

Michelle Cronquist, Class of 1999

When I was at Carleton, I had no idea whatsoever what I was going to do after graduation. Junior year I started to get really worried and signed up to take some sort of career interest test that the Career Center was offering. When I met with the counselor, she asked me about my interests and ended up suggesting that I should be a librarian. I really had no idea what librarians did and had never considered that as a career option, but I kept it in the back of my mind as my fallback plan in case I couldn't figure out what to do with my life.

I had become interested in music history at Carleton and took most of the classes required for the music major, so after graduation I applied for graduate programs in musicology. I went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with the intention of getting my Ph.D., but I quickly realized that I didn't have a future in academia, so after getting my master's I applied to UNC's library school. The Career Center counselor was right; librarianship turned out to be my niche.

I started as a music cataloger at Northwestern University, and currently I'm a cataloger for the North Carolina Collection at UNC. Catalogers are the librarians who create records in the online catalog, which is kind of a thankless job because everyone thinks they just appear there by magic, but in fact there are a lot of rules that we follow in order to create consistency and make things findable. I think we're sort of like the math majors of the librarianship world--most people shudder at the thought of having to do cataloging, but there are a select few who think it's a lot of fun.

When I started writing this profile, I felt like I'd have a hard time relating what I do to having been a math major, since I feel like I've never used my major since graduation. However, I think there is a connection in that math and cataloging are both things that appeal to people who like puzzles.