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MSLIS Portfolio

Reflective Essay

In pursuit of a new way to utilize my Bachelor's degree in Communications Media, I came to the library sciences profession with a general interest in curation, preservation, and technology. Reviewing the goals of the program in anticipation of graduating with a Master's degree, I am reflecting on the work that I have done in these last two years toward reaching the goals of library and information science professionals set by Dominican University.

To write about how I developed a professional identity and philosophy, I want to talk about what I learned from each course. Core requirement classes: LIS 701 Introduction to Library and Information Science, LIS 703 Organization of Knowledge, LIS 704 Reference and Online Service, and LIS 770 Management of Libraries and Info Centers, were some of the first ones I took in the program. I also began LIS 753 Internet Fundamentals and Design in my first year. Taking these classes early helped me to develop a better understanding of the librarian's possible roles and what I wanted my role to be.

LIS 701 gave me a general understanding of how libraries are structured and functioning in today's society and what resources they use and maintain to keep consistently delivering Michael Gorman's service goal for librarianship. LIS 701 introduced the relationships of different organizations and the benefits of their membership to various aspects of librarianship. Since then, I've become a member of the Association of Moving Image Archivists and the Society of American Archivists. Taking this idea of an organization created to help librarians and library students find more information about the profession, I have also taken a role as Vice-President of Programming

in LISSA/SAADUC, the Library and Information Science Student Association and Society of American Archivists Dominican University Chapter.

LIS 703 was an intro to technical knowledge for me. Although I had spent a brief year working tech services in undergrad at the North Park University library and four years shelving books as work study at St. Bede Academy in the late 1990s, I had no modern knowledge or experience of how things were structured or cataloged before taking that class. Spending substantial time learning how records were catalogued using MARC or the Library of Congress entries, I learned about how important accuracy, sameness, and repetition are to recordkeeping in libraries, both for ease in finding things and in sharing information with others.

LIS 704 presented a reprieve from the idea that you have to learn and remember every rule and item as the class was about how to find information and create or utilize references. This was the first class that I began to feel comfortable in the profession. Until then, I was still holding on to a mental stereotype that all librarians, because of their higher education requirements, must be the pinnacle of knowledge, perfect and precise with their words and procedures. It was a relief to know that the keeper of all knowledge created lists of helpful links and information, websites and procedures to aid patrons in finding the item or service they need without having to memorize everything.

LIS 770 tapped into my previous knowledge of administration. Having worked as an assistant manager for a decade at Northern Illinois University and a retail manager for a few years, I had an idea how organizations were run with diverse staff, limited budgets, and space constraints that did not always work well for patrons or guests. However, LIS 770 tapped into a greater idea

that librarians as managers faced a different kind of scrutiny than other leaders and administrators that you might find in different professions. Librarians as leaders need to be held to a different standard as public servants. They should stay true to the goals of librarianship, those set by Michael Gorman and any additional set by the organization that employs them, and maintain a neutral public character to serve a variety of patrons without bias. Several of the assignments for this class required an investigation into local or state incidents where good and bad examples of librarians set the goals for future librarians. This class helped me to separate my personal opinions from those of my professional self, while also showing me how to be true to my convictions in new ways. Learning of my desire to see equal access for information and diversity in libraries where advocacy can be limited, I have since become involved in a local political group, Naper Gals, which encourages women to register to vote and engage in politics to see positive change in communities.

I had taken a few classes on web design and basic computer coding in my undergrad career. Although LIS 753 was a review of those techniques and an update of coding terminology, I engaged in usability studies to determine the user needs and access points on websites and learned about the importance of libraries as a platform. These ideas were expanded in LIS 786 Advanced Web Design which taught several different infrastructures that helped to build websites or make content more easily updated by a library system. The ideas from LIS 753 and LIS 786 were also useful in LIS 768 Social Media and Emerging Technology which taught how each library can change the way it interacts with patrons by the way they engage with social media or react to current events on public platforms. The idea of a library as a vehicle for learning is not new, but to interact with people as an entity encouraging their love for learning or providing them an outlet or resource (a mobile hotspot, a place to do taxes, free movie night, educational prizes), the library becomes

elevated into a persona that can be created and formed by the words used in posts, the format and style used to hold that content, and the many ways that content can connect with the user reaching them where they are, changing the idea that the patron needs to physically go to a library building to participate.

LIS 759 Digital Libraries introduced me to the concepts that digital content has to follow specific rules to be catalogued, published, and connected, and that librarians need to be well-versed in all aspects of procedure in order to write grant proposals, stay within budgets, and complete tasks on time. I went into the class expecting to spend a lot of time scanning documents and publishing them to the Internet, but instead came away with a deep knowledge of how important it is to be precise with each task while keeping track of the timeline of the whole project. Technical skills learned in this class went on to aid in my archival work in LIS 775 Introduction to Archival Principles, Practices, and Services, and LIS 881 Advanced Archival Principles, Practices, and Services. The archival classes allowed me to work with many different mediums, taught me the reasons behind why we save things and the techniques and outlets to do so, and furthered my education on how to advocate for preserving information.

The time I spent working with grant proposals in LIS 759 and the knowledge I gained from knowing the life cycle of an artifact in LIS 775 helped me in LIS 886 Records and Information Management where I put together various plans for managing records and information. Record and Information Management plans and schedules determine the need of an organization to save or dispose of records and develop a proper plan to do so. Having had experience with record management and audits at three of my previous jobs, I was pleased to learn better techniques for records management to employ in the future.

LIS 799 Practicum was a test of all my skills and strengths. Working with the Lincoln Park Zoo, I created a version of a record and information management plan that served as the basic instructions for the volunteer internship program. The Lincoln Park Zoo had a number of records that had not yet been categorized and were difficult to search or use by the staff. Items were in several locations and in various degrees of deteriorating formats. By addressing the needs of the organization and defining what tasks needed to be done, I could prioritize what I would finish in my time there and outline several plans to complete the remaining tasks. I used the skills I learned in archive classes to digitize several different forms of media. With varying media formats digitized, I could then use knowledge from web design and social media classes to approach the public relations team with a variety of marketing and promotional materials. Evaluating what that team finds most useful out of the content I have delivered, I can make some notes on which of the future digitization tasks might have the greatest impact, either for incoming donations, display in the new facilities being built, or public relations to encourage patrons to visit. Finally, I created a reference guide, an instructional manual of how I entered each item into the new database so others can follow the same procedure to create continuity between workers.

For my eportfolio, I chose a variety of different projects that I feel most accurately represented each of the five specific goals in my educational career. For my professional identity development, I chose an informational video I made about an organization. The importance of organizations as a resource comes across in this video with clear definition of how it reaches core goals for librarianship. I also chose to show my identity through conference participation. At the Midwest Archives Conference, I networked and saw how archives and artifacts meant different things to each person. From that conference, I have delved into a deeper understanding of the

artifacts of the Chicago World's Fair, the storage of Illinois' governmental records in NARA cave facilities, and different ways records can be used to affect diversity. I took ideas formed in listening to presentations and ran away with them pouring those ideas into research and projects for later archives and records management classes. For the identity goal, I also selected a candid interview with a librarian showing how the actions of the librarian were in line with the goals of librarianship. I think these three things showcase how I define myself as an aware, involved, and evolving library and information science professional who is open to new ideas and learning from peers.

To show how I understand the essential nature of information and its relevance to society, I chose a finding aid, a library reference guide, and examples of information entered into digital archive interfaces. I think these three items show how I understand the nature of information because they each show how the information is created or can be searched by several components and stress the importance of access. Nature can have a dual meaning in archives, an origin and an origination. In archiving or digitization, the origination of the artifact has equal importance of the origin and both need to be accounted for in the records of these in order to preserve the history of that records creation and the values of its time period. In libraries, using the reference guide example, the nature refers to the roots of an idea that a patron might have to find something. If someone wanted information on movies, librarians would use that reference guide along with an interview of what they were seeking to guide that patron to an appropriate selection. The relevance to society from an archives point of view is to preserve a moment of history so that we can look back on it and reflect what that moment means after it is gone. The relevance to society from a technology point of view is that each of these things serves a retrieval function by having many

details or sources input into a computer so information can be spread beyond the single point of entry. As a society that is growing and constantly searching for new connections, information access plays an important role to societal change with every increase of collective knowledge and facts that are entered into educational databases. If we question misinformation, the more facts or proof we have to back up correct information give credibility to the content.

For the goal of navigate, curate, and create information across the spectrum of human records, I have chosen a book review, a usability study, and an example of information entered into MARC fields. I believe that each of these contributes to how librarians can create or curate information significantly. A book review helps to get a brief summary or opinion about what is good in a book or a book's style into the hands of the public who are considering whether or not to read that book. A usability study is a tool used to review and suggest optimization for content on a library website. An optimized website helps users to get to the information they find most useful quickly and not be distracted or bogged down with information they do not need to immediately access. The MARC example (note that it could be replaced with examples from other programs using HTML or XML of EAD or EAC-CPF) serves as a technical note on how the education I received through Dominican University taught me what parts of a book, artifact, or object need to be coded into a library catalog or system in order for it to be viewable and searchable by the public.

For the goal synthesize theory and practice within a dynamic and evolving information environment, I selected an IMLS grant proposal, an internship plan with the Lincoln Park Zoo, and a fictional Records and Information Management plan. Each of these large projects represents the application of technical skills and knowledge that I have gained during my education at Dominican and how they are applied to scenarios within the library and information science career. The grant

proposal shows how cooperation between different employees and the rate at which they get their job done affects the timeline of the project. The internship plan shows how a usability study affects the way that future records are prioritized for digitization. The RIM plan shows how certain tasks will affect the budget and workload of different offices and calls attention to giving certain positions raises or transferring the remaining funds from the budget to offices that will receive an increase of work. Each of these projects addresses the evolving information environment in a different way and more precisely, how the impact of the action of the librarian affects the environment around them and changes the environment through access and service.

For the goal effectively communicate and collaborate to deliver, market, and advocate for library and information services, I chose a case study on the social media of the Naperville Library, a paper on politics and culture in libraries, and a 3-D printing microsite project. The case study shows how much effort was made by a library to promote their content across platforms and if that content successfully engaged the audience. The paper on politics in libraries focused on how a librarian and library board properly or improperly advocates for libraries and their content based on cultural values. The final project is a website that markets a unique educational resource provided by Dominican University. The website shows how a microsite can be different than the formal school website to reach a different audience as well as provide content that is relevant to a specific group of people, in this case students and teachers at Dominican, that might not be relevant as content for the formal website.

I had begun my career not knowing what I wanted to do, then decided I wanted to do everything. One of our initial assignments in LIS 701 was to create a plan of what classes we wanted to take to reach the minimum required for graduation. Each class had to have a reason why it fit

into one of the five goals of the LIS program as well as why we wanted to take it. I initially selected 48 hours worth of classes and three additional certificates. As I learned and grew with each course, I had a better idea of what I didn't want to do professionally and eliminated classes from my potential schedule. I also struggled with a balance between working a full-time job while completing the track to my new career. Although my initial hypotheses why each class fit into the broad goals do not match to what I actually learned from the classes, I can see how far I have come from that first assignment to now. I am proud of my education and hope to never forget the things that I have learned. The mission of Dominican University is, "to prepare students to pursue truth, give compassionate service, and participate in the creation of a more just and humane world." Mission accomplished.