



#LibraryLife



Rebekah Tweed Fox is a Reference & Instruction Librarian at Mount Saint Mary's University. She graduated from the School of Information Sciences at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville in 2014 and has worked in multiple libraries including the University of Tennessee College of Law Library. She now lives in Los Angeles, California with her husband Patrick and their dog, Evvie.

A Day in the Life

The Reference Desk

Mount Saint Mary's University is a private, independent, Catholic liberal arts college, primarily for women. During a normal day Rebekah interacts with a number of different kinds of patrons: traditional Women's Catholic Undergraduate students, Graduate students and Non-Traditional Weekend and Evening College (mostly adult learners).

Other patrons include faculty, other staff, and the religious community.

"My number one goal while working the reference desk is to make sure the patron feels comfortable enough to come back and ask another question in the future."

As a reference and instruction librarian in an academic setting, an understanding that the job at hand is to teach students how to locate information, not find it for them, is very important. Rebekah explained that for a new or unfamiliar library user - for example, an underclassmen - the easiest way for her to accomplish a reference session is to leave the reference desk and follow them to their computer or workstation. However, if they want to chat at the reference desk Rebekah will ask them to pull out their laptop or turn her computer around and give them her keyboard - that way the student is the one "driving."

It can be a fine line to walk teaching students how to find information without telling them exactly how to do it. This might include researching multiple terms for their search or showing them how to limit and filter results. "Having the student do the actual search helps them remember the steps and the reasoning behind why we click certain buttons to do specific things." Rebekah went on to explain that generally, helping them find one or two good resources is sufficient before sending them off on their own.

"I want students to walk away understanding that research is a messy process, but at the same time provide them with at least one resource that's better than anything they're able to find through Google."

Instruction & Orientation

"Our professors are generally quite vocal about the things they want. Or, in contrast, when something isn't working as well as it should."

The other main component of Rebekah's daily job is instruction, which is considered a fairly traditional for a Reference Librarian. She visits classrooms per the instructor's request and delivers a one-shot lessons based on information literacy objectives. She's also holds new student orientations.

Additional Tasks

Because Mount Saint Mary's is a small University and the library is relatively understaffed, the librarians are required to pick up a number of additional jobs.

"I became an academic librarian because I love the university environment. I love being on a campus where everyone's main goal is learning and conducting research."

Out of all their librarians, Rebekah has the most access service experience, so she is also responsible for updating and creating new circulation policies. Other frequent daily responsibilities include updating their social media pages, preparing special library displays, hosting a book club, and preparing for library events.

She has also single handedly collected patron count data and hosted focus groups to discover how to better help the students of Mount Saint Mary's. Additionally, her library is currently working on an inventory project which requires all librarians and staff to read and assess the collection for a few hours per week. Truly proving that the job of a librarian is never truly finished.