

**Final Reflection Essay**

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My first reflective journal described the trajectory of my career path that ultimately led me to getting my MLIS. I reflect on this frequently, as sometimes I still cannot believe I was able to find the resolve to leave education, switch careers, and dive into grad school. I have really been enjoying my time in the program so far and I have been learning so much. Like I said in my journal, taking this leap of faith into the library sciences was the realization of a dream I've had for a long time. It really feels like I'm on the right path and I cannot express how excited I am to officially enter the field. As far as all the challenges I discussed are concerned, now that I am at the end of my first quarter, I can say that I have begun adjusting to all the new subject matter, as well as writing in APA format. Both of my courses this quarter were great foundations as well as introductions to the field. I feel as though I have a good foothold in the material and am not feeling overwhelmed or confused. My knowledge and execution of APA still needs some polishing, but as someone who absolutely abhorred it during their undergrad, I must give myself some credit for the progress I have made. The methods I stated in my reflective journal for keeping myself on track were things I leaned on frequently throughout the quarter. I asked questions, I talked to my colleagues, I confided in friends and loved ones, and I always made sure I had a second pair of eyes on my work to help me polish it up. The program so far has really encouraged collaboration and everyone in my cohort has been very open and easy to talk to, including the professors.

In my second reflective journal, I had discussed a situation from my previous place of work that had compromised my values, as well as how I felt regarding certain intellectual freedom issues within the library. The two issues I focused on were the inclusion of indecent or pornographic materials in the library, as well as materials containing hateful rhetoric. I still feel largely the same about them but have spent some time thinking more critically about how they

could be handled. In the case of indecent material, I still believe blanket solutions should be avoided and the problem should be approached on a case-by-case basis. As for materials containing hateful rhetoric, I have come around to the idea that keeping such materials out of the library is a form of censorship and does not stay true to what our duty is as librarians, which is giving people the access and power to make informed decisions on their own. I do, however, believe there is value in being honest about the nature of the materials. Categorizing conspiracy theory materials under “spurious research” is one workaround that I think could be applied to a lot of other things as well. It is still a difficult thing to grapple with, as the thought of putting something like *Mein Kampf* on a public shelf does make my stomach turn a bit. But I am beginning to understand why these materials need to be available.

In my third reflective journal, I discussed mission and vision statements, organizational structures, and the tenets that I believe could help guide public libraries. I still agree that it is important for an employee to resonate with their employer’s mission/vision statements. If you don’t believe in what your institution stands for, or feel no drive to help achieve its vision, the work you do may ultimately be unfulfilling and meaningless. There may also be some areas of conflict if your values do not align with your employer as well, such as the personal situation I discussed in my second reflective journal. I think it’s important to have a sense of purpose in your work, and a feeling of pride for the institution in which you find yourself. In the feedback I received for this journal, I was informed that flattening the hierarchy is becoming increasingly popular in libraries to promote equality in the workplace. I think this is an excellent idea but hearing that there has been pushback from academic libraries was unsurprising. From my experience with those in academia, title is everything. I really hope to see academic libraries, and academia in general, begin to let go of some of their archaic and exclusionary values.

In my fourth reflection journal, I discussed the diversity in my community of Arvada, Colorado. At first, I was not sure if I should write about my city. After looking at the demographics, I saw that it was largely homogenous (young, white, middle class, English speakers), and was not what I would call “diverse” by any means. However, I noticed that there were smaller populations in the city as well. Among Arvada residents, there are a number of African Americans, Latinx Americans, Spanish speakers, senior citizens, houseless people, and those below the poverty line. I then realized that I *should* write about Arvada, because in a community like this, the minority populations could easily be overlooked in favor of the majority. I thought of ways in which these populations could be supported and advocated for by the public libraries here, and the possible challenges that might be faced. Signage, outreach, access, and resources/spaces for the homeless were all things I discussed implementing and improving. Hearing the thoughts of my classmates gave me other ideas as well, such as making sure there are people on staff that reflect some of these minority populations. Representation allows for patrons to feel more comfortable and that their needs are seen and understood. A colleague of mine also described a program plan she would like to implement that encourages homeless patrons to come to the library to read. It would provide them with food and drink as well as a place to keep their books/belongings. I found her ideas to be really inspiring and are things I would love to see in the public libraries in Arvada. However, I do still believe there would be pushback against initiatives for the homeless. Arvada does not seem to have any kind of support system or shelters for houseless populations, so the public library may be their only hope. Educating the public on the needs of these users and why the library should be made a safe space for them will likely need to be part of the process.

Overall, this course was informational, challenging, and thought-provoking. I was coming into the library sciences completely fresh. I have never worked in a library before and had only worked in proximity to librarians in the past (such as the research librarians at the database company I was at for a couple years). I expected to be overwhelmed, but luckily, understanding the material came naturally to me. I also found myself compelled by a lot of our discussions, especially regarding intellectual freedom and censorship. Bouncing thoughts and ideas off my colleagues about different subjects we found interesting or difficult to navigate also proved invaluable. I heard a lot of perspectives that were enlightening and greatly supplemented what I learned in the course. As far as my professional development and where I can see myself in the field is concerned, my goal is still to get involved with archiving. A few of my colleagues that I have gotten the chance to talk to one-on-one are also interesting in archiving or even have experience. It's been great hearing about their thoughts, experiences, and even sharing some funny "we're back-of-the-house people" moments when discussing engaging with the public in the library. Even so, my growing understanding of what a librarian does has given me the confidence to say that I could thrive in a public library setting as well. The values of librarianship that I hold dear can be applied wherever I end up in the field. Access, confidentiality, democracy, diversity, intellectual freedom, and preservation are all tenets that resonate with me, and it makes me proud that I am entering a field that works to uphold these ethics. It's clear from hearing the Voices from the Field that the library and information sciences is full of driven, inspiring, innovative, and kind people who truly wish to better the world around them. I see librarianship as advocating for equality, knowledge, and the truth, and it's clear that the field is constantly striving to improve and help both their communities and the world at large. From providing a space in your local community where patrons can learn, collaborate, and grow, to affecting the

information environment across entire countries, the work of librarians is vast, never-ending, and extremely important. Even if we often must advocate for ourselves because our value is overlooked or underappreciated, it's good work, and work that I greatly look forward to doing.