

September, 2011

MLS-Staff of the State Library of Ohio

Compiled by Matthew Dyer, Head, Employee Services
State Library of Ohio

When I came to the State Library of Ohio as the Head of Employee Services, one of the first questions I asked staff was, "So, why libraries?" The answers I heard were inspired, rich, and robust. This month's newsletter theme seemed a perfect opportunity to get some of those great stories out in the open. I hope you enjoy reading the insights of our M.L.S and M.L.I.S. holding staff as much as I enjoy working with the people that wrote them.

Beverly Cain, State Librarian

Beverly joined the State Library of Ohio in 2010. Her wisdom, leadership, and ability to foster camaraderie are what keep staff engaged and eager to serve the Ohio library community. Beverly has a Bachelor of Music (Performance and Education) from the University of Akron, a Master of Public Administration from Kent State University, and a Master of Library Science from Kent State University.



After earning degrees in music performance and education, I taught music in a K-12 school setting while working on a Master of Music degree in performance. Just before completing that degree, I decided to change direction but was undecided as to exactly what that direction should be. Teachers, guidance counselors, and family members had always encouraged me to attend law school and while I had some interest in that area, I wasn't convinced it was the right choice for me. At the time, a relative was completing an MLS at Kent State University and my mother suggested that perhaps becoming a librarian was something I might be interested in doing since I spent nearly every free moment with a book in my hands and had spent so much time in the Barberton Public Library as a child; they probably should have charged me rent! I investigated library science as a career and decided it was for me. As it turns out, I was right.

I earned an MLS degree from Kent State University in 1986, which, like today, was an exciting time of change for libraries. The classes I took as part of my MLS program and the support and guidance I received from the KSU faculty provided me with exactly the training and tools I needed to accept the challenges and opportunities offered by a changing profession. Although I did not become a children's librarian, my favorite class at Kent State was an Introduction to Children's Literature taught by Dr. Clara Jackson. How can you not love a class that provides you with the opportunity to read some of the best children's books ever written?

I have had the opportunity to speak to students enrolled in the Columbus Program of the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science and have told them they are entering the profession at a very exciting time when people are visiting and using libraries in record numbers; libraries are discovering very creative ways of providing new or revitalized services to their communities; and at the same time, are embracing new technologies to interact with people in new ways. I believe library science is still a great career choice!

Sharon Douglass, Librarian Cataloger

Sharon joined the SEO Library Center in Caldwell, Ohio in 2006. In one of our first encounters, Sharon and I discovered we have a mutual appreciation for the humorous stories one can find within the layers of bureaucracy and red tape we sometimes encounter. Sharon obtained her B.A. in History from Hiram College and her M.L.I.S. from Kent State University.



My first job after graduating college was as a cataloging assistant at a small college library where I was responsible for cataloging and processing new materials. I liked the sense of satisfaction of starting and finishing the process of making library materials available to patrons. After leaving the library, I worked in a job where I did not have the same sense of completion and I missed it. So I went to library school, received my master's degree, returned to the profession and have enjoyed it ever since.

Anne Libby, Administrative Assistant to the Head of Fiscal & Business Services

Anne came to the State Library in 2000. She spearheads our Health & Wellness committee where she gives real meaning to the term "walk the talk." In fact, if you've seen a fast-walking fitness guru circling the State Library on her breaks and during lunch, you've probably seen Anne. Anne obtained her B.A. in Broadcast Journalism from Capital University and has an M.L.I.S. from Kent State University.



Libraries have been a major part of my life since I was a child. My first place of employment was at the Grove City Public Library where I worked for five years. I left the library after graduating from college to pursue a professional career in the private sector. It took less than a year of being away from the library community before I realized I wanted to return. I just knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my career in a library setting. I was fortunate enough to be hired on at the State Library of Ohio where I slowly but surely worked my way through Kent State's School of Library and Information Science program.

Utilizing a tuition benefit from my union, I was able to obtain my degree one class per semester. Taking four years to get a two-year degree not only allowed me to go to school essentially tuition-free, but it also allowed me to work full-time and focus on each class individually. This enabled me to put all of my energy into a single subject. I can't imagine a better way of going through the program.

The best part about obtaining my MLS degree, aside from the security of knowing that I will always be a member of the library community that I love, was being able to attend class after class on a subject I viewed with a passion. Graduate degrees, with their singular focus, truly train students on how to succeed in their field.

While my current position is not behind a reference desk or in the stacks shelf-reading, I know I made the right decision obtaining my MLS degree. There is a real sense of accomplishment, security, and community from that little designation. I may not officially be a librarian but I will always consider myself one. I just can't think of a better profession.

Missy Lodge, Associate State Librarian for Library Development

I first met Missy when she was a participant in the Ohio Certified Public Manager program. She was the familiar face I was grateful to see when I first came to the State Library. Missy joined the State Library in 1986. She obtained her B.A. in History from the College of Wooster, and her M.L.S. and Master's in History from Indiana University.

For me, librarianship is in the blood. Both my parents, two aunts and a cousin were/are librarians. So, it was natural to be interested in librarianship. More than just family, part of my interest comes from the stereotypical "because I like to read." It is more than just reading, however; it is being curious and inquisitive. I read a lot of historical

fiction and often stop and do research to find out more about a particular item or event mentioned and/or discover its accuracy. You need to be curious and enjoy research to be a librarian.



My undergraduate degree was in British History; I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with it, but I knew a BA was not going to be sufficient. In looking at library schools I focused on those that offered dual degrees and I ended up at Indiana University. Not only did they have a dual degree program for an MLS and a MA in History but they offered me a graduate assistantship. As I think back upon my experiences at Indiana, I would have to say that the best classes I took were the practical classes where we actually "did" as opposed to the theory classes where we listened. Reference classes with actual questions to research and document sources were the most useful. I also really enjoyed the class in special collections where we had to design an exhibit – locating materials, developing signage, and practicing proper archival display methods. At the time I was planning to go into archives and had I remained on that path, this course would have been the cornerstone to my career.

My first post-MLS-degree position had nothing to do with archives and it set a professional path that never veered back that direction. Although at times I've missed not being in special collections, I've never regretted the path I took. But I would encourage new grads to think carefully about what they want to do and where they want to be long-term before applying for and accepting that first key position. That being said, having an MLS gives you a lot of flexibility to move around, not just in the library field, but it provides you with the tools necessary to succeed in other professions as well.

Of course some of my fondest memories of library school are the people I met. When I was at IU I lived in the graduate dorm for two years. My first year I met someone who continues to be my sounding board and my vent for all things library and I serve the same role for her. My second year, there was a gang of five (three of us in library school, one in business, and one in physical therapy) and we remain close. Our connection goes beyond sharing career successes and changes; we are a support network for life.

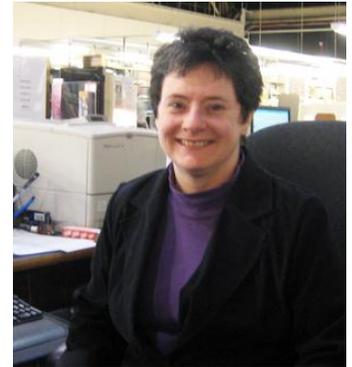
For those in library school, those new graduates and those thinking about entering library school, I think you have selected a professional degree you will not regret!

Cheryl Lubow, Reference Librarian

Cheryl came to the State Library in 2003 as a Reference Librarian. Her position is one of three Reference Librarian positions on staff today. Known for her quirky and endearing sense of humor, Cheryl obtained her A.B. in English Literature from Ohio University and has an M.L.S. from Kent State University.

While I always imagined I'd have a career in libraries, my first experience with formal library science education was dismal. I took an undergraduate overview class, disliked the instructor, and received a grade of D. I knew, though, that this was not a reflection on either my abilities or the interesting future I

was sure to have in a library somewhere. I got a part-time work-study position at the Ohio University Library in the circulation department. My supervisor was great, and since my post at the 4th floor exit required everyone leaving to submit his or her bag, knapsack, or briefcase for inspection, I learned about library security. The university president walked past my post several times a day, since his home was directly behind the library and his office was directly in front. The papers in his briefcase looked pretty much like anyone else's, but he taught me about setting a good example. Occasionally while I was checking material in or out for students, one would come up to the circulation desk holding a catalog card which had been ripped out of the catalog drawer and ask for help finding the item. So I learned about expecting the unexpected and knowing where to find mending supplies.



After college I moved to Columbus to serve as an AmeriCorps VISTA. I made trips to Washington, D.C. and Chicago for seminars, convened a committee of nutritionists to monitor school lunch programs, followed state and national legislation, and earned enough food stamps to feed myself for a year after finishing my AmeriCorps VISTA term of service. All of these activities helped to prepare me for work I did later at libraries. I learned that every experience can be stored away and retrieved later, and I learned not to squander my resources.

I became a preschool teacher and learned to stand on my head and sing, "I'm a little teapot short and stout" without embarrassment. One year of this and I was more than ready to find a job at a library. I regularly visited a smallish public library with an excellent audiovisual department to supplement my afternoon preschool science enrichment class. One day I lifted my head from the film catalog and realized that I wanted to work there. I filled out the application and a week later the head of the children's department called me. I spent the next ten years standing on my head and singing, "I'm a little teapot short and stout" during preschool story hour. It never got old showing earnest seven year olds where to find the books on dinosaurs (567.9) and joke books (818). I suspect that two or three of those children eventually went to library school because of my interactions with them.

I decided, though, that it might be nice to work with adults, so I signed up for the GRE exam. On the day of the test, I had a horrible cold and spent most of my time blowing my nose. When I reached the end of the exam booklet, I realized that at some point I'd accidentally turned two pages instead of one and none of my answers correlated with the questions after that. My plan was to enter Kent State's Columbus library school program and take classes in the evenings and on weekends while continuing to work. On the day of my interview in Kent with the Dean of the school, I was sure that he would take one look at my GRE score and laugh me out of the office. Dean Rogers listened to what I had to say and soon I found myself attending classes and making new friends. The best thing about attending library school in an off-campus satellite program like Columbus' was being taught by experienced library professionals who were well into their successful careers. It also meant being cut off from the main campus, its energy, and its student life. The hardest aspect of the library school experience was summoning the energy to think after a long day at work. I figured that if some of the Kent faculty could drive all the way to Columbus once or twice a week to teach, I could somehow stay awake and pay attention.

I introduced my first oral report – there were many – with a joke about meatloaf. I figured that even if it didn't get my weary classmates' attention, it would help me to relax. This class was taught by Dean Rogers, so I felt very daring. After that, I was never afraid of standing up in front of others to speak. When I took my first computer class at OCLC, I remembered that in high school in the 60's I'd taken a summer class in programming in BASIC. But to be on the safe side, I found a beginner's book on computers which was written on a fourth grade reading level. It was just what I needed, because I didn't understand a word the instructor said until the last couple of weeks of the class. I discovered that with the right attitude, patience, a lot of determination, and a sense of humor, I could handle the late evenings studying and

eventually I graduated. Six months after I bought my home, the basement flooded and all of my library science textbooks were ruined. I decided that practical experience was the best teacher anyway.

I remember the first reference question I answered on my first day behind the desk after I moved upstairs to finally work with adults. I was terrified and I must have looked that way. A long-time patron who came in every day asked for a list of zip codes in number order rather than by city. I flashed back to my introductory reference course and produced the list in the back of the zip code directory. I'll never forget that the patron said, "I knew you could do it!" I felt relieved and so grateful for that little bit of encouragement. I have broken up fistfights between angry teenagers. I have listened to hundreds of reports on summer reading. I have learned how to take apart a Brodart machine and put it back together again. I have been on a book truck drill team. I have had reunions with classmates at library conferences and compared notes. I am still answering reference questions and I love the challenge of finding the right bit of information or the right book for the right person. I get to indulge my curiosity every day. I like being in a helping profession. It's my way of making the world a little bit better. If you are in library school or are thinking of going to library school, you know that working in a library is a career which calls to you. You will be one of the lucky few who love what they do.

Katie Sabol, Library Consultant – Public Libraries

Katie brought her sunny disposition and enthusiastic smile with her when she joined the State Library in 2010 as a Reference Librarian. Recently promoted to a Library Consultant focused on public libraries, Katie's B.A. in Political Science is from The Ohio State University. Her M.L.I.S. comes from the University of Pittsburgh.

With my newly minted B.A. in Political Science from Ohio State University in hand, I looked around and saw nothing. I had no idea what I wanted to do with this interesting but otherwise worthless degree. Law school seemed too predictable so I did what every other Poli Sci major who didn't want to go to law school would do—I applied to graduate school to get my Master's of Public Administration. I really wanted to do research and an M.P.A. sounded like a great combination of both. As I was looking for schools to apply to, my mom (a school librarian) said, "You know, it sounds like what you really want to do is get a Library Science degree." And I said, "Mom, the LAST thing I want to do is be a librarian."



Halfway through my first semester of statistics and budgeting and only one research class, I began investigating the University of Pittsburgh's Master of Library and Information Science program. It turns out, my mom was right (as usual). The more I looked into it, what I really wanted to do was to work at a government, business or other special library and do research. And so after one semester, I made the switch and found out that I was where I needed to be. I had great professors teaching great classes about things I loved- helping people find information and making sure they found the right information. One class in particular, Digital Citizenship, has stuck with me to this day. Taught by Professor Stuart Shulman, this class involved deep discussion of the digital divide and the role of libraries and librarians in bridging that divide. Our main project throughout the class was to teach several weeks of computer classes at a senior citizen center just outside of Pittsburgh. The lessons I learned while teaching this class come back to me every time I prepare for or teach a class.

This is why the one thing I would recommend to anyone pursuing a career in libraries is to get experience. Get lots of experience. First, because it is very hard to find a job if you don't have experience- but mostly because the things that you learn while working as a clerk, library assistant or intern are things that impact the rest of your career. Things that you learn on the front line and while interacting with people are the building blocks of a successful library career.

My other recommendation is to be willing to move. Fortunately for its citizens, Ohio has great libraries and great librarians. Unless you have experience in a library, it will probably be hard to find a job in one of these great libraries. One of the best pieces of advice I received while looking for a job after graduating was to move, get experience, and then start to reapply to jobs in Ohio. I followed that advice. And while my experiences working at libraries in Virginia were wonderful, my heart was always in Ohio. After a couple years down south, I was able to find an amazing job doing what I loved, where I loved, near the people I loved.

Additional M.L.S.-Holding Staff

The State Library has several M.L.S and M.L.I.S. holding staff members who were unable to contribute to this article:

John Bittel, Reference Librarian

Steve Cassel, Library Consultant

Audrey Hall, Library Consultant

Kathy Hughes, Librarian Cataloger

Janet Ingraham-Dwyer, Library Consultant – Youth Services

Becky Kellum, Librarian Supervisor

Shannon Kupfer, Digital/Tangible Media Cataloger

Nicole Merriman, Head of Research and Catalog Services

Katrina Miday, Library Consultant