

The Inquisitive Side of Service

October 30, 2018

An interview with Johnson & Wales University Library Director Nicole Covone.

Tell us about your journey into the library field.

In college, I was a literature major and an advisor suggested I get an education degree so I could teach when I graduated. I followed that advice and I taught high school English. I'm not a disciplinarian and saw that this career in teaching was not an exact fit.

I pursued an accounting career where I found I really enjoyed the detective nature involved in our accounting firm. The owner purchased doctors' businesses to create groups of practices. When a business was purchased, we combed the books to verify their accuracy. This is where the puzzle and detective work came into play.

Audit season was stressful. Long hours, and the demand for accuracy and attention to detail was intense. I was realizing this was not a long term position for me and I started to evaluate what might be a good fit.

I enjoyed helping people and making a difference in the community through my job. I was initially drawn to being a prison librarian. I saw how valued a library is as a resource helping inmates and I found it very interesting the prison librarians are the only librarians allowed to censor their collections. This fascinated me.

When I was looking for a librarian position, JWU had an opening for a night librarian. I found being an academic librarian pairs my enjoyment in detective and inquisitive problem solving with my desire to help and serve people.





What are the financial and budget components you oversee as the Director of the JWU Library?

By far, the most peculiar aspect of the finances is budgeting for the databases. Our databases are purchased through the HELIN Library Consortium, which is a group of libraries that join together to purchase databases to keep costs lower. Roughly, database costs are based on the number of students and the number of libraries in the consortium.

Our fiscal year begins on July 1st and we make an estimation on the number of students who will enroll in fall. We are also estimating on the price of each database. It's a unique position to be put in, where you don't know the exact money you'll need for the year, and you need to request this estimated amount during the summer.

We also preview databases in February and March to see what's new and to review which of our current databases are getting the most traffic.

Tell us about SEFLIN.

SEFLIN provides networking for libraries in SE Florida. Libraries pay dues based on their budget size. SEFLIN is run by an executive director, a staff of 4-5 people, and overseen by a board of directors. SEFLIN provides opportunities for continuing education, mentorship, networking, and an opportunity to building relationships among public, university, and private libraries.

What books or genres do you enjoy? Has this changed over your library career?

I've always been an avid reader across genres. Since working as a librarian at a culinary university, I've become interested in biographies of chefs. My reading has also been driven by the curriculum. When I'm teaching or conducting a reference interview, it's helpful to have broad knowledge and it's also an opportunity for me to learn something new or find a book or author recommendation.

What advice do you have for a new MLIS student?

Make a difference and impact your community through your career. Know the resources available to you and take advantage of them. Seek out a mentorship and network through organizations like SEFLIN.

What is your most memorable moment at JWU?

Hosting Mitchell Kaplan, the founder of Books & Books.