

The Road Ahead

by Benjamin Oberdick

My travels along the road of lifelong learning and education will never end. I don't know if I will ever undertake a formal degree program again, but I do know that I will continue learning through my professional development activities at MSU and beyond, my travels throughout the US and abroad, and by continuing to be a voracious reader.

I love to learn new things and I still have the need, desire, and motivation to continue learning whatever I can, but now that I have two graduate degrees, I do not know if I have enough motivation left (at least at the present time) to ever fulfill my dream of attaining a doctoral degree. The high price of taking out the massive loans that would be necessary for me to finance a doctoral degree, especially because faculty members at MSU do not receive any type of tuition remission or reduction for their own educations, would make this an unattractive endeavor to me. A second big impediment to my pursuit of a doctoral degree is the fact that it has been a huge challenge for me to take just one class each semester during my time in the MAED program while also working full time at a job which requires me to work very hard (and I love it!) to achieve continuing appointment (our version of tenure) within six years. I really don't know if I have the energy or perseverance to take two or three courses each semester for multiple years to get through a doctoral program. For now, I will definitely take a break with degree programs, but who knows what time and distance may bring. For now I want to read for pleasure, learn to scuba dive, and continue to grow in my professional roles as a teacher and librarian.

Professional Learning

Since beginning my librarian job at MSU, I have been able to take advantage of many professional development learning opportunities and activities both on campus and at the state, national and international level. I love being a teacher and a librarian, and I am dedicated to continuously developing and improving my skills, knowledge and abilities in these areas. I want to be the best teacher and librarian I can be, and by continuing to attend interesting and relevant workshops and conferences in my field(s), will allow me to continue learning and growing in my job.

Travel

My first job after finishing college was as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Slovak Republic. I spent two-and-a-half-years teaching English as a Foreign Language at some village primary schools in rural north-eastern Slovakia. This was an incredible experience for me, and while I won't be able to replicate this type of immersive experience in a foreign country,

especially for that length of time, I want to start spending a large portion of my yearly vacation days travelling overseas. There are many places in the world that I want to explore and I want to get back to the type of real-life, real-world, learning that can only be done when you are in a land far away where you don't speak the language, and where you can spend your time exploring new things, meeting people very different from you, and expanding your mind and range of experiences exponentially.

Reading

One librarian stereotype that I definitely fall into is the fact that I love to read. Reading has been a passion of mine since I was 5 or 6 and my grandmother gave me a copy of the *Reluctant Dragon*. This book allowed me to magically travel to a totally different world full of knights and dragons, and made a big impression on me about the power of words and books. Over the past five years as I've been taking classes in the MAED program, I have unfortunately done much less reading for fun than I used to do. Between reading articles, books, and other things for my courses, as well as a lot of stuff for my job, I have slowed down tremendously in the amount of reading I do outside of work and class. Now that my time in this program is almost at an end, and my dossier for tenure will be submitted this summer, I plan to reignite the fire I have for reading and I will spend a lot more time reading than I have done over the past five years.