

Professional Development Statement

My undergraduate degree was a BA in Comparative Literature with a focus on Latin and French. As a result of my work with classical texts, including an undergraduate research position where I assisted in transcribing a 16th century Latin edition of Euripides' plays, my initial academic interests when entering the MLIS program at UCLA were mostly focused on special collections, rare books and preservation. Although I still find those subjects rewarding and worthwhile, my main research interest has coalesced into a focus on labor issues in libraries, archives, and museums (LAM).

The labor issue I have found most pressing and most fruitful for further research and advocacy is the proliferation of contingent, grant-funded and precarious labor in LAM institutions. My deepening interest in this trend and its effects on the LIS field led me to apply for and be accepted to the PhD program in Information Studies at UCLA, where I will be continuing to research labor issues in LAM and working with my advisor Dr. Sarah Roberts on commercial content moderator labor.

Special Collections

I was hired on in Technical Services at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in November 2018 and have continued to work there throughout my time at UCLA. As a result both of my position at the Clark as well as coursework in the MLIS program, I've become familiar with many aspects of special collections libraries and their collections, workflows, practices and management. My work at the Clark has encompassed activities and tasks such as creating finding aids, processing new archival acquisitions, building a relational database in Microsoft Access, reflagging books in the fine press collection, shelf reads, setting up and

breaking down displays of rare books and other materials for public events, and more. It has also taught me valuable “soft skills” for working in teams to complete both short- and long-term projects.

Preservation and Conservation

During my time in the MLIS program I took two classes with Dr. Ellen Pearlstein on preservation and conservation issues - Issues and Problems in the Preservation of Heritage Materials in Fall 2018, and Environmental Protections of Collections for Museums, Libraries, and Archives in Winter 2020. These courses taught me skills for assessment of collections, disaster preparedness for LAM institutions, restoration of water-damaged materials, environmental monitoring practices and more. This knowledge is useful not only in a practical way for library employment, but also to better understand the labor practices and expectations of LAM workers.

Labor Issues in LIS

Working on my MLIS has, by virtue of it being a professional degree, exposed me firsthand to job precarity in LAM - not only in the classroom in a theoretical setting, but through discussions with friends and classmates whose only job opportunities are grant-funded or temporary contracts, and whose situations are even more precarious now because of COVID-19 and the lack of benefits such as health insurance frequently associated with temporary positions.

My PhD research will give me the opportunity to address this topic in a new way and to contribute meaningfully both to the scholarly discourse surrounding LAM labor and to the professional community affected by these issues itself. One method of research I am particularly

interested in is analyzing job listings and descriptions for LAM workers with the intention of identifying any trends as well as collecting concrete data on things like the percentage of listed positions that are temporary versus permanent. I foresee my research also involving interviews with LAM workers who currently or formerly have held contingent positions.

Some research questions I hope to address include: how has precarious labor undermined and devalued LAM professions and workforces? How has the “reification” of information, per Christine Pawley, affected and been affected by contingent labor, neoliberalism, capitalism, etc.? The gig economy is widespread and neoliberalism is present in one way or another in all professions, so why is it important to study the effects of neoliberalism on precarious labor on LAM *in particular* - that is, what analysis might we miss or misunderstand if we were only to study job precarity today in general?

In the short term, my goals include addressing these research questions thoroughly in my time at UCLA and, as a part of that, contributing to the scholarly discourse by collecting up-to-date and useful data on precarious and temporary labor in LAM. I also intend to continue my activity with organized labor, particularly in LAM; agitating for change and empowering unions is essential to reversing the exploitative hiring practices of the gig economy and contract labor. Long-term professional goals include continuing research and publishing relevant scholarship on labor issues in LAM, as well as teaching. I believe that MLIS programs would benefit from formal instruction about these types of labor issues - library management classes often cover labor practices, but not all MLIS programs offer these classes on a regular basis. Labor studies departments and institutes at universities would also benefit from instruction on LAM-specific labor issues; even cross-listed courses between information studies and labor studies departments could be valuable.