

When I started in the MLIS program I did not have any formal library experience and I was determined to get retrained to enter a new career. This was a major undertaking and I was unsure at first how I would adjust to a new field. However, my interest in acquiring the proper skills to serve as an academic librarian propelled me forward. After completing the MLIS program I have an entire new skillset that can be applied in many ways and will help me as I enter the library science field. In this essay, I explore how participating in this program has helped me grow as a student and librarian. I highlight 5 different artifacts that I feel are among my best work in the e-portfolio. There is also an in-depth look at some of the new skills that I have developed through this program. I also reflect upon some significant opportunities that Dominican University has provided during my time at the university. Every single thing I have accomplished in this program has helped me become the newly developed librarian I am today.

Before I started in the SOIS program I always had a deep respect for libraries and valued the role they play in the community. I previously felt that libraries are great places where people can come together and learn in an informal environment. After completing my coursework, my thoughts on libraries have evolved. I now view libraries as places where libraries can set up intentional learning opportunities and help students navigate the flood of information to make the best academic decisions. Libraries are also information hubs where patrons can go to find information that comes from reliable sources. This is becoming more important than ever before especially with the rapid pace that information is created and shared.

The e-Portfolio shows a range of skills that I am able to utilize and it shows how much I have learned and evolved at my time at Dominican University. Some of these skills include evaluating digital repositories, examining digital mission statements, learning about marketing, and figuring out what user needs are in an academic library. Most of these skills were used

during my practicum experience. Once I learned about how libraries use social media and marketing I was able to see what is considered to be effective outreach or not. This will help in the future if I find myself in a position to help a library strategize their marketing. Or how to improve their marketing to bring more patrons into the library. Having a background in mass media communication was helpful as I was able to revisit some of the concepts I have previously learned, but applied to the library setting.

Everything in a library is intertwined and that helped me to see how processes in a library effect every part of it. Changes in cataloging will impact the circulation department. Circulation impacts collection development. Libraries are really ecosystems where information exchanges take place. Understanding how healthy those systems are and how to make them function better are important if librarians want to keep libraries relevant. It is not enough for me to work in a library and do my job. I also want to help any library I work at to be as best as it can be. One of the ways I will be able to do this is to use my new skillset I have developed during my time at Dominican University.

I spent my time in my studies following some of the passions that I brought into the classroom. For example, one of those interests is raising awareness and fighting against censorship. As a writer, I am aware of the fact that work can be censored at any time for any reason. It was surprising to me that librarians can self-censor work. This subject became the topic of a presentation I did in my 702 class. If librarians think a book may cause trouble if patrons discover it in the stacks, the librarian will take it upon themselves to make sure that the book is never seen by patrons. Once I learned about the stress that librarians are under and how anyone could challenge a book for any reason it made me more aware of why self-censorship happens. After I was aware of this phenomenon I started paying more attention to the criteria that

libraries use to build their collections to see if self-censorship was happening. I used this information in my 702 class that was helpful for my presentation. Now I can fight against self-censorship as well as general censorship.

The second project that I am happy to highlight is my Collection and User Needs in Academic Libraries essay. This was an essay where I explored the complexities of determining how collections can best suit the needs of patrons. This can be accomplished in many ways and one of the methods I explored is determining which format suits the collection better. Figuring out how the needs of the community can be met while helping the library manage the space of the collections. Libraries are faced with the problem of having more material available than ever to fit into their collection. However, there is a finite amount of space that libraries are given to house collections in. Storage options are not always practical for libraries to maintain. Moving collections to a digital format can help the library open up space for other purposes or for expanding another collection. Some collections get more circulation as a physical collection and others get more use being a digital collection. It is also necessary to consider how accessible the collections are and how that impacts the use they get. This is a common problem that libraries face and exploring this in my studies is helpful so I will have an official opinion on how to navigate this. I am grateful that I was given the space to think about collection development and this was helpful while I was working through the program.

The third project that I am proud of is my group project. There was a lot of work involved as everyone had to catalog their image and then wrote their own descriptions of it. We also had to come to a consensus about how we wanted our project to look like and who would be responsible for which segment of it. We were given plenty of class time to work together on it and that was helpful. I also had to negotiate and sometimes problem solve in order to keep the

group on track. Occasionally I had to figure out how to keep my group members focused on getting the job done and less time on arguing about aspects of the project we would figure out as we went along. Negotiating group dynamics can be a sensitive thing. We were going to work with each other for most of the semester no matter what. We had to come together to get the project done. There is always a learning curve when it comes to dealing with group members and we managed to get along well enough to finish our project. Navigating group dynamics is another skill that will help me as I enter the workforce.

Among the most significant learning experiences for me was working on my practicum at University of Illinois Chicago. I felt like this was where my knowledge from all my classes came together and successfully assisted me with getting my projects done. I was given the opportunity to apply my cataloging skills, assist with collection development, and collection management. I was also able to add skills from my extracurricular activities. This includes my knowledge of symphonic music and my poetry background to evaluate the music and poetry collections. Sometimes while in an academic program it can feel that the learning process is fragmented due to classes being taught in different years or semesters from each other. I also felt that I was able to experience what happens in a large academic library. I was able to finally determine that working in an academic library would be a good fit for me.

I am really proud of the work I did when it came to cleaning up metadata for Daley Library's digitized photograph collection Chicago Photographic Images for Change. This was a big project and I was able to clean up hundreds of records. Being able to contribute to a large project gave me a sense of purpose and structure. That was going to be a part of my day no matter what else was going on. I am also proud of my collection development work. I was able to clean up the creative writing collections by eliminating books that had not circulated in a while

or were in poor condition. Walking through the collections also gave me a better sense of what was missing from the collection, especially when it came to which authors perspectives were missing. Many of the books that I selected to be added into the collection were purchased. In a small way I will leave an impact on that collection. That is something that I would not have experienced had I not taken a chance and participated in this practicum.

The final project that is part of my best work is my grant proposal. This was a major project and I was responsible for the entire project. There was a fair amount of research to see how a digitization project would get accomplished. Working on this assignment after working on my practicum was wonderful planning. I was able to better determine how many employees would be needed to work on the fictional digitization project, which duties they would be assigned to, and how much money it would take to complete an ongoing project. Grant writing is an important skill as this is how many libraries secure additional funding. I appreciated being able to work on a project that will be extremely useful when I enter the library workforce.

While I was participating in the MLIS program I was able to be part of social networking that is going to help me when I become employed at a library. For my LIS 770 class, I was able to interview the manager of the Eisenhower Public Library and learned that many Dominican University alumni are employed there. I was also able to see the often-hidden processes and functions of a library. While attending the student networking event, I met an alumnus who gave me good advice about what to expect when applying for jobs. Participating in my practicum also gave me the opportunity to make professional connections. Now I have other librarians who are well established in the field I can reach out to. Of course, this is a good starting point and there will be plenty of opportunities to make more professional connections as time goes on. It has

been a real privilege to be part of a program that supports its students as they prepare to move onto getting a new career.

While I am sad that my time at Dominican University is ending, I am happy to move on to the next chapter of my life. Now is the time to take the knowledge that I have acquired by participating in the MLIS program and finding a job that will allow me to grow and develop my skills further. I am thankful for the support I have had from the faculty and am happy that I was embraced by this program. I have had experiences I never thought I would have. I have learned so many things and can enter the library science field with confidence that I have what it takes to be successful in this field. I am happy to have accomplished so much in the last two years. I will continue to learn and develop my skills as I go forward in this field and am happy that I have a solid background to start out with.