THE COLLECTIVE

March 11-13, 2020 | Knoxville, TN

The Librarian Returns To Work After Illness or Injury: Surviving At Work When You Are Busy Actually Surviving

Convenor(s):

Alex Gallin-Parisi (she/her), Instruction Librarian, Trinity University

Ashlee Brown (she/her), Reference Librarian, Kenton County Public Library

Jill Cirasella, Associate Librarian for Scholarly Communication & Digital Scholarship, CUNY Graduate Center

Brief Description of Program:

When a librarian returns to work after an extended medical leave for a serious illness or injury, there is rarely a known set of abilities, weapons, tools, or spells. The librarian is forced to renegotiate relationships with other adventurers as well as relearn the librarian's own personality traits and ideals. It can be a lonely journey...

In this roundtable discussion, brave adventurers – err, librarians who have returned to work after an extended medical leave – will gather in a safe space, discuss how we survived our individual returns-to-work, and create a map for future adventurers. Please be prepared to share as much or as little as you'd like, keep others' stories confidential, and help contribute to a working document of best practices to help those who come after us.

Tags:

Estimated Session Attendance: 8

NOTES FROM SESSION

- Session will follow Chatham House rules:
  - **When** a meeting, or part thereof, is **held** under **the Chatham** House Rule**,** participants are free to use **the information** received, but neither the

identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

- ○ Respect privacy of all individuals in session

Covid 19 update:

CDC has stated employers should NOT require doctor's notes from employees who have to stay home during pandemic.

- Important things to consider before going on medical leave
  - ○ Who is point person on campus (not supervisor, but person who decides if it is FMLA- Family Medical Leave Act, how individual will be paid, etc)
  - ○ Consider how much information you want to remain private. What do you want students, colleagues, liaisons, to know about your condition or reasons for leave
  - ○ When does FMLA year start? Varies between institutions, may not follow fiscal or academic year. For some, the year starts when you start leave. Some institutions require FMLA to be used concurrently with accumulated sick leave, some require person to use sick leave first. Some institutions ask that you start FMLA process immediately, some have you wait until
  - ○ Your leave may not be over when initial issue is resolved. You may have related issues, complications, take the time to mentally & emotionally prepare for possible complications

- Helpful considerations from supervisor and/or institutions
  - ○ Established weekly meetings, allowed for less miscommunication, conversation about what supervisor was willing to allow that perhaps the institution wouldn't

- - supervisor may be willing to make unauthorized accommodations
    - Allow person to determine how much they can do when they get back, even if it means they are doing the bare minimum
    - Can be nerve-racking to not have special accommodations in writing, but supervisor may allow more than institution, or institution may give accommodations that they cannot put in writing
  - Anonymous google doc will be created to gather information about your institution's policies, as well as questions people have about leave and returning to work after leave.
    - Please do not identify institutions except in broad terms (i.e. school library, R1 institution, etc)
    - Alex will input information if attendees do not want to use google doc.

Questions
- Consider how you would like the messaging surrounding your leave to be navigated. How do you want people to respond to you? Do you want sympathy? Do you want it not to be mentioned?
- What can be done if your department HR is ineffective, but your institutional HR insists that you must only work with department HR?
- What can be done if you are given undocumented accommodations, but it negatively affects your performance review?
- How much information do you want people to know & how much information needs to be made public in order for your department to function.