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Teaching Statement

I am an excellent storyteller. And I believe people learn most effectively when they hear a story they believe is true. Because of my life experiences, my research, and my 33-year career as a librarian, I am prepared to tell engaging stories about:

- how to run a library,
- how to manage employees,
- how to select library materials,
- how to catalogue, how to classify,¹
- how to budget collection allocations,²
- how to research—how to use the library,
- how to build library buildings, or expand old ones,
- how to conduct a successful oral history interview,³ and
- how to archive and preserve local history so it is accessible.

I like to sit around a table and talk. My favorite GSLIS classroom at UT was the south-facing conference room on the fifth (or fourth?) floor of the Sanchez Building. It was in this classroom that Fran Miksa held court on cataloguing theory, and I fell in love with bibliographic control in 1989. Fifteen years later, it was in this room that Pat Galloway slammed her hands down on the table and shouted “NO!” when I suggested that cataloguing was really the “invisible substrate” of our discipline when discussing Marcia Bates’ article.⁴ (I still think I’m right.)

There were similar rooms in Garrison Hall. And before that at Austin College in Sherman, Texas.

What these rooms and professors had in common was an elegant confidence in the covenant between the sacred space of a simple room arranged around a table and the act of meeting to share human knowledge.

I am most comfortable sitting with my fellows and conducting a seminar. I like to come to class and discuss what we have read. I love a friendly argument:

Why is this important? How does this relate to us now? Let me tell you a story....

Ruramisai Charumbira was one of my dissertation committee members. In her seminar class on memory studies for doctoral students, we sat in a circle. She insisted that we raise our hands to speak. At first, I thought it was ridiculous for the intellectual elite to be raising our hands to be called; however, I eventually realized it balanced the voices in the discussion. Dr. Charumbira, herself, was a quiet person. She made sure all the voices had the opportunity to contribute.

¹ Smith, A. (2008). Cataloguing heresy in *Radical cataloging: essays at the front*, ed. by K.R. Roberto. McFarland.

² Smith, A. (2007). Indexed collection budget allocation: a tool for quantitative collection development based on circulation. *Public Libraries*, 46 (5): 50-54.

³ Smith, A. (2017). *Capturing our stories: an oral history of librarianship in transition*. Neal-Schuman.

⁴ Bates, M.J. (1999). The invisible substrate of information science. *Journal of the American Society of Information Science*, 50: 1043-1050.

In my current class, I use a hybrid protocol. I invite my students to discuss the topic as colleagues—and argue points; but I have also told them to raise their hands if they want to be recognized when their more assertive peers are dominating the discussion. When students raise their hands, I take charge and call on them.

I am most comfortable leading a seminar; however, I am also a very good public speaker. I can stand in front of an auditorium and engage an audience to deliver a lecture.

Recently, I shared the dais with Mayor Watson to dedicate a memorial for people discovered under the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel during a building renovation. It was a difficult occasion, involving a reckoning of our City's racial past. I followed the mayor's speech. Later, on the television news, I received three times more airtime than the mayor on the two channels that covered the event. I think my speech was more successful on the "news" because I made it personal.

When Dr. Rieh suggested this position would require teaching larger classes of undergraduates, I quaked a bit in fear. I can easily deliver a 90-minute lecture on a single topic I am enthusiastic about—such as Dewey Decimal Classification; but I have never done it for a whole semester. In preparation for this task, I have been taking a course at the Center for Teaching and Learning on "Dynamic Lecturing."⁵ I have learned some active-learning strategies. I am ready for the challenge.

I would like to teach a larger undergraduate class how to effectively perform research for students planning to pursue master's degrees in any subject—that would also introduce the basics of Information Science to potential MSIS students.

While I am still too much of a pedagogy novice to discuss "active learning" and "student learning outcomes," I can say this:

I will teach students the skills they need to be successful information professionals. My students will be ready to join the information workforce, to successfully perform the work of librarianship that I personally know is valuable.

What both my lecture style and my seminar style have in common is that I will tell you a story. My story is that I had a successful three-decade career as a librarian. Now I will teach you the skills you need to be a successful information professional.

⁵ Harrington, C., & Zakrajsek, T.D. (2017). *Dynamic Lecturing: Research-Based Strategies to Enhance Lecture Effectiveness*. Routledge.