Director’s Message: Until Further Notice, Celebrate Everything

By Kathryn Carpenter

Although charming as a tee shirt slogan, bringing a certain *je ne sais quoi* to sweaty exertion in the gym, and a fine way to enjoy the endorphins engendered there post-exercise, such a determinedly positive outlook may seem irrelevant in the real world where circumstances change suddenly and irrevocably. Some things are meant to be mourned, not celebrated, and most of us view unanticipated, but significant, change as one of those things. Reorganizations and transitions, elections and newly elected officials, legal injunctions, and in Illinois, the sole state with no budget for more than a year – all have a disorienting impact when the results are a surprise, and on the surface, the outcomes are preposterous. All of them, when viewed through the default lens of effective time management, are dreadful because they are incredibly time consuming as well.

Data that tell us something that we don’t want to hear is also a mournful, not celebratory, occurrence. The sharp rise in auto accidents after a consistent downward trend for many years is troublesome. Diseases with no known cure, the data reflecting a changing physical world even when climate change itself is disputed, active terrorism, and a growing list of social breakdowns (complete with data) don’t encourage optimism.

It’s easy to overlook the positive, even when it is evident everywhere. A greater understanding of inclusion, of identity and voice, and civility in day-to-day encounters is present and noticeable, a change that isn’t always acknowledged, but also gaining momentum. Appreciation for a job done well, as well as an understanding of what effort that actually required, characterizes many workplaces today. Collaboration is gaining momentum, making silos irrelevant and even obstacles to circumvent in the way we are. In libraries, a frankly user-centered service model successfully addresses the specific goals of each user.

In health sciences libraries, the breakthroughs as well as the challenges are numerous. Libraries use future oriented, data-informed, and context-aware strategies to leverage resources to reach solutions that make sense today and seem likely to be sensible in the future as well. Maybe that is where the fun, or celebratory, outlook is best engaged – to refine mission, create services, and celebrate what we have to offer to our users, our stakeholders, and ourselves.

What do we have to lose?

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