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October, 2008

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/james_donovan/50/

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ABSTRACT. Predictions about the end of libraries point to a real crisis, but assign the wrong cause. Libraries will not be displaced by technology like Google, but can be undermined by librarians' own reactions to patron demand for Google-like experiences. Librarians can respond with a "weak model" that prioritizes the satisfaction of patrons, or a "strong model" that recognizes higher values rooted in the status of librarianship as a profession. Although recent trends favor the dominance of the weak model, only by embracing the strong model can librarians survive the challenges that threaten libraries.

KEYWORDS. Google, Internet, library 2.0, professional ethics, patron expectations

INTRODUCTION

Libraries in general, and law libraries in particular, are approaching an institutional crisis, one largely of librarians' own making. The worry

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The author would like to thank Carol A. Watson and Taylor Fitchett, who commented on an earlier draft of this article. Constructive feedback was also generously offered by his former colleagues of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Brock Scholars Program, Lori Whaley Barton, Becky Estes Bell, Cheryl S. Clingan, Clay Sellers, and Andy Walker. Any errors or outlandish claims are entirely my own.

Legal Reference Services Quarterly, Vol. 27(2-3) 2008

Available online at <http://www.haworthpress.com>

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doi: 10.1080/02703190802398581

as expressed by law professor and legal blogger Lawrence Solum is that the “ancient regime” of scholarship has relied upon intermediation, those practices, persons, and institutions that regulate access to ideas and information. Solum describes two kinds of fading intermediation. “Source intermediaries” such as traditional publishers stand between authors and audiences, while “search intermediaries” regulate identification and access to materials through indexing and other services.¹ He argues that, with the advent of Google and similar search engines that strive to make all information immediately accessible to every user, the role of the librarian as search intermediary is becoming obsolete. Solum considers this inevitable and predicts that, in a few decades, the library as a distinct cultural institution will be a thing of the past.² More daring futurists set the precise date for the demise of libraries at 2019.³

This view of the future is not restricted to interested onlookers. Terry Martin, outgoing director of the Harvard Law Library, described any need for librarian intermediation as a “systems failure”: “We trained [the patron] improperly; we haven’t designed a good catalog; and we haven’t arranged materials well so that they can’t [sic] help themselves.”⁴ Like Solum, he anticipates the end of the physical library: “I don’t care if books are gone. In fact, from my point of view, it would be good if books were gone.”⁵ Libraries, we are told by like-minded librarians, should “reassess the wisdom of dragging their historic collections through time like a giant ball and chain.”⁶ Who needs paper when electrons are where the future lies?

While the physical dismantling of libraries is far from complete, librarians can find cold comfort that their cultural role is secure only because some other sector has failed to attain its goal to dispossess them. Libraries should thrive because they are not on the chopping block, not because the executioner is late. The basis of that flourishing should flow from the intrinsic worth of the library’s valued contributions to the project of civilization. Within that ideal,

The library [is] represented not merely [as] a collection of books gathered for some purpose but also [contains] arguments about the location, form, and power of knowledge in particular social and historical contexts. As a symbolic space, a type of collection, a kind of building, the library gives institutional form to our collective memory.⁷

Librarians, who are responsible for the construction of this physical embodiment of society's rational and creative achievements, partake in the value of their collections. Librarians are important because libraries are irreplaceable.

That foundation, however, is precisely what is now being questioned, even within the ranks of library professionals. If librarians are to survive the digital revolution, what is needed is a rediscovery of what they do that remains unique. I hope to take a first step toward that argument here.

Contrary to Solum's analysis, the threat to libraries is not technological advancement *per se*, but librarians' reactions to technology or, more precisely, librarians' reactions to how technology has changed patron expectations. Two models of librarianship describe contrasting postures to those demands and represent incompatible normative postures toward the role of libraries and their personnel.

In the "weak" model, the librarian reacts to a host of external pressures, including institutional requirements and user demands, and regards her primary duty as satisfying those demands by providing something called "good service." The "strong" model asserts that, while pragmatically answering to bureaucrats and striving to foster a positive experience for patrons, a librarian's ethical allegiance lies with values and ideals that may or may not align with the demands of particular users. Which model one follows mirrors one's stance on the question of whether librarianship is a true "profession." Without a firm commitment to the profession-based strong model, librarians are destined to fade into oblivion along with other old-fashioned "good service" providers like the milkman, travel agent, and the local shopkeeper, all replaced by more efficient delivery systems and economies of scale.

THE WEAK MODEL

The first model is called "weak" not in any pejorative sense, but because the librarian's *sui generis* concerns are subordinated to outside forces. The librarian's interests are therefore "weak" in relation to these other influences. This subordination is not contingent, proximate, or practical, but rather defines the fundamental relationship of the librarian to those others, whether they are embedding institutions, funding entities, or reading patrons. Under the weak model, librarians essentially do what they understand is required of them by a wide assortment of others or in response

to emerging trends outside their control. The standards to be a "good" librarian in this model are limited to fulfilling the demands of these outside forces, with little attention to obligations arising from her own training, experience, or ideological commitments.

A significant example of the weak model of librarianship appears in a recommendation in the 1997 American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) report, *Toward a Renaissance in Law Librarianship*. The formal recommendations of the report include the expansion of the term "law librarian" to include:

any individual whose primary career is to work with legal information sources of any type in any way and to provide these sources for use by others. The term does not exclude non-professionals, or those who do not work in a specific law library.⁸

Correlatively, AALL "shall open its membership to all peoples, with the same rights of voting and office."⁹ Anyone willing to pay the dues could become a full voting member of the organization. The membership prudently spurned this recommendation at its next annual meeting, the approval of which could have rendered degreed, practicing librarians a minority within their own association.¹⁰

This push to eliminate educational requirements for recognition as a librarian betrays an insecurity about the identity of librarianship itself. The vision of librarianship in the virtual future, as expressed in the report is reactively amorphous: "Our specific roles will continue to be defined largely by those who use our services" rather than by our own judgment.¹¹ A more concise statement of the weak model of librarianship can hardly be imagined.

The weak model has been gaining popular acclaim among librarians. Laura Cohen's "manifesto" for librarians represents a bold proclamation for the devolution of librarianship into a service job. Libraries, she tells her audience, are "user-centered enterprises," and while her directives heavily intone the mantra of "service," nowhere does she mention heretofore traditional skills such as collection development, evaluation, or preservation.¹²

The user-dominated weak model finds a theoretical foundation in earlier views of the traditional library as "a kind of engine room for the project of modernity, with the librarian, both educator and technician, as a kind of enlightened mechanic."¹³ In contrast, the postmodern library will be

user-centred: it must recognize the sovereignty of individuals or communities in the knowledge utilization process and develop theories and (more practically) systems and services to assist them. . . . The postmodern library, if one can envision such a thing, will focus on the individual accessing and creation of knowledge rather than its societal ordering and institutionalization.¹⁴

The problem with postmodern formulations such as Cohen's is not that they laud the services librarians provide, but their myopic spin on those services. Librarians are not grocers or merchants, whose justified practice ends with satisfying the immediate client base—although the preference for some weak-model librarians to refer to library users as “customers” rather than “patrons” suggests they might endorse a users-as-customers philosophy.¹⁵ But, unlike true service providers, the librarian's obligations to future patrons are no less demanding than those to present ones. Librarians create not storefronts, but cultural institutions of “national memory,” and often of general human accomplishment.¹⁶

A hypothetical scenario might illustrate the void at the core of the weak model. How might a weak modeler respond to the destruction of a library whose contents have been fully digitized and whose electronic images completely satisfy current patron demands?¹⁷ Would this be a tragedy of the highest order or merely an unfortunate destruction of redundant property? If the new ideal is indeed to disassemble physical libraries, maybe their destruction would be seen through postmodern spectacles as an unfortunately violent means to an otherwise desirable end.

I suspect all librarians would be genuinely appalled, feeling that something vital had been lost. Yet postmodern librarians must look *outside* their self-definition as service providers to explain this intuition. At some level, even most postmodern librarians must realize that an image of the original does not displace the value or importance of the original, at least for some community of potential users. Justifications by strong model librarians, by contrast, will be contained within their understanding of their primary functions. They enjoy an intellectual coherency that is unavailable to proponents of the weak model. If—as the weak model insists—“service” should stand as the one-word catchphrase of librarianship, it must also be service to society and to the future. The weak model of librarianship does not recognize this expanded mission (despite goodwill ad hoc exceptions), because it denies the foundation upon which librarians can speak for those wider concerns against the pressures of the present users. Because future generations of patrons are not present to assert these interests for

themselves, it falls to the librarian to represent them when negotiating the shape of the library in the face of the louder, but no more important, voices of today's patrons.

THE STRONG MODEL

The strong model of librarianship differs from the weak by highlighting an ineliminable core of commitments to ends beyond the satisfaction of immediate users. Service has always been and will always remain a significant part of a librarian's daily responsibilities. Unlike expositions of the weak model, however, the strong model balances the service commitment with other, sometimes conflicting, responsibilities.

The sometimes subtle differences between the weak and strong models become more apparent when librarians try to meld the two into a single vision, to voice a service ideal in terms of a professional ethic. Richard Danner, the editor of the AALL report that vividly embodies the weak model, made such an attempt. In a 1998 article, he reviews how adherence to broader values is a hallmark of the true professional, a category to which many librarians aspire. Citing sociologist Talcott Parsons, Danner rightly highlights the requirement that a profession be built upon "shared values—the idea that professional work is done not only for profit," but also should "be put to socially responsible uses."¹⁸ Danner then conjoins this recognition of independent values with a restatement of the weak model:

Librarianship developed as a service-oriented, client-centered profession: one in which meeting the client's needs *as the client sees them* was of more importance than the expertise of the professional. This perspective has differentiated librarianship from other professions, such as law or medicine.¹⁹

His conclusion instantiates the strain between two incompatible visions of librarianship as service occupation and information profession. This chimera, however, is unsustainable. Any institutional role that commits to "meeting the client's needs *as the client sees them*" cannot also aspire to safeguard that its expertise is "put to socially responsible uses," since the two goals easily and often work against one another. Having as a definitional good surrendered control of her expertise to the direction of the patron, the librarian cannot simultaneously craft an identity as someone who is husbanding that expertise to benefit society.

In this sense, those who call librarianship a "service profession" contradict themselves. While service and profession overlap in practical terms, core features of each model are mutually exclusive, not least because they involve incompatible loci of control. The weak, user-based model that Danner succinctly describes invokes an *external* locus of control. Important decisions are made outside the librarian's sphere of influence. The strong model requires an *internal* locus of control, in which the librarian weighs the relevant variables and makes the ultimate choices.²⁰ Either librarians control their expertise, or they do not. Danner denies to librarians, as a professional ideal, the requisite degree of autonomy that he recognizes as characterizing a profession. The conclusion that librarianship is not a real profession is then implicitly endorsed when Danner seeks to dissociate librarianship from the prototypical professions of law and medicine.

Professionals eagerly serve the desires of others when not conflicted by their higher allegiance to the greater social good. But servers, in contrast, can never do *more* than satisfy a client's wishes, since by definition they have no higher purpose than to achieve the user's ends. Professionals control the interaction to achieve an outcome that satisfies the user's needs in a way that also benefits society. Medical doctors, from whom Danner would distinguish librarians, are professionals rather than servers because they do not simply write prescriptions for drugs when the patient asks. The physician's duty to recommend best treatment for the specific problem often contradicts the self-diagnosis of the patient. Occasionally frustrating the desires of the client is the regrettable toll of acting professionally. Service occupations, by contrast, exist only to maximize customer satisfaction by delivering a specified product. Perhaps the customer is always right, but this is not true of consumers of professional services.

Though Danner would have it otherwise, there cannot be a profession of rendering to the library user his own vision of the anticipated outcome. That task can only be a job. If librarianship is a profession, then the weak model's service ideal is precluded; if, on the other hand, user satisfaction is the librarian's highest good, then librarianship can never be a profession. Both perspectives are defensible, but they are not compatible since the normative demands of each are in direct conflict. Server and professional, weak model and strong model, are not simply *different* approaches to librarianship, they are mutually exclusive approaches. Librarians must choose which path to walk, and only one choice guarantees the librarian a place in the emerging future.

“LIBRARY 2.0”

The weak and strong models have conflicted since the founding of the American Library Association.²¹ Recent developments, however, have pushed chronic tension into an acute crisis.

In earlier environments, the user-centric model not only was not pernicious, but rendered a positive good. No one argues that service is a *bad* thing, and all things being equal, one ideal has always been to maximize patron satisfaction. Librarian ideals did not routinely diverge from the expectations of the patron, rendering a functional convergence between the weak and strong models. The similarity in outcomes masked two very different processes, and current technological changes have precipitated a divergence. Trends in both popular culture and public expectations have grown at odds with the long-term responsibilities of librarians, who seem unable to resist being pulled along. To the contrary, many librarians seem swept up in an uncritical enthusiasm engendered by all things “2.0.”

The dilemma arises not from advances in digital technologies, but out of librarians’ reactions to these technological innovations. As one prominent example, librarians have rushed to emulate the Google experience in online catalogs, and to find ways to make library catalogs not only search Google but also to import Google content into the catalog itself. How far librarians have already walked down this path became apparent when the Library of Congress began dumbing down its cataloging in order to make records more accessible, not to scholars, but to Google.²² Such actions detract from the tasks that set libraries apart as cultural institutions. Capitulating to the changed expectations of patrons, who only know how to enter words into a box in order to retrieve lists of results returned and ordered according to unknown criteria, may be providing “service,” but it is not clear that libraries thereby remain libraries. In order to “compete,” and fearful of becoming irrelevant, weak-model librarians race to move the satisfaction of current patrons to the center of their praxis, often to the detriment of their core mission.²³

What has transformed opportunity into crisis is the librarian’s response to the way ready availability has altered how patrons view the universe of information—its organization and accessibility, and, consequently, their expectations toward all information providers, including libraries. Immersed as they are in an environment that promises them everything always, users do not necessarily understand why this is not an unqualified good. That thankless and unpopular burden falls to the librarian, who, unfortunately, has not always proven equal to the challenge.

To understand how the weak model undercuts primary obligations of the librarian, it is necessary to understand how technology is changing access to information. Powerful search engines today have made available a wide variety of information that was formerly accessible only in library reference collections. This expanded access includes proprietary databases such as Westlaw and Lexis, which exhaustively collect a discipline's entire corpus, and digital databases such as JSTOR and HeinOnline, which provide computer screens of journals identical to printed pages. In addition to fee-based resources are open-access initiatives epitomized by the recent decision of Harvard Law School to make all faculty scholarship available electronically without charge.²⁴ When these resources are viewed, not as a supplement to, but rather as replacements for library holdings, radical consequences follow that impact both the physical organization of the library and its status as a valued institution.

Debate on this issue has crystallized around the controversial *Google Book Search* (formerly "Google Print"). The goal of Google Books is to assist "publishers in making books and other offline information searchable online." Where once the internet was populated with brief pieces of uncertain authority, it has expanded to encompass even published books. "Google is now working with libraries to digitally scan books from their collections, and over time will integrate this content into the Google index to make it searchable for users worldwide."²⁵ Even setting aside the copyright issues that have led some publishers to sue Google in order to stop its wholesale digitizing and dissemination of their catalogs,²⁶ librarians are understandably torn. Is this undertaking the apocalypse or a utopian breakthrough?²⁷

Jean-Noël Jeanneney has outlined broad philosophical objections to Google's intended achievement.²⁸ He worries that turning over this project to a profit-motivated business like Google will skew the intellectual heritage of the world. Because commercial interests, especially advertisers that target the American mainstream, will frame the content with ads that appeal to their desired buying audience, English-language materials will consequently dominate the database. Given an existing bias among users that "Google's failure to find a Web site can lead users to conclude that it does not exist,"²⁹ those who use the Internet to get their information will incorrectly infer that the Anglo-American perspective reflects a consensus on a wide range of topics from world history to international affairs.

Far more troubling than this intellectual hegemony is the way that Google-type products encourage the user to think in digestible, keyword-accessible bytes at the expense of complex ideas. Information abounds on

the Internet, but little knowledge. But for Jeanneney and other concerned observers,

the issue is not just the whole work but also the cultural context and language in which the work was conceived, written, published, read, understood, and maintained. Information has many contexts and receives its full meaning within these contexts. How a search engine selects, organizes, and presents information can destroy or invisibly distort the context.³⁰

Context is indeed the key. The web excels at finding data (where does this line appear in Shakespeare's *King Lear*?), or sources you already know exist; it performs miserably at discerning meaning (what does this line from *Lear* *mean*?) or letting you know which sources on a topic are reputable and which are not. At best, a search engine will suggest what is popular, but it cannot tell you what is good, which leads to a user's inability to distinguish between the two, then ultimately to equate them.

Far from being a necessary evil to be worked around, advocates of the net consider this segmentation of the accumulated wisdom of civilization into bite-sized morsels to be one of its strengths. *Everything is Miscellaneous*, sings the title of David Weinberger's book, which applauds the limitless decontextualization of information made possible by its virtual representation. These bits can be assembled into relationships reflecting the proximate interests of the searcher, who is no longer bound by the intentions of authors—the postmodern dream made real. While this strategy works well for some purposes—directories, encyclopedias, and other genre where the bit is designed to be the whole—for others it does not. Books are a prime candidate for the exception. Whether or not advocates of projects like Google Books “really do not like books, or reading for that matter,” the danger lies in their apparent belief “that the only things that matter in any book are discrete paragraphs of information.”³¹ Once that view becomes the norm, the future of libraries is indeed at risk.

What, we can ask, is the harm? If the retrieved hit “answers” the browser's question, what is lost by stripping it from the context intended by the author? Very often those missing pages serve not to state the point that the user has found in the snippet, but rather to show why the reader should be persuaded by the writer's conclusions. Shorn of that argumentative scaffolding, the researcher could form a mistaken opinion, if not of the conclusion, then about the merits of the argument supporting it.

In the decontextualized environment of the web, all viewpoints become equivalent “mere opinions,” leading to the easy accumulation of data but not necessarily to progress in understanding. “Individuals thinking out loud now have weight, and authority and expertise are losing some of their gravity,” Weinberger notes approvingly.³² More skeptical writers such as Andrew Keen, however, warn that this vaunted “cult of the amateur” amounts to nothing more than “ignorance meets egoism meets bad taste meets mob rule.”³³ When context becomes valueless, then the preservers of context—libraries—are truly imperiled.

More than cursory reflection could lead to a prediction that the “Google Age” will make libraries more popular, not less secure.³⁴ Internet-available bounty complicates the search, not makes it simpler. The useful drowns in the irrelevant, creating a need to which librarians are uniquely equipped to respond. “While a little digitization distances us from the intermediaries of knowledge, a lot of digitization will bring them closer to us.”³⁵ Digital sources are just another informational mess that requires a librarian’s organizing skills.

Why then are the cognoscenti forecasting libraries’ disappearance? Part of the explanation is that librarians have not been responding to the positive opportunities of the net, but have rather become mired in the ways in which users’ Internet experiences have distorted their ideas about what the process should look like. As the need for intermediation grows, the lay perception of that need has diminished. It is, after all, so *easy* to search on Google. What can a librarian do that the patron can’t do for himself?

That question must strike dread in the heart of librarians working under the service model. They fear that the patron will walk away from the library, preferring online tools like Google. One response has been to make using the library as Google-like as possible, and to make the library itself more electronic portal than cultural institution. These fears, however, suggest a belief that libraries offer nothing that the patron cannot find through Google or Amazon, and are somehow in competition with them.³⁶

Once their operations are interpreted as in competition with Google and at risk of “losing” patrons to search engines, libraries face a certain, if perhaps slow, demise. Google retrieves information, whereas libraries are about contextualized knowledge. While both are, in their proper settings, useful, libraries will always lose under any view that they serve the same needs as Google, and therefore compete for the same users.

Under pressure of perceived false competition, weak model librarians strive to satisfy patrons’ deformed demands by providing “good service,” and thereby luring people back into the library. Strong model librarians

recognize those demands, and pragmatically seek to accommodate them, but remain firmly committed to higher ends such as bringing context to all information, including the digital. Some patrons may walk away unhappy with the discovery that using the library to find contextualized knowledge is more difficult than searching Google to find random information. Weak model librarians see this as a failure; strong model librarians understand this frustration is a necessary consequence of offering something Google can never provide.

LIBRARIANSHIP AS PROFESSION

Predictions that Google will lead to library-destroying disintermediation imply that librarianship is "no more skilled than driving a car or reading a map. Such thinking devalues one of librarianship's most valuable aspects, and in so doing equates professional librarians with clerks."³⁷ Weak model librarians reduce librarianship to a service industry and deny its professional status. By excessively catering to users, they help create the necessary precondition for librarianship to be diminished in the eyes of society, and thereafter erased as a vital cultural activity. The weak model will lead, in the long run, to the end of libraries.

Danner was correct in his understanding that, if librarianship is to survive the digital revolution, it must be grounded in its status as a "profession," even as he erred in what that profession must look like. Under the strong model, the delivery of services must be filtered through the ethical commitments that librarians have made to their profession, obligations that lead them to consider a greater social good than the aggregate of user satisfactions.

When no longer couched in terms of patron satisfaction, what librarians do is neither mysterious nor controversial. For all the millennia that libraries and librarians have existed, the essential tasks have remained the same: "Libraries exist to acquire, give access to, and safeguard carriers of knowledge and information in all forms and to provide instruction and assistance in the use of the collections to which their users have access."³⁸ The present crisis can perhaps be interpreted as an overemphasis on access to the detriment of duties to acquire, organize, and safeguard. In any model, access remains extremely important, as does satisfying patrons, but access and user satisfaction do not delimit the work of a professional librarian; in addition, she has independent obligations toward collection development and the organization and preservation of knowledge and information in all

its forms. These commitments extend beyond immediate patron services, distinguishing the weak from the strong model.

Emulating the Google experience to placate naive user expectations vitiates the librarian's core functions to acquire the right books, to make them accessible, and to assure their continued availability. One example of the conflict between a fear of displeasing users and the obligation to curate an enduring library collection is how the presence of an item in digital form can increase pressures to dispose of the tangible item, which is now viewed as redundant and a needless expense to "warehouse."³⁹ Too often this need to create space is less to house newer books than to make room for amenities like a coffee bar.⁴⁰ The convergence of the library with the bookstore cum snack bar is further exemplified by efforts to shelve books in the broad categories found in bookstores, rather than in classified arrangements.⁴¹ These changes earn awards and accolades because they give "what users want."⁴² But when the library becomes an inefficient bookstore, it will lose out to true bookstores and other merchandisers that connect information with consumers *at that level* more efficiently.

But this is not the level at which libraries should operate. The primary charge of libraries is not to provide raw information, and when libraries compete with bookstores or the Internet, they fail to do what is expected of libraries: to acquire, organize, preserve, and make accessible. These are not simply job responsibilities to employers, but rather ethical obligations assumed by anyone who has accepted the title and status of a "librarian."⁴³ To fulfill these ethical duties, the professional librarian requires certain qualifications. First, due to the importance of collection development—perhaps the cardinal function of the library—librarians have been expected to be subject matter specialists rather than simply book-buying clerks.

These early library philosophers were concerned with the principles governing the selection of books in library collections and the cataloging and arrangement of these collections. One issue was that of who would select the books. How was the university library to prevent the more influential or more conscientious professors from distorting the balance of the collection? The best defense against this, it was agreed, was the appointment of a librarian learned enough to be able to discuss scholarly literature on equal terms with professors, and strong enough not to be intimidated by them.⁴⁴

From the origins of the library as part of the university, then, librarians have been recognized as faculty due to the importance of their work in collection

development. These duties are sufficient to justify tenure-track status for today's academic law library director, at the minimum, and to require library directors to achieve levels of subject matter expertise so as to be "on equal terms with professors." Directors who accept appointment lacking tenureability contribute to the de-professionalization of librarianship, and thereby to the obsolescence of the libraries they administer.

Even against such respected background, the status of librarians has been contested and tentative. Although once a position of great status and intellectual importance, by the eighteenth century the librarian "was often a poorly paid member of the philosophy faculty, who regarded his work in the library as a supplement to his meager salary rather than as a vocation in its own right."⁴⁵ Despite these ebbs and flows, the history lesson is that the librarian has been no mere servant.

The same history teaches us, however, that unlike other professions, librarians cannot take their status for granted. One recent incident underscores the uncertain footing of librarianship as a socially recognized profession: After a long tenure, the director of the Harvard Law Library announced his retirement. The requirements for the position, as advertised, did not include library or law degrees.⁴⁶ The new director has neither library education nor experience, but was instead a clinical professor at Harvard law school.⁴⁷

How far we are from a profession-based model of librarianship can be seen in this single event. First, it suggests that anyone can use the title of librarian, regardless of training (recall the rejected recommendation in the AALL Report, that a "librarian" be anyone who worked with information). True professions regulate who may claim the title and thereby their rights and privileges. The Harvard appointment is only the latest in a pattern of appointing outsiders to the highest library positions, presumably in favor of the technological expertise favored by environments that see the future of libraries in mirroring the Internet.⁴⁸ The trend, however, extends deeper. While it would be unthinkable to appoint someone to the U.S. Supreme Court without a law degree, or to the position of Surgeon General without a medical background, it remains disturbingly uncontroversial that only one Librarian of Congress has been a professional librarian.⁴⁹ In what should be the easiest area to control, librarians are already at an unfortunate disadvantage as to their recognition as a respected profession.

Of more immediate concern for law librarians, the Harvard appointment detracts from efforts to advance the recognition of librarianship as a profession because it plays to an already ambivalent attitude within the

profession toward the proper role of library directors. Directors can be seen in either of two lights, only one of which is compatible with the status of a profession. The first recognizes a profession as formally egalitarian. Once admitted to the profession, members are presumptively equal in knowledge and skill, and an individual's rise to special acclaim will be based on personal merit. In this view, "library director" is an institutional rank, not a professional status, and the director carries no special authority when addressing matters of general interest.

The alternative approach confuses institutional standing with professional expertise. Here, institutional directors disproportionately fill influential roles within the profession *primarily* because of their status as a "director" rather than for any unique abilities or achievements. This view ignores that directors hold their appointments because they have a specialized talent for bureaucratic management, and not as a reward for prior mastery of the primary professional craft outlined in the standards of practice. While these can coexist in the same individual, they must be recognized as independent achievements, and the former not serve as a proxy for the latter.

This fact must not detract from the necessary role that library directors play, any more than saying that hospital administrators are rarely the best physicians in their own organizations, or that managing partners are not expected to have the sharpest legal skills in the firm. However, any relationship between the two is accidental, not necessary. If the Harvard appointment illustrates anything, it is that the best of the profession are not necessarily the ones achieving its highest and most lucrative offices. On the contrary, the Harvard lesson is that rather than being the culmination of professional practice, a prized directorship can be allotted to someone with less library experience than most student workers. This outcome, undesirable in any context, is especially awkward in a group that frequently defers to institutional directors as role models of the profession in general.

That undue deference can be seen in the composition of the flawed AALL report discussed earlier. With 17 total members, four were representatives of commercial enterprises. Ten of the remaining members were directors (including academic, court, and firm libraries), and of the remaining three, two were associate directors. This means that, on a project tasked to consider broad issues of law librarianship, only one "rank and file" librarian was included. Such disproportionate representation of directors cannot be explained by the subject matter, but only by a belief that directors of institutions are necessarily better qualified to steer the

profession than are its other members. This erroneous supposition perhaps explains why the committee produced recommendations that favored a weak model.

There are other reasons, besides generating poor outcomes, to avoid relying upon library directors as examples of the pinnacle of librarianship. That practice means that librarianship as a profession will be evaluated by the spotlighted decisions of a very few, rather than by the work of all its members. Should those stars behave in ways that weaken some presuppositions of professionalism, the group suffers in a way that it does not when (as in law and medicine) the status of the profession is grounded in the acts of the collectivity rather than the choices of featured individuals.

For example, a common tenet separating the profession from a "job" is that the professionals learn not just a skill, but are socialized into a way of being. Such far-reaching changes are justified because a profession is assumed to be a lifelong affiliation. One does not merely practice law, one becomes a lawyer, or a physician. Or a librarian. Those labels describe not only what someone does, but who someone is. As one judge of the Fifth Circuit described the lawyer's professionalism, "In a very real sense, his professional service cannot be separate from his personal being."⁵⁰

Professions are broadly assumed to be self-contained, life-consuming undertakings. While there are many paths to pursue a profession, the usual expectation is that one will spend one's life seeking to realize the values of the profession. Jobs are what one does so long as it is profitable or enjoyable before moving on to something else.

Top-tier librarians increasingly seem to treat librarianship as a job, rather than as a profession. With disheartening frequency, directors of prominent academic law libraries, as well as past presidents of AALL, leave librarianship for more attractive—and perhaps more insulting still, more "challenging"—positions in university administration. Such defections represent the converse of the Harvard appointment. But both reinforce the view of librarianship as a job that people casually walk into or out of, as opposed to a profession that one aspires to enter, and to which one intends, when admitted, to devote one's working life.

For these reasons, directors, when inside their own libraries, can be potentates; at outside gatherings, they must be just one voice among many others. To the extent that, based on that status alone, they are viewed as exemplars of the profession, that lapse indicates an infirmity of the professional model of librarianship. A group that routinely conflates institutional status with professional accomplishment or expertise is very much

in danger of losing sight of its obligations to serve ends that transcend the individual organization. If librarianship is to reaffirm its status as a profession, it must better balance the influences of the director, treating that expertise as only one form of specialization among many others, including cataloging and reference.

To be regarded as professionals, librarians must be seen as professionals by those both inside and outside the ranks, and that requires sharpening the expected status indicators. If, as argued here, libraries can only survive into the foreseeable future by affirming a profession-based strong model, then the lack of that model—as indicated in current episodes such as the Harvard appointment—should not be ignored.

CONCLUSIONS

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Commentators like Solum are right when they point to a looming crisis for libraries, but they are wrong about the source of the threat. Technological advances alone will not displace libraries, because mere widgets can never fulfill the social responsibilities of libraries qua libraries. But librarians can abandon those duties out of a misplaced fear that patrons will abandon them for electronic surrogates, and libraries as “reading commons” are very dispensable.

The future of libraries, therefore, depends upon which of two responses librarians make to patrons’ demands for Google-like experiences. The weak, user-based model will capitulate in the belief that the librarian’s highest obligation is to satisfy the patron “on his own terms”; the strong model will not allow these pressures to detract from professional obligations to construct socially useful institutions of cultural knowledge. Adopting

the weak model will lead to the gradual displacement of librarians because what they offer can be performed better by those with greater technological expertise, who are unencumbered by additional scholarly and societal obligations. Commitment to the strong model assures libraries and librarians a place in the "2.0" environment and beyond, because their core functions do not compete with web-based information technologies.

The weak model presently holds the upper hand in two ways. Not only do current trends favor the "customer"-centric weak model, but librarianship (and especially law librarianship) lacks the necessary indicia of a profession to support the strong model. Little seems to stand in the way of the ongoing convergence of library practices with nonlibrarian goals, and the subsequent demise of libraries.

This essay has not been a tirade against technology. It does counsel a sophisticated relationship to the exciting array of emerging electronic resources, requiring neither reactionary rejection nor uncritical endorsement, one that understands how technology can be best applied to the library mission. It offers a diagnosis of the unhealthy effects of the influences of technology on patrons, and on librarians, who can acquiesce too readily to user demands. Fear of competition with Google, and sensitive to rejection by Google-comfortable patrons, leads some librarians to try to compete with those information-gathering tools at the expense of their own knowledge-contextualizing mission. That road leads to irrelevance.

Librarians will not ignore the great changes in how users connect with information, nor how these changes are altering the amount and forms of intermediation they require. But it cannot be taken for granted that librarians have a secure place in this breaking future. The argument put forth here is that how they respond to these changes and what becomes of librarians is largely in their own hands. If librarians see themselves and their libraries as mere service providers to the current user base—analogue to the bricks and mortar record store, for example—then they can expect to suffer the same fate. Or, librarians can commit to a long-contemplated, but not fully embraced image of professionalism with a calling not only to provide service, but also to construct enduring cultural institutions of knowledge. Only in this avatar of the strong professional model are librarians sure to survive, because while they can be replaced in the weak model by other motivated service providers, no one can usurp their obligations in the strong model. If those tasks are to be done at all, they will be accomplished by professional librarians.

NOTES

1. Lawrence B. Solum, *Blogging and the Transformation of Legal Scholarship*, 84 WASH. U. L. REV. 1071 (2006).
2. Lawrence B. Solum, Presentation at the American Association of Law Libraries 100th Annual Meeting, New Orleans: Blogs, Working Papers, Electronic Publishing: Will Changes in Legal Scholarship Affect the Future Development of Library Collections (July 14–17, 2007).
3. Posting of Ross Dawson to Trends in the Living Networks, http://www.rossdawsonblog.com/weblog/archives/2007/10/extinction_time.html (October 14, 2007, 8:44 PM US PT).
4. AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF LAW LIBRARIES, TOWARD A RENAISSANCE IN LAW LIBRARIANSHIP 27 (1997) [hereinafter AALL REPORT].
5. *Id.* at 40.
6. Mark Sandler, *Disruptive Beneficence: The Google Print Program and the Future of Libraries*, 10(3/4) INTERNET REF. SERVS. Q. 5, 17 (2005).
7. Thomas Augst, *American Libraries and Agencies of Culture*, in LIBRARIES AS AN AGENCY OF CULTURE 5, 16 (Thomas Augst & Wayne Wiegand, eds., 2001).
8. AALL REPORT, *supra* note 4, at 14.
9. *Id.* at 17. Lyman Ross and Pongracz Sennyey recommend this same approach for all librarianship. Lyman Ross & Pongracz Sennyey, *The Library is Dead, Long Live the Library! The Practice of Academic Librarianship and the Digital Revolution*, 34 J. ACAD. LIBR. 145, 147 (2008) (“Libraries should also consider opening its professional ranks to nonlibrarians [because high-level] skills in marketing, systems, and a new competitive attitude, so uncharacteristic of the traditional librarian, are now needed”).
10. *Proceedings of the 90th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Law Libraries*, 89 L. LIBR. J. 467, 494 (1997).
11. AALL REPORT, *supra* note 4, at 138 (quoting Roy M. Mersky).
12. Laura B. Cohen, *A Manifesto for Our Times*, 38(7) AMER. LIBR. 47 (August 2007).
13. Dave Muddiman, *Towards a Postmodern Context for Information and Library Education*, 17 EDUC. FOR INFO. 1, 4 (1999).
14. *Id.* at 16.
15. See, e.g., MICHAEL E. CASEY & LAURA C. SAVASTINUK, LIBRARY 2.0: A GUIDE TO PARTICIPATORY LIBRARY SERVICE (2007). A recent editorial by John Berry identifies most of the important themes of this essay, including the jarring preference of library revisionists for the term “customer” rather than “patron,” as well as the weak model’s logical culmination in the replacement of professional librarians as directors in favor of “business types from industry.” John N. Berry, III, *The Vanishing Librarians*, LIBR. J., Feb. 15, 2008, at 10.
16. Augst, *supra* note 7, at 17.
17. See REBECCA KNUTH, LIBRICIDE: THE REGIME-SPONSORED DESTRUCTION OF BOOKS AND LIBRARIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (2003).
18. Richard A. Danner, *Redefining a Profession*, 90 L. LIBR. J. 315, 326 (1998).
19. *Id.* at 352 (emphasis in the original). My reliance on this article to isolate important trends is not a straw man. It is much revered within law librarian circles. For example comes this eucomium from the editor of the *Legal Reference Services*

Quarterly: "I previously mentioned Dick Danner's *Redefining a Profession*; if you haven't read it, you should. If you have read it, you should re-read it. It's that good." Mike Chiorazzi, *The Next Twenty-Five Years of LRSQ*, 25(4) LEG. REF. SERVS. Q. 5, 10 (2006).

20. Hanna Levenson, *Differentiating among Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance*, in RESEARCH WITH THE LOCUS OF CONTROL CONSTRUCT, VOL. 1: ASSESSMENT METHODS 15 (Herbert M. Lefcourt, ed., 1981).

21. *E.g.*, Matthew Battles recounts disagreements among early library professionals that echoes that between the strong and weak models:

[Melville] Dewey actually used the admittance of women to the [Columbia School of Library Economy] to the same end he used their hiring the library: to define the profession down. Women were already socially subordinate to the men who filled faculty roles; for Dewey, this subordination nicely mirrored the professional subordination of librarians to professors and other experts—a subordination he deemed necessary to the efficient workings of the library. While his colleagues in the ALA cultivated the authority to direct the reading of their patrons, Dewey eschewed this mandate. Library workers, after all, were far too busy cataloging books and putting them in patrons' hands to trouble themselves with the choosing of books.

MATTHEW BATTLES, *LIBRARY: AN UNQUIET HISTORY* 144–145 (2003).

22. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL, ON THE RECORD (2008), available at <http://www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future/news/lcwg-ontherecord-jan08-final.pdf>; see also THOMAS MANN, "ON THE RECORD" BUT OFF THE TRACK: A REVIEW OF THE REPORT OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WORKING GROUP ON THE FUTURE OF BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL (2008), available at <http://www.guild2910.org/WorkingGrpResponse2008.pdf>.

23. *E.g.*, CASEY & SAVASTINUK, *supra* note 15, at 4 ("Our customers don't first turn to their library's Web site when seeking an answer to their questions. It is not just that there are alternative sources out there; it is also the fact that we are competing with so many other commercial and nonprofit services").

24. Robert Mitchell, Harvard to Collect, Disseminate Scholarly Articles for Faculty (Feb. 12, 2008), <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2008/02.14/99-fasvote.html>. On May 7, 2008, this initiative was adopted by Harvard's Law School. Harvard Law School, Harvard Law Faculty Votes for "Open Access" to Scholarly Articles (May 7, 2008), http://www.law.harvard.edu/news/2008/05/07_openaccess.php.

25. Google Press Center, Google Checks Out Books (Dec. 14, 2004), http://www.google.com/press/pressrel/print_library.html.

26. *McGraw Hill v. Google*, 05-CV-8881 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 19, 2005).

27. A review bibliography of the controversy surrounding Google Book Search is available from Charles W. Bailey, Jr., Google Book Search Bibliography (May 27, 2008), <http://www.digital-scholarship.org/gbsb/gbsb.htm>.

28. JEAN-NOËL JEANNENEY, *GOOGLE AND THE MYTH OF UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE: A VIEW FROM EUROPE* (Teresa Lavender Fagan, trans., 2007).

29. Janice Adlington and Chris Benda, *Checking Under the Hood: Evaluating Google Scholar for Reference Use*, 10(3/4) INTERNET REF. SERVS. Q. 135, 141 (2005).

30. Ian E Wilson, *Foreword*, in JEANNENEY, *supra* note 27, at xiii.
31. WALT CRAWFORD & MICHAEL GORMAN, *FUTURE LIBRARIES: DREAMS, MADNESS & REALITY* 105 (1995).
32. DAVID WEINBERGER, *EVERYTHING IS MISCELLANEOUS: THE POWER OF THE NEW DIGITAL DISORDER* 230 (2007).
33. ANDREW KEEN, *THE CULT OF THE AMATEUR: HOW TODAY'S INTERNET IS KILLING OUR CULTURE* 9 (2007).
34. Robert Darnton lists eight reasons why Google—and Google Book Search—“will make [libraries] more important than ever,” rather than rendering them obsolete. Robert Darnton, *The Library in the New Age*, N.Y. REV. OF BOOKS, June 12, 2008, at 72, 78. A historian rather than a librarian, Darnton's opinion is ironic given that his appointment as head of the Harvard libraries makes him symptomatic of the problem that he intends to critique.
35. JEANNENEY, *supra* note 27, at 24.
36. One recent example worrying about how “competitive” libraries are in the digital age can be found at Ross & Sennyey, *supra* note 9.
37. CRAWFORD & GORMAN, *supra* note 30, at 108.
38. *Id.* at 3.
39. Space prevents a fuller elaboration of the ways in which electronic versions are viable substitutes for paper editions in only limited contexts. First, digital editions preserve only one copy of a text; scholarship will often require study of multiple copies of a given version due to the value of marginalia in revealing social and cultural background and impact of a specific text. *See id.* at 110; Anthony Grafton, *Future Reading*, THE NEW YORKER, Nov. 5, 2007, at 50. Second, the library-created semantic network that turns information into knowledge can be approximately embodied by arrangement of the physical items on the shelf. Any systematic classification arrangement can make shelf-browsing and the serendipitous discovery of useful but unexpected information one of the true pleasures of library research.
40. Cf. Scott Bennett, *Righting the Balance*, in LIBRARY AS PLACE: RETHINKING ROLES, RETHINKING SPACE 10, 20 (2005), available at <http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub129/pub129.pdf> (“It is good that food service of one sort or another has become a standard feature of library design”); *see also* Andrea L. Foster, *Snacks in the Stacks: Libraries Welcome Food Amid the Books*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC., Apr. 18, 2008, at A1, A38 (“Fed by a desire to make libraries more inviting places for students to work in groups, many colleges are installing cafes in their libraries.”). It remains unclear whether the “library as place” movement promises an improved outlook on the future of libraries, since it deemphasizes what should be the heart of the library, the collection, in favor of study areas and social gathering opportunities.
41. Andrew Lavalley, *Discord over Dewey*, WALL ST. J., July 20, 2007, available at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB118340075827155554.html>.
42. *Movers and Shakers: The Man Who Said No to Dewey: Marshall Shore*, Maricopa County Library District, LIBR. J., Mar. 15, 2008, at 12.
43. AALL Ethical Principles (approved April 5, 1999), available at http://www.aallnet.org/about/policy_ethics.asp (“By collecting, organizing, preserving, and retrieving legal information, the members of the American Association of Law Libraries enable people to make this ideal of democracy a reality.”) *See also* ALA

Code of Ethics (adopted June 28, 1997; amended January 22, 2008), available at <http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.cfm>.

44. FRED LERNER, *THE STORY OF LIBRARIES: FROM THE INVENTION OF WRITING TO THE COMPUTER AGE* 186 (1998).

45. *Id.* at 126–127.

46. AALL Job Hotline, *Associate Dean, Library and Information Resources*, <http://www.aallnet.org/hotline/showarchive.asp?jobNum=1452> (last visited February 24, 2008).

47. Harvard Law School, *Palfrey Appointed as New Head of Harvard Law School Library* (April 30, 2008) http://www.law.harvard.edu/news/2008/04/30_palfrey.php.

48. Andrea L. Foster, *Strains and Joys Color Mergers between Libraries and Tech Units*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC., Jan. 18, 2008, at A1, A13. Harvard has now created a tradition of belittling librarians, having earlier appointed a historian as the library dean. Among law libraries, disregard for professional criteria for directorships has occurred at institutions besides Harvard, including Northwestern, where the newly named head was hired from a background in web management but with no apparent library education or experience. Northwestern University Pritzker Legal Research Center, Welcome Lois Remeikis, Associate Dean for Information Services, <http://www.law.northwestern.edu/library/aboutus/announcements/2007-11-12/> (last visited June 4, 2008).

49. Suzanne E. Thorin & Robert Wedgeworth, *Librarians of Congress*, 38(6) AMER. LIBR. 86 (June/July 2007). The statutory requirements for Surgeon General are that the candidate “have specialized training or significant experience in public health programs.” 42 U.S.C. § 205 (2000). By contrast, law stipulates only that the “Librarian of Congress shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate.” 2 U.S.C. § 136 (2006).

50. Elbert P. Tuttle, *Heroism in War and Peace*, 13 EMORY U. Q. 129, 138 (1957).