



# The Next *Generation*

STUDENTS LOOK AT THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION COMMUNITY WITH FRESH EYES

## A Librarian's Course

Having recently graduated from the Library and Information Science program at Ontario's University of Western, I find myself thinking about my course selections. I no longer have to plot out courses of enrollment at Western; instead I must now decide on a professional career. I am already heading along two separate paths, and am surrounded by accredited librarians who are each running in their own direction. With so many courses of action to choose from, I ask to myself: How does a new graduate set her compass?

Historically, my compass has been set according to the advice of Rousseau to "take the course opposite to custom and you will almost always do well." However, as a graduate of a Library and Information Science program, I don't see a custom to which I could conform, let alone oppose. Instead, I face a surplus of options.

I am reminded of this every day because I work and live with graduates of the MLIS program—each forging distinct paths. By day, I work with reference and subject librarians at an academic library and, across town, with information specialists and analysts in a corporate research setting. At night,

By Kathryn Klages



I come home to two MLIS graduates: a research officer and a knowledge manager. We are bound by a degree, but are on different paths... which brings me back to wondering, how does a new graduate set her compass?

Since graduating I have made a few selections about my course already, and with every direction I take I see an increasing number of paths. Thus, the answer to my question is that this new graduate doesn't set her compass. I carry my compass with me and take as many detours as I can. There's a lot of road to cover. A compass, after all, will determine the direction of my initial zig, but not the next zag.

In the past, some of my decisions have baffled people, but they've provided a highly adventurous and satisfying journey. Looking back at the directions I've already taken in just earning this degree, I notice that my course selections have always included many detours and time zones.

I took 28 months to finish a degree that, conceivably, can be earned in just 12. I did not intend to take that long, but the choices I made along the way kept extending the journey. I was a full time student for my first three terms, then I spent eight months in Saskatoon on a co-op placement at the University of Saskatchewan's Health Sciences Library. I followed that with a summer doing Records Management in Doha, Qatar, and in my last term I took one distance course to finally finish the program.

I look back at that journey and realize that not only are there many paths to forge, but that the path taken is never straight—it is a sequence of zigs and zags.

### For example, ZIG...

The last course that I took at Western was Social Software & Libraries. I could not have predicted the zags that would result from just one course. It is because of that course that I graduated with an understanding of Web 2.0 and, dare I say, Library 2.0. Some highlights that I carry with me as a result of that course include:

- I know what a wiki is, and I'm not afraid to use one. Of equal importance, I know how to determine if a wiki is the best solution to a particular problem (versus a blog, del.icio.us, what-have-you).
- My aggregator is full of library RSS feeds tracking the thoughts, trends, and insights of librarians.
- I understand folksonomies and the value I add with every Web site, video, picture, and podcast I tag.

### ... ZAG


Social Software & Libraries encouraged exploration and experimentation with the Web-ovations in our midst. So I explored. I experimented. And the Zags appeared.

The knowledge gained, confidence built, and curiosity spurred on by one course has propelled me in unexpected directions. In the past few months I have done research, presentations, and workshops at York University, OLA, and at the Knowledge Ontario launch on social software tools. The path keeps zipping and zagging.

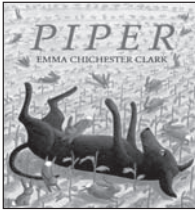
I am learning that my pursuit of professional adventures doesn't mean that I have to keep boarding planes. Degree accommodates meandering without a passport. It's all about course selection. I have been in Toronto for eight months and without crossing any time zones I have forged an unexpected course.

*Kathryn Klages currently pays rent in Toronto. During the month of May she placed herself strategically between contracts to spend the month in Africa. She will be back on course and contractually bound in June.*

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