*British Columbia Library Association 2007 Conference*
**Burnaby, BC**
**Saturday, April 21, 2007**
**2:00–3:15 p.m.**

# *Don't let Google and the Pennypinchers Get You Down: Defending (or Redefining) Libraries and Librarianship in the Age of Technology*

**Bill Crowley, Ph.D.**
**Professor**
**Graduate School of Library and Information Science**
**Dominican University**
**7900 West Division Street**
**River Forest, IL 60305, U.S. A.**
**708.583.0531 V.**
**708.524.6657 F.**
**crowbill@dom.edu**

## Abstract

What are libraries really about? If libraries and librarians cannot compete with information technology giants like Google, how can they remain relevant to their communities of users? Crowley explores ways to understand how the general public and students view libraries. Bluntly stated, there is no longer any way that librarians and trustees can convince residents of local communities and members of college and university campuses that libraries are their primary information source. Given this reality, Crowley introduces the concept of lifecycle librarianship, offering a useful way of considering library roles and securing the necessary human and financial resources to carry them through. This presentation will encourage realistic and original thinking about the future of libraries and professional librarianship by redefining their primary roles from information suppliers to education providers and self-learning facilitators.

**Speakers:**

Bill Crowley, Professor, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Dominican University

**Convener:**

Julia Hedley

***Don't let Google and the Pennypinchers Get You Down:  Defending (or Redefining) Libraries and Librarianship in the Age of Technology***
**Bill Crowley, GLSIS, Dominican University**
*(NOTE: The presenter is notorious for his "typos" and they are to be expected!)*
I.        <u>**Background of the Presentation**</u>

Before going into the details of today's presentation, I would first like to thank the many librarians who helped educate me on the British Columbia library context. Given the incendiary nature of much of what I have to say today, it is best that these valuable human resources remain nameless.

Although far from an expert on things Canadian, I do know a bit about your country. My dissertation (Crowley 1995) involved the Canadian universities supporting American Library Association-accredited programs and I have published in the Canadian library and information literature (Crowley 1997). I will warn you that I was raised in New York City, a place that is a bit brasher than is normally acceptable to Canadian notions of civility. However, I was employed for about five years with the Alabama Public Library Service. Alabamians and other residents of the American South tend to be particularly polite. In consequence, they have developed a formula to be invoked when speakers feel the need to convey ideas offensive to some in their audience. This formula, used by preachers, journalists, and podium presenters alike, runs something like this:

> ***I will beg your pardon in advance for any disquiet you might feel at my remarks. Unfortunately, this uneasiness may be inevitable for today I intend to both comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.***

And, ladies and gentlemen, ***COMFORTING THE AFFLICTED and AFFLICTING THE COMFORTABLE*** is precisely what I propose to do today.

Today, I will describe for you how destructive it is for the future of libraries and librarians in our provinces, states, and nations (1) to proclaim to our users, funding sources and the public at large that academic, public, and school libraries are predominantly information providers and (2) that librarians are employed primarily as information intermediaries. It is equally destructive to operate our libraries on a gross simplification of the business model. In the age of information self service via Google and its kindred search engines, the business model of the library as a tax supported information provider is irrelevant to a public that is quite well satisfied with "good enough" information available for free on the Internet (*Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources* 2005).  Given this reality, claiming that academic, public, and school libraries are predominately "information" entities only serves to undermine any rationale for sustaining or increasing the number of public dollars committed to their support.

This information science business model which sees information as a commodity to be delivered on the basis of the lowest possible cost is actually a poor business tactic for libraries. It neglects the reality that for many Canadians and Americans the services provided by their libraries are defined less by ***ROI*** or ***Return On Investment*** than by ***ROEI*** or ***Return On Emotional Investment.*** Of late, the realization that quality can be a

casualty of too much cost-reduction has led to the growing embrace of "relationship marketing." As is increasingly the case *Wikipedia.* a free online competitor to the library as information intermediary, provides a good enough definition

> **Relationship marketing** is a form of marketing….in which emphasis is placed on building longer term relationships with customers rather than on individual transactions. It involves understanding the customers' needs as they go through their life cycles. It emphasizes providing a range of products or services to existing customers as they need them. (Wikipedia contributors, "Relationship marketing," accessed April 11, 2007)

Please keep in mind the phrase "understanding the customers' needs as they go through their life cycles." I will ask any in the audience with an MBA to keep *relationship marketing*—a strategy that involves both service effectiveness and emotional commitment—in mind when I talk about lifecycle librarianship as the basis for securing the future of libraries. My own Ph.D. is in higher education administration and I do recognize the folly of not using effective business techniques when they contribute to achieving the two complementary goals of maintaining librarian professionalism and providing effective library service. One simply has to avoid the fundamental error of confusing ends with means. A deprofessionalized library work force is a poor means that works against the end of achieving effective and appropriate library service. At the risk of being accused of blaming the victim, I will be pointing out that it is our own fault when members of the public and funding sources believe otherwise.

***It is always problematic and usually ill-mannered to criticize one's hosts***. However, one of the British Columbia librarians helping me with this presentation pointed me to the 2004 publication *Libraries Without Walls: The World Within Your Reach: A Vision for Public Libraries in British Columbia.* It was published by the province's Public Library Services Branch which was with the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and is now—as it should be—a part of the provincial Ministry of Education. In this work it was stressed that public libraries are active in

- promoting literacy and an enjoyment of reading;
- encouraging a love of life-long learning;
- supporting democratic values through free access to information for everyone;
- providing resources and programs that enhance the lives of children and families;
- supporting the local and provincial economy by providing information on jobs, skills and markets;
- supporting local culture and leisure by partnering with arts and recreation organizations;
- reflecting the personalities of their communities through local culture and heritage collections;
- serving as community meeting places;
- offering an array of services including those for children and seniors, job-seekers and retirees, new Canadians and individuals with special needs. (6)

These are first-rate sets of library services and were identified through an extensive consultation process. As such, they are undoubtedly suited to British Columbian realities. At least six, possibly as many as seven of these nine sets of services

are directly related to lifelong learning and education. As an outsider I feel I cannot argue with the selections. However, as someone with a public relations background I have a real problem with how they are presented to the British Columbia audiences for *Libraries Without Walls*. Unfortunately, it seems to be the case that the library community of British Columbia has decided to market its public libraries as tax supported equivalents to Google and the other information search engines.

***When these valuable services are listed on page 6 of <u>Libraries Without Walls</u> the reader is instructed to regard public libraries as information, not learning services, since***

- "public libraries are important public institutions in British Columbia because they offer highly regarded **information services** that the public trust"; and
- "since 1891, public libraries have provided access to **information** thereby expanding the knowledge and enhancing leisure time of British Columbia's citizens" (6).

Here this presenter will offer a bit of communication advice from his former positions as a public relations representative (New York Public Library) and consultant with PR responsibilities (Alabama Public Library Service). Words are important; they send signals and activate the mental models that we use to understand the world (Crowley 2005a). When the voters of British Columbia are told to view their library services as information resources their basis of comparison is likely to become an Internet search engine. Here it is well to remember that Google and its equivalents are free to anyone with online access to an ISP or Internet Service Provider. In the real world, "cheap," "convenient," and "good enough" information really does tend to trump "pricey," "less convenient," and "excellent" information a great deal of the time. Why should people pay taxes to get information from a library when so often librarians have Google up on their own computers?

It is likely the case that *Libraries Without Walls* has wrongly defined the roles of the public library as informational. However, the responsibility for inappropriately seeing library learning programs as information services is a shared one. The fault lies with the MBA consultants who speak so often at our conferences and, most importantly, with the information educators in American Library Association-accredited programs who over the years told the librarians, trustees, and other library supporters involved in the planning effort that corporate information models are perfectly appropriate for operating academic, public, and school library services.

Many in this room may be unaware that "information science"—disguised as "library and information studies" in ALA-accredited programs—is so unrelated to the world of real libraries that

> A series of studies undertaken or led by Canadian researchers Richard Apostle and Boris Raymond—brought together in *Librarianship and the Information Paradigm*— found almost no convergence between the information-driven circumstances of special libraries/information centers and the educational, cultural, recreational, and informational realities of academic, public, and school libraries. (Crowley 1999, 1128).

Information intermediaries, including librarians who see themselves as such, are passé. We are in an age of information self-service. When information faculty in ALA-accredited programs told the academic, public, and school librarians and trustees in this audience that they were information intermediaries and not lifelong learning facilitators they sold you a particularly destructive version of  "yesterday's future" (Thatcher 1992).

For those who doubt this reality I would suggest consulting one of the more interesting studies of library relevance on a global basis. Published in 2005 it is a rather large document entitled *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources: A Report to the OCLC Membership*. It was based on data collected by Harris Poll Online and involved 3,348 English-speakers, male and female, 18 years and older, with Internet access who were living in Australia, Canada, India, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States (xi)

The results on this survey were considered by the OCLC marketing and research staff with an overwhelmingly strong business education and perspective. Three of the "principal contributors" had MBA degrees and all six were involved in marketing (*Perceptions* 2005). These researchers and writers concluded that the data, when analyzed, demonstrated

- **The "library" is a single brand.** People see all of all types of libraries as, in effect, a single organization, "one entity with many outlets—constant, consistent, expected. The 'Library' is, in essence, a global brand: a brand dominated by nostalgia and reinforced by common experience" (6-8). From a planning point of view this perception represents a plus. It offers the possibility for public, academic, and school librarians to employ the philosophy of *lifecycle librarianship* and jointly plan at town, city, or county levels to identify and meet human learning needs from "lapsit to nursing home."
- **Libraries are not really used as a source of electronic information.** While as many as 50% of the respondents said that "information" was the main purpose of the library—as opposed to a third who still indicated "books"—this information-oriented response broke down when it was revealed that "The majority of information seekers are not making much use of the array of electronic resources (online magazines, databases, and reference assistance, for example) libraries make available to them (6-4)."
- **Google and other search engines own the electronic information world or what OCLC terms the "infosphere."** "There is widespread use of [non-Library] Internet information resources. Respondents regularly use search engines, email and instant messages to obtain and use information" (6-4)."

So, what do people expect from this thing we call "the library"? As noted by OCLC and italicized in the report:

When prompted, information consumers see libraries' role in the community *as a place to learn, as a place to read, as a place to make information freely available, as a place to provide research support, as a place to provide free computer Internet access* [emphasis in original] and more. (6-8)

The library is "a place to learn" and "a place to read"? These do not appear to be the views of people as "information consumers." It really sounds like the interests of people as lifelong learners and recreational readers, who, we now know, are one and the same. OCLC tried to measure information use but actually reported on people who see all library services as part of a learning process. And that learning reality is why professional librarians should stop bemoaning public and student embrace of search engines as their primary information sources. We work in learning organizations and part of our job is to help patrons, customers, users, students, faculty and quite a lot of current nonusers learn to employ search engines and other information tools to achieve the best possible effectiveness.

We can use this new knowledge of how people actually view libraries to set aside our information illusions and recognize that information is a tool and learning and education constitute a lifelong process, model, and reality. Tools change but learning can and often does go on for a human lifetime. When we embrace the "learning as process" library philosophy we can understand that our fundamental role is not that of harried information provider trying in vain to compete with *Google, Yahoo, Ask* or all the new search engines and other Internet resources that will inevitably appear in the future. Librarians are not defined by our tools. We use tools in our mission to help others in their lifelong learning endeavors.

### Restating the Purpose of the Presentation

 To restate the purpose of this presentation, I am here today is to get you thinking about the future of libraries and professional librarianship. It is early in the afternoon but I hope that some in this audience will leave the room livid, absolutely outraged at what I have to say. If that reaction encourages you to look at your beliefs about libraries and professional librarianship, whether to confirm or change them, then I have done my job.

To outline the remainder of today's presentation,

*First, I am going to provide you with the American Library Association's definition of "library and information studies" and show how it has little relationship to library realities. Next, I will offer a new definition of "library science" to consider as an alternative to "library and information studies" for academic, public, and school librarians.*

My challenge to you will be for you to leave here and look at what your library does and on the basis of that evidence and your experience determine whether your public, academic, or school library operates on the principles of information science that dominate ALA's definition or library science.

*Second, I will take you through the nature of professional and institutional survival with two accounts that illustrate what it means.*

The first example I will provide may be the quintessential version of applying the business model to libraries. It is a consultant's report advocating the imposition of a for-profit model on the public libraries of an entire British county. The second example addresses what OCLC, the Online Computer Library Center, Inc., located in Dublin, Ohio, sees as a fundamental problem involving students and academic libraries. It seems that students equate academic libraries with books and view them as increasingly irrelevant to their lifestyles.

*Third, being a good pragmatist, I am obligated to follow John Dewey's injunction that any statement of a problem has to include in it possible solutions. In helping you address the issues of librarian professionalism and library relevance we will explore how these examples demonstrate the negatives of using the wrong lens—the information lens—to understand how members of the general public and college and university students view the learning entities they call libraries.* If we use the right lens—the "library lens"—we can build on what people expect from their libraries and escape an impossible problem. Bluntly stated, there is *no* realistic way we can convince residents of local communities and members of college and university campuses that libraries are their primary information source when their own experience I repeat, their own experience, teaches them that libraries really are a critical resource for lifelong learning. Given this reality, the concept of *lifecycle librarianship*—**LL** for those who *like to collect acronyms*, gives us a useful way of considering library roles and securing the necessary human and financial resources to carry them through.

In offering possible solutions I will start with day to day reforms that can be implemented relatively easily by public and academic libraries. Then, since a number of my fellow educators, in their capacities as consultants, have argued for applying the business model to libraries, I will turn the table and make the case that there is a greater justification for applying the business model to American Library Association-accredited programs. Many such programs are at the point where, *increasingly, they should be seen, not as organizations of colleagues but as entities having the status of officially endorsed education vendors*. It is ALA's duty, not to give such programs a blank check to teach what they will but, as with any vendor, to insure that they supply the necessary "product," in this case graduates with the professional knowledge necessary for 21$^{st}$ century public and academic librarianship.

## I.      ALA's Definition of "Library and Information Studies" and a Short Definition of "Library Science."

The indoctrination of aspiring librarians and would-be professors into an information-centric view of the library world starts before they are admitted to their ALA-accredited program. How often have the library practitioners and information educators in this room examined the definition of the field you were educated for, what ALA terms "library and information studies"?  This definition, the guide for organizing programs adopted by the American Librarian Association in 1992, is perfectly acceptable for corporate knowledge managers or research information specialists. Although offered by a "library" association, the definition of our field is lacking in "things library." It only takes the deletion of the words "library and" in the two places where they appear to reveal why many librarians have received an education that is largely irrelevant to library realties.

Dropping the phrase "library and" the ALA definition reads

The phrase "~~library and~~ information studies" is understood to be concerned with recordable information and knowledge and the services and technologies to facilitate their management and use. ~~Library and~~ information studies encompasses information and knowledge creation, communication, identification, selection, acquisition, organization and description, storage and retrieval, preservation, analysis, interpretation, evaluation, synthesis, dissemination, and management.

(American Library Association, 1992, 2)

This definition is great for faculty researchers. However, when applied to educating librarians it results in increasing irrelevance. As noted, this is the long established definition of our field. But does it really describe the bulk of what real librarians do in real public, academic, and school libraries? For me it has always represented a definition that has a particular appeal to catalogers. These are wonderful people who happen to be more at home organizing information out of the public eye. Library jobs can be self-selecting and some catalogers, certainly not all, are simply un comfortable with the public-oriented learning and educational efforts of librarians and library staff that is often so eloquently done through effective children's storytelling, encouraging primary school students to read through selecting books fit for their purposes, teaching new college students the "tricks of the online searching trade," whether it be databases or search engines, and working with faculty to better use information tools to design new classes or develop new theories.

Rather than try and twist library reality so that circulating books, telling stories, organizing public programs, and operating a library art gallery can be covered by the definition of "information science," I would like to offer the following definition of "library science or librarianship." You might want to see which definition better fits what your academic, public, or school library actually does.

As a field, library science or librarianship is concerned with understanding and advancing learning throughout the human lifecycle, with a particular emphasis on the processes of reading and other forms of communicating story, information, and meaning through library and library-related contexts. The emphasis on human learning, content, and meaning distinguishes library science from the newer field of information science. (Bill Crowley, October 6, 2006)

Here I have to let you in on a little secret. If you are employed with a public, school, or academic library—and really believe that you are an information specialist and not a librarian—you are either engaging in wishful thinking or you have been successfully brainwashed by your ALA-accredited program. For what we professors saw as valid reasons—program survival and the lure of the information economy—we did not give you the real facts about the library profession. We gave you a "library as information center illusion," what less-charitable sociologists might be tempted to term *"mythic fact."* And just what is mythic fact? "Mythic fact is a claim which can be accepted as true, for example, on the basis of being repeated in textbooks and monographs used in the education of new LIS researchers [and students]" (Crowley 1999, 1129)

For decades, a substantial percentage of faculty members--most notably in the information schools that were formerly library schools--have mixed fact and fiction in their syllabi and textbooks. Many, although not all, of their students have believed it. Here I will urge you not to shoot the messenger. I have always been identified with the "library wing" of the failed compromise that we called "library and information science" before it dropped "library" and became "information science" (Crowley 1999).

Ironically, in a world where people are becoming their own information experts, it is the information scientists, not the librarians, who are unable to make the case against

having their jobs outsourced or offshored. In the age of information self-service librarians are needed more than ever. Yet, even in corporations and research centers, "information specialists" operating from the United States face being seen as peripheral and irrelevant when their duties can be sent overseas for a fifth or an eight of the cost.

## II.    Two Accounts Illustrating the Problem of Professional and Institutional Survival

As a longtime consultant I often find it useful to remember the frequently encountered reality that people often resist change in their professional lives until it becomes agonizingly clear that not changing is going to be more painful. So, the first story I have for you is going to be a recent nightmare for public library directors who believe in their hearts that the world would be a better place if people stopped being so concerned with reading books and, instead, started using all those really great databases.

### A.  <u>A Nightmare for the Professional Public Librarian or Tim Coates and *Who's in Charge? Responsibility for the Public Library Service*</u>

In 2004 the Libri Trust[1] published **Who's in Charge? Responsibility for the Public Library Service**.  According to the Libri website Tim Coates, the author of the study, was a businessman with decades of experience in publishing, book retailing and consulting before involving himself with advising on the management of public libraries. A longtime bookstore manager, Coates, in 1992, opened his own large book shop in London, claiming it to be the first in the capital with 24 hour-a-day-service, with a café and all the features that have become the style of modern book stores (29). Coates sees himself as a sort of living exemplar of how to successfully apply a cost-conscious business model to meeting reader needs. Such self-serving posturing aside, Coates has clearly been a relentless proponent of transferring the for-profit business model to meeting reader needs in the public library sector.

What did Tim Coates see as the future of the public library in England? Analyzing national figures and local data from the County of Hampshire's public library service, he explored how library use had declined for seven straight years while library revenue had increased by 25%. On the basis of these and similar reports he asserted

> In the library service there is so much good work in progress to introduce reading to those who are excluded and to those who are isolated. Libraries have always been a centre for learning through life. However, today's reality is that if we do not address the fundamental structural problems of the library service, there may be no libraries to provide those excellent services to readers in ten or fifteen years time. Those who are responsible for libraries must change what they are doing and the way they approach their work. Change in the library service requires change in the library profession and in the way in which library professionals are managed by councils. (1)

Throughout England Coates found that there were three factors that "dominate the views of users and non users and determine whether or not a library is likely to be used"

- o The range of books and materials and whether it is likely to satisfy the particular need
- o The location, appearance, welcome, convenience, and general state of the library building
- o Whether the library is open when it is needed. (12)

To this end Coates offers a "programme of recommended actions" that includes

- Attractive, welcoming, accessible and safe buildings, designed to meet the library needs of all sections of the community and able to act as study centers;
- An extensive and wide range of books, computers, reference works, electronic databases, newspapers and magazines selected to meet the needs of all sections of the community whether they are currently library users or not;
- Long opening hours from early morning to late evening and including Sundays; improved access for those who may be in any way at a disadvantage; and mobile libraries and home services which seek out the remote and less mobile in the community. (4)

So, who could argue with well designed and attractive libraries, well stocked with reading material and databases, and open all possible hours of the day? I will give you a hint —***Coates says nothing positive about the value of professional librarians.*** In fact, he rather doubts that professional librarians have any value at all.

It needs to be stressed that Coates does not limit himself to public services and provides his readers with a number of ways to save money, including reducing the incredible cost of getting material on library shelves. For him, the library "Acquisitions Supply Chain" seems to have at least 20 steps, many of them unjustifiable, to get a book on the shelf ready for circulation. In England's Hampshire County, his calculations assert that the library spent approximately £2,000,000 in a process that involved "consulting, selecting and approving orders, entering data on to systems, processing and preparing items for loan, re-distribution and handling of stock, re-cataloguing, labeling and stamping, the maintenance of library lending systems, approval and paying invoice" for only £1,400,000 worth of material. Restated in Canadian and American terms, his claim is the equivalent of asserting that the Hampshire County public library spends about $10 behind the scenes to put each $7 paperback in the hands of a reader.

> According to Coates
> Those processes, which are substantially the same as those a commercial book buyer would undertake (with the obvious difference that preparation for loan is replaced by preparation for sale) would only cost commercial operators approximately £70,000. The costs to commercial operators cannot be more because otherwise they would not be able to afford to sell the goods. In other words, the process in this library service [Hampshire] alone costs nearly £2m more that it needs to. (21)

Coates claims that the cost to a comparably sized bookstore operation of £70,000 pounds to provide materials for purchase and list them in the bookstore database represents a figure of about 3.5% (three and a half percent) of what the Hampshire

Country library service expends for getting material on the shelves and in its online catalog. His report does not provide a justification for his library figures but he does know the economics of bookstore operations. If he is anywhere near right, we have a real problem. Unless libraries develop a reasonable justification for every dollar or pound spent securing, cataloging, and maintaining material—a justification that is understandable and supported by the public in the public's own terms—applying the business model to library collection development and processing operations supports a slash-and-burn approach. Superficially, individuals such as this presenter, a former senior manager in library public services, could easily find much to like in any reasonable way of reducing the costs of *support services* such as technical services if in the end Coates's recommendations, grounded in the business model, provide better *public services*.

But does it? When examined, Coates's application of the business model to by defining down programs to the lowest acceptable minimum does not really advance the library's mission to serve the lifelong learning needs of its community. Briefly stated, in arguments that come right out of the extreme version of the business model of librarianship, he alludes to other services but pretty much limits public library programs to better buildings, larger collections, and more hours, and sees professional librarianship as irrelevant to such factors.

> Coates writes
> Most library services make a distinction between 'professionally qualified' staff and 'library assistants'. However the public assumes that all staff members working in a library are librarians and would hope to receive the best possible standard of service from whomever they address a request for help. The distinction may not be helpful in giving the best possible service at all times.
>
> Clearly there is a need to make sure that the service given to the public is the best it can possibly be, and that all staff have the training that allows them to give services to the best of their ability and makes best use of their knowledge and experience. The demarcation between professional and non-professional staff should cease. (20)

Admittedly, we librarians often lack licensure [2] in the public library world. Here licensure should be understood as a formal process that provides for state certification of practitioner quality in a manner similar to the certifications accorded teachers, attorneys, and even beauticians. In consequence, it is not usually the case that professional librarians are seen as legally seen as such by virtue of earning an ALA-accredited master's degree, we may be faced with Canadian equivalents of Coates's demand that British public librarians study community needs and determine how libraries can meet them. As he envisions, such a study would address

- The difference between the roles of professional and non-professional staff
- The training they receive
- The content of qualifications
- The remuneration and cost of staff
- The support roles played by the existing professional and training bodies
  …and match those against the needs of the public. (20)

Unfortunately, in the public library world of the early 21st century we have consistently allowed ourselves to fail or, more charitably, fall short in making the case for librarian professionalism, both in the education of librarians and the provision of library services. So, whether or not we like it, the business model is very soon going to force us to provide answers to these and similar questions. We are going to have to follow the road map laid out by Coates and other advocates of accountability in justifying both our services and our professionalism. The good news, when such studies are actually carried, out is that they can and should document the incredibly powerful role played by public libraries in facilitating learning throughout the human lifecycle.

However, in addition to forcing us to open our eyes to what public libraries are actually doing, we will have to learn to apply the business model ourselves to evaluating the success of information schools in providing lifecycle librarians. Simply put, we have to determine how effective an information-oriented education prepares graduates for the learning-centered realities of public library service.

## B.  Student Learning and Academic Librarians

Your presenter will return in a bit to a further consideration of public librarianship but right now I have to fulfill my promise to address the issues of academic librarians. In 2006, OCLC followed up on its December 2005 *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources: A Report to the OCLC Membership* with a work concentrating on what its multination study found regarding academic libraries. The work is entitled ***College Students' Perceptions of Libraries*** *and* ***Information Resources: A Report to the OCLC Membership*** and it is available online. Analyzing the previously collected data to more intensely address information provided by the 396 college student subset of the larger survey the report asserts:

- The most frequent use of the library among college students is as **a place to do homework and study** *(Part 2.1).*
- **"Books" is the library brand** among college students. There is no runner up. ***(Part 3.8)***
- College students use personal knowledge and common sense and cross-referencing other sites to judge if electronic information is trustworthy. They use other Web sites with similar information and their teachers to validate information. ***(Parts 3.2 and 3.5)***
- Search engines fit college students' lifestyles better than physical or online libraries. The majority of college students see search engines as a perfect lifestyle fit. ***(Part 3.7)*** (6.2)

In a finding that seems to particularly bother academic librarians the college and university student component of the OCLC study concluded that what call the "information-oriented" definition of the academic library was in difficulty. Apparently, there are certain fundamental problems with information version of the library "brand." The report notes

In addition to being familiar, trusted and high-quality, strong brands must be relevant. Relevance is the degree to which people believe a brand meets their needs. In the

survey we tested for relevancy and lifestyle fit. Sixty-four percent of college students said that search engines perfectly fit their lifestyle. Thirty percent said online libraries are a perfect fit. Eleven percent said libraries do not fit their lifestyle. That library resources and librarians add value to information was not disputed by respondents, but the data suggest that the relevancy and lifestyle fit of that value are in question. (6-6)

Restated, search engines are more important to students than academic libraries. Academic libraries are not disparaged; they are just seen as increasingly irrelevant and out of sync with student lifestyles. So, what does OCLC see as the solution to irrelevant academic libraries and a problematic library brand?

Libraries must work collectively to "rejuvenate" the brand. It is not simply about educating students about the library and its physical and electronic resources. Trying to educate consumers whose habits and lifestyles are changing and have changed seldom works. It doesn't work for companies and it probably won't work for libraries. (6-6)

And what is the base that academic libraries have to work from? It happens to be the same base that supports libraries in general. It is also a predominately learning-oriented base.
To repeat,

When prompted, information consumers' see libraries roles in the community

- as a place to learn
- as a place to read
- as a place to make information freely available
- as a place to support literacy
- as a place to provide research support
- as a place to provide free computer/Internet access
- and more (6-6)

### III.    Possible Solutions to the Problem of Public, Academic, and School Library Irrelevance to the Information Consumer

**General Observations**

It is possible to disagree with much of the information orientation of the OCLC analysis contained in the 2006 report *College Students' Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources*, as well as the December 2005 *Perceptions of Libraries and Information Resources,* and still concur with one if its fundamental  assertions—"Libraries must work collectively to 'rejuvenate' the brand" (6-6).

But the process of rejuvenation can be very different, depending if one takes either information or a learning perspective. First, let's look a public libraries.

**A.      PUBLIC LIBRARIES---THE INSTITUTION AND THE
          PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIAN**

**Short to Long Term**

In the short term your presenter is advocating the creation of an evolving **21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Library Learning and Education Agenda.** Carrying through this agenda involves the need to do a number of things. To begin with, like the professor I am, I am going to start handing out assignments. First, every member of this audience, in order to get a passing grade for her or his public or academic library—and your own professionalism, whether librarian or trustee—has to read a copy of that wonderful **Canadian** work entitled *Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community* by Catherine Sheldrick Ross, Lynne (E.F.) McKechnie, and Paulette M. Rothbauer (Libraries Unlimited, 2006). This book is required reading for those information specialists (you may hate it) and librarians who believe that public and other libraries have fundamentally important roles to play in advancing lifelong learning. Reading this book was instrumental for me in developing the new definition of library science and in generating the concept of lifecycle librarianship. Here I need to point out that I will not get a cent from the Canadian authors if you buy the book. But you will understand, among many things, why recreational reading is so powerful a learning tool. If you do not feel up to reading a book, at least read Anne E. Cunningham and Keith E. Stanovich's "What Reading Does for the Mind" in the Spring-Summer 1998 issue of *American Educator.*

The second assignment, this one for those concerned with the future of the public library, is to download a copy of Tim Coates's *Who's in Charge? Responsibility for the Public Library Service.* Read it and then run scared, real scared. This is your future if you cannot come up with a learning or educational definition and program for the public library now that the information model is failing. Such definitions should be based on lifecycle librarianship and its commitment to studying and meeting human learning needs from the lapsit to the nursing home. Let's examine the possible components of the **21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Library Learning and Educational Agenda**.

<u>**21<sup>st</sup> Century Public Library Learning and Educational Agenda**</u>

1. Comprehend that the public library largely falls under "library science" ***not*** "information science." As a field, library science or librarianship is concerned with understanding learning throughout the human lifecycle, with a particular emphasis on the processes of reading and other forms of communicating story, information, and meaning through library and library-related contexts. The emphasis on human learning, content, and meaning distinguishes library science from the newer field of "information science."

2. Understand that the heavy tax support accorded Canadian public schools indicates a general willingness of the culture to support programs that are seen as learning oriented and educationally beneficial to voters and their families.

3. Recognize that privileging the master's degree from a program accredited by the American Library Association, by hiring whenever possible staff possessing the traditional educational "gold standard" of the library profession, may be the only viable method of avoiding ongoing librarian deprofessionalization as dictated

through use of the corporate business model in public libraries. One way of doing so is for all library staff to celebrate the education of library personnel by wearing name tags with professional qualifications, e.g., "Jane Jones, MLS/MLIS/MIS, Librarian," "John Smith, B.A., Library Assistant," etc. If one is concerned about stalking, drop the last name. Regardless of what Tim Coates believes, not all librarians and library staff members are interchangeable and wearing name tags might begin conversations with community members who have no idea that librarians have or need a professional education.

4. Become aware that a unionized professional librarian workforce can be a management tool in that it represents a potentially valuable ally in resisting the imposition of the business model within public libraries by trustees and other government officials willing to accept a lower level of professionalism in return for reduced cost. Through working to maintain the numbers of professionally educated librarians, such unions provide a contemporary countervailing force to the deprofessionalization imperatives and help insure that the future ranks of library administrators are filled with professionally educated librarians. Unions, in short, can help buy us time while administrators switch our service orientation from the information model, increasingly irrelevant in a self-service era, to the learning model of the public library and embrace lifecycle librarianship as a service philosophy.

5. Demonstrate leadership by national and state public library associations in bringing public librarians and trustees together to identify the knowledge, understanding, and skill needed by professional librarians in the lifecycle librarianship learning/educational model of the public library and in insuring that present or alternative American Library Association-accredited programs offer courses and degrees that embody and convey such requirements. In all fairness, before we demand appropriate education from the education vendors that we term ALA-accredited programs, we have to identify what public libraries actually do and answer the business model questions offered by Tim Coates. This is a hardheaded approach that is very different from the strategy taken by former ALA-President Michael Gorman both in his presidency and in his flawed yet compelling *Our Enduring Values: Librarianship in the 21st Century.* Gorman's heart is in the right place and his often harsh rhetoric has the virtue of making any proposals of mine look moderate in comparison. In the process of determining what public librarians actually do, in order to negotiate with the ALA-accredited professional education vendors, we need to provide acceptable reasons for

    a. The difference between the roles of professional and non-professional staff
    b. The training they receive
    c. The content of qualifications ([degrees}
    d. The remuneration and cost of staff
    e. The support roles played by the existing professional and training bodies
    …and demonstrate how all these human and financial inputs serve the learning needs of the public. (2004, 20)

6. Comprehend that "recreational" activities of the public library, when analyzed, often support priority learning and educational objectives. Examples of this

phenomenon include the advancement of learning through supplying substantial amounts of reading material. Researchers such as Anne E. Cunningham and Keith E. Stanovich ("What Reading Does for the Mind") have shown us that reading volume itself is so powerful a learning tool that "even the child with limited reading and comprehension skills will build vocabulary and cognitive structures through reading" (21). In other words, while reading cannot make geniuses out of people with average IQ's it can help them live up to their God-given, genetic and/or environmental potential. When properly marketed, the vital library activities promoting reading—preschool programs, teen poetry slams, and adult yearlong reading programs and book discussion groups—can and should reinforce the public's existing view that public libraries are for enjoyable learning.

7.  Understand that the learning centered model of the Canadian public library requires a particularly strong librarian presence in children, young adult, and reader's advisory services. Reading can increase potential at any age but it is best to start early and reinforce through the human lifecycle. Youth services constitute the public library's front line in the struggle for an educated society; we need to give it the priority it deserves.

8.  Realize that the learning model of the public library requires facilities designed or renovated to emphasize such learning spaces as small and large learning rooms, computer labs, art galleries, and performance spaces/meeting rooms with portable stages.

9.  Know that in an Internet-facilitated world the public library's role in making possible effective information use is primarily educational and lies in the (a) provision of instruction, frequently via workshops, in employing effective information tools and techniques for validating the information acquired through various means and (b) acquiring or identifying of useful information resources and the facilitation of their use in Internet-facilitated environments.

10. In American context, this listing includes the need to study the effects of the HAPLR rating system and to explore developing alternative procedures that better measure public library quality, particularly in the areas deemed to be priorities by informed users and nonusers.

**B.      ACADEMIC LIBRARIES---THE INSTITUTION AND THE PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIAN**

**Short to Long Term**

As noted earlier, this presenter would also like any academic librarians in the audience to go home and borrow or buy a copy of ***Reading Matters: What the Research Reveals about Reading, Libraries, and Community***. Again, if you do not feel up to reading a book, at least read Anne E. Cunningham and Keith E. Stanovich's "What Reading Does for the Mind" in the Spring-Summer 1998 issue of *American Educator*. Next, I would suggest downloading a copy of the Canadian Council on Learning's ***State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency—Report on Learning in Canada 2007*** (2007)*.* Then I would like you to go to the web and find Canadian equivalents to the ACT Inc. report ***Reading Between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals about College Readiness in Reading*** (2006). In the United States this report represents a call for action for academic libraries since it reveals that "only 51 percent of 2005 ACT-tested

[American] high school graduates are ready for college-level reading"(2006, 1). This report puts the responsibility for the reading deficit on K through 12 educators and says nothing about what needs to be done to help students read better in their colleges and universities. After you have read the book and the Canadian equivalents to *Reading Between the Lines,* next determine if students in Canadian higher education, from community colleges through universities have a reading problem. If Canada as a whole or British Columbia in particular is not afflicted by such a problem, you can skip the next section. Should such a problem of student reading readiness exist, then

- take the time to find out what your campus is already doing to increase student reading levels;
- talk to some faculty in the various departments and schools, as well as support services that see the promotion of student reading as "their" issue;
- while visiting talk up *Reading Matters* (drop off copies purchased by your academic library Friends group) and emphasize its contribution to addressing the problems highlighted in whatever the Canadian equivalents are to *Reading Between the Lines.* Shortly thereafter, hold a catered lunch or dinner at the library for those who are interested in composing a well-considered memo for your Vice President for Academic Affairs or Provost.  In this memo, drawing on a spectrum of possible solutions, including those described by Ross, McKechnie, and Rothbauer in *Reading Matters,* you and you new allies can suggest a number of ways of attacking the Canadian reading issues.
- Talk to your local public and school librarians about what steps they have or can take in tackling this communitywide problem of inadequate reading skills. Use this as a basis for your contributions to lifecycle librarianship.

In addressing reading readiness, there are other steps that academic librarians can take to enhance their cooperation with research and teaching faculty. A few years ago your presenter offered a number of ways of fostering academic librarian value to the larger university or college community in an article published in the November 2001 issue of *College & Research Libraries*. Entitled "Tacit Knowledge, Tacit Ignorance, and the Future of Academic Librarianship," the essay advocated such steps as involving sympathetic on-campus or external faculty and administrators in helping university or college librarians surface the tacit knowledge held by present and potential users regarding what the library is and what it should be. To this end I advocated a number of planning approaches

- Conducting brainstorming sessions from the perspective of the user or nonuser
- Undertaking large group visits to libraries that have become successful models for change
- Viewing the campus and off-campus environments as learning niche markets with sometimes-differing service requirements

In the area or actual programs your presenter floated such ideas as
- Creating or reinvigorating popular literature collections. Should Canadian higher education students evidence a lack of reading readiness, such efforts to promote reading may well have become even more pressing priorities.

- Teach tuition-generating, credit–bearing courses on using information. If students are going to use Google for self-service, let us make sure that it is quality self-service that they receive.
- Negotiate with the university English or popular culture departments for librarians to teach for-credit courses on established or emerging reading genres in order to advance student reading abilities. Once again, using ACT's ***Between the Lines: What the ACT Reveals about College Readiness*** (2006) as a touchstone, a little research on the part of Canadian academic librarians may provide leverage to make this a campus-wide priority and a target for library and librarian involvement.
- Put a cyber café in the academic library
- Continue or initiate programs for academic librarians to earn Ph.D.s In hindsight, in addition to advanced degrees in a variety of subject areas I now see particular value in doctoral degrees dealing with the process of human learning and reading.

For more on the continuing issues facing academic librarians, as well as additional tactics for a developing faculty allies and insuring that your academic library meets priority campus needs, please refer back to "Tacit Knowledge, Tacit Ignorance, and the Future of Academic Librarianship." It's easy to find on the web. Just do a Google search or use the web address in the "Selected Bibliography."

### C.      School Libraries---The Institution and the Teacher-Librarian

It is a challenging fact of political life for teacher librarians that "funding for school libraries is included in the block funding that [British Columbia's] Government allocates to school districts" and that the BC authorities leave the allocation of such dollars to locally elected school boards (van Dyk 2007). If the British Columbia Teacher-Librarians' Association's regularly issued annual surveys of working and learning conditions and the Ontario Library Association's *School Libraries & Student Achievement in Ontario* (2006) are to be believed, Canada's ignorance of the value of teacher-librarians almost rivals that of the "great republic to the south." It is indicative of a real lack of appreciation that "only 18% of school libraries have a full-time teacher librarian" in British Columbia (British Columbia 2006, 5), despite the reality that research elsewhere in Canada joins prior American studies in demonstrating that the work of teacher librarians directly contributes to student proficiency in—and enjoyment of--reading (Ontario Library Association 2006, 2).

Ignoring the value of academic, public, and school librarians seems to be a North American reality. However, the specific reasons why teacher librarians are <u>unsuccessful in securing recognition and support</u>, reasons that include a lack of school administrator knowledge of librarian capabilities, absence of positive views of teacher librarians in teacher and administrator training, perception of teacher librarians as "support resources" instead of "colleagues" by other teachers, and the tendency of teacher-librarians to talk to themselves and not to spread the good word about libraries to their bosses, are fairly well known (Hartzell 2002). However, the imbalance in power between teacher librarians and their bosses is also in play.

Quite a few years ago this presenter was both employed as the administrator of an Indiana multitype library cooperative and serving as chair of that state's librarian and trustee legislative committee. At the time, the president of the presenter's cooperative

happened to be the coordinator of school library media for a system located in the area's most populated county. Driving to and from the state capitol of Indianapolis on multiple occasions we had plenty of time to discuss the fundamental problem facing school librarians or teacher librarians in advocating for additional funding at the state or provincial level. Briefly, teacher-librarians want funding earmarked for school libraries and their principals, superintendents, and school boards, all want block funding. Since fighting against one's bosses is seldom helpful to career longevity, it is not unknown, in the U.S., for school librarians to ask public and academic librarians to lobby on their behalf with state legislators. However, such assistance always ran the risk of becoming rather complicated when legislators played divide and conquer and asked, "You have a choice, do you want more funding for school libraries or for public libraries?"

But what is to be done for teacher librarians and school libraries when information has become self-service and even articles from peer-reviewed journals can be freely available on the Web (see Crowley 2001)?

The short answer involves a long-term solution. Teacher librarians should change the terms of the discussion and join public and academic librarians in developing a provincial approach to lifecycle librarianship that defines lifelong learning, reading, and literacy as the "problem to be solved by libraries." Those who have studied extended mass campaigns have found that they flounder when everyone wants specific recognition and programs for change become complicated mixtures of "we are this, we are that, we are all these things," as if simple addition made an effective change program.

Successful campaigns, winning ways of getting public attention and legislative action have a
1.  common concept around which to gather "solutions and ideas";
2.  "solution at hand [that] is simple, easily understood, and strengthened with personal anecdotes";
3.  common name. (Christie 2005).

**The common c<u>oncept</u> is lifelong learning, reading, and literacy; the <u>solution</u> is the library and librarian, and the <u>common name</u> is *LIFECYCLE LIBRARIANSHIP*. Think of the possibilities including marketing on a variation of "Learning and Reading for a Lifetime—It's educational, profitable, and fun."**

Let me leave you with this reminder. Remember what OCLC found. We are valued for our contributions to individual and societal lifelong learning. Useful technologies come and go but the impulse to learn, including the desire to learn about technology, can last a person's entire life. Our patrons, users, and customers believe that our library "business" is learning and reading. It is the sort of business that can insure that we librarians have the incredible opportunity to remain relevant for much more than the foreseeable future.

Thank you for the invitation to talk with you about our really exciting horizons.

**Notes**

1.   *The following is taken from the website of the Libri Trust, more formally the Libri Charity for Libraries*,
Libri's mission is to encourage a vibrant and relevant public library network, focused on its prime responsibility of providing …the public with a good choice of books for reading and reference. A network where each local library can develop as a centre of community involvement, and which everyone in the local community wants to use.

 We believe that the public library service has important lessons to learn from all sectors of the book trade and the information provision sector. Learning the lessons will help create a public library service that is efficient, serves the needs of local communities and maintains public libraries as the heart of community life.

 Demand for books has never been greater. The public library service is excluding itself from this trend and the time is ripe for change. (Accessed September 8, 2006)

2.   According to the *Wikipedi*a contributors, "Licensure refers to the granting of a license (in the US….elsewhere the term registration is used), usually to work in a particular profession. Many professions require a license from the government (generally the state government) in order to ensure that the public will not be harmed by the incompetence of the practitioners. Doctors, nurses, lawyers, psychologists, and public accountants are some examples of professions that require licensure.

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