



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“In support of the San José State University mission, the School of Library and Information Science educates professionals to address the information needs of their community, the nature of information and its uses and its supporting technologies through teaching, research, service, and leadership.”

-San Jose State University
School of Library and
Information Science
(SJSU SLIS) mission
statement

After two and a half years, library school is finally over for me. I am relieved to be finished – the ever-present anxiety of yet one more assignment has been stressful. In fact, I have had more than my usual number of those dreams where I have forgotten to drop or attend a class and now there is a final. I have even dreamed about being back in high school, although I couldn’t figure out why I was there and how no one noticed I was older than the other students.

So, it’s good to be finished with that part. However, as with anything worth doing, I find myself reflecting on how I have changed, what I have learned and what I will miss about being constantly engaged in reading, thinking, discussing and writing about new ideas. That part of school has unexpectedly turned out to fill a need I have had for many years: the need to think just for the sake of thinking, and to be

engaged in an exchange of those thoughts with other people. The other students in library school are amazingly insightful, articulate, opinionated and informed. It has been a pleasure having online discussions about everything related to libraries: books, publicity, services, missions, collections, diversity, programming, and more. There have been some lively conversations that have led – at least, in my opinion – to better understandings of the wide range of views on some of these topics.

I have also been impressed – no, overwhelmed – by the backgrounds, experiences and talents my fellow students bring to the program. As I know from my latest class project, the average student age at SJSU SLIS is thirty-nine, which is quite a bit higher than many other library schools. The most likely reason for this is the large array of online, weekend and evening classes that are offered – students can work, be

with their families and still attend class. But also, library science seems to be a field that attracts a high percentage of people who are already employed in libraries or who are professionals in another field. I have attended classes with people who have multiple master's degrees, PhD's, or even law degrees. These professionals bring with them life and work experiences that give them the ability and the confidence to take assignments and make them more than simply homework; instead, they produce papers well worth reading and ideas well worth considering.

Of course, credit should go also to the professors. The online format of many of the classes makes it feasible to have professors from all over the United States and even other countries. While there are some disadvantages to this - for instance, it is challenging to

provide a feeling of community - there is the fact that it is possible to hire librarians who love what they do and are excellent at their jobs. Bringing in enthusiastic experts is one of the best ways to inspire and encourage students toward their own excellence.

As for me, I think the biggest effect has been the connection I make every day between what I do and the profession of librarianship. Storytimes, class visits, reference questions, programs, book selection - all of these are not only crucial aspects of my job, but they are part of an ongoing history of providing public library service to a community. It is a tradition I am proud to embrace.