

Conclusion

The future belongs not to those who merely navigate us through cyberspace, nor those who populate it with data. Rather it belongs to those who help us make sense of all the data that is available to us.

–John J. Regazzi¹

In conclusion, I want to offer some insights and opinions by respected library innovators and administrators related to what libraries need and should do in order to survive and become more meaningful in the current and future information marketplace. I offer them here in order to illustrate some of the political, academic, and economic challenges that library administrators have to deal with, in addition to the internal library-related issues that are often focused upon by those who do the daily work. Both sides, internal and external, must be balanced and taken into consideration by those who lead and manage libraries today and into the future.

“Attitudes of Presidents and Provosts on the University Library”

Beverly P. Lynch et. al., *College & Research Libraries* 68, no. 3 (May 2007)

www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crljournal/backissues/2007a/crlmay07/lynch07pdf.cfm

A fascinating article on the changing attitudes among presidents and provosts concerning university libraries and their place in the academy. The library is no longer considered a “sacred cow,” but must compete alongside other departments and divisions for scarce resources.

“What Does the Boss Think?”

Lorcan Dempsey’s Weblog, May 30, 2007

<http://orweblog.oclc.org/archives/001362.html>

Blog posting related to the article above.

“The New Academic Librarian, or ‘It’s Life, Jim, but Not as We Know It’”

Peter Brophy, presentation, *The Academic Librarian: Dinosaur or Phoenix?* April 11–12, 2007, Hong Kong www.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/conference/aldp2007/programme/aldp_2007_presentation/Brophy2a.ppt

This presentation describes the changing environment for academic librarians within their own institutions.

“A Provost and a Librarian Walk into a Meeting . . .”

Elia Powers, *Inside Higher Education*, June 26, 2007

<http://insidehighered.com/news/2007/06/26/ala>

Another article on the changing attitudes toward libraries, librarians, and their resources among higher education administrators.

“The Ultimate Debate: Do Libraries Innovate”

Andy Havens, post to Web4lib, June 5, 2007

I found this quote very insightful, as it succinctly states what libraries need to do to be successful now and in the future.

One of the best presentations I ever heard was given by A.G. Lafley, CEO of Proctor & Gamble. When asked the secret of P&G’s success, he replied with one word: failure. He then went on to explain that in his industry each success requires hundreds if not thousands of failures in order to identify and, in many cases, invent suitable products for its various industries. He went on to say that their goal at P&G was to, “Fail often, as inexpensively and humanely as possible, while tracking and learning from each failure.”

“ALA Annual 2007: ALCTS President’s Program”

Jennifer Lang, Z666.7.L364 blog, June 27, 2007

<http://jenniferlang.net/archives/69>

This long blog post offers comments on Peter Morville’s presentation “Ambient Findability—Librarians, Libraries, and the Internet of Things.” It is of interest for the many quotes that hit home. Here are some of them:

Morville says that users trust the things that come at the top of Google search results and that credibility and findability are becoming increasingly connected.

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So who is really going to help us? In his article "Revenge of the Librarians," Morville argued that the Internet would turn anyone into a librarian.

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Now people can't shut up about metadata. The stuff from catalog cards is now the subject of intense discussions. Metadata has become sexy:

- free tagging of flickr and del.icio.us
- religious/political zeal for folksonomies—let the users do it!
- it's a free world!

David Weinberger, author of *Everything is Miscellaneous*, says, "The old way creates a tree. The new rakes leaves together." In other words, tags self organize into clusters.

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UC Berkeley's FLAMENCO interface: The Flamenco search interface framework has the primary design goal of allowing users to move through large information spaces in a flexible manner without feeling lost. A key property of the interface is the explicit exposure of category metadata, to guide the user toward possible choices, and to organize the results of keyword searches. The interface uses hierarchical faceted metadata in a manner that allows users to both refine and expand the current query, while maintaining a consistent representation of the collection's structure. This use of metadata is integrated with free-text search, allowing the user to follow links, then add search terms, then follow more links, without interrupting the interaction flow. FLAMENCO stands for FLeXible information Access using MEtadata in Novel COmbinations.

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But this is not enough, says Morville. He told the story of the three stone cutters, each of whom was asked "what are you doing?" The first said "I'm making a living." The second said "I'm doing the best job of stone cutting in the county." The third said "I'm building a cathedral." It's this third stone cutter who gets the big picture.

We need to apply this to libraries. Libraries lift us up and inspire us.

"20 Tips to Inspire Innovation"

Stephen Abram, *American Libraries* (Jan. 2007): 46–48

An excellent list of innovation tips by the vice president of SirsiDynix. Includes:

1. Good, not perfect
3. Prefer action over study
6. Get out of your box
10. Have a vision and dream big
15. Bring management on board first; and
19. No mistake is ever final.

"Researchers' Use of Academic Libraries and Their Services"

A report commissioned by the Research Information Network and the Consortium of Research Libraries, April 2007

www.rin.ac.uk/files/libraries-report-2007.pdf (main report)

www.rin.ac.uk/files/Appendix_0.pdf (appendices)

The executive summary (pp. 2–4) includes some interesting comments from academic researchers about their understanding and opinions on the importance of the library. Here are some of them:

As users of digital information, researchers place a very high value on electronic journals, but a much lower value as yet on libraries' provision of other kinds of digital resources . . . A significant part of the study focuses on the roles librarians play in support of the research process, and the related expectations of researchers. Both groups expect that libraries will have a key role as custodians and managers of digital resources. Librarians believe their current role of providing expert advice and teaching on information literacy will continue to be important in the future. But while many researchers agree with this, libraries will need to ensure that effort is put into securing significant take-up of their expertise and advice by the research community. There are some significant differences between researchers' and librarians' views as to the future role of libraries in supporting research, and there is a need for dialogue between them to ensure that library services and expertise are developed and deployed in the most effective way.

"Academic Library Organizations"

Lorcan Dempsey's Weblog, May 4, 2007
<http://orweblog.oclc.org/archives/001338.html>

Lorcan Dempsey's comments on the report listed above.

"Innovation, Growth, and Getting to Where You Want to Go"

Ryan Jacoby and Diego Rodriguez, *Design Management Review* 18, no. 1 (2007)

www.ideo.com/pdf/DMI_winter-2007.pdf

The authors of this article (NOT librarians) identify three types of innovation outcomes: incremental innovation, which reaches existing users with existing offerings; evolutionary innovation, which provides new offerings to existing users, and existing offerings to new users; and revolutionary innovation, which provides new users with new offerings.

They include two excellent graphics to illustrate their point, one called Ways to Grow (p. 12). Four corners show the relationship between your growth intention and the innovation outcome you are seeking. So, for existing offerings with existing users, you need to manage raising prices, manage raising usage, and manage winning share. For existing offerings with new users, you adapt expanding your footprint, and you adapt winning share. For new offerings with existing users, you extend brands, extend the share of the wallet, and extend leveraging users. Finally, for new offerings with new users, you create markets and you disrupt markets. The second graphic shows the same relationships in a different way.

"Universities Tap the Internet to Map the Universe . . . One Galaxy at a Time"

David Nagel, *Campus Technology*, July 16, 2007
<http://campustechnology.com/articles/49118>

Article describing an example of how researchers and universities are using social technologies: with volunteers over the Internet assisting in attempts to map the entire universe.

"A Librarian's 2.0 Manifesto"

Laura Cohen, YouTube video, Nov. 9, 2006
<http://youtube.com/watch?v=ZblRrS3fkSU>

Needs to be seen. One person's attitude towards change in the current technological climate.

"Re: My Testimony for the Working Group on the Future of Bibliographic Control"

James Weinheimer, post to the AUTOCAT listserv, Aug. 8, 2007

An excellent message about how catalogers often do not relate to the reality of user experiences and needs.

These are excellent comments and point out many of the problems very clearly, but I want to play the Devil's Advocate here (a post unfortunately abolished at the Vatican). Do you really believe that the system of library cataloging as it now stands is sustainable in the long run? By this I mean the system that hires *lots* of people from around the world to redo and redo and redo work manually that is "substandard." If you were going to set up a system of "interoperable metadata creation" from scratch, is this the system you would create?

I personally believe that the system of library cataloging is a remnant of the 19th century (even earlier), where people had no choice except to redo one another's work. (They didn't even have a standard sized card until the 1890s or so). Today, this system of giving access to materials in a collection is so outmoded that it is unsustainable and even indefensible in the era of easily exchangeable information. As I have written in other posts, other fields have chosen solutions when they have been threatened in this way: instead of every car dealer completely rechecking every single car from top to bottom before the dealer sells it, people introduced a system of standards: these are real standards that *must be followed* or else there are serious consequences. A store that sells televisions must be able to sell those televisions right out of the box, and not have to recheck all the wiring in each one.

Standards involve trust. But trust in this sense implies consequences if you break that trust. In library metadata, there is no trust, and for good reason, because there are no real standards. If somebody puts out lousy metadata (my current favorite is at: <http://worldcat.org/oclc/82672072>, the book "Modernism and fascism : the sense of a beginning under Mussolini and Hitler" which somebody gave the subject "Modernist-fundamentalist controversy"(!) and everybody copied it!), then nothing happens—except people say bad things about you at other institutions. Of course, as users see these things and we go on about the virtues of "high quality," we shouldn't blame them when they simply roll their eyes.

Librarians give lip service to standards, but those in charge don't really believe it is necessary and won't fund it. Unfortunately, people rarely use our catalogs for all sorts of reasons, and when we do have good quality records, the use of these records is limited to extremely local uses, i.e. within the local catalog. And how does any of this "high-quality" relate to the World Wide Web, which is what people are using, anyway?

I believe the solution is the one the other fields have chosen: establish genuine, no-nonsense standards with appropriate consequences if people don't follow them. I don't think libraries are in any position to do this, especially on their own, but I am sure someone will eventually when people understand the importance of "metadata." Librarians must accept that "cataloging" is a rather small issue now, but "metadata" is big, powerful, and important. We must find it within ourselves to fit into that universe. I think there would be a special role for us there.

"Is That a Library in Your Pocket?"

Lorcan Dempsey's Weblog, July 25, 2007
<http://orweblog.oclc.org/archives/001405.html>

This blog post quotes a presentation by Peter Kaufman that made some startling predictions on the online digital video market:

- Over the next 13 years:
an iPod or device its size will be able to hold:
- a year's worth of video (8.760 hours) by 2012 (5 years from now)
 - all the commercial music ever created by 2015 (8 years), and
 - all the content ever created (in all media) by 2020 (13 years).

SOLINET Member Scenario Planning Discussions

Executive Summary, April 23, 2007
www.solinet.net/emplibfile/ScenarioPlanningReport.pdf

A major OCLC regional vendor examines future scenarios and environments for libraries in the next five years and how the vendor can strategically plan and prepare for these scenarios.

"Oh the Games People Play Now—in Libraries"

Tom Peters, ALA TechSource blog, July 23, 2007
www.techsource.ala.org/blog/2007/07/oh-the-games-people-play-now-in-libraries.html

Insightful comments and statistics on the role that gaming and games play in library users' lives.

"The Role of Gaming in Libraries: Taking the Pulse"

Scott Nicholson, whitepaper, 2007
<http://boardgameswithscott.com/pulse2007.pdf>
A report on a survey mentioned in the blog posting above related to games and gaming in library services.

"If Libraries Had Shareholders . . ."

Peter Brantley, O'Reilly Radar, July 17, 2007
http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2007/07/if_libraries_ha.html

A must-read, with statistics, on how library reference queries have dramatically declined since 1997, as well as the drop in circulation of materials in ARL libraries since 1995. As director of the Digital Library Federation, the author indicates that if libraries were a business, we would probably be extinct right now.

"Approach to Creating Experiences"

developed by David Armano at the Logic+Emotion blog
http://darmano.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/2007/06/06/experience_map.gif

A beautiful graphic showing how librarians ought to create experiences for their users.

"Open Source Software and XML Hands-on Workshop"

Eric Lease Morgan, post to the NGC4LIB listserv, Aug. 11, 2007
<http://permalink.gmane.org/gmane.culture.libraries.ngc4lib/2831>

This workshop summary provides a nice closer to this report:

The combined use of open source software and XML are the current means for getting the most out of your computing infrastructure. Their underlying philosophies are akin to the principles of librarianship. They enable. They empower. They are flexible. They are "free." The way to get from here to there is through a bit of re-training and re-engineering of the way libraries do their work not what they do but how they do it. Let's not confuse the tools of our profession with the purpose of the profession. If you think libraries and librarianship are about books, MARC, and specific controlled vocabularies, then your future is limited. On the other hand, if you think libraries are about the collection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of data, information, and knowledge, then the future is quite bright.

Note

1. John J. Regazzi, "The Battle for Mindshare: A Battle beyond Access and Retrieval." 2004 Miles Conrad Memorial Lecture, 46th NFAIS Annual conference, February 23, 2004.

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