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### The Graduate Assistant in Technical Services: Reflecting on a Real-World Work Experience

Diana Simpson

Cheryl Kaletsch

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# The Graduate Assistant in Technical Services

Reflecting on a Real-World Work Experience

Cheryl Kaletsch,  
Graduate Assistant

Diana Simpson,  
Cataloging Librarian



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SOUTHERN**  
**MISSISSIPPI.**



Background

Expectations

Planning

Implementation

Future





# Background

Why hire a Graduate Assistant?

- ❖ Help the department accomplish goals
- ❖ Opportunity for LIS student
- ❖ Support SLIS



# Background

Why hire a Graduate Assistant?

- ❖ Help the department accomplish goals
  - ❖ Opportunity for LIS student
  - ❖ Support SLIS
- 
- Exposure to tech services librarianship



# Background

## Beginning challenges

- ❖ Staff turnover
- ❖ Reorganized workflows
- ❖ Documentation update
- ❖ New-ish system migration
- ❖ Working with GA was new to staff
- ❖ Pandemic



# Planning & Expectations

## Interviews

- ❖ Professional interview



# Planning & Expectations

## Interviews

### ❖ Professional interview

- Cataloging course
- Interest in technical services
- Desire to gain practical experience
- Bonus: prior library experience





# Planning & Expectations

## Interviews

### ❖ Professional interview

- Cataloging course
- Interest in technical services
- Desire to gain practical experience
- Bonus: prior library experience

### ❖ Key: Aptitudes & Motivation



# Implementation

## Interviews

- ❖ How did it go?
  - Early practice at resume & cover letter
  - Practice being interviewed
  - Number of applicants
  
- ❖ Cataloging course as minimum qualification



# Expectations

What attracted me to the position?

What is Technical Services?

Is this going to be a good fit for me?





# Planning & Expectations

How will it work?

- ❖ Professional work experience
- ❖ Treat GA as regular employee
- ❖ Team approach to planning



# Planning & Expectations

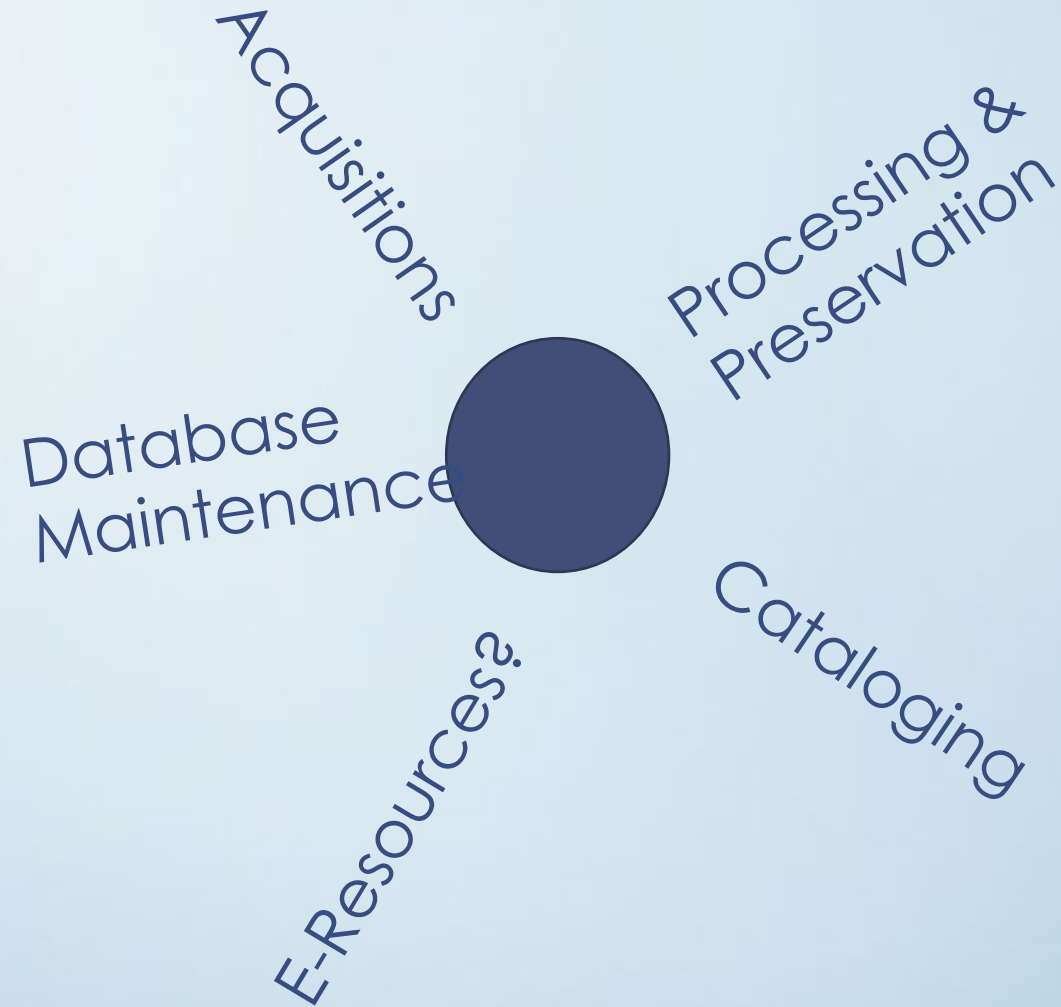
How will it work?

- ❖ Professional work experience
- ❖ Treat GA as regular employee
- ❖ Team approach to planning

➤ Work "modules"



# Planning & Expectations



# Planning & Expectations



# Implementation

- ❖ How did it go?
  - Predicting workloads



# Implementation

- ❖ How did it go?
  - Predicting workloads
  - Type of work changed

ALL CATALOGING ALL THE TIME

# Implementation

- ❖ How did it go?
  - Predicting workloads
  - Type of work changed
  - Nature of work changed

# Implementation

- ❖ How did it go?

- Predicting workloads
- Type of work changed
- Nature of work changed

- ❖ Streamlining processes
- ❖ Documentation



# Planning & Expectations

## Training

### ❖ Overall Planning Considerations

- Topics / Skills to cover
- Time frames
- Training sequence
- Training methods
- Training resources

# Planning & Expectations Training

## ❖ Trello for Project Management

The screenshot displays a Trello workspace named "Graduate Assistant". The board is organized into several columns and cards:

- Overview / Schedule:** Contains four cards: "Schedule Fall 2021 Semester" (0/7), "Staff Contact Info", "Basic Cataloging Aug 23 - Sept 30" (0/10), and "Acquisitions - Oct 1 - Nov 1" (0/13).
- Goals for the Week:** Contains four weekly goal cards: "Week 1: Aug 23-27" (5/5), "Week 2: Aug. 30 - Sept. 3" (7/7), "Week 3: Sept. 7-10" (6/9), and "Week 4: Sept. 13-17" (1).
- Training:** Contains two cards: "Training - Basic Cataloging Aug 23 - Sept 30" (5 tasks, 11/18) and "Training - Alma" (2/19).
- Projects & Workflows - Overview:** Contains two cards: "Cataloging" (1 comment, 0/6) and "Acquisitions".

The interface includes a top navigation bar with "Workspaces", "Recent", "Starred", and "Create" buttons. The board title "Graduate Assistant" is prominently displayed, along with a list of team members (DS, MB, CJ, CK, LG) and an "Invite" button.



# Planning & Expectations

## Training

### ❖ Initial Training Prep

- Consultations with others
- Find existing training
- Best practices



# Planning & Expectations

## Training

### ❖ Varied training methods

- Reading
- Online tutorials
- Demonstration
- Discussion
- Examples
- Practice
- Feedback



# Implementation

Training

- ❖ How did it go?
  - Foundational > Complex
  - Continuous planning





# Implementation

Training

- ❖ How did it go?
  - Foundational > Complex
  - Continuous planning
  
- ❖ Weekly training log
- ❖ Feedback log
- ❖ In-person discussion group



# Training

Starting point

Getting up to speed

Tools used





# Future

## Training

- ❖ What will we keep?
  - Trello
  - Training & feedback logs
  - In-person discussion group
  - Screen sharing
  
- ❖ Current GA mentors the next GA



# Future

## Training

- ❖ What will we improve?
  - Reduce complexity of initial training
  - More complete how-to documentation
  - More instruction on when to pass materials to full-time staff



# Future

Overall

- ❖ What will we modify?
  - Less Module rotation
  - Retain exposure to all tech services areas



# The First Year

## The GA in Technical Services

- Practice complements coursework
  - Learned about Tech Services
  - Real work experience
- 
- ❖ Department accomplishes goals!



# Overall

Practical Application

Tying it together





# Questions?

Cheryl Kaletsch,  
Graduate Assistant

Diana Simpson,  
Cataloging Librarian







# Best Practices

## The GA in Technical Services

- ❖ Clear expectations
- ❖ Prepare, Prepare, Prepare
- ❖ “Real” interviewing
- ❖ Streamline work processes
- ❖ Provide documentation
- ❖ Treat as regular staff
- ❖ Communication and check-ins
- ❖ Flexibility