I Believe Libraries are for Freshmen

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I believe that libraries are for freshmen (and everyone else too, but I digress). How do I know? Long, long ago (one year to be exact) I had the privilege of speaking to last year’s class of first year students. There was no mistaking their bright-eyes, clear voices and unbridled enthusiasm. I shared my best college advice, ‘Connect with a librarian who is interested in your topic and you will have a source of support throughout your academic career’. Brockport librarians stand ready to help. I have seen library assistance, provided at a critical time, make the difference between flourishing and floundering. I believe you deserve all the advantages the library can bring to your education as well.

I believe the first year experience provides a foundation for all students to discover, explore and make a difference. We count on you to help the library come alive through your use, in person and online. The library can help you learn the difference between Hell and Heller, Kardashian and Kevorkian, South Park and Socrates.

Libraries will give you the information resources and tools to assist you achieve your academic, as well as life goals. As the heart of the university, libraries are here to help you in a deeper dive of topics of interest and issues of the day. They provide intellectual sustenance and pique academic curiosity. They offer both answers as well as more questions. Libraries invite closer examination, comparative inquiry and reasoned responses. They allow us to ‘think differently’. They help us maintain balance throughout life.

After you’ve consulted Google, come to the library. The transformative power of reading can happen quietly, as in reading a reflective poem, or as a ‘Eureka!’ moment that jumps at you from a novel, essay or journal article. Libraries can help when other avenues aren’t working. They can help jumpstart writer’s block, provide creative collaboration and illuminate other approaches.

Make it part of your ‘life of the mind’ to scan current event headlines as part of your academic routine as an informed citizen. Librarians can help you discern trusted sources as well as the information biases inherent in this task.

Libraries will both affirm and challenge your beliefs. That’s where the real fun begins. They can provide the facts to support your argument, the foundation for a thesis, and the courage to question. Opposing views sharpen your skills, while historical materials provide necessary perspective. Libraries can be a jumping off point to imagination and a safe landing zone for wild and crazy ideas.

I believe that libraries are great places for second chances. Come to us early and often. Libraries can be indispensable resources, especially AFTER you know it all.

I know libraries are partnerships and this year’s class will challenge all of us to improve our information seeking skills. We ask you to ‘Expect More’ in demanding better libraries for today’s
complex world\footnote{Lankes, R. David (2012). Expect More: Demanding Better Libraries For Today’s Complex World. Jamesville, NY: Riland Publishing.}. We know you will be producing as well as consuming new forms of scholarship and research at Brockport. We hope you will become strong advocates for libraries in your communities after you graduate. But first, Drake librarians and staff want to see you using the library. We are some of your biggest supporters in the life-long quest to achieve your dreams.