

## **Julieann V. Nilson Scholarship Award Winner Essay**

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As a current student in the dual MLS/MA English program and employee of the IU Libraries, I am very excited to apply for the Julieann V. Nilson InULA Scholarship. When I decided to return to school to become a librarian, I knew that I wanted to go into the field of academic libraries. Inspired by the close connections I fostered with the librarians at my undergraduate institution, I was motivated to craft my future career around engagement with students and researchers. I came to IU both because of the strong reputation of its library system and because the dual program allows me to gain experience as an English researcher while providing me with foundational librarianship skills. Since beginning my degree this past fall, my time at IU has only reinforced my interest in academic librarianship while allowing me to explore areas I hadn't before considered. I have always wanted to work in a service-oriented position and specifically love working with young people. Throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate career, I worked in a variety of service positions which involved running an LGBTQ+ Asian American mentorship project at a health care center, organizing a mixed-Asian heritage club at my undergraduate institution, and volunteering as a crisis counselor for The Trevor Project, a suicide hotline for LGBTQ+ youth. All of these positions gave me a greater understanding of different experiences and taught me the importance of uplifting the voices of those around me. They also taught me that I love interacting with people, especially students, which is why I pivoted away from my previous career in laboratory research and into librarianship. I have always loved working to create accepting spaces for all and will continue to bring this philosophy to my time at IU and my career post-graduation. Currently, I work at the Wells Research Desk where I engage directly with students and assist them with a wide range of questions. Working collaboratively with students has given me the chance to learn about their information needs and foster both technical research skills and a curiosity for learning that they can carry with them after graduation. I assist all levels of researchers—from undergraduate students who are encountering university library services for the first time to graduate students who need help researching highly-specialized topics. I am also an Assistant to the Subject Librarians at Wells. In this position I have been able to make LibGuides that highlight the diverse holdings in IU's collections and add books that reflect a broad range of topics written by authors who hold marginalized identities. I assist with classes, answer reference inquiries, and worked on developing a guide for students who need help getting started with their research projects. When I first decided to become a librarian, this is exactly the kind of work that I imagined myself doing—assisting students with research while highlighting diverse voices and perspectives. This work is also closely related to the research that I am doing for my English Masters, which focuses on the letter-

writing and self-publishing of women and other marginalized peoples. As a mixed-race, Asian American woman, I know how important it is not only to see oneself represented in literature, but in academic scholarship as well. I can remember the first book I read that featured an Asian American protagonist, mixed-Asian protagonist, and just a few years ago, a queer mixed-Asian protagonist. Diversity in research texts is just as important as it allows for more global, nuanced, and inclusive arguments in all areas, including theory, history, and literature. This is what I want to encourage throughout my career in librarianship. I hope to continue fostering learning among a wide range of students and researchers in academic libraries. I believe in collaborative teaching that meets patrons where they are at while providing them with information literacy and searching skills that they can apply to all areas of their lives. I believe in advocating for more diverse and inclusive holdings and providing non-academic resources that enrich the lives of students and foster a desire for lifelong learning.