If I was to tell my career story from 1995 this is how it would go...

As a college student I had a love of dolls and sewing and had decided in my naiveté youth that I'd go to fashion school (1994-97). While that fed my love of sewing and helped me discover my further love of pattern making both by hand and computer it ultimately will not feed my family. I tutored computers on campus and took computer courses but never took the hint that my life should have been in computers. After all, I don't really like fussing with the guts of a machine but I do love the software end of things.

I ended my college career with a certificate in fashion design no actual degree. I then moved on to living in Yellowstone National Park for a season where I met my now ex-husband. I bounced from retail position to retail position in Yellowstone, Steamboat Springs, Colorado back to California, to work at Marine World (1997), and then to Oregon to work for Michael's (1997-99) as a clerk and then finally as a Event Coordinator.

After the birth of my first child we decided to move to Alaska (2001) of all places. During this time I spent my "spare time" working on sewing patterns for dolls and ultimately two books on pattern drafting. I also started teaching classes online before there were tools to do so and was featured, including as the cover for a couple doll and miniature magazines. This was when I realized that my dolls could bring in "milk and diaper money" but nothing more than that. I enjoyed my time with my now two kids who were toddler & pre-school age.

Ultimately, the marriage broke up and the kids and I were forced to move to the city and for me to go back to school, start a job and find them decent day care as well as schools. We survived thanks to a lot of help. I joined Americorps (2006-2008) as a Career Development Mentor and Computer Instructor. With the new job I had a lot going on but the computer skills I'd honed writing patterns and books was just what I needed. I taught my boss a trick that reduced his work on a task by 50%. By the end of my term I was managing 2 career labs and the computer lab plus collecting, compiling and generating the statistics report (later called the Darby Report) the company needed for their grant program.

During all that I was also a full time business student maintaining a 3.85 GPA. I took a variety of classes including project management, statistics, physics and a couple of programming classes. One of the class instructors (Visual Basic) commented on my "natural talent" for programming and questioned why I wasn't an IT major. I now wish I'd listened to him and added the IT to my list of degrees but I was burning out on school and debt was climbing. I graduated with honors with two bachelors, 2 associates (one is in Comp Sci at least!) and 2 certificates plus all 6 of the required Microsoft Office Certificates.

It was in mid 2008 I started with the State of Alaska as an Admin Clerk. My boss knew I was overqualified and did her best to keep me challenged and on my toes. I was also her well kept secret with all the talents and skills I brought to the unit. Anyone who knew me knew I could run Excel or Word in my sleep and would show them how to do anything I knew. I whipped the file system into shape and dug into the archiving that hadn't been done in 20 years. In the meanwhile, I also tracked various processes and streamlined mailings using modern software tricks like mail merging.

Many things improved and the unit's admin processes have been honed nicely in 9 years. I had a parade of volunteer help as the archives were too much for one person to tackle and so I trained and assisted with managing multiple individuals. I helped with everything from hiring to interviews to saying good bye.

Speaking of the archives that process went through one of the largest changes. It started as a series of spreadsheets and metamorphosed into a SharePoint site. The Retention Schedule had to be updated and the site built by the team in Juneau. The site is linked to the main database and tracks everything for closed files and for old documents for current files. It has been programmed to generate the needed forms to send boxes of information to our storage facility. This has made it easy to track files, clean up the file room and even recall files for legal actions as needed. The process is finally at a maintenance level too with well over 150 boxes gone and only a small handful needing to go each year from now on. Well over 15,000 files entered and sent.

With several waiver programs and many variables for the provider files, the regulations had to change thanks to the rules that the Federal Government put out. With the changes came a need to redesign the application process from the ground up to meet the new requirements. Everything from the application to the forms used to what information is collected was scrutinized and changed. It was during this process that one sub-type of provider was identified as missing from our database system. The state had no idea who these providers were or what clients were being served by them or who the provider connected to. It was a huge hole in our data. Knowing this was an issue and knowing a bit about databases and specifically ours I suggested a connection system similar to another sub-type of provider. This suggestion was met with management's enthusiastic approval and IT went to work asking me specifically for my "vision" of the idea. Once I'd articulated the entirety of it and IT had implemented it programmatically, I was tasked with the data collection, entry and connection of the provider subset. As more information was collected, it became clear that there were a lot of issues with the providers, and corrective actions have been implemented, including adding an additional staff member to do the management of the process and the compliance completing 900 plus reviews of the sites. There are likely additional regulatory changes that will be part of the reviews as well.

This spring I've been more a part of the compliance portion of the team and while observing my team mates and listening to what they do for a process I suggested a software tool I stumbled on that compares documents. What a life saving, time saving tool it's been for them. I cut a portion of the review process by 66%. My other contribution to the review process has been to merge 5 separate tools into one Excel workbook that compiles all the data for a site in one place and has the option to also be used to generate notices to correct as well.

During all this I have also processed 40+ applications per month for reviewers to approve, regularly generated reports including the once in a while odd report that a commissioner or director wanted and cleaned up more than 5,000 records in the database via updates, merges or other changes needed. I also developed and maintain the certification checklists using Visual Basic.

All this seems impressive and in some areas even overwhelming for one person to have tackled but I had a team around me of various people from the group I signed on with to multiple managers and supervisors as well as co-workers. Even with all that in mind I have decided that it is time to move on to something new. If there is one thing that more than one manager or supervisor or even co-worker will say about me it's "NEVER EVER let her get bored!" I have been bored more often these last few months and I know that when I'm bored and not moving forward with learning something new that it's time to find something new!