July 2014

One Year Down

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Recommended Citation
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When I graduated with an MLS in 2007, I entered librarianship as if embarking upon a fantastic adventure.

Arise, colleagues! We are librarians! Hoo-hah!

My mind teemed with the ideals of the profession. With the organizing tools of our calling, we shall bring order to chaos!

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.

We shall bring the light of information literacy into the darkness!

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

We shall bridge the knowledge gap!

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Where’s the bathroom? Down the hall, to the left.
The librarian in me compels me to confess that the cartoonist in me has compelled 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 repetitions 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.

Uhh, I have an assignment on a film? Let's have a look!

Because under the appearance of repetition...

Uhh, 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?

Big Book of Films

Big Book of Films

It is easy to lose sight of these unique needs.

Can interfere with effective service tailored to the specific needs of individuals.

Don't forget about budget constraints!

Or whole groups of people who don't fit the "user profile"!
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!

Why not talk to the patrons?

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

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

Hmmm... Maybe there's a panel on that!