

## Debbie Morrow: “Liberal Arts Nerd at Heart”



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Debbie Morrow has a long history of working in libraries that started during her undergraduate days at Earlham College, a small liberal arts institution. As a sociology/anthropology major, Morrow worked as a student employee in her college library. Although initially interested in pursuing a higher degree in anthropology, she soon realized that was not the right path for her. Morrow took a staff position in the Northwestern University Libraries while deciding her next move. Morrow was captivated by the rapidly evolving technology as computers gained popularity as library management tools, which led her to pursue a Masters in Library and Information Science from University Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She began her professional career as a librarian in 1984, at Michigan Technological University, supporting library systems and technical processes.

Morrow eventually took a position at Grand Valley State University as a Systems Librarian where she could continue to leverage her self-taught skills and knowledge about library technology. She started in 1991, and has worked for University Libraries ever since in a variety of roles. In 2009, she became the liaison librarian in the areas of computing and information systems, engineering, mathematics, occupational safety and health, and statistics, and as of the 2018 - 2019 academic year, has taken on physics as well. Although her formal education is not in those areas, Morrow’s 20-

plus years of library systems experience and love of learning has served her well working across an array of STEM disciplines.

In 2017, Morrow was recognized by University Libraries colleagues with the Library Excellence Award, which is awarded to a faculty or staff member who goes above and beyond their job description. Colleagues appreciated Morrow’s mentoring and extensive knowledge of the Libraries’ context and history. A nominator stated, “As a new librarian, the background she shared about Grand Valley State University, the Libraries, and faculty processes helped me find my footing quickly.”

For Morrow, the best part of being a librarian is “any occasion when I can be an advocate for faculty and students in my liaison departments. I’m not here to tell people ‘no we can’t do that,’ I’m here to help find a way.” She strives to be present for students and faculty, wherever that might be. Morrow regularly holds office hours at the School of Engineering on the downtown campus and feels being available in their departmental spaces has sparked many casual conversations that have led to new and exciting collaborations.

Morrow describes herself as a “liberal arts nerd at heart”. Her personal belief in the value of liberal arts education helped shape her career and continues to inform her dedication to helping students, faculty, and staff be successful.