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Future of Librarianship paper  
2 November 2009

Librarianship has been a constantly changing profession since the inception of libraries. Librarians have been archivists, scribes, catalogers, guardians of closed stacks, and defenders of free speech; they have been pressed into service, selected as an honor given by kings, and compelled by their own interests to pursue a graduate degree. But it seems that within the last several years, with the advent of the Internet, Google and other search engines, and now especially easy access to both of these, librarians have been resistant to change their ways as “keepers of the books.”

The literature on librarianship in the 21st century seems to be split between authors promoting the benefits of the traditional library over Internet search engines and authors recognizing a need for change to keep up with Internet information providers, both of which are valid viewpoints.

Writing on traditional librarianship, Irene McDermott makes a comparison between librarians and the Internet, chefs and cooking implements: “These cooking experts use the best oven, pots, and pans. Yet, they too own and use microwave ovens. It is one of the gadgets in their cooking toolbox” (“The Microwave of the Reference World”. *Last One Out Turn Off the Lights*, 2005. p. 3). She goes on to say that the Internet “fulfills many kinds of information needs easily and well. But it can’t do everything” (p. 4). This view of libraries coexisting with the Internet is interesting, but it does not account for the people who are, to extend the metaphor, not willing to wait an hour for their food to cook and will accept an unevenly heated dinner instead.

A better argument might be Kay Cahill’s, in which she writes that “At the end of the day, Google supplies the results list: it is still down to the individual sat at the screen to assess the relevance and authority of the individual items on that list” (“An Opportunity, Not a Crisis”. *Journal of Library Administration*, Vol. 47(1/2), 2008. p. 69). In her opinion, librarians are just the people to make these assessments: “As a gateway to information, we have the opportunity to teach users about authority, about optimizing searches, and about the areas where Google is not the be-all and end-all” (p. 70). Cahill also posits that librarians can act as facilitators for patrons in finding new ways to process and share information. She writes, “In many ways our role in this new environment is fundamentally the same: to instruct users in how to use these tools to access the information they need, and to step in and help when they hit barriers. The difference is that we’re no longer in control of the tools that we’re using to do this” (p. 71). Here librarians, instead of promoting books over online sources, are teaching their patrons how to critically evaluate all sources of information. With many periodicals becoming online-only, it is important that users be taught how to locate these reputable sources and others on the Internet, rather than limiting users to what is physically available in the library.

Richard Rubin echoes this sentiment in the textbook. He quotes a suggestion from James Rice that “future librarians will exert much greater effort in consulting, teaching, and advising individuals in their search for information, and such activities will become an essential part of the librarians’ function” (p. 478). However, he also notes the importance of adapting traditional library information searches to the way that patrons use the Internet to find information. He writes that library science experts “saw the role of professionals as increasingly user-centered rather than organization-centered and that there was greater need for LIS professionals to understand how individuals seek and use information” (Rubin p. 479).

This is covered in the literature as the idea of bringing reference services to the people, rather than people to the library and its reference services. In her essay on George Mason University's Johnson Center, a multi-purpose student center that includes a branch library, Ruth Kifer describes entirely open stacks that any student center user can browse. Students can select books without ever running into a librarian, and are bound only by their honor to check books out at the information desk in the center of the building. Thus, this branch's reference librarians must come to the students. "The librarians are often seen away from the reference desk assisting students at public computers. Reference staff members also take the library on the road and periodically set up research assistance stations in kiosks located in the food court" ("Real University Libraries Don't Have Neon Lights", *Last One Out* p. 55). Kifer's words of wisdom to future academic librarians is that they "must borrow liberally from the public library's customer service philosophy; recognize the need to market collections and services; and create inviting, comfortable spaces" (p. 62).

This type of outreach to students is also exemplified in Penn State Berks Campus's Thun Library's ASK cart. "Designed as a simple, effective and fun approach to faculty and student outreach, the Library Dude aka Billie Walker and other librarians offer on-the-spot information and/or reference assistance outdoors" (Radford, Marie, "Reference Service Excellence". *Reference and User Services Quarterly*, Vol. 48(2), 2008. p. 110). The cart, which looks just like a hotdog cart, is designed to give students access to the library from anywhere on campus, much as they have access to the Internet from their phones and laptops. Aside from helping students get information when and where they need it, the cart has also helped promote the library's physical space. "I've been told that students now come in to the library and specifically ask for the 'Library Dude' when they have reference questions" (Radford p. 110).

Many authors give ideas like these for increasing library visibility. In "Reference Service Excellence," Radford offers other suggestions for promoting library services, including making "house calls" to faculty offices and other campus buildings and selling book bags to students and having them take pictures of the bags in exotic places, the pictures to be posted on the library's blog.

In the wake of increasing budget cuts, Patricia Jobb gives some ideas on keeping public libraries current with local students' needs, including developing homework shelves that contain relevant information for known school assignments and implementing ways for teachers to alert library staff of upcoming assignments ("Public Libraries and Services to Students: Taking Up the Slack in the Face of Budget Cuts". *Last One Out*, p. 75). These services are also part of the movement to bring reference to the patron.

Roy Tennant argues this point, as well as the idea of using Web 2.0's creation tools to extend the library's reach to users' computers.

We must build compelling web-based services. We must cover services such as Google and Yahoo! Like a blanket, while also offering the licensed resources that are our bread and butter. We must meet our users where they are-on the web-with both collections and services tailored to their specific needs and desires. We must stop thinking we can force our users to learn how we wish them to seek information and instead mold our services to accommodate their natural tendencies. ("Being All We Can Be: The Web as Both a Threat and the Means of Our Salvation". *Last One Out*, p. 90)

The Case Western Reserve University library uses many of these tools to expand their reference services. Their Ask a Librarian services at <http://library.cwru.edu/ksl/talkwithus/ask.html> include live chat, telephone reference, and instant

messaging reference via several IM clients, though only during the physical reference desk's hours. Outside of those hours, users can e-mail questions to the librarians, but have only the promise of receiving an answer within two days. The library also hosts several blogs on various topics related to the library and its collections that are also available via RSS feed. Kent State's library offers also a text-message-based reference service and the ability to schedule an in-depth reference appointment for larger projects (<http://www.library.kent.edu/page/10599>).

Using Web 2.0 tools like social media and blogs is recommended by many authors as a new tool of librarianship. "It comes down to having presence. Primarily, presence for the library and its services, but I'd also urge librarians to consider using these tools to build presence for the profession" (Stephens, Michael, *Information Tomorrow*, 2007. p. 99). The idea seems to be to remind community members that the library exists and is ready to provide service, as well as to compete with Internet services for ease of use and reliability.

In class, we have talked about a library's functions being education, recreation, and information. In *Public Libraries and Internet Service Roles*, McClure provides a list of more specific digital-age functions that public libraries can serve. These include the technology-use-centered "Place for Public Access to the Internet" and "Internet and Technology Trainer," but also "Connector of Friends, Families, and Others," "Anyplace Anywhere Anytime Individualized Information Provider," and "Digital Ombudsperson" (2009, p. 50-51).

One of the better examples of a library serving these functions is the Columbus Metropolitan Library's catalog at <http://catalog.columbuslibrary.org>. The main search page has just one box for a keyword search (and an advanced search link for those who need it), and a search on any keyword brings up a list of relevant items in the catalog. Users can then refine their searches by location, format, author, series, and genre, among other categories, and can see a web of related search terms that can be used to find similar materials. Once an item is selected, users can rate it, review it, share it on various social media sites, or just place a hold on it. This site provides the sort of one-stop shop that Internet users are becoming accustomed to without sacrificing the traditional OPAC functions.

Incorporating the Internet into library services seems to be the path for many libraries, but with budget cuts and other economic woes it might not be viable to hire one person to cover just the library's web interface. "Over the past few years, we've seen more and more positions with titles like Web/Reference Librarian and Research Librarian/Information Technology Specialist" (Farkas, Meredith, *Information Tomorrow* p. 196). This means that current librarians and library science students need to be able to work with the technologies that exist now and be able to cope with how these technologies will change in the near and distant future. However, it may be that librarians having both sets of skills – for traditional and web reference – will be to the benefit of the libraries as well. "Librarians with Web design skills can better translate information literacy objectives into the online medium that someone with no background in library science. They can better design online library services based on traditional library principles" (Farkas, *Information Tomorrow* p. 197).

As I mentioned in my ERI discussion essay, I am in favor of embracing participatory web technologies and working to both bring people into the library and bring the library to the people via the Internet. I agree most with the views espoused by Cahill, that reference librarians should adopt Internet information resources like Google and Wikipedia as their own and instruct patrons in using these technologies in concert with traditional library media like books and periodicals to develop a well-rounded set of sources and information.

Even librarians whose focus is on programming and reader's advisory can use these new technologies to enhance the services they already provide. My local library's librarians maintain reader's advisory blogs located at <http://heightslibrary.org/page.php?id=21> that provide book reviews as well as bibliographies of books in specific topics (i.e. mysteries set in Cleveland or cross-genre books). Two librarians at the Twinsburg Public Library record podcasts available at <http://bethandcari.blogspot.com/> that highlight books they've read as well as new and popular books. These resources give patrons a chance to get book recommendations at home that will bring them into the library when they come to pick up the books. Both of these libraries also advertise their events through sites like Facebook and Twitter, bringing notice of these events to their followers in real time. This can help get people who aren't regular patrons of the library to come to events that they would otherwise not hear about, and can give regular patrons an easy way to share event with their friends and family.

I don't think that there is any way for a library to survive if it focuses on its physical collection at the expense of digital resources and technologies. The future of librarianship must include these new tools or users will simply bypass the library for the ease of the Internet, even if using the latter results in sub-optimal information. Outside of these Internet resources, librarians should also embrace the idea of bringing reference to the patron through virtual reference and services located outside of the physical library. In a time when information seekers are looking for the best information in the shortest amount of time, librarians need to be able to fit their services into these constraints.