

## Meet the People

### An Interview Column by June L. Power

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Though it goes by many names, virtually every library has an Access Services or circulation department, meaning that we have a lot of colleagues out there. There are many people working in Access Services in various types of libraries all over the United States and abroad and many of us talk, if not every day, sometimes quite frequently. A good portion of this communication takes place through electronic discussion lists, and many of us have been able to make friends without ever meeting someone face to face, and sometimes in the mix, there may be things about a person that we miss. Hopefully this column will help us to get to know each other a little better. If you know anyone we should all get to know better, or if you yourself want to be interviewed, please write me at [june.power@uncp.edu](mailto:june.power@uncp.edu) and tell me why and they could appear here in future editions. I look forward to meeting more of you.

### Meet Hayden Battle

Hayden Battle is the Assistant Head of Access Services, Head of Interlibrary Loan and Reserves at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana. He first began working in libraries when at the University of South Carolina working on his MA, as a student worker in the interlibrary loan office. After eight months he was hired as a full-time paraprofessional. Enjoying this work he decided to pursue a library degree and obtained a MLIS from the University of South Carolina. After completing his degree, he interviewed for an interlibrary loan job at Tulane, and was hired in part due to his previous experience as a paraprofessional. Originally, he oversaw all interlibrary loan and reserve operations, but since August 2005, has also served as interim Head of Access Services, encompassing circulation and stacks maintenance.

One of my colleagues suggested interviewing Hayden, after having worked with him at the University of South Carolina, and I agreed that it would be interesting to interview him, not only due to his experience in Access Services, but also because he was serving at Tulane at the time of Hurricane Katrina. I was interested in the impact this had, not just on the library, but specifically on access services. No matter where we are located, each of us faces the risk of some sort of natural disaster. (I am actually writing this on the eve of hurricane season for those of us on the coast.) Some of us have detailed disaster plans, some of us don't; but you can't ever really be prepared until you've been through it, which is why I wanted to get some answers straight from the horse's mouth.

#### **What were the initial effects of Hurricane Katrina on your library, and specifically on Access Services?**

Katrina and the levee breaks flooded 80% of New Orleans. At Tulane, half the campus was under water, anywhere from a few feet to a few inches. The water around Howard-Tilton Library was enough to flood our basement area, where Government Documents, Microfilm and Microfiche, and Music collections were housed, as well as the HVAC and power plant for the building. The basement ended up with approximately nine feet of water in it. Tulane was closed to the public under November 1, 2005, and the fall semester was cancelled completely. Due to the damage in the library, we were closed until January 2, 2006. I came back to the city in late October, and officially returned to work on December 1. Access Services was affected much the

same way as the other departments in the library. Everyone had evacuated, and had trouble coming back to the city. Some of our staff were not able to relocate back to New Orleans at all.

**What happened to all the books your patrons had checked out that were damaged by the storm – both your own and books from other libraries? How were the damages reconciled?**

On August 29, 2005, when Katrina hit, we had almost 4000 books out on loan. We were lucky in that the fall semester had not yet started, and that limited the number of books that were checked-out. Once we resumed operations in January 2006, we sent out emails and regular letters to everyone who had books checked out. We asked them to contact us and either return the books or let us know they had been lost. After May 2006, we still had 900 books unaccounted for. At that point we sent the records of those books to our bursar, and patrons were billed for the lost materials. We're still dealing with the occasional patron with these book problems today, but for the most part it is the University Bursar who deals with them, not us. As for ILL, we had almost 200 books out at the time, and most were returned without incident. All books owned by Tulane destroyed by the flood are sent to our collections department, and replaced, with the ultimate goal of that being part of an eventual insurance settlement.

**Were any items salvageable? How were the decisions made?**

Belfor USA, an emergency management company, works with Tulane in the case of natural disasters. They had a team on-site the week of the hurricane, and in early September 2005 began pumping water out of the basement. The resultant mess of wet paper, microfilm, microfiche, CDs, and furniture had to be cleaned out by hand. Several librarians, including our head of government documents and the head of the music library were on hand to salvage what they could. Mostly, the Belfor employees saved everything they could, which was then sent to their Fort Worth headquarters and frozen until restoration work could begin. Restored materials are being returned to the library now, and should all be returned by the end of this year.

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**How were services affected – both short-term and long-term – by Katrina?**

In the short-term, the library was closed from September through December 2005. Although we were able to monitor the library email through part of that time, for the most part there was no infrastructure to have any services to Tulane patrons. Up to and including the first week of January 2006, the building was still a

maze of electrical power cords and temporary air tubes. By the time the spring semester started, those tubes were hung from the ceiling (where they remain today) and power was restored in most of the building. Basic services, such as checking out of materials and use of computers, were restored almost immediately. For ILL services, we were able to start borrowing immediately, but the mail situation at Tulane and New Orleans made us delay lending operations until July 2006.

**How was staffing affected – both short-term and long-term – by Katrina?**

Tulane University cut 15% of their staff in the aftermath of the hurricane. This was permanent loss of staff positions. Access Services thankfully only lost one position. However, four staff members in Access Services were unable to return to New Orleans, and there were two open positions prior to the storm. This meant that we were trying to deal with an emergency situation with a much smaller staff. We were able to begin hiring again late in the spring of 2006, but the job market in the city has made retention of entry-level employees difficult. Hiring people and keeping them in the library continues to be my major concern.

**Please describe how the library approached the disaster recovery process and the steps taken to restore functionality. How much progress has been made and how much more is needed?**

As described above, Belfor USA has been the main partner with the university on disaster recovery. Immediately after the storm, the concern was to get the water out of the building, and to insure that building conditions did not deteriorate further. Belfor was able to keep the temperature in the library to a reasonable level, and there was no major mold outbreak in the collection, as was feared. After the library reopened, we tried to make the building as comfortable as possible for patrons and staff. To date, we have no central air or heat in the building. That is controlled by a series of air pumps along the back of the building, which supply air through plastic tubes on each floor. The basement is locked off from the rest of the building, and has not yet been renovated. Once funding is secured, there is a plan to open a reading room/computer lab in the basement. The first major step we need to make is a new HVAC system on the roof, although the schedule for that is still unknown. I am currently a member of a building steering committee, and we are looking at the options for the building both long- and short-term in light of the hurricane and flood damage.

**What long term effects has your library, and especially Access Services, experienced as a result of Hurricane Katrina?**

The biggest effect on Access Services has been that of staffing. We have not been fully-staffed since the storm, and this has put severe restrictions on what services we can provide for patrons,

what changes we can make to procedures, etc. Added to this, since I have been a temporary head of the department, it has been difficult for me to make any large permanent changes to operations. In the year since the hurricane has reopened, we have had a large turnover in personnel for Access Services. On the one hand, this limits our operations because of the need to hire new staff, train them, and the like. On the other hand, this allows me to examine how things were done in the past, and the best way to approach them in the future. While we have not had a diminution in our basic services to patrons since the storm; some less essential services (study carrels, locating lost books, etc.) have taken longer to do than was previously the case.

**As a result of Katrina what, if any, construction projects has the library undergone, and how has this affected Access Services?**

The basement was gutted and remains mostly an empty shell. The library built a temporary staff break room in the basement, and a new student lounge. We also had to build temporary offices for the music library and the rebuilding government document collections. These projects were relatively small and contained, and so did not affect the library that much. When the new HVAC system is installed, it will cause major disruption to library operations, as will many of the other projects currently being discussed. One major problem, however, is the timing of these projects. We don't know when anything major is likely to happen, due to delays in insurance and FEMA remediation. And so while we deal with a library in mid-construction, we have no idea when that is likely to come to an end.

**Has the recovery process allowed you to make any changes in Access Services that weren't possible before the storm and if so, what?**

Changes are ongoing in the Access Services department. I suppose the biggest change has been the departure of so many longtime employees in the department. This was due to a variety of factors including the storm, resignations, and the like. While this has hurt us in the short-term, it really presents an opportunity to create a brand-new department. Given the new challenges at Tulane since Katrina, I think this is one major bright spot.

**What plans have been made to deal with any future natural disasters, and how does this differ from any disaster plans the library had before Katrina?**

The main change since Katrina has been the question of communication. We discovered after the storm that our records were not up-to-date, and so it was difficult to get in contact with everyone. Additionally, the library website and email servers were on campus, and therefore affected just like everyone else in the city. Last year, we began to get multiple contacts for every employee, and the university has moved their computer servers to other locations. This should allow Tulane to communicate to

everyone in a more efficient way. Physically, no collections will be housed in the basement again, and future plans will always use the Katrina floodwaters as a new benchmark for what could happen. The main Tulane campus is located anywhere from a few feet above sea level to almost ten feet below, and is therefore susceptible to flooding, even in an ordinary thunderstorm. But we are working with that in mind to make sure that next time the inevitable flood will not have as great an impact as the one after Katrina did.

**What is one thing you would like to change about your library's Access Services department?**

I would make interlibrary loan a separate department. Its needs are so unique and its operations so different from the rest of Access Services that I think it would benefit as an independent department.

**How many people work in your Access Services Department and in what areas? How many do you manage?**

There are eighteen full-time staff members in our Access Services Department. The circulation desk has eight employees, stacks maintenance has five, interlibrary loan has four plus a librarian, and there is one nighttime security person. Three of the staff members are library associates, with management duties. However, I am the supervisory librarian of the entire department.

**If you weren't working in Access Services, what library department would you want to work in and why?**

I have always worked in Access Services, so it's difficult to think of working anywhere else. I did have a lot of cataloging work in library school, however, so if I had to choose another department it would probably be that one.

**What was it like to go from the head of Interlibrary Loan to the head of all of Access Services?**

I became head of the department when the previous head left to become the director of a library in another state. The transition to Head of Access Services was a difficult one, because I did not know all of the duties in the department. Everything was made much worse when, a month after I became interim head, Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans.

**What were the major changes in your job responsibilities and how have you adapted to the change in job function?**

The major changes have been in management duties. I went from supervising four employees to eighteen. I find that I rely a lot on the library associates to run the day-to-day duties and to keep me informed about particular problems. Thankfully, I have never been a micro-manager, because that kind of style in this job would have driven me, and everyone under me, crazy.

**Did being a paraprofessional help make you a better librarian? Why?**

Being a paraprofessional absolutely helped me become a better librarian. I was able to become familiar with how the academic library worked, what was expected of staff members, and what the staff expected from their supervisors. My interlibrary loan office experience also helped me as a manager, because I was familiar with the type of work my staff did.

**What do you wish you were taught in library school that you weren't?**

The main thing that I don't think is taught enough are management skills. Many professional librarians oversee either staff members or student workers, and management becomes a major part of the job. More time should be spent on it. I've also spent a lot of times in meetings since becoming a professional, be they in conferences or the regular meetings involved in running a library. There should be some kind of training with how to attend or run meetings, how to carry your self in a professional meeting, and other professional skills.