

Gabrielle Esposito, SUNY Geneseo alum

So hello, I'm so happy to be here, to speak with you on this panel. So I'm going to talk a little bit about my experience with FUSE as an undergraduate. I have my notes here, so forgive me if I'm looking down.

But I attended FUSE in the fall of 2018, so it was the fall before my graduation. I was at the time the fiction editor at Gandy Dancer, which is SUNY Geneseo's undergraduate literary magazine. I wasn't originally on the roster to go to FUSE, but my professor Rachel Hall invited me to go, and I can never say no to Rachel, so of course I went. So the theme that year was Resilience, so there were a lot of panels on that topic, a lot of exchanging of ideas, and I remember it being all at once exhausting and exhilarating. It was an incredible experience overall because I got to meet so many different editors who were writing at the same path that I was, and you know we sat in on panels that made my brain tingle. I was introduced to material that I still actually reread today because I loved it so much, and it was just an incredible weekend of idea sharing and meeting with my peers.

So what I've done since graduation: so I graduated like I said that next season, so the spring of 2019, a couple of months after attending the FUSE conference. By the time I graduated I was pretty sold on the information science path to become a public librarian because at Geneseo there was a small internship run by the academic library, and I was fortunate enough to take part in that, so I knew that I was going to pursue that path.

So I enrolled in SUNY Albany all online which would be perfect since the pandemic hit when I was halfway through my second semester. While I was attending my master's program, I got a job as a library clerk in Beacon, New York, which is where I am now. So it was part time, so I was able to go to school as well as pay for my master's, so I didn't have to take out any loans where I was going. I found out that I loved Beacon. It was a really diverse, creative, compassionate, and aware city, where I really kind of wanted to grow my roots.

So I did my internship there and then I was finally offered the job as Head of Adult Services in July of this year. So a lot of my role consists of providing programs that enrich the lives of adults. I focus on collection development, so I do have a bit of a publishing backbone because they deal with publishers a lot through Baker & Taylor, finding what's current, what's diverse, what's needed within our community, DVD purchasing, audiobooks, I'm in charge of our digital lending collection as well. So that's kind of where my focus has been professionally.

And then outside of work, I've started running creative writing classes for other libraries. So at Somers Library I did a 12-week writing course. That was so rewarding,

because you know I worked with older adults, people who were working on their memoir or maybe they'd never written before, and they didn't have anything to write for until that workshop. So I did that, and it was incredible, and one of the women in the group has actually had a piece that we worked on together, published.

And finally, since graduating, I've also just been finding my identity as a writer, somebody who works full time, has a fiancé and an adult social life and obligations. Finding time to write and publish is something that I've been waffling with since graduation.

And finally, my experience with FUSE, and how it's kind of taken a role in the path that I've decided on. I think the biggest thing that FUSE gave me was a sense of identity and belonging, What I didn't mention in the first segment when I talked about attending FUSE as an undergraduate, was how uncomfortable it was for me, because I didn't necessarily believe that I was a student editor, and more importantly, I thought, who cares? You know? Nobody cares If you write every day. Nobody cares if you show up and does this thing because it doesn't really apply to them necessarily. But Rachel invited me to the conference, so I had somebody believing in me. So I went, and it wound up being a wonderful experience, because there's nothing quite like being in a room full of like-minded people who can teach you something and elevate you at the same time.

So FUSE was the beginning of this confidence, and it led me to keep seeking out like-minded individuals long after college and to join other organizations whose cause I can contribute to through my work as a librarian. So I'm currently a member of the Hudson Valley Digital Navigators, it's a small cohort that recently came out this year so I'm part of the second cohort. I applied and was accepted to teach people about how to use their technology, how to access low cost wi-fi plans to their provider, and how to get affordable technology. And as we speak, I'm currently at the NYLA Conference, which is the New York Library Association Conference, on scholarship through Mid-Hudson Library System. Kind of exactly like FUSE, we have panels, we have all this good stuff happening, as we move along.

So in summary, what FUSE taught me is that no matter how much you feel like what you're doing doesn't make a difference, or maybe it goes unnoticed, there are groups of people that you can seek out far beyond college that will think you're a frickin' rock star, so you just have to go out and find them. Thank you.