

From LIT to MLIS: My Journey from Library Technician to MLIS Candidate

By Sara Tokay



A Bit About Me

Or: my timeline from Fall 2009-Winter 2017

OR: a chance to show off my resume

- Education
 - Library Technician Diploma (2009-2011)
 - BA in History and political science (2011-2015)
 - MLIS candidate (2015-graduating this spring!)
- Work Experience
 - Legislature Library (2011-2016)
 - Alberta Law Libraries (January-March 2015)
 - Grant MacEwan Library (2015-current)
 - Bruce Peel Special Collections (2016-current)
- Making it to Library School
 - Initially interested in photography
 - A year in retail changed my mind on that
 - Never know where you will end up

My time at Grant MacEwan

- Group work
 - Helped with the cohort camaraderie
 - We were big on potlucks and get togethers
- Built up valuable contacts
 - Still see them at conferences
- Started work experience early, before my degree started
 - Put me ahead

I want more! But why?

- Money?
- Less chance of cataloging?
- Being able to brag that I have a masters?

Maybe...

- Passion?
- More opportunity?

Yes!

Transferring into a Degree

And how it has changed



A Difficult Path: A Great Reward

- Transfer to U of A left me short some credits
 - Transfer agreement? What has changed? What are the options now?
- Health problems
 - Left me with little motivation
- Other personal problems
 - Family pets and job offers?
- Was giving up an option?

Better Understanding of Career Path

- Tech program taught me what I did and didn't want to do
 - Cataloguing?
 - Children's programming?
 - Special libraries?
- Also made it easier to pursue a history degree
 - “And how do you plan on making money with an arts degree?”

Setting up for Success

- Transition from undergraduate to graduate degree was much easier
 - Healthy, happy, and I knew what I was doing this time!
- Had a good idea about the classes I wanted to take, where my knowledge gaps could be improved, and most importantly, what I didn't want to take!
 - Metada? Not for me!

Contacts and Experience

- Starting my MLIS with 4 years work experience, plus the 2 years educational experience
 - Contacts in the field!
 - Co-workers, former co-workers, and former classmates who were working
 - Having references, going into my MLIS was helpful too
 - Jobs hunts for more SLIS oriented roles made easier
- Conferences
 - Previous contacts means an opportunity to network even more
 - They introduce you to other people they know and so on

Working Towards Mutual Understanding

How my experience has helped me



So What's the point?

- Is there such a huge divide between the levels of education?
 - I would argue no
 - Each are equally important!
 - But others feel differently
 - Depends on workplace culture!
- Having both qualifications has given me some good insights
 - I am able to put myself into both types of rolls
 - If I am ever a manager I will have a better understanding of the tasks I assign to my team
 - While one program may focus more on technical and the other on managerial, plenty of content crosses over
 - We really do learn similar things!

Conclusions

- A rapidly changing field means we all need to work together to ensure success
- Being well prepared for my masters has made these two years fly by
 - And sometimes made my assignments more understandable
- It has been a long road, and not always easy, but 100% worth every minute

Questions?

Maybe later?

Contact me! I love to tell people about my journey and help others with theirs
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