

Library Connect Podcast: Digital Library Symposium

This is a transcript of a Library Connect podcast recorded in January 2009.

MALE VOICE 1: This podcast is a production of Elsevier's Library Connect program.

MR. DAVIESS MENEFEE: Good afternoon. Good afternoon everyone. My name is Daviess Menefee, and I'm the global director for Institutional Relations for Elsevier, and I'm going to be the moderator for our panel discussion today. This is the 11th Digital Library Symposium that Elsevier has hosted. We are very pleased to see so many people came today for this particular discussion. It's heartwarming to see people come out of the cold for this particular program.

Let me say up front, there are no PowerPoints for this particular program, yay. This is just going to be, basically, an informal discussion with our panelists that we have here. In the past, this particular program has been fairly formal, with formal presentations that had been presented, and then questions from the audience. We decided to change it this year, and make it more interactive with our audience. So, you're sitting in groups today, and we're going to ask each group to come up with one question to ask our panelists after they have made their introductory presentations.

At each group, there is also a representative from Elsevier to help facilitate in deriving a question. We only just need one question. That's all we need from this group, and to try to make it a little bit more interactive with you, so that you get a chance to express your ideas and concepts about Next Generation librarians. So, the first thing I want to do is, I want to know how many Next Generation librarians are in the audience. Raise your hands—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven back there, eight, nine. I got a ninth one. Okay, maybe 11, 12, 13, 14.

Okay, those of you with gray hair, that doesn't count, no. You may feel like you're a NextGen librarian, but don't quality at this point. So yeah, I'm glad to see we've got some Next Generation librarians here for this discussion also, and I hope you'll be participating in the questions and dialogue as we go along.

So first, what I want to do is introduce our panelists that we have here. Each of you should have a copy of the biography on them. I'm not going to read their particular biography, I just want to introduce their names. So, to my right and your left, the first person is Jack Maness, from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Sitting next to him is Denise Pan, and she's associate director of Technical Services at the Auraria Library.

Next to Denise is Refugio Ramirez, and he's an MLIS student from UCLA. Also sitting next to Refugio is Gary Strong, who's the director of libraries, at the University of California at Los Angeles. Um, so what we're going to do is give them some time upfront. They're going to speak for about five or ten minutes. After that, we're going to take a very short break for people to come up with their question in their groups. Then we will start taking questions from each group after that, and hopefully have some nice discussion.

There is also coffee, water, and fruit in the back if you need anything along those lines. I should also tell you that there will be podcasts of this particular session available off of the Elsevier.com site, and if you're interested in being notified about that, if you'll leave your email address at the back, we will send you an email about when that podcast is available.

So, does the audience have any questions? Do you have any questions for us about the format today? Okay, then we're going—the order of speaking, first is going to be Refugio, followed by Denise, then Jack, and then our library director, Gary is going to bat clean-up for us today. So, let me turn it over first to Refugio.

MR. REFUGIO RAMIREZ: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Refugio Ramirez. I'm currently in my second year in the MLIS program at UCLA. The way I got into, or interested in librarianship was my senior year in college. I was working on my senior thesis, and in working on my senior thesis, I spent a lot of time with the reference librarian. While writing my thesis, the idea of, you know, working with people, you know, trying to help them find their information needs and stuff, kind of was planted in my mind.

I was like, "That's kind of a cool job, you know, to help people find information." So, upon graduating in 2005, I took two years off to kind of work and pay off some debt, and then

afterwards decided to pursue librarianship. Finally, in the program in 2007, I knew I wanted to be a librarian, I just had no idea what aspect of it. So, the first year, I did a lot of thinking, and you know, "Do I want to do public? Do I want to do academic?" It wasn't until this year, my second year, that I really took an interest in law librarianship, and so that's the plan for now.

But aside from law librarianship, I really have a strong interest in recruitment of librarians of color into the field. It just made me think, like, how do we get people of color into this program, or into the profession. This year I'm going to be working on a proposal, and trying to explore new ways of how to do that, whether we want to tackle this, you know, "Do you want to do this in elementary school, high school, or before college?"

'Cause I remember looking back in high school, when we had, like, Career Days, I don't think I recall seeing a librarian, you know, kind of promoting the profession. You know, you just had your typical, like, Navy, Marines, beauty schools, and which, you know, nothing's wrong with those professions, but it made me think, like, it'd be kind of nice to kind of see that maybe more taking place across the nation.

Also, I know in college, and when you graduate senior year, they also have Career Days as well. You know, people, organizations, recruiting. I also did not recall seeing any library school program out there promoting the field. So, I think maybe that's, perhaps, one way that we could do that.

Also, I guess one thing I'd like maybe to, later on when we start the discussion, is to, perhaps, like, one thing that we could maybe discuss is, or a question that I wanted to pose was, like for newcomers such as myself and those in the audience, like in light of the economic crisis with budgets cuts and all, like, what words of assurance would the folks who have been here, you know, or who have been in the game for a while, like what words of assurance do you have for newcomers such as ourselves, you know, considering the downturn and all that. But that's all.

MR. MENELEE: Okay, thank you, Refugio. Denise?

MS. DENISE PAN: Hello, thank you for having me here. My background is a little more haphazard in my career in librarianship. We've talked a little bit about, amongst ourselves, about what Next Generation librarian means. Is it

an age-thing? Is it a graduation date? I graduated from library school in 2000. I went to library school because I wanted to be an archivist. I actually have a Master's in history, and I left graduate school in the mid-1990's, and I moved to California, to the Bay area, during the dot-com boom.

I started off working, 'cause I just wanted a job. I got hired as a tech writer, and I did that for about a year. Tech writing is probably one of the most boring, unfulfilling jobs on the planet. So, what more did I want? I wanted something more fulfilling and substantial for myself, something that was more important. I had that background in history, and so, I did some informational interviews, and talked to all these people. Actually, I talked to people at the Smithsonian, and they talked about being an archivist, and they loved their jobs, and I thought it sounded great.

So, I went back to California, and I continued to work in high tech during the dot-com boom. By day, I became a marketing director, and by night, I would go to library school, and it was very fulfilling for me in having this dichotomist life of the for-profit commercial world, and the altruistic being part of academia, being part of this higher purpose and ideals.

So, I graduated in 2000, if you remember back in 2000, and I couldn't afford to pay my mortgage and become a librarian, because at that point, I was at sort of the top of my pay scale as a marketing professional, and would be coming in at the lowest level of a librarian. That wasn't going to pay my mortgage. So, I continued to work for another year, and then 9-11 happened, and I lost my job. So, I had a mortgage to pay, and actually, I had a library degree.

So, I went out and I took the first library job I could get, which was working at a county library system, Contra Costa County. I was a part-time team librarian, and it was great. I worked the sub list. I worked every Sunday. I worked six days a week, some days because of rotation, Saturdays, and this was a great experience for me. My husband and I relocated to Colorado. Again, what kind of job can I get? First job I got, I took. It was working for Denver Public Schools as a school librarian. So, I did that for about nine months, and decided school librarianship was not for me.

But it was a powerful experience. I'm very respectful for school librarians. It's one of the hardest jobs I think you can ever have, is working with 25 to 30 kids under the age of, you know, between seven and ten. It was very hard, and meaningful. So, from there I got a job working for Johnson & Wales University, my first academic job. There was a staff of four, and one of my colleagues is here today.

The four of us ran this library. There was a director. I was public services. The tech-service person is here. We had a circulation supervisor. We ran that library 80 hours a week with four people and thirteen students. I learned every aspect about librarianship from that role. From there, I got recruited in my current sort of role. In February 2008, I was hired on at Auraria Library. It's a unique institution where we serve, and it's actually, literally, across the street at an Auraria campus.

We have three institutions. University of Colorado Denver was actually my employer. We also serve Metro State, Metropolitan State of Denver, and Community College of Denver as well. So it's a tri-institution. So, we have three different schools and populations, about 40,000 people. So, I was hired there in February 2008 to run electronic resources. Since then, I've been promoted, and as of November 1st, to associate director of technical services.

I look back on my career, which is probably a very haphazard experience, but the library school experience for me was the framework of how I do my job. It was the experience of how I look at librarianship, and my purpose, and our future as librarians. What skills I learned at library school, quite honestly, they weren't that helpful. Okay, what I really got from, as my current role as an associate director, business experience, marketing, business, project management, those are the skills and functions that I learned from my work while I was going to library school.

You know, how to run a library—I learned on the job when I worked at Johnson & Wales, in a small library where you have to do everything because there are only four of you. Somebody's got to do the job. So, those are sort of my experiences, and what I bring sort of to, literally, to our table here. But I think this is a really exciting time to be a librarian. It's a watershed moment for us all, in time and history, with politics, our economy, and in libraries, in terms of our users.

But the tenets of where why we became librarians, and why we aspire to be librarians, is at the core is the same, but how we execute those things have changed. Technology, the resources around us, those things are changed, but our fundamental reasons why we became a librarian, I think those are still here today. As a future librarian, or Next Gen, I think what's important is that we all need to be fearless. We need to be fearless about trying things new, breaking down barriers, whether it's a racial barrier, a socio-economic barrier, whatever technology, generational, these barriers are what are holding us back to re-envision librarianship as how it can be transformed for the reality we have today.

So, these are challenges, but they're opportunities, and to look at that glass half-full, rather than half-empty. So, I think we are living in a very, very interesting time. Thank you.

MR. MENEFEE: Thank you, Denise. Jack?

MR. JACK MANESS: Well, I think I would pick up right where Denise left off, and make sort of a blanket statement, and I think it's a common expectation that NextGen librarians have, is that there's something wrong with libraries, and we're out there to fix it. I say that somewhat facetiously. My road to libraries comes from an experience where a director and a group of managers were trying to make some changes in a large public library system, and this was met with a great amount of resistance on part of the staff and libraries, and the librarians there.

So, my experience there was really, there's something wrong with this. There's some unwillingness to change on the behalf of this organization, and perhaps this profession, that is steeped in a long heritage of culture, and its resistance towards change. So, I went to library school, thinking that I could make a difference in this. I see that these users are changing. They're wanting something different than what the libraries are providing, and I think I can go out there and help these organizations make that change.

That expectation was validated, to a great degree, by my library school education. I went to Emporia State University, in Emporia, Kansas. This school has a very theoretically-driven curriculum. It has a sort of core set of theories that it believes all librarians need to know, and

that these are sort of undergirding, and underpinning all of the practices that have gone throughout the years in libraries.

This was often put in the sense of a paradigmatic change, that libraries, for a long time, are like a square, and users are like a circle. For most of our history, we're trying to teach the circle to act like the square, and that over the last couple of decades we've learned that the opposite needs to be true, that we need to change our organizations. We need to deliver new types of services, new ways of describing our items, new collections, to make the square act more like the circle.

So, my expectations coming into libraries were that I was going to go in and be an agent for change. This was sort of reiterated over and over again, throughout library school, and in those original experiences at the public library system where I worked for quite a number of years. I was also told that a lot of people were going to retire, and so it would be easy to push through these changes, because leadership opportunities would fall in my lap.

So, I went into libraries with this big expectation that I was going to immediately assume leadership positions, and would be out there to change a lot of things, and a lot of people would be resisting me. I found, fairly quickly, that that was only partially the case. I did find that the leadership opportunities availed themselves to me, and I'm now an acting associate director of a branch library, and I'm applying for the directorship of that library.

But I found that the library system in which I work, and really, I think most libraries, are not as resistant to that change as I thought they would be. That might have been something that changed in just the four or five years since I've gotten out of library school, but I tend to think that we overemphasize our traditions. We seem to think that we're more resistant to change than we actually are. So, I found that the square is actually a little more pliable than I was told in library school, and that the changes are welcomed by a lot of people.

So, I don't know if I really qualify as a Next Generation librarian in some ways, because I see that it's not really a generational thing. I find that there are people who have been out of library school 30, 40 years, and they're willing

to change. They're willing to adopt to new services, new users, new technologies, new taxonomies, and how we describe our items and collections, and that kind of thing, and I find that there are people who are in library school, and just graduating from library school, that are more inflexible, and they're not willing to make some of these changes.

So I've started to label this a library school disorder, okay? And this is the disorder characterized by this idea that you're going to go out there and fix a profession that's been broken for several decades. I don't think that's the case. I think there are a lot of changes that need to happen in our profession, but I've learned to be patient with those changes, that people can be persuaded in a lot of ways. They're willing to change, and it's a much more flexible profession than I thought it was.

So, I don't really think that this is a generational thing. I think it's a theoretical position, a philosophical position, and people who—librarians, no matter how old they are, or how long they've been out of library school, who are in touch with the changes that their users are making, are willing to do this. I think that that is a good, sort of segue to Gary Strong, who, if any of you are familiar with his career, has been that agent of change. I would call him a Next Generation librarian, and he's been so for several decades. So, I'll turn it over to him.

MR. GARY STRONG: Thank you very much. I appreciate the fact that some people think that librarianship is dead. The last three years I've been sitting on the advisory committee to an IMLS study on the future of the library and workforce. I can assure you from the data that has been generated within that study, that librarianship is not dead, that there will be a marketplace and a shortage of librarians to fill library positions in libraries and other types of places, projected out at least through 2017, which the study does.

Almost 20 years ago, I was asked to comment on employer expectations for librarians, and how library education was doing in fulfilling its role in training new librarians. I commented that one characteristic I look for in librarians is passion. One ought to love the profession she or he chooses. More important, one should not have to apologize for being filled with that passion about being a librarian.

I also mention that librarians must be literate, able to write and to speak effectively. They must be able to link people, and information, and knowledge together effectively, if libraries are to be relevant.

I listed several expectations I had of new librarians, and they included flexibility, and a willingness to grow as technologies change—this is before the Internet—willingness to look beyond tradition and today to encompass issues of importance to the future role of libraries, multi-varied experience. People who'd tried different things and have not been doing the same jobs in the same way, people who have cross-departmental experiences, people who have successfully tackled special assignments or projects, evidence of self-learning in one's personal life applications, a willingness to explore as well as to create, good sense of planning and organization, what needs to be done.

And when, communication and team-building skills, initiative in program areas and fashioning of programs using one's individual talents and skills, not afraid to take a risk that one's ideas, and that one's ideas will enhance the end product, technical knowledge in the areas of the position, ability to get along with other people, regardless of the backgrounds, traditions, lifestyles, cultures, whether as a coworker, supervisor, subordinate, or the individual who is to be served, willingness to consider alternatives.

And to manage programs effectively, an understanding of how things are going to work into the future, and how people will be able to work together competently to get results needed to meet needs, willingness and ability to take responsibility for the unit assigned, and have an ownership stake in the services that are rendered.

Today, I would add to that list a solid knowledge of subject area, an understanding of scholarly publishing and author's rights, and a desire to continually learn and develop one's knowledge management skills. I should quickly say that I have put aside the image of prospective librarians leaping tall buildings with a single bound, walking on water, changing water into wine, though a good glass of wine is still pretty good.

I would add though, compassion, sensitivity, scholarship, understanding, and the belief in what one is doing is important factors. I believe that we're also facing the

challenge of the balance of technology, and the information and knowledge that people seek by using that technology. This challenge will require the next generation of librarians to work differently. Students have different expectations of academic libraries than do faculty, balancing these expectations is no easy task, but take heart.

Those students who progress on through into our Master's and Doctoral programs will soon take the place of that faculty. UCLA Professor Gary Small tells us in his new book, "iBrain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind," that in a world overflowing with ever-advancing technology, the generations are now separated by a brain gap between young, digital natives, and older digital immigrants. He goes on to say that we know that technology is changing our lives. It is also changing our brains.

But Small gives me some very small glimmer of hope that, and I quote from him, "The good news is that the flexible brain is imminently trainable." So, what does all this mean to our session today? Allow me to think back briefly over 40 years of librarianship, when as an undergraduate student working at the University of Idaho Library, we installed our first Xerox 914 copier, the first such installation on the campus in 1964.

I realized that there were likely no limits to the bounds that technology would take libraries. Students and faculty could now get a copy of the page, or a section of a journal, or a reference book. They no longer had to write it down, or worse yet, tear out the page, and slip it into their binder. It has been an exciting ride ever since, and I've enjoyed every stop along the way. Today we are faced, however, with those who want librarians to make a choice between traditional sources and electronic sources.

Well, my old brain just isn't quite ready to make a choice of one over the other. Frankly, I see it as just a continued evolution of the process of how we do library work, that of identifying, gathering, organizing, preserving, and providing access to the worlds knowledge on behalf of the people and the communities that we serve. There are new players and new challenges. There have been at each generation, but it's basically about knowledge and ideas, about innovation and invention, about creation and thought.

Let us also understand the difference between science and medicine, and the humanities. In the fields of science and medicine, we are challenged to deliver content to the lab, or quickly to the patient's bedside. In the humanities, the library is the laboratory, where access to primary sources support scholarship and discovery. We must also understand that the emerging trends, and interdisciplinary research in teaching, to develop mechanisms for those paths to merge and develop.

As we create and build this new research commons, librarians will be challenged to bring their new, NextGen thinking and skills to work with content, to create new knowledge and new means of discovery and collaboration, but now in a global context. We will also explore ways in which the library can participate in social networking, and in a social networking context that allows students to find the library where they are, rather than where we think they should be.

This next generation of librarians must step up and take the reigns, and carry us all forward. As I think of the list I shared to you earlier, I would reinforce the need for passion for the profession, and the belief in empower people to use what we have at hand. I'm energized by this generation, as I have been by past generations, and that you will take us where libraries have not gone before.

MR. MENEFE: At this point, I'm going to ask the panelists, do you have any questions you want to ask between you at this point before we go to the part with the questions from the audience? Do any of you have questions you would like to ask Gary?

MR. STRONG: Well, I want to respond to Refugio's question, in a sense, of is there a future in this climate? I think I started by saying, "Yes, there is." I think it will be much what many librarians faced in the '80s, the search may be a little harder. That job may not be quite as easy to come across, but I think there are still tremendous opportunities, and particularly where we are looking at how we create new service approaches, new mechanisms of managing our collections, and how to interact with an ever-increasing commercial world.

All of those things are still there, and we need new thinking and new talent to go at that.

MR. MENEFE: Any other comments from the panelists?

MR. MANESS: I might ask Gary, do you feel that library schools are preparing young librarians to do what you've spoken about?

MR. STRONG: No. I think a few are. I was visited, and it was not a religious experience the other day, by the development officer of my library school. I had a very interesting chat, because that is now an iSchool, where the training of librarians is one aspect, that I have absolutely no problem with, but my commitment in my own giving has been towards scholarships in that school. I asked what assurance there could be that my scholarships would go to the training of librarians. Because I still feel there is a need for librarians into the future.

It doesn't mean we don't need information skills, and all the archival skills, and all the other things that I think some of those curriculums have been enriched to include. There was a long pause, and she said, "I'll have to get back to you on that," and I thought that was a rather interesting, telling response. Now, I grant her, she's new and this was her first trip out, and the poor dear probably didn't expect to run into someone like me. But you know, that's okay.

I think some of us who had a decent library school experience, maybe we're overly nostalgic about that having a role in the education of librarians, but I still believe it could be the case. I worry in the school in my own institution, where fewer and fewer of the faculty are librarians, or who teach librarianship, particularly academic librarianship, and the challenge that poses for us is that we really have to rethink some of the continuing education and training then that we do on the job, and on first hire.

MR. MENEFE: Okay, at this point in time, we're going to turn it over to you. There are people sitting in each group who will be facilitating.

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