



## **2024 Student Scholarship Awardee Essays**

**“How has working at UW Libraries / UW Press supported your personal, academic, or professional growth?”**

In the UW Special Collections there is a black and white photograph, likely over a hundred years old, of a man named George stood on a sidewalk in ceremonial dress, parked cars and brick buildings blurry in the background. Last May, I was lucky enough to be able to come with my professor as she brought the photo to three tribal elders in Yakima, only to discover that the man in the photograph was the grandfather of the man sat across from me. George, to me an image, had existed to him in full color. To watch this document so rapidly leave the realm of “history” and enter the world around me – I couldn’t help but reconsider my perspective of my studies, my *need* to be ‘outstanding’ in my field. I also knew then that my passing interest in archival work had become a need to involve myself in a process I now found more vital than ever. And I was lucky enough to have that need met.

There’s an idea, I think, that the library’s job is simply to collect for collection’s sake. This is untrue. To me, the library exists to resist entropy; to acquire, preserve, and disseminate knowledge. Knowledge, (which is everything) is not about a stagnant accumulation and it’s not about lone wolves, studying and solving and hoarding in solitude. The library, like the stories it stores, is a living thing, and five days a week I get to be a conduit and a keeper for a small part of it: a neuron or two, maybe a ventricle. “Resisting entropy” may seem lofty wording for the situation (although not to anyone who has had to manage a Holds Shelf!), but to be able to come in and be a small part of something larger than myself has granted me a healthier and more profound perspective on what it means to be an academic, what it means to be a part of this human project, to come together in small ways to achieve some larger goal. To help someone find a book or a scanner or a photograph, to reshelve a cart of books or two; it is nothing and everything all at once.

-Sofia

As a graduate student at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, I have always admired the immense support from the libraries. This includes searching for scholarships, exploring the University of Washington's fantastic collection, meeting librarians, and gaining their valuable guidance in finding the right sources. Working at the library has not only deepened my appreciation for the intricacies of library operations but has also allowed me to contribute to the academic community within my home department and beyond.

I was driven by a curiosity to understand how one builds such an extensive collection used by numerous students and faculty daily, and what is the process of getting a book on the shelf. My work involves assisting with the receipt, processing, and (pre-)ordering of incoming library materials in a diverse array of Slavic and East European languages. Additionally, I am involved in the maintenance of the library's pre-cataloged front-log, a collection comprising approximately 16,000 volumes, witnessing firsthand the meticulous curation of this invaluable resource.

What sets this experience apart is the mentorship and guidance I receive from my supervisors, Michael Biggins and Nadia Dimitrov. Their dedication and love for their work truly inspired me. Witnessing their commitment to overcoming challenges, such as navigating international conflicts that often hinder book acquisitions, has underscored the importance of their daily endeavors in sustaining a thriving academic environment.

Working at the Slavic Section and being surrounded by the team in the International Studies has provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the entire process involved in building and maintaining a library collection, from ordering a title to preparing it to be cataloged. Daily tasks, like catching a typo in a title written in a less-commonly represented language or stumbling upon a book that could prove invaluable to a fellow graduate student's research, highlight the meaningful impact of my contributions. Furthermore, acquiring a book for a faculty member's compelling research project adds another layer of significance to my work.

In conclusion, one of the most gratifying aspects of the work is the opportunity to leverage my proficiency in multiple Slavic languages for a purpose beyond the academic realm. The library has not only provided me with a platform to apply my linguistic skills for a noble cause but has also a profound sense of purpose as I witness the direct impact of my efforts on the academic community. I have come to appreciate the collaborative effort required to build and maintain a library collection, realizing that each meticulously cataloged book contributes to the intellectual richness of our university and larger communities.

-Stefana

Eddie Kennison once said, “When opportunity presents itself, don't be afraid to go after it.” This quote struck a chord when I stumbled upon the Southeast Asian Studies Student Assistant opening position at Suzzallo and Allen Libraries. It felt like destiny calling, perfectly aligning with my love for books and my native Burmese tongue.

During the initial weeks, I was introduced to the Library of Congress’ Burmese transliteration language system, about the existence of which I, a native Burmese speaker, had no idea. Learning this new system seemed like an uphill climb, given its contrast with the Burglish (Burmese English) writing that I was already familiar with. I was anxious, doubting if I would be able to grasp this new system quickly enough to start working with books. Fast forward one year, having transliterated and processed nearly 1,300 Burmese books, I now feel a sense of accomplishment in mastering the LC Burmese transliteration with speed and precision.

Beyond handling all incoming Burmese books and those in the backlog, my role has expanded to processing English books from other Southeast Asian countries, sorting Burmese serials, cataloging DVDs from the Yangon Film School, and providing support with my native Burmese language when necessary. Working closely with my manager has been a game-changer. Her belief in my abilities keeps pushing me forward, offering new challenges and chances to learn and grow.

Last year, I had the honor of leading the “Unveiling Myanmar” exhibit at the library, both as a designer and a native. The month-long exhibit in November aimed to introduce the UW community to Myanmar’s culture, history, and current state of affairs through visuals and interactive content. From the idea dump board to the final refined panels and setup, the three-month project involved meticulous planning, resource collection from UW library archives (such as the Cowell and Lintner Collections), designing the exhibit flyer and 19 panels, crafting item descriptions, and creating interactive components. As I am a UI/UX design and content strategy student at UW, this project served as an invaluable real-world application of my classroom learnings. The exhibit not only effectively educated visitors about Myanmar but also reinforced the importance of trusting in my abilities and never holding back from showcasing them.

Reflecting on one year, this position has been nothing short of transformative, shaping me both academically and professionally. It has taught me to be boundless, echoing UW’s famous motto that champions faith in possibility and the belief that even the smallest actions can change the world. I aspire to change my little world with the intellectually stimulating nature of working in a library, which is as inspiring as a sky filled with constellations.

-Thit Thit



The moment I learned that the University of Washington's library system had a department dedicated to preservation, I knew I needed to apply. Prior to my entry into UW's MLIS program, I studied both anthropology and archaeology in my undergrad program. I then went on to work in an archaeological lab in Mexico focused on organizing artifacts and reconstructing pottery; it was then where I was first tasked with handling delicate and irreplaceable materials. Now, with my work in Preservation Services as a student assistant, my sense of appreciation and understanding of why and how material ought to be handled and cared for has only deepened. Every time I scan materials, I know I am saving a piece of history regardless of whether it is a book, a journal, a file, or notes; nothing is trivial, and everything is worth preserving. This is a belief that I have carried with me into this program, and I know I will continue to have it as I move forward in my career. Most importantly, my job in Preservation Services has provided me with a sense of fulfillment I have not felt since my time working at an archaeological lab reconstructing pottery, and I never thought I would experience that again.

My favorite part of the job is working with those objects to reveal those small, human moments and revive the experiences had by people from so many years ago; it makes the past feel less removed from the present and reminds you that a living person wrote these documents or owned the books you are scanning. I believe that with preservation, there is a trap that is easily fallen for, which is seeing recovered materials as just data as if it is only something to scan or metadata to be inputted into a database. This seems to go alongside a misguided tendency for people to sanitize the materials as current-day artifacts and what they mean to us contemporarily. Recently, however, I came across a small stick figure of a dancing man in the middle of a journal entry from the Native Northwest Online collection. The drawing was made to help illustrate a dance the author saw performed by an indigenous community. Although I know he drew it to help describe what he saw, the placement of it in the middle of a sentence made me smile and think about why he would put it there and the life that he lived that now lives on through his journal that will be forever preserved, studied, and appreciated. The prospect that preservation could be my career after graduating provides me with hope after I finish my program because I hope to continue to find those small, human moments amongst the pages of text that come across my desk.

-Victoria



Now that I am in the second year of my MLIS program, I'm really beginning to focus on what I want to *do* for the rest of my life. Not necessarily in terms of a career, but what kind of impact I want to have on the world and how I can use my work to improve the lives of those around me. Working in UW Special Collections has given me a better focus on what helps people, and what actions can really be meaningful to the patrons of our library.

I joke to my friends that I am an expert in moving boxes, because a large part of the job is exactly that. However, thankfully, as a Public Services Assistant I am also tasked with work that allows me to see exactly why our archives are so important. While working at the desk I'm on the front lines for visitors coming with questions about the exhibit or an item in the collection. Many of these people have a personal connection to their work; someone wanted to show their son their college thesis, one man wanted to yearbook photos of a distant ancestor. Small victories like finding someone's grandmother in sorority records from the 1920's can change a patron's life. Archives are at their best when they connect people to their past.

The most memorable of these experiences was during a virtual session with three researchers, looking over passenger ship records. They had been all over the world, tracking this one boat through its life, and were visibly tired of continuously running into dead ends. Then we found it, one paragraph that contained the missing link in their research, connecting dots they didn't even know could be connected. You would have thought the ship we found was the Titanic; I have never seen three men so excited from 100 year old maritime transaction records. A week later we even received a letter thanking our department for the help we gave them.

This is what I want to do for my career. I know that reactions like this are rare, but I don't want to lose sight how impactful archival work can be. Working in Special Collections has allowed me to cultivate the skills I can use to help people with their journeys into the past, and hopefully I can someday again bring the joy that those men had finding that boat.

-W. Carrington

One early morning, right after my microbiology class, I found myself at a crossroads, debating whether to head home or spend a few extra hours studying on campus. That's when I noticed a sign pointing to the Health Sciences Library. Interesting, I thought, "I've been to Odegaard Undergraduate Library and Suzzallo Library, but never heard of this one." I decided to check it out.

Upon entering the library, I was captivated by the anatomical models on display. If only I had known about this study a quarter earlier—I could have utilized those models for physiology! Descending the stairs, my excitement grew as I discovered the diverse series and book sections. From *The Lancet* to *JAMA*, *American Journal of Public Health*, and more, the book area covered subjects like microbiology, public health, environmental health, and toxicology, creating a haven for public health students. Inspired, I promptly applied for a position as a student assistant at the Health Sciences Library.

My time working in libraries has been a rich learning experience, especially in telephone Q&A and access services. Handling customer emotions while resolving issues has taught me effective communication strategies for dealing with anxiety, frustration, and anger, though these situations are rare. I've evolved into an active listener, adept at quickly addressing unforeseen issues. Even shelving books and fulfilling pick requests has become an engaging learning process—I often stumble upon interesting chapters while perusing returned books.

Beyond the practical skills gained, working in the Health Sciences Library has provided me with in-depth exposure to various health science topics, crucial for my future graduate school decision. During slower hours, I explore books I've searched for on the library website. Last quarter, while applying to graduate programs, I delved into Food Toxicology and Nutritional Epidemiology, finding excellent examples of the research I'm passionate about. My interests were nurtured right here in the library. Collaborating with colleagues and supervisors is a joy, fostering countless enjoyable conversations. Despite our diverse backgrounds, our group feels welcoming and warm, creating an environment where I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts.

The UW Health Sciences Library has become my safe nest, a stop before lectures, and a post-exam retreat. Most importantly, it has shaped me into a more extroverted person with clear objectives.

-Xiaoyu

**How has working at UW Libraries / UW Press supported your personal, academic, or professional growth?**

I was thrilled when I received the Interlibrary Loan Department offer. It was my first job, and I would be a librarian, my dream job. I had always admired how librarians moved between shelves, organizing, searching, and shuffling books because librarians build a bridge between readers and books.

The first time I entered the department office, with my supervisor's introduction, I realized how a library assists readers in obtaining books and articles from across the state, the country, or even the world. Although UW Libraries have the most extensive collection in the Pacific Northwest, boasting over 9 million books and journals, they sometimes need help to fulfill all readers' needs. By requesting books our libraries do not own, sending books from other libraries to our readers, and looking up journal articles to scan copies, we work tirelessly to help people access information without barriers. The efforts of interlibrary loan and document delivery services have effectively broken down barriers.

Learning how information transmits through libraries encouraged my academic goal of pursuing informatics. My interaction with various information technologies at the library sparked a deep interest in how technology can enhance information accessibility. I witnessed the fusion of traditional information management with modern digital technologies in the library environment. Journals nearly a century old, stored in storage, were scanned into copies for researchers to use; old newspapers in microfilm were given new life; books in foreign languages from across the ocean were delivered to readers' hands; and the Summit system facilitated efficient book borrowing among dozens of libraries and institutions.

Integrating new and old technologies, such as High-Quality Digital Scanners, Journal Databases, Airmail, and Library Material Databases, has shaped modern methods of information exchange. This resonates with my ideal in informatics: to use technology to enhance information systems, break down information barriers, and make them more accessible. My experience with interlibrary loan and document delivery has given me a unique perspective on the practical application of informatics in the real world, a viewpoint I emphasized in my application for the informatics program. This autumn, I am excited to enter the informatics program, carrying my aspiration to "make information more easily accessible to people."

As I pushed my cart filled with outbound books towards the loading dock, I realized that the UW Libraries are not just the information hub of Washington State but also a vital heart of the Pacific Northwest. What I do, both as a librarian and an informatics student, is to bring information to those who need it and make it more accessible.

- Yuanxi





When I applied to work at the UW Libraries, I didn't anticipate much of a change to my worldview. Like most broke college students, I wanted a job, and eagerly applied when I saw my position listing hiding in the corners of the libraries website. Student Communications Specialist; I knew how to use Canva, make an Instagram post, and write stories—this sounded perfect for me.

As a creative person, I was excited to design campaigns and create content that provide informational value to others. I planned my first social media campaign series, entitled Meet the UW Libraries. I taught myself how to create a social media analytics report, which strengthened my data analytics skills and motivated me to potentially explore social media marketing as a professional path.

Working on various projects, I talked with librarians across campus and got an in depth look at the vast library resources and unique features. I, like many others, had no idea that Ode has a recording studio and was excited to share this resource with my fellow students. I improved my communication skills and learned how to organize my administrative responsibilities, which I benefited from immensely when managing heavier academic coursework.

Exploring the multifaceted role of the UW Libraries within the campus and greater community, I found myself increasingly fascinated by the value that libraries provide. So fascinated, in fact, that I studied Dutch libraries abroad over last summer. This was an incredibly enriching experience, and I returned to UW full of inspiration, excited to use my newfound perspective in my work.

Aside from my personal and academic journey, other aspects of my life have also benefited from my experiences at the UW Libraries. I am a Resident Adviser on campus, working with numerous new students every year. Due to my vast knowledge of UW Libraries and partner resources, I am able to refer students to opportunities or support for nearly everything. I have found student job offerings and other opportunities through my work, and networked them to people who were a good fit—some of whom went on to get the job! I have found many exhibits, collections, and events that I was personally interested in, which adds an extra element of enjoyment to my professional UW Libraries work.

Overall, my experience working at the UW Libraries has been transformative for my personal, academic, and professional growth, impacting my past activities, current skill set, and future prospects for my transition into the modern workplace. With all these experiences and more, I can confidently say that I've gained more than just a job from working with the UW Libraries.

-Braedyn



During my freshman year two years ago, I had an unfortunate accident that severely damaged my laptop. The repairs cost a large portion of my savings from my job that summer, which combined with some medical bills at the time, was my wake up call to start looking for a job. When I began my search, a job at Central Circulation was one of the first job listings that popped up. Before even starting college, I'd already been browsing on-campus jobs and I remember being a library student assistant was one of the ones that I was most interested in at the time. This still held true after I started college and still holds true now. When I saw the job listing, I eagerly applied and luckily got an interview. When I got the job offer, it was a much needed piece of good news in my hectic life while I was quarantined with COVID and managing to get through midterms and finals with no stable access to a laptop.

My position as a Central Circulation Student Assistant has been my first job that wasn't seasonal so my time here has taught me so much and has contributed to much of my personal growth. One change that I've seen is that I've become more sociable by interacting with a large number of different patrons at the circulation desk. It's also helped me manage how to deal with stressful situations by finding solutions for upset or worried patrons, such as a patron being billed for a lost item though claiming they turned it in. When I first started working here, I wasn't as comfortable with talking to strangers, especially when in a stressful situation, but it has since become much more effortless to me. Another contribution to my personal growth has been the development of my sense of community. Throughout my time here I have become part of a community among my coworkers of all forms whether that be other student employees, technicians, or supervisors. I've been working here for a while now, so I've been able to meet so many new people from this job. I've enjoyed building relationships with my coworkers both inside and outside of work, whether that be road tripping to a concert with one coworker or receiving a Christmas card (that will remain on my fridge regardless of the season) from another coworker. I've found that many highlights from my days have been from doing tasks with or having conversations with my coworkers.

This has taught me that working with people I'm able to get to know on a personal level is very substantial to me. The sense of community I've found here is an important part of what makes me excited to come to work and I'm very grateful for all of those I've met in my time at Central Circulation.

-Lexie

My first year at the University of Washington was, as I am sure it was for many other Class of '24 students, very lonely. I can count on one hand the number of campus buildings I entered, which is probably exactly how many I was allowed inside. The days consisted of the same couple of meals at the dining hall, attending class from my bed, and, if I was lucky, being randomly selected to get a Covid-19 test at the UW Club. I would walk around North Campus looking at the beautiful architecture, the library lit up at night, and lament that I hadn't yet gotten to see UW's famous "Harry Potter" room. I was on campus, but UW wasn't.

I was incredibly excited when I got a job in Circulation at the beginning of my sophomore year. In addition to finally being able to go to the library and feel like a "real student", I would get to be right in the center of things. Ironical as it might seem, coming to work soon became the best part of my week, as it made me feel so connected to the academic community. Through my various job requirements, I was helping people with their research, I was welcoming new and returning students back to normalcy, I was teaching my fellow Covid-freshmen how to use this great space that was finally ours again. It was also just refreshing to get to meet people outside of class (and in person) who all had a similar passion to me of the sharing and stewardship of knowledge.

In addition to enriching my sense of community on campus, working at the library, especially in and around the older collections held offsite and in Special Collections, made me even more enthusiastic about my academic studies. As a new student in Archaeology, I loved being constantly around miles of knowledge, some of it centuries old. It is so inspiring to know that people are diving into this great body of historical knowledge, and this reminder that the past is constantly shaping our present is ever humbling. My work at our offsite location at Sandpoint has also made me feel more connected to my discipline by giving me the honor of accessing and handling such historic and fragile material. I am so grateful for my time at UW Libraries and look forward to working here for the rest of my academic career.

-Lela

In my role as a Peer Research Consultant at UW Libraries, I have had the privilege of contributing to the academic journeys of numerous individuals, each experience leaving an indelible mark on both myself and those I have assisted. My journey as a Peer Research Consultant has spanned individual support, group instruction, and community outreach.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of my role is the one-on-one assistance I provide to students navigating the vast landscape of online library tools and resources. One student's story stands out as a testament to the transformative power of such support. Jack, a nursing student and UW alumnus returning to academics after 50 years, was initially overwhelmed by the digital resources available at UW Libraries. Through patient guidance and tailored instruction, I not only helped him adapt to the new online environment but also ignited a newfound passion for research that he thought was beyond his grasp. Jack's success became a personal triumph, highlighting the profound impact of individualized assistance in the realm of academic research.

Beyond individual consultations, my responsibilities extend to providing instructional support to incoming freshmen and the wider community, aiding them in navigating the complex terrain of research at UW. Recently, I had the opportunity to lead research workshops at Ballard High School, empowering students with foundational skills in academic research before they even set foot in college. This outreach effort is not just about fostering early research skills; it's about instilling confidence and laying the groundwork for a lifelong love of learning. These instructional activities are not just about helping students; they also serve to support instructors who find it challenging to provide comprehensive programming on their own. The collaborative nature of my work allows me to assist in building bridges between educators and students, fostering an environment of shared knowledge and mutual growth.

Reflecting on my experiences at UW Libraries, it becomes evident how this journey has profoundly impacted my personal, academic, and professional growth. My role as a Peer Research Consultant has been a conduit for putting my MLIS program learnings into practical application. The diverse projects and engagements within Learning Services have allowed me to explore and expand my professional interests from collection development to student outreach, providing a dynamic platform for continuous learning. Furthermore, working at UW Libraries has not only enriched my academic pursuits but has also opened doors to a broader professional network. The collaborative ethos of the library environment has exposed me to a myriad of perspectives and ideas, fostering a culture of shared learning.

In conclusion, my narrative as a Peer Research Consultant at UW Libraries is one of personal and collective growth. Through individualized support, instructional outreach, and collaboration with diverse groups, I have contributed to the academic tapestry of UW. As I reflect on these experiences, I recognize the reciprocal nature of growth – not only have I played a role in others' journeys, but each interaction has been a stepping stone in my path of self-discovery and professional evolution.

-Connor



Of all of the difficulties that I know come with librarianship, service to patrons is what makes it worthwhile. I don't mean that in the sense of vocational awe that likens this field of work to sainthood— I mean this as gratitude towards the patrons and librarians that I work with. The connections that I've formed are not one-sided; they exist symbiotically, building off of each other and providing benefits on each side. A major element of my role as the Graduate Funding Information Service (GFIS) Manager is to provide reference support through consultations with graduate students. These one-on-one interactions not only strengthen my emotional and social skills— crucial in librarianship but cannot be formally taught in the classroom— but increase my curiosity and expand my own notions of what constitutes librarianship. And on the subject of class instruction, the challenges that I encounter in my position serve as case studies when I'm engaging with my iSchool cohort. Not all students in my program work in a library and some have no experience in a library setting. I am privileged to bring my experiences into the classroom, which benefits other students and provides me with different perspectives that challenge my own inclinations and creates space for new solutions. Exposure to new viewpoints influenced by people with different lived realities is a summation of how working in the Library has impacted many aspects of my life and goals. Something that I am particularly proud of is my inclination to digital librarianship and the use of web tools and resources to serve patrons. When I started my MLIS program, I had never thought of myself as someone who had— or could possess— internet technology skills. iSchool coursework has certainly piqued my interests, but working as GFIS Manager in a hybrid, virtual environment pushed me to develop these skills, cultivating my interests along the way. Should I pursue this path, I know that I have many contacts within the Library who will advise me and support my pursuits.

Graduate school comes with many difficulties and is a major balancing act quite different from the life I had as a student in undergrad. My life does not revolve around my educational environment. Working in the library creates a bridge to UW that I wouldn't have without my current position. That bridge connects me to graduate students outside of my program; creates opportunities to connect with librarians who come from a myriad of backgrounds and have their chosen niche of expertise; and exposes me to community oriented work that is highly applicable to librarianship through collaboration with CIRCLE, Leadership Without Borders, GSEE, and the Office of Merit Scholarship, Fellowships, and Awards. My UW education has given me innumerable opportunities and presented pathways that I didn't think possible, but I wouldn't not have the same sense of accomplishment or gratitude without my position in the Library. For me, they are inextricably linked.

-Aaliyah

Looking back on my year as the Digital Scholarship Student Specialist, I feel proud of my accomplishments in advancing digital scholarship at UW Libraries, and incredibly grateful for the opportunities provided to me by this job. There is no doubt in my mind that this experience has changed the trajectory of my career in librarianship. While my values around knowledge accessibility, community engaged scholarship, and student empowerment have remained the same, I now have a new set of digital scholarship tools to use as I work towards these goals. One accomplishment I am particularly proud of is the Open Scholarship Commons Community Fellowship Workshop Series. This Fellowship provides an opportunity for graduate students who are underrepresented in the field of open scholarship to be compensated for developing original workshops on open scholarship skills or tools. Fellows also benefit from mentorship and a connection to the open scholarship community at UW Libraries, and the new Open Scholarship Commons space benefits from being able to offer peer-to-peer learning opportunities that lift up student expertise. And by focusing the Fellowship specifically on underrepresented graduate students, we are investing in the future diversity of the field. My supervisor, Verletta Kern, and I conceived of this workshop series in the Fall of 2022 and successfully applied for funding from a UW Diversity Council Seed Grant. We are currently accepting applications, and the Fellowship will begin in earnest in Winter 2024. This Fellowship embodies many of the values I hope to apply in my career as a librarian, and I feel incredibly proud of leaving this Fellowship as part of my legacy at UW Libraries.

Thanks to the generosity and support of all the staff and collaborators at the Open Scholarship Commons, I have had the chance to build a wide variety of skills in my year as Digital Scholarship Student Specialist. From developing original workshops and LibGuides, to learning new platforms like Manifold and Omeka, to developing collection development policy documents, to helping to organize student-led panels – the list goes on! As I now begin to apply for jobs, I am fully appreciating the breadth of skills I have been able to develop at this job. I also feel the benefit of having a strong direction in my job search: I am excited to continue in the field of open scholarship and continue to work in an area of constant innovation, collaboration, creativity, and boundary-pushing librarianship. This job has been the highlight of my MLIS experience, and I have UW Libraries to thank!

-Andrea

I believe that my degree would not be complete without my work at the Libraries. Truly, my employment at the UW Special Collections has allowed me to build practical skills and practice my training in a supportive environment. As a graduate student in the MLIS program, I am grateful to have the opportunity to develop my knowledge of librarianship in my courses and with my peers; however, readings and discussions can only prepare me for my career so much, which is where my employment at Special Collections as a Student Reference Specialist has been invaluable to my professional and academic growth.

Through my daily interactions with colleagues and patrons, I have been able to refine my ability to respond to user queries and fulfill research requests of all kinds. I have had the incredible opportunity to work with both local and international users—and everyone in between—to find niche materials. From indigenous linguistic materials for local tribal organizations to Pacific Northwest internment history for an author from Japan. From ephemeral LGBTQIA+ materials for an AIDS exhibit to the tomes of ledgers from the 1962 Seattle World's Fair for a Gender Studies professor. There has been no shortage of interesting material and even more interesting users to connect with at Special Collections.

Likewise, my supervisor, Allee Monheim, has been exceptional in allowing me the time and resources to explore my own professional interests when not interacting with patrons. For example, Allee has encouraged and supported me in my exploration of professional writing. I've been able to write LibGuides for various topics, including an instructional guide to using our Digital Collections, as well as an in-progress guide on the various reference resources available for our users to browse through.

Additionally, she has given me several opportunities to review and draft new language for existing policies with the objective of increasing inclusive language and removing potentially harmful barriers to accessing the collections. This experience was particularly helpful in the LIS 522 Collection Development course, in which a couple of my student peers and I drafted a complete collection development policy for the Pacific Northwest collecting area of Special Collections. Without the previous policy experience that Allee facilitated, I would not have been able to complete that project successfully.

Most importantly, Allee and other Special Collections' staff supported me while writing my first professional paper this past summer, titled "Privacy for Protesters: Ethical Considerations for the Preservation and Access of Social Justice Movement Digital Content in Archives". This paper was a daunting task but was made possible by the encouragement and resources that Allee provided me with, as well as the understanding of digital collections and archival ethics that I had gained while working with materials in Special Collections. I never expected to learn and grow so much in my student position, but I am so grateful that I have, and hope to continue to do so over the next few quarters.

-Courtney



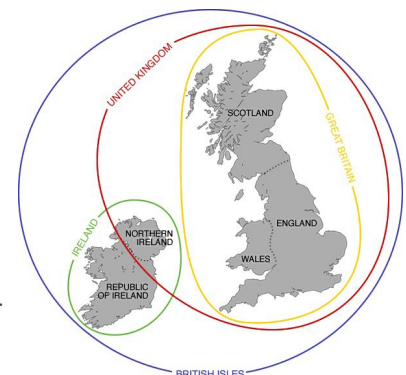
Working in archives, often remotely or in tiny, two-person offices, I spent lots of time interacting with records, getting to know their ins and outs, sharing the contents of my thoughts with the silent interlocutors of spreadsheets and transcription software. But the goal of this work is ultimately to contribute to something the public *might* access. My hard work was filed away for a later date, for an invisible future researcher and a question they *might* have about Hungarian-language Holocaust testimonies.

While I still love archives and value this type of service within the information field, working at Odegaard Undergraduate Library during my MLIS degree at UW has given me the special experience of participating in a highly active library environment. My role is specifically to be an up-to-date and friendly resource for curious, sleep-deprived undergraduates as they come in wondering about the newest fiction additions to the first floor display, what kind of recording equipment to check out for use in our Sound Studio, or simply, “Where are the bathrooms?” These library needs feel very alive, and it’s satisfying being able to provide direct answers and see the impact that an open institution of knowledge can have: the relief that spreads across a patron’s face when the printer finally works; the triumph in a first year student who successfully used a call number to locate a book in the stacks; and the pride for me in being a designated person to fill knowledge gaps and preserve the institution of face to face interactions for academic research. All of these information exchanges are located squarely within the present tense, while still building upon the past research and historical institutional knowledge held within Odegaard’s brutalist walls.

One late night, a most memorable patron interaction occurred when two students first timidly, then more comfortably approached the Information Desk to ask me how the U.K. was organized and whether England and the United Kingdom were separate countries, as they wanted to use the correct terms in their economics assignment. Geography, and specifically concepts such as country borders and official delineations, is a favorite hobby of mine, and this question about the U.K. is a famous edge case that I had spent time exploring on my own. As we looked over a map together on the Info Desk computer, I was excited to see one of my personal interests transform into specialized help that I can offer as a library assistant, and it was a privilege to watch the conversation play out live and share mutual enthusiasm with patrons. After our conversation, I continued reading about the U.K. at the desk and this moment, among others, inspires me to continue celebrating and contributing to the sharing of information, face to face exchanges, and the precious institution of the library.

-Hannah

Debenham, A. (2023). *England vs Great Britain vs United Kingdom Explained* [Illustration]. Brilliant Maps. [brilliantmaps.com/wp-content/uploads/England-vs-GB-Vs-UK.gif](https://brilliantmaps.com/wp-content/uploads/England-vs-GB-Vs-UK.gif)







Since I was young, becoming a librarian has been my dream. I've always enjoyed reading books, and going to the library after school was particularly loved during my school days. Upon embarking on my academic journey in the United States, concerns about the absence of Korean books were alleviated by the discovery of an East Asian library. Throughout freshman year, I frequented this haven, grateful for its expansive collection of Korean literature and appreciative to the UW Lib for providing such valuable resources. During this period, the motivation by desiring to contribute to the preservation of my native language, Korean, I got an opportunity to work in the TEAL as a Korean Student Assistant.

My main responsibilities at the library include unpacking books shipped from Korea, translating them, and categorizing them. Reflecting on the time when I started working here, which was a year ago, I vividly remember being surprised by the intricacies of the librarian role. The process of showcasing a single book for people to see involves many steps, and the fact that numerous individuals reviewed it along the way was even more astonishing. Although my contribution to the library may not be significant, I've gained a boost in self-esteem through this work. Seeing the numerous delivery boxes finishing and being able to witness my accomplishment has given me a sense of achievement. I felt the greatest pride when, as a typical student, I borrowed the books I had cataloged. Despite the vast collection of books, the pride I feel when seeing the books I worked on is unforgettable. Seeing the shelves gradually fill up with my efforts brings immense joy.

Working at the library has not only taught me the procedures and operations of book classification but also helped me find more efficient ways to balance work and studies. Initiating assignments early and utilizing the time between classes has significantly enhanced my time management skills, leading to improved academic performance. The scrupulous process of categorizing books at the library has cultivated in me a habit of meticulous attention to detail, translating into a heightened ability to adeptly manage academic tasks. The alignment of my inclination for working discreetly behind the scenes and my commitment to volunteering for the benefit of others has found its perfect synergy in my role at the library. This experience has not only been a professional endeavor but has also played a pivotal role in fostering my personal growth.

-Jenny



Throughout my time at the RC Desk, I've grown significantly as a person. Our manager had us watch conflict resolution videos at the beginning of the year, specifically addressing when and how to ask someone to leave. While the videos provided good insights, not everyone responds the same way. The most difficult encounters were with people dealing with mental health issues, requiring me to deviate from the conflict resolution advice.

In situations like these, I have a mental checklist. Do I feel threatened? What is this person looking for? Do they need help, someone to rant to, or just acknowledgment? By identifying the person's objective, I can manage the situation effectively to feel comfortable, and the other person is satisfied. Many times, these people are looking for acknowledgment. I focus on my body language, making myself as least threatening as possible but also non-avoidant. I lean in to illustrate that I'm engaged. From this, I've noticed through numerous experiences, it has led from initially stressful situations to positive and impactful interactions.

One day, a man came up to my desk. He started the conversation loudly, almost yelling. I became extremely nervous. It was hard to follow along as his words weren't very audible, but I made sure to ask him questions. His response illustrated he didn't need any help. So I sat and listened. His conversation started to get worrisome as he made comments about suicide and guns, implying he wanted to shoot himself. I focused on staying calm and strong in my body language. He then randomly stated he wants to check out a book but is sad that he can't because he is not a student. I went "Aha!" I can help him with that! I gave him instructions on how to attain a borrower's card.

Afterward, he smiled, thanked me, and continued on his way. I notified my supervisor and put out a report. This is a situation I was not "trained" for. There was no video explaining how to manage this situation best. From this, I learned the importance of acknowledging people's concerns. Although this man made me nervous, I kept the situation safe and effectively assisted him.

Outside the libraries, I've put more effort into listening and focusing on body language. This has led to the ability to connect better with others on a deeper level. I have another job at UW Recreation where I lead and manage over 50 people. With experience from the library, I can adapt well to each employee's situation. These employees have reached out to me because they trust my judgment and feel respected.

Working at the UW Libraries has shaped me into a better person, one who can connect better with others. My personal growth from the RC Desk is something I will value for life as I will utilize these skills in every possible situation. I've appreciated the opportunities and challenges the help desk has presented, and I will continue to grow and improve throughout my time here.

-Jordyn

**How has working at UW Libraries supported your personal, academic, or professional growth?**

I hated reading as a kid, mainly because I didn't know how to. I came face-to-face with this realization during the first silent reading time of first grade. As I looked at all of my classmates reading, I came face-to-face with another realization that I was the only one struggling with reading. Anxiety claimed my mind and, instead of asking for help, I pretended to read the Dr. Seuss book in my hand. It would not take long for my teacher to notice my problem and I would ultimately learn how to read. I would eventually fall in love with reading. This experience stands out to me as one of the first, of many, instances where shame and anxiety held me back from growing and getting help.

After the initial excitement I felt when I was officially hired as a student circulation assistant at UW Bothell, anxiety soon plagued my mind. I became instantly worried that I would not be able to keep up with all the tasks, responsibilities, and skills needed to effectively perform my job. What I was most worried about was being unable to readily conjure up answers for our patrons' questions. It seemed as though my supervisors and fellow student employees knew the answer to almost every question they were hit with. The feeling of inadequacy came creeping back, much like it did in first grade. However, my anxieties began to dwindle as I witnessed the strong support system behind the circulation desk. There were times where a supervisor or another student employee wouldn't know the answer to a question right away and would need to ask for help. There was constant reassurance that questions were encouraged and expected. Rather than falling deep into that feeling of inadequacy like I had done numerous times before, I instead reminded myself that everyone needs help. Whenever I was faced with a situation that I did not know the answer to—whether it was a patron question or a task—I would ask for help. Instead of feeling embarrassed, I would feel more confident because I would know how to tackle that situation in the future.

My time at the library has provided me the tools I need to be more successful in essentially all aspects of my life. Asking for help is okay; it's a must more than anything. Even if feelings of anxiety or shame crop up in my mind, I now have the foresight to know that asking for help is worth it. In both my school and personal life, I have felt more empowered to ask for assistance and to admit that I don't always know what I am doing.

-Monserrat



Through the UW Libraries High School Internship in 2021, I had my first exposure to the UW libraries. I was able to learn how to use databases for research and create media. It was essential that I develop these abilities when I started my undergraduate studies. I was able to find my supervisor, Elliot Stevens, as a mentor because of this internship. I told Elliott about my wonderful news when I was accepted to the University of Washington, and I got the opportunity to work together at the Research Commons (RC).

It was really difficult for me to adjust to all the changes during my first year of university as a first-generation college student. I frequently relied on my helpdesk hours to give me a sense of stability. It made it possible for me to help the larger UW community. On this massive campus, I yearned for a place where I felt like I belonged, and the RC was that place for me. Working at the RC not only meets my financial needs, but it also allows me to interact with other students. The staff of student workers at the RC are truly amazing. I have the opportunity to speak with fourth-year students and ask them for advice. An opportunity where I would have not gotten within my lectures. I am positively impacted by the UW libraries that I recommended my friends to join.

Helping a graduate student print in my native Arabic language was my greatest and largest contribution to the UW library. I helped her add money to her husky card after demonstrating how to upload into my print. I was thrilled to be in contact with someone of Middle Eastern descent, and she was too. That was a nice connection because there isn't a large Middle Eastern community at UW. After we had a brief conversation, I was able to learn more about her program at UW and her work as an Arabic teacher in the Seattle Public School (SPS) district. That was really interesting because I graduated High School from SPS and longed to learn Arabic. It was nice to know that she was achieving a goal that I wish I had in high school.

-Sadeen

Stories have always been my preferred form of meaning-making in the world. I fell in love with words from a young age, spending my time exploring fantasy lands in libraries while my mother browsed the same shelf of Chinese language books and cassettes, seeking the nostalgia of home. At three, I was a young immigrant. My adjustment to the English language stood in stark contrast to my father and my mother. Writing was where I turned to make sense of the world, as if I could weave identity from the words.

Over the years, I have seen how much all of our stories are entwined, how beautifully complex people and the connections between us are. I returned to graduate school after spending seven years deeply embedded in work with people who are unhoused, people who use drugs, and survivors of sexual violence. Filled with grief, rage, and numbness at the injustice of the oppressive systems that we live in, pursuing employment at the library was my way of seeking comfort from the vicarious trauma I was experiencing. It was where I could turn to make sense of the world.

When Leah, Jordan, and Jenny welcomed me into the Central Circulation team at the Suzzallo and Allen Libraries, it was a sharp contrast from my previous roles. Working at the library would not be the same as responding to overdoses and safety planning with survivors - this, I knew. What I didn't expect was for my supervisors to take such care in orienting new staff and recognizing that as people, there are times we may need to take a pause and slow down. Coming from fields where it felt like I was responding to crisis after crisis, it has been difficult to unlearn the need to constantly respond and react, even if it leads to burnout, and to recognize how much I have internalized this constant dysregulation. The intentional time and care that Leah and Jordan took in orienting me to my role was grounding, as has been their continued support.

I truly believe that my orientation to the libraries helped regulate my system after experiencing long term vicarious trauma and eased my transition into graduate school. It has helped me see what a healthy work environment can look like and how the library can be a trauma-informed environment that doesn't have to ask the question of "What happened to you?" in order to provide support, structure, and safety. At UW, the library has been a place that reminds me to breathe, and has helped me move towards healing.

-Jane



“It’s different.” My go-to response whenever someone asks me “How is college?” back home. It’s been more than a year since I’ve been in college, but I’m still mastering the techniques of being a good student, and juggling that with being a good person. However, bordering a life of adulthood has come with more anxiety-inducing problems. Paying the utility bill, having time to do a grocery run, finishing assignments on time, making it to my 8:30 lecture to name a few. In the midst of this, I have come to realize the importance of protecting my peace as the first step towards becoming a better, more wise person.

Working at the Interlibrary Loan department for a quarter has allowed me to practice protecting my peace. Placing the pull slip perfectly into the end of the book makes me feel like maybe cereal for dinner is delicious. Banding a book and having the band fit perfectly around the book makes me feel like maybe Physics 122 isn't so hard. Filling up a summit bag with the perfect amount of books so that the zip closes with a satisfying zzzp sound makes me feel like maybe I can and should put myself out there. Printing out shipping labels in perfect multiples of six makes me feel like maybe I can save up for a car. Drawing a little heart and cross on the summit book band on a book return makes me feel like maybe I will secure that internship. Filling up a red bin till the max fill line in four sets of books lets me slow down and reminds me that it is going to be okay.

I might be an overly anxious person and whilst some of that may be my fault, working at the library lets me channel my energy into something positive. It acts as my safe space outside of school, family and friends. It gets me closer to protecting my peace in my everyday life and if that journey takes me one month, one year or one decade, I am okay with it.

-Saiyuri

There has been a trendy personality-type questionnaire going around for the past couple of years. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is like a map for understanding people. It sorts us into one of 16 personality types. I had an INFP personality before my time at the Health Science Library (HSL). Now, after the recent test, I've been reevaluated as an INTJ.

Let me explain what these letters mean. First, the letters that did not change (IN) signify that I stayed as an introverted and intuitive personality. This indicates that I prefer to listen than to speak, that I like to think about the broader picture, and that I try to seek creative solutions to problems. I think staying an IN is fitting for me. Being an IN enhanced my ability to work at the desk with the HSL user experience team. I was able to patiently listen to different users' inquiries and try to find the best solutions for them quickly.

Working with different people with various questions and requests has helped me greatly with my quick thinking and task organization skills. This is where my MBTI has changed. I was a feeler and perceiver (FP) which signifies that I made decisions spontaneously, and I made plans and decisions on the spot instead of planning.

Through working at HSL, I transformed into a TJ personality indicating that I think more objectively and plan and organize things ahead of time. The library work has unknowingly nudged me toward structure and organization. I found myself drawn to making plans, setting frameworks, and making things more efficient - qualities of an INTJ. The challenges of organizing data, managing systems, and researching pushed me to embrace this new approach.

I noticed how I started relying on my phone's calendar. I'd never been much of a planner before, but now I schedule all my plans ahead of time. This is evidence that I became a more organized person, in my studies and my personal life as well. Furthermore, this change has enhanced my professional growth. As an INTJ, I found myself coming up with bigger career goals, setting solid professional plans, and becoming more detailed with my future career plans.

The part of me that values empathy and human connections, the INFP side, still thrives even with this new INTJ label. I've learned to blend both—using intuition and logic—to make my interactions richer, whether with patrons or coworkers. Becoming an INTJ opened doors for me. I improved at connecting dots, planning smartly, and seeing new paths in my academic world. This shift not only helped my studies but also equipped me to handle work challenges with strength and foresight. This change and growth are a testament to how the library environment shaped me, making me more well-rounded and better prepared for whatever comes next.

-Noel



My earliest memory is also my most cherished memory. My Dad comes into my room and spreads out a thick stack of library books into a wide arc on my carpet. Their covers showcase cartoon families, photographs of wildlife, and illustrations of castles. My Dad squats down next to me, as I poke at the books, exploring each one slowly. “Look at all these books,” he exclaims, putting on an exaggerated voice oozing enthusiasm. I can feel the power of those words and books even now.

This repeated routine of surprise library books combined with nightly bedtime stories, library story times, my own library card, and the power to pick out my own books created the core of my young self. It is still the core of my adult self. To no surprise my love of reading, and the access to public knowledge and stories, motivated my passion for education. It has to this day motivated my dream to tell stories myself as an author. And most importantly to my current role in the UW libraries, it shaped my desire to work in libraries and spend my time surrounded by books.

Thanks to my parents, I’ve always held libraries in high regard, but until beginning my job at Branch Operation Services as a Student Assistant in the fall of 2022, I didn’t understand the full role these institutions play in the spread of not only knowledge but services. I’ve learned practical skills such as how shelving with call numbers works, how to reorganize stacks through my work on the Engineering Library’s shifting project, how materials circulate throughout our extensive library and beyond, and how to digitize annual business reports in order to enhance accessibility of library materials. But most importantly, I’ve learned how to serve the public while understanding that the library is a community and a starting place for so many people. The most meaningful work I’ve done at BOS has been through helping users locate a specific volume, learn how to request materials on their own, or even point them in the right direction on how to begin research. I love when the library fills up with users right before finals week, and the buzz of communal studying. In this way, the physical space of the library is just as important as the physical materials it provides. I’ve always loved that libraries offer books, but I never knew what I loved most of all- that they afford community for anyone who seeks it out.

This development in thinking, thanks to my time at BOS, has made me a better worker- one who understands that above all else my role in the library is to facilitate community. More so, every time I help someone check out a book, or pull books from the stacks I feel my younger self smile. BOS has allowed me to fulfill a lifelong goal while providing continued personal and professional growth, for which I’ll always be grateful.

-Clara

I am a Museum Studies Master's student as well as a UW Libraries employee. My focus in my graduate program is exhibit development and visitor-facing interpretation. Visitor experience, meaning-making, and relevance are important concepts in the museum field. As I have worked with the Scholarly Communication and Publishing Department at the UW Libraries, I have come to understand that this is a throughline in library work too. Much of my work involves considering the services and resources we provide from the perspective of the users. It has been a great opportunity for both personal and professional growth as I am able to employ audience-focused ideas both in my classes as well as at work.

One project I have worked on is assessing the new Open Scholarship Commons (OSC) in Suzzallo. This has involved taking user counts as well as conducting longer observations of interactions, use of technology and space, and comfort. The results of this evaluation will be used to understand how people are using the space. It was exciting to participate in a project like this that can be used to improve the OSC. However, it has also been a useful exercise in practical evaluation skills. Evaluation is an important part of museum work and will be a part of my professional career in the future. I am excited to continue developing my evaluation skills in this position.

Another aspect of exhibits and interpretive work is considering how information is delivered, both visually and organizationally. This involves identifying audience motivations, putting yourself in a visitor's shoes, and thinking about how they might navigate the exhibit. An additional project of which I am a part is redesigning the LibGuides and websites associated with Scholarly Communication and Publishing Department. In this capacity, I have applied the principles of design and information interpretation skills I use in physical exhibits to the virtual spaces I am improving.

Applying my museum work skills to both the OSC assessment as well as the website redesign project has helped me understand the importance of audience-focused work in multiple fields. More than ever, I acknowledge how information presented without an eye toward visitor motivations is a much less powerful resource than information presented to meet needs. I am pleased to grow my museum skills within the UW Libraries and improve library experiences for UW's students, faculty, and staff.

-Hannah



Before joining the UW Libraries, I had the opportunity to intern at a small engineering firm in my hometown. During my time, I found myself working in a rather solitary environment. I was responsible for carrying out my tasks on my own, with little need for collaboration. In a week, it would be a miracle if I were to exchange a few words with colleagues. I believed this to be typical of entry-level positions, and I spent two years at this organization, unsure of when I would feel like a true member of the team.

When I began my time at UW, I was lucky enough to land a job at the library. Despite my excitement for this role, I had expected it to bring about a sense of isolation, much like my previous job. Accustomed to silently and quickly completing my work without input or support from colleagues, and feeling the need to prove myself, I hesitated to seek friendship or support from my new co-workers. It wasn't until I finished my first quarter that I began to feel a newfound sense of confidence in my work at the library. I was given greater responsibilities that allowed me to broaden my skill set, and I felt a strong sense of community within my department. As a result, I began to open up to my colleagues. When wrapping up for the night or while sharing elevators, I struck up a conversation with my co-workers. As new students joined the team, I took the opportunity to introduce myself, and in the process, I got a glimpse into their job experiences. This gave me a whole new perspective on my own expectations. As I observed fragments of their training, it struck me how I had needlessly overwhelmed myself with the pressure of perfectly completing tasks and understanding procedures without any assistance.

Although I had not encountered this at my first job at the engineering firm, I discovered that teamwork and camaraderie was the norm in the workplace. Some may find my experience at the library unremarkable, but the quick respect and trust I was given without having to prove myself has genuinely boosted my self-confidence. I've gained greater self-confidence and have more self-assurance that I do not worry about making a mistake. The library position gave me a distinct professional context that appreciates workers, especially young inexperienced ones, and so helped me to realize the potential when one takes chances. Working in Central Circulation has been instrumental in fostering my recent personal development.

-Katie

“Work” is often associated with fatigue and labor, something few look forward to. Balancing college and a job can intensify these feelings of exhaustion. Despite these connotations, working for UW Libraries has been a highlight of my college experience. After a long day of class or an emotionally tiring day, I am uplifted when I get to work. A good conversation with a library user rejuvenates me and shifts my mood for the day, whether it be for two minutes or ten. I feel elevated by my supervisors who show an active interest in my growth and well-being. They’ve created a safe and supportive environment for student staff, ensuring that we have their assistance and support. More than anything, I am extremely grateful for the people who were once my coworkers that have now become some of my most trusted friends. It’s beautifully shocking the community that our student staff has created, a group of people who support each other when we’re down and celebrate when we’re up.

I didn’t have a long-term job in high school, so working at the libraries was my introduction to a consistent, lasting job. I entered the position feeling insecure in tumultuous situations and fearful of frustrated patrons. Through this job, I’ve become extremely comfortable assisting others in all different circumstances and learning to adapt as I go. While the printers and Bloomberg terminals have given me a fairshare of difficulty, I now know how to keep a positive attitude while problem-solving and ensuring users know that they’re being supported. It feels good knowing I can help other stressed college students. Furthermore, managing the desk at different libraries has taught me strong communication skills, even when prompted questions about aerodynamics or accounting or symphonies. I am grateful to have grown a professional foundation before graduating college.

I know that when I look back on my college experience, I will think fondly of the amazing friendships I built at UW Libraries and feel appreciative of my professional growth.

-Rachel

*How has working at UW Libraries / UW Press supported your personal, academic, or professional growth?*

As an MLIS student with an interest in archives, special collections, and media history, I anticipated that my experience as a student employee in the Government Documents, Maps, Microforms and Newspapers unit of Suzzallo Library would reaffirm my interest in the field, and I have been pleased to find that my experience within GMM has broadened the scope of my interests, due in large part to the unit's unique nature and Suzzallo's position as a large university library open to the public.

I have been lucky to help with several "History Day" visits from local middle school classes, and each has been a valuable learning opportunity. The experience of assisting with a history day visit feels as though it was created in a lab to help MLIS students develop their reference skills. The stakes are real, but with a seemingly endless stream of seventh graders stretching before me, I can't agonize over whether I'm answering every question perfectly—I can only offer help to students, and ask the experienced permanent staff for help when my knowledge runs out. This steady onslaught of questions from middle schoolers might be more of a learning experience for me than it is for the students asking the questions. While I might not be excited for each uniquely thorny question I get during a history day visit, I'm grateful for the experience of navigating the collection—often over the course of several attempts, aided by a more knowledgeable staff member—to find the particular pamphlet or microfiche a student is looking for.

While not every day can include a history day class visit, my experiences on those days encapsulate what I enjoy about working at GMM: the unit (and Suzzallo) serves the university community and is simultaneously open to the public. This allows for a wide range of queries, snafus, and user needs, all of which help broaden my understanding of what library work entails. One morning this fall stands in my memory: a middle school class was visiting GMM, and simultaneously, the reference desk fielded questions from students interested in decades-old newspaper microfilm and a user researching genealogy on microfiche. I was initially drawn to GMM because of my interest in niche formats and archives, and I've found myself increasingly interested in the unit because of the way that these niche formats can be utilized by such a range of users.

The reference desk experience I have had while working in GMM has affirmed what I suspected about myself: I'm interested in working with the unique materials in a collection, but I'm just as interested in working with the public. Each of the permanent staff members I've interacted with, whether I'm staffing the desk alongside them or asking them a quick question, have been so willing to share their knowledge and experiences with me. My time with GMM so far has affirmed the value of asking lots of questions, and I look forward to continuing to ask questions and grow during this work experience.

-Norah

Since starting as a Linked Data Student Specialist in November 2022, I have continuously been given opportunities to learn and grow in pursuit of my career goals. I have had the opportunity to meet with my supervisors and discuss my professional goals and how I can get the experience I want out of my current position. I have participated in multiple projects on the forefront of metadata management, and even been the primary person on one of these projects, gaining experience in project design and management. I attended my first library conference, Code4Lib, where I did a poster presentation and networked with professionals working in the intersection of tech and library science, where I plan to be when I graduate.

In October of 2023, I began having recurring health issues, and I was immediately worried about how it would affect my job. The work I have done at this job has improved my confidence both in the workplace and as an MLIS student. Everyone has been happy to answer my questions no matter how novice they may be, and I am encouraged to participate in meetings and share my thoughts and ideas on challenging problems that we encounter. So when I became ill, with no idea how long it would last and how soon I would receive a solution from doctors, I was afraid. I was frequently nauseous, unable to keep food down for days, and the medications I was given by doctors were sedating, all of which was affecting my day-to-day life. I didn't want it to affect work, but trying to hide how ill I was only brought on anxiety about my work performance and trying to appear healthy all the time.

When I finally spoke to my supervisors, explaining what I had been dealing with and the worries I had around my job performance, I learned that this position was not like any other job I had before. They were incredibly supportive and able to meet me where I was, whether that meant postponing meetings and communicating asynchronously on days where I was sick or allowing me to attend Zoom meetings with my camera off so I wasn't worried about looking ill and could instead focus on the work at hand.

Working in Cataloguing and Metadata Services, I have gained experience that will be invaluable for my career in library science. I have consistently continued to learn new things and gain new skills through the projects I have worked on. I learned that my work was valued, including the time I needed to learn and the questions I needed to ask; and that this was a place where I could communicate my needs and be met where I was, with understanding and encouragement, by people who were excited to help me grow and learn.

-Cypress

The role of a library and its librarians is to provide their community with access to the information and resources they need. As a student reference specialist at UW Tacoma Library, and MLIS student at UW, this value is central to my work. My job allows me to take on and pursue a myriad of projects and responsibilities that help serve members of the UW community but my work providing reference and research assistance exemplifies this purpose of librarianship. Due to the shift online, most of the reference and research help I provide is virtual. However, I also cover the reference desk at Tioga Library once per week. On my first shift alone, a student came up to the desk who had scheduled an appointment with the Urban Studies Librarian for help with a research paper. He hadn't received a confirmation email and was concerned that the appointment wasn't in the system. Putting him in contact with the librarian and checking to see if his appointment was confirmed was a small and quick task. I remember my first response was disappointment at the simplicity of the question - I had wanted more of a challenge. In comparison to my online research help that involves finding quality references or explaining proper citations, it was undemanding. Nonetheless, it felt weighty. Maybe because it was my first shift alone, but I felt a huge sense of responsibility for this student and ensuring they received the information and help they needed. I could sense his anxiety and stress and knew I had the power to ease his day. It was in this small interaction that I realized the impact of a librarian's contribution isn't measured in the loftiness or grandness of their work but in the need of their patrons. This interaction was just as valuable as research and reference help because it too was addressing the need of a patron.

This story not only represents the contribution I have made to UW Libraries but also shows how working at UW Libraries has supported my academic and professional growth in library and information science. My experiences as a student reference specialist have provided me with real-world applications of the material and readings from my classes. Furthermore, it has provided me with tangible skills and knowledge that will be instrumental in my future career in librarianship. The culmination of these experiences and knowledge is shaping my values and goals in librarianship. This is why upon reflection of my interaction with the patron at the reference desk, I want to amend my initial definition of the role of librarianship. I believe the role of libraries is defined by their communities and it is the responsibility of librarians to adapt to the current definition.

-Martha



At first glance, I assumed that working at a library was solely centered around handling and distributing books. However, I soon realized that working in a library goes far beyond a job; it opens doors to meaningful connections with individuals who are like me, aspiring to advance our knowledge in our fields and to meet new people in every aspect of campus, especially at the University of Washington Libraries.

After a year of working at Odegaard Library, I sought to infuse more creativity into my role as a Student Specialist by initiating a quarter-long book display project. Throughout the fall quarter of 2023, in collaboration with one of Odegaard's Technicians, Em Ready, we curated a display dedicated to arts and crafts in preparation for the Maker's Fair. This is a quarterly event dedicated to presenting the creative talents, distinctive crafts, and innovations of UW students, faculty, and staff; serving as a valuable platform for entrepreneurial-minded students to launch their unique artistic endeavors. We intended to tailor this display to current small business owners who are also students at UW. However, it goes beyond these businesses as it is equally beneficial for students who are just starting their small business journey. In this way, this display served as a versatile resource, accommodating a diverse range of individuals and contributing to the creative and artistic spirits at UW. In the end, we successfully curated the arts and crafts display featuring over 40 books, encompassing a broad spectrum of artistic endeavors - crocheting, knitting, sewing, digital art, clay-making, and so much more.

This project was fulfilling to me, as it inspired students to discover their hidden talents for art. I recall one patron checking out a book from this display and talking to me about their current artistic projects, expressing their excitement to participate in the upcoming Maker's Fair for the first time, crocheting flowers to make long-lasting bouquets. Being able to directly witness how this impacted students made me happy. Whether or not they were planning on participating in the Maker's Fair, knowing that they enjoyed making a piece of art, either to cope with school or just for the fun of it, was rewarding. This project not only aligned with my passion for creating my own art form: sushi cat plushies, but it also made me find an artistic community that I can belong to at UW.

Being able to share my knowledge and resources at the library for creating arts and crafts made me overjoyed, as we are recognizing the substantial time, care, and effort invested by these small business owners in crafting each product. As an artist and current student who has participated in the Maker's Fair, I constantly encountered a positive environment with supportive peers and fellow makers. In essence, my experience with the UW Libraries has empowered me to encourage students to be inspired to create handmade artworks that resonate with their genuine passions.

-Raina



As a Web Services & UX Assistant at ITS/DS at UW Libraries, my journey has been transformative, echoing not just professional development, but a profound personal evolution. This position is not just a job; it's also a stepping stone towards my ultimate goal of becoming a UX Librarian. Reflecting on my experiences, I see a tapestry of lessons and achievements that are shaping me into the librarian I aspire to be.

Growing up in a strict Asian family environment, where support was conditional and contingent on success, I often found solace among books. The library was more than a repository of knowledge; it was a sanctuary where I could be myself, unjudged from the fear of failure. This early relationship with libraries instilled in me a love for learning and an appreciation for the silent yet powerful role these institutions play in shaping my mind.

At UW Libraries, under the guidance of supportive supervisors Christine and Anne, I found an environment that not only respected my ideas but also encouraged me to voice them. This nurturing atmosphere was starkly different from my previous experiences, where mistakes were not tolerated. Here, every question was a stepping stone to learning, and every achievement, no matter how small, was celebrated. This positive reinforcement was instrumental in chipping away at my ingrained fear of failure, slowly replacing it with confidence and a willingness to experiment and learn.

My role demanded a blend of technical skills and empathy. My role involved conducting user research, UX testing and qualitative analyzing to improve the UW Libraries website, pivoting it closer to the real needs of its users. Through conducting user testing and organizing UX cafes, I have honed my ability to listen and understand the nuanced needs of library users. At UW Libraries, the pace was contemplative, the approach personalized. Each interaction was not just about resolving a query but understanding the individual behind it. This shift from a rapid, volume-driven approach to a more thoughtful, user-centered one was enlightening. It taught me the value of patience and the power of truly understanding user needs.

Furthermore, the diverse projects I undertook at UW Libraries contributed significantly to my academic and professional growth. From working on website usability to participating in projects analyzing data, I was exposed to various facets of librarianship. Each project was a new lesson in users and the intricate workings of library services. UW Libraries provided more than just a job; it offered a community where I found friends, mentors, and a sense of belonging. My experience at UW Libraries is shaping me into a well-rounded UX Librarian. It has nurtured my professional skills, yes, but more importantly, it has allowed me to find my voice and vision. I have learned to embrace challenges with confidence and curiosity, qualities that I will carry forward in my journey both within and beyond the realms of librarianship.

-Sabrina

Our modern day life accepts habits of consumption between us and our clothing. Sewing is made out to be something beyond our reach; stigmatized to be “*work for others*”. This is a deeply negative and common ideology, as it allows oppressive systems like the garment industry to persist their malpractices. An industry that is disproportionately built on the backs of women of color. Traditionally this has been people exactly like my aunties, who wove fabrics and sewed garments in the Philippines. Over the years, hyper production of garments has been pushed nearly entirely out of the United States, stripping us of our agency and making sewing seem like an archaic technique. Solving this steep decline in basic sewing skills and the lack of access to machines I believe is the first step in reasserting agency to correct our imbalance in fixing this system we all partake in.

Therefore, taking the action to reclaim this lost knowledge is a way to empower ourselves. The multitude of benefits from educating ourselves on clothing range from sustainability, reducing overconsumption and even improving our body image. Personal transformation leads to *collective* transformation. Our UW library is one of our greatest resources for students to empower ourselves as we inherit these issues and bring about resolutions. Here at the University of Washington Makerspace I’ve aimed to create positive change by lowering the bar for entry with sewing and educating my peers. I had to teach myself sewing through online resources, and knowing this struggle I wanted to provide easier access to learning these skills. During the Autumn quarter on campus I hosted a presentation and demonstration open to the student body where I introduced the basic sewing knowledge to students. Providing several modalities for learning from the presentation slides, to references to books in the library, and even hands-on examples. Furthering this effort, I plan to host this presentation again during the Winter Quarter and further provide students with materials and patterns to create book bags utilizing the makerspace. Throughout my time in the library I have worked to optimize the space for students, from making sure we are thoroughly organized, to even successfully working with a professor to promote the space to their classes. In the past I helped in drafting our application for a serger machine through the Husky Sustainability Fund, which we managed to secure, drastically improving the possibilities for students, as the machine is vital in the construction process.

I care so deeply about opening up the possibilities of sewing because the UW library has changed the trajectory of my life in providing me this opportunity. Without the resources provided in the library I wouldn’t have been able to actualize my visions for sewing. Working from the UW library enables me to engage in the Tacoma community. Between participating in more on campus events, to the foundational relationships I’ve made with staff and patrons that would have otherwise never happened. Each of these reasons has also relieved me of external stressors, enabling me more time for school and developing myself.

-Nathan

I began working at the UW Libraries upon enrollment at UW. My first job was as a Circulation and Marking assistant at the Tatechi East Asia Library. Initially my role consisted of front desk work: checking out books, helping patrons, answering calls, reshelving, and marking. In December of 2021, I was assigned the Kane Inventory Project, where we took inventory of our over 400,000 auxiliary collection to be transferred off-site. This was a particularly intensive project due to our short timeframe and extensive collection to inventory. Together with my supervisor, I worked on the initial organization on the project: creating procedures for keeping track of issues such as missing or damaged books, training fellow students on the project, and pulling reports of our collection for the current sections we were inventorying. We worked together for the entirety of the project, continuously streamlining the process in order to maximize efficiency while still being attentive to the work at hand. Not only did I develop project management skills during this project, but I also became well versed in data entry as we worked to input call numbers for missing books that we came across while doing inventory.

These data entry skills were further honed while working with the Japanese Studies Librarian, Azusa Tanaka, on various projects such as the Gaihouzu Map project, where I was tasked with organizing and completing the inventory of WWII maps from Japan to get them ready for digitization. I had worked for Azusa briefly during our Kane inventory project, and that connection eventually landed me a position as her student assistant along with continuing to work in Circulation and Marking during my second year.

These skills translated particularly well to my current job as a Business Administrative Assistant at the UW Press. In my role, I serve as a contact point between different press departments, sharing knowledge of our guidelines. The ability to explain procedures clearly and interpret the needs of my interlocutor stems directly from the customer service work that comes from helping patrons in Circulation. Additionally, I assist with maintaining records of various types, filling out expense reports for staff as directed, assisting with royalty payments, pulling relevant invoices as requested, and balancing expenses in our accrual accounting system at the end of each month. I also learned invaluable systems in the business field such as Workday Finance and Intuit Quickbooks.

Doubling-majoring in both Japanese and Economics, I have had the pleasure of working in departments close to both fields of study. At TEAL having direct access to the Japanese collection and working closely with Azusa, I have been lucky enough to learn about topics that I may not have learned of elsewhere. Being at the Press I have gained an appreciation for the detail-oriented work of accounting and the business process. I believe the Press especially has set me up for a future in international business, where I hope to use both my Japanese skills and business background to succeed.

-Sophia



My academic and professional career has been primarily dedicated to serving the underserved. I have studied feminist theory, conducted public health research, and supported legal services, but never have I felt more like a productive member of my community than behind the circulation desk of my public library. Whether providing space and technology access for a patron to complete a job interview, helping a student locate materials for their academic research, or simply looking up public transit information, I'm able to see the effect of my impact in the community in real time. As a new UW student and UW library employee, it's a privilege to serve the UW community in the Government Publications, Maps, Microforms, and Newspapers department as I work towards my Masters of Library and Information Science degree.

Since starting my role as a Graduate Reference Specialist, I have been overwhelmed with support from the UW library community. Each member of my department and beyond has taken the time to provide training, answer questions, and share their own experiences. Through the generosity of the library staff, I have been able to explore and stretch into the various facets of librarianship, like student instruction, in-person and online reference, and information organizing. In particular, the opportunity to assist in the creation of a research guide and shadow the concept mapping for an undergraduate research course was an insightful foray into the responsibilities of academic librarianship. These small considerations are accumulating into a wealth of knowledge to complement my coursework training and breathe life into the skills I'm learning in theory.

This position has shifted my understanding of my professional future, opening doors I had not thought to knock on. Witnessing my future profession in action is inspiring; to be trained by a collective of librarians, absorb and synthesize their practices is a privilege for which I am incredibly grateful.

-Sam

I've sometimes made the off-hand comment that my job at UW is more important to me than my coursework at UW. This, of course, isn't true, but it speaks to the value that my position in UW Libraries has brought to my education. Since beginning at UW Special Collections, there's been near perfect synergy between my employment in UW Libraries and my pursuit of a Master's of Library and Information Science; as two interconnected facets of my education, they significantly enrich each other.

At UW Special Collections, I work as an accessioning assistant. When new archival materials are sent to the library, I help steward these materials through early steps in introducing them to the library collections. Through a process known as accessioning, I rehouse materials, create detailed inventories, write descriptive 'finding aids,' and create records for the materials in multiple databases. On my first day, and through my first weeks, this process felt overwhelming! My supervisor was—and continues to be—incredibly helpful in navigating the complexity of the position. I also found myself, for the first time, calling upon the vocabulary I've absorbed through coursework to frame and ask the right questions to fit the problems at hand. I found that my first year in the MLIS program had already given me the tools to critically think through the many challenges inherent in a new library position.

This application of conceptual knowledge to practical challenges has also created a positive feedback loop that benefits my academic work. In sum, I've been able to ground more abstract ideas using the practical knowledge conveyed by working in UW Libraries. For example, when faced with headache-inducing questions about MARC records, I'm no longer overwhelmed. At work, I've used MARC to write records in the Alma database. Though my snapshot of how MARC functions is small—I only use it for a few things at Special Collections—this snapshot can be extrapolated to form a better mental model of the entire system operates. Here, my library employment and library studies work in harmony, leading to greater understanding of a concept that, previously, caused difficulties for me.

I suspect the aforementioned situation will reoccur: In a future professional position, I'll be overwhelmed by new systems, concepts, and practices; I'll find myself needing to apply what a past supervisor calls the "I don't know, but I'll learn" principle. Without my time at UW Special Collections, I do not think I would have the confidence to apply this principle and adapt to challenges. In terms of personal growth and professional development, my time at UW Libraries has been invaluable.

-Sam



Working the Sunday night shift at the Allen info desk is typically characterized by a slower pace. Interacting with only a few people each hour is not uncommon. However, it is during this seemingly uneventful time that I have enjoyed some of the most rewarding experiences in my role. One particularly memorable incident occurred last summer when an older patron approached the desk seeking assistance with locating her dissertation from the early 1980s.

The patron was skeptical about the possibility of finding it, having already searched multiple libraries without success. She doubted whether it had ever been part of a library's collection. She explained that her interest in viewing it again had only recently been sparked in retirement, after years of indifference toward its circulation. She would later tell me that she had not been particularly proud of her work in the years after its publication, and quickly lost track of any copies. Now, her attitude had shifted, and she held onto the hope that she could find her old work. Despite sharing her reservations about the likelihood of success, I initiated a quick search on Primo, one of the fundamental skills I've acquired as an information services employee. To my surprise, I found her dissertation promptly: it was featured in special collections and ready to view the next day.

This interaction holds significance for me not because I performed an extraordinary feat of library science, but because it underscores the profound impact of my work, even in seemingly routine tasks. My nearly two years in this role fielding a diverse array of questions have given me the skills to answer a multitude of niche inquiries and navigate the library's resources to find solutions when I don't have the answers at my fingertips. With each shift, I continue to expand my knowledge, and my growing confidence in navigating these resources enhances the satisfaction I derive from each interaction.

My work at the UW Libraries has been immensely fulfilling throughout my time at the university, and encounters like these have solidified my belief in the importance of service to my career satisfaction. In my studies as a history and psychology double major, my work at the library has supplemented my education in multiple ways. Learning the history of UW and Suzzallo and Allen has been immensely valuable, and spreading this knowledge to patrons from all over the world gives me a unique connection to my university. Connecting people with the resources and knowledge they desire is the most meaningful part of my job, and it has solidified my commitment to service-oriented work in the future.

-Dominic



In my work as a Odegaard Writing & Research Center (OWRC) Peer Research Consultant, I am developing a relationship with Ballard High School. The teacher I'm working most closely with, Ms. Katrell, teaches English 131 as part of the UW in the High Schools program. I'm visiting Ms. Katrell's classroom twice a month to give research-specific workshops and supportive resources to these matriculated UW students. This has allowed for UW Libraries to reach more students in need of research resources and support, especially during the transition from high school to college. The work that I do through UW Libraries aims to help fill in gaps in knowledge that students may have. Like how to develop concise and effective research questions, how to evaluate sources (especially against mis- and disinformation online), and how to utilize UW Libraries' Search functions efficiently for ease of research at all stages. The curriculum I teach as a Peer Research Consultant addresses gaps in knowledge that are more present in students who do not come from college-educated families. What I teach is what my supervisor John Holmes calls an "invisible curriculum." It addresses things that students are expected to know as they enter the university system, but may not have learned in their studies or lived experience thus far. I have already seen dramatic improvement in student comfortability using UW Libraries Search in my time at Ballard. Students are getting much needed practice in researching efficiently and effectively. I'm certain these students will be better prepared for their academic studies because of the resources my department has developed which I have the opportunity to share.

I have grown personally and professionally through my work at UW Libraries thanks to the grace of my coworkers and supervisors, a variety of teaching opportunities, and my own determination. My supervisors have been extraordinarily supportive of my fear of public speaking. I was eased into the work - I started out with 1-1 research consultations and sat in on multiple workshop presentations performed by my coworkers. I was allotted ample time to learn the material and practice at my own pace. As of today, I've given three workshops at Ballard High School to students that really need the extra support. The work feels important not just to the students, but to my own professional growth as I am determined, to stand tall and face my fear. I have been able to expand into a leadership role as I continue to develop a relationship with Ballard, and flex into newfound confidence in my ability to perform in front of others. Thanks to a supportive environment and my own strength of will, working at UW Libraries has provided immense opportunities for personal and professional growth.

-E. Swenson

Being a student assistant at Odegaard frequently means extending a warm welcome to hundreds of visitors, quickly gathering books from the ever-expanding holds list, and navigating the library's bustling environment. However, working during the summer quarter showcases a noticeable change in the library's pace as fewer students fill the University of Washington's campus. Shifts during this season tend to carry a more peaceful energy, being filled with simple tasks such as fetching a book on hold or reviewing the library's inventory.

Over the past summer, I found the most distinguishable difference between these seasons to be revealed through my time working at the information desk. A duty that is often consumed with answering a plethora of questions was suddenly quite quiet, with much fewer library user interactions. During these more mundane summer shifts, one interaction stood out as it deeply impacted the way I view Odegaard and my role as a student employee.

On that day, a cheerful lady approached me with a quick request to check if a specific book was available at the library. As I searched for her book, she carried a friendly demeanor, striking up a conversation by asking how long I had been working at Odegaard and what I am studying at UW. I instantly appreciated her genuine warmth and curiosity about my experience working at the library. As the conversation progressed, she divulged that she used to be an Odegaard employee many years ago, continuing to share how much the library has changed over the years. Her nostalgia and memories illuminated how the library has evolved, morphing into the unique space it is today.

Learning about the history of Odegaard from someone who has observed these changes firsthand made my experience at the library feel even more worthwhile. Our conversation also matched the stories I had previously heard from my coworkers, who have been working at Odegaard for many years. Their many tales of what being open 24/7 entailed or the silly shenanigans students have tried to pull over the years highlight how Odegaard has, for generations, been a welcoming community space at the university. I am deeply grateful to be working in a space where library employees and users can bond over past memories as well as collaborate on the future of Odegaard. Learning how the library has progressed over the years while still maintaining the classic Odegaard charm and comfort has offered me a newfound appreciation for being employed at a UW library.

Through my time at Odegaard, I have not only found joy in the day-to-day tasks of the job but also in the unique connections I have been able to make with library users and the broader UW community. I have learned to take pride in both being an Odegaard employee and a UW student, as both are evolving spaces that continue to be shaped by those who carry the long-lasting legacies and those who craft the future of the institutions.

-Tasha



Usually, a phone ringing at the Information desk at Odegaard Library would mean that someone was inquiring about library hours or looking for a lost item, however, one night I received a phone call that completely changed the type of day I was having.

Towards the end of my shift, I was reading a book at the information desk but I wasn't able to comprehend most of it since my mind was filled with anxiety about school. Finals were fast approaching and the amount of studying I would have to do was overwhelming. The ring of the phone interrupted my thoughts and I picked up, a bit flustered. The patron, on the other line, expressed that they had somewhat of a difficult request. The patron was working on a citation for their thesis paper but they were not a UW student. Luckily I was able to find the book that they were looking for and there was an ebook version. They asked if it would be possible for me to email them a link to the ebook since they were not able to access it due to their lack of netID. At this point, I felt as if there was nothing else I could do for the patron but I was surprised when they asked me if I could find a few page numbers for them. They did not need to read the book but instead complete a citation, which only required a few page numbers. I was able to access the ebook and found the page number of certain quotes that the patron needed to cite. Toward the end of the call, they thanked me profusely and mentioned that they were able to successfully finish their thesis paper because of me.

I left the call with such a feeling of accomplishment since I was able to help someone complete a paper that was the culmination of their academic career. I was reminded of the importance of the library and how just a few numbers can help someone complete a project they had been working on for several years.

-Umikka

As a passionate and ambitious student at University of Washington, my personal and academic journey has been shaped by my experience at UW Libraries. My involvement with the UW Libraries has been a big part of my journey, providing me with knowledge and experience that have helped me gain a better understanding of myself and my future. It is a learning experience and space that I am very happy to be a part of.

In my sophomore year, I joined the UW Libraries as a Student Circulation Assistant. I quickly learned various tasks, ranging from shelving books to assisting visitors as well as helping create meaningful children's book displays and participating in displays and activities prepared by staff. I frequently worked on Sundays and, as a result, took on the responsibility of looking after and organizing items in the lost and found. I loved learning about the library process and knowing the workings of resources and sharing my interests with visitors.

One aspect that significantly impacted my growth is the guidance and support provided by the UW library staff space. I gained valuable insights into effective boundaries and communication. But it is not just one core circ staff but everybody working at the campus library is very collaborative and supportive, their willingness to listen to my ideas and questions fostered an environment that allowed me to flourish both personally and professionally with confidence. Interacting with library visitors on a frequent basis honed my communication skills, teaching me to adapt to diverse needs, interesting situations and provide assistance with patience, empathy and compassion.

The experience has been instrumental in shaping my confidence and self-esteem. Like I've stated above, engaging with library visitors, addressing their queries, and assisting them in finding the information they sought bolstered my self-assurance. In the past, I was hesitant to face discomfort, avoided confrontation, and did not display information with confidence. I don't deny that I still avoid confrontation, but I am more comfortable with my knowledge that I am able to communicate more effectively to visitors' inquiries and help them in more ways than one. This translated to my personal life, which I don't hesitate as much anymore when communicating with someone new, helping a peer or taking a leadership role in collaborative assignments.

Now a Junior, and a Student Circulation Specialist, I continue to grow both inside and outside campus grounds, carrying with me the lessons learned and skills acquired during my time at UW Libraries, which will definitely contribute to my personal and professional development throughout life.

-Anmei



Growing up, the library was one of my favorite places in the whole world. I would go every week to the Lake City Public Library with my mom and older sister and check out stacks of books in Spanish. Exploring the shelves and finding new books was easily one of the greatest highlights of my childhood. I would go to the library so often with my family that we grew quite close to some of the librarians. Spending so much time in the library allowed me to observe the level of dedication and passion that librarians have toward providing excellent assistance to all patrons. This in part is what led me to love libraries even more and it is also what drove me to apply for a front desk position in the library.

When I joined the University of Washington Libraries, I started at the Research Commons Help Desk, but over time I have been incredibly fortunate to have also worked at the Suzzallo, Allen North, and Administration desks. Working at all of these desks has allowed me to grow in a personal and professional manner. During my time working in the libraries, I have gained a great understanding of the many resources provided by the libraries, and this in turn has allowed me to improve the manner in which I am able to offer assistance to patrons. Working at the front desks has provided me with the unique experience of being the person patrons go to for help. It is during this time that I feel I serve my community the best because through these interactions I am able to improve my soft skills. Every interaction I have with a patron becomes a learning opportunity for me and every time I can provide patrons with assistance, I feel a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment knowing that that patron was able to get the help they were looking for.

As an American Ethnic Studies major, I place great importance on being able to effectively serve a diverse community. Working in the position I currently hold truly allows me to do so. Every day that I work in the library I encounter a diverse flow of patrons, and nothing makes me more excited than to meet and interact with individuals from distinct backgrounds. I have had the incredible opportunity to assist the UW and non-UW communities which oftentimes allows for me to meet international students and visitors as well as non-English speaking patrons. As someone who is hoping to work as an academic advisor but also within ethnic community organizations, working in the library is helping me immensely to better understand the needs of the communities I find myself being a part of. I feel extremely fortunate and grateful to be working in a space where diversity is celebrated and welcomed, and in turn, I aim to project that same sentiment to all those who choose to visit the library.

-Ileana



As a UWB student, working for our campus library has always been a goal of mine. I was drawn to the idea that I would be collaborating with and assisting a diverse group of fellow students.

My focus as a student employee has been on creating a welcoming environment for my peers, where everyone feels comfortable approaching library staff to seek information and receive support. As someone who experiences nervousness firsthand, I empathize with the apprehension that often accompanies asking questions; this understanding has supported my commitment to cultivating a safe environment.

I understand that many who visit our library are unfamiliar with its resources. No matter the complexity of a question, I have made it a priority to approach each interaction with a genuine sense of understanding and respect. One aspect of incorporating compassion into my interactions has been the noticeable shift in the dynamic between myself and fellow students. By actively listening, acknowledging their concerns, and treating each question with the utmost respect, I have witnessed a sense of ease emerging in our conversation. This not only resulted in their questions being answered but also allowed them the opportunity to seek further support. Additionally, this has also allowed me to feel a heightened sense of appreciation for other student employees and library staff, who are always ready to jump in and assist me with any questions that I have.

Since I was a child, I noticed how not speaking or understanding English creates barriers in education. Being a native Spanish speaker, I have connected with students who have expressed their concern about succeeding at our university and feel as though they are not receiving the same level of education as their peers. Working at our campus library, I have been given the opportunity and creative freedom to work on projects that supplement my personal growth and goal of acknowledging the struggles that non-native English speakers face while pursuing an education. Currently, other student employees and I are working on our quarterly blog posts for our community to read, where I have focused on providing resources tailored to English language learners. This showcases the amount of support that is available to them at our university and in our local community. I believe it is important for ELL students to know that their struggles are not only recognized by staff but also by their peers. Therefore, this project has proved to be supplemental to my goal of portraying this acknowledgement.

I am excited to continue my journey as a student employee and eager to learn more about the library. Every day presents a new opportunity for learning and growth, and I am grateful for the chance to contribute to a community that values inclusivity and support.

-Carolina

**How has working at UW Libraries / UW Press supported your personal, academic, or professional growth?**

When I first looked at the UW Libraries website for employment opportunities, it was because I loved to read and I wanted to explore more of the books and resources available while also earning some money. I never would have imagined that I would find a job that combines so many of my interests: helping other people, designing user interfaces, reading, learning, tackling new challenges, and creating seamless experiences for people. A little over a year later, I can proudly say that working at the UW Health Sciences Library (HSL) has allowed me to do all of that.

As a User Experience (UX) Designer, I have been redesigning the UW HSL website homepage and navigation. When I first started the role, I interviewed dozens of students and librarians at the Health Sciences Library to learn about their pain points and desires when using the HSL website. Gathering what I'd learned from them, I began to sketch out low-fidelity mockups of redesigns of the website. With these mockups, I began to meet with more librarians to gain feedback on what mockups they thought would work best for the website and which ones could be improved. After getting feedback from many librarians and going through many redesigns, I created a high fidelity mockup of a new UW HSL website homepage alongside new website navigation and new subpage mockups. I am currently conducting user/usability testing on my redesigns with students and faculty to learn how I can further improve my redesigns.

When I first started my position as a UX Designer for UW HSL, I was very apprehensive and anxious about designing such a large-scale website outside of a classroom setting. I doubted many of the designs I created and felt afraid to share them with others and get feedback and critiques. However, as I spent more and more time with the friendly UW HSL staff, I felt myself growing more comfortable and confident with my skills. When showing my plans and designs to HSL staff, I found my ideas were met with much enthusiasm. While some of the redesigns I show staff are met with critiques, I no longer feel afraid to share my designs and receive feedback or criticism.

Not only has working at UW HSL greatly improved my self-confidence as a designer, but it's also allowed me to gain much experience and further solidified my interest in UX design. I love working alongside users to learn about their experiences with the website and then redesigning it to meet their needs alongside a team. I'm passionate about creating user-friendly experiences for everyone and am excited to continue improving the UW HSL website. In the future, I would love to continue applying what I've learned at UW HSL to UX design roles at other healthcare-focused companies or organizations. I am very grateful for all the guidance and support I have received from UW students, staff, and faculty during my time as a UX Designer for UW HSL.

-Doan



I started working at Branch Operations Services the same quarter I started attending UW. As a shy and anxious freshman, I struggled with finding my place in college – I could never fit food into my schedule, I had difficulties maintaining friendships, and I was overwhelmed with my classes. Feeling lost all the time – not just literally lost on campus, but in most aspects of my life – translated into self-consciousness at work. Every time I sat down at the desk, I stressed over potentially embarrassing myself in front of patrons. However, working at the libraries taught me the importance of connection in a supportive community, ultimately helping me grow into someone I’m not embarrassed to be.

With the support of my coworkers, I became increasingly confident working. I’ve always associated shame with asking for help, but my supervisors’ continuous encouragement made me comfortable turning towards help when I felt lost. Through this support, my shaky voice that answered the phone became steadier, and my heart stopped racing when doing closing announcements. I now feel brave enough taking on unfamiliar projects by myself, understanding my coworkers are just a Teams message away if problems arise. By knowing where to turn for help, I’m better able to serve the people in my community. Outside of work, I noticed this confidence manifesting as I became more comfortable asking professors questions and talking to new people. When I had a stressful presentation for a class, I reminded myself that if I can do closing announcements at Foster, then I can basically do anything. Many aspects of this job helped me feel more secure in being my own person, yet also taught me to trust others and work collaboratively.

I truly believe the people at this job have helped me grow the most; the relationships formed here gave me a sense of belonging I’ve never experienced at previous jobs. I adore when my supervisors take time to check in on me. I love visiting friends I made from this job during my break. I admire patrons who talk to me about their day. These connections continue to remind me the value of community, especially when college can often feel isolating. I still struggle with fitting in sometimes, that funny feeling making its way back. But I know now my life is rich with support from the connections formed at this job. I am intertwined in a community of supervisors who provide me opportunities to grow, technicians who collaborate with student staff in various projects, and student staff members who I feel comfortable talking about anything with. I’ve found a place where I belong at UW libraries, and it’s turned me into a version of myself that freshman me probably wouldn’t recognize but would be grateful to have grown into. After feeling lost in college, working at UW libraries reminds me who I am: a student who cherishes connection, although sometimes still gets lost on campus while walking to different branch libraries.

-Maggie

My position at the Foster Business Library as the Graduate Research Assistant has complemented my coursework in the Master of Library and Information Science program at the Information School seamlessly. I am confident that I am getting more out of my program because of the real world experience I'm gaining at Foster. The librarians at Foster (Jessica Jerrit and Jason Sokoloff) give me every opportunity to gain experience in the responsibilities they share as librarians so that I am equipped with the tools I need to become a librarian myself when I graduate in June. Working at UW Libraries has supported my personal, academic, and professional growth by providing me with opportunities to collaborate across departments in special projects and initiatives, hone my reference and customer service skills, and gain experience in instruction and training in utilizing library resources.

Jason Sokoloff always keeps me in mind for recommendations for committees or project teams across departments he thinks I would be well suited for so that I can gain experience collaborating across the libraries. Without Jason I would not have been on the Strategic Plan Working Group last year or the STEP committee this year, which I'm very excited for. With these experiences I'm able to get out of Foster and my comfort zone, meet new people, and learn skills I otherwise wouldn't have.

Working with Jessica Jerrit as my supervisor is any MLIS student's dream when it comes to learning to do reference. I'm so grateful to have her mentorship in addition to my studies in my program. After learning to do reference for the business school with all our specialized and sometimes complicated business databases, I'm incredibly confident in my ability to learn quickly and do reference in a variety of disciplines. With this mentorship and training from Jessica, I am sure that going into my job search in libraries I can be a very competent reference librarian.

Lastly, this position has provided me with the opportunity to practice my instruction and training skills. With the number of class visits Jessica and I do, I've been able to improve every time with my delivery and how I answer questions in class by learning from my mistakes. This complemented my class that I took last quarter on instruction where we needed to iterate on a lesson plan throughout the quarter. I decided to directly apply the assignment to my class visits I do every quarter and have greatly benefited from that practice. I also have gotten the opportunity to train BOS student workers in using the business databases and doing basic reference for users that may have quick questions at the circulation desk.

I'm very grateful for the last year and a half at Foster Library because I know I will be more confident in my job search later this year because of this experience. This job has also been invaluable as a complement to my studies in the MLIS program.

-Giselle

## **My Contributions to the UW Bothell/ Cascadia College Campus Library**

Being a part of the UW Bothell/ Cascadia Campus library team has been an impactful journey. When I arrive at work, I always look forward to serving the plethora of diverse audiences with unique backgrounds that set foot into our library. I've taken on different roles while being a student employee. My contributions to Library Voices, the children's display, and first-floor displays, have enabled me to not only collaborate well with my colleagues in completing a project to meet a deadline, but I was also able to provide a student perspective, which I thought was essential.

During my time as a student employee, one of the biggest contributions I made was when I published my first blog post. My first blog post highlighted my experience as a first-generation Latino student. When I wrote this, I was a first-year UW-Bothell student and I hoped that by talking about my experience, I was able to reach out to other students who were in the same boat as me. In creating this blog post, exploring different resources that were dedicated to the succession of first-generation students was eye-opening. I realized that I wasn't fully aware of the number of resources that were out there for first-generation students.

Similarly, I contributed to creating the first-generation student's display and pop-up event this past November. This was for the National First-Generation College Celebration. There was this feeling that I felt when creating this display. A lot of this feeling had to do with the fact that I was one of many unique students and faculty who were also first-generation and understood what they were going through. While we may all come from different backgrounds, we share one similarity. Being the first in our family to achieve a higher education. This is a big part of who I am because instead of having the luxury of seeking advice from family members who held the light for us, we had to become the light. At the end of the library pop-up event, it was exciting and impressive to see how many signatures there were on the display. Each signature represented a student, staff, faculty, or community member who identified as first-generation who came by the library to be a part of this national celebration that recognized them for being first-generation.

My contributions to the UW-Bothell/ Cascadia College Campus Library have been an experience that I have grown throughout. The main focus of my library blog post and my contribution to the first-generation display and pop-up event was focused on impacting our students, staff, faculty, and community members. While I have been able to be a part of these experiences, I desire to make other notable contributions that will make an impact on our UW community as a whole.

-Cesar

Working in the UW Libraries has been a wonderful experience that I've had over the last 2 years. I have been a Sand Point Retrieval student since August of 2021, and it is in this role that I have been able to make a contribution to the UW Libraries. I was one of the first students to start in this role post-lockdown due to all of the previous students graduating during the pandemic, which meant that as time has gone on, I have gained a great sense of understanding of the workings out at the Sand Point facility. Because of that, when new things were introduced out there, I became the first person to test it out to make sure it fit into the flow of work and also to find any kinks in the system, which leads to a massive project that I helped progress. During the summer of 2022, we were introduced to a new software called Caiasoft, which was to be used to switch all of our material to an accession system. The first step for this was to apply barcodes to every single shelf in our stacks, to which I was the first person to start that process and personally placed at least 6,000 of them. Once that process was done, I was the first to start the actual scanning of the items, which meant using a laptop to scan in the first and last book on each shelf to assign that range of books there. I was always the first to report back any bugs within that system and process and help think of ways to work around those issues. I also ended up being the person to train some of the other students on this process due to the fact that there ended up being some changes in supervisor positions that left us without a technician or specialist out at Sand Point for the majority of the summer, and that fall quarter. With me taking on this role of communication between what was actually happening with the project, and the supervisors still at Suzzallo, this project was able to continue at a solid pace, barring any issues with the software itself. This system is now almost entirely what is used in the Sand Point facility now for finding material, and while still in progress due to new material being added to our collection, my being there that summer is what allowed the supervisors to not have to split their time trying to manage two different buildings due to being down a specialist. Along with this specific project, I also took on some of the lead roles in general during those five to six months, which meant that we were still able to get material out to patrons without falling behind. This included doing the searching for unfound resource requests, as well as finding articles for scanning that other students could not due to bad citations. Our output of materials was able to stay consistent and on time during those months, which was an impact that would have felt very apparent if not done in a timely manner. Thank you for your consideration for this scholarship.

-Marcus

**How has working at UW Libraries / UW Press supported your personal, academic, or professional growth?**

I could feel myself starting to sweat as I tried desperately to quickly adjust the column width to the data. With two taps the UW Press Assistant auto-fitted all the data neatly into the columns, making me feel foolish. After that demo session, I was convinced there was no way I would get the position as the Business Administration Intern for the UW Press.

Thank you, Ms. Olson, for taking a chance on me. And thank you to the Press for offering me a chance to learn and grow in my first ever desk job. Throughout my time at the Press, I've been grateful to have grown my technical skills, soft skills, and experienced personal growth.

Since joining in May 2023, I've expanded my technical skills. From learning how to autofit columns on Excel and completing a reimbursement to improving my typing speed and spelling, I've been so grateful to not merely be copying and filing or getting people coffee. Even recording journal entries in Quickbooks isn't so daunting anymore. Plus, I've learned to be productive by paying vendors and suppliers on time and through various channels.

The Press has also taught me so much more than technical skills that look good on LinkedIn. I learned adaptability and flexibility when mastering the financial transformation between Ariba and Workday. What was previously familiar had to be relearned in a different system which taught my patience and perseverance. I am learning better time management as I balance my time between school, work, and clubs. I've also had opportunities to practice communicating with vendors, authors, and other divisions of the Press like the acquisition branch and marketing teams.

Most importantly I've discovered more about myself. I discovered that I don't enjoy accounting and would be miserable as an accountant. However, I do thrive following processes. I flourish with structure and delight in learning new things. Thanks to my environment and fellow co-workers/book nerds, I also rediscovered my love for reading, particularly non-fiction. And as cliché as it sounds, I learned I can do hard things. With the UW ISC website tutorials and a good deal of chocolate, Workday is conquerable. When a task is confusing or frustrating, I take a deep breath and remind myself that I can and will get through it. The biggest change that's come from working at UW Press has been an increase in my confidence. I've become more confident in my professional abilities, writing, and perceived ability to learn new things.

The Press has taught and continues to teach me so much. Now if you ever need an Excel wizard, I can confidently say, I got you.

-Sammie

## **Professional Growth as a UW Libraries Student Employee**

My role as a student employee in UW Special Collections continually teaches me how university archives work in collaboration between internal departments and as part of a larger university library.

I am fortunate to be working within both technical and public services. This unique dual-position allows me to engage in the back-end work of accessioning, processing, and creating finding aids while also allowing me to interact on the front-end with our patrons. Seeing how patrons come in and use our collections for their research makes me better at accessioning and creating useful finding aids for future researchers. In recognizing the specific details patrons are looking for, I better understand what information is most pertinent for me to highlight within the finding aids, which is often patrons' first point of interaction with our archival collections on ArchivesWest. Furthermore, understanding how materials are accessioned allows me to better answer patron questions regarding how to navigate ArchivesWest and the finding aids, in addition to larger questions around our workflow and process. Working within both technical and public services makes me a better student worker overall by providing me a more holistic understanding of Special Collections through the lens of two internal departments.

Beyond my day-to-day work, my supervisors within Special Collections graciously allowed me to attend the presentation and stakeholder meetings for the Associate Dean of Distinctive Collections candidate visits. These meetings were my first time being a part of the interview process for a high-level administrative position and this opportunity allowed me to consider the priorities Special Collections has in making leadership decisions and how these priorities relate to other departments within the university. During the final stakeholder meeting, I asked the candidate about how they initiate partnerships with university departments and community organizations. This question encouraged other people within the meeting to describe Distinctive Collection's current partnerships and ask for further details regarding how the candidate envisions future collaborative work. Getting to contribute to the interview process and hearing how the candidates present their ideas aided in my understanding of how Distinctive Collections acts as a part of a larger university library and how our priorities relate to the mission and values of the university.

In my daily work and in the unique opportunities presented to me by my workplace, I find myself growing professionally as a library worker and archivist. I hope to continue to develop these career-oriented skills and participate in any professional development opportunities that arise as I finish my final year within the Master of Library and Information Science program.

-Eli



Since joining Tateuchi East Asia Library in the summer quarter of 2023, I have witnessed and participated in the preparations for the library's reopening after renovations.

In the beginning I first worked on Seattle Chinese Immigrants Oral History Project during the summer, a project that documented the lives and experiences of Seattle's Chinese immigrant community from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China. In the process, my colleagues and I worked together to create an electronic archive for the library to be retrieved by interested scholars. During this period, I was also involved in the preparation of the pilot phase of the library.

My job was to re-shelve new and used books, i.e. categorize books according to their barcodes and transport them to the appropriate shelving area. At the same time, I was responsible for responding to requests to find books, also based on barcodes to different floor areas. But a big problem was that in Smith 9, there were newspapers and old books that were decades or even centuries old that did not have barcodes, so the only way to find them was to search for them one by one by looking at the Chinese titles on the covers. This is where my proficient Chinese language skills helped a lot, making me faster and more accurate in accomplishing this task.

Then came the official opening of the library in the fall quarter. I began working at the information desk, where I was responsible for checking in and checking out books, answering phones, and fielding inquiries from patrons. Since the reopening of the library, it has attracted many readers, and is very busy with as many as 30 to 40 people per hour during peak hours. There are also a variety of questions from readers, and I also like to communicate with readers. Especially the elderly readers, they are like elders in the family. I once met an elderly Chinese man who came to donate Chinese books. He could barely speak English and was nervous when he started his inquiry. He was very happy to learn that I could help him communicate in Chinese and eventually helped him complete the donation process smoothly.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work in the library. When I use my own hands to look through the books of the past and touch the traces of time, it is as if I have found a peaceful place for my soul in the midst of my busy study life.

-Ruby