

Randi-Marie Gonsalves

LIS 600

Assignment 2: Reflection Paper

Values & Practices of LIS Reflection Paper

Informative Services Today: An Introduction, edited by Sandra Hirsh, is a textbook that I find to be relatively easy to read and comprehend what the various authors' points and messages are. Perhaps it is due to this fact that the textbook includes chapters written by people who have various backgrounds in the numerous library fields that make this a great book to read, and not your typical boring textbook. The way that the textbook is broken down into corresponding chapters within a unit that focuses on a particular topic in LIS further serves as evidence of this well-written, easy to understand textbook. In this paper, I will attempt to state the general focus of Part 1 and Part 2 of the textbook, while using evidence from the supporting chapters as well as outside resources.

Part 1 of our textbook really has a focus on what Hirsh sites as "Information Landscapes: Cultural and Technological Influences," (Hirsh, 2015). Chapter 1 starts out by explaining what an information professional is today, looking at the role of today's librarian. Hirsh shows how the librarian of yesterday is not the same as the librarian of today. To start with, our technology has greatly changed, and with that change, our role as librarian has changed also. We are no longer people who sit at a circulation desk and simply check in or check out books, answering the occasional reference question or referring someone to the card catalogue. No, with the technology we have in our libraries today, our tasks of librarian are these and so many more.

As Schwartz states in her article in the Library Journal, "How to Become a 21st Century Librarian," librarianship has changed drastically, and is no longer the career path to follow if you want a quiet, slow paced job where you may even find time to read all of the books that surround you. "Modern librarians need to be comfortable and conversant with technology, be willing and able to speak in public, and possess people skills and a commitment to lifelong learning, as the profession and the expertise necessary for success are constantly changing," (Schwartz, 2013).

There is so much more to being a librarian than there was in the past, and a lot of it has to do with the technology that we have seen and continue to see find a home in today's libraries, whether they be public, school, academic, or special. In all library settings, you need to be well versed in technology and be willing to keep abreast of what new technology is out there. If not, you will quickly find yourself getting lost.

Another area Part 1 spoke of was the way libraries themselves have changed. No longer are they just homes for books and important papers, although these are still in our libraries. However, now libraries house so much more. They are areas for us to congregate; they are places for us to learn new skills and improve old hobbies; they are safe havens where people who do not have access to technology in their own homes can come to use the technology here; they are places where questions can be answered in a matter of minutes rather than after a few weeks; they are places where we can read books in print or through electronic sources. To quote Brogan from his article about today's libraries, "they've given us pipes to the largest reference system in the world. They have media in paper and DVD and audio CD form, as well as links into all kinds of electronic document repositories (such as eBooks and the like)," (Brogan, 2009). What he's telling us is that today's libraries have made more room for what their patrons are asking for and requesting. Print materials are still there, but have been moved to the back so to speak. Print materials are no longer a priority for many patrons today; technology is what they are in need of and access to that technology and the world it opens up to us is now a focus in many libraries today.

I had an instance over the summer that gave me a glimpse into the modern library of today. I needed to ask a question to a library for one of my classes, and the question could not be asked to a library that was easily accessible to me by foot or transportation. In other words, it couldn't be my local library. So I chose Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library because I live in Fayetteville and I had heard so many wonderful things about it. I went on their website and was immediately impressed to see they had almost all of the icons for social media sites. I am not on many social media sites so this wasn't an option for me. However, they did have an area where you could text or email your question to a real librarian and they would reply to you within 24-48 hours. Well they got back to me within 2 hours and once again, I was very impressed with the way I was able to reach and deal with this library. I know many other libraries have these

features too and this is just one example of the way I have seen libraries be “hip” in today’s ever-changing technological world.

This opening up the library to the outside walls beyond the building it is housed in is not a new concept. Many libraries were known to be places where people could escape to and find quiet time. They were areas that you could get away from the pressures of the real world and lose yourself in a book of imagination and make-believe. Now however, this idea has taken on a new meaning for libraries. Where they once opened doors to the world through books, they now open the world to their patrons through all of the technology it holds. People are able to go on the Internet and be connected instantly to so many things they never had access to before. They can watch videos of far away countries, they can learn a new language, they can be introduced to the cuisines of places only found by looking at maps before.

These are not the only ways the library is able to push down its walls. Interlibrary loans are a way that patrons are getting access to print materials they never had access to before. They are able to request materials and/or books from their home library (or maybe even through their computer at home) from a library that has what they are looking for. When in the past if your home library didn’t have an item you were looking for, you were basically out of luck, you now have access to it through the interlibrary loan program.

Still another area Part 1 spoke about, one that I found particularly interesting, was the history of the library and the librarian. I had previously taken a class over the summer on this very topic. It is very intriguing to me to see where something has come from and how it has developed into something new over the years. Chapter 2 really touched on this and I found it to be quite impressive of how libraries were first set up for the rich to display or share their books with other fellow distinguished friends. Then the public library formed from social libraries and “by 1850 there were more than one thousand public libraries” (Pawley, 2015) in New England and Mid-Atlantic states. These libraries then helped other libraries form in other parts of the United States, and even in areas where they had little funding for public libraries, people would load books into cars or on their backs to bring books to the people in these rural.

A final area Part 1 spoke about was that of diversity and equity of access. Not only is it important for librarians to be well versed in the areas of technology and the resources that are more available to us because of this technology, but we also have to be cognizant of the patrons

in the community we are servicing. What may work in one library may not always work in another. Each library should be individually tailored to the community they service. For instance, including more computers and having free Wi-Fi in a library known to service people without access to these at their own place of residence would be a wise way for a library to service their community. “Libraries are necessary to support these dreams, since they are the public institutions that new Americans and diverse groups rely on the most to support continued education, and English language and technology skills needed to thrive and compete in today’s competitive global market,” (Rice, 2012). This statement is evidence that libraries need to be in tune with what their patrons seek from them.

The school library that I work at now has been a constant reminder that we need to service the community we have around us. Our head librarian ordered quite a few e-Books, not taking into account that many of our students at the school have no outside access to the technology needed to read e-Books. So when she saw that there were not many students checking these e-Books out, she took a look back at the demographics of the school and realized that this was not a smart purchase. While we all want to have the latest and greatest technology has to offer, without having a way to access it results in a fruitless effort to be trendy. This was a lesson learned by both the librarian and myself that you first need to assess the community you service and take into account their needs before making any rash judgements about what the library “needs.”

Librarians need to be aware of who they are a service to as well. They need to develop programs that fit the community’s needs; they need to have a working knowledge of the technology in their libraries so they may, in turn, teach the patrons how to access and use it; they need to realize when the busiest times of the library are and make accommodations to prevent shortages on the resources people will be wanting to get their hands on. “It’s important that libraries continue to develop programming that is responsive to the needs of their community — from introducing neighbors to new technology tools to connecting them with untapped collections and information,” (Pereira, 2016). Never before has the library played such an important role for so many to connect to the world around them. From using computers to apply for jobs, to learning how to write a resume, to learning interview skills, the library has become a more important role in this age of technology to the communities they are found in. To remain

relevant, libraries must be willing to offer to their communities the needs and wants being asked for by them.

Moving on to Part 2 of the textbook, it seemed to progress toward what kinds of libraries can be found in today's world. Its title, "Information Professions: Physical and Virtual Environments" made me think that the authors would now be speaking about what kinds of libraries are in existence today and what the roles of the librarians in these libraries are.

The focus again, started out with being aware of who you are servicing and the effort you must put forth to remain on top of the new and improved. "Adapt or die" is the theme found in chapter 5 of our textbook and also in an interesting article I read online about the Louisville Free Public Library. They are among the leading libraries of change and adaptation. Perhaps it is because of the way they value their community that it makes it easier for this library to serve its community in the best possible way. Julie Scoskie, Director of Education at Louisville Free Public Library, stated in the article, "Identifying needs in the community and working diligently to fill those needs is what keeps the library relevant. And asking what are some things our community needs that they didn't even know they needed. We're always looking towards the future and we stay steeped in the community so that we can provide everything they need to learn and expand their knowledge." (Smith, 2016).

The Louisville Free Public Library is a trendsetter and I believe, a great example of how libraries can effectively and successfully meet the needs of its patrons. They have developed a variety of programs to not only fill the needs of the patrons asking for them, but also in the hopes of allowing other patrons to see or be involved in something they have never been involved with before. This library has stayed on top of the technology trend, but they have also improved in other areas as well, like maker spaces, giving children and adults who learn differently ways to access the same information, and social functions that bring community members together who may not have had a reason to get together before.

There is a chapter in our textbook of particular interest to me because it is most relevant to me and where I am right now in my LIS profession. I am an Associate Media Coordinator at an elementary school and chapter 6 is all about literacy and media centers. It talks not only about the roles of the school librarian but also about two different types of learning that can take place in a library. I understand about inquiry-based learning from when I was a teacher in the

classroom, but I was unaware of what connected learning was. What I am able to take away from the reading is that connected learning allows the students to learn something that is of particular interest to them and then apply it to other areas of school and home. This enables students to learn something new and to share what they have learned with their peers. The school library is the “Third Place” (Harlan, 2015) for the student and can act as a place of refuge, a place where they can look for additional resources, and a place that supports the individual student’s needs. This is something that I will take with me and apply to my students in the library where I work.

Academic libraries were something that I knew little about. I knew that they existed and what they were used for but I didn’t realize how much I didn’t know about them until I read Part 2 of the textbook. Public libraries, digital libraries, and special libraries were also mentioned in Part 2 of the textbook and while again, I knew about public libraries, I didn’t know nearly as much as I know after reading this section of the book.

With these chapters on the different libraries, I found myself wondering if perhaps, a career outside of the school library would be for me. It was a natural transition for me to move from the classroom to the school library, but after reading about the other types of libraries that are out there, I am left wondering if I would more enjoy a career in one of them.

While the libraries are different, many of the roles are the same. Whether you are in a public library or a medical library, customer service plays an important part in the role of both librarians. Whether you work in a special library or academic library, knowledge of your materials is of the utmost importance. Digital libraries are perhaps the most set apart from the rest of the libraries but they too hold a common link with the other libraries in the roles of the librarian. A knowledge of the technology you work with holds true for all of the librarians, as does the importance of reaching your patrons. Lastly, collections are another commonality of all librarians, no matter where you work. Every library has a collection of some sort and all are conceived in basically the same way. Instead of stacks and archival boxes used for storage, the digital library uses clouds, servers, and hard drives. There may be differing libraries but the roles of the librarians that work there are very similar to each other.

The final aspect of Part 2 that I found very helpful was the information on how to get a job in the LIS field, the value of internships and coops, and the different job opportunities that may be out there for people who are Information Professionals. The table about the most

commonly sought after proficiencies in LIS is also very interesting and eye-opening. Table 11.2 is a useful tool because it shows what companies hiring LIS professionals are looking for in jobs both in the library and outside the library. Librarians aren't the only jobs that someone with an MLIS can obtain. There were other jobs mentioned that I would have never thought of as pertaining to LIS such as a research analyst. The fact that there are so many jobs out there for people who graduate with an MLIS degree was very reassuring to me that I have made the right career move for me.

Part 3 of the textbook focuses on the digital age and our roles as librarians in them. "Information Services: Roles in the Digital Age" makes note that we are the "guides in the information-seeking process," (Greyson, 2015). Acting as that guide, we have to look at the individual themselves and what it is they are asking about (sometimes this can be clear while at other times it may be unclear until more information is obtained). In order to fulfill the information need of an individual, the information professional has to gain an understanding of the factors surrounding the creation of these needs. We cannot just be people who find books or websites for our patrons; we need to become people who guide them to the information source.

The reference desk has always been a vital part of any library. With the emerging trends of today's technological world however, we are seeing different kinds of reference. Two such areas are roving reference and embedded librarianship. Roving reference simply means going where your users need you. In the textbook, it made mention of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and how they used roving reference people in areas of high traffic on campus. They found that the reference person who was at these areas (like the student union, for instance) was busier answering reference questions than the reference person in the library itself. I found this to be very intriguing because I would have thought the library reference area would have been busier. It just shows how when we change to meet the needs of our patrons, we can become so much more useful and a better aide to our community.

Embedded librarianship falls along the same lines as roving reference, except that the embedded librarianship builds a relationship with a specific group and is determined to meet their needs by learning what they need and then providing the reference services to them specifically based on their work and their needs. It's like putting a librarian in a specific business setting, having that librarian learn all there is to know about that company, and then providing

them with whatever information they may need specifically geared to them. Again, this is an area of LIS I was not familiar with.

Part 3 then went on to talk about organizing information and who benefits from all of this organized information. This is another area of the book that I found relevant to the job I am in now, as the head librarian is teaching me how to catalogue books. This is an ongoing process and one that I will use no matter what library setting I wind up working in so it is a useful tool for me to learn now. She is also teaching me how to weed older books as well as order new books. These are all processes that will be relevant to me no matter what LIS career path I follow.

While our catalogue is online through a program called Destiny I have come across other ideas for organizing your library's contents. One project we are working on in another class is a Lib Guide. This is a very useful tool that people can use to learn about a book, maybe read an excerpt of the book, and see what other materials might be included in the same collection. This is a great way to put information sources with a common theme together in one place.

Another organizing tool I am learning about and creating now that I think would be useful in a library setting is a digital curation. I have done a curation on school aged children chapter book series. This came about after numerous questions about good books to read, or what books are in a specific series, or what book comes next in the series. I was able to highlight many of the book series we have in our school library and put it all into one website that the students can access. They can learn about the series or the author that wrote them, as well as other series similar to the ones they are interested in.

Another area I found of particular interest is where the textbook speaks about successful circulation and interlibrary loan. These are two more areas I am becoming well versed in as I learn about cataloging and using OPAC. Since Cumberland County Schools use a program called Destiny, it is very easy for me to access other school's book collections and see what's available at a particular time or for a particular book. Just recently, a fifth grade teacher needed ten more copies of *The City of Ember* so I was able to go on Destiny and pull up other schools in Cumberland County that had that book and see just how many of that book they held. I then gave this information to my head librarian and she then called the other schools and was able to

acquire the ten additional books needed by the teacher. Because of inter-office mail, we were able to get the books to the teacher in 2 school days.

As for a successful collection, I think this should be one of the priorities for any library. Without a successful collection, which the textbook states consists of all of the factors found in Table 15.1 (Krasulski, 2015), I believe a library would be more of a detriment to the patrons it services than a help to them. If a collection is not organized and accounted for then you could be looking for books that aren't there or you could be thinking you don't have a book when it is on the shelf. The part about positive user experience is vital to any library as well. There are many ways that librarians can reach out to their patrons, and all of them should involve a positive attitude from that librarian. A pleasant customer service is key to a patron's positive experience in the library. Whether it is over the phone, in person, or through the computer, a patron should feel good after having any of these interactions.

The role of teacher has often been equated with a librarian, whether you work in a school library or any other library. This is due to the simple fact that the patrons that come into and use our libraries are often in need of being taught something. Some libraries have technology classes that teach their patrons how to look for jobs online or create an online resume; some libraries have classes that teach their patrons how to do certain crafts; other libraries have classes that teach their patrons about the community they live in. Teaching is a vital role to the librarian today. Sometimes we aren't in a class setting when we are teaching a patron something. Maybe it is showing a patron how to use different programs on the computer for research. Maybe it's teaching a child how to use the online catalogue. Whatever setting it may be, we cannot be successful teachers if we don't have a good grasp on that information ourselves. "Both libraries and their librarians must involve conscientiously in the exercise to improve their contribution to the education cause," (InfoScience Today, 2016).

This all goes back to the earlier parts in our textbook that call for us to be know of the trends that are in our community and be knowledgeable about them. We have to make sure we are adapting to our community and their meeting their needs or we will die. We have to stay on top of the technology that is around us and not be one who thinks it will all go away. It won't. Technology is here to change and it is ever-changing, so we need to accept that and be constantly learning ourselves or we will become extinct like the dinosaur.

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