



People of PROMIG

Kirsten Peninger
Program Coordinator
Otterbein University Library

People of PROMIG: How did you get started in your career?

Kirsten Peninger: I came to library work in a somewhat roundabout way. I graduated from college with an individualized degree in Global Music and Cultural Relations. I ended up moving between different jobs for a while - I was a barista, a preschool teacher, a lighting designer, a stage manager, and an office manager for an insurance company. Then a friend told me that there was an opening for a job at Otterbein's Courtright Memorial Library. The job looked interesting and far more fast-paced than my insurance job, where I was working at the time, and I've always loved libraries, so I made the switch!

People of PROMIG: What's your job title?

Kirsten Peninger: My current job title is Program Coordinator, which is the sort of title that can mean a lot of different things. In my case, it means I oversee my library's programming and marketing. I execute our programs, which can include finding guest speakers, inviting other departments or community organizations to partner with us, purchasing supplies, coordinating the logistics the day-of, etc. I also just added marketing to my job. Before I would promote our programs, but that was it. Now, though, I oversee our social media, our branding, and all of our promotional materials. Then there are all the other things: I create our displays; I work directly with our Friends of the Library by managing memberships and creating their newsletter; I assist with digital accessibility work; I manage our operational budget; and I oversee our student employees and their budget.



People of PROMIG: What do you enjoy most about your work, either as a librarian or in your specific role?

Kirsten Peninger: I love that every day I come in and it will be different than the day before. I'll be working on a new project, or researching how to do a new program, or determining the next set of marketing pieces. Nothing is ever the same, and I love that. I find it so invigorating.

People of PROMIG: What part(s) of your job are most challenging?

Kirsten Peninger: Balance. There are so many different components to my job, and sometimes they are all competing for my immediate attention. Finding a way to balance all of those components and ensure they all get quality attention can be difficult at times.

People of PROMIG: Tell me about an event you planned that exceeded your expectations?

Kirsten Peninger: I ran a program a few years back about coffee and sustainability. I contacted the owner of the local coffee shop and asked if he would share the work he's done with coffee farmers in South America. I also arranged for coffee from his shop to be served. I expected a modest turnout. It's an interesting topic, sure, but it was the middle of the semester and, in all honesty, our more "academic" programs don't tend to draw as large a crowd - even when we serve snacks! But to my delight, we had quite a large turnout and students were even engaging and asking questions of the presenters from a variety of perspectives. And everyone enjoyed a nice cup of coffee!

People of PROMIG: What do you think most people would be surprised to learn about you?

Kirsten Peninger: My sneaky answers for Two Truths and a Lie are that I've performed on Broadway (I spent a week learning from Broadway professionals when I was 16, as part of a Bravo TV program, and then we performed a show at the end of the week) and that I worked as a First Assistant Director on a film starring John de Lancie (aka Q from Star Trek) when I was 17. Those are both very weird truths that most people don't know about me.



Image courtesy Otterbein University, Westerville, Ohio

People of PROMIG: What's the best piece of advice you've ever received, career-related or not?

Kirsten Peninger: Failure is just another way of learning. So don't be afraid to fail.

People of PROMIG: Can you tell us about your involvement in *Sherlock Holmes of Baking Street*?

Kirsten Peninger: So I'm a big Sherlock Holmes fan. I'm fairly active in online communities, participating in discussions and debate in the Holmesian tradition. I also write in my spare time, including what we call pastiches (and what others would call fanfiction!) that I share in those online spaces. Someone that I know in the Holmesian sphere was working to put together a book, *Sherlock Holmes of Baking Street*. She'd read my writing online and asked if I wanted to contribute a piece for consideration. I wrote a piece about Kitty Winter, who is one of my favorite minor characters - she only appears in one story, "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client", but she makes quite the impact; my story is an exploration of what might happen afterwards. I'm really happy with my piece, and it has received a lot of positive attention since it's been published in the book. It was an excellent experience, and it's made me consider seeking publication for some of my other pieces.

People of PROMIG: We are always being asked to do more with less, and I wanted to ask you about some of your research/creative/professional work that focuses on low tech and low budget solutions to programming problems. What can you tell us about that?

Kirsten Peninger: I want to do so many programs each year, but our programming budget is limited, so I've worked to find ways to run potentially expensive programs in a cheaper fashion. I develop connections in my community and then I utilize them. I don't take advantage of those connections, but when I have a relationship with someone who might have what I need for a program, I make sure I ask: would you run a program at a discounted rate? Would you donate materials for a program? They may be willing to work with you and the realities of your budget if you are willing to ask the question. Almost all of our programs are run with donated materials from friends, family, other campus staff, and the community. It's amazing what people have at home that they no longer want and are willing to give away! And because we're often working with donated materials, that naturally leads to us doing a lot of low-tech programming. Our students need life skills, but they also need hobbies and ways to relax, which work very well with low-tech programming. We teach them how to knit with donated yarn; we teach them how to arrange flowers in partnership with a local flower farm; we show them how to create book art with discarded books from our stacks. With rest and self-care becoming a larger societal conversation, our low-tech programming is popular and needed - and cheap!