

Q&A with Twanna Hodge (2013), interviewed by Nancy García Ramírez (2018)

Twanna Hodge is a 2013 Spectrum Scholar currently working at SUNY Upstate Health Sciences Library as an Academic/Research Librarian. Twanna graduated with her MLIS from the University of Washington in 2015. She earned her Bachelors in Humanities with minors in Communication and Psychology from the University of Virgin Islands, St. Thomas campus in 2013.

Nancy García Ramírez is a 2018 Spectrum Scholar, funded by NCNMLG (<http://ncnmlg.mlanet.org/main/>), currently working at Santa Cruz Public Libraries as a Programs/Outreach Library Assistant II. Nancy is attending San Jose State University, where she recently accepted an invitation to join the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. Nancy will graduate with her MLIS in August of 2019. She received her Bachelor's of Arts in Politics, Feminist Studies and Education minor from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2013.

Nancy has loved being able to get involved with the Spectrum and the Medical Library community and in the interview below, she speaks with Twanna Hodge, an amazing librarian she looks forward to learning from. Twanna shares her journey to librarianship, and offers some professional tips on how to maneuver through conferences, meaningfully engage with Spectrum, and work through the application/interview process.

NGR: What inspired you to pursue a career as a librarian? Did you always know you wanted to go into Health Science Librarianship?

TH: I decided to become a Librarian when I was in middle school. I initially wanted to introduce people to the wonderful worlds that can be found in books including going on epic adventures, falling in love, exploring different cultures, and living different, interesting lifestyles. These are what drew and still draw me to books, graphic novels, manga, comic books, and fanfiction.

The intervening years between my undergrad and graduate years shifted my desire to ensure people had the right information at the right time so that they could make informed decisions, which would in turn impact their lives for the better. Becoming a Health Sciences Librarian was not in the cards for me, certainly not back in graduate school. My role as the Diversity Resident Librarian at the University of Utah was my first introduction to bioethics, health science resources, citation management styles, and more. Then in my second role as the Information Literacy and Collection Development Librarian at the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas campus, I was the liaison for the School of Nursing and College of Science and Mathematics, during which time I utilized the knowledge and skills I gained at Utah and subsequently learned about evidenced based practice, collection development for nursing (weeding) and science, and more.

I only applied to my current position because of my previous job experiences. I am an accidental Health Sciences Librarian. As the liaison for the College of Graduate Studies, I support students, faculty, and staff in the biomedical sciences, which has its own challenges and opportunities for growth.

NGR: What has been inspiring you lately in your field?

TH: The work that my friends, colleagues, mentors and many others are doing to advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in LIS. Those who are willing to explicitly talk about race, white fragility, critical librarianship, and the importance of authenticity in being accepted, respected and embraced at work. It is those who are standing up for others who don't quite know how to do that for themselves or can't for various, legitimate reasons. Inspiring me is the hope that one day, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility are automatic parts of everything that we do. That they are embedded in the curricula in LIS, training, policies, procedures, codes of ethics, codes of conduct, conversation guidelines in our institutions and organizations, as well as learning more about cultural humility.

NGR: Do you have any recommendations for a new Spectrum Scholar on how to get the most out of the experience?

TH: Introduce yourself at the Institute, over the listserv, at conferences, add your year and Spectrum Scholar to your email signature line, organize meetups in your area either at your local college or university or in the community to engage with other Spectrum Scholars or attend one that's being hosted or organize one virtually.

If you use social media, follow the Spectrum Scholarship Program (<https://www.facebook.com/alspectrum/>) on Facebook, @ala_spectrum on Twitter, along with other Spectrum Scholars. Conduct an informational interview with someone that you are interested in learning more about. Reach out to the Spectrum Advisory Committee with new ideas. Participate in the Twitter chats (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum/twitter-chats>).

Find a mentor. Be a peer-mentor. Collaborate on projects, papers, proposals and more together. If you are willing, then share your story with others. Enjoy being a member of a huge family that is there to help you. Check out the Scholar Resources (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum/scholar-resources>) page for more ideas on how to make the most of your experience.

NGR: Where do you go for continuing education and/or professional development opportunities?

TW: Professional membership listservs such as ACRL RIG, BCALA, and more. My supervisor would send me information based on my job duties. There's also my support system that sends me information about webinars, trainings, institutes and more.

NGR: What is your advice on navigating conferences/recommendations on specific events?

TW: For conferences, check the scheduler for events that pertain to your professional and personal/passion interests, then select a few of each. Don't overwhelm yourself. Bring lozenges for your throat because you will be doing a lot of talking, especially if you are presenting. Wear comfortable, breathable shoes that are versatile.

Understand what your limit is when it comes to engaging with people and honor it. Bring business cards and when you get one, write on the back what you talked to with that person about so that it's easier to follow up with them.

Be yourself. Observe. Ask questions, when you are ready. Attend one or two socials. Participate in the buddy program, if there's one. Be open to trying new food, ideas, and perspectives. Breathe. Find quiet time. Reflect afterward.

NGR: Do you have any advice on job applications and interviews based on the interview panels you've been a part of?

1. Applying - Does the library/organization values, mission, or vision align with yours? Don't count yourself out, let them count you out; if you meet the minimum qualifications then apply for the job. Ensure that your cover letter and resume/CV are tailored to the job you're applying for. Identify key experiences that exemplify one or two minimum or preferred qualifications listed. Always have someone proofread everything. Follow the directions for submitting the application materials. If you can't follow those instructions, then to a search committee member you are less likely to follow other instructions/directions.
2. Phone/Skype Interview - They are usually 30 minutes long. Dig deeper into the institution to learn about their strategic plan, partnerships, services and resources. Practice. Find a quiet space with good lighting. Have a copy of the job announcement, your resume/CV, cover letter and other documents you submitted in front of you for easy access. It's okay to take a few moments before you respond or to ask them to repeat the question. Have at least 2-3 questions to ask the search committee.
3. On-campus Interview or Finalist Interview - Most academic librarian interviews or academic health sciences librarian interviews are usually more than half day sessions that might include dinner the night before or the day off. A presentation or teaching demonstration is a usually a part of it. Read articles about current best practices or trends related to the job. Look at the staff page. Practice. Practice. Practice. Ask colleagues, friends, family, supervisor, mentors to watch you and provide constructive feedback. Adopt the LOCKSS model. Lots of copies keeps stuff safe. Always arrive early just give yourself time to calm down or deal with any unexpected issues. Use all of the scheduled breaks to either take deep breaths, stop smiling or just to stretch. Also don't be afraid to ask for breaks. Keep hydrated. Always have questions to ask the different groups you meet with and you can ask the same questions to compare the responses. Don't overshare. It's okay to be nervous. Remember that you are also interviewing the institution. Create a list of experience, skills or knowledge that you ultimately want them to leave with. Ask questions about the community, volunteer opportunities, things to do, restaurants and more especially during lunch or dinner. It's important to remember that there's more to just work where you are living. Finding a place that support most, if not all, of your identities is important. Send thank you letters.

Log in (</advocacy/user/login?destination=node/2375%23comment-form>) or register (</advocacy/user/register?destination=node/2375%23comment-form>) to post comments

