



People of PROMIG

Melissa Cox Norris
Director of Library Communications
University of Cincinnati

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

Melissa Cox Norris: I went to college with the intent of doing not-for-profit public relations. After a brief detour in the corporate world, I got a job as the first public information officer at the University of Virginia Libraries. I've been in library communication ever since.

People of PROMIG: What's your job title?

Melissa Cox Norris: Director of Library Communications, University of Cincinnati

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

Melissa Cox Norris: The variety of work I get to do in library communications stimulates both my intellectual and creative side. On any given day, I get to edit the web, write an article, design a flier, attend an event, photograph or post to social media. The opportunity to promote and inform the university community about such an important resource as the library is very worthwhile and fulfilling.

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

Melissa Cox Norris: Capacity. I am a one-woman (plus a fabulous co-op student) department providing full communication support for the entire library system, which includes ten libraries. I've managed this by being organized and efficient, thus maximizing my efforts, but I often feel as if I'm just scratching the surface on the true possibilities of my work.

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

Melissa Cox Norris: Our annual International Edible Books Festival continues to surprise me – both with the quality and creativity of the entries, but also with the outreach it generates.

Last year we had two media outlets attend and the story was syndicated on news outlets throughout the world. We've even aired on Australian TV. For such a simple event, it generates very positive outreach and engagement for the library.

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



Melissa Cox Norris: Thanks to junior high chorus, I can still sing all 50 states in alphabetical order.

People of PROMIG: Any recent project that you'd like to tell us about?

Melissa Cox Norris: One of the things I most enjoy about my job is learning about interesting and groundbreaking people who were once a part of the University of Cincinnati. Recently, I worked with a library graduate student on an article about P. Alfred Marchand, one of the first Black librarians in the Midwest and possibly in the U.S. Among his numerous achievements and the vital contributions he made to the library profession and the Cincinnati Hospital, I was struck by the importance of the information he gathered and reported as part of the hospital's annual reports – reports that are still available and accessed today. It was humbling to think that the annual progress reports I create today could be accessed one hundred years from now. It helped to put the work into proper perspective.

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

Melissa Cox Norris: Make friends with your printer (or other vendors). There have been numerous times that my printer has saved the day and gone the extra mile because of the positive working relationship we have built (I hope I do the same for them). Also, proofread backwards to find typos.

People of PROMIG: What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

Melissa Cox Norris: When I was a child I wanted to be either center fielder for the St. Louis Cardinals or an astronaut. More realistically, I've always been interested in being a book editor. I think I would love discovering and fostering new works and I've always enjoyed the editing process.

People of PROMIG: What's a project you would like to pursue if you had the resources to do it?

Melissa Cox Norris: Library exhibits are also under my purview. I wish I had the staffing, time and budget to expand these. The possibilities are endless.