Sarah’s Story: The Journey of a Student Research Fellow at the National University Library as Told through Slack Posts

The Beginning:

Hello! So the coolest thing happened to me and I was selected to be a Graduate Student Research Fellow for the School of Health and Human Services at National University. That’s just fancy for saying I work in the library doing research for faculty and other cool projects like presentations as well as other stuff that I don't even know that I'm supposed to be doing.....yet.

A little about me: my name is Sarah Mendez and I am currently enrolled in the MPH online program with an emphasis in Health Promotion here at National University. I am 30 years young, married to a USMC Huey crew chief, and actually have my BA in theatre. Go figure.....that is a story for another day though. I will be graduating in October of this year and well ideally I'll figure out where I want to go soon-ish. I have a heart for advocacy so I'm just trying to figure out the jobs that passion applies to.

My first day on "the job" was Monday, January 9th where my direct supervisor basically showed me the ropes and we tried to figure out computer stuff but let’s be honest, computers never work on the first day. I toured the library, which is incredible and makes me wish I lived closer because I’d be in here all the time. I got to meet the higher-ups whose names I have mostly forgotten because I am terrible with names but luckily I have a phone list and am really good about using direct eye contact so hopefully I will be able to fake it until I make it!

Today, I was treated to lunch by my awesome supervisor, Zem, and had the opportunity to meet the other librarians that I'll be working with. I can tell that I am going to really enjoy working here. The technology in the office is super legit. I was able to use the copier to scan some forms directly to my email address! The simple things in a millennial's life. The other office I work in doesn't have quite the same tech. At any rate, I have done all the boring HR paperwork and am getting ready to dive straight into the goods. And by goods I mean an APA knowledge assignment that one of the librarians gave me. Key words: no wrong answer. That is great news. I'm looking forward to learning a ton of new and interesting things with this job, wait....with this opportunity, I think I'll look at this more as an opportunity instead of a job because a job very well may pay the bills but opportunities enrich your life and that is exactly what I foresee this doing.

Firsts:

Ok, so get this....I've been a graduate research fellow for all of a week and a half and I'm already on the program for the SHHS Faculty retreat this Friday. This fellowship is moving almost at the same pace my classes are! 2 weeks in and then a midterm, here it’s 2 weeks in and then give a presentation in front of approximately 120 people and some of them might be professors you have already had. No pressure.

I don't anticipate it being too rough though considering I'm not really getting graded on the presentation and its opinion based. I just get to tell a room full of strangers how I feel about something that they could potentially promote to their students to make their lives easier. I've never really had a problem simply expressing my opinion so cool.

I will be giving the student perspective on this new tool available on the library's website called APA Style Central. It is like an all access website for all things APA. I've spent today trying to navigate the
website and I'm trying to determine whether this is real gold or fool's gold. The site is still a work in progress as some videos haven't been uploaded yet, some of the links are a little wacky and take you in circles, and the tutorials can be a bit dry and make you want to take a nap. But in reality, it is a guide to referencing research material not a guide to life fulfilling experiences.

I keep learning new little morsels of cool stuff each day. Today I learned how to take way better screen shots on the computer. Soooo much better than just the Print Screen button.....that is totally for rookies and I feel like a veteran now.

**SHHS Faculty & Staff Summit**

Friday afternoon I was given the opportunity to present on APA Style Central to the Faculty along with Zem Lee. This was the first time I have been in front of strictly faculty to present on a tool that serves to enhance the student experience. In the last week I browsed through APA Style Central and got to provide my opinion as a student on whether or not I thought it was a useful tool. Since I am an APA rookie, I found it to be quite helpful and it was easy to use since it wasn’t full of ads like the APA resource I had been using for the past few months. I think the faculty appreciated my point-of-view and I was even able to field a few of the questions by the faculty which I must say was quite empowering. Also, I thought it was an excellent opportunity for me to start developing my public speaking skills since my emphasis of health promotion will, undoubtedly, include a decent amount of public speaking.

**APA Style Central**

I think this site has a lot of potential. For someone who has a very specific APA question as far as formatting and referencing goes, I am confident that this website will be able to give them the answer they are looking for. The writing tool is very interesting and I think could be very popular once people are able to cut the cord with their favorite word processor because it is a little bit different. My favorite part of the Write area would be that all of the sections are separate. I know when I write papers, I tend
to bounce around from changing the title, to adding a reference, and then back to content for the body so I like that you can work on each section individually and then export it to be a complete document. As a student just starting out I feel like I haven’t had to write anything that mirrors the sample papers which are almost all over 30 pages in length but I imagine as I move toward a capstone they will start to look more and more like the sample papers on this website. For new students, or student who aren’t used to APA formatting then the Learn section will probably get the most attention. As a student becomes more comfortable in APA formatting then I think the Write tool and the Reference Manage will become like dear old friends. Like all new things, students will have a learning curve and will probably pout and complain that it isn’t like the other random internet guides they have tried to use but with a little practice I imagine people will wonder why this was never suggested to them earlier; or when they Google “APA help,” why it isn’t the first thing that pops up. Since this is a relatively new resource there is some content missing, some dead links, and still have some kinks that need to be worked out, but it would be a worthwhile recommendation to students.

UPDATE: I actually used it to write a paper for my COH604 Theories in Health Behavior class this weekend. It was alright. If there was some kind of hybrid of my favorite parts of APA Style Central and my favorite parts of Word (like the spell/grammar check! hello!!) that would be amazing.

FINAL UPDATE: I’ve now used APA Style Central to write almost every paper in my program since January. It actually does have all of my favorite parts from Word....it just took me writing a few more papers in it to figure that out. The only real issue with using it is when their site goes down or the library’s site goes down, there is no way to access your paper. That has caused a couple meltdowns but I survived.

Research

Today, I learned about using library resources to do research effectively and where to find specific types of articles and books. I had always wondered what the real difference between databases were because I always just choose EBSCOhost since it is the first one listed in the A-Z databases on the library website. I found it interesting that ProQUEST is a place where you can find other student's work like their theses. Made me start to wonder if I will have something I feel is compelling enough to publish on a database.....

I was able to put that research knowledge to use by working on a bibliography from my selfie buddie Dr. Piper. It was an interesting task. Overall, it was quite easy to locate most of the articles she was looking for, as well as provide links to chapters in ebooks. There were a few curve balls that stumped David too. The reference was almost incomplete in a way....or perhaps vague is a better way to describe it. They included language that suggested the articles were rough drafts or were pending peer review so those were basically not anywhere on the web. Now I’m curious where Dr. Piper got the info for the part of a reference that she provided to us. At any rate, I think I managed to navigate the library search tools easily and accomplish the task at hand.

I’m on this journey to figure out how to research like a librarian and I must say it is a challenge. There isn’t just one way to effectively research and figuring out how to get good at everything so you can use the right research tool when you need it is a daunting task. My impression of what research is based on what I’ve had to do in school for assignments is not exactly real research. Finding articles or books that support the core question of the study don’t always have to answer that exact question. I’ve been trying to do just that though and that probably explains why everything I've found up to this point basically say
the same thing with very minor differences. Today, I'm going to try and find a good book or two and some articles that speak to the study but aren't exactly about the study. I'm not sure if that even made sense. It's early on a Saturday and I'm not sure if I am fully awake yet.

**Professional Development**

I got to work with 2 brand new people (not really new...I just haven't worked directly with them yet...) today. I started with James and we worked on the Strength Finder survey. It is one of those "tests" that tell you about your personality, sort of like Meyers-Briggs but labels you differently. My top 5 themes were developer, adaptability, relator, harmony, and empathy. I found out I have the most in common with Lauren because we are the coolest...obviously. Haha I'm just kidding, everyone is cool (I don't want any trouble...I'm a harmonizer after all). Quite frankly, this is the coolest library I've ever been in. After having a read over my themes, I would have to agree that they are pretty accurate. For the time being anyway. I do appreciate these little tests but they probably should come with an expiration date. Or function like an oil change where you have to take it again every 3,000 miles or 6-12 months. I have to check in with some people who know me really well to see if they agree that these traits apply to me. I'll probably ask my mom, Andrew and.....maybe my brother. After I worked with James, I got with Allie and she went over Mendeley with me. It is another reference manager. However, it has some cool features like after uploading a PDF article you can go in, highlight it and leave notes on "post-its" so that was great. I used it this week while trying to put together a presentation for my Health Behavior class. The jury is still out on if I will keep using it. If I have to do some other presentations (which I will) I will probably use it again. Now that I'm getting the hang of APA Style Central, I'll probably keep using that to write papers.

**FINAL UPDATE:** Mendeley is legit the best thing ever. I've used it throughout my program and having articles I've used saved in a folder has been an amazing resource when I've written papers regarding the same topic.

I'm super happy with the experience I've had so far in this fellowship. I've only been here for a few weeks and I already feel like I've become a better researcher than in the 5 months I've been in classes. Go figure. But thank god, I was selected for this position because my grades are thanking me for it.

**Self-evaluation will be big in this process. I have been trying to make a conscientious effort to ensure my time in this program worthwhile and applicable to my future goals.** I do believe I am improving every week. Monday, Zem described how using multiple citations basically makes you look way smarter (my words, not hers lol) so I went ahead and did that on a paper I wrote this week and I will admit I did feel smarter. The idea of pulling together a cohesive thought when using a few difference references is pretty cool. Cool in a super nerd sort of way.

**Introduction to Dr. Gehrke's Work:**

The research part of this Graduate Research Fellowship just got real. It has been like two weeks, I think, since I had seen Zem and today we actually sat down to get the ball rolling on some of these research projects I kept being told I would get to. Well, today was the big day and I think Zem could tell I was a little timid because she asked if I was OK like three times. Haha, let's just say that I wouldn't consider research a strength of mine.....yet. I sat out in the pods with the articles written by Dr. Gehrke about Equine-Assisted Therapy to try and wrap my brain around what she is going to want in the way of
updated research. Sometimes it is a struggle for me to focus on a scholarly article because I don't really like to sit still for very long and the content of said articles can be quite dry and boring. I've always been of the mindset that I'll let the "intellectuals" do the research and I'll go out and execute the plan. However, I'm finding more and more that that is not really how it works and I actually need to know how to do research and how to do it well. This process is going to be somewhat hands-off and I get to mostly figure out how to do this on my own. I believe Zem when she says I'm going to go into my capstone like a real OG while everyone else is like, "What is research?" (She didn't use those exact words but it was the message I received) I think I'm going to struggle a little bit at first trying to find a method that works for me but if I ever hit a wall I know that I can ask questions and get some great direction from my librarians.

Today I was pretty much on my own. I pulled out the articles that I printed last time I was here and also looked up a few more to print so I could sit down and go through them. I went out into the pods and it was off to the races. However, I think I got the slow horse or perhaps my energy vibes are not meshing with my horse because this process is off to a slow start. I'm finding that so far the research is all the same with maybe some minor differences. Equine-Assisted Therapy is successful when dealing with stress and anxiety related health conditions. The primary differences in these studies might be the size of the horse, one article covered therapy with mini horses, or the participants were all white men instead of having a diverse group. I think for Monday I'll have to try some new research tactics to find some articles with something else interesting to say to add to Dr. Gehrke's research.

**Improving My Research Skills**

Research is a lot like sitting through a history class. Ideally, we take the actions of others and improve upon them or use them to justify/support the decisions we make in the present.

I've been trying out this concept called "citation mining" when doing research on Google Scholar. When you pull up an article you can see how many times it has been cited and when you click on that link it takes you to a bunch of other articles that used the original article. Then you can proceed to do the same with that article. If anything the new list of articles will have a long list of references that may come in handy for what I'm currently researching.

Something that I need to improve on is variety in my research. I've been researching equine-assisted therapy with veterans. I've just learned that well rounded research is going to require similar yet different keywords. For example, I've only been researching Veterans with PTSD but they are not the only ones who suffer from the condition. With that said, I can research other groups that experience PTSD like rape victims or others who have experienced violent crimes and see what therapies have been successful within those populations. Perhaps, something that is successful in these other populations can be used to supplement the original research with Veterans.

Pulling keywords out of research is probably also going to help me with the task of creating a new resume. I have to pull the keywords out of a job description and look for ways to apply the skills and experience I have from jobs that traditionally might not be considered experience (pulling skills from my theatre background to help me get a job in public health). I'll let you know how that turns out.

**FINAL UPDATE:** “Citation Mining” is basically gold mining. This research tactic has been so helpful throughout my program.
What's a Lit Review?

I'd still consider myself a research novice but I'd say I had a breakthrough the other day with a line of "out of the box" thinking. It was so far out of the box that it was quite hard to find anything scholarly about it. We will see about that. I'll adjust the search terms and work to find something cool. Most of the articles I've included in my bibliography so far can be a bit dull. There were a few interesting ones but I'd like to go into my meeting with the professor with something interesting to contribute to the conversation. She is basically the expert in this field so I hope I can find something that is rather compelling.

Zem mentioned that the end game with all this research is to put together a literature review and to potentially get some author cred. Now that would be hella cool. I printed out a sample lit review from APA Style Central and will have a read over that. I really had no idea what a lit review even was. Shocking that the pace in which my classes move that there isn't really time to go over something like that, let alone write one because they can be long and teachers just don't want to grade papers that long. All I can say is, thank God I got this position because when would I have heard about these types of papers otherwise.....

The Process

I met with Ellen last week and we got the ball rolling on her research project. I met again with Zem and Ellen today and I think we were able to get a solid outline on what next steps to take. I think it was good that Zem was there to sort of streamline the process. I think Ellen and I can sort of get lost in our thought process and she knows how to pull the focus back in. Actually, it was pretty cool to see how Ellen was looking at Zem while Zem was making suggestions on how to organize this research process. It was the look a student usually gives a teacher when they are in the process of learning. Then I thought to myself she (Ellen) also looks a bit overwhelmed and then I was like, I bet that is how I look like every day at the beginning of the day when Zem gives me my tasks for the day. I manage to get through them....sort of. The nice thing about this learning process is there is room to screw up without it affecting my GPA or something.

So here is the cool part though.....I think I'm going to get some pub cred here! Zem has been telling me that that is kind of a big deal so I'm pretty pumped up about the potential here. It just reminds me of how motivated I was when I started at NU to make sure I didn't waste my time doing things that weren't going to support my eventual career path. To get co-authorship alongside a Ph.D is a ridiculously great way to spend my time in this master's program. It went from research for one article to like 3 articles and 2 books!

After meeting with Ellen on Wednesday, we devised a list of tasks to get started on in order to have what Zem would call "deliverables" for our next meeting this Wednesday. I'll post the list of tasks to assignments if you feel inclined to follow along the journey.

I worked on trying to find animal-human type journals, research organizations/associations with human animal wellness therapy focus, and look up horse related articles in Anthrozoos. It kept me busy all day and I think I made a decent dent in those tasks. I created lists and charts to keep track of all the info. They are all shared into my OneDrive which I suppose I should share with all of you so you can keep track of what I'm up to. I found some really great organizations that primary focus is funding research
that promotes the concept of animal-assisted therapy. I was pretty impressed to see how organized these associations and groups were. I say we add to the goal, start an animal-assisted therapy research organization or something along those lines at National University. I imagine something like that would fall right in line with the Master's in Complementary & Integrative Healthcare.

I added 2 more articles to by annotated bibliography to read later just based on their titles. They seemed so relevant based on their title that I knew I should give them a read. I had to request both of them so by the time I'm back in on Monday, I'll see if I can access them.

Asked how to do something new today in research land. I needed to find horse related articles in a specific publication and I wasn't exactly sure how to limit it soooo I asked Lauren and she showed me how simple it really was. It led me to use a database called GALE. I was able to save a ton of articles to a folder which I then created a list of citations from and emailed them to me. So, I didn't get a chance to read through the articles to determine relevance but they are all saved so I can take that next step at a later time.

I think I did pretty well today. I certainly feel like the meetings we had set me up with a clear set of tasks to keep me on track for a while.

Today I had my third meeting with Ellen but today Mike also came by (they are co-authoring the paper) and we all worked on it. It was a very productive afternoon. They got a ton of writing done and I fished out more citations from my annotated bibliography to include which is amazing because hello! my work is going into a paper that is presumably going to be published. According to Mike, I'm going to be famous. At this point I've mostly been tasked with formatting and finding some last minute citations to drop in, if necessary.

The journal they are planning to submit to, is a journal out of Canada. I'm assuming because it is a Canadian journal is the reason it requires a style of citation referred to as Vancouver. So I spent the majority of the afternoon figuring out what that style even looked like and then proceeded to apply it to all but 3 of the references in the bibliography. I just ran out of time. Furthermore, I am awesome because I discovered a dead link in the references. I pulled it up and the domain had literally like shut down 2 weeks ago. Guess somebody wasn't paying their web bills. So, I had to pull up another reference to replace that one which at this point is pretty easy because I got some mad research skills my friends. I was always able to fix the error and I had my screen up on the display in the multimedia room so they could see what I was doing and they were making comments the whole time about how fast I was working or how they didn't even know you could do that with Google Scholar. When two Ph.D's are enamored by the things that you are doing, it's pretty awesome.

Speaking of being awesome, since I'm awesome Ellen was saying how she is going to be working with Ritika and Mike on another article and that when we wrap up with this one that I should jump right on to that one with them. Well, don't mind if I do. Just gonna be #addinglines to that resume.
#sorrynotsorry

I'm glad I've been able to have these face-to-face meetings with Ellen. It has certainly made the research process more enjoyable. I definitely feel that this is more of a collaboration than just an arbitrary assignment to fill my time.
I worked on the citations for Ellen's article today which was quite interesting. She dropped in an exact quote without properly citing it. When I was trying to match up all the in-text citations with the reference page I noticed the error. She had pulled a quote from a cited article that we liked and dropped in the paper to edit it but never did! If the article had gone through one of those plagiarism tool things that would have totally popped and I caught it. My professors always go nuts about making sure to not use direct quotes and always paraphrase. I felt like the paper police. It was kinda cool. I went ahead and edited the sentence to paraphrase the main idea and pulled the additional citation to put in the reference page. If someone had told me when I started this job that I would be editing and correcting a paper written by 2 PhD's I would have laughed and said, "Yeah right!"

Submission and Future Projects

I met with Ellen and it looks like we will be ready to hit the submit button on the article we have been working on and refining for a little while now. That's going to be pretty cool....being acknowledged in a published article. Sweet.

Now we will be moving on to working on the qualitative data for either another article or for a book. I'm already helping her right now with a book of stories she has created. I read her rough copy and the stories were great. Some sad, but overall a really cool read even though I don't really know anything about horses nor was I ever one of those kids who were too interested in them. The experiences she was having while raising and training her horses were totally applicable to situations I faced in my life doing other things so it was cool to see how they kind of crossed over. I will be helping her put together a glossary of terms because while I was able to understand most of it there were some things I had no idea what they were and still couldn't really determine their meaning in context. I suggested the glossary so her book wouldn't be limited to just those who are familiar with horses and their handling. Should be a fun project.

Met with Ellen and Mike today to talk about the next assignments. Now that I have one article under my belt, it is time to tackle another one. This next one will have to do with qualitative analysis. The great thing about that is that I get to have a more hands on experience. I will get to work with the data and that means I get to be a legit author on this article instead of just being listed in the acknowledgements like the last article. Also, I get to continue working on her books. This is pretty great.

So the article I worked on with Ellen and Mike is basically accepted. The reviewers gave some suggestions for changes and that is what we worked on today. The bummer is that they added about 3 new references and since the article is cited in Vancouver style that is going to require pretty much all the numbering to be changed for the in-text citations and for the reference page. I have to wait until they are completely done making all their edits though. We should be resubmitting it by next Tuesday.

The Blog:

When I had to take a break from the wonderful world of therapeutic horses, I browsed over to the blog for the School of Health and Human Services. Zem's instructions were, "Well, see if you can even find it first....." I poked around the website and let's just say for being listed under "Useful Links" it certainly is not readily apparent. It's stashed deep down at the bottom of the school's website. Furthermore, upon browsing it, I wouldn't go straight to the idea of "useful." I took about a page full of notes on what I would add in order to make it more relevant and useful for me and other students like me. I'm
interested to see if it ends up being a project that I can work on because I definitely think I would thrive working on a project like that. It is a bit more my speed than determining articles that a professor would consider useful to update her research. I anticipate as I move along in this fellowship, though, that I will become more confident in my ability to research and critically read articles. This is a bit of a laborious process and that is because I’m getting easily distracted and my mind wanders a bit while reading the articles.

FINAL UPDATE: Research isn’t quite the laborious task it used to be. Success!

Finally back on my blog game er’body! It has been quite a while since I had time to write for fun in my blog but now I’m getting paid to do it for my university. Not bad. Well, I’m not writing in my blog....I’m contributing to the SHHS blog for NU. I started a piece that is in drafts right now that covers the NUSNA’s trip to a nursing convention in Texas. I have to figure out a way to live up to my own suggestions for the blog. I explained that for the blog to be relevant, it needed at least 4 posts a month. A weekly update. Hmm, weekly update, now that reminds me of Saturday Night Live. I’ll have to keep that in mind for maybe a more humorous click-bait piece. I have to creep along a fine line of not embarrassing the university or the library or myself but let’s be honest me writing something hilarious would make me look awesome but may not bode well if "the man" catches wind of it. Beyond just the posting, I was able to reformat the blog making it look waaaaaaaaay better than that basic, unappealing bookshelf of dusty articles.

FINAL UPDATE: I wasn’t able to live up to my own comments about the blog. I guess I can appreciate how a task like blogging can take a backseat to your primary work and responsibilities.

Planetree:

Today, I had a Zoom meeting with Christy who is chairing the Executive Committee for Planetree recognition. It was my first Zoom meeting ever and it was a bit overwhelming. Needless to say, I know I came off super timid and totally clueless. Sigh....I guess I wasn’t really sure what the meeting today was going to consist of so I wasn’t really prepared.

The thought is to get a student-centered committee together to push forward these Planetree initiatives. I am totally interested in the idea of taking on a leadership role that will ultimately help students but I certainly need a bit more background on what Planetree demands and what NU already has in the works to achieve this status. In order to coordinate a group of students who barely have time to do anything, I will need to develop a compelling statement to inspire involvement.

I’ve been browsing the website to try and figure out what Planetree is all about. I think I definitely need a crash course in why this this going to benefit us in the long run. I would hate for this Planetree status just be a bumper stick to add to the NU website and be overall pointless. I would like to survey students and see if they are aware of what Planetree is and if it would make a difference in their decision to attend here if NU had the designation. Perhaps my case of "The Mondays" is making me rather cynical today but I’m interested to see if I can make this worthwhile for students.

FINAL UPDATE: Re-reading this post justifies the importance of research....so you don’t look like a noob.

I watched a presentation on Assessing Library Space today, which was a little dry at times but some of the resources they directed listeners to are actually quite cool.
I was browsing www.learningspacetoolkit.org and they had a chart that tracked the phases of design that I thought was really cool. After browsing that site for a little bit I pulled up the message Christie sent for the Planetree luncheon on Friday. The goal is to formalize the student/alumni piece since student input is very important to the designation status. As it should be.... At any rate, I want to be in charge so I started doing some research. She mentioned that our voice needed to be clear in SHHS policy, curriculum, and the strategic plan so I tried to track down all that information. I can tell you right now that it is not easy to find. That immediately triggered a transparency flag in my head. I'm looking forward to creating policy that makes the learning experience better and more efficient for students.

While watching the video, they also mentioned an app created by NC State called, Suma. Suma is a data collection and analysis app that works primarily on tablets. I didn't get a chance to mess around with it today but I plan to take a look at it later. If I've learned anything, it's that data is the most critical part to getting anything done. So I'll be interested to see how this app helps expedite that process and if it is something the Planetree folks will look to adopt for at least the library space design piece.

Somewhere in the Middle:

I spent a good amount of time actually brain dumping on Lauren and David this morning, basically verbalizing my experiential learning and all of the ideas that I have about all of the projects I'm currently involved with. I will try to outline some of my verbal musings below.

Defining my job as a research fellow through well thought out areas of concentration.

-Research: training in professional research, assisting with faculty-led research projects, improvements to writing and communication

-Advocacy: working on behalf of other students, promoting scholarship, connecting students to the library, building bridges between faculty and students, social media

-Professional development: sitting on committees, improving skills, earning certifications, making presentations, creating reference material (wiki)

One of the ideas I had this morning was to find a way to connect faculty in need of research assistance with students who are interested in fulfilling their internship requirement by participating in the aforementioned research opportunities. I would have to review the competencies listed in the new pilot internship program for the Community Health Programs but I imagine this could be a completely applicable position for students who have a passion for research. Maybe I'll develop my own pilot program for Research Interns or at least define my position as a fellow completely and advocate/find the moolah to get several more students involved. I was supposed to have a partner in crime for this fellowship but she managed to snag another job before we even met. Moving along this journey as a solo student has been interesting. I do think that the ability to collaborate with other student fellows would actually be quite beneficial for research and professional development.

Read a really interesting article today in conjunction with the research I'm doing for Ellen's paper. I'll post the PDF after this post for anyone who is interested in taking a gander. It discusses the need for equity between humans and animals in therapeutic settings. Basically, it should be unethical to use animals merely as “tools” in therapy programs and that the animals who participate in these therapies should be reaping equitable benefits as well. They don't want to abolish pet therapy but they want to
make sure animals are not being taken advantage of in the process. If I were to describe this article in slang terms, I'd say this article is throwing mad shade. Let's start the hashtag #scholarlyshade I think that should totally be a thing.

It has been about 4 months since I started here in the library and it's been pretty crazy. I started off almost immediately with projects and so far they have gone mostly according to plan.

I've had a few projects I've been working on for a while and one of the big one was the research for Dr. Gehrke about horses and HRV. I sent it along to her to have a look and when we saw each other Thursday at the Public Health Day she said to me, "Great work, I can really see that you understand what I'm trying to get at." Of course, I thought to myself, "Hell yes!" It was cool to hear that I was doing well by the person that is actually supposed to utilize that work.

I have had the opportunity to talk to people about the things I've learned in the library and have encouraged several people to use the databases the way I do now and it is always positive feedback. That is cool. Gaining knowledge and then being comfortable enough to teach it to others is quite rewarding.

I'm the new face on the SHHS blog and boy is it getting hyped up. I have done 3 posts so far and now I'm starting to get requests! That's pretty awesome. I'm not sure how often Mike got requests but I hope he doesn't tell me so I can continue to feel special. Zem sends me this email last week about how there was an SHHS faculty meeting where I was getting a huge shout out from Dr. Meyers about my updates to the blog and people were very excited to see all the new changes. Furthermore, Dr. Gehrke went on to talk about how I did some really great research for her. In the words of Zem, "We got a lot of claps and happy smiles." I felt quite accomplished. I already have like 2 more requests for content. It's very cool.

Next, I have to talk about how cool Mendeley is and why I'm so glad Allie taught it to me! I've been using the program for my classes since she taught me a few months ago. The best part is my classes offer me quite a bit of freedom to explore a public health issue that is important to me and simply apply whatever strategy that class is teaching me. I have been able to go back into Mendeley and pull out quotes that I highlighted for another class and drop them right into discussion board posts and other papers I've been writing for subsequent classes which is also supported by my use of APA Style Central because that site has all of my citations saved, which means I can just drop a citation right in the paper along with that quote without breaking a sweat. Believe me, writing papers is generally a huge chore for me because I wouldn't consider myself a very fast content producer and finding citable material and then creating the reference for that material really eats up a lot of time. Of course, research has gotten a tad easier after Zem showed me the advanced search tool in EBSCO. You might think that would be obvious but when you enter paper writing stress-mode it is hard to see much of anything except for the tears welling up because you fear failing. I actually read an article about this, the idea that most millennials are stress cases because being perfect these days is, sometimes, still not good enough. Forget about being less than perfect.....

Finally, I was able to sit down with James and we went through job postings and discussed how to adjust my resume to pull the skills out of my current job listing that would appeal to the one reviewing resumes, as well as developing a list of items to discuss in my cover letter. Hopefully, I can create something that at least gets a second look. I mean this library kind of took a chance on me, lol! This research position was something that I was like, ummm I'm not sure I qualify for this but I'll still apply
because the worst thing that could happen is they say, thanks, but no thanks. If you are expecting that then there is no shame, no foul. Go figure, here I am. Perhaps, the lesson here is that I should stop short changing myself because someone may see potential in me that I have yet to discover.

Today was awesome! I was able to participate in some really cool activities. I've learned that I need to scan Zem's calendar and anytime it says staff potluck, I need to clear my schedule and be here. This library knows how to do potlucks.

After the amazing lunch I was able to participate in the breakout sessions for the library's strategic planning. We went through a process called SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) where we all brainstormed and wrote down our thoughts for each category. It was interesting and I was glad I was able to contribute as a sort of hybrid student/staff member. I actually mentioned to Phil that I thought they should include more students in that process. The user mindset becomes quite different when you become staff. I'm tempted to take that process back to my other job and see if the implementation of it provides some positive feedback. This job has been so great that literally everything I've experienced here I have been able to apply in other job and school settings.

Today was finally the day where I was able to meet with Dr. Gehrke and chat about the research I was doing for her. That went really well and I think she is ready to hire me to be her assistant....I said we would have to chat about that when I was off the clock here but it came up and it was awesome. We are going to meet again next Wednesday to get the ball really rolling with the research.

The networking that has come out of taking this fellowship position has been invaluable. In all seriousness, this job has put me into contact with so many individuals and placed me at all kinds of events where I have had the opportunity to meet people that I can't imagine I would have had otherwise, especially as an online student. I genuinely hope that this program continues and expands to the other schools!

Professional Development

I’ve had 2 meetings with James (since my last post) and we are really starting to focus in on some useful professional development pieces. I think actually I’ve come to some realizations about my professional path just by talking things out with him. I’m quickly realizing I’m not in entry-level land anymore or the high school mentality of what a resume should look like. I have to do some reprogramming of my approach to certain things like, job hunting, interviewing, skill development and networking.

Today, I had the opportunity to attend the Student Scholarship Symposium at the Marriott in Mission Valley. It was an opportunity for students, both undergrad and graduate, to present their research in a poster session. There were presenters from each school and an undergrad and graduate from each school were chosen as winners. Furthermore, a top winner from the undergrads and graduates were chosen to win a monetary prize. I saw some really interesting topics from the use of creative drama in developing kindergartener's social skills to the abuse of opioids by women to the effects of cultural integration into society and thought this is what I should be doing. I need to sort of narrow down the things I'm truly passionate about so I can start doing progressive work to make change in those areas.

Preparing and giving presentations in a professional setting will be such great additions to a resume/CV. I hope to participate next year. In the meantime, I'm looking at ways to boost my professional prowess. In order to get opportunities to make presentations it would make sense to look into joining
professional organizations since they are generally the folks putting on the conferences where people make their presentations at.

Here I was mostly cruising along, learning research methods, doing some assignments, asking a bunch of questions, and the like which appeared to be simply for personal enrichment. Now it appears as though the importance of my projects have all come to light and it's a bit nuts. What I thought would just be providing links to articles to a professor has evolved into potential co-authorship for 3 journal articles and 2 books. What I thought was just a casual research practice task in space design has now turned into the material to work to create a presentation to give to the provost....in like 2 weeks from today. No pressure. Actually, I'm kinda flattered that all of this responsibility has been hoisted upon my shoulders because the powers that be have faith that I will execute. That is pretty awesome.....having research good enough that it can support 3 articles and 2 books, as well as inspire the provost to support an ongoing project to obtain a prestigious designation. I really have to figure out how to phrase the above in a professional way to drop right into my resume like I'm bejeweling it with diamonds.

*Thoughts on a New Fellow*

Zem mentioned that they might be able to hire another fellow which is AWESOME! I put that down as an opportunity at that staff meeting last week and it's already in the works. Ask and you shall receive. I think the only thing I would change would to have a set outline for training. Like a checklist maybe. For example, HR Tasks [ ] training on e-time, etc. Research Tasks [ ] OneDrive training, [ ] Boolean Operators video, etc. Programs [ ] APA Style Central (or maybe the preferred citation method of their school), [ ] Mendeley training, etc. I wouldn't mind sitting down and hashing out those details. At any rate, I'm excited that another student will get the opportunity to have such a rewarding experience. I think it will totally benefit their schooling, especially since NU operates at such an accelerated pace. The research tips I've learned here have really helped me in my classes and I've practically become a sales woman for APA Style Central and Mendeley, so much so that I probably should be making a commission.

Today, I continued on my journey into space design. I've been attaching relevant articles to the little bubbles in my mindmap and proceeding to go down a bunch of rabbit holes. Although, after chatting with Lauren for a little bit about a path I wanted to take on my research journey I discovered that my scope was a little too broad for my research britches. When I was researching makerspace, I didn't really consider that I'm doing research to support a Planetree Designation which is actually going to only apply to the School of Health and Human Services (at least as far as I understand) so I had a lightbulb moment about how I should be looking into how all these spaces can be utilized for the disciplines in that school.

I'm finding that chatting about my research with others is helping me make necessary changes to get to the information I actually want. Perhaps, this supports the concept of collaboration being a tool in academic success. Which further leads me to believe that having a fellow fellow (hehe that's punny) would make this process better. I mean, they don't even need to be a fellow in the same school as me but say each librarian has a fellow and then all of the fellows have to have a meeting where they collaborate on their research projects. Give a report or just have a discussion about them. That would be cool. I guess maybe I just like to talk to others. Anything that takes me out of the cubicle for a little bit. I definitely find that I thrive in collaborative situations where discussion occurs and I can bounce ideas off others and listen to their ideas as well.
So, I guess what I'm saying is.....hook a sister up with another fellow or five. I need some friends! (Read collaborative partners)  

**Making Research Work for Me**  

What exactly is feedforward? I'm sure you have heard of 'feedback' but how often do you actually digest that feedback and then utilize it in your next assignment or task or whatever? How many of us gloss over feedback if it's written or sort of tune it out if someone verbalizes it to us and then not give it a second thought?  

The study I read, in the simplest terms, claimed that feedback is basically useless. Instead, to help a person do the task right the first time or in an attempt to meet the expectations of instruction one should provide feedforward. It functions in a way similar to coaching. For example, I want to play tennis. I can't really just take a racket to the court and do whatever I want, furthermore if someone were to say you don't know what you are doing, your feet were all wrong, your swing was awful, you actually need to hit the tennis ball but not tell me how to do any of it, odds are I will continue to make the same mistakes. Now if there was some coaching beforehand that is geared to my learning sensibility (this is the important part) then even if I make some mistakes I will probably already know how to correct them and then make the adjustments.  

This concept really speaks to me because I wouldn't say I really like to just wing it when it comes to anything. I usually like very clear guidelines and instructions so I can be effective and efficient. I feel like I just had an experience with a professor that was like here is what you have to do....I'm not really going to explain any of it....you are on your own.....go! I dreaded those assignments because they were completely vague and also I came out of that class feeling like I just wasted a month and didn't learn anything new.  

One of the assignments was to do a literature review, which thanks to this job I actually had an idea of what it was and why it was important, but my professor didn’t really explain what the purpose of a lit review is, why we should know how to do one, or how it might apply to our future careers. The answers to those three questions is what I would consider feedforward. Anyway, I feel like this post was a bit of a rant but a rant inspired by research!  

**FINAL UPDATE:** I’m glad I reread this post. Got to put together some feedforward for the next fellows that will be rolling in.  

**Beginning of the End:**  

I've been here at the library for about 6 months now and time sure flies when you are tasked with all sorts of interesting projects. I've learned so much from all of the librarians (and James too!) during these past few months that has been put to use in all sorts of different aspects of my school and work life.  

Sometimes I wonder what the process might look like if I had belonged to a different school. What kind of research might I be doing in I was in SOEC and helping a faculty member research underwater robotics to aid in the restoration of coral reefs? Or how about if I were in SCOE and working to research how non-traditional classroom settings were fostering improved academic success for special education students? Oh! What about research to help a SOPS faculty member develop a new app that expedites emergency management to cut down on reaction time to disasters? I think the possibilities are endless.
I've really only worked with one faculty member and I have gained so much out of it! From advanced research skills, improvement of my communication and teaching skills, collaboration, self-confidence, and so much more. Not to mention all the times I've got to sit down and chat with everyone in this office. I've mentioned the family aspect in another post but I really think that holds true. Overall, I really think this opportunity has encouraged me to be a leader. I find myself answering student's questions in class because I know of a legit library hack that will make their lives a whole lot easier. The teachers notice too and always say thanks.

I don't want to assume anything but I hope that Zem has gotten something out of our working relationship as well. As my direct supervisor, I go to her often with really good questions but also a handful of probably rather dumb questions (and let's be honest, there totally is such a thing as a dumb question) and I think we have evolved together as student and teacher. It's been a totally rewarding experience for me and I imagine it has been for her as well (at least I hope so....I think I'm pretty cool and not totally annoying.....). I hope that this program expands to the other schools and librarians so they get the opportunity to mentor a student and have a mutually rewarding experience.

Today, Zem gave me a citation list and I had to find her the PDF's for them and I jammed that out in no time....there was some delay because the internet was being lame again but nonetheless I whipped it out quick time. Guess I'm getting good at this research gig.

As it seems, things are starting to just flow now. When I first started here and was writing these entries, it was like WOW! Guess what I learned today?! and now I'm functioning in application mode. I've learned a lot and now I just get to apply it.

I remember when I got this job and I thought to myself, what am I thinking....I don't even like research....it's boring! Of course, anything that is hard or you aren't really good at is boring. I'm pretty good at it now....or well I have certainly made a vast improvement since the beginning of the year so it's not too bad any more.

The great thing about legit research is that it can back up your opinions. Haha, so now when I argue with my husband I can say something like well according to a study by Smith in 2017, women are right all of the time while men are right only about 12% of the time. That information comes from a peer-reviewed source. I win, you lose. Lol.

**Proudest Moment**

Shortly after starting here I was introduced to APA Style Central, a word processing tool to help write correct APA Style papers. The most recent paper I wrote from my class, I had my teacher leave a comment about my APA formatting. I was like, how is this even possible? I write my papers in a program regulated by the APA..... So I did what most students should do and I checked with my librarian, it just so happens that my librarian is also my boss. She supported my professor and I was quite frankly baffled. I did some sleuthing and found my citation in the Purdue OWL guide, snapped a screen shot and sent it to Zem. She still wasn't convinced. Anyway, today I was showing her my paper that I'm working on for my research method course just as it had been created in the APA Style Central word processor and Zem was like whoa, what's up with these initials before the authors name??? and I said, that's how APA Style Central imported it and I'm trusting that they are the experts on their own citation method. She was not
convinced.....so we asked Barbara and Robin. Lo and behold, I was doing it right (or well APA Style Central was doing it right).

Graduate Research Fellow: 1

NU Faculty: 0

SHHS Librarian: 0

Final Thoughts

I’ve been reading and pulling info from articles for most of the morning and afternoon. Some were great and made the cut while several others were just a time suck. I imagine that is exactly the life of a researcher. It is like you find what you really want and need like 10% of the time while the other 90% you are just sitting there wondering about all the other things you could have done with your time. Lol. Nobody said this would be an easy job but I have certainly learned a lot and A LOT.

Presentation on Tuesday about my very position here in the library. It will be awesome.

Wrapped up the edits to the manuscript we submitted about the HOH program so hopefully it is all good and we will see an article published shortly. Cool, right? I certainly think so. A lot of faculty were impressed that I had received this opportunity and I am inclined to agree. One person did ask how I heard about this position and I mentioned that it came through my inbox on SOAR. That gal said that she is surprised I followed through since almost nobody reads what comes through that messaging center. I mentioned that I may have been a special case because I was literally on the lookout for anything and everything that was going to give me the edge in this career path since my background was in the arts and I was basically starting from scratch. She did one of those approving nods and was like, "Well, good for you. Looks like you are well on your way. Keep up the good work." That my friends is how you do it. Fake it until you make it. In the words of Drake, "I started at the bottom and now I’m here."
Just thought I should put it out there that I ran into the Assoc. Provost at the Student, Alumni, Faculty Mixer last night and he said that the poster was excellent and we should have totally got first place. That was awesome.

Secondly, a gal came up to me who was the Assoc. Dir. of the new scholar program and she saw my name tag and was like, "Oh! You're Sarah! I've heard all about you! We need to talk." I'm thinking, whoa....this complete stranger has heard all about me?? So I asked her who she found out about me from and she said Ann Marie. Like the super boss of the library....is telling people about me....I'm pretty sure I had a smile on for the rest of the night. I even splurged on the valet parking because I deserved it....before I even knew that I deserved it.

Coolest job ever.