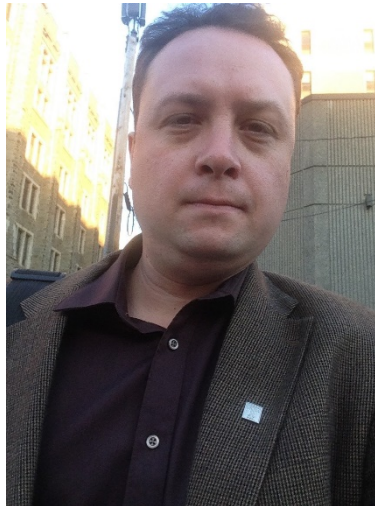PaLA | College & Research Division (CRD)

# Pennsylvania Libraries: *Research & Practice*

Interview

# In the PaLRaP Spotlight: Justin Hill

*Head, Access Services*

*Temple University, Philadelphia, PA*



## Interview by Stephanie Campbell

*Stephanie Campbell is Library Acquisitions & Outreach Specialist at Pennsylvania College of Technology, sac4@pct.edu*

## Tell us a little about yourself, specifically, your career trajectory and what led you to librarianship?

I started at Temple in September 2001 as a temporary employee working in the stacks. I became a regular full-time bibliographic assistant in January 2002, working in the Interlibrary Loan (ILL) unit. By 2004, I was supervisor of ILL loan borrowing. In 2012, I moved on to Access Services Librarian and held that position for approximately nine months until I accepted the Head of Access Services position in 2013.

The academic working environment and the feeling that I am contributing to advancing scholarship is what drove me towards librarianship as a career.

## Having worked for Temple University libraries for 18 years, I'm sure a lot has changed in Access Services. Can you describe your role and how it has evolved?

My role has changed over the years significantly, often centered around the advancement of automation of library services and culminating in what I consider the ultimate library automation tool, the BookBot.

When I first started at Temple in the ILL department, we didn't have many digital solutions for requesting materials or document delivery. We still printed received documents for pick up, and only accepted paper requests, for example. As library software and online resources became available, Temple quickly adopted those various tools, automating the request process as well as the delivery of electronic materials directly to a patron's email.

## The [Charles Library](bit.ly/2Ifdb00) (bit.ly/2Ifdb00) replaced the Samuel L. Paley Library in August 2019, combining extensive collections with extensive collaborative spaces. Though the pandemic interrupted its full usage, how has the transition gone from the old library to the new library?

The building was well received and patrons immediately made it their own. Dozens of patrons were in line outside the building waiting for the doors to open to the public for the first time; something I didn't think I'd ever see!

Since then, our patrons have made great use of the Charles Library not only as a resource for obtaining learning materials but also for its prime locations for collaborative work and singular study spaces.

Since the building was designed with co-location of academic support services in mind, it houses the [Student Success Center](bit.ly/3eA1rRv) (bit.ly/3eA1rRv) so the building has also quickly become a space where patrons can seek assistance for writing assignments as well as receive STEM tutoring, for example.

## The Fourth floor of the Charles Library holds the browsing collection of 180,0000 volumes on open shelving. How do you decide what is in the browsing collection?

Planning for the move of the physical materials was completed by a cross-departmental group of staff, also pulling in voices from around the organization for specific tasks, including the selection of items that would be held in the open browsing stacks as opposed to the BookBot.

After the group consulted with members of our Learning and Research Services Subject Specialists, it was decided that the following criteria would decide what was shelved on the fourth floor: recent (five years) acquisitions; highly circulating materials; specific items the subject specialists thought should be in open shelving including large format books best suited for browsing; and subjects such as art, architecture, and music.

Charles Library utilizes an [Automated Storage and Retrieval System (ASRS)](bit.ly/3k66B9g) (bit.ly/3k66B9g), otherwise known as the BookBot, for the additional 1.5 million volumes plus 18,000 linear feet of special collections materials. Tells us a little about how this works.

The process begins by a patron finding the desired material in our online catalog. When they choose the book they want, the button labeled "how to get this" opens a list of all the access options, including submitting a request to the BookBot. The request is then sent to the BookBot database and triggers retrieval of the bin where that specific book is located, which is then delivered to a pick station. There, a staff member pulls the book out of the bin and places it on an open hold shelf for the patron. From there, the patron can either review the material in-house or check the book out via a self-check machine or at a service desk.

## Can you provide a few general statistics to illustrate the library's usage?

The library was immediately accepted by our patron base and we have seen a large number of patrons walk through the doors over the last year we've been open, generally thousands a day (Pre-COVID).

In addition to the high usage of the building as a collaborative study space, we see high use of the collection as well with requests to the BookBot averaging every 5-6 minutes.

## Describe a day-in-the-life of your role in access services.

My role in Access Services is to provide oversight and direction to the various units within my department: Circulation, Reserves, Interlibrary Loan, Stacks and some aspects of our remote storage facility. This can include technical assistance with the BookBot, management of service desks, and policy discussions pertaining to library circulation and interlibrary loan operations. Plus, I'm the proverbial paper pusher in many ways.

## Finally, can you tell us why you do what you do?

I do what I do, because I play a part in supporting researchers who are working on various projects. Helping to support academic production is something that's very important to me. To be able to assist people who are working on research pursuits allows me to feel as if I'm playing a key part in expanding the world's knowledge in some small way.