

# Professional Growth Plan

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*"In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless but planning is indispensable." -- Dwight Eisenhower, as quoted in **The Columbia World of Quotations***

## Introduction

When I completed my post-baccalaureate work in the spring semester of 2013, I sat down with my advisor and department head for an exit interview where we talked about the past, present, and future of my academic career and professional life. During the interview, he asked me where I saw myself in five years. It took me a minute or two to answer him; where **did** I see myself in five years?

My answer? I saw myself continuing to work in an academic library (either in reference, user engagement, or web services, all with instruction capabilities) with a healthy publishing history and contemplating or pursuing a Ph.D./advanced coursework in either history or information studies. This goal has not changed in the nine months since I let it first fly from my mouth.

As it stands, I am two semesters away from completing my MLIS coursework at UNC Greensboro and will graduate with the December 2014 cohort. I will have a key component in the arsenal my chosen career requires I have yet my storehouse of skills still has room to evolve. Given my predisposition for and desire to stay the world of academic librarianship, I realize that my focus within this five-year plan needs to address both developing needed skills and setting me apart from the "herd".

I realize that I am indeed fortunate; I work in an academic library alongside a team of intelligent and talented librarians and professional staff and for an organization that encourages me to dive into projects and research. While working on this project, I talked to other librarians at work to get their input on important skills and experiences that will aid in reaching my overarching goals. This plan weaves both a determination to improve my skills as a librarian and researcher with a healthy dose of their advice and my own ambition. I am, to borrow a line from a favorite song, on the verge of something wonderful and I cannot wait to achieve these goals through hard work and determination.

## **Goal One: I will continue to work in an academic library, preferably in reference, user engagement, or web services, as a librarian.**

**Why?** I love what I do, plain and simple. Seeing students, be they first year freshmen or lifelong learners, discover materials they need or want makes me feel like I have accomplished something. I also have a passion for technology and accessibility. I want to ensure that everyone, regardless of physical ability, has equal access to resources, and that patrons have access to the most up-to-date technology as possible. I see libraries continuing to evolve as third spaces and filling a liminal role within society, and I want to be there to continue to spur that evolution along.

### **Goal One Plan of Attack**

- ➔ Develop my course of study to reflect this goal, concentrating my elective coursework in information literacy, media/web development, and information sources.
- ➔ Summer 2014: LIS 635 (Media Production Services for Library Programs), LIS 622 (Seminar in Advanced Information Sources and Services), LIS 688 (The Design of User Instruction and Training)
- ➔ Fall 2014: LIS 636 (Website Production and Usability for Librarians), LIS 690 (Independent Study: A Comprehensive Examination of the Role of Libraries in the Japanese-American Internment)

Camps), LIS 691 (Practicum Experience), LIS 698 (Capstone Experience in Library and Information Studies)

- ➔ Graduate in December 2014 with my MLIS.
- ➔ Obtain full-time, permanent employment with an academic library in one of the aforementioned fields either before or immediately following graduation, preferably in Western North Carolina.
- ➔ Become more active in local, regional, and national professional organizations, both as a member and as a facilitator.
- ➔ Participate in professional development courses, such as the information literacy intensive course offered through ALA in Portland, Oregon.
- ➔ Continue to develop innovative programs for libraries in information literacy instruction and community outreach.
- ➔ Pursue upwardly mobile career opportunities as they present themselves.
- ➔ Seek out opportunities for professional advancement.
- ➔ Develop a professional network of colleagues from across the geographic pantheon.

## **Goal Two: I will publish academic work on both developing innovative library programs but also on historical subjects of interest.**

**Why?** In this competitive job market, especially in academia, publications can be the difference between a good curriculum vitae and an exceptional curriculum vitae. When I consulted my colleagues and mentors for advice on developing a solid skill set, almost all of them mentioned writing and publication as paramount to setting oneself apart from the masses. Not only can I pursue publication within librarianship, but I can parlay my past academic experience for history into a potentially successful writing career. My real passion within history is the Japanese-American internment experience in rural Arkansas during World War II. These are the two camps everyone “forgets” about; folks know about the camps out West but tend to know next-to-nothing about Jerome and Rohwer.

### **Goal Two Plan of Attack**

- ➔ Undertake an independent study under Dr. Carmichael (already pending approval) during the Fall 2014 semester looking at the role internment camp libraries filled during the Japanese-American internment of World War II, specifically the two internment camps in Arkansas. This project will result in a paper suitable for academic publication.
  - ➔ Obtain funding to travel to both Fayetteville, Arkansas (the University of Arkansas) and Seattle, Washington (Densho: The Japanese-American Memory Project) to mine their archives for more information and documentation surrounding these camps.
  - ➔ Develop a research paper/article on my research.
  - ➔ Publish said paper/article in a number of academic journals.
- ➔ Finish my book proposal, tentatively titled *It Cannot Be Helped: A Comprehensive Study of the Internment Camps of Jerome and Rohwer, Arkansas During World War II*, within the next two years.
- ➔ Successfully pitch the book proposal to an academic publisher and write it.
- ➔ In conjunction with developing new library programs, write about the development and the research around said programs.

- ➔ Present research from a multitude of fields at professional conferences.
- ➔ Begin developing a book proposal on information literacy instruction within the liberal arts, bringing critical pedagogy and instruction into the 21st century.

### **Goal Three: I will investigate the viability of advanced education in history and/or library and information studies and pursue it.**

**Why?** Barring feeling completely burnt out from getting a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in thirty-six months with only a three month break in between, I realize that advanced coursework will further set me apart from the masses. Many academic libraries require their subject specialists have a second master's degree in their subject area. I also want to eventually teach, either in history or library and information studies, and either an additional master's (in the case of history) and/or a Ph.D. in either field will allow me to do that. This goal is a bit diaphanous compared to One and Two as it could go a multitude of directions and it also hinges on me not being completely, totally, and irreversibly burnt out after finishing this degree!

#### **Goal Three Plan of Attack**

- ➔ Graduate in December 2014 with my MLIS.
- ➔ Foster positive working relationships with the UNC Greensboro faculty and keep in touch with them after graduation.
- ➔ Enjoy some time off of school!
- ➔ Begin researching advanced degree programs in both fields.
- ➔ Target quality, well-respected programs in each and initiate contact with faculty whose research interests align with my own.
- ➔ Build a portfolio of work (through Goals One and Two) that will strengthen my application materials for each field.
- ➔ Gain entry to one (or two) of the following:
  - ➔ A master's degree program (MA) in history with an emphasis in American history;
  - ➔ A Ph.D. program in history with an emphasis in modern (post-1900) American history
  - ➔ A Ph.D. program in library and information studies with an emphasis towards developing user programs and information literacy modules for a liberal arts education.

### **Conclusion**

The Eisenhower quote I opened this plan with still holds true; plans can be negligible but the planning process is paramount to success. Will I achieve these lofty goals? Well, I certainly hope so, but plans need to be malleable and I need to be open to change. I am a firm believer in planning for excellence and success will lead to the pursuance of excellence, and selling oneself short limits how far one can go. My over-arching goal is, as always, to be the most professional individual I can be and be able to look myself in the mirror at night and know I positively impacted someone's life that day. It might seem trite, but that is a life well-lived in my mind.