

The Cloud Before and Behind You

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” (Hebrews 12:1 NIV)

As Christians, we frequently reflect on those who have impacted our faith and are part of our “great cloud of witnesses,” but we may not always reflect on those who have played a role in our professional journey. There may be the librarian who encouraged a love for reading or assisted in a difficult research project and thus sparked an interest in pursuing librarianship as a career. Perhaps a professor encouraged you to develop skills that are now second nature, or a conference speaker helped to plant an idea that has now bloomed into a useful library service. A colleague might have encouraged you to take the next step in your professional journey. Many ACL members would include fellow members, past and present, who have served as official or unofficial mentors as part of their “great cloud of witnesses.”

Recently I was reflecting on the numerous individuals who impacted my journey. I recall my school librarian who gave me permission to check out books at any time and later be a high school volunteer. I recall the library science professor who first opened my eyes to information literacy. Several professors encourage me both in the importance of the library on our campus and in their personal research, as well as encouraging me in my growth as a disciple. Numerous ACL members have mentored and encouraged via posts on our discussion list, articles in *The Christian Librarian*, and friendships developed at conference.

The encouragement we receive from others helps us to deal with the aspects of our daily lives and work that hinder us from accomplishing our goals. Budget

cuts, staff downsizing, unreasonable patrons, time constraints, and a host of other factors can too easily cause us to become entangled in problems that may lead to sin. Our response or reaction to the various individuals and circumstances we face throughout our work may easily drift into sinful attitudes or actions. The green monster of envy at another library’s databases, building, or resources frequently may rear its head as well. However, students and staff who work in the library have a front row view of our response to these hindrances. Are they seeing a race and a career that is run with perseverance or a life that is bogged down by disappointment?

Whose “great cloud” are you in? Who are the people in your life you are taking time to pour into, mentor, and encourage? Every patron who comes into the library provides the opportunity to demonstrate Christ’s love by providing excellent service and assistance in locating needed information. Are the student workers and staff seeing an example of the joy of serving the Lord and others? When visiting alumni come by to say hello while on campus, there is a good chance they consider you as part of their cloud. Are you taking the opportunity to share your firsthand experiences of turning hindrances into innovative services through conference presentations, articles, and discussion list posts? When we face the struggle of circumstances that hinder us, our “great cloud of witnesses”—past, present, and future—serves to remind us of why we continue to serve as librarians.

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