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On Being a New Voice, A New Everything

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ON BEING A NEW VOICE, A NEW EVERYTHING BY GERALDINE KALIM

I am a new librarian, a new University of Georgia (UGA) employee, a new/returning resident of the state of Georgia, and a new mother.

I am not sure for how long I get to say that I am a new mother, but with a fourteen-month-old son, I am wondering if parenting ever stops feeling new? So far it seems all new, all the time. This constant newness in my personal life (Yesterday, he said "dog"! Today, he bit me!?) is not unlike the constant newness in my professional life (Yesterday, I learned MailChimp! Today, I am co-teaching!). It can be demanding, draining, and discombobulating to be new. But, if I was being honest—I would have to admit that I enjoy it.

When I started to consider switching careers to law librarianship, one aspect of the profession that spoke to me was the notion of being a lifelong learner. Maybe this is cliché, or maybe it is true that someone who wants to be a lifelong learner can do so in any profession. As lawyers, we are subject to CLE (continuing legal education) requirements. Lives depend upon doctors being lifelong learners. I think as librarians, we adopt this mindset at a deeper level. What more tangible atmosphere of growth is there than a library? The librarian is the lifelong learner, and the library is the setting for a lifetime of learning. Each day, we get to seize something new, as do our patrons.

Because it can be unnerving to be new, one way to channel that anxiety is to read every book on pregnancy followed by every book on taking care of a baby, just as an example. My on-campus interview at UGA was my first overnight trip away from my son, but I similarly channeled that apprehension into reading everything the library director had ever published. As I was preparing to start the student services librarian role a few months later, wrapping things up in my previous faculty services position, selling our house, and planning our move presented some roadblocks in my quest to overprepare for my new role in a new library. Instead of trying to read every article ever published on the topic of student services, I chose instead to simply learn about being new.

I first read the *AALL Spectrum* article "[Creating Successful Workplace Transitions](#)" by Andrea Alexander (July/August 2019). It was valuable to consider my onboarding process from the perspective of my supervisor and colleagues. I have tried to remember that onboarding occurs on top of everyone's usual full-time duties, which made me feel extra grateful for welcome lunches, afternoon tea on my first day, and many lengthy formal and informal conversations. This article also helped me distinguish between when I need to ask questions versus when I may learn more through observation.

That fantastic article referred me to another useful article from the November/December 2018 *AALL Spectrum*, "[Reference Desk: Making the Transition](#)." While I was fortunate to be moving from one academic law library to another, I was changing roles. I have taken the advice from this article of joining my new local AALL chapters and joining a new SIS more relevant to my new position. Advice that seems so simple—remember names—can be so challenging in the moment; however, I quickly realized that passing someone in the hallway whose name you know can go a long way to feeling at home and building confidence in a new setting.

Both at home and at work, I am starting to embrace and even enjoy the enthusiasm, excitement, and even terror that comes with being new at something, or everything all at once.

About AALL New Voices: [AALL welcomes members to share their reflections on any component of law librarianship!](#)