

Julieann V. Nilson InULA Scholarship Winners' Essays

CATHERINE MINTER

Librarian for French & Italian, Germanic Studies,
Classical Studies, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics
Herman B Wells Library
Indiana University Bloomington

This year's Julieann V. Nilson scholarship winners are Erika Jenns, Bloomington, Indiana, and Carrie Watson, Farmland, Indiana. Each will receive a \$1000 scholarship.

The committee was impressed by Erika's eloquent statement, which draws on a wide range of important experience, expresses a philosophy addressing multiple functions of archives and special collections, and conveys enthusiasm and dedication.

We were also impressed by Carrie's well-written and authentic statement, her experience, and her dedication in striving to make library resources more available to those who may otherwise have limited access to them. Specifically, one member of our committee applauded Carrie's clear understanding of how "public librarians stand at the crux of societal information literacy and education goals."

ERIKA L. JENNS

My first experience working with rare books at the Lilly Library led me to change my career goals and to pursue an educational path that will lead to a position in a special collections library. My undergraduate studies in English and psychology were geared toward a career in social work, but after I enrolled in Professor Christoph Irmischer's nineteenth-century American poetry course in which we made weekly visits to the Lilly Library, a future working with rare books and manuscripts was all I could imagine. For the first time I began to consider using the resources available there as tools in my writing. The world of rare books and manuscripts was brand new, exciting, and intimidating, but the user-friendly atmosphere at the Lilly Library gave me confidence as I worked with seven editions of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* for my final project in Professor Irmischer's class. The positive experience I had while working with the Whitman materials encouraged me to take on other projects that would allow me to delve more deeply into the collections at the Lilly Library.

To further investigate my interest in working with special collections, I did a summer internship at the Watkinson Library at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. I began to understand the importance of the special collections library as an institution while modifying catalogue records for 207 volumes by Lydia H. Sigourney. I found ephemera and marginalia between the pages of the texts providing evidence of readers' interactions with them. The Sigourney materials piqued my interest in the book as a physical object with a story to tell, separate from the text, and solidified my decision to pursue rare books and manuscripts librarianship with a focus on facilitating patron use of the unique items these institutions have to offer.

Through my graduate coursework as a dual Master's degree candidate in English and Library Science at Indiana University Bloomington, I have developed a deeper appreciation for primary source materials available at rare books and special collections facilities and their value in research and education. As a reference assistant at the Lilly Library, I look forward to interacting with patrons, setting their minds at ease as they use the collection, helping them find materials, and discussing the main gallery exhibits. I hope that my interactions with patrons provide the same welcoming and encouraging atmosphere that I experienced at the Lilly Library when I first started

researching there. After completing my degrees, I would like to continue working in public services in an effort to promote the use of special collections as a supplemental tool in research and in classroom learning. As a public services librarian, I will strive to increase awareness of the materials available in these institutions and inspire others to use them interactively.

My recent work on the collection of the late Professor Don Belton was largely focused on the idea of promotion and availability. My interns and I catalogued and organized the books in the Belton Collection in order to make them accessible to interested students and faculty members. To further increase the accessibility and visibility of the collection, I created an Omeka webpage with details about each item and supplemental material about Professor Belton. When discussing the project with my interns, I emphasized the importance of making the collection user friendly and asked them each to write a brief essay highlighting an item of their choice. Omeka is a valuable resource and can be useful when implemented in a special collections institution to keep up with the current trend toward digitization.

During my career as a public services librarian, I want to continue working with rare books and manuscripts with an eye toward the digitally focused future in order to ensure the survival of these materials in an increasingly paperless world. I believe that by making these collections available electronically, we can encourage and facilitate the subsequent use of rare books and manuscripts in person. In the long-term, I would like to become a curator of rare books at a special collections library in an academic setting. As I look toward the future, I imagine myself at an institution with a patron-focused environment and am eager to implement procedures that will improve patrons' experiences using special collections

CARRIE E. WATSON

The Farmland Library was organized by private citizens in 1921. In 1924 the town began levying a library tax, appointed a board and became Farmland Public Library. In 1929 the library was given the east room in the town's new city building. You may wonder why this bit of trivia is important. It's important because the long narrow room on the east side of the Farmland City Building, housing what was once the third smallest library in the state of Indiana, is where my love and passion for libraries began.

As soon as I was old enough, my mom registered me for the Summer Reading Program. Summer Reading was the highlight of my summer and I participated every year until I aged out of the program. I still frequented the library regularly and was even offered some volunteer opportunities despite my young age. There was one volunteer day I will never forget. The library was moving from its cramped quarters to a newly remodeled and much larger building on Main Street. On that day, I transported hundreds of books down the street and around the corner in my little red wagon!

Fast forward twenty years...

Many things in Farmland have changed and my life is much different than it was in 1993 but my dedication to the library remains the same. I am currently the Steering Committee Chair of the Friends of the Farmland Public Library. The former Library Director saw the need for a Friends group and asked me if I was up for the challenge. I jumped at the opportunity to help my library! I have learned a lot over the past two years as I have led the Friends group. I have recruited members, led fundraising activities, and organized events at the library. Under my direction we have written a constitution and by-laws and I am working with an attorney to file for 501(c)(3) status. Last summer when the Summer Reading Program kicked off, I found out that there was no calendar of events and nothing planned for the kids. I quickly pulled the Friends together and started planning, organizing and delegating. Within a week we had scheduled guest readers for story time, planned activities for the children, and had volunteers signed up for snacks.

The more I work with the library, the more I wish I could do. I occasionally attend Library Board meetings on behalf of the Friends. During meetings, I would like to speak on certain agenda items but it's not my place. I would like to see changes made in the budget so we could do more with the children's programs. Beyond the children's programs I would like to see programs set up for junior high and high school students. I can see how a partnership with the local school would be beneficial to drawing children and young adults through our doors both as library patrons and as volunteers. I would like to see the library reaching out more to the community. It's my belief that if the library does more for the community, the community will do more for the library.

As you can see, I don't have aspirations to work in an academic library or a large public library. Small towns and small libraries are where my heart is. From 1924 to 1999 there were only six directors at the Farmland Public Library. Unfortunately, the last fourteen years have also seen six directors come and go. Sometimes change is good, but sometimes stability is better. I don't know if I will ever be offered the position of Library Director at Farmland Public Library, but I would love to have the required education so I can apply for the position if the opportunity arises. Even if Farmland isn't where I end up, I know there is a small library out there somewhere that would benefit from my dedication and enthusiasm. The Masters of Library Science degree is my first step to achieving that dream, and a scholarship from InULA will help me on my path.