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LIS 60280 Master's Portfolio

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### This I Believe Essay

It took me 12 years to finish my undergraduate degree at Northwestern University. I did well through high school, but when I got to college I was not prepared. While I was struggling through college I was diagnosed with both ADHD and autism. For me, these diagnoses helped me to understand myself and the struggles I was having. I began to understand myself and what I needed to succeed. I learned to advocate for myself. I was finally able to finish my bachelor's degree, but I didn't do it on my own. I had a supportive community surrounding me both within the university and outside it. I was finally able to graduate with my bachelor's degree, and now I am about to graduate with my MLIS degree. These experiences have informed my values.

One of the things I value most is community. Without the support of my community, I would not be where I am today. To value community means to value creating community and supporting the communities you are part of. To be in community means acknowledging that we and others in the community are interdependent. This aligns with two of the American Library Association's (ALA's) Core Values of librarianship: service and social responsibility. The core value of service calls us to serve our communities, both our patrons and our coworkers. Working in an academic library, I can provide service to the whole university community.

The other value that relates to community is social responsibility which is described by ALA as "the contribution that librarianship can make in ameliorating or solving the critical problems of society" (American Library Association [ALA], 2019). This is another way libraries

can support the communities they are part of. We have a responsibility to our communities to advocate and educate on important contemporary issues. This leads into another important value.

Going through school with disabilities taught me the value of accessibility, which is also one of the ALA's core values: "all information resources that are provided [...] by the library [...] should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users" (ALA, 2019). This does not just mean having resources available in different formats, but also making sure our physical spaces and online spaces are also accessible. One of the things that was most helpful in achieving my educational goals was the willingness of the Accessibility Services staff at my university to listen to my needs and my ideas about how to meet them. They allowed me to use their resources in creative ways that were very beneficial to me. When it comes to accessibility, it is important to listen to the needs of individuals and of the affected communities. As an autistic person, I know what I need for a space or a resource to be accessible to me, and so do people of other types of disabilities.

Through working in academic libraries, I can live these values. I can work to support the academic community and create and promote accessibility within the library and the entire academic community.

**Reference:**

American Library Association. (2019, January). *Core values of librarianship*.

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues>