Profiles of New LIS Graduates – Graduating Students

For Partnership’s 10th anniversary issue, we’re looking ahead to the future of LIS by talking to new and new-ish graduates: these three Master of Library and Information Science students are finishing up their final term in grad school. Meet our soon-to-be-grads:

Lindsay Bontje
Graduating December 2016 from Western University

Kevin Tanner
Graduating August 2016 from Western University
We asked them about their place in librarianship, their library inspirations, the future of the profession, and their lives outside of LIS.

**What are your plans for after graduating?**

**Janice:** I plan to enjoy a bit of downtime, then work on the job hunt.

**Kevin:** I am starting a term position as an Instructional Librarian at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary, Alberta. So yes, travelling to get there! I am debating doing a Master of Education in the future, but we will see how I feel after being out of school for a year.

**Lindsay:** I plan to finish my MLIS at Western University by the end of December 2016. After graduation I plan to continue my job search.

**Tell us a little about your early background.**

**Kevin:** I grew up in Windsor, Ontario and attended the University of Windsor graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English. My father worked in the automotive industry and my mother in the investment sector. My generation is the first to go to post-secondary school.

**Lindsay:** I am from the small town of Picton, Ontario. I grew up 15 minutes from the beach and surrounded by water. I lived there all my life before moving to London to attend Western. I graduated with my BA in Anthropology in 2014.

**What (or who) inspired you to pursue a career in libraries?**

**Lindsay:** When I was writing research essays in high school, I only had access to our school library and the public library. Both libraries were wonderful but they were not focused on providing research materials. Finding reliable sources was often a significant challenge. More often than not, I found myself choosing an essay topic based on what information was available rather than choosing a topic that I found interesting.
When I started university one of the first research papers I had to write was for a women's studies class. I wanted to research women and homelessness but I was worried about what I might be able to find on that topic. After searching the library I was amazed at how much was available. I found article after article and book after book that were all relevant to my topic! I had a new problem now; too much information was available and I had to narrow my topic.

This was an amazing experience for me and at that point I started becoming more interested in libraries and how I could be a part of helping other people access information.

**Kevin:** I think the librarians who have helped me over the years in my undergraduate degree were one contributing factor. The "library as place" certainly was; I did all my work in a small cubicle at Leddy Library. I almost went to Teachers College at University of Ottawa, but backed out for a number of reasons. I then started researching other options, and librarianship really resonated, both the values and the service aspect of the profession. Now I ended up teaching anyway, so I am pretty happy.

**What has you most excited about the future of libraries and information science?**

**Janice:** One thing I find exciting about the field of LIS is that it is in a continuous state of change, which means there will always be opportunities for learning and growth.

**Lindsay:** BIBFRAME, Linked Data, and improved library catalogs.

**Kevin:** I am excited by the diversity of my colleagues. Looking around me in class, I see people from all walks of life. I can't really speak to the fact that it wasn't always like this, but I am still excited for the future. I am also excited for how libraries are starting to really be aware of current trends in general. It seems they've perhaps lagged in the past, but libraries seem to be more aware of their patrons' wants and needs than in the past, and aren't as hesitant to jump on trends when reasonable to do so.

**What was your most interesting or most valuable assignment during your time at school?**

**Kevin:** Co-op was my most valuable assignment at school. I worked at an academic library and gained the experience I needed to start my career. In library school, my most valuable assignment was a collections assessment assignment for collections management, it really helped me think critically about collections both broadly and specifically. Also it was the professor's first online class, and it was the best online class in my education (shout out to Nicole Dalmer).

**Janice:** This is a difficult question because a number of assignments stand out as learning experiences. One example is a public company profile that I wrote for a business information class. I selected a company that is a popular library vendor, so I found that in learning about the company I also learned about the information market
along the way. The research process also forced me to familiarize myself with some of the business resources that I had initially found intimidating.

If you could ask one question of someone 5, 10, or 25 years along in their career, what would you ask?

Janice: Whenever I get the chance to speak to someone with more experience I like to ask them about how they got into their current roles. I enjoy how varied the stories are—even among those with similar roles—and I usually find I learn a lot.

Kevin: I'd probably ask what they thought when they were in my place. A lot of my former colleagues at Western Libraries are 5, 10, or 25 years along, so I've probably harassed them by proxy about this enough.

Are you involved in extracurricular activities or volunteer work related to libraries or information science?

Lindsay: Before I began my MLIS I volunteered at an elementary school library. During my MLIS I volunteered at the Pride Library at Western Libraries, volunteered as a cataloger at the art gallery on campus with the Art Libraries Society (ARLIS), and completed a practicum placement at the Archives for the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Canada. I was a member, and am now chair, of the Canadian Association of Professional Academic Libraries (CAPAL) student group at Western.

Kevin: I was Academic Liaison for Student Council during my first year of library school. Currently, I am involved in the CAPAL Communications Committee. During my last semester, I helped with Western's CAPAL Student Group's event planning.

Janice: Absolutely! I tried to take advantage of as many opportunities as I could during the course of my MLIS, and I can't emphasize enough what a difference this made in my learning.

This past semester, I was the secretary for Western's student chapter of CAPAL, which meant I got to meet a lot of great people, and practice taking minutes (one skill that is guaranteed to pay off in LIS!). I also gave a presentation with a friend for our classmates, which we did through our department's Graduate Resource Centre, and I was really excited about how well attended it was. Earlier in the semester, I also spent a few days volunteering at the conference of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, where I had the chance to attend some sessions and meet a lot of intelligent and friendly people.
What has been the biggest challenge of your library career so far? Or, what do you foresee as a challenge?

Kevin: Precarious work will definitely be a challenge. I anticipate working contracts for the first bit of my career, which I expected. I am just happy to be in a professional position out of library school.

Lindsay: I think the biggest challenge so far has been deciding what opportunities to take advantage of and what to focus on. There are so many interesting classes, student groups, and volunteer opportunities and not enough hours in the day to participate in everything I am interested in.

What do you do for fun?

Janice: I like running, spending time outdoors, reading, and knitting.

Lindsay: For fun, I enjoy making origami and riding my bike. And, of course, I love to read. Right now I am trying to read a book written by an author from every country in the world. I'm going in alphabetical order and am only on Armenia, so I have a long way to go.

Kevin: I play bass and sing words in loud and fast punk bands. We shall see if this continues when I move to Calgary. I didn't think it would continue when I went to library school, but I played in three bands over two years so who knows.

I also like hiking and travelling with my partner. We both finished graduate school at the same time and we are moving to Calgary together. She is a sweetheart.

Do you have a website or any social media accounts you would like us to link to?

Kevin:
Twitter: https://twitter.com/kevintannerlis
Snapchat: tannerkj
Instagram: bendingsickle

Twitter is primarily library related content, Snapchat and Instagram are my non-professional accounts.

Janice:
Twitter: @janice_wc
LinkedIn: https://ca.linkedin.com/in/janicewinkler
Is there anything else you’d like to mention that might interest Partnership’s readers?

**Kevin:** If you are a library school student, get professional experience at some point! While being a library assistant helps, getting that co-op that will allow you to do the work of librarians is so important.

If you are a hiring manager, give someone without library experience a chance! I really wanted to work in a library before and during library school but ended up working at Western’s undergraduate bar because I didn't have library experience. I am forever grateful that I got a co-op at The D.B. Weldon Library.