A Transforming Bridge: How Peabody Library Elevated my Academic Experience

One definition of bridge is as a “a time, place, or means of connection or transition.” As I think over my experience at Peabody College – first as a student, then as a researcher, and finally as a staff member in the Dean’s Office – I see all the ways in which the Peabody Library has been an important and significant bridge in all of my experiences. I hope to share with you a few of the ways in which this is true.

As I think about that idea of connection, I reflect on how much of the ways in which I think about the library are tied to connections with specific people. When I first came to the Peabody Library as a new PhD student in the Community Research and Action program, I met with the amazing Leslie Foutch. She taught me the wonders of using concepts in my literature searches, and how to use Zotero to manage my citations. And when she showed me that you could drag and drop citations into my reference section already in APA format, well, that was a game changer! Her guidance and kindness also went a long way in normalizing the experience of learning how to be a researcher – as imposter syndrome can often make it feel like we should already know all of this information before even setting foot on campus. With Leslie, I felt free to ask my questions and really learn the skills I would need in the future.

I then began to transition into working on a research team – and came right back to Leslie! In the many varied projects that I have worked on, Leslie has provided guidance for myself and other team members about the best ways to search for information, as well as the types of information that might be useful for us to have. For instance, on some projects, it is important to have up-to-date data from peer reviewed journals, but for other projects, more application-based grey literature may be best to move the research team forward. Leslie helped our teams think through what we really needed for a particular project, then how we could best go about finding that information.

More recently, I joined the Dean’s office as the Director of the Peabody Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. In this new role, I have had the pleasure to connect with more members of the Peabody Library. For instance, I was able to work with Karen Swoopes (as well as Kashif Graham from the Divinity Library and Meredith Broadway from the Owen Library) to provide an EDI workshop for the library staff on Implicit Bias. The collaboration provided a new insight into the people who really make such a difference in the ways we think about and access information, and what they need to make their own work spaces more inclusive and equitable. Melissa Mallon has also been an invaluable partner in planning events, and providing space for community building and inclusion for Peabody students, faculty, and staff. Several other staff, including Shahpar Kamtarin, David Golann, and Sarah Stevenson, have also worked with the EDI office to plan events and work on projects that celebrate the voices of our diverse community, highlight our history, and support the Peabody community.

In each of these times of transition, the Peabody Library has provided a place of connection and continuity for me – a true bridge in my Peabody experience. And I am especially grateful to have the friendship and collegiality of the people who make that Peabody connection possible. I would encourage you all to explore the libraries as a place for making connections beyond the norm, and to see it not just as a convenient place to study, but as a place where you can build community during your time at Peabody. It will not only enrich your Peabody experience, but can provide a bridge to where ever your journey might lead you next.

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