Profile of Sanjeet Mann

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Sanjeet Mann chairs the Core Competencies Task Force, a role he has been growing toward since he attended Dr. Sarah Sutton’s presentation at the 2010 Annual Conference. He was a recent graduate, still active with his LIS program through the alumni association, and wanted to understand how library school could better prepare future e-resource librarians. Sanjeet says that he volunteered to assist Sarah with coding survey responses, and later accepted her invitation to join the Core Competencies Task Force. His library uses other competencies statements for professional development in reference and instruction, so he sees the value of a similar set of competencies for e-resource librarians. However, the process of defining these competencies has also enabled Sanjeet to connect with other librarians and consider the work of the profession at a global level. According to Sanjeet, “Creating the competencies was a great way for all of us on the taskforce to develop a broad perspective on e-resources beyond our home campuses’ procedures.”

Sanjeet received his MSLIS from UCLA in 2008, having entered the program not long after graduating from Pomona College with a BA in English. He also took a lot of music classes and worked at the computing support helpdesk as an undergraduate, and continues his love of music and his interest in computers and software today. Regarding his transition from study of literature to library science, Sanjeet writes, “I was interested in the development of the novel and the implied relationship between authors, narrators, and readers, and wrote my undergraduate thesis about contemporary novels involving narrators that struggled to tell unusually complex stories. I was trying to describe what I saw as ‘information problems’ in these novels, without having the vocabulary for it.” After graduating, Sanjeet worked at Pomona for a year full time on the ITS staff, serving as a computing support liaison to the science departments while he contemplated applying to graduate school. This gave him time to understand that a career in academia appealed to him, and two events
Nudged him to librarianship: reading Lara Townsend Kane’s *Straight from the Stacks* and an internship with librarian Jason Price, studying the online availability of print serials. Interning confirmed for Sanjeet that library school was the right choice, and even suggested his future specialization in e-resources work.

As we librarians consider pathways into the profession, there are two received notions that Sanjeet suggests we should challenge sometimes. One is that everyone has a “lucky break” somewhere in their career, one which teaches them an important lesson, introduces a friend or mentor, or provides a new work opportunity. The truth is that it takes preparation to recognize when you’re in the presence of one of these opportunities. The other notion we should challenge occasionally is the advice to LIS students to keep a broad range of options open. Based on his own job search and service on search committees so far, Sanjeet encourages LIS students to recognize what kind of library and setting they are most attracted to, and then get practical experience in those settings. This experience could take the form of internships or volunteer work, as long as it exposes the LIS students to that library’s target audience, and shows not only how the library serves its constituents, but also how the library serves a role in its parent organization.

Working at a smaller academic library, Sanjeet has several different parts to his job and is more of a generalist than some of his colleagues at other research libraries. He feels this variety to be the proverbial double-edged sword. On one hand he loves the variety of tasks he can choose from, ranging from teaching an instruction session to troubleshooting an e-resources access issue. On the other hand, juggling competing projects and their timetables can be difficult. Sanjeet writes that he is “very fortunate to work with a supportive director and colleagues who want to learn new things, understand the big picture of e-resource management, and examine the way we do our work, looking for improvement.” This supportive atmosphere and the close collaboration with departmental faculty at Redlands are important to Sanjeet. His current University service includes chairing the General Education Speaking Intensive Task Force, Faculty Governance Steering Committee, and the Personnel Policies Committee.

Working closely with fellow faculty members at Redlands has broadened Sanjeet’s conception of his professional identity as an educator first, “an academic with a librarian specialty” as he puts it. In his academic life, he fights a tendency to look to the future too much, he says, thinking about how he would have time to do the next great thing after he reaches the next stage in the faculty promotion cycle. Sanjeet says, “The reality is, though, that there are always new professional opportunities and challenges out there.” He clarifies the importance of “choosing to do a few things well” as new librarians make a transition from the thrill of getting started in their professional lives to maintaining the time and effort required of succeeding as part of a team. “Part of the lesson for me,” he writes, “was learning to balance the initial excitement I feel when I see the opportunity for something new (a new collaboration, instruction session, statistical report, etc.) against a realistic understanding of what the new commitment would require of me, and being able to recognize whether the opportunity advances some deeper, worthwhile goal.” Sanjeet says that he’s tried to be thoughtful in this way about which service projects he has taken on, and he thinks that “this is something useful for LIS students and new librarians to consider as well.”

Indeed, Sanjeet has tackled some opportunities and challenges via his service to a state organization and to NASIG. Recently he finished a term chairing the Statewide California Electronic Resource Consortium (SCELC) Product Review Committee, and his NASIG involvement has grown since he first attended the Annual Conference in 2007. Sanjeet discovered NASIG during his first e-resources internship, when he was reading whatever he could find about serials and e-resource librarianship—including some NASIG *Conference Proceedings* that he found helpful. Since his first conference, Sanjeet has recorded several sessions
for the NASIG Newsletter and the Conference Proceedings. He presented a poster at NASIG’s 2012 Conference, and is excited to present this year. He feels that the organization plays an important role for the profession, and describes NASIG as an “excellent venue for keeping up with the changing ‘big picture’ of serials and e-resource librarianship.” Among trends to watch are the effects of mobile devices and semantic web technologies on the scholarly landscape. Further, Sanjeet believes that the organization can help serialists by providing balanced conversations between broader trends and reports on specific ideas or initiatives at member libraries.

Balance is not only important for our organizations and our approach to our work; it is also necessary for us as individuals. As Sanjeet transitions out of the “early career librarian” stage, he writes that he is “learning valuable lessons about what it means to be balanced in various ways, such as how to keep physically and spiritually active, or how to set time aside for myself and for my family.” Family time includes his wife and their two Siamese mix cats, Jireh and Gabriel, who greet them by spinning in circles, demanding their dinner. Balance in his life also includes time set aside for music. Sanjeet has played classical piano for many years and tries to set aside some time each day for practice. He says that he composes for fun and is currently working on a project to write a set of sonatinas in all 24 keys, progressing through a variety of styles representing the Classical, Romantic, and 20th Century periods.

Receiving guidance from an experienced librarian at the beginning of his career was important for Sanjeet, as it was for many of us. That guidance helped him recognize the kinds of problems he could tackle as an e-resource librarian and gave him a sense of the skill set and work experience that he would need to contribute to a library after graduating. Sanjeet’s experience helped him understand how librarianship thrives through a variety of mentoring styles – traditional, reverse, peer to peer, and more – and why it is important to support internships and student workers in our libraries, and be able to explain what we do to the next generation of potential librarians.