

Library Connect Podcast: Risa Blumlein Interview

This is a transcript of a Library Connect podcast recorded in July 2008.

MR. DAVID TURNEY: This is a Library Connect podcast. Hi, there. My name is David Turney. I'm here with Library Marketing Intern, Risa Blumlein, and she's going to tell us a little bit about her time here this summer, working with Elsevier.

MS. RISA BLUMLEIN: Hello. I'm Risa Blumlein. I'm the Library Marketing Intern, been here for two months this summer, and I go to San Jose State University, culminating in the fall, and I'll be graduating with an MLIS, a Masters in Library and Information Science.

MR. TURNEY: Great. And what do you hope to do once you graduate and get your degree?

MS. BLUMLEIN: Actually, I've taken a job with Culture Shock Dance Troupe, to start in the fall as the associate director, so I hope to use the skills that I've learned through the program, and apply them in nonprofit administration, which is kind of an interesting use. A lot of people have asked me how my library work is going to apply. I think it absolutely applies because, you know, information organization is necessary everywhere, especially at start up nonprofits in arts.

MR. TURNEY: So information outside of the traditional library environment, that's great. Tell us a little bit about your internship here at Elsevier this summer.

MS. BLUMLEIN: All right. Well, I work 20 hours a week, and I worked very closely with Daria DeCooman, Senior Library Communications Manager, in the Global Customer Marketing group, and I got some really great opportunities to work with her on Library Connect, the newsletter aimed at librarians.

I got a chance to do some writing for the web and for print, and I got to do some editing, and I got to work with next generation librarians like myself, who are contributing to Library Connect, so that's pretty cool. And I got to do a lot of web work, too.

I learned Documentum, which is great because it's being used at another job that I have, and, in general, I got to learn about the marketing efforts of Elsevier toward librarians and how Elsevier's contributing to the library community, at large.

MR. TURNEY: Now, how did other colleagues and classmates, in your studies, react to you working with Elsevier?

MS. BLUMLEIN: Good question because the reaction wasn't always a positive one. I know that Elsevier has a reputation in the library community, a good reputation, and also, they're easily scapegoated by libraries and librarians as being the leader of a corporate, you know, pack and setting journal prices really high.

And it's interesting because I think librarians are often kind of just thrown into this community perspective that Elsevier is the bad guy. And so, actually, a couple of my classmates did react to that, and react to the fact that, as a future librarian, I am working for a publisher, you know, someone kind of the other end, and a few had some negative things to say, but I really don't see it as a negative experience.

I think that, you know, Elsevier, and vendors, and publishers are always going to be part of the library community, and, you know, the best thing to do is try to shorten the divide, and to kind of work on enhancing the relationship because, you know, regardless, there's always going to be a connection, and it's better to try to understand both sides, and see where everyone's coming from, and see that, overall, you know, information is our business, whether you're in libraries or in publishing, so.

MR. TURNEY: What was one or two of the most interesting things you encountered during your internship here at Elsevier?

MS. BLUMLEIN: Well, one really interesting project was an interview that I got to work on for Library Connect with African Virtual University. They are a conglomerate of learning centers across Africa that are working to spread ODEL, which is Online Distance Education and Learning efforts in universities, higher education universities Africa.

So they are partnering with universities to help provide students with online classes, online lectures, and basically giving them access to information, you know, through the web, so that people that can't access class in person, people that don't have telephone access, people that are living in post-war zones, can still have access to higher education. I think it's really neat, and I got to actually make some contact with Dr. Bakary Diallo, who is Director of AVU and he's a really interesting guy, doing some really great things in Africa.

MR. TURNEY: And finally, has your time here changed your outlook on your future goals, or plans, or studies in the area of librarianship at all, or just added some perspective, maybe?

MS. BLUMLEIN: Yeah, definitely, to kind of build on what we were talking about before, in terms of Elsevier's image in the library community. One thing that was really great was to kind of put actual faces to Elsevier, and getting to know people that I worked with in the Global Customer Marketing group, and getting to know them as people that would work in a library and be fantastic librarians.

I mean, it's really the same stuff. We're in here. We're working online. We're analyzing information. We're evaluating ourselves and evaluating our efforts, and seeing what we do better, and how we can work with our customers better, and how our customer service can improve, and that's the same across the board. And so, putting faces to this huge corporation, this kind of like intangible entity, was really a neat experience.

MR. TURNEY: Great. And anything you would want to maybe improve, say, the next time we have a library marketing intern, and we usually do this every summer, so any suggestions for us?

MS. BLUMLEIN: No, actually, I was really impressed with Daria. My very first day, she had detailed projects outlined for me, people to contact and their contact information. She was clear on that, made it so easy for me to get started.

I've had interning and temporary work experience in the past where you show up and no one's prepared for you to be there, so you're kind of sitting around twiddling your thumbs for the first couple of days, and it wasn't like that. I dove right in and she really made that easy on me.

MR. TURNEY: Okay. Well, it's been a pleasure having you here this summer. And we always learn a lot, get some fresh perspective, ourselves. And so, anyway, thanks so much. Thanks for listening to this Library Connect podcast.