

Alycia Bailey: If it's exciting for you, it's exciting for everyone

LEARNING TO STAND ON YOUR OWN TWO FEET

In recent conversation with an older colleague, Alycia Bailey was informed she was no longer a new librarian, but a librarian toddler: still learning to walk on her own, but no longer likely to slump into a 'death position' if left unsupervised. Now, having completed her fifth year as a library professional, Alycia has found herself compelled to reflect on the things she learned over those short years, and to share some of her lessons learned with new librarians who are only just learning to walk.

COLLECT EVIDENCE

In the past two and a half years since I started at my current position, I have joined LARK (Library Applied Research Kollektive) and completed a master's research project. In the process I've learned the value of data. Even if you're not studying formally, you should always be collecting data. Not just circulation statistics and door counts, but qualitative data as well. Get patron feedback about programs, write stream of consciousness notes after events or get a colleague to observe your practice and give you feedback. No matter how well you're doing, it can always get better. Reflect on what you've done and how it can be improved.

MAKE PROGRAMS INTERESTING FOR YOU

If you've got to run a program while smiling and engaged for at least an hour, then it may as well be something you enjoy. My thing has been gaming. I've used games to encourage students to engage in critical thinking, word play and storytelling. In my master's project I also used video games to get students interested in coding, mathematics and science. My participants could see that I was excited to be there, with them, sharing something amazing. My enthusiasm has infected them with a love of learning and makes them come back for more.

SMARTER PLANNING MAKES BETTER PROGRAMS

Even for regular lunchtime club meetings, I have learned to always make a short, reusable session plan. Sometimes it's nothing more than dot points, and I usually don't bring it with me to meetings, but I find that the act of writing out a plan cements in my mind the purpose of the program and keeps me on track. Writing plans also helps you to focus your energy on what really matters and means your participants get the most out of the experience.

GET A LIFE


When I started as a librarian, I would work all the time. I'm talking twelve hour days, skipped lunch breaks, late nights, early mornings, planning programs on my days off and checking work emails in bed. I was unhappy, tired and my work was suffering. I still work late occasionally and sometimes I skip lunch, but life is a lot more balanced and I'm better at work for it.

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