

Pennsylvania Libraries: *Research & Practice*

Interview

In the PaLRaP Spotlight: Emily Reed, Reference and Instruction Librarian

Pennsylvania State University Libraries – Harrisburg, Middletown, PA

You've worked at a variety of libraries during your career; how has this shaped your approach to librarianship?

I got my start in libraries working at the Joseph T. Simpson Public Library in Mechanicsburg as a part-time circulation assistant. I loved it! I loved working in a service-oriented job, talking about books, answering patron questions, and working with wonderful, supportive colleagues. I then started working full time as a library assistant in an elementary school library in the Mechanicsburg School District while getting my master's degree in library and information science. While working as a paraprofessional in both positions, I learned how important information access and the opportunity for learning was, whether self-directed or through formal education. These jobs taught me the importance of basic literacy and how fundamental a love of reading is from a young age. I now work at Penn State Harrisburg and have been a professional librarian for 10 years. While I focus less on basic literacy in the academic library, much of my current position is focused on teaching information literacy, whether that's through teaching instruction sessions or individual research consultations with patrons. So, an emphasis on providing learning opportunities has remained a steady through-line since my earliest library work experiences.

Describe your role at Penn State Harrisburg.

Like so many other librarians, I wear many hats. I am the liaison librarian to Penn State Harrisburg's School of Public Affairs, providing reference and instruction services while also doing monograph selection in relevant subject areas. I coordinate library services for our international student population (over 600 students on our campus), and I also coordinate first-year library instruction. Penn State University Libraries is "one library, geographically dispersed," so I work closely with colleagues at other Penn State campuses and serve on both campus and University Libraries committees. I also conduct civic engagement outreach on my campus. I have two workshops that I offer in alternating fall semesters, a misinformation workshop in odd years and a voter registration workshop in even years. I am particularly proud of an outreach initiative for our international students that I have cultivated, a Personal Librarian Program. This program provides space in our Learning Management System for international students to learn about library updates, programs, services, and resources. It's an extra place that they can reach out to me with questions or requests.

Please share your favorite library-related moment or experience that has inspired you.

Attending PALS (the Pennsylvania Library Association Academy for Leadership Studies) in 2016 was probably the most instrumental experience of my early librarianship. Not only did I learn a lot about myself and what it means to be a leader, but I got to know so many other early career librarians and worked very closely with a few of them to start up the Association's mentorship program. I received mentorship from experienced leaders in Pennsylvania libraries. I also learned how I could better connect with librarians across the state through volunteering in different PaLA venues. PALS truly had an impact on my career.

As a PaLA leader, do you have any suggestions that might benefit early-career professionals thinking about joining PaLA?

I have been a member of several different professional associations and organizations, and I can confidently and enthusiastically say that PaLA has been BY FAR the greatest value for my professional growth. Pennsylvania library-land is rather small – it's small enough that you can get to know a lot of people from across the state, generating a sense of community and belonging, and great for networking. There are many opportunities for early career professionals to get involved. Joining one of our round tables or divisions can place you with other librarians in similar library types or with similar interests. There are a number of free opportunities for professional development exclusively for personal members of PaLA, such as the mentorship program. Annual Conference continues to be a highlight of each year for me – I have made some great professional connections who I look forward to catching up with each year, learn about what other libraries are doing through the educational sessions, and get great new ideas to percolate on!