

## **Beyond the Stacks, Episode 11: Interview with Jennie Rose Halperin**

**Derek:** Hello and welcome to Beyond the Stacks: Innovative Careers in Library and Information Science. I'm your host Derek Murphy and I'm here today with Jennie Rose Halperin.

Jennie is the Communications Manager for [Creative Commons](#). She is a veteran of both Mozilla and O'Reilly Media, where she worked on product, community, user experience research, and growth marketing. From 2006-2013, Jennie worked in a variety of museums and archives, including a feminist Zine Library, a medical library, an Appalachian folk music archive, and an Animal Anatomy Theater in both the United States and Germany. In 2014, Jennie served on the SCHOSS (Supporting Cultural Heritage Open Source Solutions) working group and has spoken and written widely on open technology solutions, user experience, and community development in the cultural heritage and publishing sectors. She lives in Jamaica Plain currently.

Hi, Jennie.

**Jennie:** Hi, Derek.

**Derek:** Hey, thanks for coming on.

**Jennie:** Thanks so much for having me.

**Derek:** So I wanted to start out talking about your educational background. I'm curious to know kind of how you got to the MLS and where you obtained it?

**Jennie:** So I got my undergraduate degree at Barnard College in 2010. While I was there I worked in the [feminist Zine library](#) the entire time I was there with Jenna Freedman. After my degree, which was in American Studies, I worked for a few months, maybe 10 months with a scholar named Aaron Fox who is at Columbia in the ethno-musicology department. And I worked on a collection of Appalachian music by a specific musician named [Bascom Lamar Lunsford](#). So sort of the combination of working in the feminist Zine library and archive and um, working with Aaron to really preserve and champion the work of this folk musician plus the research fellowship at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky...that really convinced me that the right step for me next would be library school and I was applying for a lot of library jobs at that time, this was right when I graduated college, it was difficult for me to find something full time that I really wanted to do so I chose to go to the University of North Carolina because I received the Carolina Academic Libraries Associates Fellowship to work in the university archives. So I was at UNC Chapel Hill for a year and then I took a year off and I did a Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange fellowship in Germany, in Berlin and Cologne. That professional fellowship is run

through the US government to encourage sort of international professional exchange between the United States and Germany. Then I came back for a semester and I finished up my degree. In December of 2013, I started at Mozilla on an [Outreach Fellowship](#). And worked there for about a year. Then moved on to O'Reilly, which was then Safari, Safari Books online. And I started at Creative Commons back in May.

**Derek:** Nice, awesome. So why did you choose to get your masters in library and information sciences. It sounds like you had some great experiences working in archives and libraries while you were in undergrad. And were there other reasons that compelled you, like this is the degree for me?

**Jennie:** So it was mostly my particularly incredible experiences in undergrad working in the library, the Zine library at Barnard is a special place; it's unlike any other library I've ever seen. One of the things that makes it really incredible is that it's a combination lending library and archive. It sort of bridges the gap between these two different ways of dealing with primary source materials that I find really interesting. And also, you know, Jenna really cultivates a space that is inclusive and welcoming and DIY and radical. And you know, I got to spend 20 hours a week during the school year and then 40 hours a week during the summer just reading radical feminist zines. It was amazing!

**Derek:** That's fantastic. Yeah, wow!

**Jennie:** I mean it was just incredible. So I really loved working there. Then when I started, sort of, experiencing archives, in particular as a researcher, I was really drawn to the work of archives and to the work of libraries. And one thing that was actually really surprising and I know in my bio it said that I worked mostly in museums and archives and that's true. But one thing I learned while I was at library school was just how much I loved reference and how much I loved working in libraries even though I had mostly archival experience. Archival reference in particular was something that I really discovered when I was in grad school as sort of this great fit where you got to do all the interesting research questions and help people. But also got to work in archives and really work with the materials.

One job I had in grad school that was really transformative for me was I got to work also with NC Knows. I had that kind of as one of my grad school jobs and that also really taught me how much I loved reference.

**Derek:** So that's reference over the Internet, right?

**Jennie:** So it was chat reference.

**Derek:** So people go on to the library website and it's kind of like an instant messenger type set-up and they can talk to you there?

**Jennie:** Totally. So when it says chat with us, we're at your library, chat with us. Very often, not always, but often, it's actually not at the library because most reference questions can be answered remotely with access to the various library databases. And so, I did a few shifts every week answering reference questions. It was wonderful. I actually miss it sometimes, I think about much I'd love to still be answering reference questions.

**Derek:** That's cool. When you were going to grad school, how did you envision the degree aiding your eventual career goals?

**Jennie:** That's a good question...I really wasn't sure. I think one thing that happened when I first came in, was I remember sitting down with Lisa Norberg, who at that point ran the, was the head of the Barnard library. She was really helpful in helping me get the CALA. She used to work at UNC and she said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "I want to be an archivist." And she said, "You know, most people, or a lot of people when they come in they so 'I really want to be an archivist' and by the time they leave they have a very different idea of the thing they want to do."

I guess for me, I really wanted to be involved in the work of archives, and in the work of museums in particular. I became very interested in the politics of display and digital mapping and digital humanities and scholarship and critical theory, which is one of the things that I really focused in on when I was in Germany. Because I was also going to classes while I was interning at this department of the library, called *das Tieranatomisches Theater* which is the animal anatomy theater.

**Derek:** I was very curious about that from your bio.

**Jennie:** So basically, I worked in a history of science archive but very little with the actual materials, mostly with translation work and in the display of this new museum space, called *das Tieranatomisches Theater* which is a [Langhans building](#) that had recently been renovated and I got to work with an art history class to create kind of a radical museum space within it. I got to work with a class making an audio guide. I got to do a lot of translations. I gained a lot from that experience, obviously, but I think one thing that the degree really gave me was a lot of time. I had a lot of time to explore, to try different jobs out. Different ways of working in libraries. Different ways of thinking about libraries. And honestly, for me, moving into the space that I moved into...it wasn't what I thought I was going to do at all. I umm...A lot of it was happenstance and a combination of luck and tenacity. But I didn't really, I mean, if you told me when I first started library school that this is what I would be doing, I would have been so surprised because I really thought I was going to go into a more traditional museum curation, archival position. But I think one thing that I discovered very quickly was that a lot of the work around libraries is really interesting to me; so a lot of the work on licensing, and open source and open access and the technology around it. Sort of the metrics and the data and the thinking broadly about libraries, sort of what you call in tech the "product side" of it, is what was really interesting to me. The actual day-to-day work

of cataloging and sort of database maintenance and even the sorting through, you know, archival boxes...for me, that was just less captivating. Museum work remains a huge fascination for me and a huge interest for me. And one of the things I love about working with Creative Commons is that I really do get to work with museums, and libraries and archives who are concerned with and working actively to improve the politics of display.

**Derek:** Absolutely. Very cool. While you were in library school getting that degree, what were some of the coolest projects or experiences that you were able to have?

**Jennie:** So one thing that immediately came to mind when I heard this question was that I got to be involved with a digital mapping project at UNC that at the time was, to be really frank, done with this kind of strange technology and we were really just kind of just feeling it out in terms of the technology we would be using and if I were to do it all again I would use a completely different stack, I would have, you know, managed it very differently and I think so would the professor who had worked with us. But it taught me a lot about my lived environment where I was living in North Carolina at the time. The project itself was amazing. We were working with historic maps and historic phonebooks and historical documents and videos through Digital North Carolina to try to map out the displaced people in Durham when the highway came through.

**Derek:** Ahhh.

**Jennie:** Because one thing that the housing authority had done that was extremely unique and very strange was that they photographed every single house that was moved or evicted or changed or torn down.

**Derek:** Wow!

**Jennie:** There were often people in the photos; it was very strange and kind of uncanny. That project I got to present at Duke that year and it was wonderful. I mean, that was a project that really stood out for me. I guess through my work, one thing that I got to do that I really liked was, I believe it's still up was that I put up a pretty large exhibit about the history of North Carolina's libraries called Knowledge Buildings, it might have come down by now, but it stayed up through the time I was in grad school. It was supposed to be up for 2 months but it was up for like, 3 or 4 years.

**Derek:** That's great when that happens.

**Jennie:** Yeah! But, you know it was my first time kind of thinking about and conceptualizing and drawing out the ways that a historic exhibit which I had done work on in undergrad because I worked a lot with public histories in undergrad, I did an internship at StoryCorps and took two or three classes on public history. I have always been really drawn to public history and the ways in which history is

displayed. So I got to create this exhibit and I pretty much had free reign and a small budget. And you know, I held a contest of photographs of the libraries and I did a lot of research and I can tell you about the historical periods of library construction and that was also really very fun. I had a great time with that project.

Again, my position as a chat librarian was always, always rewarding. And then by the time I was ready to go, I had sort of switched a lot of my research interests to be about technology and open source technology and librarians and how they learn programming and these kinds of things. I really got a pretty broad swath.

Also because I went to Germany halfway through, and didn't actually end up doing the second year of the CALA, I left the CALA to go to Germany. I got to work on a lot of really interesting projects there, including the ones I mentioned. But also I was on a working group on the history of science and museum studies. And I also got to do a lot of readings of Friedrich Kittler and Flusser through another working group that I was apart of. So that was all like I was on a reading group for Kittler.

So the reading group that I was apart was apart of this class I took, which you know was incredible, it was one of the best classes I ever took and you know, I don't know if this kind of class would ever be offered in the US but it was called *Programmieren als Kulturtechnik* and it was this weird class where we spent the first half reading critical theory of programming and then the second half of the class, programming in Perl. Which was a strange choice and I later spoke to the professor and he was like we should have taught Python! And then I was like well you know, *[laughs]* Perl was fun.

And so that was great and then they had the *Kulturwissenschaft* department at Humboldt, where I was studying, had a reading group after. And then through my job at the history of science archives, or really, it was really the Humboldt Universität or University Archives. They invited me just sort of as a participant in this working group to just be able to participate and choose a few articles about museum studies and the history of science in the US. And so I got to do a lot of reading, did a lot of reading in German and in English and it was international so there was a few French academics, my supervisor who was a German academic and then me. It was really fun and there were some write-ups of the kind of work we were doing on our website still.

**Derek:** Awesome, that sounds like a really enlightening experience.

**Jennie:** It was unlike anything I've ever done and it really opened up my perspectives of what one could do in library science.

**Derek:** Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, studying abroad in grad school for LIS seems like a very interesting experience. A chance to really get outside of the norm I suppose. Simmons has a trip to Korea that they do every year.

**Jennie:** Yeah, so UNC has a trip to Prague I think and I think just to Prague and it's very expensive. So the reason I went abroad was because I had decided at the beginning of my grad degree that studying a foreign language would be helpful to me. And so I chose German and I chose German for a strange reason, which is that Yiddish was one of my languages in college and UNC unsurprisingly did not offer Yiddish.

**Derek:** Right.

**Jennie:** So I took German instead. And also, because you know I was interested in international travel and I knew that it would be a way that I could possibly that I could possibly get a grant to travel internationally if I knew German. I took a semester of German and I got an email maybe in October that was about this fellowship and I was at the time I think I was 24 and you had to be under 25 to do it. And I figured it was my last year to be able to do it. And I or maybe I was 23 anyway I figured it was my last year to do it and so I applied without really thinking about what that would mean and then when I was accepted I had to do a lot of thinking. Which was that I was working in the University archives. The CALA program is pretty unheard of within library science you get a stipend and full tuition there were only 5 of us that year and my job at the university archives was allowing me to do things like museum curation and there was some flexibility within it but I had a strong interest in museums and archival reference and I didn't have the kind of flexibility that I wanted. I realized that if I spent another year doing that fellowship in particular which I didn't choose I was sort of placed I would have 2 years of experience in a field that I didn't want to go into which was records management.

**Derek:** I see, yeah.

**Jennie:** So I decided, it was a really difficult decision. Barbara Wildemuth the dean of the library school was instrumental in helping me make this decision and we sat down and we talked it through. My advisor, Rich Marciano, was also very helpful. We talked the whole thing through and I decided that it would be too good of an opportunity to turn down and it was a full year and I would still get credits so I think I got 8 credits. But it's very much outside of the norm. It's not... It was not something that I expected to do and it was also not something I've heard of many people doing other than myself.

**Derek:** Indeed. Well that's awesome. So in your professional career now what have been some of the most exciting experiences you've been able to have in your very varied positions that you've worked?

**Jennie:** [laughs] Oh! There have been so many so you know as much as I really love my work and I really love working at Creative Commons but I think the most incredible thing is still the first thing that happened when I started working which is that I applied for the Outreachy fellowship which used to be the GNOME Outreach for Women Program. So I got this now called Outreachy fellowship because I applied

to be on the Community Building at Mozilla which had just been created and I was biking home from a class and they called me. They were like “We want you to come to San Francisco! You got the internship! We haven’t even emailed you yet!”

**Derek:** Wow!

**Jennie:** I was like “Oh my gosh!” and I was so excited and I had to reschedule all my finals so that they could take them before I left. My art history professor was not happy. He was like, “This is your job...being a student.” I was like, “I have to go, I have to go do this!” And so um I finished my databases final on the plane to San Francisco. I honestly never experienced anything like I first experienced at Mozilla was this huge international group of people all getting together to work on open source together and talk about the issues that surround open source and the issues that surround the community at Mozilla at particular. Doing swat analyses. The offices were beautiful and I was at this hotel and it was incredible. And I have never...It was a really amazing experience for me and it was, again, not what I expected to have happen and I still remember that feeling of just being like, “Wow I’m in a very different world than I was when I was in libraries.” So that was amazing.

Another amazing thing that happened also while I was at Mozilla was that I got to talk to 1000 of the top publishing executives in Europe at a conference called Future Book about sort of open source and what the future of publishing might look like. And that was really interesting. So a lot of the experiences have been the most, I guess, the most on the surface interesting to me, have been a lot of the travel experiences that I had, which have been pretty extensive due to the nature of the kind of work I’ve been doing. But sort of on like, you know, a small scale I remember when I first started doing user experience research for Safari Books when I was working there and I started doing the research and started looking at what doing user experience research meant and it felt like a whole new world had opened up to me.

**Derek:** Yeah.

**Jennie:** I was like these are my librarian skills.

**Derek:** Mhmm.

**Jennie:** These are the skills I learned in library science. These are the skills of database searching and organizing information and talking to people and gathering interviews and writing up requirements. These were all the things that I really learned in grad school or maybe that I cultivated in grad school and now I can use them in my work. So, sort of on a small scale, as much as traveling around and giving talks on open source is really cool. What was really amazing for me was to start doing research and realizing that my degree had use, you know? That it wasn’t just this random series of steps that I fell into.

**Derek:** Definitely, you were able to apply it. And what does user experience research look like at a publishing company? Like what kind of systems were you studying?

**Jennie:** What happened was my team got dissolved after about a year at Mozilla or it got changed around a lot and I left. So then, I started working for Safari Books Online and because I had a huge number of sort of disparate generalist skills and not a lot of product experience, they hired me as what was called a Product Engagement Manager which was just a sort of made up term that my supervisor and I made up to refer to like community management and I did a lot of writing, I did a lot of editing of surveys of social media posts. Safari Books Online, which a lot of librarians know from the classic product, and has a new product and actually, I don't really know where the state of the product is right now. But they just launched this new product so we needed to do pretty traditional user experience research on what it would like for people to be using their product. Why people flipped, why they didn't flip. I used all different kinds of tools. I used interviews, screen grabs, and product walkthroughs, and usability tests and sort of all of the things you use when you do user experience research and I feel like that experience of doing so many interviews and of talking to people, that was really where I saw the skills that I cultivated in grad school come up a lot.

**Derek:** That's awesome. I'm pretty hyped about user experience research myself as a career path for librarians. I think it's a natural fit. I think more and more people are recognizing that - that a library degree can lead you down that path and really prepare you for it.

**Jennie:** Yeah, totally. I think one of the things that the MLS does prepare you for is to be actively engaged in the act of qualitative and quantitative data analysis. I think there is this sort of misconception that librarians were these secret programmers who really wanted to learn how to program. But really where I think librarians, who I know at least, not everyone obviously, but a lot of the librarians I know, find their niche is within the research methods of sort of lighter qualitative/quantitative data analysis. So, for me that meant using learning everything I learned about surveys in my research methods class, which to be very honest was not a lot. Also, to draw back on my research interview kinds of skills that I had learned. I gave a presentation actually last year at the ALA about why librarians were particularly suited to do user experience research.

**Derek:** Oh fantastic!

**Jennie:** Yeah, I can't remember what it was called. But I was saying that I felt like user experience research was a lot easier than a lot of the research that you do in grad school, where you have to do the IRB, you have to do all this stuff and really user experience research is this sort of like playground for people who like to do research where get to kind of like get to mix all these different methods and do



qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis, and you know, like use your SQL skills, and pull charts and use Excel and use all these things, it's fun. If you like research, then it's fun. Which I think a lot of us do this.

**Derek:** Most definitely. So for those who might be listening who might not be so familiar with Creative commons, could you kind of, like, sum up Creative Commons, like what it is?

**Jennie:** Sure. So, Creative Commons is a suite of licensing tools to help people simply license their work. So, rather than relying on traditional copyright models, Creative Commons allows you to kind of choose and stay in control of how you as a creator want your work to be licensed. And the thing about Creative Commons is that it inspires a lot of gratitude because the licensing suite also creates a way to provide your work to sort of a global commons, to sort of a global collection of creativity and sharing and it's pretty ubiquitous across the web. And it was really started because it's clear that copyright as it is traditionally construed doesn't work for the web.

**Derek:** I would agree.

**Jennie:** You know? Content is shared, it moves around, it gets changed, it's remixed, it's...and that's what's exciting about the web, right? That's what's so interesting about the Internet...that's one of the many things that's so interesting about the Internet. But what Creative Commons does is it provides a way for people to say, "Hey this is mine. But also use it, like reuse it, remix it, change it." So that's sort of on a creative level but it's also been invaluable and widely used in open educational resources and in open science and the open access movement and those are the kinds of advocacy areas in which we're working now very, very strongly is through open access and open educational resources to really highlight why Creative Commons and champion why Creative Commons is possibly the best solution for educators and for scientists to share their work, globally, actually I won't say the best, I will say a very good solution for scientists and educators to share their work.

**Derek:** Most definitely.

*[Both laugh]*

**Derek:** So uh could you tell us about um...I always use the royal we when I do these interviews.

*[Both laugh]*

**Jennie:** It's cool.

**Derek:** Can you tell us about um [laughs] about what you do now at Creative Commons, what kind of work you do there?

**Jennie:** Sure! So, my official title is that I'm Communications Manager for Creative Commons. I just started in May, in mid-May. I do a variety of different things and I'm still trying to figure some of that out because I haven't been there all that long. A lot of the work I do is I run interviews, sort of like this one. I do a lot of content creation; I manage all the social media with another, with our Comms team essentially. And I pull a lot of analytics which is I guess sort of a librarian-ish skill.

**Derek:** Definitely.

**Jennie:** If I really look back on the data and sort of try to figure out where, where can we have the most impact? And also a lot of community skills of you know, where is our community, what kind of content interests them, it's content curation and social media and talking to people. I kind of in a way because it's open source and because it's CC and because we're distributed and also pretty flat, like you know, one of the great things about working at CC, is sometimes you can be like I wanna do this crazy thing, I wanna see if this is gonna land, how cool this is gonna be? And a lot of the coolest projects are sort of just someone being like I think this is gonna be awesome. The other thing that I do which is not I exactly what I thought I was going to base a large percentage of my career on is that I learned, while I was at Mozilla, I learned *a lot* about email marketing and then I did a lot of that at Safari as well.

**Derek:** Mhmm.

**Jennie:** Email marketing is a topic very dear to my heart and it's not really, really, REALLY not what I thought I would be doing. But it's taught me to become a much better HTML coder.

**Derek:** Mhmm.

**Jennie:** And it's taught me a lot of CSS and it's made me very comfortable with using text editors and with using tables and kind of like how to create emails in code. And how email systems work, how systems work in general. I think one thing that librarians really bring to the table is that we have a deeper understanding of systems and usability and the ways in which people actually interact with technology than I think other technologists do.

So I do, I make a lot of content. I work with our Comms team to kind of figure out what's gonna land. What are people interested in? What are people doing? How are they using the licenses? Where are they looking, where are they going? How effective are our email campaigns? I do a newsletter every month. I run interviews, and I run articles and I do a lot of editing. I think honestly, and I've said this to my team at CC before, I think honestly if I could have thought of the job I wanted, in my life, it would have been this one. Like there's no...

**Derek:** That's great!

**Jennie:** This is my dream job.

**Derek:** That's wonderful.

**Jennie:** And one other thing that I really get to be engaged with which kind of coming from a more activist background, one of the things that I really do get to be engaged with is advocacy campaigns around open educational resources and around open science and open access and copyright. And you know, I think...I mean I guess I don't have to tell librarians that copyright is fascinating. It's incredibly interesting. And it might seem like maybe like not the most important advocacy work to do. But I personally think that it's incredibly important and that it touches so many aspects of our lives.

**Derek:** It does, yeah.

**Jennie:** Not only our digital lives but also our physical lives. Another thing we've been working on lately is considering the way in which 3D printed objects are attributed.

**Derek:** Mhmm!

**Jenni:** And 3D printing is going to become such a bigger part of our lives, as you know really thinking about the ways in which they're attributed and licensed as creative objects is going to become increasingly important, I think.

**Derek:** Definitely...wow, that that is interesting. Because, I suppose copyright isn't normally used for physically objects; it's more patents, right? But a 3D object starts as a 3D file, like a modeling file.

**Jennie:** Yeah and so Creative Commons also is not, it's not used for software either; there are other compatible licenses. But, I mean I just did this really interesting interview with these people who run the [Open Building Institute](#) and they've made Creative Commons license buildings.

**Derek:** Wow!

**Jennie:** Yeah! So you know, what does a \$25,000 eco-house look like that's all openly licensed and open source and I really just encourage you to go back and read her response to the question of, you know open source is usually used for software, what does it mean to have an openly licensed building? And she goes into detail about sort of the history of open hardware and how it influences the tangible objects that are affected by copyright and open source.

**Derek:** That's so interesting.

**Jennie:** It's really, really interesting.

**Derek:** Wow that is, that is very cool. Hmm, I should mention I use Creative Commons myself.

**Jennie:** I know! That's how we met!

**Derek:** Yeah, that's right. *[both laugh]* I release, well...so I have a hobby of making films that often use found footage from mostly public domain sources or at least sources the way I use them couldn't reasonably be construed as fair use. But I find Creative Commons extremely helpful in my own practice. In terms of finding assets I can use while filmmaking like for example, I could find a Creative Commons licensed piece of music that maybe I could use...or even in this podcast, for example. But also I like to release my films under Creative Commons. I like to use the by license which means that pretty much anyone can reuse or modify or distribute my film as long as they credit me. So like you can do whatever you want with this film as long as you say I'm the one that made it.

**Jennie:** Yeah that's a very permissive and generous license to choose.

**Derek:** Yeah, yeah. Well I think it's good to be able to...it helps get your work seen. And read. And I think that's...you were talking about people using Creative Commons licensing in science or education and I think that is a place that it makes a lot of sense, right? I mean in the sciences and education, you want people to read your work, you know? Like you want to make that contribution to the scientific record or to educating people. It makes sense to remove as many barriers as you can to that access.

**Jennie:** Have you seen any surprising outcomes of using the CC by license? Have you seen any remixes? Anything?

**Derek:** My stuff is not popular enough that I could expect to have that happen, personally.

**Jennie:** Well, who knows, you never know.

**Derek:** I'm about to release a feature and I expect that's going to be more seen. The stuff that I released before was like school projects.

**Jennie:** Ok, that's cool.

**Derek:** But yeah, we'll see.

**Jennie:** But on your point on open science and open education, I think that, I mean that one thing that I find really inspiring about being a librarian and being a part of the library community even still not working in the library community, you know in

a traditional manner, is that librarians are really, really leading the charge for open access.

**Derek:** Definitely.

**Jennie:** And like that's become you know...that's not even a question any more. People think of librarians and they're like oh open access, like immediately. And I think that one thing the MLS does provide you even just by the virtue of just using the systems in a way that pretty much no one else who works with libraries does is that you do get a versing in the politics of open access and the rules of open access in a way that has actually, honestly, proven pretty invaluable to me in my work. Both as an advocate and within traditional publishing is to really understand, you know, what does it mean to openly license content? What does it mean to release something under open access? And you know, so, right before I started working at Creative Commons, our CEO Ryan Murkley released this Op-Ed in *Wired* that went pretty viral. I think the subject...the title of it was something like "You Pay for Research That You Fund With Your Tax Money."

**Derek:** Right, I mean it's a good point. I've heard that argument, too. I completely agree. Like, I mean, everyone is paying for this research, everyone should be able to read it.

**Jennie:** Yeah and so I think as an organization we are really trying to rethink that paradigm and like, you know, there are a lot of people who are doing this work also and who have been doing this work for a long time. But you know, the open access movement has seen incredible strides in the last, even in the last few years. I mean the Gates Foundation came out and said all research that we fund has to be openly licensed and you know, it's bringing these sort of traditional arcane topics out into the open and people are talking about them and seeing why it matters, you know why open science matters. Why open data matters. Why copyright matters. The TPP is another thing that's really up on the forefront where people are starting to realize that the work of open access is more important and you know, it shouldn't just be relegated to academics and librarians and scientists necessarily. It really affects everyone.

**Derek:** Yeah, I agree.

**Jennie:** Mhm. One thing that I hear a lot about Creative Commons also is that it's recognizable. It's easy to use, people understand what it means when you put it on, and I hope that that's the case, that people do understand what it means. The logo was inducted into the Museum of Modern Art.

**Derek:** Oh no kidding?

**Jennie:** Yeah!

**Derek:** Oh that's neat.

**Jennie:** Yeah, it's really a symbol of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and what copyright can be. I think one thing we haven't really talked about is some of the work I've done post grad, the post grad research I've done. That I've been doing because, well for a couple reasons. I started to do a lot of research on debt when I graduated. So I became interested in how librarians and other professional degrees work with debt. And some of that was admittedly didn't come from the most compassionate place...uh, which was that I was paying off my own debt and I started to think about if one semester cost me this much, as an out of state student at UNC, what other debt burdens are librarians holding? And another thing that I had noticed was working in tech, you know, tech has this problem right? This problem that everybody talks about all the time, where it's you know...I think the estimate two years ago, it's probably gotten a little bit better, but the estimate two or three years ago was that 90% of programmers were male.

**Derek:** Yeah, that is a definite problem.

**Jennie:** Right. And in library science there is sort of this opposite problem where 83% or 82% of librarians are women.

**Derek:** Right.

**Jennie:** And 92% are white.

**Derek:** Yup.

**Jennie:** And I began to think about how these statistics that are so often cited are possibly related. And so what I did was I gave a fairly incendiary talk at Code for Live back in 2015, I think. It was only a year ago. Then submitted a paper to Library with a Lead Pipe, about, which was called our "\$50,000 Problem" which is a conservative estimate of how much library school would cost some people. And they put me in touch with a whole other group of people who were thinking about this. And then we've met a lot of times over the last year or so and have started to form a working group called Library School Transparency. So then, for a few months this year I was unemployed and I decided to run a survey. After lots of thought on like how am I going to get these numbers? And looking around, trying to get numbers from schools. I was like you know what, I'm just gonna run a survey and see what happens. I didn't expect to get a huge response, right? You know, you run a survey on debt and think that people are like oh I don't know. In a weekend I had to actually turn it off, because in a weekend I got 1,700 responses.

**Derek:** Wow!

**Jennie:** Not to give away my data too early....and over 400 people have said that they would be interviewed for this project. I have yet to do the interviews but I'll be

doing them pretty soon. And in October, I'm submitting, I had a chapter proposal accepted in a book called *The Advances in Librarianship*. I think for me what I'd like to be working on more publically within librarianship in particular...the politics of librarianship is what the gatekeeping of the grad degree means. Because if \$50,000 is a conservative estimate of how much a librarian can expect to spend on their degree, that's outrageous. The number of graduate fellowships available to people are too low. The degree doesn't hold a lot of the kind of promise that I think a lot of people think it does when they first start. And not to sound too negative about it...I really don't want to sound negative about it. I think you know, my library degree has opened a lot of doors for me but I was also able to take that risk. I was able to take 2 years off of my life, well 3 years for me. I was able to take 3 years off of my life because I was young and I didn't have another job and I won this fellowship and that's not an option for a lot of people.

**Derek:** Right, it creates a big barrier for entry.

**Jennie:** It's gatekeeping. It's institutional, bureaucratic and also socio-economic gatekeeping. And I think that we can't talk about the issues around the MLS and the issues with curriculum and the fact that you know librarians...I think the top skill leave wanting to learn that they haven't learned is programming. We can kind of talk around these issues but really what it needs to get down to is that the MLS is a fundamentally unequal system. I really do feel that there needs to be a lot of reform around cost and fellowships and how people become librarians. You know and how people gain these kinds of positions that are salaried and stable and also on how many librarians are graduated every year. I think there are now 5700, another conservative estimate because there are 57 grad schools in the US, assuming each one graduates about 100, probably about 5700 new librarians every year. And that's probably more than there are jobs.

**Derek:** Most likely.

**Jennie:** Yeah! *[laughs]* Not to get too depressing, I do think that it's an issue that we don't always consider. And I think sometimes that particularly with the administration, it's you know, it's not always understood just how much debt a lot of these students are taking on. Particularly non-traditional students.

**Derek:** Indeed. Yeah, it's tough. It's a little sad to think about. I did actually in my position I wrote an article about debt in library school.

**Jennie:** Really?

**Derek:** Yeah, but it was just like for a blog that Simmons runs. But umm...

**Jennie:** Send it to me, I'd love to read it. That's so cool.

**Derek:** It was mostly kind of instruction manual in how to use public service loan forgiveness actually.

**Jennie:** Oh nice!

**Derek:** Because that stuff is really complicated, they do not make it clear how you actually use it. You have to dig into like 10 different documents and read all this legalese to figure it out. And I'm concerned that in 2017 when the first wave of PSL forgiveness rolls around for the first time, congress might immediately defund it.

**Jennie:** Yeah, I don't actually know that much about Public Service Loan Forgiveness. I do know that when I published the survey I had pretty disparate responses...it seemed like people were pretty far on a lot of ends of the spectrum, which really surprised me. Some people took \$120,000 in loans, some people took out like \$0 and everyone in between. Most people took out somewhere in between. Somebody came out on Twitter and was like this survey is interesting but I think I had my highest range be like: "Did you take out over \$50,000 in loans?" It might have been less, it was probably less actually, and they were like "not even close, like oh my gosh. This is...I'm so beyond that."

**Derek:** Yeah and you know people have undergraduate loans and it kind of ends up getting compounded. Having loans for two different programs – it really adds up.

**Jennie:** Yeah and I think, I think one thing that is telling is mostly like can a librarian expect to pay off their loans within the first 5-10 years of working? It's not even that there is a degree that you have to get. I do think there should be some way to prove you're a librarian. You know, the degree used to be 1 year. And we can talk about the many different reasons why that might have been expanded. But the degree was 1 year and I think most librarians find that you could learn the skills to be a librarian in one year.

**Derek:** Right.

**Jennie:** You could learn...there are a lot of classes; there are a lot of required classes in most programs that probably aren't applicable to everyone. Then there are the questions like, should there be 2 degrees? Like at UNC we had a MIS and MLS. And for me I didn't know which one I wanted. So I ended up getting a MLS. One of My closest friends ended up getting an MIS but she came in as an MLS. Other places offer a MLIS...you know, should necessarily someone like myself who is interested in technology and the issues around it, necessarily be studying with the children's librarian who might be interested in other topics. Has this profession, which is so disparate in a lot of ways and interesting because it's disparate and you know should everyone be studying together? That's another question that we ask ourselves. And if so, like what are the different, or if not, what are the different ways that we could do that? And one of the things that I've seen is that programs like, I know that UNC runs a program where if you get your undergrad then you can kind



of tack on one more year to get your masters and those kinds of programs, to me, provide a lot of, kind of hope for what librarianship could look like in the future. Because if you're paying in-state tuition and you tack on another year, and then you have a masters, you know, even for a student like myself who kind of knew I wanted to get a library degree, like you know, that's great! That's totally, that's totally something...I do think that the degree is too long and I think that there needs to be a serious look at the kinds of values that it's instilling in its students. Because the values of librarianship are fantastic!

**Derek:** Yeah, they are.

**Jennie:** They're about sharing, you know like, here I am and I work for Creative Commons which is also about sharing, and helping people and public service and just kind of...and opening up technology and all of these values are there and you know the ALA's (American Library Association) statement is inspiring, you know?

**Derek:** It is, yeah.

**Jennie:** It's this incredibly inspiring statement that all librarians supposedly agree to if they're apart of the ALA which most of us are. But, the big caveat of a but, is that the sort of stranglehold that vendors and the graduate degree which is so expensive and so difficult to obtain and the employment climate around libraries creates, I think is in congress with the values that we espouse.

**Derek:** Mhm. Cool.

**Jennie:** That's a whole other topic I went into a place that was unexpected.

**Derek:** No, it's interesting. Now before we finish, is there anything else that you want to add to the conversation anything that didn't get brought up that you wanted to talk about?

**Jennie:** Yeah, I guess, I guess one thing that I really like to talk about when I, you know, a question that comes up a lot, is should I go to library school, right? People ask me that a lot, like what did you learn in library school? I think that, for me, having a master's degree and having a master's in library science in particular, has been extremely helpful if only because it gave me some time to experience a lot of different kinds of libraries and archives and to experience a lot of different kinds of ways of seeing information and visualizing information and thinking about the world of information more holistically. I think that students can feel very frustrated with their classes a lot and I think that taking on any kind of significant amount of debt to have this degree is a choice that has to be extremely individual.

**Derek:** Mhm.

**Jennie:** I also have a lot of hope for libraries. I have a lot of hope for library degrees and librarians and fixing this. And fixing what we're beginning to see as an untenable problem within our profession because we're keeping out talented people who want to become librarians and I'm really excited for the future of libraries and I'm excited to see you know, Dr. Hayden in the new position as Librarian of Congress.

**Derek:** Yeah, I'm very excited about that. She's gonna do great.

**Jennie:** She's amazing. And I'm just excited in general to see the kinds of changes that are being made. And one quick plug that I'd like to make is that Creative Commons is starting to offer a certificate for librarians to learn the licenses and be able to teach them better.

**Derek:** That's great.

**Jennie:** So we're starting this project of Creative Commons certificates so you can become like a Creative Commons certified librarian.

**Derek:** That's nifty!

**Jennie:** Yeah, it's pretty nifty. And I just encourage everyone to kind of keep their eyes out for that project. We're gonna be talking a lot about it in the next year.

**Derek:** Great, very cool. Do you have anything you want to plug or any place that people can find your work online?

**Jennie:** Yeah, so I'm currently in the process of redoing my own website so hopefully by the time this podcast airs, it will be up again. I'm at [jennierosehalperin.me](http://jennierosehalperin.me) I'm also totally reachable via Twitter; probably the best way to reach me. My Twitter handle is [@little\\_wow](https://twitter.com/little_wow).

**Derek:** Cool.

**Jennie:** [I'm also on Medium](https://medium.com/@jennierosehalperin).

**Derek:** What's your Medium name?

**Jennie:** It's just my name. I post sort of a combination of personal essays. I also have had a couple articles that have gone quite a bit further than my own Medium. [One is a usability study of the MA unemployment system](https://medium.com/@jennierosehalperin/one-is-a-usability-study-of-the-ma-unemployment-system). It got picked up by Boing Boing a few months ago, which is kind of interesting. Then I have a few articles on email marketing that have gone like pretty far, that's always fun.

**Derek:** That's awesome, yeah.

**Jennie:** But yeah, I also am probably gonna start writing for the Boston Countercultural Compass. I have an article in there this month, that will be fun.

**Derek:** Yeah that's exciting. That'll be a good time.

**Jennie:** If you're listening to this and are interested in the issues around open licensing definitely get on our email list. I blog constantly and so do our heads of advocacy and we have guest bloggers and any kind of information about like OPEN, the Creative Commons Twitter and [blog](#) are really a good place to learn more about that and also our newsletter.

**Derek:** Fantastic! Cool. So Jennie, thanks so much for coming on, it was awesome talking to you.

**Jennie:** Thanks, Derek! This was so fun. This was also such a good way to get to know you, because like we randomly met that one time and now we get to chat!

**Derek:** For sure.

**Jennie:** Cool. Thanks!

**Derek:** Cool, thanks.

**Derek:** I'd like to close the show today with a quick note for our listeners. This will actually be my final episode as host of *Beyond the Stacks*. I started this show as part of my Dean's Fellow position at Simmons College and it is now graduation time for me. I am about to obtain my MLIS and I'll be starting my own career in librarianship. From now on, *Beyond the Stacks* is going to be hosted and edited by the new Dean's Fellow, Elizabeth Reilly. She is extremely talented and I'm pretty excited to see where she takes the show next. I'm really, really appreciative to all of the guests I've had on the show and to all the people who have tuned in every month. Hosting this show has been a wonderful experience. If you'd like to see what I'm up to in the future, you can follow me on [Twitter @DerekLMurphy](#). And don't forget to check in on the very first of next month for Elizabeth's debut on *Beyond the Stacks*.