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We Love LIBRARIES!

By Catherine Burnett

Why become a librarian in 2012? As an MLIS candidate, this is a question I am frequently



asked, usually followed by, “you need a master’s for that?” It is no wonder why they ask. Librarians are constantly beat over the head with reminders of across the board budget cuts, the

rise of e-books, and increased personal access to the internet. These are all used as examples to “prove” that libraries are no longer needed. Even *Forbes* magazine has its doubts. In a June 2012 article, they stated that an MLIS is the worst master’s degree to get. However, I argue that these are all reasons library staff is needed more than ever. The question is why? Why invest time and money when libraries are apparently going extinct? Because they are not; they are only changing. The classic idea of the librarian with a bun and glasses shushing patrons is what is going extinct. We are now information professionals, filters for emerging information technology.

Today librarians are serving their patrons in many different formats. The *Internet Public Library* and *Ask a Librarian* features are only one aspect of long distance communication. Information is passed through Facebook and Twitter, colleagues are formed through distance learning classes and online communities of newly minted “tumblrarians.” As times are changing so is the profession. The only thing lacking is the recognition and acceptance of these changes. Change is not easy, but if we resist the changes around us, we become dated and out of touch.

Most library science programs are now completely online. As a graduate student, I am able to attend class from the comfort of my couch. The biggest challenge is no longer fighting for the closest parking space but navigating the ever-changing interfaces of Blackboard. In a career that is made for life-long learners, there is no better time than now to be an MLIS student. This is an exciting time for libraries! Patrons have challenging questions, and we are their reference sources that are called on to find their answers.

I have always loved libraries. Becoming a Librarian has been in the back of mind for as long as I can remember. When it came to choosing a focus as an undergraduate, I chose classes that interested me the most. I ended up with an English degree. People would ask what I would do with an English degree and then continue to look quizzical when I said I wanted to be a librarian. My response was usually “nobody is going to pay me to explicate a poem!” The truth is, as a Librarian I basically get to do just that – look at things and explain their meaning. Whether it is a poem or an e-reader, guiding someone to resources that will help them and finding the answers to their questions is exactly the job of a librarian. Library science is a field that anyone with social skills can succeed in; even those with the most obscure backgrounds are needed. For example, if your main hobby is underwater basket weaving, somewhere there is a patron that only you can help. Versatility is our biggest asset. We may not always know the answers, but we know how to find them.

Catherine Burnett is Library Assistant at the North Columbus branch of Chattahoochee Valley Libraries.