

SPOTLIGHT

Kristin Elliott Library Page, Sprague Public Library



Carol Abatelli

As soon as she turned 16, Kristin Elliott went right down to the Sprague Town Hall to ask for a job. Fortunately for Sprague Public Library, town grant writer Penny Newbury recognized Kristin's potential and worked with Norwich Youth & Family Services to secure Summer Youth Employment funding through the Eastern CT Workforce Investment Board. Thus, Kristin began work as a page in July 2006, splitting her time between duties at the library and at the town's Parks & Recreation Department.

At the time, Library Director Barbaranne Warner had been at Sprague only a little over three months. The library, which occupies several rooms in a charming old stone gristmill on Main Street, had just been renovated with a new carpet, pine shelving and a coat of colonial blue paint.

Kristin joined a staff of two part-time library professionals—the director and her assistant—and two other pages, one grant-funded like herself and another who was working a few hours a week on the town budget. Like the other pages, Kristin started out shelving library books. "Shelving was easy," she says, "because I remembered the Dewey Decimal system from fifth grade."

In no time at all, Kristin began learning the circulation functions of the library's Athena system, moving on next to those of the reQuest ILL system. "She was so eager to learn," Barbaranne recalls, "and I so needed the help!"

By the fall of 2006, Kristin, then a high school senior, was designing library displays and offering a bedtime story hour for local children on Thursday evenings. Over the winter, she began to assist with cataloging, downloading records from iCONN's catalog and adding them to the library's system.

"Kristin does everything," Barbaranne says admiringly. "She's not really a page."

"Everything" includes answering reference questions from library patrons, teaching them to search the iCONN databases, and offering patrons suggestions for books to read. The library serves about 3,000 Sprague residents, including the villages of Baltic, Versailles, Hanover, and Occum (part of Norwich),



In January 2007, Kristin Elliott spoke to legislators in Hartford about the merits of the Summer Youth Employment Program, urging them to continue funding for the program that has supported her work at Sprague Public Library.

with about 2,000 registered borrowers. The collection is just under 11,000 volumes.

"We've had many people come into our library recently," says Kristin, "because it is now a nicer place to come. We've had a considerable rise in interest in the library because of the staff and their openness to the community."

Earlier this year, Kristin learned that funding for the Summer Youth Employment Program was in jeopardy. In an effort to save the program, she spoke about its merits to a group of legislators in Hartford. Her talk on January 31, 2007 was filmed and later televised on a local station.

Fortunately, funding for the program was secured, and Kristin again worked for the library and the recreation department over the past summer. This fall, she is splitting

her time between Sprague PL and the town's Catholic high school, the Academy of the Holy Family, where she assists Sister Rosemarie Vacca in the library on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The academy's library collection of somewhere between 4,000 and 8,000 volumes recently was moved to the school from the old fire department. Kristin's knowledge of Dewey is again proving useful as she unpacks the books and arranges them on the shelves.

Back at Sprague PL, Kristin is now the advisor for the library's Teen Advisory Group (TAG), which seeks donations from local businesses for library activities. When I spoke with her in late September, the group was creating a haunted house to raise funds to buy more computers for the library. (They buy second-hand machines and the town's computer guru configures them for service in the library.) Kristin estimates that TAG might raise \$200 from the event.

In September, Kristin enrolled at Three Rivers Community College, where she is taking library and other courses. Her goal is to become a special education teacher. After Three Rivers, she plans to attend Western Connecticut State University.

As one might guess, Kristin is an avid reader. She especially enjoys nonfiction and likes to read about special education, her chosen field. She also very much enjoys photography and takes photographs of "anything and everything, but especially people." She is a "people-watcher" who is fascinated by seeing people in adjacent spaces wrapped up in their own worlds, doing entirely different things.

Where Kristin gets time to do so many things so well is anybody's guess. She will work at Sprague PL on her grant for the remainder of the academic year. The thought of her leaving for WCSU is probably a lot scarier for her library friends than TAG's Halloween haunted house! Members of the library profession can't help but hope that she will reconsider her decision to become a special education teacher and become a librarian instead. However, let's wish Kristin the best no matter what path she decides to take. She is making a terrific contribution to her library and her town and will no doubt make a valuable contribution to whatever field she chooses to enter.

Carol Abatelli, head of collections & electronic services management, Smith Library, ECSU

Creating a Social OPAC

November 8

Registration 9:30 a.m., Program 10:00 –1:00

Farmington Library

Library innovators John Blyberg (Darien PL) and Kate Sheehan (Danbury PL) share their experiences with integrating user content into the local OPAC. Kate is the first person to link "LibraryThing" to a local OPAC (cat.danburylibrary.org). John pioneered the "SOPAC" (social OPAC) in his work at Ann Arbor District Library (www.aadl.org/catalog). Sponsor CLA Technical Services Section
Registration Contact Priya Rai, rai@ccsu.edu