



Profiles

Christian Burris, Profiles Editor

Profile of April Hathcock, Scholarly Communications Librarian at New York University and 32nd Annual NASIG Conference Vision Speaker



Photo Courtesy of April Hathcock

April Hathcock will be one of three Vision Speakers at the upcoming NASIG Annual Conference in June 2017. Ms. Hathcock is the scholarly communication librarian at New York University, and is an attorney as well as a librarian. Professionally, she has been a member of ACRL (Association of College & Research Libraries) and

ALA (American Library Association), and she is an author and contributor to publications such as *In the Library with the Lead Pipe* as well as her own personal blog "At the Intersection." Her work on advocacy and social action have led to many appearances at both library conferences and the larger mainstream media. She's also on Twitter, so follow @AprilHathcock for her take on a variety of issues.

I conducted my interview with Ms. Hathcock by e-mail, and it was completed on February 13, 2017.

You had a career as an attorney before you became an academic librarian. What led to your move toward librarianship?

I realized that I was working way too hard and not for something that felt particularly worthwhile. It was really a matter of realizing that life in the corporate world just wasn't for me. After a few years, I left corporate law practice and made the decision to return to school to get my library degree. I knew I loved research and writing and wanted to continue doing that work but in a different capacity. Librarianship just seemed like a natural next step, and it turns out, it was!

As a scholarly communications librarian, how has your legal background aided your work?

I use my law degree every day. In some ways, it's very obvious: like when I'm reviewing a user license or helping someone navigate copyright issues. In other ways, it's not as obvious but still relevant: like when I'm figuring out how to connect people and services across a very large and complex organization, like my

institution. Even though I'm no longer practicing, I'm still very much using my legal background each and every day.

What is an area of scholarly communications that could be an emerging trend?

For so long, scholarly communications has been about each institution doing its own thing in terms of publishing or digitization or open access, but I see the new wave being more about interoperability and cross-institutional cooperation. We realize we can't expect users to connect with our materials when they are kept locked away in our own discovery and storage systems, even if those materials are ostensibly marked as "open." We are learning, and need to continue to learn, how to work together across institutions to make materials available in a meaningful way. I look at the work of DPLA (Digital Public Library of America) as a great example of where scholarly communications is headed in terms of this cross-institutional collaboration.

In your opinion, what are some of the important issues facing academic libraries in 2017?

To me, the top issue that should inform everything else we face in academic libraries is the diversity, or the lack thereof, and inclusion. Honestly, so many of our other issues—be they technological or collections-based or organizational or whatever else—can and will be largely improved once we really begin to make meaningful strides in increasing the diversity of our profession and creating inclusive environments for workers from

underrepresented identities to thrive. Multiple viewpoints, multiple ways of knowing, multiple backgrounds and experiences—there is truly a wealth of knowledge and opportunity that we're missing because our profession remains so homogeneous.

How has social media had a role in your work?

Social media, especially Twitter and my blog, have enabled me to connect with colleagues whom I may never have had the chance to meet or work with from all over the globe. It has really opened up opportunities for me to join forces with other library workers who care about social justice and the ways it informs our work.

What are some of your passions, professionally and personally?

I care very deeply about justice. That's why I went to law school, and it's a passion that continues to motivate much of my work today. And it's a very personal, as well as professional, passion. I find that there are so many ways in which the professional and the personal are intertwined and cannot be separated, particularly for those of us from marginalized identities working in fields where we are underrepresented.

On a less serious note, I am also very, very passionate about food. For now, it's a purely personal passion; but if I could find a way to tie that into my professional work, that would make for a dream job.