

## A STORY OF DETOURS AND ROADBLOCKS ON THE ROAD TO LIBRARIANSHIP

“To be or not to be, that is the question” has plagued me for possibly my entire career thus far. For so long, I have asked myself, “Do I want to be a lawyer?”, and every time I would respond with ambivalence and reluctance. The legal field runs in my family, as my father was a paralegal, my brother is now a lawyer himself, and most of my career has been spent at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. I have managed appeals, I have been (and still am) a judge’s judicial assistant, and now I also currently work in the court’s law library as an assistant librarian. My road here took a long time, with some twists and turns, but I am so happy I decided not to push myself down a path I was uncertain about.



I truly would not be where I am today without the encouragement and mentorship I have received throughout my journey. While I was a case manager, my mentor at the time encouraged me to pursue a master’s degree in public administration (MPA), which grew my interest in policy and research. Upon graduating in December 2019, I began applying for jobs. However, just three months later, COVID-19 introduced a lot of uncertainty and hiring freezes into the job market. Then, during the pandemic years, life happened—I got married and bought a house! I became discouraged with my job search, especially since I realized that my federal experience and this career path might require moving to Washington, DC. My husband and I were not prepared to make that change, as living close to our families is important to us.

Fast forward a few years later, I came across another wonderful friend and mentor in the court’s library who thought librarianship would be a great fit for my interest in research. I began to consider how librarianship might align with both my love of research and my interest in helping others. Again, with a lot of encouragement and support, I applied to San Jose State University’s remote MLIS program and am now graduating this May. I was lucky enough to transition over to the court’s library before graduating, and I have learned so much about law librarianship and myself since then. Not everyone needs to go to law school to find deep fulfillment in the legal field. I get to research complex reference questions from our law clerks, collaborate with other librarians on court history projects and events, and even lead civic education sessions with high school students, sometimes all within the same day! Reflecting on my journey, I am shocked by how a little support and encouragement can really go a long way in changing your life’s trajectory, and I am determined to pay it forward.

***Dana Ellwood, Assistant Librarian, United States Court of Appeals 2nd Circuit, Floral Park, NY***

READ MORE POSTS