



# Contributions of Patrick R Penland in Shaping the Contours of Information & Communication Science

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## Abstract

Patrick Penland was one shaped the contours of information and communication science in the later part of twentieth century. The innovative programs he designed, the diversity of academic explorations he engaged in and his concerns and care for expansion of quality of information science and professionals across the globe, have given a new face to information science. Penland, as an information consultant, was involved in movements that promoted production and utilization of knowledge across the globe especially in developing countries. His narrative writing represent existential episodes of interpersonal drama within the fate of human destiny. He has always been involved with enterprises designed to ensure every citizen's democratic right for free access to universal knowledge, which still remains to be a dream. His writings embed the principles of Open Access to research half a century before the movement actually could set to start

## Introduction

Prof. Patrick Penland (1918- ) who shaped the contours of information and communication science in the later part of twentieth century considerably, served as Professor at the School of Information Sciences, University of Pittsburgh for more than two decades since 1968. The innovative programs he designed, the diversity of academic explorations he engaged in and his concerns and care for expansion of quality of information science and professionals across the globe, have given a new face to information science in the second half of the twentieth century.

Penland, as an information consultant, was involved in movements that promoted production and utilization of knowledge

across the globe. It was his passion to travel widely in developing countries and inspire numerous projects and programmes on application of information science in every human endeavour.

## Communication Science Research

The thrust area of Penland's studies was application of communication science and information services in academic spheres. The results of Penland's life long research on Communication Science were compiled into four volumes in 'Communication Science and Technology Series' published from 1974. They are 'Communication Science and Technology', 'Group Dynamics and Individual Development', 'Interpersonal Communication', and 'Community Psychology and Coordination'.

He brought out an Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Sciences (1978), a classic reference work focusing on current developments in the field of library and information science. He lavishly contributed articles in his area of specialization to 'Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science' of Marcel and Decker. The Working Reports on Human Communication prepared by him include Advisory Counselling for Librarians (1969), Communications Management of Human Resources (1971), Communication Research for Librarians (1972), Communications Study Guide for Media, Library and Information Specialists (1975), Towards a Map of Communications (1978), etc.

He has been a prolific writer in his focus areas. His works include: Bookmobile Book Selection (1954), Accrediting library schools: A study of the background and problems (1955), Helping the public librarian to work as an adult educator (1961), Mechanization in libraries (1965), Advisory counselling for libraries (1969), Interviewing for Counsellor and Reference Librarians (1970), Media Designed Programmes for Librarians (1970), Communication Theory (1971), Leadership Development for Librarians (1971), Manual for the Library-Community Encounter Simulation (co author, 1971), Communications Manual for Librarians (1972), Interpersonal Communication: Counselling, Guidance, and Retrieval (1974), Audiovisual Methods and Techniques (1975), Learning Patterns of Librarian Clients (Report, 1976), Librarian as a Learning Consultant (1976), Self-Planned Learning in America (1977), Information Consultants and Learning Brokers (1979), Delphi Assessment Study (1980), and Healed Recovery (1989), a work on responsible knowledge utilization.

### **Communication for Librarians**

Penland's 'Communication for Librarians' is the earliest introduction to human communication in information services. It

discusses the history and theory of communication and culture, organization and function of communication institutions, communication structures in biological and social organization, transfer of meaning, design and processing of messages in different media, analysis of message content and systems, individual behaviour, social interaction and experience, attitude formation and change, public opinion and collective behaviour, and the consequence of exposure to various messages.

### **Leadership Development**

Penland's 'Leadership Development for Librarians' provides guidance to those who are serving the underprivileged and emerging communities in community mediating through the group work process. It aims to develop competence in understanding major problems associated with group activity and community development work, develop skill in diagnosing the problems which a group leader may handle, acquire experience in leading discussion in order to build leadership skills, and understand the role of skilful interpersonal relations as a technique for bridging the gap between the 'passivity' of discussion and the activism of community involvement.

### **Integrating Services with the Community**

In his book titled, 'Communications Management of Human Resources for Librarians', Penland addresses information managers serving the underprivileged and emerging community and asserts that a "bold new approach" on the evaluation of information service is essential to exert leadership in the patterns of citizen's involvement and local control. He points out that the core of the problem is on integrating library service with the community, focusing attention upon the imperatives of a right to read and new careers, making the full range of information and communicative help which the community has to offer to

persons in need, increasing the likelihood that concerns can be identified and help provided early enough to do some good and strengthening the service program of the community information centres for prevention of information dislocation. The citizens themselves should ultimately be involved in determining the kind of information they get. He opines that without a situation - producing theory of communications, it is unlikely that librarians and information managers will ever produce the strategies for community leadership.

In 'Floating Librarians in the Community', Penland opines that one of the weakest areas of professional preparation, and professional in-service training and development, is community development education. Year after year, many professionally trained recruits go into the field of library and information service with only the most rudimentary notion of training for community, group, and power structure analyses. Information science educational services, historically, have given little formal attention to any training neither for "floating" community librarian nor in developing the ability to use the methods of community development education for the broad informational and educational purposes of actual and potential patrons in the community neighbourhoods. Four models of community communication services he presented are the 'outreach project' for reaching users outside the main building, community involvement, community work beyond regular library hours, and the role of independent information specialist who works outside of the confines of institutional support. Penland says that the role of a library and information professional is to stimulate the articulation of community needs and interests and involve citizens in decision-making processes, using the professional methods.

## **Communication: Theory and Application**

His 'Communication Theory' delineates the foundation of theory and principles, which underlie the research and instructional approach to communications. Cybernetic principles say that the integration and validation are based in part on a situation - producing professional theory for both library and information science. Penland has developed experimental research vehicles as verification matrices, including both on-line and off-line components.

In his book 'Communications Manual for Librarians', Penland points out that the existence of problems in libraries has two significant dimensions - the theoretical and the practical - even though the problems occur mainly in the minds of people to a large extent. The materials and methods for communication he presents have been tested successfully in numerous problem solving contexts.

His 'Learning Patterns of Librarian Clients' presents results of his study of the educational patterns of individuals who have used library resources in a sample region for independent learning projects on a continuing basis. The content of the projects emerged from real-life negotiations and ranged across the transactional environment. Different events - consulting people, reading, browsing, searching, viewing, and listening - are linked to form sequential learning projects. Penland found that the tendency of respondents was to use a combination of all four major types of resources - self as resource, non-human resources such as library materials, another person such as a librarian, and a group - for information and planning. Penland suggests that the role of librarian or information professional as learning consultant could be developed around the psychology of actual learning patterns rather than developing from the way instructors teach or librarians train laymen in information use.

## **Self-Planned Learning**

'Self-Planned Learning in America' reports results of Penland's explorations on the psychology of self-planned learning. The study focuses on various aspects of continuing learning through self-initiated learning projects, reasons people prefer to learn on their own, how they become involved, learning goals, number, type and length of projects, suggested means of evaluation, preferred categories in which self-learning takes place, and use of supporting information for a learning project. Findings are discussed in terms of four types of adult learners, combination learners who conduct their own learning projects and participate in some type of course, self-initiating learners who conduct their own learning projects, formal learners, and non-learners. It includes implications for professionals serving the learning needs of adults as well.

## **Disciplined Encounter with the Patron**

'Interviewing for Counsellor and Reference Librarians' proposes interview as a disciplined encounter technique for counsellors and reference service staff who want to be more effective in serving the individual patron. To Penland, there exist two types of patrons - those who will not talk, and those who will not stop talking. Without training, information service staff tends to rush patrons to the documents rather than take the time to encourage the patron to discuss his purposes and interests. Penland discusses orientation to the interview, patron-librarian interface, counselling in librarianship, interpersonal aspects of librarian counselling, psychological dimensions of librarian counselling, and interview question analysis in this book. Examples of the non-directive interview, directive interview and functional interviewing are also provided.

In 'Advisory Counselling for Librarians' Penland provides an understanding of the background, purpose and functions of

advisory counselling in library and information systems. It delineates the interrelationships of information transfer and meaning transfer and provides a background where flexibility can be developed in moving from one frame of reference and orientation to another with the same patron. Then, it explores the principles and functions of counselling and of guiding the healthy, self-actualising adult towards human development organized around life states, social roles and various coping behaviours. In this work, Penland discusses a variety of principles and techniques for interview and question analysis, and presents the principles and methods of evaluation and research of advisory counselling, for information service professionals.

## **Research Design**

'Communication Research for Librarians' considers research design as a product of the scientific method in Western Civilization whose major purposes are to eliminate the biased judgements of individual researchers and to ensure replication of the study. In general, the formal protocol of the research design includes several elements - theoretical position out of which the hypotheses to be tested grew, relation of definitions to the measurement scales, methods of observation (data collection) and sampling, analysis of data and summary of findings, and conclusions and recommendations for further research. Such an outline is the format of formal report of basic research. With that alone, another investigator can perform precisely the same study with no other information, but the protocol of research design itself. Penland also considered that the task of an author of a research study is to establish, and then describe with precision, the way in which the elements of a study - subject, attribute, setting, moment and method - are to be defined.

## **Participative Development**

His 'Delphi Assessment Study' for the

Pittsburgh Regional Library Center's programs and services is one of the earliest attempts in devising a system for participative development of information services. The study had a sample of around 200 members of the Pittsburgh Regional Library Centre and its purpose was to achieve a consensus on the refinement and prioritisation of possible information services and programs. Respondents were asked to assign a single importance score to each of the services listed. Conclusions drawn from responses were considered in relation to priority assessments and underlying patterns of possible relationships. The results of the study were used to develop resources and services of the centre.

### **Synthesizing the Content in Instructional Design**

In his works on synthesizing the content in instructional design, Penland states that when the instructional content and the media are developed, they need to be synthesized into an integrated program. It should flow as naturally as possible, with each lesson, module and/or activity building the foundation for the next one. It should provide variety that is conducive to learning. According to him, practice sessions need to be mixed in with instructional periods, rather than having all the instructions in the beginning, followed by nothing but practices alone later. He says spaced practice, sometimes termed distributed practice, is more effective than an equivalent practice session that is given in one long stretch of time.

While discussing Learner Control, he suggests that the learner should have the freedom to control the selection and sequencing of the instructional elements. Whenever possible, the learners need to be given a menu to choose from, rather than require them to learn in the then existed preset, linear order.

### **Education Resources Information Center**

Prof. Penland inspired the establishment of Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) opened on May 15th, 1964 and it still continues the long tradition of innovation and enhancement in educational resources. Most of the research papers and reports prepared by Penland are available for open access at ERIC repository. His work at University of Pittsburgh made it the most active university in information science in the world and brought the subject to the forefront in academic world.

### **Concern for Social and Political Development**

Penland has authored numerous novels, which depict the social psychology of his time. His popular novel 'Hosteled Prodigal' is a story set in a millennial one-world environment governed by the United Federation of North American States (UFNAS). It is the story of Bill Scoln, employed as a bawdy house promoter, when his PhD thesis is scuttled by a hedonistic faculty still imbued with an outmoded new age ideology. 'Mooring the Karibbean Bear' is a story of corruption and redemption of a hinterland young adult. 'Narcissus Spurned' is the love story of a young couple whom fate entangles in the socio-political upheavals of the early 21st century at the time when they begin family life and contend with occupational demands. 'Shakedown Lifestyle' is a love story of two people from divergent backgrounds who meet and learn to communicate with a sensitive empathy. Both are openly curious and intelligent about socio-cultural and spiritual affairs, they are often distracted by the world of UFNAS. 'Franchised Desert' is a novel of new age personality

## **Contributions to the Developing Countries**

He travelled widely in developing countries. He visited India many times during 1976-1990. In 1976, he conducted courses consisting of five lectures at Documentation Research and Training Centre (DRTC) on various aspects of communication to senior information service professionals of the country. He also delivered lectures at Banagalore University, Mysore University, Kerala University, Indian Institute of Science, INSDOC, National Library at Calcutta and the Punjab University, on topics concerning application of information and communication technologies.

Prof. Penland continuously communicated with Indian Libraries and librarians for about three decades. He was instrumental in the modernization of various library systems in India also. He involved as contributor and consultant in ALIS Bulletin, Library Progress International and many other library science publications. He served as an evaluator of PhD dissertations on information science at Andhra University and University of Poona. In 1985, he served as a Fulbright Visiting Professor at SNDT Women's University, Bombay. During the period, he involved in conducting an International seminar on 'Changing Technological Environment and Development of Workforces: Directions for Library and Information Science Education', at Osmania University.

## **Democracy and Free Access to Knowledge**

His novels embed his vision on contributions that higher education and research systems can make to socio-cultural and political development. It depicts the

realities, which remain much distant from the achievable goals due to the forces of bias, corruption and craze for wealth and the loss of spiritual values that lead people to wrong directions in life.

The wide and far-ranging endeavours of Patrick R. Penland have long been advantaged by diversely chequered experiences he gathered while being a young adult, vocational practitioner and world traveller. In turn, this wealth of background and experiences has enriched his works qualitatively. His novels represent existential episodes of interpersonal drama within the fate of human destiny. As an information and communications specialist, his professional life was dedicated to the facilitation of relevant information retrieval. Despite early retirement and a career change to narrative writing, he has always been involved with enterprises designed to ensure every citizen's democratic right to free access to universal knowledge for liberty and personal self-betterment which still remains to be a dream. His writings embed the principles of Open Access to research half a century before the movement actually could set to start.

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