

Pennsylvania Libraries: *Research & Practice*

Interview

In the PaLRaP Spotlight: Maureen Bentz, Director of the Vernon and Doris Bishop Library

Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA

Denise Wetzel

Denise Wetzel is the Science and Engineering Librarian at Pennsylvania State University, daw5086@psu.edu

Tell us about your career journey to librarianship

I began my career in librarianship in my hometown at the Lebanon Community Library. I started as the Volunteer Coordinator and then became the Assistant Director. It was a wonderful place to grow into a professional and it gave me the opportunity to make positive changes in my own community. With the mentorship of many including my first library director, Jayne Tremaine, I pursued my graduate degree while working full-time at the library and part time as a graphic designer at our local newspaper. I then ventured into part-time community college librarianship at Harrisburg Area Community College (HACC)'s Lebanon Campus. I enjoyed helping college students, which led me to continue pursuing a career in academic libraries. Over fifteen years ago, I came back to Lebanon Valley College, my undergraduate alma mater, as Access Services Librarian. Over the years I had the opportunity to pursue library leadership in interim roles. Over the last five years, I've served as the library director.



Describe your role at Lebanon Valley College's Vernon and Doris Bishop Library

I provide direction and support to our amazing library team and oversee all library operations. Together, we offer excellent customer service to our students and the campus community. I ensure our team has the tools and resources to enhance academic programs, provide excellent information literacy instruction, and encourage and cheerlead faculty efforts in the areas of scholarship and teaching. I focus on collaboration with faculty, administrators, staff, students, alumni, and other stakeholders. At the same time, I do my best to ensure that the library is supporting academic priorities and overall strategic planning.

You mention that you are an alum of Lebanon Valley College (LVC). How did your experience as a student prepare you for your current role?

Bishop Library was my home base at the college. I was a commuting student, so the library is where I connected with friends, wrote papers, and studied. Being able to be a part of this library's transformation over the years has been a privilege because I know firsthand how important the library is for social connection and quiet study. LVC and our generous donors continue to invest in the future of the library. The renovation of the library's main floor in 2016 created collaborative spaces and study rooms. This summer, our second floor will be renovated to provide more areas for students to gather in small groups and pursue quiet study. This is a testament to the college's commitment to the library as a space supporting student success.

In your opinion, what do you think academic libraries will always need, no matter how things change?

I believe academic libraries will always need kind, knowledgeable, and communicative staff and librarians to welcome, assist, instruct, and support students with their research questions and academic goals.

How have professional association memberships, such as with the Pennsylvania Library Association (PaLA), contributed to your professional development? Do you have any advice that might benefit early-career professionals?

My first experience with PaLA was over twenty years ago. Attending my first conference gave me a sense of the scope of the larger Pennsylvania library community. Through PaLA connections, I gained insight into how to tackle challenging issues with creativity and kindness. With that lens, I would say that PaLA is more important today than it was when I first entered the profession. Librarians today are facing an overwhelming set of pressures, and it is vital for early career folks to receive strong support and mentorship as they enter the field. Opportunities to connect through conferences and meetings, such as those offered by PaLA, provide a valuable network of encouragement during a particularly difficult period.