

**James Madison University**

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**From the Selected Works of Brian Flota**

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## Illuminate Illinois: Brian Flota

Brian Flota, *James Madison University*



Available at: [https://works.bepress.com/brian\\_flota/11/](https://works.bepress.com/brian_flota/11/)

## **Illuminate Illinois: Brian Flota**

Posted on 18 September 2013.

### **What are you up to these days?**

In August, 2013, I became the English Librarian at James Madison University (JMU) in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

### **How did you get there?**

Prior to working at JMU, I attended the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). While there, I was a graduate library assistant at both the Illinois Fire Service Institute's Library and the University's Literatures and Languages Library.

### **What advanced degree/s do you have? Any comments on how that fits with your work or goals today?**

I received my Ph.D. in English from The George Washington University in 2006 and just recently earned my M.S. in Library and Information Science from UIUC in May, 2013. My current position combines my strength in teaching and research from my previous career as an English professor with the skills I acquired as a special librarian while at UIUC.

### **If you met a total (professional) stranger, what's your elevator pitch? What do you think your clients value most about working with you?**

My job as a librarian is to serve the scholarly aims of JMU, especially its English Department's students and faculty. The fact that I bring with me to this position a Ph.D. in English gives me credibility with the faculty and makes me relatable.

### **Are you in the job today that you thought you would be 10 years ago? What was something you were doing then that influenced your eventual career path?**

Ten years ago, I thought I was either going to be a novelist or an English professor. As I was working on my dissertation proposal, and otherwise working on scholarship to make me become increasingly familiar with library resources—especially archives, special collections, interlibrary loan, and databases—I became constantly reminded of the value of libraries.

### **What's the thing few would suspect about you?**

Though I have been in 37 of the 50 United States, I have yet to travel outside the borders of this country.

### **What is your favorite library or information center that you have ever visited or worked in? Favorite in Illinois?**

The Main Reading Room at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC still inspires awe in me. One word of advice: try not to cough or sneeze in there. The

echo is intense! In Illinois, I enjoyed working at UIUC's Rare Book and Manuscript library. There was just so much neat stuff in there.

**How have you participated in SLA Illinois and what has it meant to you personally and/or professionally? What chapter volunteer roles might you be interested in taking on?**

I was the winner of the 2013 SLA Conference Graduate Stipend. This was an invaluable experience. While there, I networked with fellow SLA Illinois Chapter members. You can read about my experience at the conference on the SLA Illinois website. At UIUC, I was an active member of SLA's student chapter.

**How can we connect with you?**

I can be found on Twitter: @BrianFlota.