

Marketing the Academic Library



Elsevier's Learning Trends Series



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Introduction

This is the first volume of Elsevier's *Learning Trends* series. Elsevier Science & Technology Books is providing this series of free digital volumes to support and encourage learning and development across the sciences.

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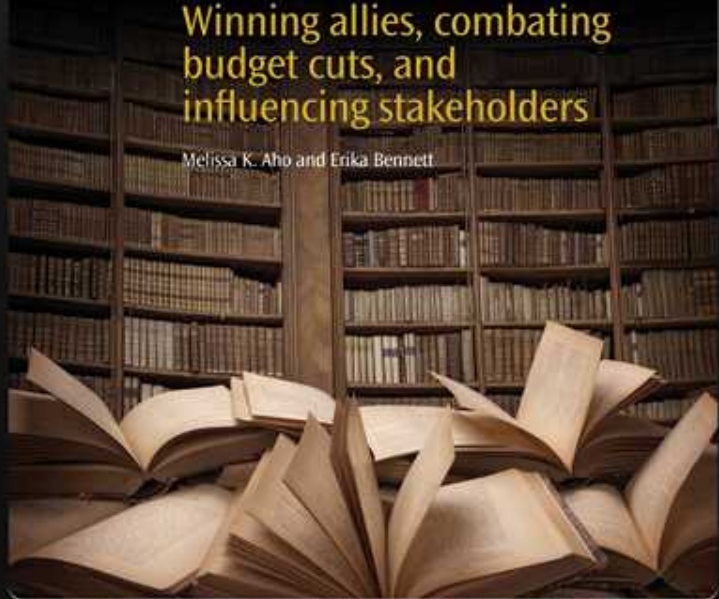
Chandos Information Professional Series

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The Machiavellian librarian

Winning allies, combating
budget cuts, and
influencing stakeholders

Melissa K. Aho and Erika Bennett



Introduction

Melissa K. Aho and Erika Bennett

Although I recognize this book is unworthy to be given to Yourself, yet I trust that out of kindness you will accept it, taking account of the fact that there is no greater gift I can present to you than the opportunity to understand, after a few hours of reading, everything I have learned over the course of so many years, and have undergone so many discomforts and dangers to discover.

—Machiavelli, 1995, p. 5

Those words by civil servant Niccolò Machiavelli are at the beginning of the most famous political works in Western history, *The Prince*, written in 1513 in Florence, Italy (Machiavelli, 1995, p. 5). While the book that you are currently holding in your hands did not come from dangers or discomforts (well, not too many, at least), it is filled with ideas and suggestions that Machiavellian librarians have learned over the course of their professional years.

Five hundred years ago, aka 1513, started out to be a very bad year for Machiavelli, as months earlier he had been wrongly found guilty, along with some of his acquaintances, of plotting against the new Medici government of Florence. So at the age of 44, Machiavelli spent his jail time being tortured, fined, and writing letters to powerful friends like Giuliano Medici, whose brother had just been elected Pope Leo X. Pope Leo would soon release Machiavelli and others in jail so that they could join in the public festivities which were underway to celebrate the new pope (Machiavelli, 1995, p. xii).

Born in 1469 to Bartolomea de' Nelli and Bernardo Machiavelli, Niccolò was truly a product of the Renaissance culture going on around him (Viroli, 2000). His father was a poor lawyer who could not join

the legal guild due to his family's debts, but he wanted his son to have a good education in the humanities (Machiavelli, 1995, p. xiii; Viroli, 2000). But Niccolò, due to his family, was destined always to be the civil servant and never the politician. Machiavelli first appears in the public records in 1498 as a second chancellor of the Florentine republic and later that year he was elected to the position of secretary of the Ten of War committee (Machiavelli, 1995, p. xiii). Other high-ranking positions soon followed, such as organizing the Florentine militia, and later he would travel to France, Austria, and all over Italy on diplomatic missions (Machiavelli, 1995, p. xiv). By 1501 he had married Marietta Corsini and with her had six children (Skinner, 2000).

While considered the ideal book for anyone going into politics, written to convey the art of influence and leadership for a young prince just coming into power, *The Prince* was penned by Machiavelli as a plea for a job. Talk about a cover letter! *The Prince*, writes Skinner, has two themes: war and arms, and that “in addition to having a sound army, a prince who aims to scale the heights of glory must cultivate the right qualities of princely leadership” (2000, p. 38). Virtue and goodness are apparently not characteristics we need in princes, Machiavelli tells readers. What is needed is deception, cruelty, unfaithfulness, and whatever it takes to be a successful prince and stay in power and to keep the principality safe and secure (Rubery, 2009). After writing *The Prince* in jail, Machiavelli did not get back his diplomatic and civil service career; that part of his life was over. Instead, he changed his focus and increasingly became “a man of letters” (Skinner, 2000, p. 55) and soon other works—fiction and non-fiction—followed, including *The Discourses*, *The Art of War*, and *The History of Florence*. However, *The Prince*, which was not published until after his death in 1527, would be his claim to immortality.

What does a 500-year-old Italian book on war, arms, and cruelty have to teach modern-day librarians? Librarianship may seem much more in tuned to Servant Leadership than Machiavellianism. Librarians are typically called to their profession by principles of public benevolence: tolerance, equality, and civic empowerment. We root the arguments for our continued existence in lofty principles and touching patron anecdotes. When we do use data, it is often rife with caveats: “Well, there is a correlation here with student success, but you know that the only true measure of causation is a longitudinal focus group...” We bury the lead headline behind pages of interjected pre-analysis.

Why read this book? In sum total, librarians need to boost their abilities to influence decision-makers, or else face professional extinction. Machiavelli wrestled with dualities through his writing: private life vs.

public life, Christianity vs. paganism, individual knowledge vs. common pursuits (Donskis, 2011). Librarians live in a similarly dichotomous world. On one hand, we are seen as fuddy-duddy relics of a print-based world. In reality, we are recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency for our digital information prowess (Central Intelligence Agency, 2007). On the one hand, we avoid using our professional terms like “metadata,” “Boolean,” “databases,” or “fields,” but on the other hand, our students of all backgrounds and preparation levels get hired as data-entry professionals in the entry information economy, and an understanding of Boolean logic could boost their efficiency with every search box they ever face. Fictional police and crime shows talk about databases with glee, glamour, and awe, as an all-powerful research tool that only the most crafty hackers on their team can wrangle. They don’t search “Google Terrorist;” they consult *a crime database*. Yet these hacker-turned-criminal-investigators are never former librarians. Librarians in fiction still dwell in caves of paper books. How do we shift impressions of what we do? How do we craft a message with greater impact? How do we show stakeholders the import and value of our information skills? Each author in this book has offered practical examples and insights into the professional dilemma of bringing visibility to our value.

At the surface, the misanthropic stereotype of Machiavellianism seems like an ill fit, professionally. However, librarians who deeply read Machiavelli’s work may be surprised at certain synergies. While Machiavellianism in the pejorative sense means deceit, manipulation, cynicism, and ruthlessness, his works were much more complex, motivationally. He never actually stated, “The end justifies the means.” In fact, deep reading reveals certain shared values with the library profession. For one, he wanted a value-neutral evaluation approach. In his view, politicians should have values and ethics independent from other value sets, such as religion, and reject the biasing influences of utopian fantasies. In essence, he believed in approaching information pragmatically, according to need or function. Secondly, a review of *The Discourses* reveals that personal gains are not the end goal for Machiavelli. They are simply a vehicle for civil prosperity. His goal was not the whims of the Prince, but civic virtue, preserving civilization from disruption. He sought a place where rules were followed and civility ultimately reigned. Librarians can appreciate this mindset. Sometimes, in the interest of fairness and the common good, individual patrons cannot get what they want.

The first section in this book covers the character and behavior for princes. Christopher Shaffer and Megan Hodge show how to capitalize

on leadership opportunities that present themselves and thrive as a supervisor in a Machiavellian climate. André Nault dissects the skill of networking in a playful manner. He describes techniques for building warm connections with stakeholders and allies, in a strategically planned manner. Kacy Allgood looks at the same issue of networking, but with surprising patrons in unusual locations. Maggie Farrell tackles strategic planning and Kristen Mastel tells librarians to focus on their strengths.

New principalities are addressed in the second section. These are areas of influence that might normally be ignored under the umbrella of traditional librarianship. Laura Francabandera posits that student-athletes are an ignored, but significant support opportunity. Donna Braquet follows a new LGBT Center from conception to construction, including the tactics that paved the way for its unlikely success. Ken Bolton shows how a stand-alone Information Literacy course is not only possible, but a strategically sound pursuit. Visualization techniques are covered by Bradford Eden. Joanne Percy looks at methods for combining services that are normally geographically separate in a visible, beneficial way. Kim Glover offers the perspective that certifications in influential areas can push alliances with important stakeholders. Leslie Morgan reflects on her trajectory as a First Year of Studies Librarian.

In the third section, we look at types of armies, or the tools that are at the disposal of the Machiavellian librarian. Scott Sheidlower demonstrates how to maximize access opportunities with those in power. Anne C. Barnhart outlines her success in adding to staff during severe recession times, through careful reclassification of hires. Accreditation tactics are covered by Carolyn S. Burrell and Scott W. Lee. Tia Esposito and Anna Martinez similarly look at state regulation requirements in bolstering school library value. Bern Mulligan and Benjamin Andrus address user-centered planning for physical building improvements. Jesse Leraas introduces the manner in which the Social Style Model can improve organizational communications. Jorge Brown notes the importance of proximity in relationship building.

In the final section, political situation, we give organizational climates their due scrutiny. Todd Fenton offers process mapping and needs assessment as means for positively changing political environments, speaking from the perspective of his corporate past. Cara Bradley shows that strategic alignment with a Teaching Center can raise the profile of a library. Amy Pajewski offers up student advisory boards as a significant avenue for outreach. Cynthia Graham approaches accreditation from a political climate standpoint. Finally, Eric Owen approaches political positioning head-on.

Use this book for advice and ideas for thriving in a Machiavellian manner. If librarians are not at war, we are at the very least in a fiercely competitive resource environment. Outsiders perhaps diagnose our environment better when they write books with titles such as *Information Warfare and Organizational Decision-Making* (2006). As information professionals, we should be well equipped for this type of knowledge battleground. Yet today's library leaders face agonizing choices among options that are not always compatible. Machiavellians can exhibit ethical behavior to all appearances, even if they do not believe these values privately (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). This means that Machiavellianism is not inherently incompatible with our professional belief structure. Only inactiveness can protect leaders from seeming hypocrisy.

At the end of the day, libraries are a huge cost center. Any library is simply a gleaming, shining city just waiting to be plundered by desperate administrators or jealous adversaries. Leaders need to have defenses at the ready. If our goal is to preserve our profession—if we truly believe in deep reading, scholarship, critical analysis, and inspiring innovation and career skills for an information economy—then we need to be willing to subsist, if not at any cost, then at the risk of some very difficult choices.

The lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves.

—Machiavelli

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Weasels and honey badgers: networking for librarians

André J. Nault

Abstract: Success as a librarian is largely dependent on the work relationships one forms, both with colleagues and with the population served. This chapter describes why networking and self-promotion is more critical than ever in this new e-Learning environment, how to create and execute a networking and marketing plan, and finally how to do some assessment to evaluate the success of your networking.

Key words: networking, marketing, promotion.

What's amazing to me about the library is it's a place where you go in you can take out any book you want—they just give it to you and say bring it back when you're done. It reminds me of like this pathetic friend that everybody had when they were a little kid who would let you borrow any of his stuff if you would just be his friend. That's what the library is—a government funded pathetic friend.

—Jerry Seinfeld

Libraries don't often command much respect, do they? Modern libraries have created an information infrastructure so transparent that users don't really understand all the work done by library staff. The result is that they often don't value us the way they should. In the future, the idea of libraries as physical space might be vague or nonexistent. The way to avoid this is by better educating all our stakeholders, especially our

deans, provosts, and presidents, about the role of modern librarians, our vision for the future, and how the management of information brings value to the academy.

The ability to network is critical in a social work environment, whether that's an academic library, a governmental library, a corporate library, or any other kind. This is because we are reliant on others to give us the opportunities and resources to do our jobs effectively. Librarians, however, are notoriously poor at networking and marketing themselves (Strand, 2012). Historically, those attracted to the field of librarianship did so because of their love of reading. However, to be a good librarian today requires not just great people skills, but exemplary networking, self-promotion, and marketing skills as well. If administrators are unclear about what we offer and what we do, why would we expect them to keep us around or protect us from the ax during financially difficult times?

Part of the problem can sometimes exist in the organizational structure of libraries. In academia for example, the university librarian might report to a provost or someone similar, but other library staff typically do not have any reporting lines to school deans or others outside the libraries. Additionally, the major stakeholders in our work are rarely solicited with any regular frequency as part of our performance evaluations. By creating these reporting lines and protocols in annual performance evaluations, administrators would be more informed of the value librarians provide.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes of librarians usually run deep, and they can inhibit our ability to network. Stereotypes, however, are not inherently bad—rather, they give someone a reference point to inform them during a new situation. Clinging too tightly to a stereotype *is* the problem. Much of the public or other library users continue to view us in traditional ways, and this is why the book you are holding is covering this very topic! Ignoring the existence of librarian stereotypes will not get them to disappear. As a result, a critical part of networking involves quickly dispelling those stereotypes as you interact with faculty or other groups and market yourself. Each of us has different tools in our tool-box to accomplish this, but some of them might include:

- the ability to make small talk
- a friendly, outgoing nature
- a sense of humor
- an engaging but short story to tell related to the topic at hand
- technical knowledge that lies within the other person's field of expertise.

The warm connection

Men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand, for everyone can see and few can feel. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are.

—Niccolò Machiavelli

Creating relationships is the main goal of networking. In order to educate and promote library services, librarians need to learn how to create “warm connections”—when an interaction with a living, breathing person is required over virtual or computer assisted service. Personal connections and relationships will never be replaced by virtual ones, and only by demonstrating the value of expertise over hardware and software will we continue to be valued as integral partners. Remember that networking is largely about increasing our likability factor, similar to the “beer test” we hear about during U.S. presidential races (i.e. “Would you sit down for a beer with them?”). Doesn't everyone prefer to work with people they like?

Dale Carnegie wrote the first edition of *How to Win Friends & Influence People* in 1936 (Carnegie, 1998), and it still remains the classic on networking and relationship building. Much research has been done since this book's publication which confirms that the ability to network and work well with others is a better predictor for job success than intelligence (Achor, 2010). This is certainly a positive thing, as most would agree that it is easier to improve one's social abilities than one's intelligence.

Libraries have their own culture, which differs from the cultures found in faculty groups, government groups, or outside organization. These differences vary of course, but being attuned to these differences is the first step in your networking plan as this will affect how you approach groups or, in the case of library liaisons, academic departments. When

we look at individual personalities and the corresponding Myers Briggs Type Index (MBTI) (The Myers & Briggs Foundation), there are differences in how we take in data and make decisions. The problem is not the difference between each of us—the problem is being *unaware* of the difference. As an example, faculty teaching the physical sciences are more likely to be data-oriented (thinking or “T”s in MBTI classification) in their decision-making, and thus need to be presented with numbers and statistics for you to get buy-in on a library initiative. Conversely, those teaching the fine arts are more like to be “F”s, and rely more on feelings in making decisions (Schaubhut & Thompson, 2008). Being aware of these differences will affect how you interject your expertise during meetings with these disparate groups by influencing what data/information you present, and how you present it.

Creating your networking plan

Weaseling out of things is important to learn. It’s what separates us from the animals... except the weasel.

—Homer Simpson

Conversely, weaseling *into* things is an equally important skill to learn. So when you go about sketching out your networking plan, first consider the political landscape: who are the powerful people within the departments you want to develop work relationships with? The power I’m referring to here is *influence*. As an example, administrative assistants who control access to a dean’s schedule are not someone we might naturally prioritize meeting and networking with, but they should be.

Those near the top of an organizational structure will have political power, but they are not always influential. I highly recommend the book *Reframing Academic Leadership* (Bolman & Gallos, 2011) to those wishing to understand better the political landscape within academic institutions. There will be individuals at your institution or organization who will naturally be your allies, and already be interested in incorporating your information expertise because of the learning objectives within their courses, or desire your input as part of their strategic planning. With a little luck, the previous librarian in your position was already taking part in various committees or course-integrated instruction within the schools and departments. Great! You

can pick up right where they left off. The goal here is to be as efficient as you can in picking up allies with your limited time, while targeting the most influential individuals first. Just remember that those who are influential are not always the decision-makers, so try to incorporate enough of these people to turn your objectives into reality.

Do your homework before meeting with anyone new. Research their publication history, recent grants, relevant organizational charts for their unit, or annual reports, to inform yourself with background knowledge. Start thinking about what information needs they might see themselves as having. Remember those administrative assistants I mentioned? If you have established a working relationship with them, they might be sources for this information. Incidentally, it's often people in those positions who arrange the orientation for new faculty or employees. Want a library orientation to be on the agenda for new employees? Your relationship with them is often the best way to make it happen.

Executing your networking plan

Time to get to specific details on contacting, meeting, and turning someone into an ally. Assuming you have never met this person previously, here's a suggested approach:

Step 1: Ask the individual to meet with you for a short meeting (15–30 minutes) in order for you to chat with them about a great idea you've had that could help them with some specified need. If possible, make the meeting request in person when you see them in the hallway, at a meeting, etc. Remember: it's harder to say no in person than through email. If you do go the email invitation route first, only email them once before you just “happen to be walking by their office” to inquire in person. Repeated emails could make you appear annoying. Your sales pitch for the meeting should articulate what *you* can do for *them*. Do not mention what you are hoping to get out of meeting with them.

Here's an example of some language, whether said in person or through email:

Dr. Myers,

It was wonderful to learn through the College's e-newsletter that you are offering a new course on critical scientific reading this coming fall! It's great to see that someone is addressing this pressing need, especially now that the AAVMC Accreditation

Standards clearly articulate the need for graduates to be able to incorporate scientific literature into their clinical decision-making processes. It occurred to me that I might be of assistance to you in this course by helping students learn best practices in database searching. This will help them locate the articles they will need to read as part of your course.

Please let me know when I might swing by your office for a few minutes to discuss the idea further.

At your service,
André

Why am I asking for just a few minutes when it will likely take longer? The one constant I have found with faculty and administrators is that they are *all* short on time. The ability to be succinct is important to create productive conversations with them, but critical in written/email communication. It's up to the other person to tell or show me how much time they are willing to allocate to the meeting, but if I'm only asking for a few minutes, it's much less likely that they'll decline the meeting.

Step 2: Note that I'm asking to meet in *their* office. There are two important reasons for this: 1) it's less of a hassle for them, and you want to make it as convenient as possible, and 2) their office will be full of information you'll be able to use in developing a relationship with that person. When you arrive, greet them warmly with a genuine smile and "Hello!" Once seated in their office, a quick glance around will tell you what they are passionate about. Do they have framed pictures of their kids? Their sailboat? What's the content of the art on their walls? What you are trying to do is gather information that points towards the passions in their life. Start your conversation by asking them a question about an item in their office that you feel points towards those passions, whether work-related or not. Often, this will lead to an engaging and spirited conversation about that topic, as it's human nature to enjoy talking about ourselves, especially to someone eager to hear about it. Once that conversation trails off, you are now in a better place to engage them in a conversation about how your expertise can lend itself to their needs. As much as possible, let them do the talking about what their needs are, and you can respond in turn about how you can precisely meet those needs.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to meeting stakeholder needs:

1. “Give them what they want.”—P.T. Barnum.
2. “People don’t know what they want until you show it to them.”—Steve Jobs.

I think it’s important to know what patrons are thinking and saying, but even more important, I want to tease out what library users want but cannot articulate. Anthony (2012) offers interesting insights on innovative thinking. There are times when you’ll prefer to satisfy someone by performing a task exactly as requested. Other times, you might have an opportunity to help them see why their request may not be the best solution or offer suggestions on a better course of action. Consider carefully the route you choose for each situation.

Step 3: Congratulations! You were successful in weaseling into a committee, work group, teaching in a new class, or whatever outcome you were hoping for. Now what? Remember you can only make a first impression once; the first work you do for anyone will be more critically reviewed than future work. As a result, do a darn good job that first time out of the gate.

Dealing with rejection

Honey badger don’t care.

—Randall

There will be difficult individuals, aloof to your sweetest invitation for a meeting. Try not to take it personally. You are now in sales, selling libraries and yourself, and like all salespeople, you have to develop a little bit of a thick skin to handle some rejection. I like to think of the viral video on the honey badger to handle rejection—the honey badger approach to librarianship! If that doesn’t work for you, develop your own coping strategy, but you *will* need a strategy. Keep your eye on the end goal, and try not to be unduly dissuaded by a setback. In the words of Jack Canfield, “Everything you want is on the other side of fear.” Not trying to network and create a new relationship guarantees failure; trying can only put you in a better place because you can always learn something from being unsuccessful.

Do not spend all your time and energy on challenging individuals; go for the easy picking fruit first—those already interested. What you are trying to obtain is a tipping point where enough people know you,

respect you, and solicit your input, so that those challenging individuals will hear of your expertise and seek you out when they learn of your value.

Evaluate the success of your networking plan

Consider performing a self-assessment to see how well you've done with your networking and marketing. This will provide valuable feedback for you and identify areas for improvement. It will also give you a benchmark so that when you repeat the survey a couple of years later, you can see if you've heightened your visibility with the schools or departments you support. Different schools or organizations with varying curriculum or needs will use library staff and resources in greatly different ways. While you might not get all faculty or employees to recruit you to help in their educational or research missions, you should strive to have “brand recognition”—that they know who you are, even if they have yet to mine your expertise.

With that in mind, below is a sample of possible survey questions a liaison can pose to faculty as part of a self-assessment; “company” could be substituted for “college” as applicable. Questions numbers are kept few and short to encourage participation.

1. What is your position within college X?
2. What is your department affiliation within the college of X?
3. Can you identify the librarian responsible for supporting your college?
If so, please write their name here.
4. If you have consulted with the librarian, please tell us how you would rank your overall satisfaction with the service provided. If you have not, please skip to question 5. [Liggert scale—1 to 5]
5. If you have not used the librarian's services, please indicate why (check all that apply):
 - I feel I can meet all my information needs myself.
 - I didn't know we had a designated librarian
 - I didn't know if the librarian could help me with my specific question/problem.
 - I asked a colleague.
 - Other.

New roles provide new networking opportunities

Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change.

—Stephen Hawkins

As the work of librarians has changed due to increases online delivery of information, so have the number of face-to-face interactions with our users declined. As a result, successful networking will often entail stepping outside our usual library circles to be more visible to those who matter.

Raising your visibility and developing a reputation as a strategic ally happens from one-to-one meetings, but you can have a broader impact by demonstrating your willingness to perform non-traditional work (for a librarian) or being receptive to taking on emerging roles. This can bring librarians outside their natural comfort zone, and therein lies the challenge. Libraries and the work we do have changed rapidly with a changing information landscape, so are we willing to adapt to those changes as well—and if so, quickly enough to remain relevant? It is human nature to gravitate to those similar to ourselves. So how can we become part of the lifeblood of the schools or organizations we support, and in essence, be viewed as faculty or colleagues? The answer is to become involved with all the work that will make them see you as faculty or coworkers.

Here are specific academic library examples of things that I have done to illustrate my point:

- Weasel into all the departmental meetings you can. I'm always ready to articulate that "the more I know about the work going on in the department/schools, the better I can support you;" ditto for the curriculum review group. I sit by people I don't already know at all these meetings and introduce myself. When an issue is raised in these meetings where I think the libraries can assist them, I vocalize the idea.
- Try to co-author posters, presentations, and papers with faculty. I've had success by inviting them to contribute to some of my research to offer the "faculty perspective," and schools encourage such outside collaborations. New tenure-track faculty might be especially receptive to co-authorships. Whenever possible, I publish articles in the journals

read by faculty, not by the library community. I suggested a journal issue dedicated to veterinary information to the editor of the only journal dedicated to veterinary education, and now sit on their editorial board.

- Instead of attending library association conferences, start attending those of our stakeholders. I was the first librarian to attend the annual conference of the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges. Try to give talks or present posters at those conferences.
- Look for local professional groups who could be strategic allies. I joined the Continuing Education Committee for my state's veterinary medical association to integrate myself further into my outreach community.
- Consider taking part in the social events of your stakeholders. I attend such events orchestrated by the school I support as a liaison—welcoming returning students, commencement activities, happy hours, and research celebrations—any event where I can increase my visibility and have an opportunity to network. Sometimes I'm serving ice cream, supporting fund-raising for student events, or even buying Girl Scout cookies. I also park my vehicle in the same parking lot as faculty just to exchange morning and afternoon salutations.
- The University of Minnesota has a fund designed to pay for lunches with new faculty when library liaisons wish to network. Consider setting up something similar at your institution!
- Pursue an adjunct appointment within the school you support the most. Consider starting by asking for a copy of the school's guidelines for adjunct appointments so you can understand what the requirements are. Typically, these involve a minimum number of teaching or working hours. This single achievement significantly changed how I was viewed by faculty. The advantage librarians have is that they are already being salaried by the institution, and thus the appointment typically does not involve an increased cost for the school.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Evaluate the current organizational and political landscape of your stakeholders

- Gather information on previously existing working relationships.
- Identify the natural allies of your library.
- Identify the influencing and politically powerful users of your library.
- Identify the committees or workgroups you would like to take part in.
- Perform a candid self-assessment and identify areas for improvement of social skills. Many books exist on the topic; you could start with Carnegie's *How to Win Friends & Influence People*.

Recommendation 2: Construct and execute a networking plan

- Arrange meetings through email and follow-up in person if necessary. Be a weasel!
- Research the history of individuals you are going to meet, such as publication history, grant awards, educational background, etc.
- Assume new people you meet carry the stereotypical view of librarians.
- Sell what *you* can do for *them*, keeping in mind the information they will need to have to make decisions on your proposal/idea.
- Meet first with individuals whom you estimate will give you your easiest successes.
- Consider online networks for promotion of yourself and library services, but be cautious about intersecting your work and personal online profile.

Recommendation 3: Move forward

- Be persistent without being pushy or obnoxious. If an approach is not going to work, drop it but find another way. Be a honey badger if you fail!
- Conduct a survey periodically to assess your “name recognition” and satisfaction with library services.

- Be willing to evolve professionally by taking on new types of work, and move outside typical social circles in order to rub shoulders and network with library stakeholders.

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Building Communities

Social networking for academic libraries

Denise A. Garofalo



The whats and whys of social networking for academic libraries

Abstract: A brief overview with an explanation of what social media are and why they are important, including the role of social media on campus as an adjunct to digital teaching strategies and also as a means for student engagement. Their twentieth-century origins. A presence in social media facilitates the academic library in participating in academic culture, as well as increasing its visibility. Considering the different types of community on campus keys in to the various ways in which participation in social media can benefit a library. This means innovation in difficult times, and can enhance relationships with and among students and improve students' learning skills. The role of the contemporary academic library. Outreach to distance-learning students.

Key words: social media networking, academic libraries, student engagement, information literacy, innovation, technology, life skills, branding, information commons, marketing.

Background

The technological and social changes of the twenty-first century have expanded the roles of social media and social networking and highlighted the ubiquity of these technologies. The term 'social media' denotes 'websites and applications

which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking' (*OED Online*, 2012). This is a democratizing technology, affording anybody the capacity to create content and disseminate information; a kind of global 'word of mouth' for the twenty-first century. The facility for anyone and everyone to create and distribute information to a broad audience, and then interact with that audience, allows the rapid development of extensive communities of people with common interests, where like-minded individuals can associate, engage, and build relationships through purposeful conversations and connections. Social networking sites are small virtual villages, and they also alter the traditional relationships between individuals and organizations or between individuals and institutions. Both facets of those relationships center on communicating – providing content and responding to messages, creating and building virtual personalities – resulting in dialog between the individuals and the institution or organization. The prevalence and popularity of social networking sites are changing the dynamics of social interactions as they change the traditional face-to-face in-person interactions and expand the numbers of different outlets through which individuals, institutions, and organizations can communicate. As Neal Rodriguez (2012, para. 2) commented, social networking sites '...are community building tools'.

'Social networking' – the use or establishment of social networks or connections or the use of websites which enable users to interact with one another (*OED Online*, 2012) – and 'social media' are among the buzzwords of current technology for all types of businesses and organizations. Getting connected and staying that way are important aspects of outreach, brand-building, and networking for people and groups alike. However, using technology to

connect with others is not new in the twenty-first century. The 1970s saw the birth of email and online BBS (bulletin board systems), newsgroups were first formed in the 1980s, and online communities such as Tripod and GeoCities sprang up in the 1990s, followed by blogs, chat, and online course management software. Wikipedia debuted in 2001, followed closely by iTunes, Friendster, MySpace and LinkedIn. Facebook and podcasting came into being in 2004, and Twitter in 2006 (McManus, 2011; Cherim, 2006).

During these years libraries kept pace and utilized these and other technical innovations, such as the incorporation of streaming media, downloadable audio, and ebooks into their collections. Social networking is just one more technological tool libraries are integrating into their service model. Through the use of social networking, libraries can connect with users and others, building a virtual community of people who have similar interests (the library) and interact through discussions and postings. Social networking is the twenty-first-century mode of communication. Libraries can use social networking to communicate with library users and extend services, for example, by providing news about library events, information about new materials, research tips, and much more.

Building a community on social media is much more than just waiting for comments from users. 'By definition, a community is a collection of people ... who interact together in the same environment' (Bacon, 2009, p. 4). A community goes beyond comments or 'shares' or an active fan base, although comments can be an indicator of community on a social media network. When user comments include reactions to another's comment, with direct engagement through the comments, the result is side conversations and possibly the emergence of new topics and revelations, indicating that a common purpose or mission exists among the participants – in

other words, a community exists, and social connectedness is established.

Social connectedness can be defined as the experience of belonging to a social relationship or network (Lee and Robbins, 1995) and a social networking community is such a network. Community-building via social networking results in a sense of belonging and connectedness. Community members connect with one another, building support for themselves from among these connections. When an academic library participates in social media for community-building efforts, the community members look out for each other and for the library. The community allows for opportunities for connection and growth, as community members participate and share in this active, engaging, and fluid experience.

To those that participate in such online communities, these spaces are real, and they augment, intensify, and connect to all aspects of their lives. Social networking sites deliver channels for members to connect, exchange information, invite others to events, and share media. In this way participants acquire a forum for presentation and extension of themselves and their ideas and concerns and a place to explore their identities, share their insights, and interact with others. Students may be confident in their ability to gather information via the Internet so that they can find resources, locate answers, and substantiate their answers, but also recognize that their confidence does not mean that they constitute an information-literate student body.

Consideration needs to be given to the different types of relationship existing on campus (student-based, faculty-based, service-based, staff-based and variations thereof), along with the acknowledgement that these different relationships are increasingly facilitated through social media technologies. There is a perception in academia that the use of and participation in social media networking sites

takes time away from more intellectual pursuits and dissipates the necessary boundaries between instructor and student; perceptions can be difficult to overcome (McBride, 2010). As Manlow et al. (2010, p. 50) state, 'While there are those who oppose web-based teaching, and who are suspicious of or slow to adopt new technologies, more and more faculty and administrators will recognize that advances in technology enable universities to transform the learning environment in a positive direction in line with progressive pedagogies'. Through successful community-building, members of the academic community may come to perceive that social media provide a means to engage with students and promote transparency within this growing twenty-first-century culture of informality, and can lead to campus-wide engagement through networking sites.

These sites are used not only for social networking and entertainment but also for access to information, for learning, and for carrying out professional duties. Perhaps the reluctance of academic libraries to begin to participate in social networking is due to the explicitly non-educational intention of a technology that includes 'social' in its name. But there are benefits to the library in building a community and establishing connections. Libraries may find that 'it might be possible to leverage it [social media technology] as an instructional tool' (Graham, 2007, p. 6). There is potential in social networking to allow the library to provide expertise in the research process, instruction in the use of resources, and information on the content available through the library. Social media technology furnishes the academic library with another tool for connecting to the community, whether the community members prefer contact in person, by phone, email, IM, chat, text messaging, or through the social networking community.

Social networking technology is a means to be where our community is, and to interact with the community and others with whom that community interacts. Younger people believe that email is dead, and use texting, IM, and Facebook to stay in touch. Libraries need to recognize that in order to remain relevant to a user base an adjustment in communication modes is essential. Facebook is a widely used social networking service that is very popular with people of all ages. Businesses and other organizations alike utilize Facebook in community-building efforts, using it as a means to extend and promote their services within their community. Academic libraries can use social media networking to notify their communities about news, events, resources, and library services.

A community built around the academic library can assist students and faculty seeking assistance in their research and information-gathering activities but who may be reluctant or unable to visit the physical library building in person. For instance, students using distance education may be unable to make the visit because of location constraints. There are also those, primarily students, who want information and need assistance with research, but do not wish to visit the library building. The library can reach those students through social media networking, demonstrating integration via the preferred means of interaction for these community members.

Role on campus

Innovation is never easy. Academic libraries can become entrenched in their standard means of providing services, notifying the campus of available materials, or of reaching out to their core community of students, faculty, and staff. And as Steven Bell (Associate University Librarian for

Research and Instructional Services at Temple University, Philadelphia, PA) stated at the ACRL/NEC (Association of College and Research Libraries, New England Chapter) Annual Conference at the College of the Holy Cross (Worcester, MA, 18 May, 2012), ‘entrenched cultures do not support changes, innovation, and discovery.’ Integrating social media technologies into academic libraries is innovative, and without a doubt it will change the way academic libraries relate to their communities. More importantly, though, in order to continue to be relevant in today’s world of higher education, libraries need to connect to people on campus. Social networking provides a method to reach out to people, to make connections and build communities.

These are challenging times for higher education, and institutions will ‘have difficulty surviving in this new environment made harsher with [sic] the recent economic crisis’ (Manlow et al., 2010, p. 48). The global situation is a factor, but local conditions are the most likely determinants for any challenges faced, and it is essential to understand the academic environment in which the library functions, as well as the basic functions of the library, when considering an implementation of an innovative service. The basic functions of the academic library – providing the content of collections, a mechanism of access to the collection content, various services to support the community, and personnel to provide and maintain access, services and collections – are directly related to the academic environment (the college or university) in which the library exists. The changing face of higher education directly impacts the academic library and its services, such as:

- demographic changes and societal shifts, resulting in a culturally diverse student body as well as a shift to more undergraduates who are older than the traditional 18–22-year-olds

- changes to the curriculum
- technological changes, including those impacting the media used in the classroom and to support research
- financial support
- student recruitment and retention
- physical space limitations.

Changing social, political, and economic situations are impacting all facets of higher education, including the academic library. Societal shifts have already impacted the ability of young people to participate in the traditional offerings of higher education. As a result, owing to the need to work, working schedules, and the need for new skills, the make-up of the student body has shifted to include more undergraduates, along with an increase in evening and weekend classes and the further implementation of distance learning (Altbach et al., 2011).

What is the academic library of today? Briefly, it is an institution that offers a supplement and complement to the college's or university's curriculum; essentially the library offers content. To support the content, the library also provides a means for the academic community to access that content, whether via a print book, a digital object, or some other mode. It also provides services such as instruction and research support, a facility to house and interact with the content, and trained personnel to assist the community in activities related to this content. Much of the discussion on how best the library can serve the academic community revolves around scholarly communications and the collection content, and whether a library should even continue to develop a collection. Such debate is far outside the scope of this title. But it is important to remember that academic libraries essentially support the mission of their academic institution and go on from there.

No matter what your perspective, it is important to remember that libraries are a means to connect knowledge to the community. Libraries have always been about community, although the composition of the community involved varies from library type to library type. Academic libraries are concerned with their campus community members – the students, faculty, researchers, staff, alumni, and other groups associated with the college or university.

The partnership among those engaged in learning, research, and the library on academic campuses is an inherent one, and integral to the success of teaching and learning. ‘Raising awareness of what the library can do to support teaching and research staff, as well as students, and of its contribution to the wider institution, is a key component of demonstrating value’ (Creaser and Spezi, 2012, p. 10). Academic libraries contribute to the success of learning and research, and assist in the creation of students able to succeed in our dynamically advancing society, armed with the skills to navigate, find information and use it to answer questions and solve problems in the real world beyond academia’s walls. Academic librarians have the skills and talent to retrieve, organize and evaluate information and then guide others to locate it.

Digital teaching strategies encompass schemes that engage students so they can focus on the content and the collaborative process. The means to accomplish this are varied, and can depend on the delivery of the course content (synchronous v. asynchronous, online v. hybrid, blended v. face-to-face, etc.), but generally involve such activities as pre-course orientation, the ability to browse materials to gain familiarity with the various course materials (readings, texts, handouts, presentations, notes, etc.), recorded class sessions, and course management system orientation. Social media have the potential to facilitate distributed research, through the

engagement of students in developing practical research skills, such as those needed in using online information networks (Mejias, 2006). The academic library can serve as a means to assist and support digital teaching strategies, and the library's social networking community is a viable means of providing such support.

Distance-education students, in particular, may find the use of social media networking invaluable as a means to enhance their learning experience and connection to the academic campus. Instruction rubrics and pedagogical practices have shifted to place student interaction at the heart of the knowledge-transfer transactions. The connective nature of social media can assist distance-education students in feeling a part of the community through collaboration and interactivity (Beldarrain, 2006).

Since students use social networking daily (Madden and Zickuhr, 2011), the presence of a virtual library community can encourage a 'learning is fun' atmosphere while still providing informative and educational support. For instance, the library could use its social networking channels to spark a discussion about any anxiety issues the uninitiated may have around using course management software, allowing the community members the opportunity to acknowledge any apprehension and seek out information on how the software works, with the library providing information and access to an overview of the system. And seasoned users may find that such a community discussion serves for them as a review of functionality; they may even pick up a tip or tool of which they were previously unaware. These exchanges facilitate reciprocal communication and foster student-driven participation. Games and scavenger hunts are popular on social networking sites, so that another helpful activity for the cognitive inquiry approach to instruction could be a

scavenger hunt to introduce students to the system and aid in identifying skill levels among participating students.

Discussions of contemporary effective teaching embrace the idea that a connection between the student and the instructor is essential, and that successful learning and understanding go hand in hand with good teaching (Ramsden, p. 84). Student engagement is a factor relevant to course success, and there are many factors that affect course design and delivery and the effect that these have on student engagement and successful learning and teaching. Junco et al. (2011, p. 8) state that ‘academic and co-curricular engagement are powerful forces in both student psychosocial development and academic success.’ For the successful engagement of students in classes instructors need to provide the opportunity for students to share experiences that they find relevant and accessible. Academic libraries can play a role in fostering this engagement by building a social networking community that allows active participation by students in their learning experience.

Why social media for academic libraries?

Academic libraries are besieged with greater demands from the academic community for access to and instruction in electronic information resources such as ebooks and database resources, while at the same time feeling pressure to advocate and promote awareness of library resources and services to current, former, and new users. Some librarians believe that social media are ‘outside the purview of librarianship’ (Boyd and Ellison, 2008, p. 223), but the potential that exists for the library in participating in social media cannot be ignored; perhaps the changes that younger generations and advancing

technology are bringing about will result in a shift in perceptions among librarians. In any case, redefining the role of the library on the academic campus while simultaneously integrating new formats and technologies has been demonstrated to be difficult to achieve.

Staff and librarians find another challenge in the need to maintain a high tolerance for rapid change as formats and technologies morph and alter. The library can increase both its visibility to the academic community and the vital role it plays by active involvement in pursuits that are visible, support learning, and confirm the role of the library as both a learning space and a meeting place. A social media community that it has established can promote a positive and hospitable perception of the library.

Building communities via social networking can also assist libraries in demonstrating value to their academic institutions. Researchers, faculty, and students may be unaware that the online journal articles and other digital resources they use are library-provided. Overcoming perceptions can be quite an impediment to ensuring users of library services are library supporters. Fortunately, libraries are generally perceived in a positive light owing to a surplus of social capital. According to Bacon (2009, p. 6,) 'social capital is the collective family of positive interactions between two or more people. When you affect someone positively, it builds your social capital.' Providing research assistance, curriculum support and information literacy instruction, along with all the many other ways libraries operate on campus, equates to a substantial sum of social capital.

Social networking provides one way to build upon that social capital and develop additional relationships and connections, to communicate with and demonstrate value to the academic community. Participation and community-building via social

networking provide academic libraries with opportunities to engage with students, faculty, researchers, and staff. The library's efforts to demonstrate participation in faculty and student engagement provide 'evidence of value more effectively' (Barr, 2012, para. 8) to the campus. Building a community is a cooperative venture, which requires engagement with the various community constituent groups and encourages collaborative discussions.

The academic campus has been affected not only by technology and the resulting changes but also by globalization and a realization that competition for students, faculty, and research dollars is increasing. Libraries have to respond to these changes that are affecting the teaching and research efforts of our faculty and student bodies, and carve out new methods to meet these needs.

As Wavle (2009, p. 321) states, 'in order to increase the visibility of the library and to affirm the central role that the library plays in the academic enterprise, it is imperative for the library staff to actively engage in activities that support and foster learning, study, and discovery, as well as to be highly visible and active on campus.'

Today colleges and universities are regarding social media as important conduits through which to reach out, communicate, and engage with students, alumni, and potential students and to build relationships in the virtual locations where these groups interact. Integrating social networking on campus involves thinking about how to connect to students in their own environments and find efficient and effective ways to provide services that are flexible and meaningful to them.

Librarians must stay informed of new developments and continually acquire new knowledge and skills to remain relevant and support learning on the academic campus and

to keep pace with user expectations and needs. Given that academic libraries are a mechanism to offer access to knowledge for their communities, academic librarians need to overcome the tendency to overlook the fact that libraries are a means, not an end, and use innovative, new, and diverse methods to ensure that the library as an institution adjusts, survives, and thrives. Building a community based around the academic library through interaction via social networking is one such innovative method. Academic libraries can interact with the academic community through social networking. The library can, at a basic level, provide access to knowledge for the local social networking community or, at a more advanced level of interaction, offer the opportunity to build a community.

Whether faculty, students, and staff visit the library to use its resources and services or to meet and work collaboratively, the continuing growth in the information commons model for academic libraries reinforces the position of the library as the campus community's gathering place. Taking advantage of this situation and building up a community through social networking technologies provides academic libraries with a teaching tool that is in synch with the mindset and needs of at least one large component of the community, the students. Utilizing social networking demonstrates to students that the library is flexible, relevant, and contemporary. This technology also allows for collaboration and user-generated content, both facets of the informal learning experience (Cain and Policastri, 2011, p. 1). Libraries design and deliver personal, supportive, and responsive services to support research and the curriculum, but the heart of the job of academic libraries is still helping students to succeed.

Connectedness as it is seen in today's society is most often sought and achieved through social media and social

networking sites. The ability to connect and relate through conversations and interactive discussions provides an opportunity to discover and share new information, enabled online via social media, and social media are broadly used across colleges and universities. Obviously more than a passing trend, the social and digital media revolution is here to stay; the reality of online communities must be embraced, not just tolerated, in order to reach students where they choose to interact. The broad use of social media by college students creates exciting opportunities for academic institutions, such as the library, that are ready and willing to acquire the skills, knowledge, and training to successfully build communities and participate in social media technologies. As Olson et al. (2010, last para.) note, social media on academic campuses create ‘virtual environments where community members can connect with the institution and build affinity online.’

The community built through social media redefines how relationships are created and developed, both among individuals and with organizations. These communities also serve as digital meeting grounds, ‘public spaces’ as substitutes for locations where people have traditionally met face to face, such as parks, malls, neighborhoods, and other locations where people gather. In particular, college students are very engaged with social media, and this engagement has transformed the way these students communicate generally as well as within their college environment. College students use social media to connect, and to create and consume content; basically to experience college in both face-to-face and online communities. In fact, the more college students use social media to connect and communicate with other students, their instructors, and college staff regarding college concerns or coursework, the higher their levels of engagement (*Making Connections*, 2009, pp. 8–9).

The combination of our technologically advanced society and the information explosion means that information literacy and the skills involved in organizing, accessing, and evaluating information are integral not only to the learning process but to success in the workplace as well. Making students' learning meaningful as well as successful is crucial, and imparting effectively how best to navigate the confusing choices of information is difficult; the easy solution is to 'Google it.' But librarians know that those students who can locate, evaluate, analyze, and communicate information to others efficiently will almost certainly be successful in their chosen vocation.

Social networking can be another channel to communicate to the academic library's community those vital information literacy skills. Demonstrating and discussing the doubtful quality of information found through general Internet searches as compared to information located through scholarly research databases is one way of approaching this. Social media networking sites such as Facebook can be utilized as informal learning environments. Cain and Policastri (2011, p. 7) shared experiences in using Facebook as a teaching tool. An optional activity within a course provided an opportunity for students to share opinions and content online on a Facebook group page. The effort involved instructional design to ensure the topics and dialog encompassed the targeted subject matter of contemporary business topics, as well as a means for evaluation and assessment. The informal learning strategy meshed well with the activity, and offered 'a way to model professional communications via social media.'

Student skills for success

The academic library and librarians serve to encourage and support faculty in their efforts to teach students. By assisting

in the college or university's established learning priorities and curriculum, librarians can aid in the effort to ensure that students are equipped with the tools, skills, and competencies to be effective lifelong learners. The collaboration between librarian and faculty in this effort may be a challenge. Recognizing the opportunity social media software creates to aid in this effort and utilizing the technology to communicate and foster the community are ways to provide services and support those skills students need for success on the campus and beyond.

Take information literacy as an example. Information is readily accessible and very available because of the various technologies students use daily, from mobile technologies to computer labs and more. The pervasive nature of information in today's society would seem to mean that students are not only accustomed to using information but are also able to do so in a confident and accurate manner. The bare fact that students exhibit information-seeking behaviors on a daily basis, however, does not mean they have the skills to analyze the information they have retrieved and make judicious decisions on what information to use and what to cull (Rockman, 2004, p. xv).

A social networking community built around the academic library can provide a means to support appropriate, precise, and critical skills to deal with the ever-changing and expanding information environment, and its existence demonstrates a willingness to adopt a strategy that meets the students where they like to spend time – on social media. Posting questions or suggestions or tips on how to deal with the complex and plentiful information choices, and then waiting for comments and discussion from the community, can provide the opportunity to give practical feedback on comments that show poor judgment as well as those that demonstrate critical thinking and analysis in regard to

whether a chosen resource is authentic, valid, and reliable; such interactions can be a means to support and promote suitable information-seeking behaviors.

As Secker and Price (2007, p. 51) note, ‘social software such as podcasting and resource sharing can also be used in information literacy initiatives.’ Students use information from a variety of formats daily, and discussions may include these multiple media and how to determine the veracity of information found in media such as video or other visual art forms. Sustaining any discussion on these concepts that change data into meaning is another way librarians can support information literacy within the academic community and support students in developing the skills and competencies for lifelong success. Students who learn such skills are not only educated, they are information-literate. They can recognize when information is needed and know how to locate, analyze, and use the information they need. These are the people who will be best suited to contribute to economic productivity in the future.

The interactive nature of social networking can be adapted for user-centered learning. Postings can solicit observations and opinions from community members, which should provide an insight into their understanding of information literacy concepts and their level of awareness of resources and evaluative measures. Instructors need an awareness of students’ information literacy skills in order to develop enriched learning environments that engage the students (Maybee, 2006, p. 79), and the complexity of today’s information landscape demands that any information literacy effort support the information-savvy student as well as those who are not as proficient. The community setting can provide an opportunity for each segment to learn from the others. Questions, observations, and comments can enhance

collaboration within the community and foster continued discussion, creating a framework for connecting the community and enhancing the information-seeking behaviors of all participants (Jackson and Mackey, 2007; Maybee, 2006).

Of course, ensuring that efforts in the area of information literacy garner student attention is essential to success. Such efforts, if adequately integrated into the social media community, should merit attention from the students in the community. Collaborations between librarians and faculty in a social media community can demonstrate that the value of information literacy applies not just in the classroom but to anyone accessing information anywhere and for any reason, and the collaborators can work towards developing strategic alliances (Jacobson and Mackey, 2007).

A social media community can be a supportive environment where librarians and faculty cooperate to initiate conversations that highlight concepts. A solid academic foundation includes more than reading, writing, computer use, and proficiency in a subject or course. Success in higher education involves skills not related to any academic area or course. The levels of awareness students have of the fundamental skills necessary to research and use information in all aspects of life is difficult to gauge. Enriched discourse among community members can reveal how analyzing material to create new knowledge that results in a product, such as a paper or a performance, is an essential scholarly task. Acquiring a level of competent information-literacy expertise is a lifelong learning skill. Providing instruction through the interactive discourse of social media is another way an academic library can cope with the challenge of reaching students and instructing them about locating, analyzing, and using information (Katz, 1993; Raspa and Ward, 2000).

Aligning with the institution's branding

Staying connected to students is just one aspect of public relations at a college or university. Using social media helps with marketing and retention, and contributes to campus culture 'a space where students in the same institution can connect and share a common collegiate bond' (Charnigo and Barnett-Ellis, 2007, p. 31). In the competitive world of higher education, colleges and universities have developed branding. Branding is defined by BusinessDictionary.com as 'the entire process involved in creating a unique image for a product in the consumer's mind through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers.'

Branding is more than consistent signage and stationery; it also provides an identity for campus content and culture. Branding is a marketing concept designed to define the essence of a college or university, to differentiate one higher-education institution from another (Wæraas and Solbakk, 2009).

Because colleges and universities 'bring the power of a social institution and the cultures that swirl around campus experiences to forge true partnerships with students, alumni, and supporters' (Anctil, 2008, p. 96), for consistency and a common public 'face,' any social media efforts by an academic library should align with the campus branding. The library can only benefit by ensuring its social media campaign remains consistent with its parent institution's image and branding. One way to guarantee such affiliation is to coordinate with the campus marketing or public relations staff.

Libraries should perform as part of the integrated marketing plan for the entire institution, where branding is

consistent across campus and individual segments such as admissions, athletics, library, alumni, academics, and so on, to conform to one campus brand and identity. Discuss the intended library's social media campaign with the college's or university's marketing or public relations people and ask them for suggestions on how the library can incorporate the institution's branding into its campaign. To avoid any misunderstandings or perceptions of competition, be prepared to explain why the library is launching a separate social media presence. Collaboration can alleviate misconceptions regarding intentions or purpose – the library just wants to use social media networking to engage with the campus and build community. Consider any suggestions, incorporate those that seem to be reasonable, and then move forward with a library social media plan aligned with the campus branding.

Marketing the library's content and services

The impact of technology and the Internet on higher education has led not only to a remarkable outgrowth of electronic resources but has changed the way faculty and students conduct research. Although the resources in the library can be searched and accessed with a smartphone, a tablet or other computer device, and the full texts of millions of journal articles are available both on and off campus, users turn to search engines rather than the library for research.

The library has evolved from a storehouse of books to an information commons, where people come to study, collaborate, meet, research, and more. Many use the virtual aspect of the library whenever and wherever they fancy doing so. Library users expect rapid, convenient delivery of

whatever resources they require. Libraries need to actively promote resources and services, and ensuring that the campus is aware of all the library offers is a task social media can accomplish (Burkhardt, 2010).

An unfortunate reality at the moment is that for most academic libraries, the majority of people on campus are not library users; and even library users are not aware of all the library offers. In addition, informing the campus of new services in a way that is noteworthy and memorable can be difficult. A social media networking presence and the community that it fosters provide an ideal forum to disseminate information about library resources and services.

Through social media, academic libraries can interact with faculty, staff, and students about new library resources, projects, services, or events. Participating in social media can 'provide opportunities for libraries in communicating better with their users' (Ayu and Abrizah, 2011, p. 257). The conversations naturally arising as an element of a social media presence can provide awareness and understanding of what resources, research needs, programs, or services are desired. Results should not be expected immediately, but patience and perseverance can give the library and its services more exposure and attention.

Since social media are about relationships, community, and conversations, consistent communication is crucial to social media success. And the communication must be two-way, just as in face-to-face conversations. These conversations can be about the new books that have arrived, or the new database content that is now available. Programs and late-night study hours can be mentioned. Any remark made about the library can be considered as posting content. As with any new tool, library staff using social media will take some time to acquire the best voice, personality, and posting

schedule, but with time a growing, active community centered on the library will begin to emerge.

Rewards of social media participation

Using social media technologies to establish an academic library community is a venture that will take time and effort, but the rewards can make it worthwhile. Libraries can seize this opportunity to find connections with users and have real conversations with the people who use the library and its services. Establishing a social media presence will raise the visibility of the library, develop dialog, and increase awareness of all the library offers to the campus.

Presence in social media is the norm for colleges and universities. A study by the Dartmouth Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts noted that 100% of the colleges and universities studied used some form of social media (Barnes and Lescault, 2011, p. 2). A natural offshoot of such pervasive social media use in higher education is for campus units, such as libraries, to participate as well.

In essence, developing a social media network is really developing an online means for the library to stay in touch with people as well as to meet and build relationships with new students, faculty, staff, administrators, and researchers. The library shares information and participants comment and share content. To maintain the relationship and work towards building a community, the library responds to comments and posts.

It is essential to remember that social networking is not about technology but is rather about building relationships. Through social media networking the academic library can foster these relationships into a community. Subsequently

the library can reach out and present information to the community, which can respond in turn, giving the library the opportunity to listen. Provide thoughtful comments, promote links to news and events, and be personable. Ask questions of the community to foster engagement and nurture a sense of belonging. The library may discover that if it adopts new technologies such as online social networking, student involvement and participation increases because the library is accessible via a technology in which they are interested. Bottom line – library visibility is increased, as noted.

Utilizing social networks to create a library presence can help bring attention to library services. With regard to courses, social networking can provide a setting for feedback and discussion, where a librarian can post about citation style, locating relevant research articles, or accessing digital resources (Haycock and Howe, 2011). Since social media bring librarians and library users together, you would do well to consider collaborative collection development, where community members can suggest titles for purchase, or are asked to evaluate resources. Discussing new materials purchased or sharing reading suggestions are other ways to highlight and enhance library services and resources. Links to helpful resources, such as citation style guides, can be shared as well.

New resources can be introduced using social media, and existing resources can be featured in order to connect learners to new resources (Mejias, 2005). Every library has those ‘hidden’ collections that few users know exist; open a conversation with the library’s social media community about these unknown gems. Distribute helpful information such as emergency-response tests and preparedness materials or information about events in the college’s or university’s community. Promote the day’s activities at the library or answer questions. All of these allow the library to share with

its social media community and in doing so promote and highlight resources and services, while raising the library's visibility with the campus. Sachs et al. (2011) mention that students, faculty and libraries can benefit from being connected through social media, and Wan (2011, p. 318) points out that social networking 'has great potential for library outreach.' When executed successfully, social media can be a tool to reach out and promote library services, a means to build a community through connections, content, and conversations.

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Political positioning

Eric Owen

Abstract: The academic world remains steeped in a structure and driven by dynamics that would not feel unfamiliar to Niccolò Machiavelli living half a millennium ago. The importance of personalities, patronage, and political positioning within a college or university setting are ignored at a library's (and librarian's) peril. In the 13 years I have worked at my institution, I have seen half a dozen university presidents, at least as many provosts, and a myriad of other significant campus administrators come and go. During that same timeframe, our university library has also changed with five different leaders (permanent or interim), one of whom was me. The reasons for this high turnover were many, and in this chapter I will highlight examples of successful strategies for surviving and thriving in such a turbulent setting, while also describing potential pitfalls to avoid. I will lay out the tactics (successful and not) of several successive library administrations attempting to maneuver within the arena of an ever-changing academic hierarchy. I will also look at my own failures and successes attempting to advance both my library and my career while rising from the most junior library faculty member to the interim University Librarian in less than a decade.

Key words: constituencies, engagement, influence, politics, positioning.

In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, various city-states in Italy were caught in a maelstrom of economic, political, and religious tensions. This period witnessed a complex interplay of forces from powerful foreign monarchies, ambitious local potentates, trading cartels

and families, and republican factions, as well as the intrigues of the Papacy. Five hundred years later, a useful analogy may be drawn between the communities and people of late Renaissance Italy and the position of academic libraries and librarians in the twenty-first century.

In search of insights from this past period and place, no better voice can be found than in the writings and observations of Niccolò Machiavelli. He was thoroughly enmeshed into the dynamics of power in the important Italian city of Florence. In 1498 he was appointed as the second Chancellor and Secretary of the Ten on Liberty and Peace, and he served in this civilian position heavily involved with military matters, until his expulsion with the return of the Medici to power 1512. Viewed as a potential threat, Machiavelli was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured as a conspirator in 1513. After a few months, he was released, exiled to his country home and began to work on his writings (most published after his death in 1527), which would shape the work of many important later military and political philosophical thinkers and writers.

Interpretations of portions of his most famous work, *The Prince*, have commonly been used to develop leadership and management maxims, which, while entertaining in the abstract, often seem of dubious ethical and political merit when in practice. However, a careful contextual reading of Machiavelli's body of works, including *The Art of War* and the *Discourses on Livy*, provides a more holistic perspective of Machiavelli's lessons on securing, applying, and maintaining political power. This critical and perhaps more constructive approach is thoroughly detailed by Erica Benner in her work *Machiavelli's Ethics* (2009). While Machiavelli uses contemporary examples in his writings, it is his historical antecedents, particularly of Greek and Roman origins, which form the most important contributions in style and serve as examples in his chapters.

Machiavelli's works can be used to educate those interested in both obtaining influence as well as recognizing the machinations and strategies of potential political opponents. In this chapter, I hope to demonstrate a few factors and tactics to take, or avoid, when attempting to positively position your library (or your own librarian career) in complicated political professional circumstances. I will intersperse brief descriptions and references to sources which may serve for fuller investigation of key points. My focus will remain fixed to an academic library setting, but I believe many of the approaches I describe, as broad modes of learning the landscape and acting in a political environment, are applicable in any library setting.

Politics, and political position, as I will describe in this chapter, are not centered on the political activities of formal government and legislative entities. In general, an academic library environment remains somewhat removed, in part, because the larger institution is most often the level at which governmental politics enter the academy. In public libraries, which are often part of municipal governments and may even have an elected board of trustees, this separation does not exist. While I will not delve into this deeper layer of the role of libraries in traditional politics (in the sense of ballots and proposals, elections, and parties), I would be remiss if I did not mention at least a few examples of scholarship that concentrate on political factors in a public library setting. One might begin with John Feather's editorial "Libraries and politics: where two worlds meet" (2003), John Budd's "Politics and public library collections" (2006), and the recent article by Jaeger et al., "Libraries, policy, and politics in a democracy: four historical epochs" (2013).

The academic world today remains steeped in a structure and driven by dynamics that would not feel unfamiliar to Machiavelli living half a millennium ago. The importance of personalities, patronage, and political positioning within a college or university setting are ignored at a library's (and librarian's) peril. In the 13 years I have worked at my institution, I have seen half a dozen university presidents, probably as many provosts, and a myriad of other significant campus administrators come and go. During this same timeframe, our university library has also seen dramatic change with five different leaders (permanent or interim), one of whom was myself.

View from the top/going down (when politics attack)

I began my career as the junior-most library faculty member on my campus. My new bosses, the Dean of the university division of Learning Resources and Technologies (LR&T), and the Associate Dean of Learning Resources, had hired me with the intention that I create and develop a digital library, as well as act as a liaison between the two units of the LR&T division.

- LR or Learning Resources (aka the library) included:
 - two dozen tenure-track faculty librarians
 - a larger cohort of clerical and professional personnel.

- LT or Learning Technologies ran academic computing, and encompassed:
 - multiple email systems
 - file sharing/storage
 - many campus servers
 - a staff of almost 50 administrators, programmers, and technicians.

The library building was new, with construction completed less than two years before I was hired. It seemed set for the establishment of an innovative digital presence.

I was too new (and too naïve) to notice the first crack in the foundation of the library’s political position—a longstanding university president retired within a month of my start. I didn’t think much about it when I attended the picnic celebrating his years of service. I used the time to get to know my new coworkers. The new university president took office just as the contract with our powerful campus faculty union, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) came up for renewal. Negotiations did not go smoothly and when the fall semester was set to begin, the union called a strike. I weighed my options, considered scenarios, and decided to stay home for the duration of the arbitration. I thought for the first time, but certainly not the last: “What have I gotten myself into?”

The strike ended in about a week, a four-year contract was signed, and I returned to work. I had started in the summer so I had not met nor interacted with many of my librarian colleagues. Now, with everyone back in the library, I began to recognize a new factor entering my workplace consciousness: peers in a tenure-track environment. I quickly appreciated the power of faculty evaluation committees and the effects of involvement in (or exclusion from) departmental teams and task forces. While I was gaining a valuable education in office influence, I remained blissfully unaware of the storm brewing above me in the library and campus administration.

Early the following year the Provost, of nearly two decades, and a long-time library supporter and friend of the LR&T Dean, died unexpectedly. Within three months the Dean and Associate Dean, the folks who had hired me, were gone, and the division of LR&T was dismantled. The librarians, clerical, and facilities personnel, as well as a group of half a dozen professionals and technicians, were selected to staff a “new” University Library. The remaining members of LR&T, mostly programmers and other technology specialists, were assimilated

by the remaining university computing body to form a new campus entity: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

My first year was very turbulent. Reflecting on that time, I can see several factors of campus politics played out at once. A few years prior to my hire, the LR&T Dean had been successful in combining a powerful patron, his friend the Provost, with a strong groundswell of student support to pursue his vision of a library and information technology environment combined into a single campus entity and locale. While I was not witness to the Dean's specific maneuvers and strategies during this endeavor, it seems likely that several potent enemies were made, and few useful alliances developed. The aegis of a supportive Provost is an excellent asset, but such influence relies on the ongoing relationship with the individual. The mobilization of the masses (the students) can also prove exceptionally effective, but that reinforcement can be fleeting, as the transient nature of the student body precludes much continuity of support over time.

The political landscape for academic libraries (and librarians) is a collage of constituencies and stakeholders, both internal and external. Identifying the stakeholders is a logical first step. A useful list and description of possible participants in the arena of academic politics is well articulated in *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*, including administrators, communities, employers, government entities, graduate/professional schools, institutional faculty, parents, and students (Oakleaf & ACRL, 2010, p. 27). To situate the library and librarian effectively in an advantageous political position requires a thorough examination and understanding of the attitudes, methods, and motivations that drive these stakeholders.

With this broad list of constituencies, a framework for determining the possible goals and values of each group becomes essential. An excellent and accessible approach is provided in Bergquist and Pawlak's *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy* (2008). This work, expanding on Bergquist's original 1992 study, *The Four Cultures of the Academy*, defines half a dozen academic cultures:

- collegial
- managerial
- developmental
- advocacy
- virtual
- tangible.

The work places each culture in the context of its historical development and associating values and perspectives to each. These six cultures provide “lenses through which its members interpret and assign value to the various events and products in the world... [and] guidelines for problem solving, and more generally, serves an overarching purpose” ((Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 10). Individuals and organizations may exhibit traits from more than one of these cultures, but the ability to recognize these varying qualities in stakeholders can inform strategies to package library propositions either in a manner which will resonate with their values and elicit support, or as a means to challenge resistance more effectively if a proposal counters their interests.

What is going on around here? (seeing the big picture)

- Begin to recognize and decipher the political landscape of your institution.
- Perceive political power structures of the campus (organizational and personal).
- Identify campus and community constituencies for the library.
- Determine motivations and values (cultures) of stakeholders.

Transitions and transformation (enemies within)

Over the next year, a librarian colleague accepted an interim appointment to the new position of University Librarian. This person had the unenviable task of presiding over the library during a tumultuous period of staffing transitions, budget separations, and space negotiations with the dissolution of the LR&T division. Though the situation was far from optimal, the library was not without support. The interim University Librarian was able to muster considerable assistance and timely representation from the incumbent associate provost, who helped mitigate the loss of resources and staff. Furthermore, while the creation of ICT marked a significant official separation of technology expertise and focus from the library, the fact that former LR&T personnel remained co-located in the library building meant that many personal associations and connections continued to provide outstanding opportunities for collaboration, whether officially sanctioned or not.

Realizing that many of the original duties for which I was hired either no longer existed or, at best, were not likely to be a priority in the current environment, I began to broaden my range of responsibilities. I sought and accepted additional material selection areas, departmental liaison functions, and computer lab supervisory roles. In addition, I was successful in getting elected to a couple of departmental committees, likely benefiting from the care I had taken to minimize the concerns of my established colleagues that my performance of my professional duties, especially with respect to new or existing technology, might bode baleful action or baneful intent.

A recognition of the forces and factions within your library can assist in any local political efforts. An appreciation of your own institution's structures and coworkers' biases will help you, in the words of my own library colleagues:

...become an effective player in the system, alert to the pitfalls and land mines that populate the office scene. This means learning the lay of the land, not for the purposes of being a manipulator but to become an effective advocate for positive change and support within your work organization.

—Storm et al., 2008, p. 34

Who are these people? (local politics)

- Apply lessons for the larger landscape to the environment within the library.
- Never underestimate the power of personal connections across the institution.
- Be cognizant of colleagues concerns and acknowledge areas of expertise.

Campus chaos and library instability

The longest period of leadership that I experienced from any one library administrator began in my third year. That University Librarian remained as head of the library for over seven years. With graduate academic credentials in Computing, in addition to Library Science, and a track record of encouraging innovations in library technology and digital pursuits, I was curious to see if I would be asked to return to my former roles and duties. During the early years of this

University Librarian's tenure, internal tensions developed as differences of contractual interpretation and communication failures between the library administration and existing library faculty occurred repeatedly.

While these tensions were at times uncomfortable, the library environment seemed a calm sea in comparison to the greater culture clashes, scandals, and turnover which continued to crash over the campus administration. Within two years, the incumbent University President, Provost, and CIO were no longer in power. An experienced external single-year interim Presidential appointment averted any repeat of the faculty union strike four years prior, but the next permanent President did not fare so well and lasted only two years, following another wave of strikes and scandal. Another interim President, this time from within the university, was followed by another national search resulting in the current University President hired almost five years ago. This rapid and repeating cycle of new campus leadership was coupled with a variety of administrative agendas and exceptional turnover in many key campus positions.

The manner in which individuals and organizations operate to define and reach goals and solve problems is a reflection of differing styles of management and leadership. These styles change over time and the remnants of replaced regimens remain noticeable throughout higher education. An eminent observer and commentator of educational styles of leadership is Robert Birnbaum. In his book *Management Fads in Higher Education* (2000), Birnbaum illustrates the evolution of many management approaches in American higher education, from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century. His insights into the rationale behind the adoption, implementation, and eventual departure from each approach illustrates the potential patchwork of successive strategies that often underpin the actions of higher education leaders today.

While the campus carousel of upper administrations went round and round, the library experienced its own internal shift, as over half of the librarians retired, moved on, or passed away, and a group of new hires took their place. Overall, the library's relative stability, undoubtedly tempered by the influx of fresh ideas and energy from our newest recruits, provided opportunities to spread our influence broadly. During this period, library faculty members and other personnel:

- secured leadership positions within the campus Faculty Senate, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and clerical/secretarial union chapter

- renewed a presidential appointment as chair of the campus Women's Commission
- continued command of the campus Women's Association
- gained significant representation on campus budget, facilities, parking, safety, and technology committees.

While my previous talents and original reasons for hire were never fully reintegrated into my position, I was asked to fill multiple roles related to library technology, many of which remain to this day. I also underwent a fairly swift metamorphosis from a junior colleague to an experienced librarian voice, mentor, and library faculty leader. I required no convincing that participation and engagement were keys to my own (and the library's) success. As a result, I served at various times on all of the elected departmental committees, often being selected in a leadership position on each. I also functioned as an alternate for our library post in the Faculty Senate and accepted an appointment, repeated multiple times up to the present, as the library's faculty representative to the campus Educational Environment and Facilities Committee.

Though the library appeared stable compared to the rest of campus, many local squabbles and much disquiet existed throughout this period. The following elements took a steady toll on the person and position of the University Librarian:

- a steady erosion of library staff positions used to offset a lack of budget increases and occasional cuts
- contractual ambiguities and grievances with librarians
- repeated turnover in the Associate University Librarian post
- conflicting cultures of management philosophy and practice.

As I approached the tenth year in the library, the concept of political positioning was about to take on an entirely new and very personal perspective.

While Birnbaum provides a valuable vision of managerial techniques and processes likely to confront library leaders on the broader academic stage, research focused on leadership and management in libraries are also instructive: both as a potential navigational aid to individual librarian's career aspirations, and as a compass, determining the direction of library specific styles of leadership and management. Mech and McCabe's *Leadership and Academic Librarians* (1998), Hernon et

al.'s *The Next Library Leadership: Attributes of Academic and Public Library Directors* (2003), Gregory's *The Successful Academic Librarian: Winning Strategies from Library Leaders* (2005), Wood et al.'s *Beyond Survival: Managing Academic Libraries in Transition* (2007), Herson and Rossiter's *Making a Difference: Leadership and Academic Libraries* (2007), and Budd's *The Changing Academic Library: Operations, Cultures, Environments* (2012) represent several substantial examples of such works.

During the past 15 years (a period of increasing transformative change in academic libraries), numerous articles on the topic of library leadership have been produced, ranging from Riggs' "What's in store for academic libraries? Leadership and management issues" (1997), and McClamroch et al.'s "Strategic planning: politics, leadership, and learning" (2001), to more recent samples of scholarship such as "Managerial leadership in academic libraries: roadblocks to success" (Allner, 2008), "Academic libraries in transition: some leadership issues—a viewpoint" (Maropa, 2010), and "Leading from the middle of the organization: an examination of shared leadership in academic libraries" (Cawthorne, 2010). These articles, and others, provided ideas about library leadership, both as a means of understanding the methods of those I followed, and as a measure for how I might approach an administrative position myself.

Now what do we do? (campus chaos = opportunity)

- Be ready to lead to take advantage of opportunities when they appear.
- Leverage active participation (and leadership) on campus (and library) committees, task forces, and teams to build connections and expand influence during intervals of institutional instability.
- Learn about the leadership styles and management techniques of past and present administrations to capture current context and predict (and plan for) future directions and priorities.

What have I gotten myself into? (political positioning on the big stage)

As I completed my first decade as a librarian at my institution, our leader for more than two-thirds of my professional academic librarian career

announced plans to step down. The internal wrangling between our library administration and the library faculty had created a significant structural barrier preventing the existing Associate University Librarian from assuming an interim appointment as the University Librarian. My years of service and leadership on departmental committees, teams, and task forces, coupled with a solid reputation I had earned with my work and leadership on the campus Educational Environment and Facilities Committee (chaired by the Associate Provost), ensured that I was considered a viable candidate as the next interim University Librarian. As the reality unfolded, I became the sole candidate put forth by the library faculty.

I would be lying if I did not admit that I used this situation to improve my own financial position. I also negotiated terms that I hoped would force a swift search for an external library leader, as our campus had a history of lengthy interim appointments which, in my view, suffered diminished access and authority, compared to permanent positions. I began my interim appointment with several factors in my favour: strong support from my colleagues, an experienced Associate University Librarian, and administrative office support personnel, and an excellent relationship with my new boss, the Associate Provost. But all was not perfect; my negotiation tactics had frustrated some upper administrators. Library morale was nearing an all-time low. The library was due for its first turn in a new multi-year, campus-wide process of program review intending to determine the effectiveness, and seeking to benchmark, our operations and services. Finally, the campus was about to begin a massive renovation of the largest classroom facility on campus while simultaneously working to complete an earlier renovation to the campus' enormous science complex.

This last challenge was in many respects the easiest. I had been involved with campus planning for this eventuality for several years and had been able to work with the previous library administration to offer the assistance of library facilities, particularly if deferred maintenance issues plaguing the library building were addressed. The appearance, and indeed actuality, of the library being a good campus citizen did not go unnoticed.

Program review was also a process where I gained at least a semester's prior involvement to assuming the interim post. This was also not something I had to tackle alone, and I was happy to continue the distribution of many aspects to a variety of librarians, professional personnel, and particularly the Associate University Librarian. This group performed admirably, and I used our collective labors to issue

a comprehensive report and presentation that seemed to satisfy all requirements while making a pitch for the library's need for increased materials funding. The need was evidenced by comparative data with some of our peer institutions.

Morale in the library was abysmal, mostly as a function of repeated years of budget cuts and eliminated or lengthy unfilled positions. In addition, a flat hierarchical structure, a product of the faculty status of our librarians, had been an anathema to the previous University Librarian. I was quick to halt the vestiges of previous attempts to circumvent this structure, by creating a new group of paraprofessional managers, as I believed this scheme had caused more harm than good. This decision was regarded with relief, though it did stop some potential promotions for non-faculty personnel. This action, in turn, freed some money from eliminated staff positions which we worked to redistribute back to the people in affected units; however, there was not enough for raises across the board.

My time as the interim University Librarian was brief—only six months—so I guess my negotiating tactics worked well, at least in that regard. We had a permanent replacement hired and serving in record time. I had been in the big game, and while I made mistakes, I believe my willingness to confront challenges head on and engage in sometimes adversarial encounters, when necessary, served the library well.

So now you're the boss (becoming a political player)

- Appreciate, utilize, and attest to the abilities, strengths, and contributions of colleagues and subordinates.
- Avoid an appetite for confrontation, but never avoid conflicts just because they are uncomfortable.
- Seek varied opinions and diverse input; be willing to act without consensus if necessary.

Welcome Dr. Dean—an era of s(chair)ed governance

The search committee had been active even before I assumed the interim University Librarian position. Their process proceeded while I worked

to place the library in the best possible position, prior to my successor's appointment. The final choice for leader of the library brought the position full circle, with the candidate holding academic credentials at a doctoral level and an acceptance of the post with the understanding that the title would return from University Librarian to Dean.

As the new Dean of the University Library settled in, I returned to my previous appointment as associate professor and information systems librarian. I continued to serve on important campus committees, and I returned to fill positions on departmental committees as well. The new boss seemed perfectly comfortable with the more collegial constructs and managerial vicissitudes of our library's faculty structure, and perhaps swung further than many librarians had expected (or wished) in the direction of faculty input and shared governance. Leadership positions within the department, like committee chairs and team and task force leaders, soon found their opinions might matter (and they were expected to have an opinion). During the past couple of years I have also noticed a widespread attempt at library-wide engagement in determining direction and implementation of library goals, operations, services, and vision.

While the campus chaos of my first decade mainly served as a backdrop to my apprenticeship in the realm of political positioning, the reign of the current library Dean has been one filled with constant local crises and challenges. Within the first year of the Dean taking office, most of the direct academic affairs leadership above the library including the associate provost, the head of academic human resources, and the provost had either moved on or stepped down. Soon after, change occurred within the library administration suite, as the Associate University Librarian accepted a director position at another university, and the vastly experienced administrative office manager departed on medical leave and later retired due to illness.

As if this was not enough, last year the library building experienced a catastrophic pipe failure requiring the closure of a quarter of the facility for two months, and the temporary relocation of the library's acquisitions, cataloguing, interlibrary loan, facilities and systems personnel and operations (as well as several other substantial campus units housed in the library). Concurrent with the restoration of normal services and the return of personnel to their offices, mold was discovered in our Automated Storage and Retrieval System (ASRS). Over the following months, it was determined that a comprehensive cleaning of the half million items contained in the system would be required, and a nearly \$2 million enhancement to the HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air condition) and environmental infrastructure of the ASRS would

be necessary. Fortunately, this extraordinary allocation was recently approved by our university's governing Board of Regents. The trials and tribulations of the current Dean's term underline a fundamental realization in planning and positioning—you can neither anticipate every scenario nor control every situation, no matter how well you prepare.

So many voices, so little time (benefits and burdens of distributed power)

- Effective communication requires reciprocity.
- Shared governance implies shared responsibility and authority, and all entail additional effort.
- Unforeseen circumstances and crises can always arise—personal flexibility, professional dexterity, and organizational agility are the most efficient and effective preparations.

Being politically effective in an academic library, both with respect to the rest of campus and within the library itself, relies on the development of a comprehensive understanding of the various stakeholders in that environment, their varying and often conflicting cultures, and the motivations and expectations ensconced in the sundry styles of leadership and modes of management used to govern. The core lesson for the Machiavellian librarian is one of informed engagement. Whether you are a recognized leader or one of many librarians, you should not underestimate the value of understanding how and why others do what they do. In this way, at best you can develop ways to match them with your library (and your own career) goals, and aspirations, and at worst you can prepare potent plans to mitigate them when they don't.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Learn the political landscape

- Perceive political power structures of the campus (organizational and personal).
- Identify campus and community constituencies for the library.

- Determine motivations and values (cultures) of stakeholders.
- Learn about the leadership styles and management techniques of past and present administrations to capture current context (how and why we are in a current situation), and predict (and plan for) future directions and priorities.

Recommendation 2: Act in a political environment

- Never underestimate the power of personal connections across the institution.
- Leverage active participation (and leadership) on campus (and library) committees, task forces, and teams to build connections and expand influence during intervals of institutional instability.
- Be ready to lead to take advantage of opportunities when they appear.
- Avoid an appetite for confrontation, but never avoid conflicts just because they are uncomfortable.
- Unforeseen circumstances and crises can always arise—personal flexibility, professional dexterity, and organizational agility are the most efficient and effective preparations.

Recommendation 3: Become an effective politician

- Be cognizant of colleagues' concerns and acknowledge areas of expertise.
- Appreciate, utilize, and attest to the abilities, strengths, and contributions of colleagues and subordinates.
- Effective communication requires reciprocity.
- Seek varied opinions and diverse input; be willing to act without consensus if necessary.
- Shared governance implies shared responsibility and authority, and all entail additional effort.

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The sound of a librarian: the politics and potential of podcasting in difficult times

Tara Brabazon

Abstract: Quite unexpectedly, the Information Age has not provided a golden era for librarians. The de-skilling of information literacy and a decline in public funding has resulted in librarians fighting for their professionalism, knowledge and ability, as much as for their jobs. This chapter explores how libraries and librarians are using podcasts not only to fulfil an outreach function to build a community of users, but to demonstrate the value of an information professional in an age of excessive information.

Key words: librarianship, information management, information literacy, iPod, podcasting

Michael Moore's *Stupid White Men* was a publishing success story of the early 2000s. It featured a great title and defiant argument, but it had a troubled passage to fame. The first 50,000 copies of the book came off the press on the night of 10 September 2001. Not surprisingly, a critique of George W. Bush was not seen as appropriate in the aftermath of 9/11. But as the weeks passed after this inopportune printing, the publishers – ReganBooks/HarperCollins – demanded a 50 per cent rewrite of the book. They also wanted a \$100,000 cheque from Moore to pay for the reprint. With the publisher and writer at a standoff, the book was to be pulped.

The reason it survived and thrived was thanks to librarians. On 1 December 2001, Michael Moore was booked to speak to one hundred people in New Jersey. He did not deliver the planned speech but relayed the story of his soon-to-be-doomed book. In that crowd, Ann Sparanese, a librarian from New Jersey, was disgusted at the censorship. After the talk, she went home, logged on and started typing. She left messages on

sites for politically progressive librarians, detailing HarperCollins' behaviour. Sparanese asked forum participants to write to the publisher and demand the release of *Stupid White Men*.

Thousands of librarians peppered the publisher's offices with letters. In disgust, HarperCollins contacted Moore and asked him what he had done, because 'now we're getting hate mail from librarians'.¹ To silence them, the publishers released the book with little advertising, book tours or publicity. The internet, in those early days of the read write web, was used to convey information about the release. Within hours, the first 50,000 copies were sold. By the next day, *Stupid White Men* was the Amazon.com number one best seller. By the fifth day, the book was in its ninth printing and at the top of the *New York Times* best seller list. It stayed there for five months.

It is no surprise that librarians were the first voices to affirm the value of democracy, justice and dissent. As a profession, librarians have faced excessive spin doctoring about the Information Age and managed the budget cuts as a consequence of it.² As librarians were reclassified as information managers and libraries transformed into media centres and information commons, new priorities emerged. Against this digital tide, members of the profession transformed into literacy guerrillas – protecting reading, writing and thinking from those who would sell the future of education as easily as they would market a database. Ann Sparanese has continued to ask questions and build alternatives. She has built collections in African American Studies, Hispanic Studies, World Music, and has won a grant to fund library services for Spanish-speaking citizens.³ She demonstrates that an activist librarian can speak politics to ignorance, but also change the lives of disempowered citizens. New communities cannot only be served but created by intervening in assumptions about rights, responsibilities, literacy, community, nation and public service.

Michael Moore, reflecting upon how librarians protected his right to dissent, confirmed in the preface of his book that

it should have come as no surprise that the librarians were leading the charge. Most people think of them as all mousy and quiet and telling everyone to 'SHHHHHH!' I'm now convinced that 'shush' is just the sound of the steam coming out of their ears as they sit there plotting the revolution.⁴

Ten years on from publishing this preface, I take Moore's commentary about librarians more literally. I am interested in the sound of, for and

from librarians. Particularly, I want to investigate the activist podcasting librarian, to explore how the profession is using time and space shifting media to provide examples, opportunities and models for academics, university marketers, managers, students and citizens. Put another way, I am interested not in the ‘shhhhh’, but how and why librarians are using podcasts to deploy sound as both innovation and invention to solidify pathways for communication to users who may be reticent to use a library. Their quest for authenticity is built on a desire to improve information literacy. I begin this chapter with an introduction to iPod studies, showing how a small and mobile music device moved into higher education in the last decade, providing the platform for intellectual revelations through sound. While learners have gathered in classrooms, libraries and learning management systems, my chapter shows how communities of lifelong learners are assisted through the sounds – and more precisely the podcasts – of librarians.

But first I offer a statement of intent. The selection of delivery systems is a form of information management. However, the medium is not the message. Choosing a medium is the first moment – the first decision – in meaning, making and interpretation. When a platform is selected, producers make a decision about who they *will not* reach and the type of information they *will not* convey. It is ineffective to choose Twitter to convey complex ideas. However, as a pointer to richer information sources, it is excellent. Similarly if a librarian, teacher or writer wants to craft information that can be scanned at speed, sonic media is a mistake. For rapid searching on screens, visual literacy is efficient and appropriate. But for abstract ideas that slows the user’s engagement with data and defamiliarises the relationship between readers and information, then sound is ideal. If reflection, imagination and creative thought are required, then sonic media is a strong option.⁵ With such a caveat in place, this study of podcasting librarians can commence.

iPod studies

The 2000s emerged as the decade of gadgets. Some have succeeded. Others have failed. One of the fascinating success stories in the history of technology, as much as branding and marketing, is Apple’s iPod suite. A decade on from the arrival of the first iPod, it is important to differentiate between Apple’s public relations and the use of these platforms in private and public life. It is time to develop iPod studies as

an important sub-component of sonic media, focusing on the mobility of sound. In the midst of accelerated change and obsolescence, teachers and librarians forget how recently the iPod and podcasts entered the language. Robin Mason and Frank Rennie's *Elearning: The Key Concepts* does not have an entry for podcasts.⁶ That is no surprise. The book was published in 2006 only two years after podcasts moved from a *Guardian*-inspired neologism and into popular culture.⁷ Since then, a range of websites⁸ and guides have been produced to assist the movement into podcasting.⁹

The iPod has not only offered new ways of listening to music, but new ways of engaging with sonic media. Sound is a mode of communication that slows the interpretation of words and ideas, heightens awareness of an environment and encourages quiet interiority. It punctuates buildings, workplaces, leisure complexes and family life. The visual bias in theories of truth and authenticity means that sounds are often decentred or silenced in empowered knowledge systems.

Education rarely manages this sonic sophistication. Formal educational structures are geared to develop literacies in managing print. Too often, soundscapes are cheapened with monotone verbal deliveries in lectures, interjected with stammering and confusion, and do not open our ears to the other rhythms, melodies, intonations and textures in the sonic palette. The i-lecture rollout became commercially labelled as Lectopia and then, through a merger, it was known as EchoSystem 360.¹⁰ This was an example of how an urgent – yet under-theorised – need to obtain 'online materials' from academic staff resulted in low quality sonic resources. The system was developed so that it could be automated and not subjected to the chance of academics 'ruining' the recording and distribution. This desire for standardisation rather than standards marginalised and undermined the complex relationship between media and education. Yet, as social media developed through the reduction in the price and complexity of hardware and software, new opportunities for sound and vision emerged.

Podcasts are simple to produce and receive and are suitable for distance education.¹¹ They also offer an intellectual opportunity for reflection on sound in learning. The most effectively branded platform for educational podcasts is iTunes U, which is part of the iTunes online store. The store's business model ensured that songs could be downloaded without a monthly or annual subscription fee. One-click purchasing led to impulse buying because of the relatively small costs and immediate desire for a track. Music videos, games, television programmes, films and apps were later sold. The arrival of the iPod Video, iPod Touch and the iPad also created and increased the value of video podcasts, or vodcasts, delivered through a larger screen.

The seamless integration of podcasts into the iTunes Music Store added another arm to the business model, with free materials available for downloading alongside commercial music. It is important to note that the proportion of users who download podcasts is much smaller than those who buy and download music.¹² It is part of the long tail¹³ and is narrowcasting, rather than broadcasting. Communities not serviced by their local record store or radio station could – if digitally literate and prepared to enter a credit card number – find specialist content. It was in this context that iTunes U was developed. It was designed to be integrated into the iTunes Store but featuring university logos. Student content was not and is not the bulk of material situated in iTunes U. Instead, there are lectures, conference presentations, university alumni information and guides for students. In other words, most material is derived from staff in the form of teaching materials, promotional talks and corporate presentations of ‘student life’.

The advantages of this educational material – for both enrolled students and lifelong learners outside schools, colleges and universities – are enormous. Sonic media offers a reflexive space for the teaching of abstract ideas.¹⁴ Recognising this strength, it is important to log the weaknesses of post-visual (or blind) media. Not every subject is best learnt through digitised, mobile sound. Yet when podcasts and asynchronous sonic sessions are written and targeted for particular courses, approaches and student communities, the effects are powerful. For example, Jack Herrington outlines the importance of ‘becoming a critical listener’,¹⁵ placing attention on structure, style, technical elements and content.

Initial leadership into iTunes U was derived from elite universities, including Duke, Stanford, the University of Michigan and the University of Missouri, but smaller institutions have increased their international corporate visibility through this relationship. Stanford has gained most from the publicly branded material. All of its podcasts are professionally produced and, while some of the sonic quality is variable, the tracks are introduced, advertised and mixed in a standardised and professional fashion. Stanford had a model to follow and improve, building on the high profile deployment of iPods by Duke University. In August 2004, Duke distributed 20 GB iPods to 1,600 first-year students. With enough space to store 5,000 songs, it was preloaded with orientation content in both spoken and written form, alongside information about Duke’s academic environment and student activities. It was a US\$500,000 investment from the University. The key element of the Duke story that is underplayed in the retelling is that the University also provided a Belkin bar microphone to attach to the iPod. Students used the

microphone to record lectures and interviews for oral history and community media courses. Academics used the iPod to disseminate class content, record class based discussion and for file storage and transfer. It was aligned into the curriculum as a fieldwork recording tool.

At the end of the first year, Duke released its evaluative report of the iPod experiment:

Initial planning for academic iPod use focused on audio playback; however, digital recording capabilities ultimately generated the highest level of student and faculty interest. Recording was the most widely used feature for academic purposes, with 60 per cent of first-year students reporting using the iPod's recording ability for academic purposes.¹⁶

The significance of 'the Duke moment' in the history of iPods in education was to recognise that much of the value of the unit was derived from the Belkin voice recorder. It meant that listening could – with technical ease – transform into recording. The 'what if' scenario is an enticing one. If Duke had distributed the iPods without the microphone, student behaviour may have drifted into listening to music. Instead, there was a more malleable and integrated relationship between listening and recording, downloading and uploading, the iPod and curriculum. If Duke's 2004 and 2005 'experiment' is assessed in terms of the wider iPod-owning constituency, then it is clear that most users mobilise the platform for listening rather than the production of material. Duke's story is different because, from the start of the unit's distribution with a microphone, there was an assumption of interactive production.

After two years of experimentation, the University moved away from providing iPods to students.¹⁷ The iPod was treated, not as a branding or marketing device, not as a web 2.0 platform and the basis of social networking and collaboration, but as 'as a course supply, much like a textbook'.¹⁸ In the space of two years, iPods went from the forefront of educational innovation to the basic kit of an undergraduate student. In reviewing this early history of both podcasts and iTunes U, three strategies emerged for their deployment in education:

- distribution of lectures for review;
- delivery of new educational materials (which may be termed 'supplemental materials'); and
- use for student assignments.¹⁹

Other functions started to develop in terms of branding and marketing, alongside the potential of developing a sonic archive for significant historical, theoretical and political moments. Tables 9.1 to 9.3 capture a sample of these podcasting possibilities that emerged during the decade of the iPod.

An increasing diversity of materials is distributed through podcasts, even though the lecture continues to dominate. Lecture recording is the simplest and least time-consuming way to create sonic material. Obviously, simply because lectures are syndicated to a student does not mean that they are heard. Still, a series of surprises have emerged in how students work with podcasts. Most significantly, it is believed that up to 80 per cent listen to podcasts at their computer rather than deploying the mobility of the iPod platform.²⁰ The potential of mobile education – delivering content anywhere and anytime – is distinct from the lived experience of students in learning by podcasts. But for librarians, mobile technology – like the old mobile library – has great potential in making traditional services relevant and useful for new users.²¹

As signified by Tables 9.1 to 9.3, the last five years have revealed strong uses of sonic media and podcasting, rather than as medication for

Table 9.1 Examples of iTunes U podcasts – branding and marketing

Name of sonic file	Department affiliation/ University	Comments
University of Warwick Podcasts	University of Warwick	The University of Warwick deploys an interview format of podcasts with featured academics on selected topics
Authors at MIT Series	MIT	Public speeches and podcasts from MIT authors and MIT Press authors
60 Seconds Lecture	School of Arts and Social Sciences/University of Pennsylvania	(Remarkably) short soapbox commentary from academics
Humanities Lectures	Humanities/University of Otago	Inaugural professorial address and significant keynote addresses
OU Life	Open University	Chancellery introduces students and iTunes users to the campus

Table 9.2 Examples of iTunes U podcasts – scholarly, professional development, archival and historical value

Name of sonic file	Department affiliation/University	Comments
CMS Colloquia Podcast	Comparative Media Studies/MIT	Guest speakers and diverse range of industry and fan based knowledge presented
Digital Campus	Centre for History and New Media/ George Mason University	How 'new media' have impacted on Universities, particularly in the United States
Research Channel	25 partner universities and research institutes	Integrated partnership of diverse universities
Journalism@ Stanford	Stanford University	Panels alongside keynote speeches
Town Meeting with Howard Zinn	WGBH	Vodcast with Zinn taking questions

Table 9.3 Examples of iTunes U podcasts – immediate educational use, student life and work

Name of sonic file	University	Course	Comments
Geography of Europe	University of Arizona	GUC325	Podcast lectures
Centre for Science Communication	University of Otago	Centre for Science Communication	Presentation of student films
Yale Athletics	Yale	University sports	Review of sporting successes and events
Student Voices	Arizona State University	N/A	Student podcasts on university news, global news and their experiences
Study Smarter Series	University of Western Australia	Various	Study skills programme

poor lecture attendance. As a teacher, I have located ten clear uses for podcasts in my practice.

1. Record a lecture to time and space shift its availability. This function is also useful to archive special events.
2. Record specific (and short) sonic sessions that convey specific and often abstract information for a targeted audience, to enable deeper learning.
3. Capture the student voice, constructing links between theory and practice, analysis and production.
4. Provide a way to present the student experience of a course, beyond surveys.
5. Provide audio feedback for assignments.
6. Provide sonic notes of supervisory sessions.
7. Generate new modes of supervision for off-campus students.
8. Disseminate student research and provide a show reel of student development.²²
9. Create rich born digital data to embed within articles.
10. Record micro-interviews with staff and students on a Creative Commons licence that can be repurposed as Open Educational Resources.

For under-confident and inexperienced students, podcasts are an opportunity to connect theory and practice, thinking and doing. The advantages are clear: podcasts are inexpensive to produce. They build a community of learners and add emotion to education. They are successful, as assessed by A.W. Bates' early checklist that evaluated educational technology (set out in Text Box 9.1 below).²³

While Bates assessed analogue education technology, the effectiveness of this checklist is still clear. Learning requires motivation, method, delivery and evaluation. Phrases like 'knowledge transfer' underestimate the planning required for learning. It suggests that ideas move between people as easily as a song is downloaded from iTunes. Dissemination, let alone learning, is much more complex. Sonic media performs this complexity, as they deliver information differently. Sound whispers its presence. When we share a sound, we share a story and a memory. However, because auditory literacies are under-researched, there is a tendency to underestimate the effectiveness of sound in learning. For example, Nandini Shastry and David Gillespie stated that

Text Box 9.1

Assessment of educational technology

- cost
- learning effectiveness
- availability to students
- user friendliness
- place in the organizational environment
- recognition of international technological inequalities

[t]he popularity of podcasts has mostly to do with the fact that audio has become an easy way to consume information without much effort. Reading anything requires your complete attention; your eyes need to see the content, your mind needs to be involved in digesting it, and your attention must be fully focused on the visual matter to understand it. On the other hand, using audio allows you to multitask and does not require your eyes.²⁴

Digestion is rarely an effective metaphor to understand the complex movement between information and knowledge, reading and understanding. Formulating binary oppositions of reading and listening, active and passive, attention and inattention, difficult and easy, is not capturing the complexities of learning through sound. However, Shastry and Gillespie do recognise the benefit of opening up new spaces and times while travelling, commuting or exercising to create new learning opportunities.²⁵ To transform the digestive metaphor into a culinary one, sound is the jelly of the media world. It fits into the spaces left by other responsibilities.

Listening is different from hearing. It is intentional, conscious and active. Listening is literacy for the ear. It is a social act and involves making choices in filtering and selecting sounds from our sonic environment. Listening is underestimated in our daily lives and undertheorised in academic literature. Jean-Luc Nancy confirmed that hearing is ‘to understand the sense’, while listening ‘is to be straining towards a possible meaning’.²⁶ He argues that listening requires work, decoding the unknown and inaccessible into the realm of interpretation and understanding. The overwhelming majority of information we receive to understand the world emerges through our eyes. We believe what we see. Most of what

constitutes knowledge and methods of study – like ethnography and participant observation – attach meanings to behaviour, derived primarily from the information we gather through vision. Differences between people are judged visually. Racism most frequently emerges from the differences we observe, rather than the diverse accents that we hear.

With this saturation of visuality, Michael Bull and Les Back probe ‘the opportunities provided by thinking with our ears’.²⁷ We read sound through the ears as much as we read print on paper or text on a screen. Every act of listening is based on recalling a prior hearing experience. When we hear, we learn. Because we lack ear lids, we often accidentally and randomly build literacies, learning about ourselves through what we hear and how we evaluate it.

Listening is intensely personal and intimate. As Peter Szendy asks, ‘what summons us to listen?’²⁸ For those involved in teaching and learning, our job is to connect the motivation for listening with a motivation for learning. Each new musical technology creates artificial ear lids to develop a new intimacy between the self and sound. The transistor radio in the 1960s disconnected teenagers from their family. The iPod has allowed diverse groups to claim space through sound, whether it is commuters, students or drivers. While hyper-personal, if teachers and librarians can find a way to share and enable sonic literacies and listening practices, then communities of interest – communities for learning – are built.

What if less is more? What if we gain more meaning from fewer media? Could there be positive consequences of using our senses in different ways to create fresh environments for listening, learning and thinking? Even if readers disagree with my assumption that fewer media may create more meaning by reducing the information choices we have to make, there is no doubt that fewer media – less sensory information – creates different types of learning. Educational technologies possess at least five functions:

- to provide a framework for the presentation of learning materials;
- to construct a space for the interaction between learner and an information environment;
- to offer a matrix of communication between learners and teachers;
- to offer a matrix of communication between learners and learners; and
- to offer a matrix of communication between teachers and teachers.

While it is easy in an era of digital convergence to align and conflate these roles – to combine presentation, engagement and communication

into a synchronous bundle – there are advantages in the development of literacy and building an information scaffold to slow and differentiate these functions. Perhaps most importantly, podcasts return the emotion, connection and community to education. The next section of this chapter moves from investigating the role of the iPod in education to exploring the specific opportunities for librarians in building alternative learning communities.

Why should librarians use podcasts?

While the iPod has enlarged and enhanced auditory cultures and sonic literacies in education, there are specific and particular roles for librarians and information management professions in such a cultural shift. Librarians can instigate, develop, enhance, reflect upon and evaluate each of the five general functions of podcasts in universities that I have listed above. However, there are specific uses for podcasts developed by and for librarians that cannot be replicated by any other profession in higher education. Here are ten current uses of podcasts by librarians.

Returns the emotion to librarianship

The greatest gift derived from podcasts is to return the voice to education. Librarians and teachers can literally whisper their presence. Voices convey emotion, intensity, power, confusion, despair or interest. They transform public experiences into a private moment by moving complex ideas through the human voice and to the ear of another. Podcasts are a sonic hook that creates a relationship between a librarian and listeners. The medium for that connection is the voice. I conducted a project with the University of Brighton librarian, Sarah Ison. We constructed a basic ‘what the library can do for you’ session. I sent this as part of the orientation package to all students.²⁹ This meant that, right from the start of their education, a librarian was at the core of their teaching and learning. Because they heard her voice, it created a connection and relationship. They met her sonically before they saw her visually.

Podcasts make librarians more than the keepers of books. They have personality, lives, interests and enthusiasm. Plamen Miltenoff, Jo Flanders and Jennifer Hill recognised that ‘the transition from bookworm to computer geek, from introvert pundit to outgoing public relations personality has been slow in coming and difficult to envision for some’.³⁰

The conversational nature of podcasting has made such a transition easier. It has also enhanced the recognition that a librarian builds, and maintains the connection between information and citizens. Therefore, sound tailors particular sorts of information for new audiences. As an example, Sarah Long, Executive Director of the 650 North Suburban Chicago Libraries, interviewed interesting colleagues and authors, and aligned her region and staff. She provides a fascinating example of how a multi-campus library and librarians can form into a community.³¹

Podcasts are a pointer to resources

The characteristic of the read write web is a flattening of expertise and a confusion of popularity and relevance. This disintermediation is unhelpful in affirming the specific skills and knowledge of librarians. However, podcasts offer an opportunity for thought leadership from librarians, to intervene in the space between search and research and reintermediate the information landscape with regard to quality and relevance, rather than search engine optimisation and sponsored links. John Budd, in his fascinating book *Self-Examination: The present and future of librarianship*, explored the capacity of the profession not only in terms of facilitating access and enabling reading, but to shape ideas and form questions. He argued that ‘people want to see, to read, to comprehend, to answer. With that information – and people’s quest for it – as a beginning, the profession aims at giving people something they value’.³²

He also asked the key question about a librarian’s role in understanding the world. Do they follow the patterns of information generation and management or create those patterns? While Budd focused on the role of the profession in enabling new ways of seeing the world, librarians can create new methods for listening and creating a sonically rich architecture in our universities.

I am interested in how sound is used as a pointer and how podcasts can be deployed to direct students and citizens to better quality materials, while also providing scaffolding and a guide to and through this information. There is great potential in thinking about how sound can be used in a way that is disconnected from vision, enabling imagination, creativity and curiosity to re-enter education. Sound can enrich a visual media environment, but it can also be self-standing, independent and distinctive in guiding (re)searchers to new ways of thinking. The National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM) has shown great leadership in debates and discussions about how to create a media environment for a

diversity of students and citizens.³³ With the eyes at rest, sound can be used to assist those confronting text based challenges.

In a seminar I conducted on sound in education at Middlesex University, Nazlin Bhimani revealed the potential of sound for international students studying by distance education.³⁴ She found that sound and sonic files carried via an email attachment provided an alternative to text based email instruction. The creation of reusable information that can be deployed through asynchronous media assists the management of unreliably supplied utilities such as electricity. It also creates a feedback loop – a dialogue – through asynchronous delivery of content.

Self-standing information literacy programmes

There are convincing arguments that the best information literacy programmes are integrated into the curriculum.³⁵ But there is a good case to be made about the value of just-in-time assistance from librarians before a semester starts or in recognition of challenges in skill development. Jaya Berk, Sonja Olsen, Jody Atkinson and Joanne Comerford described this as ‘innovation in a podshell’.³⁶ They presented a pilot podcasting programme used at Curtin University in Western Australia to develop information literacy in the context of an academic library. They aimed for more than audio-blogging, but wanted to find new ways of delivering a programme to students. There are great advantages, including the ease of production and the capacity for materials to be reviewed and repeated until students are satisfied with their understanding. There is a wider recognition beyond librarianship that podcasting is an ideal mechanism to deliver training packages.³⁷ The great advantage of audio is that it can be a soundtrack while visual functions are undertaken. Students and staff can listen to a search technique or strategy from a librarian while performing it.

Specialist distance education training

Podcasts are ideal for distance education.³⁸ I have used podcasts with Sarah Ison in many ways. We have enacted a distance education orientation through podcasts, a virtual tour through library services and an introduction to Sarah’s Twitter profile and blog.³⁹ The best use, however, was for the supervision of graduate students enrolled through distance education.

I initially became interested in how to use podcasts for the professional development of staff while supervising graduate students.⁴⁰ My original intention was to share supervisory practice with colleagues, but the unexpected impact of this recording and dissemination process actually became even more useful. First, students started to listen to each other's podcasts, helping each other as they moved through their research. Students who were disconnected geographically were connected sonically. However, the greatest advantage and surprise involved our librarian. She was able to hear in great detail the topics being researched by the students and customised advice and resources to them. This simply would not have been possible with geographically dispersed students. She could hear the development of the dissertation and offer strategic intervention and resources when required. Podcasting became a way to create a learning community, linking not only students and supervisors or students with each other, but students with their librarian. Significantly, every dissertation student thanked Sarah Ison in their acknowledgements. She was a librarian who became not only an information adviser, but a partner in research.

This community development strategy in supervision is both timely and important. In degrees like the Brighton based MA Creative Media, students can enrol full time or part time, distance education or on campus. Students complete one module at a time, or three modules a semester and a dissertation over the summer. One of the advantages of this flexibility is that students can complete a dissertation in each semester of the year rather than just during the summer. The consequence is that smaller cohorts complete their dissertation each semester when compared to the conventional summer enrolment. I was concerned that a community of learners would not be created. One particular semester really worried me. There were only four students completing the dissertation. Two were distance students: one in Blackburn, England; the other in Melbourne, Australia. My two on-campus students included a Brighton local and an international student from Cameroon, who had learnt English as a third language.

I wanted to find a way not only to bind the four students together, but also to create a postgraduate culture so that the much larger group of students completing the thesis over the summer would have a model for their dissertations. It was also necessary to show the relatively junior Media Studies staff how to supervise – so there was a training function as well. But I also wanted to involve our librarian, Sarah Ison, to enable her to help these diverse students who were literally all over the world.

It was probably the most successful intervention I have made in online learning. Every week I recorded a short session with the students, logging their progress. I then mixed and uploaded it to the Blackboard portal. I also released it to the public domain on the Internet Archive and via my Libsyn podcast so that the students could repurpose it for their professional show reels. This process continued throughout the entire semester. The students supported each other with references, advice and enthusiasm. It created an incredible sense of a group and a collective ownership of both the programme and the research being produced. Importantly, though, such a supervisory practice creates a significant feedback loop, allowing librarians and teachers to review their delivery pace and effectiveness.

English as second language students

Frequently the materials developed for distance education students improve the experience of on-campus scholars. Particularly, the capacity to move, review and repurpose information presents great opportunities for English for second language scholars. Jason Griffey's experience at the University of Tennessee made him realise that podcasts

are asynchronous, allowing patrons to choose when they want library instruction; they teach to multiple learning styles; they allow for infinite review and reinforcement of skills; and they can be broken into smaller, more digestible chunks than the typical 50-minute instruction sessions in academic and public libraries.⁴¹

While podcasts offer rich content to distance education, Griffey realised that 'simply, many patrons can be better served with podcasts'.⁴² There are multiple opportunities to review, pause, think and reconnect with information. Such a process creates an intellectual safety net for scholars developing both language skills and subject-specific knowledge.

Branding, marketing and awareness of services

Podcasting, particularly short sessions, are ideal for presenting library news. LibVibe is a great podcasting example of this function.⁴³ These specific presentations highlight new books, databases and new collections for specialist staff. Short, sharp, quirky and professional sessions gain an

audience through a regularity of distribution. Students and staff anticipate the next instalment. Such a strategy creates what Angela Jowitt described as an 'alternative communication method',⁴⁴ with great value for geographically dispersed organisations and professions. The podcasts can be promoted on the library website, with specific episodes embedded into relevant pages. Arizona State University Library includes a range of functions in its podcasts, including tours, news, planning, subject-related material – but it binds this diversity through a Library Channel.⁴⁵

Special collections

Regina Lee Roberts, at the World Library and Information Congress in 2007 in Durban, offered one of the most thorough reviews of the role of podcasting in information literacy.⁴⁶ As Curator of an African Collection, she argued that podcasts highlight special collections while building great links between librarians and academics. She recommended that librarians interview faculty members and present sonic book reviews of new monographs. Roberts found that podcasts were not only a way to repurpose data, but share it between institutions. As acquisition budgets collapse, it will be increasingly important to know the archival materials available, beyond a record in a library catalogue. With rich metadata and considered selection of creative commons licences,⁴⁷ the value of such podcasts in difficult economic times becomes clear. The usefulness of open education resources like podcasts is increasing, not only through iTunes U and the Internet Archive, but also with search engines like Podscope⁴⁸ which finds relevant words within podcasts.

Podcasting is narrowcasting. It targets content to less visible and financially viable audiences and offers an ideal platform to promote library resources. Newkirk Barnes reports that Mississippi State University uses podcasts to explore governmental documents and the microform department.⁴⁹ New media can create productive relationships with the old.

Professional development

As fewer staff will be completing more work in higher education in response to budget cuts, professional development may be neglected. There will always be more urgent, if not more important, tasks to

complete. Yet, because of the timeshifting capacity of podcasts, they can fit into liminal moments of life that can become learning opportunities. For example, over one hundred Lunch 'n Learn Information Technology seminars at Princeton have been uploaded for timeshifting. The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) has made its podcasts available. Jenn Horwath realised that 'through podcasting, we aim to make our users aware of emerging technologies and help them become knowledgeable in their use'.⁵⁰ She argues that training can be completed not only just in time, but in good time and folded around other tasks. Podcasts fit into liminal spaces and times. While commuting, exercising, relaxing or completing low-level intellectual work, podcasts can weave around empty spaces. Handheld devices like the iPod and iPad are creating new relationships between librarianship, information literacy and mobility.⁵¹

Repackaging of content for different audiences

There has been much talk about digital natives and the Google Generation. I am not convinced.⁵² However Berk, Olsen, Atkinson and Comerford argued that 'this generation has changed the way libraries need to package information literacy as we have to compete with divided attention spans. We recognised that podcasts give libraries one answer'.⁵³ However, for all communities of students – managing competing timetables and conflicts between family, work and study – the capacity to move quality information into the gaps of our lives is a powerful use of educational technology.

For example, the Seattle Public Library provides a podcast service for 'Teens'⁵⁴ and also a wide range of public events that are then re-packaged for new audiences, including seniors.⁵⁵ There have also been experiments in multicultural education, using podcasts to link universities with community agencies working with young people disconnected from learning environments.⁵⁶ For libraries and librarians, there is a range of functions that can be served through this repackaging of information.⁵⁷ An audio tour of the library not only can accompany new students while in the physical building, but can also prepare new students to understand the architecture of information. The London School of Economics (LSE) has a fine podcast audio tour, from an introduction and history through to the exit.⁵⁸ For distance education students, off-campus library services can be presented, along with detailed instruction on how to use a

database. I have found that students use these podcasts in a loop to act as a soundtrack while searching and writing.

Building a better (not a beta) library

It has been a great decade in which to be working in communication, media and cultural studies. It has been a privilege to write, think and use our changing media environment in new ways. But the emerging and productive links between information studies and media studies have been the most pleasing. I was fortunate enough to complete a degree in internet studies in the late 1990s, during the period when librarians were teaching in this area. So the capacity of librarians to occupy positions of leadership in this field was clear to me, even before 2.0 started to be added to random nouns. But the partnerships between librarianship and media studies must continue to develop. Plamen Miltenoff, Jo Flanders and Jennifer Hill, from Learning Resources and Technology Services at St Cloud State University, showed the potential of such links in a 2008 conference paper, particularly with regard to podcasting.⁵⁹

The University of California Santa Cruz is a great model for this best practice. They use podcasting and vodcasting for lecture series and also ensure that the library archives these sessions. Such a process ensures that the library remains the core, focus and hub of scholarship, communications and lifelong learning. By providing a home for disparate resources for academics, students and the wider community, there is a structural reminder of how librarians and libraries are integral to any teaching or research agenda.⁶⁰

Questions of quality

Gilly Salmon and Ming Nie argued that ‘listening is easier than reading’.⁶¹ While I respect both scholars and their work, they are not right. The literature on auditory cultures and sonic media is revealing complex, intricate and dynamic oscillations between hearing, listening and learning. In such a context, Nick Mount and Claire Chambers have provided us with a challenge. They realised that ‘more complex questions are being asked about how media should be used to influence learning for particular students, tasks and situations’.⁶² One way to ask these new questions is to let our eyes rest and freshen the potential of sonic media.

Through the talk of social media and user-generated content, quality, professionalism and technical expertise are re-entering the discussion. While this last ten years in educational technology may be termed an 'iPod moment', teachers and librarians are moving away from the iPod as a recording device. The iPod is the symbol and activator of change, not the platform of change. One of the leadership roles that Media Studies scholars can offer to librarians and higher education more generally is a movement away from the iPod. Its use as a mobile platform for sonic files is clear. But its role as a recorder is limited. Its quality is reasonable for student work and software can clean up the sound, but reasonably cheap and powerful stereo recorders are now available. Flexible and useful recorders for a diversity of environments are the Zoom H2 and H4n Handy Recorders. They weigh 120 grams, have a power adapter or can use two AA standard batteries. They deploy a USB interface, permitting high quality recording with control over sound capture with four separate microphone capsules. The Zoom H4n also includes a small speaker to test the recordings.

The quality of the microphones does matter. While some information management scholars such as Berk et al. have stated that 'the difference in quality between a good microphone and a cheap one was minimal',⁶³ that is incorrect. If the initial recording is not adequate, then it is very difficult – indeed impossible – to boost, clean and enhance the file so that it is useable. These scholars do acknowledge that

cheap microphones are more inclined to 'pop', which is an audible distortion on hard consonants such as 'p'. We reduced this problem by turning the microphone on an angle during recording and by using an iPod earbud cover as a make-shift pop-sock, which worked very well.⁶⁴

Actually, a Zoom of either model – which offers easy connection to any computer via a USB – with a £5 pop screen, enables librarians to sit at a desk and record good quality sound.

Concurrently, editing software has also improved for podcasts and the construction of sonic files. While Audacity is a free and efficient open source software, it requires the installation of a LAME MP3 encoder to overcome software patents. It is not as intuitive as other recording and editing programmes. While the Adobe Audition 3 – which now enfolds the Cool Edit Pro editing suite – is arguably the best software on the market, its complexity and scale is beyond what is required for many

educational productions. A more appropriate and available software at one tenth the price is Acoustica's Mixcraft, which is an intuitive multi-track audio recorder and mixer. While useful for musicians and remixer, it is also ideal for constructing podcasts and sonic material, composed of perhaps two or three tracks. It allows a simple mix down into MP3 files. There are now many intuitive and effective medium priced platforms and programmes available to improve the management of digital sonic files.

This is not 'living the beta' or Podcasting 2.0. Podcasting embodies the great paradox of social media. It appears to hyper-individualise, customise and tailor goods and services, delivering very specific material to consumers, students and citizens. At a time when state based public institutions and organisations are being abolished or underfunded, such a hyper-individualism cannot go without critique. John Maxymuk also questioned the value of podcasts and vodcasts because of 'the dry nature of the content generally on offer'.⁶⁵ But he noted exceptions when presenting information on special collections, music and art libraries. Maxymuk asked whether library materials can be made exciting, believing that they are 'more likely to be used by patrons desperately trying to cure insomnia than to find information'.⁶⁶

While training in and for sonic media is helpful, any information is boring if presented in a monotone. The key area of improvement in delivery of the voice through media is to inject emotion into the words. A script must come to life, rather than be read as straight prose. Podcasts are not text-anchored, but start with a well drafted script. At their best, they are a conversation, triggering dialogue, action and transformation from the listener. Maxymuk recommends blogs, rather than podcasts, for librarians. Both can be used, but in different ways. The key decision is to think about the mobility of content, and the audience for it. Podcasts are like Google Goggles for the ear. They sort, point, recognise, emphasise and shape. Librarians can use them to initiate thought leadership, to correct the Google Effect, or the flattening of expertise.⁶⁷ They can reintermediate the information landscape. Perhaps most importantly, sonic media and podcasts build relationships. Podcasts can be sonic twitter for librarians, pointing to richer materials, sources and ideas.

The worry when recommending such postfordist strategies for a postfordist library is that already overworked librarians have even more responsibilities. This problem was revealed when I delivered a talk to school librarians in Portsmouth. They were an inspirational group: intelligent, caring and responsive to social change and challenges. One

seemingly inexhaustible female librarian was blogging, podcasting, vodcasting, text messaging, and creating wiki-enabled book reviews and recommendations. She had just opened a Twitter account and asked me: 'Why the hell am I on Twitter?' I asked her what she was trying to achieve in 140 characters. She shook her head and replied: 'I have absolutely no idea. I'm closing it down when I get home.' Her moment of consciousness is important. Librarians cannot do everything. They should only use podcasts or any social media if it aligns with their learning and teaching goals. If it is not required or does not improve the effectiveness of a current media platform, then do not add one more responsibility on to staff. Select what is appropriate to a particular institution, collection and community. But if sound can enliven and renew, then podcasts provide not Library 2.0, but a restatement of the centrality of libraries as the core of our culture.

Notes

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use of syndicated feeds. The feed and subscription model is like a sonic direct debit. It can be set, and files arrive without much thought. Playback is activated on portable media players and personal computers and timeshifted to suit the listening patterns of subscribers. The initial attraction to recording podcasts was that individuals beyond radio stations could deliver and distribute programmes, creating a diversity of content, voices, accents and programme length. Rapidly though, the early adopters who expressed their enthusiasm and interests were joined by empowered institutions like schools, universities, museums, government and corporate communications. A major area of success has been the deployment of podcasts in formal education.

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11. A. Chan and C. McLoughlin disagreed with my argument here, reporting that 'although substantive data is not available at this stage, in a postgraduate distance education cohort consisting of mature age, working professionals, the students appeared to favour text based material in print or electronic (web based) form. In fact, some even asked for transcripts of the podcasts to be supplied so they could avoid having to listen to them' (p. 18). While I have found the opposite of their findings – with mature-aged female students using sonic media educational sessions in the car on a school run, for example – the assessment by Chan and McLoughlin of diverse learning communities requiring diverse media is an important corrective, particularly considering the title of their paper: 'Everyone's Learning with Podcasting: A Charles Sturt University experience', Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Ascilite Conference, 2006, http://csusap.csu.edu.au/~achan/papers/2006_POD_ASCILITE.pdf
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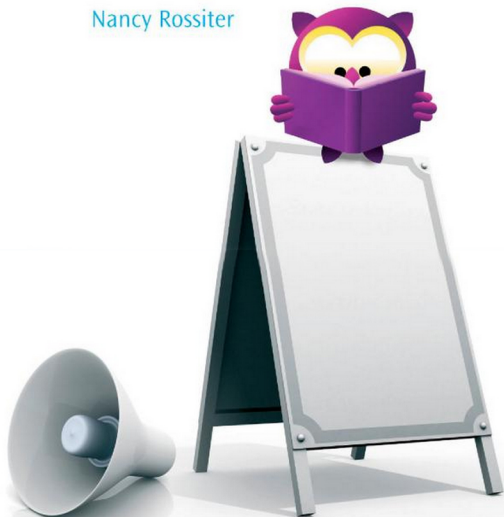
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Marketing the Best Deal in Town: Your Library

Where is your Purple Owl?

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Purple cows, free prizes, and Moogle, oh my!

Introduction

Seth Godin has written some pretty interesting stuff on marketing. His book *Purple Cow* discusses how organizations need to be remarkable to stand out from the competition.¹ In *Free Prize Inside*, Godin discusses how the old ways of marketing don't work anymore, and the only way to attract customers is to offer something small, yet precious – a 'free prize' – that makes it irresistible.² Godin has also recently published an e-book, *99 Cows*.³ As you might have guessed, the e-book contains stories of 99 remarkable companies (OK, and a bonus 100th cow ... or would that be a free prize?). Each page has a web link from the content on the page to the organization that is being discussed. One link is to a page on his website which is a parody of Google. 'Moogle' combines Google's look, but with cow links and links which can be used to buy Godin's book.⁴ Very clever. This chapter will discuss how you can create a 'Purple Owl' for your library.

Don't have a cow, man, have a Purple Cow!

In his book *Purple Cow* Seth Godin puts across that a fundamental change has occurred in the marketplace. The idea is that organizations need to create a 'Purple Cow' or something that makes their product or service remarkable in order to have their marketing message heard by their customers. In the past, organizations would simply throw money into TV ads and people would seek out their products. This is not the case anymore; according to Godin the old rule was to 'Create safe, ordinary products and combine them with great marketing.' The new rule is this: 'Create remarkable products [or services] that the right people seek out.'⁵ So why don't all organizations have Purple Cows?

Godin believes the reason why most organizations don't create remarkable products and services is actually due to fear. He states: 'Some folks would like you to believe that there are too few great ideas or that their product or industry or company can't support a great idea. This, of course, is nonsense.'⁶

According to Godin, if your organization creates remarkable products, there is a chance that someone will not like you ... which is part of the definition of remarkable. Criticism inevitably comes to those who stand out. Additionally, he states, most of us believe criticism inevitably leads to failure. Godin takes the opposite view; he believes that creating products and services that don't stand out from the pack leads to failure – in essence 'being safe is risky,' and the only way to create remarkable products and services is to set them up for some serious criticism.

Godin discusses our aversion to criticism by stating that when we get it, we usually respond to it by hiding,

‘avoiding the negative feedback and thus (ironically) guaranteeing that we won’t succeed.’ He further states: ‘It’s people who have projects that are never criticized who ultimately fail.’ So in order to be successful, Godin believes that organizations need to create a Purple Cow. Is your Purple Cow guaranteed to work? Absolutely not! As Godin writes, ‘If it was easy to be a rock star, everyone would be one! ... It’s the unpredictability of the outcome that makes it work.’⁷ ‘Boring is always the most risky strategy. Smart business people realize this, and they work to minimize the risk from the process. They know that sometimes it’s not going to work, but they accept the fact that that’s okay.’⁸

Godin pushes this idea by using the example of the J. Peterman catalog. The writing in the catalog was so over the top that Peterman became a character on *Seinfeld*. He then compares the Peterman catalog with LL Bean or Land’s End’s catalog. Could it happen with one of them? Not likely.⁹

Exercise 5.1 Spoof the library

How could you modify your library’s services so that you’d show up on the next Saturday Night Live, or be spoofed in a trade journal?

Are your library services very good?

Godin believes that the opposite of remarkable is not bad, but very good.¹⁰ Jim Collins echoes this sentiment in his book *Good to Great*. The book opens with this paragraph:

Good is the enemy of great. And that is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great. We

don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools. We don't have great government, principally because we have good government. Few people attain great lives, in large part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life. The vast majority of companies never become great, precisely because the vast majority become quite good – and that is their main problem.¹¹

Collins continues by showing how various companies in various organizations went beyond good and achieved greatness.

Godin illustrates the problem with 'good' through the following example:

If you travel on an airline and they get you there safely, you don't tell anyone. That's what's supposed to happen. What makes it remarkable is if [...] the service is so unexpected (they were an hour early! They served flaming crepes suzette in first class!) that you need to share it.¹²

Are your patrons getting what they expect when they come to your library? How can you make their experience remarkable?

The US Postal Service

OK, you may be thinking that your library isn't innovative and never will be. Libraries just don't innovate, you say. What about the United States Postal Service (USPS), a large government monopoly that's lumbered along since the Pony Express? Think about it.

In *Purple Cow*, Seth Godin writes that the USPS has had a very hard time innovating, as it is dominated by conservative, big customers, and most individuals are in no hurry to change their mailing habits. He states that the lion's share of new policy proposals at the Postal Service are either ignored or met with contempt, but one such initiative, ZIP+4, was a resounding success. Within a few years, the Postal Service disseminated a new idea, resulting in the change of billions of address records in thousands of databases.

Here's why it worked. The USPS created a game-changing innovation because ZIP+4 makes it much easier for marketers to target neighborhoods and makes it much faster and easier to deliver the mail. The product changed the way people deal with bulk mail as well. The USPS also singled out a few champions in organizations that were technically savvy and very sensitive to speed and price.

Godin states:

The lesson here is simple. The more intransigent your market, the more crowded the marketplace, the busier your customers, the more you need a Purple Cow. Half measures will fail. Overhauling the product with dramatic improvements in things the right customers care about on the other hand can have a huge payoff.¹³

The Ferguson Library in Stamford, Connecticut created a Purple Cow in their library by offering passport photo services. Many libraries are offering coffee to full service cafés. The Salt Lake City Library has 20,000 square feet of retail space in their library. How can you create a Purple Owl for yours?

Otaku

Otaku is a Japanese word that describes something that's more than a hobby but a little less than an obsession. In *Purple Cow*, Seth Godin states that *otaku* is the overwhelming desire that gets someone to drive across town to try a new product in the category of interest. For example, Godin states that there are a great deal of people with a hot sauce *otaku* in the US. For example: *Blind Betty's Caribbean Hot Sauce*, *Lawyer's Breath*, *So Sue Me*, *Butt Burner*, *Spicy Chit*, *Habby Neros' Slap Your Mamma*, *Hellfire and Damnation* ... you get the point. Catsup does not have an *otaku* – you usually do not request a different variety of catsup when you go to a restaurant. However, catsup is the best selling condiment in the US – Europeans are famous for making fun of the 'ugly Americans' that destroy their culinary creations by pouring catsup over everything they eat. There are very few people by comparison that enjoy the fiery pain that various body parts endure from consuming a habañero pepper sauce, yet hot sauce has an *otaku* and catsup does not.

Godin suggests going to a science fiction convention. He states: 'Those are some pretty odd folks. Do you appeal to an audience as wacky and wonderful as this one? How could you create one?'¹⁴ What can you add to your library programs and services to create *otaku*?

The problem with compromise

Godin states: 'The old saying is right: "a camel is a horse designed by a committee."' If the goal of marketing is to create a Purple Cow, and the nature is to be extreme in some attribute, it's inevitable that compromise can only diminish

your chances of success. He says: 'If someone in your organization is charged with creating a Purple Cow, leave them alone!' Pick the right maverick and get out of their way.¹⁵ Do you need seven levels of approval to get a new program underway? How can you pare this down?

Is your library more boring than salt?

In *Purple Cow*, Seth Godin writes that the Morton Salt Company, which has been making boring salt for over 50 years, must truly be an example of an industry where no Purple Cow can exist. If you agree, you would be wrong. Godin cites the people who make handmade salt from seawater in France that get \$20 a pound for their incredible salt. The Hawaiians are creating a stir in gourmet restaurants since they recently entered the salt market. He also states 'ordinarily boring Diamond Kosher salt is looking at millions of dollars in increased annual sales because their salt tastes better on food.'¹⁶ Additionally, the Ritz-Carlton in Amelia Island, Florida has a five-star restaurant that is named 'Salt.' It features several different types of salt that bring out the best flavor in various foods.

Other thoughts: Seth Godin says to think small. He says that the TV industrial complex has trained us to think big. 'If it doesn't appeal to everyone, the thinking goes, it's not worth it. No longer.' His advice is to think of the smallest conceivable market and create products and services that overwhelm it with its remarkability, and to 'go from there.'¹⁷

Other advice:

- outsource;
- copy from another industry;

- find things that ‘just aren’t done in libraries’ and do them;
- ask ‘why not?’¹⁸

Exercise 5.2 Make your library more exciting than salt

So do you still think your library is more boring than salt? Come up with a list of ten ways to change the services (not the hype) your library offers to make it appeal to a small sliver of your market.

Where is your library’s free prize?

In the prologue of Seth Godin’s *Free Prize Inside*, he states: ‘Every product and every service can be remarkable. And anyone in your organization can make it happen.’ The premise behind the book is the ‘soft innovations’ – what Godin describes as

the clever, insightful, useful, small ideas ... that make your product into a Purple Cow; they make it remarkable. They do this by solving a problem that is peripheral to what your product is ostensibly about. It’s a second reason to buy the thing, and perhaps a first reason to talk about it. It may seem like a gimmick, but soon what seems like a gimmick becomes an essential element in your product or service.¹⁹

He argues that the revenue associated with the soft innovation (a.k.a. ‘free prize’) is far greater than the cost of implementing it – good news for libraries that traditionally have had little or no money for marketing.

Additionally Godin states, ‘if it satisfies consumers and gets them to tell other people what you want them to tell other people, it’s not a gimmick. It’s a soft innovation.’²⁰

Godin believes that anyone in the organization can come up with soft innovations, but the real problem in implementing them is getting the organization to embrace the idea. In order to do this, the organization needs a champion for the new idea to see it through.

Godin also argues that innovation is actually cheaper than advertising. ‘When the marketing is built into the product, creating products that are innovative is actually cheaper than advertising average products.’²¹ He uses various examples to illustrate this point. One is that of Amazon.com. Amazon decided early on not to advertise, but instead to put their advertising dollars into creating free shipping for its customers. This tactic has worked out very well for Amazon and other dot coms are following their lead.

Another soft innovation Godin discusses is that of the paperback book. This simple idea, created by Robert de Graff sixty years ago, was met with a huge amount of resistance from the publishing industry. The public loved the idea and it led to billions of books being sold. Godin also cautions that free prizes do not last forever, ‘which is why it’s so essential that we get better at making new ones.’²²

As in *Purple Cow*, Godin states that the reason why organizations do not create free prizes is down to fear. He states:

They’re scared.

They’re organized to resist change of any kind.

They don’t understand that soft innovation isn’t risky,
it’s free and important.

They don’t realize how much their bosses want them to
pursue soft innovations.

They've never been sold on doing it and they've never been taught how to do it well.²³

If it ain't broke, don't fix it

If I had a penny for every time I heard about a library director that didn't believe in marketing because 'our patrons are happy ... we get very few complaints,' well, I'd have a lot of pennies ... but that's not the point. According to Tom Peters, Seth Godin, and many others, *not* getting complaints is a problem. Godin states: 'If the place where you work is successful at all, your company's biggest goal is probably to keep the satisfied customers happy.' Godin argues this is a problem because satisfied customers are 'unlikely to push you and your colleagues to stay ahead of the competition. One day, in fact, the competition will pass you and the satisfied customers will quietly leave.'²⁴

It sounds scarily like the scenario where we wake up one day and our patrons are reading books and sipping cappuccino at the local Barnes & Noble while the library sits empty. How can we get our patrons to complain?

If the USPS can do it ...

Godin discusses how the USPS used a soft innovation by letting customers vote for which events would be commemorated with the millennium stamp. Azeez Jaffer came up with the idea and realized he would have to go through many layers of bureaucracy in order to make it happen. The deadline of the impending millennium helped

him to move through the various levels of bureaucracy, and most importantly through the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, which typically takes five to seven years to make a stamp happen. Jaffer also worked through the numbers – he found that this stamp would add \$50 million to the bottom line.²⁵

So how can you use Jaffer's idea? The Cambridge Public Library (CPL) is an example of a library that used a similar tactic to choose their mascot. They let the public vote, and they eventually chose Bamboo the Panda. It's unclear if Bamboo added \$50 million to CPL's bottom line, but this marketing tactic helped to empower the community and showed them that their opinion mattered. (What pandas have to do with books is another story ...)

Notes

1. Seth Godin (2003) *Purple Cow – Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable*. New York: Penguin Group.
2. Seth Godin (2004) *Free Prize Inside: The Next Big Marketing Idea*. New York: Penguin Group.
3. Seth Godin (2003) *99 Cows*. New York: Do You Zoom.
4. Available at: <http://www.sethgodin.com/purple/99cows/moogle/> (accessed 31 July 2007).
5. Godin, *Purple Cow*, p. 16.
6. Ibid., p. 45.
7. Ibid., p. 49.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 70.
10. Ibid., p. 67.
11. Jim Collins (2001) *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't*. New York: HarperCollins, p. 1.
12. Godin, *Purple Cow*, p. 67.
13. Ibid., p. 77.

14. Ibid., p. 79.
15. Ibid., p. 92.
16. Ibid., p. 136.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Godin, *Free Prize Inside*, p. 238.
20. Ibid., p. 32.
21. Ibid., p. 5.
22. Ibid., p. 37.
23. Ibid., p. 41.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 116.

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Understanding Librarians: Communication is the issue

Barbara Hull



Self publicise

Abstract: This chapter considers various reasons underpinning the need for libraries and librarians to practise self promotion: to inform potential users, to forge links with the communities they serve, to become names with faces and to increase their chances of survival.

Key words: library publicity, library promotion, community links, liaison links, names and faces.

Bescheidenheit ist eine Zier
doch weiter kommt man ohne ihr.¹

Sell your service!

As we saw in the chapter on images of librarians, information science/librarianship is greatly underestimated by the uninformed. Are we, as librarians, partly to blame? We live in a world where others constantly engage in continuous self-promotion. Are we in danger of being overlooked and undervalued unless we too engage in what could be seen as ‘stating the obvious’? We know we have enormous skills, we provide access to treasure stores of information and culture and we are here waiting to help to change the world. But unless we communicate these facts clearly and constantly, we are in danger of not receiving due recognition: ‘Libraries

have made the grave mistake of assuming everyone knows how important they are' (Keller, 2008).

Are we perhaps afraid of being accused of wasting resources on advertising? If we look at the business world we see that advertising, in consumers' eyes, is often an indication of added value and that 'this cost perception evokes an inference about brand quality. Perceived advertising costs might evoke quality inferences for several reasons: (1) perceived costs may act as a signal of a manufacturer's advertising effort, which indicates managerial confidence in the product; (2) consumers may perceive a correlation between advertising costs and product quality (Kirmani, 1990).

It is sad but true that there is a human tendency to underappreciate something which is not trumpeted. Many years ago, in the heyday of liberal Adult Education courses in the UK, the city of Manchester organised a scheme whereby, for a single annual payment of £10, an individual could enrol for as many Adult Education courses as they wanted. The tutors were well qualified and the courses professionally conceived. The scheme was discontinued after one year, not because of an oversubscription but because there was a huge demand at enrolment, followed by a rapid falling off in subsequent weeks; when dropouts were asked about their failure to continue, they intimated that they did not think that it mattered, the courses were so cheap, weren't they? Unfortunately for many there is a real confusion between price and value, so it is sometimes worthwhile using a little trickery to stimulate some appreciation. When I used to conduct information literacy sessions on the use of subscription databases, I was frequently disappointed by the subsequent relatively low usage of the databases when the monthly statistics were checked. After I started telling them how much the databases cost, and that they, as students, were privileged in having access, the monthly usage increased noticeably.

On a similar note, I also started including some facts and figures on budget, opening hours, number of loans, etc. into general induction sessions, presented as a kind of 'sales pitch'. It is rather sad that this should be necessary but it is.

In the Barriers to Libraries Project (Hull, 2000) an unacceptably large percentage of students (over 40 per cent) reported non-attendance at LRC [Library] induction sessions. Evidently, this is indicative of a lack of awareness of the centrality of the library to the student learning experience, as failure to attend has a statistically significant correlation with agreement with the statement, 'I didn't realise that learning how to use the LRC [Library] was part of being a student.' This clearly indicates the need for greater recognition of the importance of Information Literacy at the institutional level and more self-promotion by the library.

The need to remind users

One key role for librarians is to constantly promote new sources and refresh customers on the usefulness of existing ones. We may fall into the trap of believing that we have already advertised the new database, the special collection or our user education sessions. But if we look to the world of business, we see that the brand leader does not stop advertising on the assumption that everyone already knows about the product or service. It is recognised that even existing customers need reminding of what is available and there are always potentially new customers out there. In speaking of the need for continual promotion, an advertising guru reminded us a long time ago: 'You can never wash the dinner dishes and say they are done. You have to keep doing them constantly' (Lawrence, 1966). The quote *is* old;

although we are nowadays less likely to actually wash the dinner dishes ourselves, the dishwasher still needs to be loaded! Librarians would do well to take this to heart. For those working in academic libraries there is a constant influx of new students, some from countries with completely different library systems and ethos. Public librarians could see their client group as more static, but they have potential access to the life blood of future library users – children! Amazingly, quite a large number of children in Wales were woefully ignorant about the services available to them at the library:

The National Marketing Strategy survey for libraries in Wales found many children believed they had to pay to borrow books.

... A lot of people who don't use libraries have a very negative view of them and don't think they are relevant to them ... No one has looked at marketing libraries as a national brand before. I think the survey findings were a surprise to everyone because if you talk to people who use libraries they tend to be very happy with the service they get. (Wightwick, 2007)

There is evidence that librarians are beginning to realise that their survival may well depend on learning to self publicise more. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) has issued very practical guides to marketing libraries, and uses the Chartered Institute of Marketing's definition that marketing is 'the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably', adding the rider 'There is tendency to assume "profitably" equates only to money. It is possible to profit in a non-financial way; you profit if you gain a benefit or advantage. So, for instance, an

organisation may profit through raising awareness of an issue' (CILIP, 2009).

Integrating into your community

All libraries serve a community or client group, and to do their job really well need to be a fully integrated part of that group; this can offer opportunities for some 'stealth marketing' – usually seen as unethical, but in this case justifiable, considering that our motive is philanthropic, not monetary.

Satisfied users as ambassadors

Sometimes we inherit a library service which is poorly integrated. To mix metaphors, we know that Rome wasn't built in a day, but one of the best ways of raising our profile is with 'Trojan mice'! Each time we have a satisfied client, we have created a potential ambassador for our skills and services, especially if we gently enlist them as promoters of the library. Satisfied customers bring in more (Peters and Waterman, 1995). As Keller (2008) suggests, the value of the Royal Library of Alexandria was probably spread across the Mediterranean by satisfied customers. Sometimes contented clients might need a gentle hint that their word of mouth publicity could help the library's cause or even survival. It often does not occur to satisfied clients to mention their appreciation other than to verbally thank the person responsible. It is harder for funding bodies to make cuts in high profile institutions. Perhaps it is worth reviving the old tradesman's adage: 'If you're not satisfied, tell us. If you are satisfied, tell your friends.'

To use an analogy from a very different field, the manager of a breast cancer screening unit in the UK, on receipt of a letter of appreciation for the way the centre staff dealt with women in this vulnerable state, stated that such letters were kept on file and acted as valuable ammunition in the face of any threatened reduction in funding.

It is a truism that familiarity breeds friendship or at least co-operation. If the library staff are more visible in the community served by the library, they are more likely to be seen as full members of that community; the social psychology ‘ingroup/outgroup’ concept, whereby members of one’s own group (the ingroup) are privileged over the outgroup, is quite powerful in parts of life. I hear of people dying in a plane crash and I am sorry, but even more sorry when I find they are from my country, and quite devastated when I discover they are from my home town and I even know one or two of them slightly. The ivory tower model of librarianship is not a useful one either for promoting the library or ensuring its survival.

Importance of names

A first step in becoming part of the ingroup is taking advantage of the face and name concept. People outside the library need to know who the library staff are, as we are more likely to liaise with people we know by sight and whose name we know: for a human being, nothing is worse than the Kafkaesque nightmare of anonymity: we tend to feel more comfortable and in control if we are interacting with a named individual. Human beings relate well to other human beings with *names*! We even go as far as anthropomorphising inanimate objects by giving them (usually women’s) names: ships, cars, on Italian railways even trains are given names.

If they are so important to the human psyche, we should take full advantage of this by making sure people know who we are and by using other people's names as far as we can. When I appeared and was named on a library induction video it was somewhat disconcerting to be greeted by name by numerous people across campus, whom I had not previously formally met, and so could not salute them by name. But at least they knew who I was and I was half-way to knowing them! I was not just a name without a face, or a face without a name. Recognising the importance of others' names brings with it the burden of remembering them. There are lots of tricks to remembering: in a large gathering, where you are meeting a huge number of people for the first time, a committee meeting or a new class of students, I have found it useful to add a note next to every name of how each one seems different to me which gives me a personal tag for my memory, e.g. 'fantastic black hair', or 'Johnny Depp' or even 'Aunt Teresa', if she reminds me of my maiden aunt! People are often surprised at how quickly you have learned their names and take this as a compliment – that you are interested. A word of warning: don't leave the list on view! I dread to think what shorthand might appear against my name on a list ...

A trick for eliciting a name that you have forgotten and still retain some credibility is to ask them to remind you. If they answer 'John Smith' your answer is 'Yes, I know your name's John. I'd just forgotten your surname' or 'Yes, I know your name is Smith. I'd just forgotten your first name'. Not perfect, but it does allow us to partially extricate ourselves from an embarrassing situation.

The naming idea is utilised in many areas outside libraries: the use of name badges, say at conferences, helps lubricate the wheels of communication, making it easier for us to approach someone without a formal introduction; the

telephone sales pitch often starts with the caller trying to personalise the interaction by telling us their name, although this is rarely sufficient to compensate for their invasion of our privacy.

Joining in

Another useful device for getting known outside the confines of the library is to join in the social life of your institution or community. Being seen as a ‘team player’, either literally on the football team or metaphorically on the fundraising for charity committee, firmly integrates you, as the librarian, and subconsciously the library itself into the wider community.

Publicise your achievements

How do we librarians in universities and colleges gain recognition from our institutional academic colleagues: recognition that we too are experts in our own field of information handling, that we are different but equal? McNicol (2003) observed that ‘research can serve a number of practical purposes’ including ‘raising the profile of libraries’. Librarians *do* conduct and publish research and, as reflective practitioners, we frequently act on that research to make changes to our service provision. Do we bother to make our academic colleagues aware of this? Learning resources are at the very heart of lifelong learning. Do we make efforts to publicise our research findings *outside of* our own specialist LIS circles? The research findings from ‘Barriers to Libraries as agents of lifelong learning’ research project (Hull, 2000), for example, besides being widely disseminated to LIS professionals in conferences and

publications, have also been publicised in adult and continuing education² and computer ethics circles,³ thus making them available to those who would not normally be aware that information professionals conduct research and endeavour to act on its findings. Sometimes when a librarian presents a paper at a conference for another discipline, the reactions of other participants can be interesting: for some the librarian is the ‘joker in the pack’ but for others it can be a first step in seeing librarians in a totally different light. I have even made unexpectedly useful contacts with other libraries through these non-librarian contacts at conferences. Perhaps most importantly, spending time with a professional group of non-librarians offers a frank insight into how information workers are perceived by the communities they serve: it is not always flattering.

There are many challenges that remain for librarians in today’s uncertain times. If we are to succeed in this changing environment, there are some key factors to bear in mind. First, it pays to advertise! Let’s polish up our trumpets and remind people that we are experts in our field. Second, even in this electronic age the most satisfying interface is human. Let us remember that we are dealing with people. Finally, alliances can improve our prestige and influence. Time spent creating links with others in our wider community is usually time well spent.

Notes

1. Old German proverb, loosely translates as, ‘Modesty is a wonderful thing, but you go a lot further without it’.
2. E.g. FACE conferences. See <http://www.f-a-c-e.org.uk/> (accessed 16/01/2011).
3. E.g. Ethicomp conferences. See <http://www.ccsr.cse.dmu.ac.uk/> (accessed 16/01/2011).

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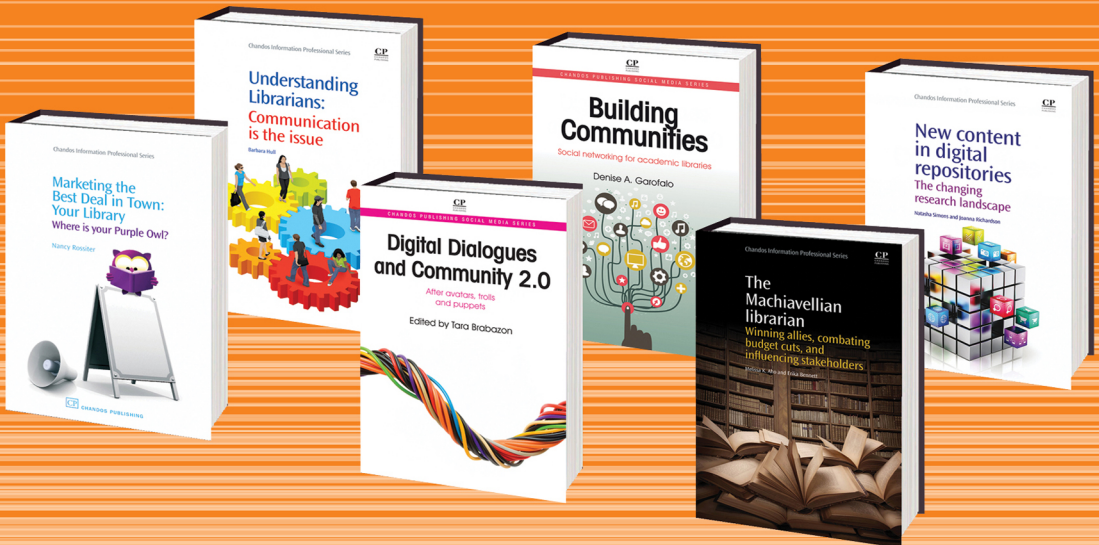
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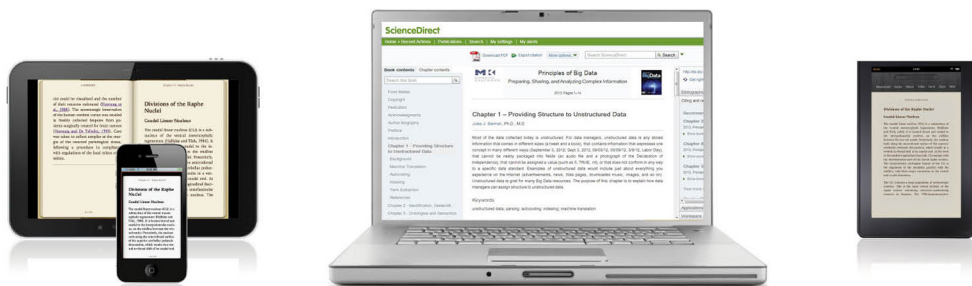
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