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Librarian / Teacher to Dramaturg

Second career and Second vocation...

Once upon a time, I believed a Librarian / Teacher job was the best job I could have. Being surrounded by books and high school kids is the best place in the world. The stability of stories and knowledge combined with the unpredictability of growing teens is stimulating, frustrating and exhilarating -- all at once.

In my Library job, teachers, in all disciplines, would bring their students to the Library for special projects. One of my tasks was to pull the books and encyclopedias for the kids to discover legitimate sources for their research. Students assignments were to create visuals and text for their reports using materials from the Library. “Google” was still a funny word then. Little did I know that I was building Dramaturgical skills in my Library job.

Every year, the freshmen English department would teach “To Kill a Mockingbird”. Maycomb, Alabama, during the Great Depression, was a completely different world from suburban Chicago. Southern life -- scuppernongs (local grapes), pickled pig’s knuckles -- rigid gender roles -- racism vs. justice were difficult concepts to learn.

“...helping students make sense of a text -- because (of) the things readers already know -- work like a scaffold on which to build a more complete — and nuanced — mental model of the subject matter.” By [Holly Korbey](#) July 28, 2020 <https://www.edutopia.org/article/it-time-drop-finding-main-idea-and-teach-reading-new-way>

Good education philosophies / practices include different learning styles -- auditory vs. visual. Multiple perspectives and critical thinking are included in good lesson plans.

DEI (Diversity, Equity Inclusion) lessons influences everything we research, discuss and create in Libraries. The perspective of the “forgotten” or the “ignored” in history should be included and celebrated – in classrooms and in the theatre world.

Social, Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula is used to build empathy and understanding for education and life skills – Also, in Dramaturgy and the theatre world.

As years march on, online research skills came into play. “Googling” wasn’t just a funny word anymore. Google’s easy answers, incomplete facts and biased information had to be counteracted in the Library lessons. Fighting misinformation and creating Media Literacy skills were added to our curricula. The CRAAP test is a Library tool that the students and Dramaturgs can use to be sure of accuracy.

Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose. Dramaturgs are trained to smell “CRAAP” from very far away.

Librarians have created other tools, also: “**SIFT**” **STOP** check reputation of website , **INVESTIGATE** point of view , **FIND** better coverage – different points of view, **TRACE** claims to original sources.

Another acronym, **CARS**: Credibility, Accuracy, Responsibility, Support – not as much fun to remember, but carries the same message.

Also, our School district provides access to educational databases from many different sources, covering many topics – to help pre-screen information for validity. Public Libraries also offer these services and products -- for the public and Dramaturgs, too.

Online Encyclopedias, access to magazines, journals and newspapers – (great for period specific popular culture) – “Global Cultures” with worldwide POVs and links to the “DPLA” Digital Public Library with its Boolean searches and friendly “Primary source collections” for topical, overview research. My public library has a permanent bookmark on my browser. Also, the Library of Congress is always improving access points and collections in finding primary source materials.

Early Career Dramaturgs may have links to their college / universities, but for those far removed from their academic institutions, public libraries are a great resource.

Retirement then Enter Dramaturgy.

Previous volunteer time (sewing costumes) at our local small theatre, led me to volunteer as Dramaturg for “Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical”. I couldn’t see our young actors appear on stage without know the meanings “Behind the Words”.

This musical is much more than Hippies, “Let the Sunshine In” and celebration of drug use. The Vietnam War Draft, and its unfairness must be understood. The horrors of war were revealed in the song “3-5-0-0” -- a count of the number of dead soldiers - after one battle in Vietnam. (These lyrics were inspired by a poem written by Alec Ginsburg.)

My library skills helped me find the primary sources for the research, and first hand experiences from my own life added more flavor. I lived through the 1960s era and survived. Yes, I am old! ... sigh, so much older than the young actors on stage!

Library research tools and teaching skills led to my new second career -- providing Dramturgy for the director and young actors and potential audiences. My new goal is to create meanings “behind the words” for scripts and songs.

Library research, teaching and dramaturgy are skills that can / should be blended together. Combining multiple perspectives and critical thinking -- using text, visual and auditory formats -- mixing these techniques allows us Dramaturgs to “leave no stone unturned” in seeking meaning “Behind the Words” for our directors, actors and audiences. Onwards in “listening and learning” with the best job I ever had!

<https://library.si.edu/research/free-databases-and-collections>

<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2019/11/01/media-literacy-in-an-age-of-fake-news/>

William Paterson University – Wayne NJ.— Library

<https://guides.wpunj.edu/c.php?g=615053&p=4276858>