

Julieann V. Nilson InULA Scholarship Winners' Essays

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This year's Julieann V. Nilson scholarship winners are John W. Davis III, Akron, Indiana and Melissa C. M. Glidden, Muncie, Indiana. Each will receive a \$1000 scholarship. Mr. Davis and Ms. Glidden were chosen from a very competitive group of applicants.

Mr. Davis is a reference librarian at the Fulton County Public Library and a student in the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science, Indianapolis, graduate program. He currently maintains a 4.0 GPA and expects to graduate in August 2013. During his graduate work he developed an interest in legal issues and legal research. In pursuit of this interest, Mr. Davis will complete an internship at the University of Norte Dame Law Library this summer. His recommender noted that Mr. Davis has a "zeal for learning like few others she has met" and that if awarded the scholarship he will "make the most of it... and both learn and contribute a great deal as a result."

Ms. Glidden, is a former teacher and a student in the Indiana University School of Library and Information Science, Indianapolis, graduate program. She currently maintains a 3.7 GPA and expects to graduate in June 2013. Her professional goal is to become a media specialist. Her personal statement reflects an understanding of the evolving role of technology in libraries and information literacy and a need for librarians to participate in research and scholarship. Ms. Glidden's application also reflected a strong sense of professionalism and leadership, particularly in her expression of the need for librarians to engage in advocacy and grant and fund raising work. Her recommender noted that Ms. Glidden is "unfailingly professional, prompt, responsive, thorough—and also creative."

JOHN W. DAVIS III

I believe I was born to do research. My earliest memories are seeing TV shows about Babe Ruth, the Apollo Space Program, and the Titanic. I would beg my parents to take me to the public library so I could read more about these topics. I've always had a thirst for knowledge. My mom would drive me in the evenings to the library. I'd follow the light gleaming through the glass entrance of an old but wonderful Carnegie Public Library, grab the handle, and I would step into my natural habitat. Books were everywhere and I could smell the paper, hear the pages turning, and open the little drawers of the card catalog as if seeking treasure. I remember the excitement when I found what I was looking for and the anticipation of going down the stacks of books. It's never left me and I have fond memories of those trips to the library with my mom. I would read in the seat next to her and say, "Someday I'm going to make you proud."

I first entered the School of Library Science at IU Indianapolis with the goal of obtaining my MLS and state certification for a public reference librarian. I had worked my way up from a reference assistant to head of reference at the Fulton County Public Library. I drove two and a half hours to Indy nearly every Friday because I wanted to experience the classroom environment and interact with the professors and students. This was worth every hour of driving as most classes are now online. But the SLIS program changed me in a way that was most unexpected. I was introduced to the law.

I loved my experience in Indianapolis and soaked up the concepts of intellectual freedom, collaboration, open access, marketing, and search strategies but most of all I was fascinated by legal issues. I've always loved history and each case, statute, or regulation I read had its own story. In my second year of school I made the decision that I was going to pursue law librarianship. I loved researching the law and took every possible law related class or class taught by a professor with a law degree. I had found my true passion, and then my world almost stopped.

In the spring of 2012 my mother's cancer had spread. It was our last Easter together. At the time I was taking Law and Information Policy and reading literally thousands of pages of case law and legal articles for the class. I would sit by my mother's side and she would say, "I want you to finish your homework." As I presented my final project on copyright infringement that spring, my thoughts flashed back to my mom who taught me how to treat everyone with respect, do what's right, and work hard. The tears surprised me as I began to speak. I saw myself as a little boy in the car with the book reading next to my mom. I could almost hear her voice and see her smile. Then I remembered the promise I had made her, regained my composure, and finished the class.

This summer I have an internship at the University of Notre Dame Law Library doing legal research. I am well prepared because of the excellent education I received from some outstanding professors and the work ethic taught to me by my mother and father. When I finish my internship I will have earned my master's degree in library science with an emphasis in law. I want to work, research, and teach in a law library. I want to make sure that essential information is available to everyone and apply the principles I've learned. But most of all I want to honor my mother and pass on her values. Upon graduation, I will take my wife and daughter for a trip. We will drive to a quiet place that I know too well. I will get out of the car, diploma in hand. I will let the tears flow and kneel by her headstone and say one last time "Mom, I've finished my homework, I hope I've made you proud."

MELISSA C. M. GLIDDEN

Every student deserves access to quality information, quality technology, and quality information literacy education, regardless of age, race, or economic status. Not just the students at a private academy in the suburbs, and not just upperclassmen at a public urban high school—every student.

This idea isn't just my philosophy of school librarianship; it is also a strong personal conviction. It is the reason I have sacrificed so much to pursue my master's degree in library and information science at Indiana University, and it's a dream from which my studies and career draw momentum. Research has proven that excellent technology and school library media programs can positively impact the learning culture of an entire school, yet all too often we're seeing these programs either underfunded or eliminated entirely. I want to be a school media specialist and a leader in the field of information technology because I believe it is where I will have the greatest impact as an advocate for students from diverse backgrounds, as well as for the educators that work so hard for them every day.

In the fall of 2008, I began teaching ninth grade English and reading at a high school situated in the Third Ward district of Houston, Texas—notoriously one of the most economically impoverished neighborhoods in the entire city. The school was in a crisis not unfamiliar to many other urban high schools in the country. We had been given an ultimatum: increase academic performance by 2009, or the school will be closed.

That year, I found myself tossing out lesson plan after lesson plan because there were too many students who wouldn't be able to complete the assignments without home access to basic technology, like word processing software. Granted, students did have access to Internet-enabled computers on campus. The lab down the hall could easily seat thirty—if all the computers were

working that day. There were about ten more computers in the library that anyone was welcome to use—at least, when the librarian was on campus and in a good mood. Print resources were either outdated or sparse, and if we had any subscription databases, no one knew about them.

As a trained teacher, I know that students must be provided with opportunities to interact with concepts, and it's no secret that the twenty-first century learner practically requires technology in order to do so. Yet, here was a campus being asked to meet new education standards without any of the tools available to schools in the surrounding, more affluent neighborhoods, or get completely shut down.

The following year, I taught at a high school in Indiana.

This time, when I assigned an essay for homework, there was no conversation about whether or not it could be typed. Students had the privilege of choosing how they would interact with their lessons: videos, blogging, graphic design, and using online subscription databases were just a few of the many high-tech options available to them. Even more importantly, everyone on campus loved the welcoming, buzzing hub of discovery that was their library. The media specialist, Mrs. Anderson, had done a fantastic job preserving, updating, and organizing the school's collection of books and other reference materials. She was also serving as an information literacy instructor, technology consultant, support system, and advocate for everyone in the school, students and faculty alike.

In *Student Learning Through Ohio School Libraries, Part I: How Effective School Libraries Help Students*, researchers concluded that, "An effective school library is not just informational, but transformational and formational, leading to knowledge creation, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination and knowledge use, as well as the development of information values" (Todd & Kuhlthau, 2005). The term "formational" is key, as it is proof that school libraries impact the academic culture of a school. Mrs. Anderson's cutting-edge media center played a vital role in creating a culture of achievement and discovery in her school.

So, how might the academic culture have been different at my school in Houston if there had been a greater investment in its media center? How could new computer labs, print materials, and Internet technologies have impacted my students' confidence and motivation?

Who was advocating for them?

In the future, I expect to become adept at grant writing and fundraising, knowing that the state of our economy has occasionally made it a challenge for libraries to financially invest in the kind of technology that helps new learners synthesize information. I intend to support the tireless work of our teachers and administrators by innovating a school library that gets students of all ages excited about discovery. I also expect to stay abreast of, and even lead, research and publishing activities on the topic of technology integration in education, as well as effective information literacy education.

The school I worked at in Houston was not shut down. Instead, it was overhauled and is now in its third year of becoming a magnet school with an emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics: a STEM academy. I can assume that such a transition would require a new media center lead by a creative, knowledgeable teacher-librarian with strong leadership skills—someone who will ceaselessly advocate for the entire student body, including students and teachers, without prejudice.

A scholarship from InULA would be a privilege and an asset for me, but more importantly, a great honor. Thank you for your consideration.

References

Todd, R. J., & Kuhlthau, C. C. (2005). Student learning through Ohio school libraries, part 1: How effective school libraries help students. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 11(1).