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The life of a DFAIT librarian is anything but boring. Running from tanks and tear gas in the middle of a student riot... All in a day's work for librarian Anne Maffre.

When people think of librarians, they generally think of someone sitting behind a desk, answering questions and shushing people in the library. Often, they equate our job to boredom. But in reality, the opportunities that I have had while working in DFAIT's library far exceed anything I could have hoped for when I graduated with a Masters in Library Science.

Never, for example, would I have imagined myself running through the streets of Santiago, frantically looking for a safe place to escape the tear gas that was

being sprayed on protesters on the "Day of the Young Combatant." Last year on March 29, my colleague and I were spending our final day in the city picking up last-minute souvenirs after having travelled to missions in Bogotá, Quito and Caracas to promote DFAIT's Virtual Library and Library Services. We began to notice large groups of students and some tanks gathering near the university. Though we were expecting some protests that day, we did not think much of it and continued on our way.

Later that day, the metal doors of the store we were in came crashing down and we realized the riot was heading in our direction. When the doors finally reopened, we decided to head back to the hotel to avoid any further problems. We began walking to the closest subway station, not realizing that it was also the station for the university—but the doors to the station were locked. We were aghast to find ourselves in the middle of a riot. A crowd was running toward us, followed closely by several tanks. At that point, we turned and ran the other way, looking desperately for an escape. Eventually, we made it, though not before feeling the effects of the tear gas.

This Santiago experience was certainly my most memorable to date, but my work at the DFAIT library has also taken me to many U.S. posts where I provide staff training.

As a portfolio librarian, my specialization subject is trade relations and investment, and my geographic responsibility is North America. There is no typical day for me—I work on something different every day. One day, I might be asked to find the date a consulate opened and who was in attendance at the ceremony, another I might be looking for trade statistics for computer equipment. As our library is open to the public, we also get questions from students and researchers who come to use our specialized collection. Most of my time generally involves answering in-depth research questions, preparing presentations and coaching sessions, selecting relevant books for the library collection and preparing material for our intranet site. More recently, I was involved in the initial planning stages of the departmental wiki.

Although, thankfully, not every day is spent running from student riots, my days here in the library are far from dull. The subject matter I deal with is always interesting, and I am constantly learning new things.

If you have never visited the library before, please come visit us in person or virtually—we promise we won't shush you!