Academic Librarianship Reflection: Promoting Intellectual Freedom

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Recommended Citation
Rose, Rebecca (2024) "Academic Librarianship Reflection: Promoting Intellectual Freedom," The Southeastern Librarian: Vol. 71: Iss. 4, Article 12.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.62915/0038-3686.2055
Available at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol71/iss4/12

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One thrilling activity within academic librarianship is the publication of written works in a book or journal. For me the excitement remains the same for publishing a solo or collaborative piece, an essay, book review, book chapter, or research article. Personally, my activity in writing and publishing occurred only in the last decade, i.e. late in my career. Even though authoring publications was not required for librarians, working in an academic setting (where promotion in the other academic departments required published research) pushed me towards achieving the same goal. In the process of writing and publishing, I gained invaluable experience that helped me grow professionally.

This is why encouraging librarians to write for professional journals is a worthwhile endeavor and provides numerous and far-reaching benefits. Accumulating a body of written works adds to the credibility of a librarian’s expertise. In writing, the author shares experiences and knowledge they have acquired, and the rest of us learn from reading their findings and conclusions. Professional writing on a topic does not exist in a vacuum but contributes to an ongoing conversation on that subject. Before embarking on a writing project, savvy authors consult related professional journal publications to research trending topics before embarking on a new project, creating a survey, or seeking new engagement strategies. Writing for publication should expand and build upon the understanding of a research topic. Library research articles ideally generate discussion, growth, and inspiration.

The purpose of New Voices, the Southeastern Library Association’s paper writing award is to promote writing to librarians early in their career. The call for papers invites professional librarians with less than five years of experience to submit a research paper for consideration. The author whose paper is selected will receive $200 from an EBSCO sponsored award, earn a poster presentation slot in the SELA conference, and have their paper published in SELn, the Southeastern Library Association’s peer reviewed journal. Papers written collaboratively are accepted as long as the authors all meet the eligibility criteria.