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E-Portfolio

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### Reflective Essay

When I began my studies at Dominican University, I had just started working as a library associate in teen services for the Chicago Public Library. While I had a few years of experience working previously as a page and a circulation assistant in public and academic libraries, this was the first position where I performed formal librarian duties like reader's advisory, reference help, programming, collection development, and library management. Simply put, I was a little overwhelmed and lost. It was fortunate, really, that I began my studies at Dominican the same time I started the position. By pairing my education in the GLIS program with my experiences at work, I was able to resolve issues, incorporate core values, effectively assess my programs, and apply what I learned in class directly to the workplace and vice versa. As an LIS student and librarian-in-training, I found myself contemplating what it meant to be a professional librarian, how to form my personal philosophy, and how to adapt core values of LIS librarianship into practice.

Unlike many who may have dreamed to become a librarian since childhood, the idea of library profession was a new concept for me. It wasn't until I was working on my Masters of Fine Arts in Writing at The School of the Art Institute (SAIC) that I became interested in librarianship. As a form of work-study, I was hired as a circulation assistant at the Flaxman Library, SAIC's academic library. While working there and observing the librarians in action, I was fascinated by how much librarians worked with the public. For some reason, I had always envisioned a library

job to be quiet, introverted, and solitary. As I found out, not only at SAIC but also in my position at Chicago Public Library and through my studies at Dominican University, this is not the case at all. Librarians are very much *helpers*. Their duties revolve around assisting patrons, advocating, marketing, promoting education, and providing access to information, technology, and resources.

For this e-portfolio, I chose specific artifacts and evidences gather from my time at Dominican University that best reflect the five core goals and outcomes of librarianship as expected of an LIS graduate from the school's GLIS program. Looking over my artifacts, a few common themes emerge: youth services, technology resources, and freedom of access. As I mentioned before, I attended Dominican University while also working as a teen library associate at CPL, so many of my course choices were intentionally relevant to my job, as well as my personal interest in technology and art.

Reaching the first goal, which emphasizes professional identity and commitment to the core values, was especially important while I was in school at Dominican University and working for CPL. In my first class, LIS 701 Intro to Library and Information Science, one of the first assignments Prof. Crowley gave us was a short paper reflecting on an informational brief by the New York Comprehensive Center Educational Technology Team concerning instrumental library programs that demonstrate the impact of libraries on the community. Analyzing these various services provided by many different libraries changed the way I saw the potential for the library as a space for learning, growing, creating. The report also opened my eyes to the need to give access to information and technology to anyone and everyone regardless of their socioeconomic and racial status. I was particularly inspired by the "Read Down Your Fines" program offered at NYPL where patrons could opt to read at the library as a way to diminish their fines, which promotes reading and learning in a creative and community-building way.

I am also especially proud of the personal service philosophy I created for LIS 723 Services for Children and Young Adults as a part of our Best Practices Portfolio. In my philosophy, I put weight into the importance of outreach, collaboration, helping the underserved and underprivileged, as well as accessibility for children and young adults with special needs. As someone who enjoys and sees her future in working with teens and children, I feel it is highly important that public libraries provide youth a safe space that fosters learning, literacy of all kinds, creativity, access to technology, and, importantly, the freedom to play.

The second goal involves understanding essential roles of information and relevance to society. For this, I chose artifacts that related to assessing and providing resources for community needs as well as underserved population needs. For LIS 701, I wrote a paper and gave a presentation on how to assist autistic patrons in public libraries. I reviewed other articles and programs offered to support this demographic and emphasized the growing need for public libraries to adapt to help these patrons and their families with staff training, autism-centric programming, sensory storytime, and even physical layout of library spaces. In LIS 723 we created a Summer Learning Challenge proposal and my group did a community assessment of the Lincoln Square, Chicago neighborhood and designed our program to fit that community's needs, specifically through partnering with local schools, community centers, festivals, and businesses.

The experience of doing these community assessments and analyzing and advocating for the importance of the library as a source of free information and a place of learning was especially relevant at my job, where I was able to apply these experiences directly and assess my own library's neighborhood and schools and design specific programs to address their needs and concerns. For instance, I have many parents who are unable to attend the children's librarian's programs during the day in the summer due to work, so I was able to create and

design some children's programs that were technology-focused during the evenings for our summer learning challenge. Also, after completing an inventory for my local high school, I discovered that one of the English teachers had assigned a paper on current topics and I worked with the teacher to present an instruction on databases and evaluating sources to two of her classes. Without the experiences I learned at Dominican University, I don't believe this opportunity would have happened quite as easily or smoothly as it did.

For the third goal, which is about navigating, creating and curating information, my biggest accomplishments were in creating digital information sources. Throughout my time at Dominican University, I was continuously encouraged to create and assess digital resources, which I found to be enjoyable and greatly informative. For LIS 804 with Prof. Huggins we analyzed and assessed many digital tools and media that children and youth are exposed to and developed ways to critically exam these materials and provide youth and parents with ways to assess the usefulness of these materials themselves. Also, at the encouragement of Prof. Janice Del Negro, I took Prof. Gao's Internet Fundamentals and Design course which developed my basic HTML skills and introduced me to other tools such as Bootstrap--a tool in fact I used to create this very website. Other online resources I created include: a Subject Guide for Young Adults and Technology created in LIS 704, a Young Adults and Suicide resource for LIS 722, and two websites that provide book and comic recommendations for children and young adults. As someone who loves technology and feel like digital literacy is key in today's society, knowing how to create these resources and the methods involved are essential for me to become an effective and innovative librarian.

With the fourth goal, which synthesizes theory and practice, my examples include some teaching experiences from Prof. Nemece-Loise's class LIS 723 where I performed ten minutes of a storytime for young children and an unprogram for teens and tweens. In the storytime, I chose

to read Marla Frazee's *The Farmer and the Clown* and I created my own hand-sewn felt flannel board presentation for the learning aspect of the program in which the participants identified emotions through facial expressions of the clown-boy, an important skill for developing empathy in children. The photos from this storytime can be found throughout this e-portfolio website. For the unprogram, which is less about formal instruction and more about self-driven learning and discovery, I used a "pixel art" theme with perler beads and patterns. The teens and tweens, with little instruction, use the beads to make their design which will be melted into a keychain they can take home. The participants are encouraged to look up patterns or test their own designs. I have often used this unprogram in practice at my library with great results and the course taught me how to incorporate books from our collection as well as instruct basic digital literacy skills through the process of looking up other patterns and designs.

Also in LIS 723 with Prof. Nemeč-Loise, our final project was to compile a collection of best practices we found in our research and readings for the course. Discovering how different libraries came up with innovative, technologically driven programs for children, teens, and tweens enhanced the way I created my own programs and allowed for better skills in verbally advocating for newer tech-focused programs and supplies and tech-focused nonfiction books from collections. I gathered cool ideas for programming and was able to implement them in the workplace, such as using conductive thread and ink to teach circuitry to teens and children in my "paper circuits" and "light-up felt decal" programs I recently taught this summer.

Lastly, the fifth goal pushes the need for effective communication and collaboration to deliver, market, and advocate for library services. For LIS 770 Management of Library and Information Centers, I wrote a reflection on the readings discussing the importance of marketing for libraries and how it differs from advertising. Essentially, I argue that libraries should use advocacy and marketing together, focusing on assessing community needs and appealing to

those needs by becoming more visible and outspoken in the community space. Also, for the same class, I wrote a marketing plan for a proposed activity called “Minecraft Me” which promoted the library’s makerspace and vinyl cutter while also appealing to teens and tweens with a video game theme. The marketing plan spelled out all of the various marketing tools such as social media promotion, e-mail lists, school visits, and flyers as well as a description of the program itself. These skills helped immensely in my own self-promotion of my programs and advocacy for the library. I find myself even promoting the library while standing in line at the grocery store and overhear someone talking about 3D printing or a parent lamenting about their bored teenager.

As for collaboration, I’ve worked on many group projects throughout my time at Dominican University. Namely, one group project I enjoyed was working with Amanda Shively and fellow CPL employee, Latrece Hunter, in the creation of a Summer Learning Challenge Project Plan and presentation for LIS 723. Together we assigned tasks, talked through email, skype, and group calls, rehearsed, and worked simultaneously on a digital document through Google Docs. I felt that our group dynamic worked very well despite our differences in personality and the way we researched and performed. The process of this group project from start to execution helped me understand the potential of collaboration and how, together, we can accomplish a lot in a short time with great results.

Overall, my experiences as Dominican University have allowed me to fully realize my potential as a librarian and helped me to understand the core values of the profession and formulate my own personal philosophy. I hope to continue my interests in promoting technology and digital literacy, creating and advocating for teen and tween programming, and as well as designing programs and implementing policies that serve underprivileged or special needs populations. While I intend to continue working at Chicago Public Library, I feel that my courses

at Dominican University have opened the doors for many venues I wish to follow, whether to continue as a teen librarian or approach a position as a children's librarian, an adult librarian, or a management position, and I now have the experience and education to be prepared for any path my future opens for me.