

## professional perspective

# Work Matters

featuring Karen Braeuler | School Librarian

**Name:** Karen Braeuler

**Employer:** Holy Cross of San Antonio

**Title:** School Librarian

**How long in current position?** Starting her third year

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in English, University of Texas at Austin; Master of Library Science, University of North Texas

**Personal:** 56; married 24 years to Peter Braeuler; children Jason, 20, Evan, 18



**WHAT ARE YOUR JOB RESPONSIBILITIES?** In a broad sense, this job is being a cheerleader and mentor for literacy, both the traditional

"reading" kind of literacy and information literacy — the finding, evaluation and responsible use of information. I facilitate this by gathering the tools and resources to broaden the learning of the classroom. This involves working closely with our students and collaborating with teachers on many kinds of assignments and activities from research projects to poetry slams.

**HOW DID YOU GET INTO THIS CAREER?** It's been a kind of windy road but always about information. I started out in communications and then stayed home with our kids for 13 years. During this time, I volunteered in the boys' schools, did some substitute teaching and was a Cub Scout leader. I found these experiences with education and kids interesting and rewarding. A surprise call from the principal at my son's former elementary school answered an itch to get back to full-time work. I took the job as a library assistant and liked it so much I pursued a library master's degree while working there for five years. It was great preparation for my present job as a "real" librarian.

**WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME MAJOR CHALLENGES IN THIS CAREER AND HOW HAVE YOU HANDLED THEM?** The sheer volume of information and the technology used to deliver it has

transformed library work. This can be quite overwhelming. I deal with it by keeping the focus on my users' needs and looking for those resources and tech tools that best serve them and the goals of our school. It is essential to stay current with professional development and in touch with seasoned pros in this field. I ask a lot of questions.

**WHAT IS MOST FULFILLING ABOUT THIS CAREER?** It has to be the meaning behind the words of a shy middle-school student this past year who told me, "This is the best place in the school." I try to make people feel comfortable in our library. They are truly grateful for your help, and that is rewarding. It really helps to work in a supportive and spirited place like Holy Cross of San Antonio. My coworkers are caring and fun-loving, and the kids are respectful and quite humble for teens!

**WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THIS CAREER?** By the grace of God, just getting to this point. Doing graduate studies in my 50s, after 30 years out of college, was more than an education. As it turned out, the digital nature of higher education today was the perfect preparation for a librarian in the 21st century.

**WHAT EDUCATION IS REQUIRED FOR THIS CAREER?** This job requires a master's degree in library science. In a personal way, I think it



Karen Braeuler (right) assists student Ashley Arguello.

helps to have an inquisitive nature and a love for working with people.

**WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU THE MOST ABOUT THIS CAREER?** It's not just about books; it's about the people. Also, librarians don't say "shush" anymore!

**WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THIS CAREER TO OTHERS?** This is not a career that's going by the wayside. No matter how technical it gets (and it will continue to get more so), it will always be a people job. The literacy portion will remain important whether we read from paper or a screen or a hologram, and people will always need a guide (beyond Google) for organizing and finding information. We literally have the world at our fingertips with a few keystrokes, but helping decipher it and shedding light on our human stories is what will keep libraries and librarians in business.

— compiled by jeannette mcnamee

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