

Leslie A. Hopper: Statement of Purpose

Submitted as part of the application for the Julieann V. Nilson InULA Scholarship Program

When deciding how to focus my graduate coursework, I thought about my time as an elementary school teacher. I reflected upon my favorite subjects to teach and the ones I felt most passionate about. One day, after reading *A Bad Case of the Stripes* by David Shannon to my first graders, I watched my students sharing their ideas on Camilla's love of lima beans with partners. I then realized that talking and writing about books with students were the most enthusiastic, energetic, and enjoyable moments of the day for me, as well as my students. After making personal connections to the story, the students asked if I could find more books by David Shannon. We went to the school library the next afternoon and found the books together. I knew that if I could spend my entire day focused on books, reading, and students in the entire school that it would be the most rewarding and enriching way to spend the rest of my career.

The school library media center and program should be the nucleus of the school. According to *Information Power*, it should be "a dynamic program that challenges students to create personal meaning from information" (59). An article that provided me with an overall vision for the school media center was Mike Eisenberg's article "This Man Wants to Change Your Job," especially when he discusses advocating your program and being a teacher-librarian. He makes it the media specialist's responsibility when he says "As librarians, it's our job to ensure that administrators, teachers, parents, and decision makers fully comprehend that effective library programs are critical to boosting student learning and achievement." This made immediate sense to me and helped me start to define what my role will be as the school media specialist.

My primary goal as a media specialist is to be a teacher. The teaching role is the most important aspect of this position, and it is the one role that has been overlooked for decades. I embrace the opportunity to make the entire school my classroom and foster an information literate society of learners. My passion for working with children and my experience in a school setting makes me believe a position in a school media center is where I belong. My media center will pulse with students, books, technology, and discussion all day long. Being a school-wide leader and expert in state standards are areas that I take great pride in. The role of a media specialist involves being "a leader of leaders" (Wilson and Lyders 2). Fostering collaboration and supporting the staff are very important to me. Being involved with professional development is also an essential part of being an effective teacher and leader that I look forward to.

I have spent my career gaining knowledge of how children learn to read and how to develop lifelong readers. Most importantly, my exposure to children's literature and resources has allowed me to have engaging discussions with students about reading. My graduate coursework has helped me learn about information literacy standards and technology, aspects of which I have already attempted to incorporate into my daily classroom teaching. Leadership experiences, such as working with our district's Director of Elementary Curriculum on professional development for teachers, have prepared me to be an active and cooperative leader as a school media specialist. While these experiences have most certainly provided the foundation and passion for an active career in the library field, my continuing desire to seek professional activities and development will further my growth and strength in the profession.

Resources

AASL & AECT (1998). *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Eisenberg, Mike. (Sept. 2002) "This Man Wants to Change Your Job." *School Library Journal*. 47-50.

Wilson, Patricia Potter, & Josette Anne Lyders. (2001). *Leadership for Today's School Library*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Rachel Slough: Statement of Purpose

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Academic librarianship is an exciting field that offers opportunities for research, service, and community with those dedicated to learning. Through these roles and opportunities, academic librarianship provides tremendous variety in patrons, job duties, challenges, and possibilities. I hope to work as a Latin American Studies librarian in order to continue to use my Spanish, and to serve others in their search for information in the multitude of areas encompassed by Latin American Studies.

Though it is hard to pinpoint an exact moment when I knew I wanted to be a librarian, the day I finished reading my first novel in Spanish, *La aventura de Miguel Littín: clandestino en Chile* (*The Adventure of Miguel Littín: Clandestine in Chile*) marks an important step in the process. This novel, which describes the ways in which a Chilean exile used film to capture and protest the horrors of the Pinochet regime, allowed me to connect to a language, a culture, and people of which I had previously known very little. Feeling this connection was a powerful experience that I think parallels the work of librarians-to serve as an intermediary between library resources and community members in order to enable these patrons to find and easily access the information they seek. Although this role occurs in all libraries, I am especially interested in the academic library situation due to its great variety, and thereby potential to create many different kinds of connections.

Academic librarians are in a unique position to help many patrons with the crucial skills of finding relevant information from appropriate sources and evaluating them. Information literacy is an issue I find particularly interesting based on my experiences as a peer research tutor. This year, I worked with a Writing Center-Library pilot program that I helped initiate in order to combine my interest in libraries with tutoring skills. Working closely with two supervising librarians, I received library training to assist introductory writing courses with finding library materials to use in structuring arguments. Throughout this process, I observed and presented several instruction sessions. During my first session, I became acutely aware of the challenge of responding to such a wide variety of individual interests, experiences, and attitudes toward the library-even within the undergraduate setting. Some students did not know how to find a book

within the library; most began research with a Google search; none were unaware of the many scholarly resources easily available to them.

While these students had specific research concerns, international students face different obstacles to which I am particularly sensitive after a semester of study at the University of Salamanca in Spain. The foreign language, different organizational system, and in many cases, overwhelming number of available resources, complicate the already difficult process of adjusting to life in a new country. As a Latin American Studies librarian, I would be especially prepared and interested in assisting these students, as well all patrons.

Libraries now are in a crucial time as they continue to discern how to balance the changes in technology to best serve patrons, as well as to change the image of inapproachability and intimidation that the library often holds for students. In support of this goal, I have noticed a renewed commitment at the library of my undergraduate institution since my first year that demonstrates that, as stated in its strategic plan, "students trust that their needs are the library's top priority." This dedication has been demonstrated through providing a suggestion box for new collection additions, implementing a trial program of extended hours during finals week, and offering coffee and cocoa during the last weeks of each semester, among other projects. The variety of these programs demonstrates the creativity involved within librarianship. I hope to contribute in this time of re-definition for academic libraries, to assist both with the current image of the library, and to implement changes that will shape its identity for years to come.

One of the most exciting opportunities for academic librarians is the chance to pursue their own research. Just as they assist patrons in a variety of ways to access information for effective use, they set an example through conducting research. Library research, like much of the work in academic librarianship, offers a great variety of possibilities. From studying how libraries have changed throughout the world to evaluating new programs to meet specific needs, this field offers many opportunities for new research. For my senior honors research project, I explored the way detective novels reflect the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Spain and Chile. Due to severe censorships in both countries during the regimes, popular literature published shortly after the end of the dictatorships offers a particularly enlightening view of each country. In a similar way, censorship and the restriction of information are areas that offer opportunities for library research. I look forward to continuing research I began as an undergraduate in Hispanic Studies, English and music, and to exploring research possibilities within library science.

Overall, academic librarianship offers me a way to use my skills in a variety of ways, allowing me to aid, research, and contribute both to the library and to the academic community. Just as Miguel Littín used film to connect the greater world to the situation in Chile, I would be in the position to connect patrons to a variety of resources. Though I cannot promise that these resources will provide them with life-changing experiences as this book did for me, I would provide sensitivity and a wide range of experiences to better aid library users of all backgrounds- and a passion for the importance of accessing information.

Virginia Vasquez: Statement of Purpose

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The day after I had broken the news to friends and co-workers that I was leaving Hollywood for - gasp - *librarianship*, I got an unexpected call. NBC was interested in my television script. As I continued to plan my move home to Indiana, my options in Los Angeles continued to unfold. I had made the decision once - dissatisfied with the television industry, I was moving home to pursue a career in library science - but I was forced to make the decision again, this time with interviews at a major network and an all-expenses-paid writing fellowship dangled in front of me. Could I walk away from the realization of a dream I had chased for two years toward my new but admittedly less glamorous goal?

With all its allure, the entertainment industry couldn't offer me everything I wanted out of a career. In my time in Los Angeles, I had learned that to be satisfied with my work, I needed to be working for something bigger than myself. I decided I want to work in a field that is, at the core of its mission, having a positive influence on our communities.

The search for such a mission began in my adolescence, when I was first introduced to the idea of community service. My mother is the assistant director of a nonprofit children's shelter, so I had grown up with the conviction that serving the community is an important part of a meaningful life. I believed I was a "good" person and had an interest in helping others, but none of the opportunities presented really spoke to me. I was a wannabe do-gooder without a cause.

This continued into college, where I worked as the IU Honors College Community Service Program Coordinator. I ran the volunteer service program for two years, feeling like a hypocrite all the while. My peers were making a difference in the Bloomington community while I, the program coordinator, couldn't find a social issue that motivated me, nor a project for which I was truly enthusiastic.

In retrospect, I was developing a social consciousness and strong opinions on certain issues; I just didn't know it. A journalism course strengthened my interest in the freedom of information. I found myself speaking passionately about the need for equal accessibility of information and the problems caused by censorship at an Honors College discussion seminar at the main library. While I hadn't figured out how I felt about many social issues, my strong beliefs in equal rights for all citizens, in the essential role of education and information accessibility in the development of good citizens, and in the necessity of the freedom of information were coming together to form my mission.

My passion for public libraries has roots in my childhood. My mother often told me that one of the reasons she fell in love with my father was that though a steel mill worker, he brought home stacks of books from the public library each week. Information accessibility is the great equalizer and it encouraged a factory supervisor from poverty-stricken East Chicago to become an English professor and one of the greatest intellectuals I've met.

Though there is often a correlation between the academic performance of a child and his or her economic situation, public libraries offer children of all economic backgrounds the chance to supplement their public educations. Much of my childhood was spent at the library, where I

learned how to find nonfiction books that interested me. This led to a lifelong passion for learning and self-education. Because a visit to the library is a more self-guided experience than our children's public educations, it encourages them to seek solutions to their problems, find information on topics of their own choosing, and thus develop both their self-reliance and individuality.

I've found that I love to help people and in particular, I love to help people find information. I plan to use my leadership and organizational skills to one day direct a public library, focusing on making public libraries more visible in the community and developing partnerships with nonprofits and special needs groups. But I consider my library career to be a long path and I'd like to start in children's librarianship, where I can develop programs that introduce children to the variety of fun and educational resources at our libraries. An important part of raising a child is preparing him or her to make decisions without our aid - as librarians, we can contribute to that effort by teaching our young patrons how to independently find resources to make informed decisions at every step of their adulthood.