

Julieann V. Nilson Scholarship Award Winner Essay

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Libraries are essential to a democracy, providing the public with free and equal access to information and helping to bridge the technology gap. They bring communities together by providing a safe space for all and a gathering space to connect and share ideas. They partner with other organizations to bring new opportunities to the community and support education and literacy through free programs and resources. They preserve and document a community's diverse history, instilling a sense of pride and belonging. I chose the library and information profession because I am passionate about supporting the mission and goals of libraries as a vital community institution. My library career began as an undergraduate, working in my university's library. Shortly after graduation, I found myself working for the local public library. What started out as a part-time job turned into a career when I transferred to the Local History & Genealogy department of the library and found my true calling. I have now worked in the library profession for 20 years, and the majority of those years have been in the archival field as the Local History & Genealogy Supervisor. I have also remained active in the local historical community by serving on the board of directors of the Delaware County Historical Society, serving as library coordinator for the Notable Women of Muncie and Delaware County Project, and by frequently partnering with local archives and museums to create workshops, exhibits, and publications. My work in historical archives allows me to connect with the community in new and unique ways by preserving information and artifacts that provide evidence of the past and support research initiatives, conducting research to uncover and share previously unwritten stories that celebrate our diversity, creating exhibits that help communities make a connection between historical facts and lived experiences, and teaching others the skills they need to become effective researchers themselves. Although I had previously completed library courses to obtain certification, I elected to pursue my MLIS with a specialization in Archives Management to refine my skills as an archivist and apply newly gained knowledge and ideas to the field. Through my coursework I have also delved into the field of digital curation. The world of libraries and archives is always evolving to meet the informational needs of the public, and developments in technology have created new but exciting challenges for archivists in the world of digital preservation. My goal is to continue building on my experiences as an archivist and librarian to better serve the research community through my work to preserve and provide access to information. Libraries and archives are community treasures, and I am proud to be a part of the work they do to educate, inspire, and connect.