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From Physics to Preprints: Transitioning from a Subject to a Scholarly Communications Librarian

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From Physics to Preprints:

Transitioning from a Subject to
a Scholarly Communications
Librarian

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**This is the web version of
a lightning talk given at
the DC+GLUG 2017
meeting.**



I began as a Digital Commons and Research librarian at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in October 2016 (eight months ago). Before that, I spent five years as the Chemistry, Mathematics and Statistics, and Physics and Astronomy librarian at Georgia State University.



What did I learn?

- Outreach
- Research Trends
- Instruction
- Change

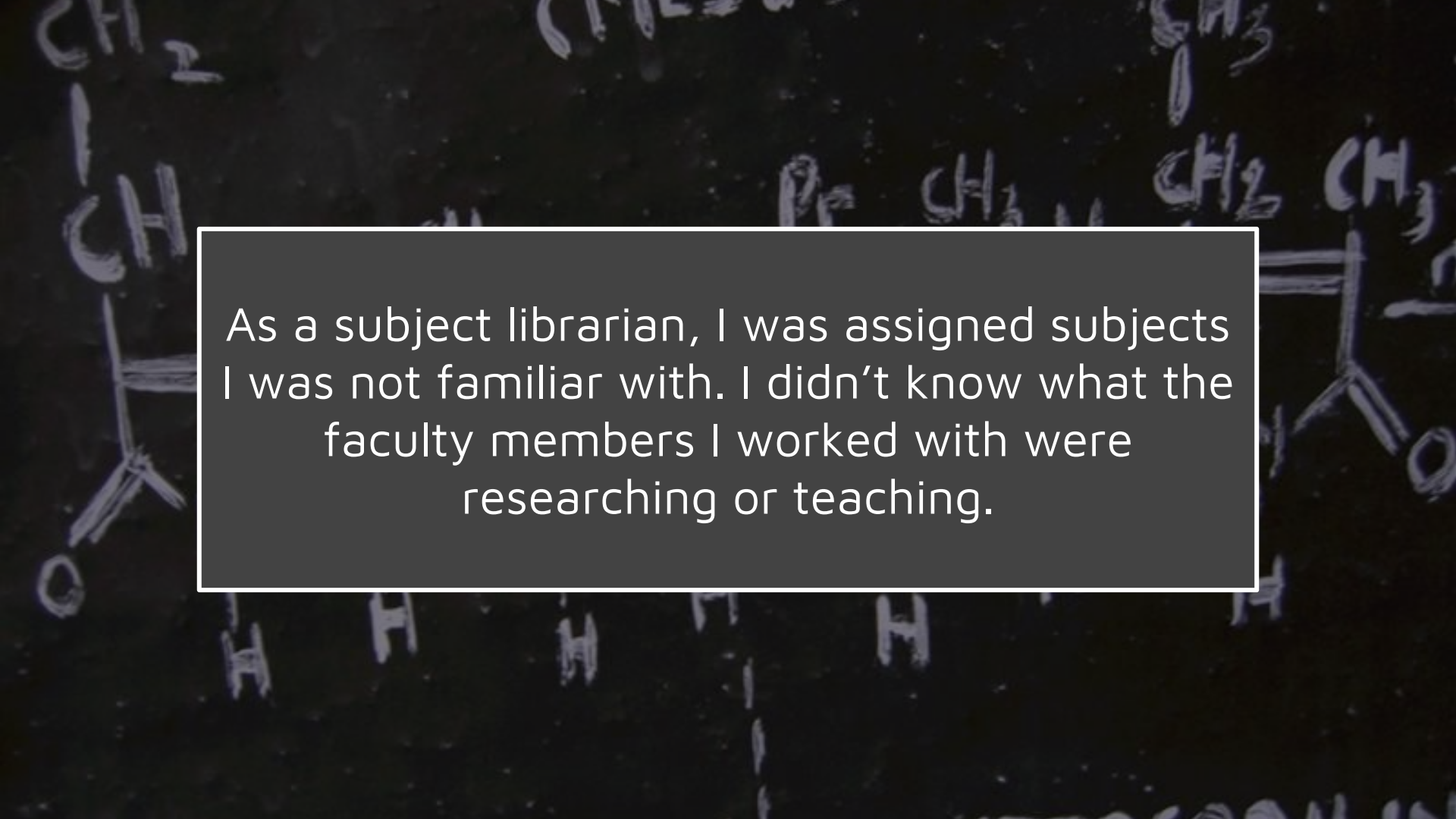


Outreach



The background of the image shows a chalkboard filled with hand-drawn chemical structures in white chalk. These structures include various organic molecules such as alkenes, alcohols, and amides, some with labels like 'CH2', 'CH3', 'Pr', and 'H'. The drawings are somewhat sketchy and represent a collection of chemical examples.

What are they doing?

The background is a dark, textured surface, likely a chalkboard, covered with faint, white chalk-like markings. These markings include various chemical formulas and structural diagrams, such as CH_2 , CH_3 , CH , and skeletal structures of organic molecules. The text is centered within a white rectangular box.

As a subject librarian, I was assigned subjects I was not familiar with. I didn't know what the faculty members I worked with were researching or teaching.

Neurodegenerative Disorders

Researchers are focused on brain, spinal cord, and neuromuscular dysfunction, disease and health, including dementia, brain and spinal cord injury, neurodegenerative diseases, and muscular dystrophy in the following ways:

Find out

- The infectious agent paradigm in Alzheimer's disease
- Cell biology of neurons; receptors in the prefrontal cortex
- Neurotoxicity of metals and of methamphetamine
- Cerebellar function, using optogenetic methods



Neurodegenerative Disorders

Researchers are focused on brain, spinal cord, and neuromuscular

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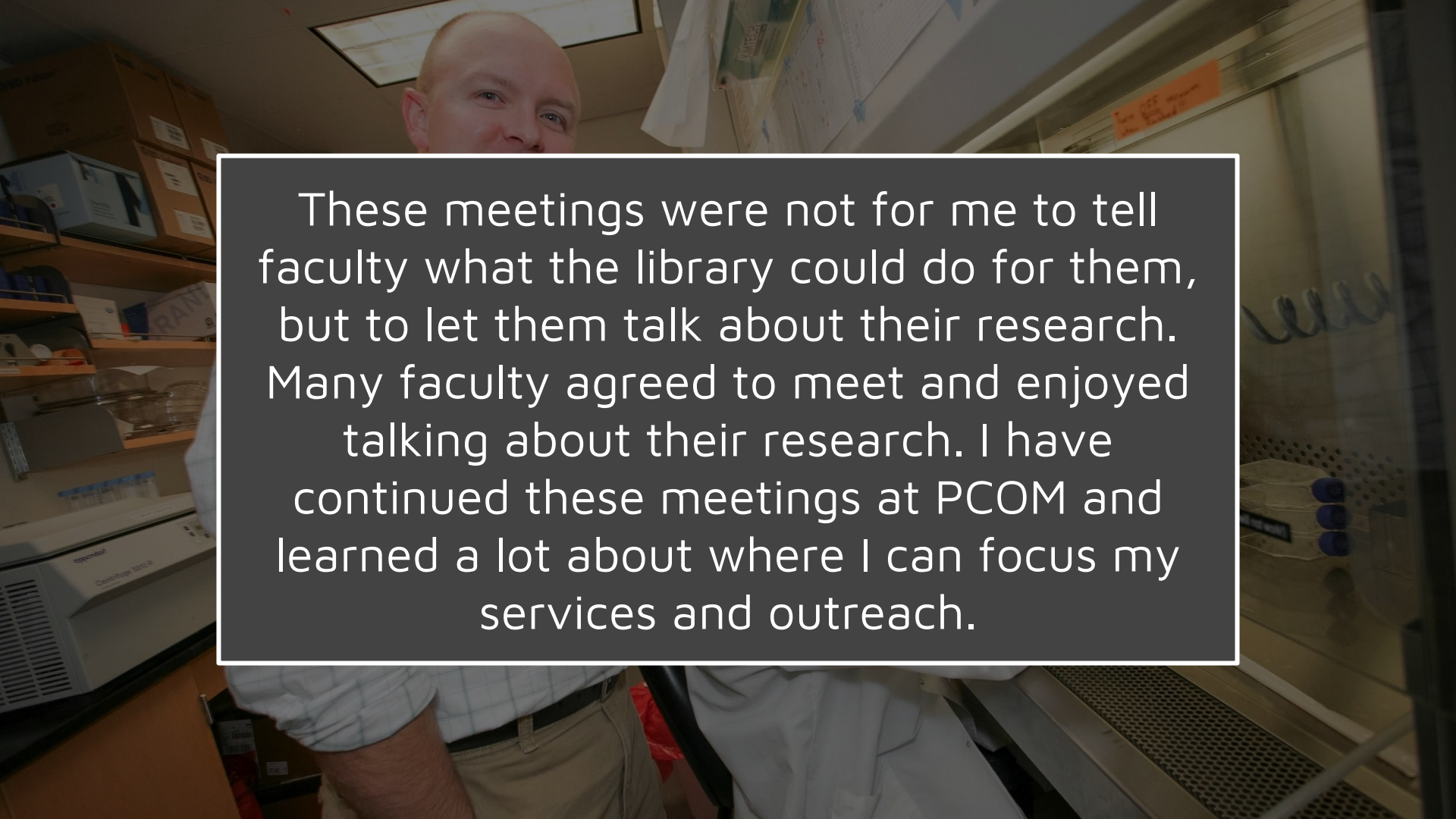
- My first step was to find out what they were working on. I started by reading faculty research profiles on GSU's website and browsing faculty articles on their Digital Commons. This was a good start, but the most important step I took was scheduling one-on-one meetings with faculty to discuss their research.
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-
-

- Cerebellar function, using optogenetic methods



A photograph of two men in a laboratory. On the left, a man in a light blue and white checkered button-down shirt and khaki pants stands and looks towards the camera with a slight smile. On the right, a man in a white lab coat and glasses is seated at a biosafety cabinet, focused on his work. He is using a pipette to transfer liquid into a multi-well plate. The biosafety cabinet has a glass front and a metal mesh base. In the background, there are shelves with various laboratory supplies, including boxes and containers. The text "Learn, don't tell" is overlaid in the center of the image.

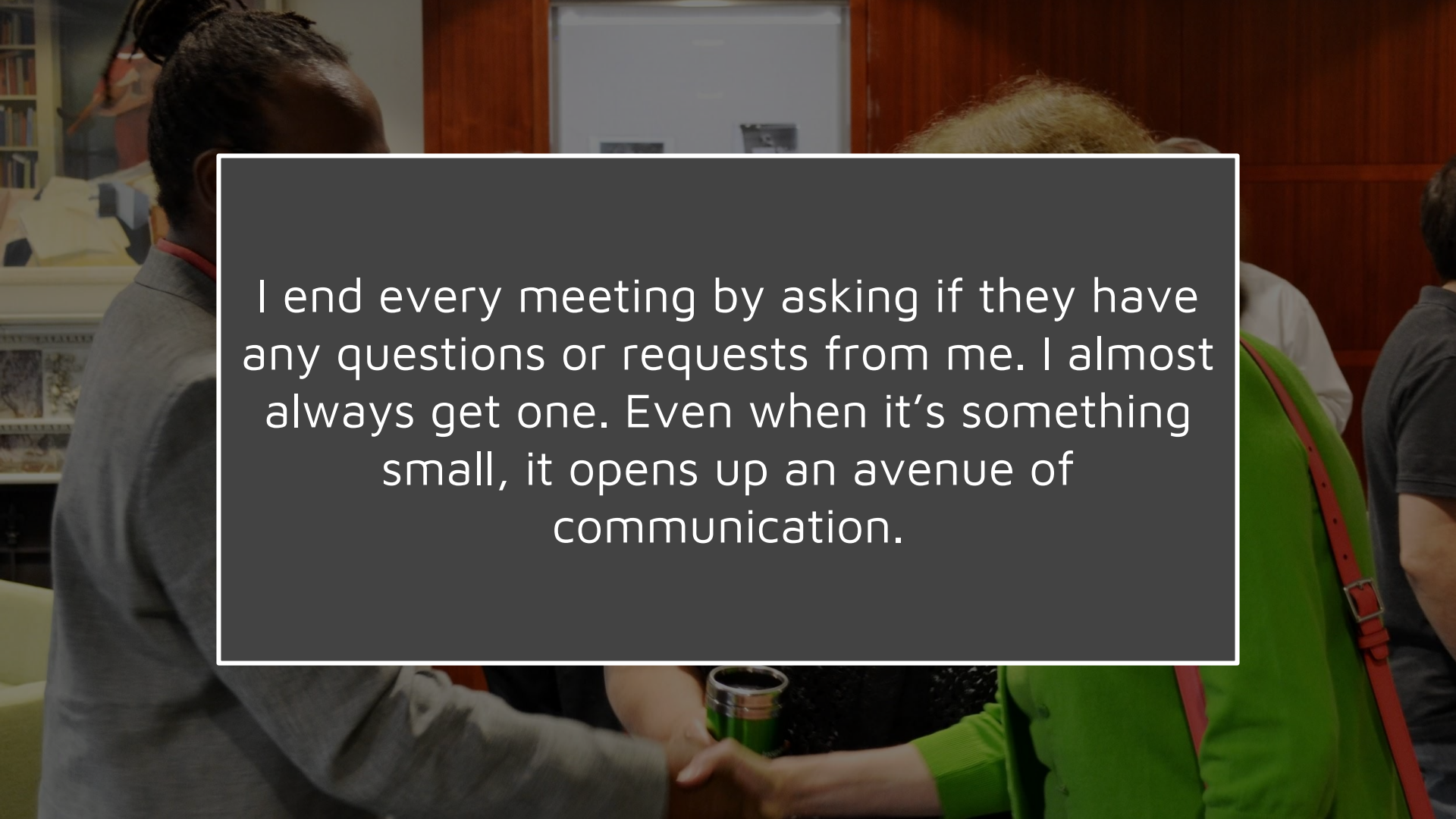
Learn, don't tell

A photograph of a man in a white lab coat standing in a laboratory. He is looking towards the camera. In the background, there are shelves with various lab equipment and supplies, including boxes and a centrifuge. A large, semi-transparent grey box with a white border is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text. The text reads: "These meetings were not for me to tell faculty what the library could do for them, but to let them talk about their research. Many faculty agreed to meet and enjoyed talking about their research. I have continued these meetings at PCOM and learned a lot about where I can focus my services and outreach."

These meetings were not for me to tell faculty what the library could do for them, but to let them talk about their research. Many faculty agreed to meet and enjoyed talking about their research. I have continued these meetings at PCOM and learned a lot about where I can focus my services and outreach.

A photograph of a social gathering in a room with wood-paneled walls. In the foreground, a Black man with glasses and a grey blazer over a red shirt is shaking hands with a woman. The woman has blonde hair and is wearing a bright green cardigan over a black lace top. She is holding a green insulated cup. Another woman with blonde hair, wearing a black lace top, stands behind her. In the background, a man in a blue button-down shirt stands near a whiteboard covered with papers and photos. The text "(Tell just a little)" is overlaid in white, bold font in the center of the image.

(Tell just a little)

A background image showing a person in a grey blazer on the left and a person in a green shirt on the right, shaking hands. The person in the green shirt is holding a green cup. The scene appears to be indoors, possibly in a meeting room or office, with bookshelves and a whiteboard visible in the background.

I end every meeting by asking if they have any questions or requests from me. I almost always get one. Even when it's something small, it opens up an avenue of communication.



Research Trends



Open access to 862,559 e-prints in Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science, Quantitative Biology, Quantitative Finance and Statistics

Subject search and browse:

Physics

Search

Form Interface

Catchup

See cumulative "What's New" pages. Read [robots beware](#) before attempting any automated download

Physics

Know your fields

- **Astrophysics** (**astro-ph** [new](#), [recent](#), [find](#))
includes: Cosmology and Extragalactic Astrophysics; Earth and Planetary Astrophysics; Galaxy Astrophysics; High Energy Astrophysical Phenomena; Instrumentation and Methods for Astrophysics; Solar and Stellar Astrophysics
- **Condensed Matter** (**cond-mat** [new](#), [recent](#), [find](#))
includes: Disordered Systems and Neural Networks; Materials Science; Mesoscale and Nanoscale Physics; Other Condensed Matter; Quantum Gases; Soft Condensed Matter; Statistical Mechanics; Strongly Correlated Electrons; Superconductivity
- **General Relativity and Quantum Cosmology** (**gr-qc** [new](#), [recent](#), [find](#))
- **High Energy Physics – Experiment** (**hep-ex** [new](#), [recent](#), [find](#))
- **High Energy Physics – Lattice** (**hep-lat** [new](#), [recent](#), [find](#))
- **High Energy Physics – Phenomenology** (**hep-ph** [new](#), [recent](#), [find](#))
- **High Energy Physics – Theory** (**hep-th** [new](#), [recent](#), [find](#))

As a subject librarian, I had to research subject-specific databases and resources to teach. I learned a lot about how physics and astronomy researchers feel about open access through learning about arXiv and other databases. Physics and Astronomy faculty could be great proponents of institutional repositories.

Open access to
Finance and Sta

Subject search a

See cumulative

Physics

- Astrophysics includes: C High Energy Astrophysics
- Condensed includes: D Other Con Electrons; Superconductivity
- General Relativity and Quantum Cosmology (**gr-qc** new, recent, find)
- High Energy Physics – Experiment (**hep-ex** new, recent, find)
- High Energy Physics – Lattice (**hep-lat** new, recent, find)
- High Energy Physics – Phenomenology (**hep-ph** new, recent, find)
- High Energy Physics – Theory (**hep-th** new, recent, find)

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This is a detailed technical drawing of a steam-powered coffee machine, labeled 'Fig. 2' in the bottom left corner. The machine consists of several main components: a large vertical boiler on the right, a smaller horizontal boiler at the bottom, and a complex network of pipes and valves. A steam engine mechanism is visible in the center, with a flywheel and various gears. The machine is designed for the 'preparation economic and instantaneous of coffee in beverage system A Moriondo'. The drawing is labeled with various letters (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z) and numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100) indicating different parts of the machine. The text 'MORIONDO ANGELO' is prominently displayed in the upper right, followed by the description of the machine's function. The overall style is that of a 19th-century technical patent drawing.

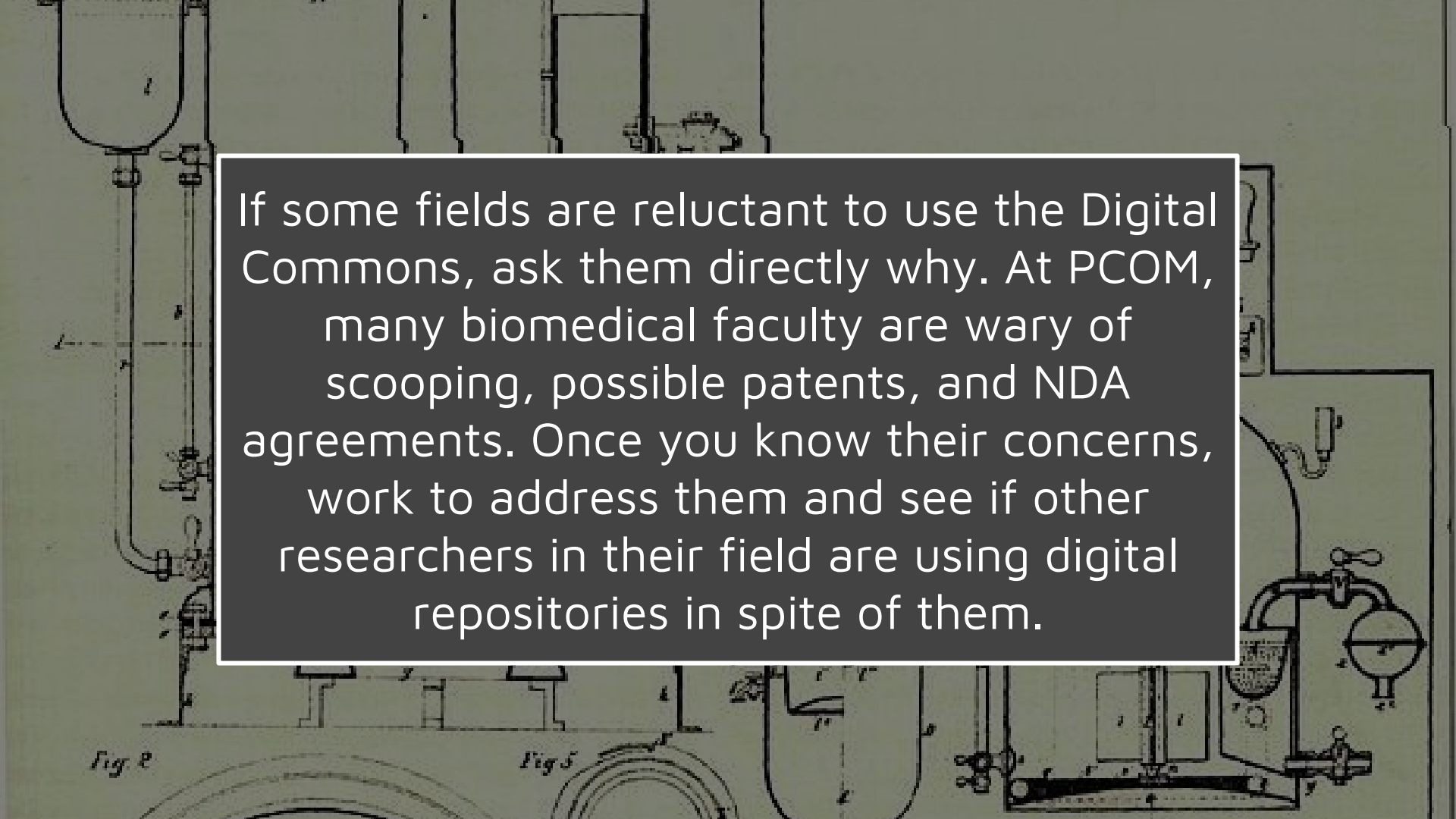
**Personalize your
approach**

MORIONDO ANGELO
Nuovi apparecchi a vapore per la
preparazione economica ed istantanea
del caffè in bevanda sistema A Moriondo

Fig. 2

Fig. 2

Fig. 5



If some fields are reluctant to use the Digital Commons, ask them directly why. At PCOM, many biomedical faculty are wary of scooping, possible patents, and NDA agreements. Once you know their concerns, work to address them and see if other researchers in their field are using digital repositories in spite of them.

Fig 2

Fig 5



Instruction

Follow from
beginning to end

At GSU, I was an embedded librarian for several semesters of a capstone Chemistry class where students completed one major project. Seeing how students applied my lessons into their papers and presentations was invaluable in recognizing how well my instruction worked and what else I needed to teach.

With the Digital Commons, we can see the endpoint of students' work. Does their work draw on what librarians are teaching them? Are their references correct? Do they know how to write an abstract? Where can we step in with instruction, research guides, and so on?

**Find out what they
don't know**

- Requirements
- Well drained loamy soils.
- Propagation is by seed
- CLIMATE
- Crop water required for the growing period is 250-400mm/year

NOTICE
DO NOT USE
STANDS
HERE

- Well drained loamy soils.
- Propagation is by seed
- CLIMATE
- Crop water 400mm/yr

There are many things that everyone assumes someone else must have taught students. At GSU, students in the capstone class often didn't have experience making or giving presentations. These research-adjacent subjects are a good place for librarians to step in. If you have many posters on the Digital Commons, tie that into a research guide or workshop on creating posters.

Remember the little things



Take every opportunity to teach relevant topics. If you want to make students and faculty think about copyright and open source, introduce them to something like Creative Commons...



...through something small like using only Creative Commons images in a presentation and showing their licenses. You may not have a chance to teach these small things on their own, but even a little awareness is better than nothing.

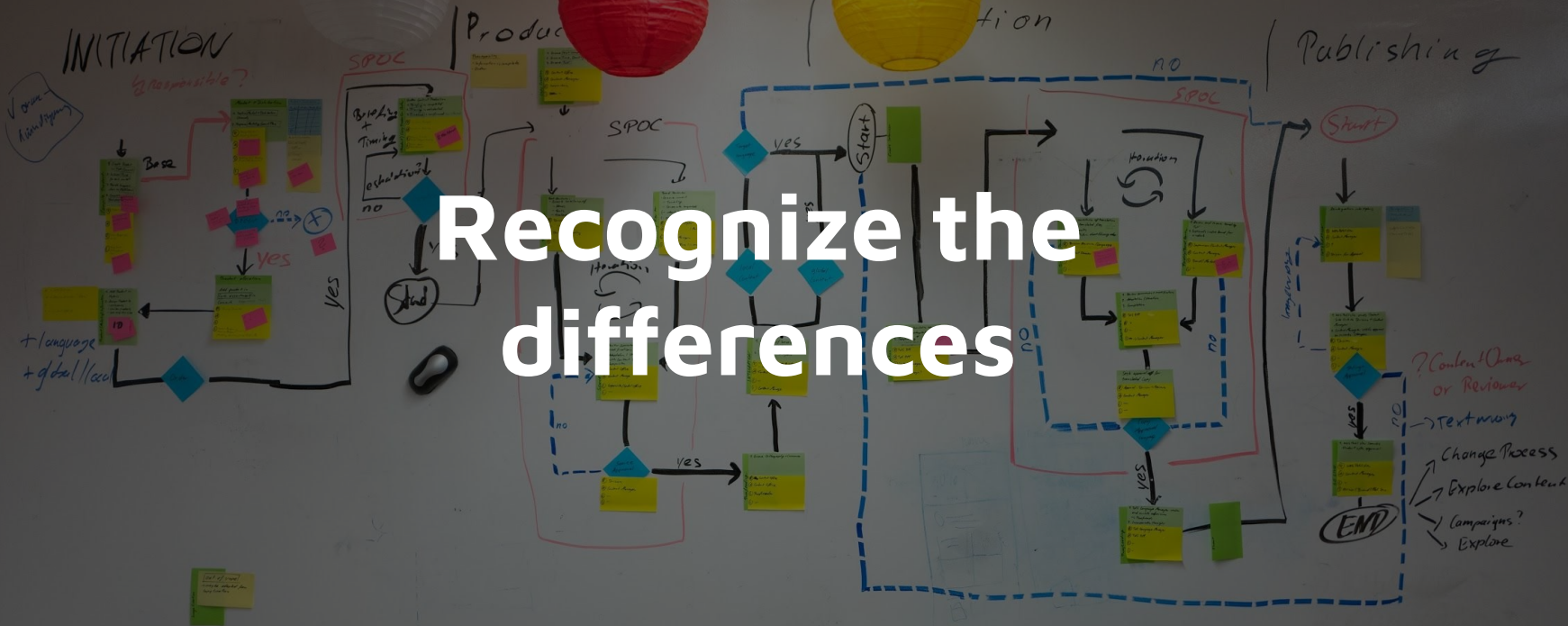
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Change

Recognize the differences



When I started at PCOM, I had to figure out how I had to change for my new position. I had to learn new fields and research topics, but the biggest change was in my daily work. I now had a regular influx of Digital Commons uploads to deal with, along with outreach, teaching, and so on. I started my position reviewing and revising existing workflows to make everything as streamlined as possible.

INITIAL

Vision
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10

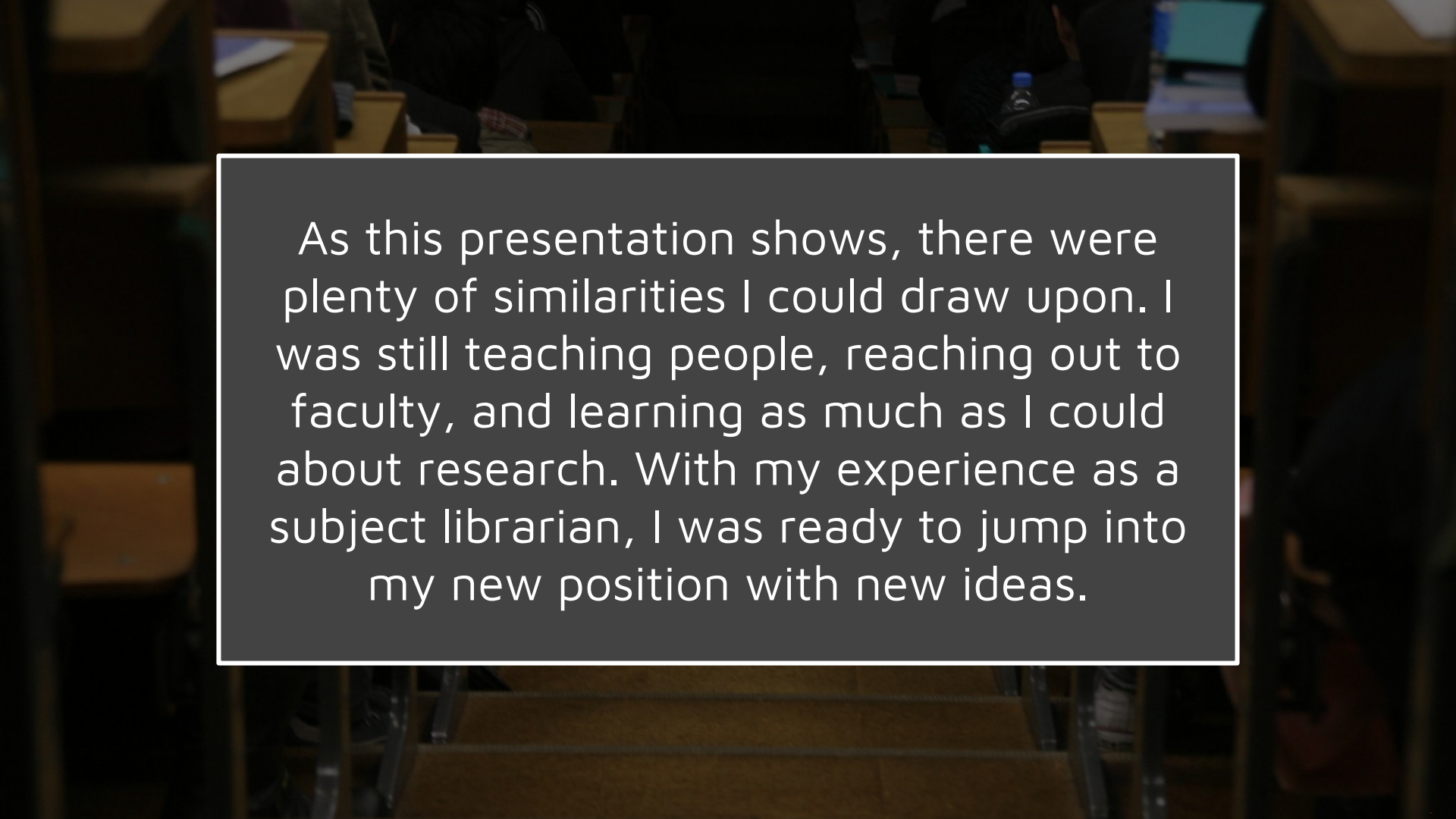
+ language
+ global/local

ishing

? Content Owner
or Reviewer
→ Text Mining
→ Change Process
→ Explore Content
→ Campaigns?
→ Explore

A dimly lit lecture hall with rows of wooden desks and chairs. The text "Recognize the similarities" is overlaid in the center. The perspective is from the back of the hall, looking down the rows. The lighting is low, with some light coming from the front, creating a sense of depth. The text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**Recognize the
similarities**



As this presentation shows, there were plenty of similarities I could draw upon. I was still teaching people, reaching out to faculty, and learning as much as I could about research. With my experience as a subject librarian, I was ready to jump into my new position with new ideas.



Any questions?

Email me at [\[jaclynwe@pcom.edu\]\(mailto:jaclynwe@pcom.edu\)](mailto:jaclynwe@pcom.edu)

