

APRIL 2010 ISSUE 01



issue 1



elcome to Library Manifesto. I want to thank you for getting this far into our first issue. LM was created to contribute to conversations happening in libraries and library schools around the world. At LM we know libraries are connected to every aspect of society. Education, economics, health, science and the humanities are all social sectors which

depend on libraries to grow and advance. Just think, how would the world be different if everyone thought like a librarian? The implications for society would be far-reaching. Mom and pop business records would be superbly organized, 5th graders would be preparing moot court on Westlaw Next, doctors could easily access vital health information for faster care, and parents might even start reading to their children. All in all, the world would be a better place. Sometimes the library's connections to our lives are tangential but their presence is powerful. People say libraries are a symbol of democratic values. Anti-censorship, public service, and free recreation are universally considered some of our basic human rights. We aim to relate the principles of library science into a larger social context i.e. TV, politics, globalization. OK, librarians are not world rulers. We do not think everyone should be a master of library science. We are often a naïve and idealistic group, but at LM we embrace our inner child.

We promise to put together an engaging and informative newsletter seasonally. In the spirit of French new wave (our logo was inspired by a poster for a film by Jean-Luc Godard), we'll keep things fresh. Thanks for reading and I encourage you to continue thinking like a librarian.

CONTRIBUTORS

Natalie Pantoja

Editor

Mission Statement:

Produce subsequent issues of library manifesto. Learn something in the process.

Clair Segal

Editor

Mission Statement:

Help people, preferably through the prodigious use of star wars references.

Daniel Burke

Contributor

Amber Loveless

Contributor

Stewart Campbell

Contributor

Amy Helfant

Design Consultant

Who belongs at the reference desk?

by Clair Segal

So I got into this debate with my professor recently, and even though she looked at me like my brain was made of two cats stuck together with silly putty, I think my point was valid.

My professor runs a library that employs library school students as pages and other general labor. She explained that when she sees a library student at work being asked a reference question (because they're visible to the patron) she tells them to not answer, and to direct the patron around the corner to the back offices where the reference librarians live.

The argument boils down to this: can/should a library allow non-librarians to man the reference desk?

Librarians have a habit of placing themselves above staff. We like to believe that no one else in the world can do our jobs, or at least do them as well as we can, and that we should be recognized for the skilled, wonderful, talented people that we are. This will happen. We will also be given unicorns, a soft serve cone with rainbow sprinkles, and a ride on the Sarcasm Carousel.

Competence has nothing to do with letters after your name. A smart person who has the skills and resources to help should be listened to and allowed to help. Queens College requires one reference class. While others are available, a student can graduate with one class explaining reference, and yet somehow be seen as more capable than a staff member with years of experience under their belt because of those three letters.

Don't get me wrong: when I graduate, I will refer to myself as The Master of Library Sciences, and force all friends and relations to refer to me as such. But I don't kid myself; I'm a good librarian because of who I am as a person and the skills I have been taught throughout my lifetime—not because of those letters. Yes, we are skilled. Yes, we have been taught how to research and answer questions and perform a reference interview. But no, we are not the only ones who can do these things and when we pretend that three letters after our names make us more skilled than a staff member who has been working for a library for years, or just an intelligent person who's willing to learn and help people, we do ourselves and, more importantly, our patrons a disservice.



The Intern Olympics: Before the ARLIS Conference in Boston, Panelists Converged to Discuss a “problematic” internship climate.

by Natalie Pantoja

In February, Pratt SILS and ARLIS/NY sponsored a panel discussion at Pratt Institute to discuss art librarianship jobs and answer questions from students considering the field. The turnout included students from library schools around the area. The event was organized primarily by Pratt student Karyn Anonia. The event came about as a result of Karyn’s persistence and was welcomed by students with a general interest in art librarianship and mentoring opportunities. On the panel were Ken Soehner, Chief Librarian, The Metropolitan Museum of Art//Amy Lucker, Director of the Library, NYU and President of ARLIS/NA// Lisa Ryan, Librarian, LIM College and Chair of ARLIS/NY// and Sandy Brooke, Director of the Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University. The speakers and their colleagues (scattered in the audience) agreed to help students in attendance with resumes and offered future cover letter assistance. At the announcement jaws clenched and palms clammed.

The discussion began with Karyn Anonia outlining the main concerns of students considering art librarianship. These questions included the murky future of the field, desired skills in perspective employees, and competition with paraprofessionals for jobs. As the panel took over two main themes dictated the night. The first big one: Join a professional organization. If you weren’t a member of ARLIS on your first birthday you are already behind, read the rest of this later and go get your checkbook now. Lisa Ryan of LIM College apparently owes her career to ARLIS and we get the sense that upon joining Amy Lucker will adopt you in a special ARLIS initiation ceremony. Lucker suggests attending organization conferences, especially after getting a job with an art institution; your institution should want you to represent them. That is, if you get a job with an art institution in the first place.

It was clear from the start of the conversation that internships were on the minds of students and more surprisingly, panel speakers. There was a tide of agreement among the panelists that internships are highly valuable and stand out on a resume, but as Amy Lucker pointed out, “all internships are not created equal”. Lucker pushed for students to say something if they are not getting what they want from an internship. Lucker, raising her voice to a firm scold told library students they are allowed to say, “look, I don’t think this is a good experience.” One Pratt student, sounding quite exasperated, explained to the panel that students are often taking a full load already. Ken Soehner of the Metropolitan Museum told her to get on listservs to find an internship or volunteer opportunity that fit her schedule. Perhaps she could work on the weekends, or a weeknight, potentially kicking the one night a week she can fit in family dinner. The new culture of internships is “problematic” Soehner said and added, recent cutbacks in

art libraries are not “cyclic.” Institutions are re-organizing to run their ship with a smaller crew. Nevertheless, he believes students should take advantage of gaining library experience.

Librarians simply have no chance of working with Sandy Brooke at Princeton unless they have worked or volunteered in a real-life library for at least a year. Brooke had some smart advice for interviewing. She says look polished and sell yourself: “we want you to be smashing”. Be prepared to answer two of Sandy Brooke’s basic interview questions: “What interests you in this job?” and “Do you have any questions for us?” Your resume should include any certificates and specializations, even if they don’t relate directly to the job. On the other hand, don’t overly specialize. Ken Soehner advised students to generalize, “single minded focus doesn’t show me your strength it shows me your weakness”.

If freshly minted students should land a library job, Dean Tula Giannini of Pratt says to stay “in the heart of the mission” of their institution. By the end of the night it was clear art librarians have to make a case for their jobs. While the general sentiment of the evening was upbeat and hopeful, there were still unsettled library students at the discussion’s end.

INTERNSHIP HALL OF FAME: A pick from our favorite internship listings

Intern/Guard for Mike Nelson show
303 Gallery
(New York NY)

We are looking for interns to guard Mike Nelson’s sculpture for the duration of his show at 303 Gallery (february 27th - April 10th). You will be responsible for greeting the public and controlling the amount of people who enter the sculpture. Lunch & comfy chair included. Schedule is flexible.



Confessions of a Google Whore

by Clair Segal

I check my iGoogle page obsessively, adding gadgets and tabs like they're the last one in my size and color. My Blackberry is synced with my Google Calendar, and if you're not on that little app, our date isn't official and I'll probably stand you up. (Sorry). I have a Google Wave account; no idea how the heck to use it, but damn it, I have one. Because they made it and if they made it, I know it's designed to make my life easy, revolutionary, stylish, and easily accessible, for free.

I know, I know, I'm supposed to fear them. Logically, Google has too much power, too much control over information, too much influence on our daily lives. Their bogarting of orphaned works on Google Books, their digitization of library books and the accessibility issues those bring—these are Very Bad Things and I stand with fist firmly planted in the air against them. Access for all is our battle cry and anyone with the power to potentially start charging for that access should be fought to the bitter end.

I've also lost count of the number of quiz questions that involve some variation of "What would you say to someone who says Google can replace librarians?" At this point, it's fallen into the same category as papers on information literacy; if I have to read another one, I'm going to set myself on fire and run screaming from the building.

Our relationship with the largest information provider in the world, as information professions, is conflicted. Messy. We're afraid of the power they could yield, afraid that reliance on one source for all of our information and resources isn't so much as slippery slope as a big gaping sink hole opening up under our feet, and we're going to get swallowed whole sooner or later.

Reference librarians are sticking to their mantra of "You can't get everything from Google" and users are happily rolling their eyes and responding "Why not?" Library administrators are screaming at the top of their lungs "We're useful! In a recession, we are the only source for many people for internet, movies, job search help! We are doing more with less and we are important, dagnabit!" (Old man lingo may have been added for emphasis.)

We're fighting a battle to be seen as relevant, and in this climate of budget cuts and limited programming and no-friggin'-money, it can be easy to turn to an enemy like Google, one that makes itself a target just by being so omnipresent in every part of our daily lives and say "Fight this! Won't someone please think of the children?"

These librarians aren't wrong—Google does have its wrongs. They aren't acting inappropriately, but with honest concern and a common heartfelt desire for the Greater Good and just a bit of fear. But when we ignore the good available from a company like Google—when we ignore how culturally useful and relevant it has become in the day-to-day of our users, we risk standing up in front of the class and presenting ourselves as out of touch.

Top Ten Things You Know You Shouldn't do as a Librarian in Training *(But still totally do)*

1. Return books late
2. Pretend to have read books you haven't when they come up at biblioball.
3. Use Google for Everything
4. Reshelve Books at the Library After You Take them Off the Shelf (You know Dewey/LOC! It's not that hard!)
5. Steal Music (Information Wants to be Free)
6. Mock Patrons (Just a bit)
7. Read over other people's shoulders on the subway and judge their taste in literature.
8. Go into the bathroom/stairwell/government documents shelves to talk on your cellphone
9. Facebook on the library computer (It's important, damn it!)
10. Not read for class (It's library science, not rocket science)



Digital Presents: The Internet as Enlightenment Myth

by Stewart Campbell

On February 19th and 20th, the Whitney Humanities Center at Yale University hosted "The Past's Digital Presence: Database, Archive, and Knowledge Work in the Humanities." This conference, organized by graduate students and supported by over 25 organizations, included presentations on various topics concerning the shifting research tectonics in the digital era, to use a phrase of colloquium speaker Jacqueline Goldsby, Associate Professor of English at the University of Chicago. The discussions that followed the eight panels could not have been more dynamic, with approximately two hundred people in attendance to hear over twenty student papers. Presentation topics included the cartographic visualization of historical research, amateur appropriations of Frank O'Hara poems in YouTube for educational or artistic purposes, and interfaces designed to draw large bodies of secondary resources into an internet window rather than catapulting the reader to the hyperlinked destination. Keynote speaker Peter Stallybrass, author of *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, demonstrated the benefits of digital resources for his research on medieval texts, showing remarkable images he uncovered of illustrations of hands used to mark passages in manuscripts. Edward Ayers, President of the University of Richmond, called the conference a "watershed event" and recognized the graduate student initiative as marking a "sea change" in the Digital Humanities. Contrary to the popular sentiment during these two days, it seems that the promise of the Elysian Fields of the digital interfaces may be simultaneously offset by the threat that no one wanted to discuss. Newer and subtler forms for hegemonic power structures covertly control information and continue, even in the digital realm, to dictate the constitution of knowledge in our new era.

"GLEE" in the Library: What librarians can learn from the Fox TV show

by Amber Loveless

I have a love-hate relationship with the Fox series Glee. The premise is that a bunch of high school 'misfits' form a glee club under the auspices of a teacher who is also having problems in his own life. For the first few weeks the show split the kids fairly predictably down the usual televised lines: jocks and cheerleaders, the effeminate boy, the Asian chick, the black girl, and the Jewish girl. Each had their stereotypes firmly in place.

As the show progressed, stereotypes were broken down and one theme emerged: what is the best way to help these kids? When Rachel, the bullied Jewish girl who sees her voice as her ticket to likeability, said to the teacher: "You help everyone else, but you don't know what to do for me." She hit on something vital there. When it comes to all the other kids, their problems are obvious, and are generally eased by giving them a confidence boost. Rachel has confidence already. What she needed from glee club was a social connection with people who will not judge her or mock her for having that confidence. I think it can be easy to overlook the Rachels. They may come into the library and seem to have all the answers already and our focus remains on those teens who are not so confident. But Rachel's development is equally important. This is why it is vital to try, as much as it is possible, to know each teen, whether it is only for a moment or for a longer period, depending on how often s/he comes into the library.

Young adults are often made to feel unwelcome. In Glee, the kids are in the club because they don't fit in anywhere else. However, the club is now giving them the confidence to branch out. Kurt, the effeminate boy, joined the football team and come out to his father. The jock and the cheerleader opened themselves up to accepting others' differences because of glee club. Likewise, the library can serve as a place for young adults to hang out with peers who they normally wouldn't.



LEARNING SPANISH FOR LITTLE TO NO DINERO

by Daniel Burke

¡Hola, amigos! That's Spanish for "Hello, friends!" I jest, you likely already know this. Most all of us are familiar with small phrases from the many languages of the world. I knew some Spanish without attempting to know any, and a few weeks ago I decided I wanted to learn more. I started my search at the library, of course.

The public library can be a great place to learn a new language, I found. Inside the walls of the larger libraries (I chose Brooklyn Central Public), you can find what you want to know. My first stop was the Languages section. I want to learn Spanish, I told the librarian, can you suggest some titles? She said she couldn't, but she was able to find where the Spanish for English-speakers books were held. I think she might have been a stand-in librarian, because it was Sunday. Later, I called my friend and language expert, Allan, and he was able to tell me a bit about the quality of the works I had taken out.

There's a good variety of titles at Brooklyn Central. Some come with working CDs, for audio clips of pronunciation; others come with broken CDs, for the purpose of lendable table coasters. Head on over to the video section, and there are a few DVDs on learning Spanish. All of them, from what I saw, are intended for children. That's fine with me, though, because I'm learning now just as any child would. With that thought, I headed over to the children's section.

The children's section holds what I believe might be most helpful for learning Spanish. In this division, there is a section of children's books written in languages other than English. Some of the books are clearly intended for teaching English speaking children Spanish. Others, are meant for native Spanish speakers. Both are terrific for language learns; though they are clearly meant for children, they are just as useful for adults. Some of the titles are Spanish translations of books I remember from my childhood -- "Goodnight Moon" becomes "Buenas Noches, Luna," and this familiarity makes reading easier. I have been spending my nights translating the simplest of these books, ones that are meant to be read to toddlers.

Brooklyn Public offers more, too. The Windsor Terrace branch, I read, hosts a conversational group -- this might be a fun, useful and/or awkward way to learn more. It seems that Brooklyn Public doesn't own Rosetta Stone software (unfortunate for me, because language-expert Allan says that it's of excellent quality).

If I wasn't so poor, I might just buy the software. But then, if I wasn't poor, I would probably pay for Spanish classes, which would be the quickest way of learning. For those that don't have the money, or don't want to spend the money, walking feet, a library card and the chance of late fees, and a bit of effort are all it takes to learn Spanish.

APRIL 2010
ISSUE 1
drop-cap by Jessica Hische

CONTROLLED VOCABULARY OF THE ISSUE:

Spanish, Internship climate, Glee, Yale, iGoogle,
ARLIS, Pages, Digital Humanities, Rachels, Fame.

