One Year Down

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One Year Down

by Kevin Moore
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When I graduated with an MLS in 2007, I entered librarianship as if embarking upon a fantastic adventure.

My mind teemed with the ideals of the profession. With the organizing tools of our calling, we shall bring order to chaos! We shall bring the light of information literacy into the darkness! We shall bridge the knowledge gap! Hoo-Hah! Hoo-Hah!

Soon I was lucky to land jobs as a reference librarian at two local community college libraries. There reality quickly came crashing down.

Where’s the bathroom? Down the hall to the left. Where’s the bathroom? Down the hall to the left. Where’s the bathroom? Down the hall to the left.

Dude, sit down!
THE LIBRARIAN IN ME COMPELS ME TO CONCLUDE THAT THE CARTOONIST IN ME HAS CONCEIVED ME TO EXAGGERATE JUST A TAD. MY FIRST YEAR IN THE PROFESSION HAS TAUGHT ME A GREAT DEAL BEYOND THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS (AND MUNDANE REPEL- TIONS) OF WORKING IN A LIBRARY. INDEED, AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY FOR ME HAS BEEN THAT THE IDEALS OF THE PROFESSION ARE OFTEN REALIZED WITHIN SEEMINGLY TRIVIAL ACTIVITIES.

AFTER I PEE, I SHOULD ASK THAT GUY HOW TO FIND AN ARTICLE!

THE CHALLENGE IS TO TREAT EVERY INTERACTION AS A FRESH EXPERIENCE, NO MATTER HOW ROUTINE. UH, I HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT ON A FILM? LET'S HAVE A LOOK!

BECAUSE UNDER THE APPEARANCE OF REPETITION... UH, I HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT ON FILM? GREAT! WHAT FILM?

... THERE ARE INDIVIDUAL PATRONS WITH UNIQUE INFORMATION NEEDS. NO, I MEAN IT'S ON FILM...

WHERE ARE THE COURSE RESERVES?

OH! RIGHT! FRONT DESK!

IT IS EASY TO LOSE SIGHT OF THESE UNIQUE NEEDS. OLD HABITS OF SERVICE, NEW DOMAINS OF INFORMATION DELIVERY, PLUS THE SILO EFFECT OF OUR DIVISIONS AND THE POLITICS OF OUR INSTITUTIONS — DON'T FORGET ABOUT BUDGET CONSTRAINTS!!

CAN INTERGRED WITH EFFECTIVE SERVICE TAILORED TO THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS. OR WHOLE GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHO DON'T FIT THE "USER PROFILE".
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These lessons are not new. I learned them in grad school and thought about them a lot. What I have learned is how to place my own idealistic expectations within a professional and institutional framework.

I’ve re-learned the value of professional development. As a student, I saw it as a tool to learn about the profession and its standards of conduct. Now I see it as a way to discover new methods of service.

New Ideas! Fresh Perspectives!

Then I bring ‘em back to my library, share with my colleagues and—ultimately—benefit the patron with improved practices and services.

I see.

So, you talk to librarians about how you, as a librarian, can better serve patrons.

Well! It looks like we’ve run out of time! Keep it real!

Hmmm... maybe there’s a panel on that!

The End