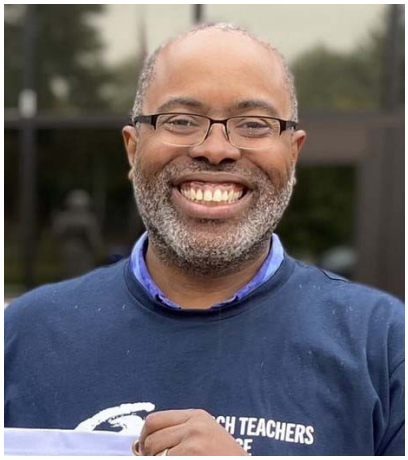
Serge Danielson-Francois



Librarian, Divine Child High School, Dearborn, Michigan

Describe your career as a librarian and where you work.

I have been a librarian for twenty years. I started as a children's librarian and assistant branch manager for the Kansas City Public Library at the Trails West Branch in November 2000 and have worked in multiple settings since then. I was a public services theological librarian for the Dana Dawson Library at Saint Paul School of Theology and a reference librarian for the Harris County Public Library/Cy-Fair (now Lonestar) College before assuming my current position as school librarian for Divine Child High School in 2007. Divine Child is a parish school in the Archdiocese of Detroit with a high school enrollment just below nine hundred students. I am also the lead teacher for our AP Capstone program, the lead moderator for our Debate Society, and advisor for the Ministry of Presence initiative and our Business Club.

Share something about yourself not related to librarianship.

I am a long-suffering fan of the New York Jets (J-E-T-S). My brother idolized Curtis Martin, and I am a Wayne Chrebet devotee, known to describe a sure thing as "entrusted to the hands of Wayne Chrebet." I miss the dominant defense (the New York Sack Exchange) that once defined my favorite team.

How does your faith inspire or fit in with your work?

I think librarianship is a vocation. For more than thirteen years, I have interpreted the work that we accomplish in the Bernardine Franciscan Learning Center as guided by these verses from Ephesians 4:15-16: "But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love." As librarians, we promote, to paraphrase Bernard Lonergan, the judgment and human understanding that make "speaking truth in love" not only possible but, with God's help, likely.

When and why did you get involved in the CLA?

I became a member of CLA in 2007 when I moved to Michigan to begin my work at Divine Child High School. I had been a member of the American Theological Library Association until then. I presented at the 2008 spring conference in Indianapolis on the transformation of our library into an unfinished space defined by radical hospitality (whosoever, whenever, wherever), nomadic reference and circulation, acceptable loss (no due dates or fines), and town hall programming (outside voices, expert voices, archived voices).

What has been your most rewarding experience with the CLA? When I was president of the Michigan chapter of the Catholic Library Association, I reached out to CLA to help identify speakers for our fall 2013 conference and the suggested experts were extraordinary. I have shared our work at Divine Child in promoting a deep immersion in the Catholic intellectual tradition through book clubs and discussions. Our most successful initiatives have made The Iliad, The Republic, and "A Good Man is Hard to Find" central to the moral formation of our students. What do you hope for the future of the CLA? My hope for the future of the CLA is the same as my hope for my local setting. Here is what I wrote when I started at Divine Child: "A twenty-first century library is both a physical and virtual place where communities of shared inquiry build trust, articulate hopes, and engage the compelling civic and moral challenges of the day. A library in the digital age is an intentionally public space where ideas are weighed and considered, where knowledge consumption and knowledge production are mediated. We test the limits of what we know in order to embrace what is unknown or only partially revealed. We must restore credibility to our knowledge commons and prize once more authority, reliability, and hypothesis testing as much as we now revere notoriety, currency, and convenience. We must dare to expose the gaps in our knowledge. A Catholic library should be the place where we measure our progress towards the truth."