

Empowering the Masses through Libraries!

by Elizabeth Dehne

I've worked in libraries for many years. My undergraduate career was spent in the library, not only studying but working as a student worker to help pay for tuition. By working in this environment, I learned some "secrets" of research given to me by the reference librarians and used them for academic gain.

I enjoyed my time at the library. There is something about being around so much information and understanding how to unlock its potential that empowered me. Later, I worked in a public library where the information sought was different in nature, but with each experience with a patron, I learned something new. I realized that, as a librarian, I am able to continue in my thirst for education and knowledge. With each experience I learn more and thus I become a better librarian and overall person. Upon graduation of university, I decided that I would become a Librarian! I have been accepted to the SLIS program at Indiana University, Bloomington and expect to begin classes Summer or Fall of 2003.

As a librarian, I feel that I hold a great responsibility to the people I serve, to provide access to unbiased and thorough information to anyone who desires it. I am a representative of free speech, and of freedom in general. Anyone, of any race, religion or social status can walk into a library and search for anything that is of interest to them.

What is so unique about Libraries are the many varieties that exist in this country alone. For example, in a university setting, a library is the center of academia. Groups meet in study rooms to work on projects, students find sanctuary among the silent stacks to study for a test or read a favorite book. Most importantly, faculty, students and the general public surrounding the university, search for books, journal articles and other reference materials to aid them further their education, or to educate others.

A public library does just the same, only on a more communal level, meaning, the public library is a large part of the community that supports it. Parents check out books to read to their children, students find books for projects, business enthusiasts search for the latest stock quotes, travelers check out books on tape to make their journey more enriching, the possibilities are endless. I believe that Libraries are the center of community, family and the individual.

Libraries empower people with the weapon of literacy and education. I find this philosophy and environment to be very stimulating and exciting. However, there are many issues to take into consideration as a librarian that will ensure the legitimacy of libraries in the future. It is very important to make sure the general philosophy stays the same, but at the same time nurture evolution along with technological advancements.

"The new digital technologies are eliding the boundaries that used to exist between text and video, between school and society between physical and virtual space. As they do, they also elide the lines we have drawn between student and teacher, learner and mentor and in the case of schools between teacher and librarian."

Information Literacy: the changing library by: Kapitzke, Cushla, Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, Feb 2001 v.44:5 p.1

This is a good example highlighting the basic need to for understanding and promoting technological advancements within Libraries.

My career goals are, primarily, to get a good education and remain up to date on the multitudes of technological advances. Information access will rely more and more on the computer, electronic databases etc. Paradoxically, as a librarian, I understand the importance of the written word inside the pages of a book. Not only must I understand how to preserve these treasures of information, I must also know which books in print will provide a positive addition to the Library's collection.

Being a Librarian is all encompassing, including the technical, and physical aspects of information literacy. However, working with people is another skill that I must constantly strengthen as a Librarian. It is possible that I might have several employees for whom I am responsible for supervision. I must find the balance of management in order to pull the best out of every employee in order to create an environment conducive to learning, for both patrons and the employees. I understand that I must instill the philosophy of Libraries within these individuals and make the library an exciting and enjoyable place to work.

Creating relationships with patrons is on the other end of the spectrum of personal relations, compared to management, but is the most important aspect for the success of a Library. It is necessary for me as a Librarian to understand the importance of service to these patrons, whether they are professors, students, civic leaders or citizens of a community. I am responsible for providing instruction on how to use the Library's resources in order to facilitate their research needs. This could include bibliographic instruction in a university setting, or simply sitting with a patron at a computer, teaching them how to look up a favorite book. This personal aspect of the profession is what drew me initially, because I am curious about everything, including people. As a member of the community, more specifically, a librarian, I use my natural curiosity to experience community events and bring the library ethic into the community circle. Libraries are living and breathing entities, the librarians within its walls should be as well. No longer is the stereotype of an old, shriveled woman behind a desk saying "SHHHH!" at every noise!

I admire the business of libraries; which is much different than what is expected from the corporate level, which is to make money. The business of Libraries is to help people become more well rounded and educated so they can be the best at what they pursue and enjoy the life they have.

As an International Affairs major, I learned about many less fortunate countries, with hardly any freedoms. No libraries exist, much less sustainable housing. Many do not enjoy the rights of free speech, especially against the governmental regime. I strongly feel the need for American citizens to become more educated about the world around them, including their own government. Libraries provide that educational opportunity. I am overjoyed to encourage that opportunity, using any and all means possible.

