

Reflective Essay

Stephanie Lawson

Wayne State University

Dr. Dian Walster

## Reflective Essay

### **Introduction**

The artifact that best meets the learning outcomes of Learning Outcome Five is the Analytic Essay assignment from Objective Three. While far from my best writing example, this assignment intersected all aspects of my life both professionally and personally. It also provided lessons in establishing a narrower focus and a fresh perspective from the final weeks of this course. “The foundations of the profession and its basic values and ethics such as intellectual freedom, information access and dissemination” (Wayne State University Web Communications, 2019) have been a part of who I am for many years. Equity of access and intellectual freedom are closely tied together especially concerning collection development. Collection development is something that impacts all patrons. Done well, patrons will have access to the information that they need. Rights of free speech, free access to the free speech of others, as well as confidentiality and privacy are at the center of the Library Bill of Rights (American Library Association, 2006); Lawson, 2019; LaRue, 2018, pp. 434 – 435).

### **Intellectual freedom, information access, and collection development**

The more diverse a library’s patronage, the more likely conflicts may arise. This is especially true when it concerns children’s and teen’s collections. Many in our communities feel that our youth need to be protected from materials that they deem harmful. Different cultures have their own ideas about what is harmful to children. Collections should be developed without bias, resisting censorship, and representing all views (American Library Association, 2006; LaRue, p. 437).

In the Analytic Essay I referred to a time when my commitment to these values was tested as I was working as a Children’s Librarian at a library with an embattled Library Board

and Friends of the Library group. Some members of the community made it their personal mission to keep “dangerous materials out of the hands of impressionable children” (Lawson, 2019). I had experience working with children and an extensive knowledge of children’s literature, knew libraries well and had many library skills. I believed in intellectual freedom, information access, and other library values. I did not, however, know how to advocate for them (American Library Association, 2006; Jaeger, Gorham, Taylor & Bertot, 2015).

In 2002, a patron entered the library with twin girls. She approached the children’s reference desk and asked if we had the book *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman. We did not have it. She asked if I could get a copy for the collection. I asked her to write down the title and author and I taped it to my computer monitor.

That evening the Friends of the Library had their meeting. Some of the members stopped by my desk to let me know they had funds for the children’s department. One of the women gasped as she saw the note taped to my monitor, “You aren’t getting THAT book, are you?”

I said that I was looking it up for a patron and would consider it for the collection. She told me that the children of our community should not be exposed to its content. Before they left, the woman said, “We will not be using our funds for that kind of book”.

I looked up the book as soon as they left and, knowing the beliefs of the woman that so strongly opposed it, understood why she was opposed to having it in our collection. I also knew that we needed it in our collection. I spoke with a colleague about the situation and they advised submitting the title as a patron request. Patron requests were ordered from a different budget and department and would not ruffle feathers as far as the children’s department was concerned. While this got the book into the collection, I sensed then and I know now that I should have handled it differently.

## Conclusion

I learned through the process that not everyone is going to love every book that I choose for the collection. Those books that are unwanted by some are needed by other patrons. It changed the way that I ordered books, where I kept notes from patrons, and my response to the Friends of the Library and other groups even if they do contribute to the library. I wish I had the words and the information then that I have now. The resource materials that I have gathered through my coursework this semester are valuable. Librarian Charli Osborne uses a scripted response when materials in the Southfield Public Library youth collections are questioned. She says, “If I don’t have something in my library that offends you, then I am not doing my job.” (S. Lawson. (2019) [Personal interview] April 9, 2019.).

Knowing to refer to the Library Bill of Rights and a Collection Development Policy would have also been helpful. I have also gained a greater confidence in these beliefs and values. It helps to know that the law, professional organizations, and colleagues will support decisions made based on them. While I do not currently make decisions about collection development, I do interact with patrons that are concerned about the materials that are available at our library. Knowing how to share the library beliefs and values in a way that patrons can understand them may not eliminate conflict, but it generally is met with an agreement to disagree (American Library Association, 2006; Garnar, M. L., 2018; Koehler, 2003; LaRue, J., 2018).

Whether it is comic books and Manga, movies and video games, or books and magazines, someone is going to find something on library shelves that offends them. I will not be able to avoid such conversations in the future. I believe that I now have and will continue to expand the skills and resources to advocate for the foundations of the information professions in similar situations and do so with confidence.

## References

- American Library Association. (2006, July 26). Core Values of Librarianship. Retrieved March 25, 2019, from <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>
- Garnar, M. L. (2018). Information ethics. In Hirsh, S. (Ed.), *Information services today: An introduction* (Second ed.) (pp. 366 – 377). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jaeger, P., Gorham, U., Taylor, N., & Bertot, J. (2015). Teaching Information Policy in the Digital Age: Issues, Strategies, and Innovation. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 56(3), 175-189. Retrieved from <https://www-jstor-org.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/stable/90015184>
- Koehler, W. (2003). Professional Values and Ethics as Defined by "The LIS Discipline". *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 44(2), 99-119. doi:10.2307/40323926
- LaRue, J. (2018). Intellectual freedom. In Hirsh, S. (Ed.), *Information services today: An introduction* (Second ed.) (pp. 434 – 449). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lawson, S. (2019). *How do library beliefs and values align with my personal beliefs and values?* Unpublished manuscript, Wayne State University.
- Wayne State University Web Communications. (2019). Student learning outcomes: MLIS. Retrieved April 27, 2019, from [https://sis.wayne.edu/mlis/learning\\_outcomes.php](https://sis.wayne.edu/mlis/learning_outcomes.php)

## Appendix A

Name: Stephanie Lawson Graduating semester/year: Fall 2020

Degree/Certificate: MLIS

Artifact 1: Course: 6010 Assignment: Analytic Essay Assignment Learning outcome # it supports: 5

Please add your evaluative statement below:

This artifact was created for the Analytic Essay assignment. The purpose was to address course objective 3 and career enhancement competencies. I also learned to narrow the scope of projects. I selected this assignment because it best fits learning outcome 5. It also represents the deep meaning that the values and beliefs discussed in the document has in my life both personally and professionally.

## Appendix B

**Stephanie L. Lawson**

2356 Anders Drive  
Waterford, MI 48329

425-345-7338

[Gv3691@wayne.edu](mailto:Gv3691@wayne.edu)

**EDUCATION****Master of Library and Information Science**

Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

Expected: December 2020

Concentration in children's services and technology

**Bachelor of Science**

Rochester University, Rochester Hills, Michigan

2017

Major: Early Childhood Studies

**EXPERIENCE**

Library Assistant, Pontiac Public Library, Pontiac, Michigan 2015 to Present

- Register patrons, charge and discharge materials, manage materials under the supervision of the Circulation Librarian
- Plan and implement the Family Karaoke Night monthly
- Plan and implement programs for children and their families
- Prepare flyers and newsletter documents to promote programs and services
- Create displays quarterly
- Assisted children and adults with public computers
- Led Minecraft Club

Lead Preschool Teacher, Oakland Family Services, Pontiac, Michigan 2017 to 2019

- Taught in a class of 15 students using play-based curriculum
- Kept meticulous records of children's progress
- Adjusted lesson plans according to individual needs of children and the classroom

Library Assistant, Lied Public Library, Essex, Iowa 2012 to 2014

- Planned programs, chose and processed books for children and teens
- Provided reference services, computer assistance, fax services, and more as needed to support the Library Director

Children's Librarian, Ransom District Library, Plainwell, Michigan 2001 to 2004

- Planned, promoted, and implemented children's programming
- Children's collection development and management
- Maintained budget and records for the children's department

**Stephanie L. Lawson**

**2**

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS & MEMBERSHIPS**

American Library Association (ALA)

- Wayne State University, Student Chapter
- Michigan Library Association (MLA)

**SPECIAL SKILLS**

Operating systems: Windows

Software & Databases: Microsoft Office Suite, Office 365 (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, Sway, Teams, One Note), MARC, HTML, CSS



**Stephanie L. Lawson**

2356 Anders Drive  
Waterford, MI 48329  
425-345-7338  
[Gv3691@wayne.edu](mailto:Gv3691@wayne.edu)

**REFERENCES**

Brenda Franks  
Director, retired  
Lied Public Library, Essex, Iowa  
Home address:  
809 Iowa Ave.  
P.O. Box 362,  
Essex, IA 51638  
712-215-5812

Dr. Dian Walster  
Professor  
Library and Information Science Program  
Wayne State University  
300.10 Kresge Library  
Detroit, MI 48202  
Ah1984@wayne.edu

Dr. Joe Bentley  
Professor  
Rochester University  
School of Humanities  
Alumni Music Center 201  
248-218-2141  
jbentley@rc.edu