

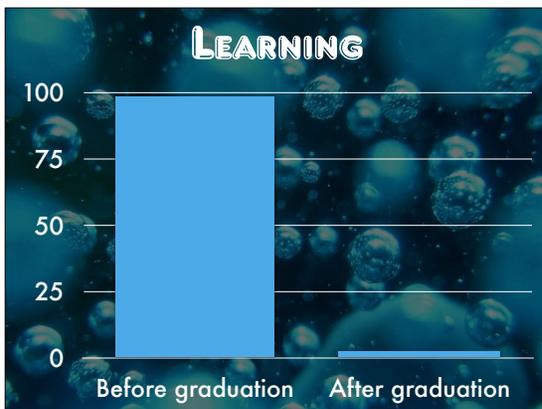
Congratulations graduates, and greetings to all your loved ones! I'm Dorothea Salo, a Distinguished Faculty Associate here at the iSchool, and it is my honor to offer a few words on your accomplishments, and a challenge for your future.

So kick back, grab a glass of your favorite bubbly, and let's do this thing.



This is a nostalgic moment for me because I graduated from this place, what was then the School of Library and Information Studies, in two-thousand-five. So it's my fifteenth graduation anniversary, and if I said I'm not sentimental about that I'd be lying.

Graduates, it is more amazing than I can manage to express to welcome you to the information professions. Welcome, fellow professionals!



There's a theory of how information school works and how information professionals learn that goes something like this: in information school, we teach you ninety-eight percent of everything you'll ever need to know to be a professional. After you graduate, you'll pick up maybe two percent of your entire career-long knowledge base.

But that's ridiculous, you say! There's a lot to learn here, and you have learned a lot, believe me, but the idea that you've nothing left to learn is ridiculous. And you're right! It is exactly

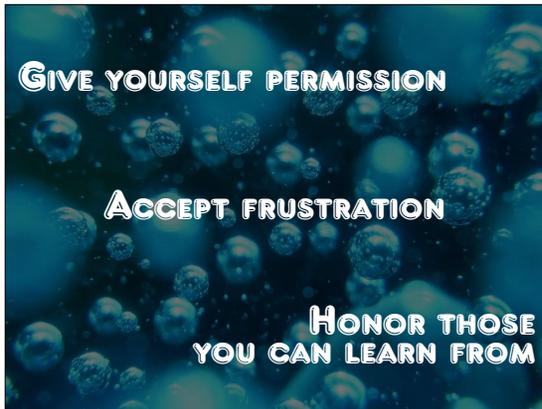
as ridiculous as you think it is. But every time you hear somebody say “I didn’t learn THAT in school” or “nobody told me in school I’d have to do THIS,” this bar chart here is basically what they’re saying. And it’s ridiculous.



Which brings me back to this, *Omnia disce*. This is from a twelfth-century Western European academic named Hugh of St. Victor, who wrote this thing called the *Didascalion*, which was kind of like those incredibly annoying “competency lists” all over the LIS literature that supposedly tell you everything you have to know to be a particular kind of information professional. Let me just say, those competency lists are cruel and wrong and harmful and I encourage you to pay exactly zero attention to them. But the *Didascalion* was a competency list for Catholic theologians, okay?

There’s this one sentence in it, though. “*Omnia disce, videbis postea nihil esse superfluum; coartata scientia iucunda non est.*” Which means, more or less, “Learn everything! You’ll see later that none of it was wasted. Knowledge that’s suddenly cut off is no fun!”

And I believe this. I believe this clear through to my soul. *Omnia disce, graduates* — learn everything. None of it’s wasted. And most of all, don’t cut off your learning on reaching this milestone, exciting and profound though it absolutely is.

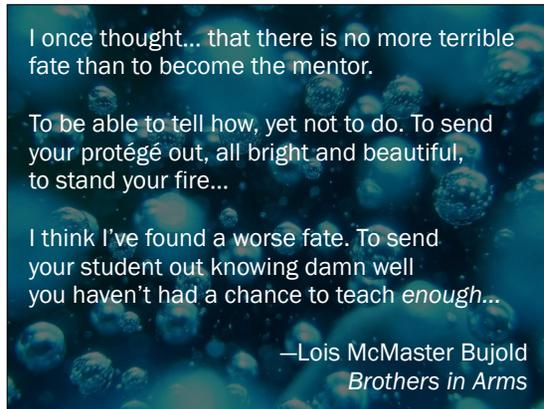


In my head, there are three parts to learning everything — or if not everything, at least as much as comes your way.

The first part is giving yourself permission. Wait, who needs permission to learn? You do, actually, because a lot of us cut ourselves off from learning by not giving ourselves permission to admit we don't know something! Or by not giving ourselves permission to be bad at something. You can't be good at something until you've spent a lot of time being bad at it! Believe me, that's been a consistent theme of the fifteen years of my professional life since my graduation.

Second, accept frustration. Learning is a frustrating process. There's an interesting strain of education research happening around now suggesting that a lot of students dislike this frustration so much that their evaluations of their instructors have more to do with how easy the instructor made the content look than on how much they actually learned. Don't be like that. Accept the frustration for what it is — an unavoidable side-effect of real learning.

Last, honor the people who can teach you something! Don't be the person who trash-talks somebody else for knowing something they don't. That person is an awful person, and they're missing out on opportunities to learn. And don't be the person who writes somebody off because they're different, and different is somehow less. That very difference is where learning happens. It is NOT less, NEVER less. Honor it.

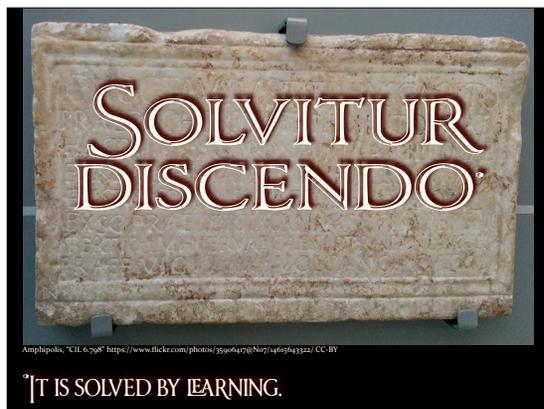


So if we accept for the sake of argument that I have followed my own advice these last fifteen years — and I certainly have tried to — that leaves me in an uncomfortable position as an instructor. Lois McMaster Bujold captured it perfectly in her novel *Brothers in Arms*, where she has the character Aral Vorkosigan say, “I once thought — I only found this out when I grew old, understand — that there is no more terrible fate than to become the mentor. To be able to tell how, yet not to do. To send your protégé out, all bright and beautiful, to stand your fire... I think I've found a worse fate. To send your student out knowing damn well you haven't had a chance to teach **enough**...”



Or, as Yoda said to Luke as they watched the Jedi books burn, “We are what they grow beyond.”

I am humble before what you have learned from me, graduates. From all of us. Because if nothing else, I know how much more there is to know.



And as I sit here recording this for you, alone in my refitted guest room, I can't help but ask myself, what should I have done? What should I have said, what should I have taught, that would get you through this terrifying time?

I don't have an answer I'm satisfied with. I only have this, which I stole from a presentation I did a few years ago. *Solvitur discendo*: it is solved by learning. Which is a riff on something Saint Augustine supposedly used to say, *Solvitur ambulando*: it is solved by walking — by which he meant not walking exactly,

more like shutting up and actually doing something in the world. I mention Augustine, by the way, because Hugh of St. Victor was a huge Augustine fan, and also when I took the podium at my own graduation fifteen years ago, I quoted a different bit of Augustine, and I'm just sentimental enough to want to bring that back around, you know?

But seriously, I'm learning things I wish I hadn't had to right now. I know you are too. I challenge you, as I challenge us all, to keep doing that. Keep learning. Keep working through how to apply what we're learning to keep one another safe and well and supported.

It's bad right now. Folks are saying they want to get back to normal. I have to say, I don't. I want to get back to BETTER, and I think that if we walk around enough, if we learn enough — if we learn everything, if we apply what we learn with the grace and the wisdom that I know all you graduates have within you — it is within our power to do that, to bring something better into being. I want that for you, and I will try to make it happen.



Graduates of the class of two-thousand-twenty, I congratulate you and I give you all my love and my hope. Let us learn everything — together.