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## Student perspectives of the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science

*What better way to get a look at the Kent State University's School of Library and Information Science than from the students themselves? Here, three students share their varying experiences.*

### **Perspective #1: Working full-time and going to school part-time**

By Ashlee Clark

I can't help but marvel that I am starting my last fall semester in my quest for a master's degree in library and information science. I am so close to reaching my long-time goal now that I can almost feel that diploma in my hand (or at least the "temporary" one they give you at graduation). What I am not surprised about is that I still get excited with each new semester. I buy my books, study my syllabus, and anticipate what each semester will bring. What will I learn about the profession? What will I learn about me? How will I incorporate everything into being the best librarian I can?

It might be a little harder to believe that recurring excitement when I reveal that I am beginning my tenth semester. I'm not a glutton for punishment as you might think. You see, I've been taking one class each semester since September 2008 because I work full-time. I have the luxury of enjoying my current job at the State Library of Ohio so I don't feel any pressure to expedite my academic experience. I am also gaining valuable experience and knowledge of Ohio's libraries in my job. Taking three credit hours each semester allows me to have a bit of a life (although I don't have time to read for pleasure during semesters) and I am able to regularly spend time with friends and family as long as I have planned accordingly. I can also concentrate and work hard on each class and most importantly, afford the cost of my education.

In addition to these benefits of taking classes part-time while working full-time, I am also able to participate in C-ALSSO, the student organization for the Columbus campus. This group organizes social and professional development activities for Columbus students, most of whom work part-time or full-time and don't always have the chance to foster relationships with their fellow students, especially if they are only enrolled in online classes. C-ALSSO's events provide great opportunities to learn more about the profession as well as time to talk about classes, assignments, professors, goals, experiences, and even normal things like pets and vacations. These opportunities also translate into networking and as my friend and recent KSU-SLIS alum Shelly Miller says, "Your classmates today will be your peers tomorrow." So what better way to get to know them?

I must admit that there are times when I feel impatient and wish I already had my degree. It can be hard seeing groups of students graduate and move on in their careers. And sometimes after I've worked eight hours and been in class for four and I realize I have to be back at work early the next morning, I feel frustrated. But in the next moment I am thankful for my choices and I recall an article, "Slow Down: Making the Most of Library School," that was shared on the KSU-SLIS listserv a few years ago. And I remember all of the wonderful people I've come in contact with and all of the opportunities I've had



Ashlee Clark and Nancy Lensenmayer, KSU-SLIS Columbus lecturer and Program Director, Education and Professional Development at OCLC, during the fall 2011 new student orientation at the State Library of Ohio.

because of my slow approach. Then I remember that I am on the path that is best for me and that with each workday, each class, each assignment, and each semester, I am closer to being an honest-to-goodness librarian. The end product of a life-long career dedicated to service, openness, learning, intellectual freedom, and empowering patrons excites me to no end!

*Ashlee is the Executive Secretary to the State Librarian at the State Library of Ohio. She is focusing on reference and instruction services and expects to graduate in August of 2012.*

## **Perspective #2: Working as a graduate assistant**

By Jessica Crossfield

There is nothing quite like learning how to be a librarian.

During the four years of my first career as a photojournalist, I spent a lot of time in libraries. I immediately realized the importance of these institutions as a source of information from my own research as well as interaction with their patrons. I already had an interest in library science as an undergraduate degree, but my university did not have an accredited master's program. So after realizing photojournalism, another career based in information and access, wasn't the right path for me, I turned toward the Kent State School of Library and Information Science (SLIS).

Once enrolled, I applied for the Columbus graduate assistantship on a whim because I spent my first semester as a long-distance online student. After getting the position and spending the past year with the amazing professors Kent State has to offer, I have never been more sure of my career path. Being a graduate assistant has really opened my eyes to the world of library education. The professors I worked with come from different backgrounds and their strengths create a solid stage for education, mentoring and networking. I attended faculty meetings as a student representative and got to assist with preparing materials for classes. I also played a role in conducting project research and preparing the office for various events and celebrations. The experience of being a graduate assistant is one I will always treasure, and I'm so happy it was a part of my SLIS experience.



Jessica Crossfield at the Royal National Park in Australia this summer.

Along with my experience as a graduate assistant, I came to choose a library specialization with the help of several mentors. There were many areas of librarianship that interested me, but because of my background in digital media and photography, I decided that specializing in digital preservation and digital librarianship would be the right track. Along the way I also discovered cataloging and metadata and with these varied areas of interests, I have hopes of being a step ahead in searching for a full-time position once I graduate.

One of the best things about being a student in KSU's library science program is the constant flow of support. The professors are always willing to offer advice and guidance and make themselves available 24/7. KSU also opens a wide door of alumni who are more than willing to provide help for current students. There have been several librarians who have offered their support, advice and friendship during my two years in the SLIS program. The feeling of community between Kent State faculty, staff and students is hard to ignore and the state of Ohio is home to so many passionate librarians and information professionals. There is nowhere else I would rather learn how to share knowledge with the world.

*Jessica is a Periodicals Library Specialist at Columbus State Community College. She is focusing on metadata and digital services and expects to graduate in December of 2011.*

## Perspective #3: Attending school in Kent

By Matthew Cox

I had been considering librarianship as a career for more than ten years—ever since my first student job in a library—before I finally began an MLIS program. During those ten years, I went back and forth between law and librarianship as the top choice for my career, and I needed to eventually begin law school before I was able to accept that it was not the right path for me. Having given that a try for part of a semester, I applied to Kent State University's School of Library and Information Science just weeks before the next semester was set to begin. Once I was accepted, I was very eager to begin my first classes.

It was not long before I became convinced that librarianship truly was the right career choice for me. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the history of the profession, the various ways in which information could be organized, and the incredible variety of sources of information that are available. I gained a greater appreciation for the fact that the much larger amount of information that is easily accessible in today's world makes it even more important for librarians to be able to provide expert advice to those who are seeking information.

I had been active in a number of student organizations as an undergraduate, and I looked forward to becoming involved with at least one while at Kent State. I became involved with the student chapter of the ALA, which is also known as ALSSO (Associated Library Science Students of Ohio), and soon became an officer. This year I am serving as the chapter's president. My involvement has allowed me to get to know other MLIS students in a setting outside of the classroom and discuss both library-related and non-library-related subjects with them. I think that such involvement can be even more beneficial now that a larger number of our classes are offered online and some students have fewer opportunities to get to know professors and other students in person. In addition to my involvement in the student chapter, I am a member of the ALA at the national level, and I attended this year's annual conference in New Orleans with my fiancée, Julie Macomber, whom I met in the MLIS program. We met numerous librarians and library students from around the country, learned a lot at the sessions and workshops that we attended, and had a great time. Overall, both the knowledge gained through my coursework and my experiences with student and professional organizations have given me an excellent foundation with which to begin my career after I graduate with my MLIS next year.

*Matthew is a Graduate Reference Assistant at Kent State University's Main Library. He is focusing on reference services and management and expects to graduate in August 2012.*



Current KSU-SLIS students Matt Cox and Julie Macomber at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans.