What I’ve Learned in Library School (so far)

by Micah Vandegrift

I’m not much of a reader. This is like the worst confession of all time for a librarian-to-be. I just happen to have other interests and surprisingly it was those interests that led me into LIS. I can already hear colleagues and employers fuming, “Why do a degree based on a professional love of books if you don’t read?” Simply because, as I have begun to learn through the degree, library school is much, much more than training in booksmithery.

That said, here is my list of The Things I’ve learned in Library School (so far):

✔ Information Organization is a learned skill. Despite the fact that I hate math, abhor sciences, and barely grasp “data,” I understand that the study of information is fundamental to librarian-ship. The ability to assess information needs of a population and accurately approach data as research are tasks of the trade, and in learning these I become a more effective info-conduit for my

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Florida State Visits ALA, SLA Conferences

Florida State was well represented in June’s perfect storm of annual library conferences. Students J Week-ley and Laniece Miller found time to sample beignets between programs at the Special Libraries Association’s (SLA) Annual Conference in New Orleans, while Rose Simpson, Teresa Nesbitt, Natalie Binder and recent MLIS graduate Maggie Wells attended the American Library Association (ALA) Annual in Washington D.C.

Stay tuned for a rundown of Laniece Miller’s SLA conference experience in the Student Chapter’s August newsletter!
Library School (con’t)

- Libraries are extraordinary social institutions. The phrase that resonated with me when taking library history with Dr. Wayne Wiegand was "Free and Open to All." This concept is subversive enough to be important to our past, current and future socio-cultural contexts.

- Libraries are greater than the sum of their books. (Again, picking on books - sorry!) Concepts like “Information Laboratory” and “Media Center” can more accurately describe some contemporary libraries. Being a media/tech guy, this has been incredibly attractive.

- There are many types of libraries. This blew me away as a new student in the program. There are differences between a public, academic and “special” libraries?! My interdisciplinary radar went off when I realized I could kind of curate my own path through the library world.

- Emerging technology is integral to libraries. As a user/fan of new media & technology this was an exciting selling point for the MLIS. My favorite course thus far was Digital Media Concepts and Production with Dr. Lisa Tripp. Blog for class? OK! Start a Twitter account and connect with information professionals? Yes, please!

- Library school is great training for work in a variety of areas. Thinking about coding websites or how best to meet the real/perceived needs of groups through books, media and info-literacy skills can prepare one for many careers. I am consistently surprised at the possibilities that exist for those with better than average understanding of organization, technology systems, and media.

- Best of all, I am learning that the faculty in library school, especially at FSU, are invested in student’s success. (Am I sucking up? Most definitely.) I appreciate the time and help offered by my professors and hope that all MLIS students have as much investment in building relationships as they do in acquiring skills.

So, have I redeemed the fact that I am not a book person? I will argue that I read a ton, and I enjoy it very much, but most of what I am reading is online and better suited to my interests in emerging technology, social media and digital humanities. That’s my claim, and I’m sticking to it! What are the most valuable things you learned in library school?

Micah writes about library school, technology and everyday professional life at his blog (michavanegdift.wordpress.com), and is active on Twitter (@micahvanegdift).