

Epilogue

I struggled with how to end this book because the principal purpose of this work is to provide the academic librarians that I interviewed with a voice. Through the course of the text, I interjected some of my personal views and opinions because it benefited the context, but I really attempted to keep such interpolations to a minimum. The vast majority of the quotes and stories were those of the academic librarians. Therefore, I do not plan to deviate from that pattern in these closing remarks. While I am concluding with some additional information about my experience after the research ended, the heart of this book and its message was and remains about the academic librarians.

Aftermath

Throughout the interview process, the librarians routinely asked me “What’s next?” in anticipation that I would leave the libraries soon after completing the degree. The funny thing was that I was not committed wholly to moving on at that point. One impetus for staying involved pay; I made a very good salary. In fact, I knew that the difference between my salary at that rank of classified staff and that of a starting librarian in a professional faculty position was negligible.

I also liked the institution and the surrounding locale. The university was progressive and relatively pleasant, and I enjoyed working with my immediate colleagues in my department. Moreover, I had been in the region for close to 10 years, had acquired a mortgage, and had built ties and friendships. I was not keen with the notion of having to uproot and start anew elsewhere.

Finally, my wife and I also were expecting a daughter a few months after the completion of the research. I thought that professional stability would help in that immediate future. This was especially so, given all of the horror stories that I had heard about sleep deprivation with newborns.

As things worked out though, a dean/director position at another university opened up elsewhere. I was fortunate to be offered this opportunity just as I was finishing the paperwork for the submission of the doctorate. The scheduling of the transition was not the greatest because the aforementioned lack of sleep was accurate, but I chose to move forward, and my time in the libraries came to an end.

In part due to my approaching departure, I never had the opportunity to present the results of this study to anyone other than my immediate line managers, and even then, the information passed was informal. It is unfortunate because I truly believe that the librarians who participated in this study would benefit from hearing about how they perceived themselves within this particular environment. By approaching their roles through the prism of a blended professional, I think that those academic librarians

might find greater success and satisfaction in their positions because the librarians' identity and third space might be better understood.

At the same time, in order for these discoveries to find optimal success, they would need to gain acceptance from administration, and I am unsure if these findings would be appreciated by that sector of the organization in particular. Given prior interactions with administrators, I believe that a good majority of them would view the source of the information and write it off as the misguided interpretations of a nonlibrarian. This is why I mostly have curtailed the personal anecdotes. These findings are the voices of the academic librarians. The words of the librarians have a better chance of promoting transformation than those of Michael Perini.

Yes, consideration of these results requires self-reflection by individuals in the administration regarding their policies, decisions, and procedures. It is difficult to look in the mirror. However, it is necessary to do so in order to create positive change for both the organization and the individuals therein.

Ever Forward

The work at my new university is challenging. It is easy to get lost in the minutia of administration and forget about the integral parts of the higher education process. It required far less effort to refocus back when I was surrounded by stacks of books and journals because to me, they represented the physical manifestation of learning and of one's educational ambitions. The books created the foundation for students to build a better life. In this way, to me libraries and their books signify hope and spirit. Academic librarians help navigate this chaotic maze. I do miss working with my colleagues, and I do miss the libraries. For me, the library was, and is, the heart of academe.

Who knows? Maybe I someday will end up pursuing a library science degree and wind up back in libraries at some point. Until then, I will advocate for libraries from the higher education administration side and I will continue to support libraries and their librarians as entities of collaboration.