and spending time with my family. My love of travel began when I was a volunteer with the Peace Corps, which is also where my love for libraries and passion for public service began. When I graduate in May 2014, I hope to work in a library abroad before I find an academic or special library to call home!

Kenya Flash

I am a part-time student in Drexel University's iSchool program. I am happily anticipating my formal entry into the world of librarianship in June of 2014. At that time, I hope to engage students' interest in the field of research as an academic librarian. Currently, I am working as an Evening Supervisor at King's College Library in Northeast Pennsylvania, and I anticipate engaging in a practicum there during the winter quarter. My hobbies currently include knitting, reading, and watching an old movie from time to time.

Elizabeth Lieutenant

I'm starting my first semester of graduate school, studying for a Master's of Science in Library and Information Science at the Catholic University of America. I recently relocated from New Jersey to the Washington, D.C. area to fulfill my dreams of living, learning and working in one of the top information capitals in the world. I am currently working as a Library Assistant in the Access Services Department of CUA's Mullen Library, and I will be serving as Secretary for the SLA/CUA Student Chapter. Earlier this year, I completed an archives internship at the Mahwah Museum. Prior to entering the LIS field, I spent 5 years working in retail and financial services settings, focusing on customer service and quality assurance management.

My interests in libraries are diverse, and I am currently excited by: debates surrounding information access, reference and research services for underserved populations, embedded librarianship in online learning environments, digitization projects in information repositories, and visitor experience optimization in cultural heritage settings. When I'm not investigating new volunteer and internship opportunities, I'm exploring my new home-city, visiting one of the many Smithsonian museums, the Library of Congress, and my local public library. I occasionally blog on my [website](#) and excessively tweet [@LizLieutenant](#).

Timothy Ryan

I'm currently in the process of beginning my final semester working towards my Master of Library and Information Science from the University of Buffalo, State University of New York. My current course load focuses on me becoming a potential school library media specialist, but I also have significant interest and experience in special collections, archives, academic libraries, digital collections, and museums. I'm currently the part-time curator and archivist at Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park located in Canandaigua, N.Y. I also created and maintain a [history and collections blog for Sonnenberg](#). After graduation I hope to take the skills I have learned in graduate school and employ them in my current position as curator and archivist at Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion, but I would also like to pursue employment opportunities in either an archival, museum, or library setting including public, school, and academic environments. Aside from my graduate course work and my job as a curator I enjoy spending as much time as possible with my three young boys Preston (9), Hayden (6), and Lawson (4), as well as spending whatever free time I have doing research on the Victorian-era, reading Plato, Leibniz, and Aristotle, as well as trying to improve my golf game.

Student Organizations

30 September 2013

What is your attitude toward student organizations? Are they active in your program, and if so, have you chosen to participate?

Brittany Austin (San Jose State University)

I'm sorry to admit it, but I'm not too active in my school's student organizations – which is a total shame because the student/alumni group, SLISConnect, at San Jose State University has been doing some amazing things with their 23 Things project! I recently signed up for a tour of a local library with my school's ALA student chapter, so I'm trying harder to get involved and meet people. I also follow and interact with student groups via social media.

My attitude towards associations is positive. Since I'm an exclusive e-learner, I don't get many opportunities to meet with others in my program. I really value face to face interaction and networking, but my schedule isn't always so accommodating. Sometimes these groups will host online events, which are helpful, but it's nice to meet people "in the real world." In the past, I've attended a few San Francisco Bay Area SLA meetings and Information Professionals Social Group (IPSC) because the events are close to my work, plus there's usually food and drinks involved! I don't always have the time to start a new project, so I really appreciate the social aspect of student associations.

It's easy to get stuck in a rut or have a limited view of the LIS field, so I enjoy talking to others with experiences different than mine. It's so exciting to hear about the diverse opportunities available – I've met people who do everything from managing a gadget library in a corporate setting to interning in a map library at a university. I also love having a go-to for course recommendations, internship/scholarship tips, future conference buddies and possible project partners.

Overall, I'm into anything that gets me away from the computer screen for a bit!

Joel Bowlin (University of Denver)

Mention student organizations to me and right away I think of Simon & Garfunkel's song, "I am a Rock." Two lines in it stand out because they kind of fit the librarian stereotype: "I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain." One reason the duo gives is:"I have my books and my poetry to protect me." Librarians seem to come across as natural introverts. And when wallflowers are thrown together in a room full of strangers, things tend to be awkward or incredibly silent.

Now I'm not poo pooing student organizations for LIS scholars; I do believe they can be a major asset to students. I do, however, think it's hard to get introverts to be social butterflies when they're not. I find participating in student organizations tough. . . Stranger danger and all.

Yet for some odd reason I want to work in the library field where I'm constantly interacting with strangers. However, it's much easier to deal with intruders one-on-one rather than in a group setting. On the rare occasions I do participate in a student run activity, I can guarantee I'll be both awkward and quiet – just being at the event is a major accomplishment! After all, "I am a rock."

Brandie Burrows (Simmons College)

As an undergraduate I worked full time and therefore didn't have the opportunity to join all the clubs I would have liked. Now as a graduate student, I not only work full time but I also have a family and commute from Maine to Boston for classes. I travel down on the 5am bus and return the same day, making time spent on campus very limited. My lack of attendance does not mean I don't support student organizations, in fact I think they are a great networking tool (though I find that many librarians hate that word), especially for non-traditional or commuter students like myself. Today in class we also discussed the assistance these groups provide to International students who come to school with little or no connections. In addition to meeting other cool librarians in the field, student groups also provide a format to talk about what is happening in the library world outside of the classroom.

There are so many different types of groups offered at graduate schools, the groups are as varied as the students, and Simmons is no exception. Some of the student organizations are listed here. Most groups meet at various

times and days of the week to accommodate students who work. These are three groups I would participate in if I lived in Boston:

Monthly book club meeting hosted by ALASC. Currently the group is featuring Beatley Library's [bibliomysteries](#) collection, which is a collection of mysteries featuring libraries, historians, and librarians.

Simmons chapter of the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) is an organization committed to inscribing the struggle for social justice at the center of the library profession. I am especially fond of the [Pop-Up library.](#)

Panopticon is a special interest group focused on the intersection of librarianship and visual resources. This month they [hosted a viewing](#) of selections from the Prelinger Archives and Ephemeral VHS collections**.**

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

I think that student organizations are a great way for students to feel connected to their institution and associations, which may support their future professions. Not only do they provide enhanced opportunities for scholarship, but they also provide networking and mentoring capabilities that may enhance the student's learning endeavors. I am a member of both DUSLA and the ALA student chapters at Drexel University, and am amazed at the opportunities open to students to explore different avenues within the field. It seems like there is an activity of some type every two weeks or so and varied avenues to become involved.

Given my positive attitude, and belief in student organizations, it is perhaps surprising that I am not very involved in either organization of which I am a member. I find it very challenging to be involved as a distance education student. Many of the opportunities provided are either on-site or at times when it is simply not possible for me to participate. Often, I find the networking opportunities are mid-week and on-campus, or the webinars are provided at times when I am working; I wish that student organizations would provide virtual networking capabilities as well as physical ones, or even access to the transcripts of webinars, which may be of interest. Working full time, as I am, does not lend itself to the same type of access that a traditional graduate student may have; I believe a greater effort needs to be made that reflects the realities of online students.

[Elizabeth Lieutenant](#) (Catholic University of America)

The Catholic University of America's Department of Library and Information Science has student chapters of three professional organizations: [SLA/CUA](#), [CUA-ASIS&T](#), & ALA (called [AGLISS](#)). I'm new to the student organization scene, since my last membership in a student group was back in fourth grade as a member of my elementary school's student council. Even though this is my first semester of library school, I knew I wanted to get involved in a student organization. I began investigating what types of events and activities each group organized right after I enrolled at CUA, and it was frustrating trying to find information on CUA-ASIS&T & AGLISS, since they only had Facebook pages and I'm not on Facebook. SLA/CUA has a great [website](#), and based on some of the cool events they'd organized over the past few years, I was most excited about their group.

My work supervisor, Angela June (Aranas) Kent, is a past-president of SLA/CUA, and she strongly encouraged me to get involved in the group. The first SLA/CUA meeting of the semester was in early August, and I have to admit, I was a bit nervous about taking on a position as a new student. However, I was so warmly welcomed by our group that I offered to serve as Secretary for the fall semester. I also attended my first AGLISS meeting earlier this month. When our faculty advisor, Dr. Sue Yeon Syn, mentioned that she wanted the group to have a website, I jumped at the opportunity. I'm currently in the process of gathering content for the site, and it should be ready by the end of the month. I have yet to attend a CUA-ASIS&T meeting, but I hope to as the semester gets underway.

While many of our student groups' past events have been popular, it's a bit disappointing that so few students are involved in the groups themselves. Getting involved in our school's student organization has already allowed me to meet other students, faculty members, and alumni that I may never have had a chance to otherwise. While

it can be difficult to juggle work and classes, I hope that more CUA library school students will choose to step up and get involved in our student organizations.

Timothy Ryan (University of Buffalo)

As a student at the University of Buffalo enrolled in their Library and information Science graduate program, I have the benefit of being exposed to a variety of student services that are extremely active. Even as an online student completing my masters as part of the University's cohort program, the student services that are offered including the LIS-GSA, Student PLA, and the Student SLA, all reach out and try to include everyone in their various activities and events.

In particular, the Student SLA at the University of Buffalo seeks to support information professionals with the tools and skills necessary to compete in today's information saturated society. The University of Buffalo's SLA, through their on-campus student extension, strives to support students interested in special libraries through integrated events, seminars, and activities in collaboration with local librarians. Even though I live in Rochester, N.Y., the SLA hosts events and activities within my area that allow me to feel part of this wonderful learning community. They are extremely invested and interested in educating fellow students about special librarians' roles and techniques. Some of the things they offer graduate students such as me are that they hold job hunting workshops, host panel discussions about special libraries, seminars on integrating technology, and they offer visits and behind the scenes views of local special libraries. In addition, the services and events offered by the Student SLA provide an opportunity for students to network with their LIS peers as well as library professionals that ultimately provide increased opportunities for learning and establish lasting professional relationships.

Career Preparations

07 November 2013

Is there a particular area of librarianship you want to pursue a career in? If so, how are you preparing yourself during library school?

[Brittany Austin](#) (San Jose State University)

This question is so difficult for me! I've been so fortunate to dabble in many projects at my current job, and there's so much that I love about being a librarian. I work at a fashion college, and I really enjoy working with students and faculty on research and teaching. But I also love working with the back-end of things to organize information and resources. This semester, I'm taking classes that give me skills necessary for working with digital collections – XML and digitization – but I think my true passion is in instruction and working directly with library users. I envision myself developing and teaching workshops or classes in a public or academic setting.

I'm using coursework to supplement my work experience and become more knowledgeable in a variety of areas. I'm still a newbie to the library field, so I'm trying to find the path that's best for me. I try to take a mix of classes that will both strengthen my current skills (e.g. cataloging, instructional design) and give me new skills in unfamiliar areas. I'm about halfway through the program, and I'm frequently tweaking my schedule based on what I've learned and my evolving interests. I want to do an internship, and I'm applying for a fellowship working with special collections. It's important to me to take classes that will give me a strong background on the subject, but also give me hands-on, practical experience. My goal in school is to soak in as much information as possible!

Joel Bowlin (University of Denver)

I'm a bit surprised to find myself interested in working for a prison library. I realize technology-related librarianship such as digitization, e-books, metadata are a hot markets/trends, yet I've no desire to be a tech

person. I'm aware of how to use new technologies, I just have no desire to work with them. I enjoy being around people which is strange since I'm not outgoing. I think it has something to do with simply helping others.

Seeing that I like serving others, I've discovered I like reference. . . And they don't use technology, right? But that's beside the point. I've loaded up on reference related course an thoroughly enjoy it. For years, I've liked law related matters. I find them interesting. I'm not a lawyer so legal reference librarianship was ruled out early. Working in prisons, I suppose, is the next best thing.

Now most librarians know access is a core value of librarianship. Bear in mind I'm a feisty person by nature. How much fun would it be to stick up for prisoners and their right to access materials? Oh I'm sure it's a challenge having to work within the safety, security and laws surrounding prisons. All the research I've done on homework assignments I feel relate to prisons indicate it's quite the challenge working in a prison, but I can't think of a better fit for myself.

[Brandie Burrows](#) (Simmons College)

To be honest, I haven't decided on a career yet. So much about the profession interests me and there are so many avenues one could follow! Early on my advisor suggested that internships are the best way to find out if a job is the right fit and I couldn't agree more. When I started library school I thought I would be a law librarian, I had at one point considered going to law school and even took the dreaded LSAT. The summer after my first year as a GSLIS student I interned at a law library and realized it wasn't for me. I also ruled out children's librarianship after a class focused on children's programming in public libraries. Right now I am working at a public library and really love my job and the public service component, but I am also considering academic librarianship. Perhaps deciding to be an academic librarian is just my way of staying in school forever because I can't believe I am in my final year of graduate school. Currently I am taking a class called Academic Libraries which has piqued my interest to work in academia. I plan on interning at an academic library in the Spring. Beyond internships and classes, I think that networking is incredibly important. I take advantage of any opportunity where I can meet someone new and pick their brain about the profession. This weekend I am attending [NELA's Conference](#) and hope to meet librarians from all over New England.

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

I desire to be an academic librarian. Towards this end, I have engaged in several different avenues to ensure this becomes a reality. In conjunction with my courses, I have done the following:

Explored librarianship – Often in the program, there were assignments that called for interviewing librarians; I engaged these wholeheartedly to find out what the field of librarianship was about and diverse aspects within. Student memberships in ALA and SLA, and Linkedin, as well as open source publications like College Research and Libraries provided insight into this part of the profession.

Cultivated partnerships – I have engaged people on several different levels within my sphere of influence. Though I am an online student, I attempted to build a strong rapport with my professors; I also developed relationships with the librarians and faculty at my place of employment. Currently greater emphasis is placed on librarians developing collaborative relationships across outside of the library; library students if situated appropriately can practice developing these skills.

Investigated new opportunities – It would be the easy to simply be a student and engage in introverted behavior; unfortunately, many of the people who you will be competing with are not doing the same. I consider myself an underachiever in exploring opportunity; and yet, I am working on this blog (thankfully a small time commitment), and I will complete a research guide for a department that has not utilized library resources in a while, assist on a library project, and complete a practicum in the field.

[Elizabeth Lieutenant](#) (Catholic University of America)

There are many aspects of librarianship that interest me, so it's difficult to place parameters on what type of work I envision myself doing. I am strongly committed to certain tenants of the profession which I would support regardless of my particular career path, including: ensuring egalitarian access to information, championing the free dissemination of knowledge, working with and advocating for underserved populations and non-traditional patron groups, and dedicating myself to assist users in their educational pursuits, both formal and informal.

I am particularly excited by: establishing relationships with other educational institutions to enable collaboration, providing outreach services to underresourced patrons to support community development, embedding librarianship in online learning environments to grant remote users equitable access to resources, and optimizing visitor experiences in cultural heritage settings to facilitate informal learning opportunities.

I'm currently following the Generalist track at the Catholic University of America, which will equip me with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to successfully serve a diverse user base within a variety of information settings. I chose CUA in part due to the ability to tailor my course of study (outside of the four core courses) to fit my particular interests. I'm not sure exactly where I'll end up, but I know it will be a rewarding experience along the way.

Ready for the Real World?

10 December 2013

Do you feel ready for life after library school? How does your program prepare you for the job search process?

Brittany Austin (San Jose State University)

I'm ready for life after school, absolutely! I'm applying knowledge and skills from my studies daily as an assistant librarian, but I'm definitely looking forward to less stress and workload (totally my own fault – I'mfinally dropping my class load from 3 to 2 this upcoming semester!). That being said, I don't look at my graduation as the end of my studies – there are so many more learning experiences out there, and my MLIS will open more opportunities for me. After I earn my degree, the work won't stop. There will be plenty other new projects to keep me busy!

SJSU SLIS offers truly amazing career resources, including an awesome career advisor Jill Klees. She leads career webcasts and hosts guest speakers to talk about the job search process or share career advice (see archives here) – anyone can attend these! I also really appreciate that my school publishes an annual report on the LIS job market and emerging trends. Not only is it a great way to research jobs, but it also helps me determine what classes I should take. My school has a great network of students and alumni, so I feel connected to the LIS community. Networking plays a big role in the job search, so Iplan to stay active in associations, attend events and conferences and connect with social media.

Joel Bowlin (University of Denver)

Tick. Tick. Tick. My time is winding down as a MLIS student. To my surprise, when reflecting back, I'm fairly comfortable with what I've learned and pretty sure I'll be a an asset to a library. But I also thought I'd be useful to any newspaper once I got my bachelor's degree only to find out newspapers were closing left and right due to the power of the Internet. Had I known this, I would've put more effort into finding a job as a full time reporter for a newspaper more seriously.

Now that I'm older, more seasoned and aware of how the world works, I've every intention of having a job lined up before graduating. My outlook on life is to just take one step at a time. Worrying does no good, so why bother? School's the same. One credit, one class, one assignment at a time. During the holiday break, I'll spiff up my resume, create generic cover letters, and research interview questions. Come January, I'll take advantage of programs and seminars offered by my school on how to find a job, interview, etc. I realize these programs are

good for networking as well as making in-state professional connections. applying out of state will be a priority. Completion for library jobs around the state. My mind is already made up to leave the state of Colorado. My hope is to get training on how to apply out of state. If not, there will be one persistent MLIS student badgering library directors in other states.

[Brandie Burrows](#) (Simmons College)

I am completely ready for life after library school, and looking forward to it! To prepare I have selected classes that I thought would be valuable to the work I hope to do. I am fortunate to have a great advisor and have gone to her many times to ask specific questions about classes and the job search process. Recently I was applying for a job and she looked over my cover letter and resume and offered valuable feedback. Working closely with my advisor has been crucial.

A useful resource at Simmons is the [Jobline](#), which automatically sends job updates to my email. Even if I don't plan to apply, I find it beneficial to see the experience and skills required for library jobs. The Jobline website also offers other valuable services and provides information for job seekers.

In addition to school work, being proactive is important. Over the last 2+ years I have worked hard to get into the local library system. Knowing I needed library work experience, I was encouraged to become a substitute. While working each shift I could manage I continued to apply for library jobs, recently I was hired for one. I am not sure it would have been useful to finish school and then begin the search process. Maybe it would have led to the same outcome, but I think it has been helpful that the work I perform towards my MLS degree can be immediately applied on the job.

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

Do I feel ready for life after library school? I must admit that I do not. I am aware of how flooded the job market is through several discussions we have had in our courses, and in one course, we discussed the fact that many library positions desire candidates with 2 years of post-graduate experience. Indeed, our professors highlight the importance of becoming involved in different areas and/or different organizations as these will help us upon graduation. I recently noted that the College of Computing and Informatics (formerly the i-School) does have a career-services page with a job-search tool, and the ability to have letters of reference credentialed. This is rather helpful information to know, but Iwish it had been advertised The general Career Development page for the University seems geared towards undergraduates. I believe greater outreach to distance MLIS/MLS/MS graduate students needs to occur. If it were not for advice from my professors, I would not have identified several library job websites such as InsideHigherEdJobs, LibGig, INALJ, or the ACRL residency interest group (which provides information on positions for entry-level librarians). As a member of SLA and ALA,I receive job information, but I am very fearful that my lack of experience as a professional may impact my future candidacy. I have taken steps to enhance my experience, but one wonders if this is enough.

[Elizabeth Lieutenant](#) (Catholic University of America)

I'm only in my first semester of library school, so it's a bit soon for me to say that I'm ready for life post-MLIS. However, I can say with confidence that I will be prepared for the job market upon graduation. CUA's[LIS](#) curriculum equips their students with the core competencies they need to succeed as library and information professionals in a wide variety of roles. In addition, our Department stresses the need for practicallibrary work experience, which is vital for obtaining employment in the LIS field upon graduation. The CUA Libraries has a [Graduate Library Pre-Professional](#) (GLP) program that allows a few students each year to obtain full-time, salaried positions within the Libraries and complete their degree part-time on a Scholarship, in addition to offering part- and full-time job opportunities to MLIS students.

The CUA LIS faculty also provide opportunities to connect with professionals through in-class guest speakers, course fieldwork requirements, colloquiums, and an annual [symposium](#). In addition, faculty are always open to discussing career options and often share job opportunities through our departmental listserv. Our student groups also help to prepare students for their post-MLIS careers. This semester, I've received career advice from

professionals at an [SLA/CUA](#) Knowledge Cafe, served as SLA/CUA's official student representative at a[DC/SLA](#) Open House event, met professional organization representatives at an [AGLISS](#)-led event, and attended a DC/SLA Careers in Library Science panel discussion. In past semesters, our students groups have held resume review and interviewing assistance workshops.

Our New Year's Resolutions

02 January 2014

Do you have any librarianship-related resolutions for the New Year? What would you like to do better or learn more about?

[Brittany Austin](#) (San Jose State University)

Well, I didn't have a librarianship-related resolution, but that's a great idea! My simple goal is to be less stressed next year. I'm taking fewer classes next semester, so that should definitely help. I want to really savor my remaining semesters – focus more on the process and self-reflection, less on the grades and getting everything perfect. My big resolution is to become more involved with the LIS community, both locally and globally. This year I spoke at the [Library 2.0 conference](#) and in 2012, I presented at [Internet Librarian](#) with my colleagues. I want to do more research, public speaking, poster sessions or lead workshops. Not only is this fun, but I can meet more people and learn more about my profession. I'd love to team up with fellow students or other professionals, so get at me if you're interested! I also attended ACRL in Indianapolis which was amazing. I definitely want to attend more conferences in 2014!

I work at a college, so I want to strengthen my relationships with departments outside of the library. For example, I'd like to become more involved in the decision making process regarding student learning outcomes, standards for teaching, faculty outreach, etc. I also see potential work closer with admissions and promote library resources, offer training or workshops for staff and tours. Outside of this setting, I'd love to learn more about how other academic libraries are supporting their students, faculty and staff. Overall, my theme is to become more connected!

[Brandie Burrows](#) (Simmons College)

My mantra for the new year is Just Do It. It's cheesy, sure…but I am the queen of planning and reading and researching, and 2014 is going to be the year that I get stuff done. My professional list of goals include:

1. Do more programs in the library and add some presentations to my resume.
2. Submit at least one paper for publication.
3. Learn a lot about archives from my internship with Maine Historical Society.
4. Do something everyday. One of my goals for 2013 was to read one picture book each day. I really enjoyed this task and hope to replace it with something new…perhaps reading one graphic novel a week.
5. I would love to attend the [ALA conference](#) this year.
6. Find a full time job! Right now I am working 2 part-time positions and hope 2014 will be the year I find something full time!
7. Establish an online professional presence. I have a LinkedIn account, blog, and Twitter account, but I rarely use them.
8. Since school will be over for me January 5th (just have the internship in the Spring to complete), I hope to read more for pleasure. I'd also like to review those books on Goodreads so that I can use that for RA. I read [this](#) book about writing better reviews and hope to put that to use this year.
9. Read more library related blogs (I'd love to know what your favorite blogs are!)

Here's wishing all of you a Happy 2014!

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

In the New Year, I would like to learn more about how to enhance the role of librarians. In my discussions with colleagues and with my professors, it seems that outreach regarding the role of librarians is sorely needed. Indeed, in a recent article on Yahoo, librarianship was discussed as a dying career, and compared with the favorable field of nutrition. How do we let the public know that our roles are increasingly important in a world where information literacy is taken as a given? Society equates the ability to use a computer with the ability to determine its applicability. This misconception may be encountered on several levels: students and newer employees may feel they know how to find information and can determine its utility, faculty and employers feel students and newer employees should know this information, and taking the time to explain it lessens efficiency and increases costs, while various literature sources provide different ways through which we can inform our constituents of our role. In the next year, I would like to explore ways to reach our patrons so they know the ways in which we can support them.

[Elizabeth Lieutenant](#) **(Catholic University of America)**

I've never been a fan of New Year's resolutions, as I tend to start working on my goals as soon as I've prepared a formalized plan of action. I want to accomplish as much as I can during the next two years of my library school career, so keeping my short- and long-term goals in mind is critical to my success. Over the winter break, I'll have a few weeks to reflect on what I've accomplished in the past year and where I want to go. Having just finished the first semester of my MLIS program and returned from my first [professional development workshop](#), I've already begun revising my to-do list. In order to be an effective LIS professional, I need to work on improving my presentation skills. In my former career in the financial services sector, I often conducted brief training sessions with employees, which is beneficial for providing individual reference services but not for presenting in front of an audience. Having completed the majority of my undergraduate degree online, I haven't had many opportunities to develop my public speaking skills. While my peers gave me positive feedback during my in-class presentations, I didn't feel nearly as comfortable as I want to be. By gaining more experience, I will be more confident in my public speaking and presentation skills. I also want to develop my project management skills, which I will to do by participating in one of the many local opportunities available to serve in [SLA](#).

Our Mentors

31 January 2014

Do you have a librarian mentor or another individual who has strongly impacted your path within the field? How did you meet this person and how have they affected you?

[Brittany Austin](#) **(San Jose State University)**

Though I did consider teaching as a career for a bit in undergrad, I never dreamed I would be a librarian. My background is in fashion! My former boss (Adam Elsholz) at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, San Francisco Campus Library was really influential in me starting grad school. He gave me the opportunity to work at my first library. From that point forward, I really blossomed in my role as library assistant. I had a lot of support from my supervisor and we had long, (somewhat!) philosophical discussions on libraries, technology, academia, pop culture, and many other topics. He empowered me to start new projects and dream big. He shaped a lot of my values and ideas on libraries and information, and I feel like I have a great foundation to build on in the future because of this relationship. If it hadn't been for my boss and my coworkers at my job, I wouldn't be on my way to becoming a librarian!

Joel Bowlin (University of Denver)

The qualities I'd like to have in a mentor are fairly easy. I'd like one who knows what he or she is doing, has experience, and is tough yet merciful at the same time. I'd also like one who is humble and listens. In other words, doesn't know everything and is willing to learn from me. I like asking questions. It's one of the best ways I know how to understand something as well as learn from another. So I'd prefer a person who has the patience to answer my questions.

Much as I would like to say I know everything, I don't. It would be appreciated if this individual recognizes I won't be perfect at all the tasks assigned. Realize that I likely won't do everything 100% the exact same way as the person teaching me. It doesn't mean I'd be doing it wrong, it just means I need to tweak what I've learned to fit me.

I also greatly appreciate people who are honest. If I'm not doing something right, tell me. On the flip side, if I am doing something correct, letting me know would be helpful. I will do everything I can to do what is asked of me, however I do need the person teaching me to utilize my creativity and individuality by putting the skills to use in order to make the library better.

[Brandie Burrows](#) (Simmons College)

When I first read this question I couldn't think of just one person who has impacted my path within the field. It really has been a collection of people contributing to my accomplishments and interests. When I was first deciding to go to library school, I talked to as many librarians as possible. What I found was that every librarian I spoke to was super happy with their job. That was huge for me because all the jobs I previously had were with people who really disliked what they were doing. So I credit those first few librarians for leading the way to library school. Next was my advisor and the professors at Simmons. The classes along with interactions with other library students helped me understand librarianship as a profession. Finally there are all the librarians I currently work with. I enjoy watching the collaboration and innovation that goes on regularly in the public library. Today we had a going away party for one of the children's librarians who has been with this library for 30 years. Many parents have shared how they remember coming to story hour with Valerie when they were little, and now she leads story hour for their own children. They are all sad to see her go. Seeing how much she enjoys her work has brought it full circle (and has also renewed my interest in youth librarianship). It confirms that many people, like myself, get into this work for the people. I look forward to future inspiration from amazing librarians in the field.

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

It is hard to say that I have only one person who has impacted my path within the field. There have been so many people along the way who have shown me the road, and how to best travel it. And while that is primarily true, this fall, I met a librarian who works in the same institution that I do, who has truly influenced much of the way I see the field. Her style is to offer insight and knowledge of the field, without treating me with kid gloves. I think quite highly of this approach, because it ensures that I do not have a skewed view of the profession. Often, as graduate students, we become caught up in the ideals of librarianship, and do not see all the complexities involved within the field. My work with her has illuminated why most institutions are looking for persons with two years of professional experience. When one initially hears of this practice by institution, the first question asked is "how am I to gain this experience?" followed closely by "why is it necessary, I have the degree." Through working with her, I realize that most institutions are not equipped to make new librarians "street" ready. Through her influence, I have found myself considering how to reach this stage with my current strengths and weaknesses, and how to find answers in the world of librarianship to the question, "What can I offer?"

[Elizabeth Lieutenant](#) (Catholic University of America)

Out of everyone I've met since I began CUA's MLIS program last August, no one has been more influential to my professional development than my supervisor and recent CUA Alumna, Angela J.A. Kent. Over the past 6 months, Angela has been the impetus for much of my participation with SLA. She encouraged me to get involved with [SLA/CUA](#), gave me networking advice before my first [DC/SLA](#) event, and approved of me participating in this blog series. I had the privilege of attended the [SLA Military Libraries Workshop](#) in December, where Angela was their [Student Stipend Award Winner](#). On the last day of the conference Angela was kind enough to spend some time with me, telling me about what led her to librarianship, her work as past president of SLA/CUA and on two of DC/SLA's Committees, and her long-term goals. She also gave me advice on how to approach my career as a budding information professional and the need to be strategic when taking on new experiences that will help me achieve my professional goals. Today is a happy and sad day for me, as it is Angela's last day as my supervisor. She'll be relocating to Texas soon, and while I'm very excited for this new

chapter in her career, I'll miss her guidance and encouragement. I'm confident she will go on to do incredible things within our profession and continue to inspire future LIS students. Thanks Angela and best of luck!

Transformative Experiences in LIS

03 March 2014

Have you had an experience as a library student that enhanced or transformed your view of librarianship?

Brittany Austin (**San Jose State University**)

I've had so many inspiring moments as a library student, ranging from influential professors to speaking at and attending library conferences. Right now, I'm really having an a-ha moment with a new seminar course at San Jose State University. I'm taking Production of Knowledge and Content in Libraries with Monica Harris. It's a mash-up of learning how people engage and learn with new media and technology, researching gaming and online cultures, exploring and planning DIY and maker movements in libraries and more. The course readings, discussions with my classmate and my instructor's exciting background in library participatory spaces are all making me rethink my purpose and goals in librarianship, and I'm enjoying exploring new ways to work with my library community. For example, at my job at FIDM's library in San Francisco, I'm working together with the student activities coordinator to create a dance appreciation week with dance workshops, guest speakers and movie nights. Additionally, I'm getting some great ideas for my English Composition presentations – more engaging, more collaborative and more fun! I'm working on some proposals for upcoming conferences in California – stay tuned! This class isn't necessarily transforming my view of librarianship, it's just once again reinforcing the idea that I love my job and the work that I do. I feel so excited about the future of libraries!

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

I believe it is extremely easy to get so caught up in library school and in work that one feels isolated. Indeed, the lack of understanding of why one wants to be a librarian may also add a layer of isolation. Attending the ALA Midwinter conference, my first, was transformative for me, because it put a new light on what we are trying to do. From the moment I registered, I met two librarians who were quite engaged, and everywhere you looked were people excited about different aspects of librarianship. Every librarian I have met has been excited about his/her craft, but this was something on a different level. The goal of each librarian was the same, but the faces of librarianship diverged in several ways. It was refreshing to see and be caught up in that atmosphere; it renewed my desire to engage in this world of librarianship.

Elizabeth Lieutenant (**Catholic University of America**)

On the most enhancing experiences of my time as a library school student has been taking one of CUA's core courses, "Libraries, Information and Society." The course covers all the core competencies of our profession, including its history, ethics, and values. Our professor, David Shumaker, constantly reinforced how pervasive the role of information is in our society, and how our skills as information professionals are relevant in a variety of fields. This course firmly deepened my belief that while libraries are important information service providers, librarians cannot and should not be confined within or defined by libraries. I worry that, too often, our profession is transfixed on the institution of librarianship, as defined by the reverence for the tangible library, archive or museum. While libraries as an institution play an important role in our society, librarians can and should play a much larger role in our society beyond "the library." Librarians have the capacity to do great things for our society beyond the traditional roles of librarianship. This is one of the many things I appreciate about SLA. The transformative view of what librarianship is and what it could be in the future is one that I wholeheartedly endorse. Our world is changing at a rapid pace, and our skills can serve an important role in navigating the new information environment. I am excited for what the future of holds, and prepared to go wherever society needs me, even if it's outside of the library.

Our Advice for Future LIS Students

04 April 2014

Based on your LIS experience, what advice would you give to individuals who are considering going to library school?

[Brittany Austin](#) (San Jose State University)

Get real library experience – work, volunteer, intern or just talk to librarians about their jobs! I think this is crucial because it gives prospective librarians a better idea of what to expect. I'm not saying everyone should be an expert before starting library school, but it helps to have a frame of reference. It's also a good idea to research jobs so that you can start to plan classes and determine what career path best suits your passions (librarians are no longer limited to traditional libraries!). In other words, don't start library school because you like to read!

Also, it's important to weigh your options. There are some amazing library schools out there, and each school has its perks. Look at the classes offered, attend webinars or information sessions, watch and interact with their social media, connect with current students or alumni. Before I started school at San Jose State University, I chatted up alumni and did my research. Also, consider your time constraints and current responsibilities. For example, I knew I wanted to continue working throughout grad school so an online school was a big draw for me. Don't forget finances! Look for scholarships before and during school and create a reasonable budget.

[Brandie Burrows](#) (Simmons College)

It's hard to believe that I am nearing the end of my program and can actually answer this question! My response usually focuses on location, networking, and staying organized. One thing I would change about my own LIS experience is I would have lived near my program. I chose to commute two hours to classes and feel that I would have had a better experience had I lived in Boston. I would have liked to participate in some of the events at Simmons, like the knitting group or book club, and attend more of the special lectures and speaking events. Another thing I say is that though you learn a lot of theory in graduate school, it's through applying those concepts in an internship or job that you are able to hone library skills. Because I did not have previous experience in a library, it was difficult to get a job so I started substituting and worked out an internship. This allowed me to get into the library and make valuable connections so that I could apply when jobs finally opened. I think the networks I have created through volunteering, jobs, and internships have been the most valuable connections I have made and have really supported me through school. Finally I would say that most of the people I meet in graduate school have jobs and families, and that makes graduate school very different than undergrad. I learned early on to perfect my time-management and organization skills. At the beginning of every semester I would plan out on a poster board what I needed to accomplish each week to stay on task. It was invaluable and really allowed me to enjoy my time at Simmons.

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

There are a few things I would recommend to those who are considering library school, the first of which is to take the time to know your work personality. By situating your preferences, and your performance style, you can be in a better position to discuss librarianship with a professional, my next bit of advice. Discussing the position with a practitioner is imperative before entering library school, because librarianship is the stuff of ideals, which is increasingly weighted by external realities. One's personality will impact not only the type of librarianship one selects, but also the way in which one handles these realities.

Aspiring librarians ought to get involved as well. This advice is twofold. First, read about what is occurring in the field: become aware of the challenges and the rewards, read job announcements and identify sectors in which librarianship or related careers are experiencing growth, read publications or news related to libraries, etc. Then, and this is very important, work at a library. This advice may not be the easiest to accomplish, given schedules and available opportunities, but it is imperative. The level of investment one has while in library school and after

requires that the individual has some understanding of libraries beyond that of a patron, because as many a librarian can share- patrons can be misinformed.

[Elizabeth Lieutenant](#) (Catholic University of America)

The most important piece of advice I can give to prospective library school students is to be strategic. You should identify what you want to get out of your time in library school before you even apply. For me, that is a solid set of information-related skills that are applicable in a variety of settings. For others, that might be to advance within their current organization or to move into a new information-related position. Be sure to identify what criteria a prospective program must meet before you consider applying. Is it cost, specialization, online delivery, internship and practica opportunities, or location? Then, do your homework on library school programs. If you want to be an information professional, there's no excuse for not doing research on your prospective programs. Review requirements, course offerings, faculty research interests, field study opportunities, everything really (even program presentations, if available). When making your decision, don't rely on the poor methodology of US News and World Report rankings or the questionable presentation of results in Library Journal's Placements and Salaries Survey. Once you've winnowed down your list of prospective schools, make contact. Visit their campus if you have the time and financial resources. Meet with an academic advisor or program coordinator, talk with current students, and sit in on a class or two. While I was pretty sure I knew where I wanted to pursue my MLIS, visiting the programs I applied to solidified my decision, and I couldn't be happier. Good luck!

Our Next Steps

02 May 2014

What's next for you?

[Brittany Austin](#) (San Jose State University)

As my semester at San Jose State University draws to a close, I'm scrambling to finish projects, celebrate birthdays, participate in a poster session at the California Conference on Library Instruction, perform during Bay Area Dance Week and prepare for an exciting summer! I received a fellowship from the Dance Heritage Coalition, funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Starting in late May, I will receive training in Chicago with the other DHC fellows on dance-related archives and preservation. For six weeks, I'll be working with digital collections and exhibits at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Afterwards, I'll be assigned to a six-week practicum at another dance collection. I'm super excited to get started! I'll be blogging again about my experiences, so stay tuned! Here's the link to the previous blogs: http://www.danceheritage.org/imlsfellowshipsfirstyr.html. When I get back from my summer projects, I'll be finishing up my degree for a December graduation. Can't believe I'm so close to graduating! Good luck to all the other bloggers :)

Joel Bowlin (University of Denver)

Ah the sweet smell of freedom and no more homework keeps wafting my way causing me yearn to be done with school. . . Oh wait, I'm pretty much finished. A practicum this summer is the final task I need to do in order to receive my MLIS degree. A mix of both excitement and dread cover come me when I think about completing the program.

On the downside, I'm not looking forward to repaying my student loans, job-hunting, or finding a new place to live. But I suppose it comes with the territory. And I'll adjust accordingly. But why focus on the negative? I'll worry about the other stuff later. It's far more fun to examine the positives.

I'm excited about the plans I have, yet I'm also a realist. Much as I yearn to work in a prison as a librarian, the reality seems to be that a person needs to have a few years' experience under his or her belt. If this is true, my

backup plan is to move to a Spanish-speaking community to learn the language better and, perhaps, to serve in a library where it's predominately Latinos or Hispanic. Another option I been mulling over is to work with young adults again.

Either option is fine by me, but the plan for right now is to live in a Spanish-speaking community while working in a library. If possible, I'd like the library to allow me to work with the prison population as an extension of their services. It's kind of like making a transition into prisons eventually.

Brandie Burrows (Simmons College)

After I graduate (May 9th!!), my one goal is to find a full-time job. I love my job and the work I am doing at the public library, but that job is part-time. Currently I am working a couple of part-time jobs and I am trying to decide if I should just continue to do that and hope that a full-time position will come up at the library in the future, or if I should invest more time looking for something full-time now. I am leaning towards the former since I really enjoy my job and the people I work with.

Last year I traveled to Guatemala with Librarians Without Borders and I loved my experience working with them. I had been looking for a way to stay involved since I returned and recently took a position as Program Manager. With school work and an internship, I haven't been able to devote as much time to the program as I would have liked. Now I will be able to start on some of the many projects we have planned. I also plan on improving my Spanish (which has drastically declined since moving to the Northeast) so that when I travel with them again next year I will be a better conversationalist.

Beyond my professional goals, I hope to catch up on all the books I've meant to read, knit all the sweaters I have on my needles, visit the beach weekly, and go on more bike rides. Life without school work will open up my weekends, and I look forward to that.

Kenya Flash (Drexel University)

In the next year, I will supervise the Circulation Department at Corgan Library in Northeast Pennsylvania. My current supervisor is retiring and I have accepted the position of Circulation Supervisor, so that I may continue to be an influence on King's College campus. I also intend to find diverse opportunities to engage different aspects of librarianship- I will be volunteering at a local public library this summer, as well as begin exploring opportunities to research and possibly publish. I may also return to Drexel University in the fall for two more classes to complete a certificate in Digital Libraries. Thank you for the opportunity to share my experiences with you.

Elizabeth Lieutenant (Catholic University of America)

As my second semester of library school is coming to an end, I've been spending some time reflecting my time in school thus far. I've had so many great experiences and opportunities over the past 9 months it's hard for me to envision all of the exciting things I'll be up to over the next 2 years! I'm currently in the process of arranging a summer internship at one of my dream employers. I'm still waiting for my project assignment to be finalized, so I can't make an official announcement yet, but I'm incredibly excited to work for one of my favorite organizations. I'll also be presenting a poster on embedded librarianship at the Maryland Library Association and Delaware Library Association Joint Annual Conference. I'm a bit nervous about presenting for the first time, but I've found that some of the most rewarding experiences I've had have been those that make me feel a little nervous at the onset. I'll also be attending SLA's Annual Conference in Vancouver thanks to a generous award from DC/SLA. I'm looking forward to learning from the insights of their many knowledgeable speakers and meeting professionals who are actively involved in SLA. I'll be livetweeting conference sessions @LizLieutenant, so feel free to follow me and the conversation at #SLA2014.