

Final Reflection

DFW | LIS 590

My DFW took place at the Microsoft Library and Archives, which as a corporate library supports Microsoft employees and business groups with their information and resource needs. These needs include everything from access to newspapers and research databases to e-books and audiobooks to market research content through third-party vendors to curated reading lists on a variety of business and cultural topics. The library also positions itself as a knowledge management center of excellence with information professionals who are able to ensure that the company builds empowered learners by enhancing time for learning, democratizing access to content, and creating spaces for learning. The mission of the Microsoft Archives is to connect internal and external communities to Microsoft's heritage in authentic ways that build trust and pride and enhance the corporate image and culture. (Sources: internal library/archives business plan documents).

I was so grateful for the opportunity to join the Microsoft Library and Archives team for eight weeks and be able to work on interesting and challenging projects with guidance and support from everyone on the team. They really embraced me as a full-time staff member and I got a glimpse into what working for a corporate library feels like and how they are able to support a large, multinational company with an ambitious mission. Several weeks before I started they shared with me an outline and timeline of what projects they thought would be interesting and ones I could contribute to and for the most part the expectations stayed consistent throughout my DFW. One of my projects changed slightly (Expert Insights Playbook)

as we realized the direction it was taking was away from a focus on market research broadly and more narrowly focused on specific third-party firms who could offer MS Library customers an inside look into a specific focus area. The Expert Insights Playbook was the most challenging project for sure since I really was unsure of how to approach it, what topics to focus on and I had to “cold call/email” several companies to see who would be willing to participate. The UX Study was probably the most fun because I got to work closely with a library staff person who I really enjoyed working with and we got to interview employees from around the world and hear about their experience using the library portal and what suggestions they had for improvement. It was so fun! The UX study also had the most focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion because we actively sought out participants who came from different backgrounds, from different countries (Netherlands, China, India, USA) and even one employee with a learning disability so that we could better understand how the portal was or was not meeting their information needs.

The Archives project was the most technical and required the most patience and focus as going through hundreds of videos and carefully searching for them in three different places was challenging at times. I did not get through every single video that needs to be viewed and processed for cataloguing or moved to deletion staging but that was to be expected. There is probably another 20-30 hours worth of work and it was always made clear to me that the expectation was to get through as much as possible with a focus on quality over quantity. (It was still hard for me to just leave the project unfinished and I had to resist the urge to continue working on it after I surpassed 150 hours of work!).

One project that I brought to my supervisor on my own was creating a curated reading list for the library portal around giving and receiving effective feedback. Performance reviews are important at Microsoft and the message around honest feedback is often unclear and most people have difficulty accepting and giving effective and even negative feedback. I wanted to create this list as our review process is coming up in October so I thought it would be timely and useful for employees and nothing like it already existed. I also enjoyed learning more about the library operations process and I helped to onboard the Washington Post onto the library's portal. I enjoy the "behind the scenes" type of work and could see an operations library manager role being something well-suited for my strengths. Finally, being included in all team meetings and several strategy sessions really allowed me to feel like part of the team and that was so important for my overall experience. Being able to listen to the interactions between the team, being asked for my input often, and understanding the business was very useful for my learning. It was always evident to me that the team really values making sure all employees have access to the content they want in the format that works best for them and keeping the "customer" (aka Microsoft employees and business groups) top of mind is always number one.

My experience was not negatively impacted by COVID as I did get to meet with the team in person several times. We likely would have had more interaction in person but the team works well together in virtual meetings and I did not feel that doing most of my work without consistent in-person interaction was negatively affected. I was even invited to two social gatherings (outside) so that was fun, and they made me feel very included. As much work as this summer has been for me, I am so grateful I had this DFW experience and these three credits I earned are probably the most valuable of my MLIS degree so far. I was pushed,

challenged, unsure of myself at times and really stretched my abilities in many ways and I am proud of my final artifacts and excited to have these as part of my MLIS portfolio. I will say that I wish I would have taken Cataloging and Collection Development prior to this DFW. Multiple people on the team who all have their MLIS degrees asked me if I had taken these types of courses and they emphasized their importance in the LIS field. They also stressed the importance to me of just general digital literacy and gaining technical skills whenever possible. To conclude, I will take this experience with me and know that I was able to jump into a new team and learn a great deal in a short amount of time. With minimal direction at times, I was able to complete my projects all while keeping the Microsoft library customers in mind and always centering the work around access to information. I hope that this DFW along with my work experience and an MLIS degree will help me find a position in special libraries as an information professional doing work that I enjoy.

Thank you Helene for all your support and great advice along the way, it was wonderful finally having a course with you!