November 2004

Adventures in Librarianship -- Position Description

Ned Kraft

U.S. Department of State, kraftno@state.gov

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

Recommended Citation

Kraft, Ned (2004) "Adventures in Librarianship -- Position Description," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 16: Iss. 5, Article 40.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4095>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

he looked up from his current adventure to suddenly discover that he had never considered the home these books occupy. Bookshelves have a long history of various materials, smells and sizes, not to mention placements and even the Medieval picture of manuscripts chained to the reading tables/shelves. The more I read, the more interesting this book became. Are we ever aware of our surroundings enough to know why some shelving is metal, while others are wood or fringed with leather, or behind glass, staggered, covered, or open. Do we wonder why some people stack their books vertically, while others are insistent upon the horizontal position. Some people use bookends purposely, while others feel the books should be able to roam the shelves at will.

Mr. Petroski elaborates on the infrastructure of the shelving and even follows the historical patterns and trends in shelving today. I thought the discussion on free standing shelves and compact storage was most interesting. My one touch with compact storage left me skeptical. We had a system at the University of Florida that reminded me of Frankenstein's lab. There was a control panel whose functioning was scarred by excessive use and panicked stabbings at the buttons. I do believe there were shorts in the system and sometimes one could believe in the ghosts of old librarians playing with the buttons while you were down the long rows of moving shelves. When the rows only open a couple of feet and then begin to close while you are standing in between them, there is little time to scurry out to safety. Yeah, I know there is a kick plate at the bottom of the shelving to automatically stop the movement, but I wasn't sure I wanted to rely on that or just run and scream at the same time. As I became more and more paranoid about the shelving and the mechanism, I made arrangements to have someone come with me and keep an eye on the controls, ready to push the big RED button called STOP! This safety precaution eased my tensions and made the task of removing books from the shelves for disposal somewhat less distressing. Today, I read on the UF Website that all of the books in Library West, being renovated for the next 2 years, will be placed in compact storage in the new facility. That should be a real adventure for any staff member or patron wanting materials. Welcome to the new generation of bookshelves.

I have been fascinated over the years by the reports of stored books in Texas Libraries retrieved by robot arms and brought to circulation for patrons. The computer to do this task took up the whole basement of the building. The University of South Carolina has a remote storage building that is climate and moisture controlled. The Annex staff enter the numbers of the bins (storage containers for multiple books) on the item records and then the bins are loaded onto shelving that soars some forty feet or more upward. There is a "lift" that carries a staff member to the appropriate place for dispersal or retrieval. The whole room and temperature (brr!) remind me of the Low Temperature Lab

at UF that was two stories. Talk about future shock?! Well, Petroski decides to settle on the traditional wood shelving, solid, dark, and mellow, with the smell of rare leather books to make him comfortable. He recognizes the need for moveable metal shelving and even stationery metal shelving. Got me wondering whether, with preservation thoughts in mind, we shouldn't be designing shelves with ventilation. Perhaps a metal mesh similar to that used in walls (but needs to be stronger/less flexible) or a more decorative filigree metal (this may be too soft also). Well, back to the design board on that one.

The last part of the book deals with "order." Being declared throughout my life as anal retentive, a common cataloger tag, this section was particularly exciting to me. He lists 25 ways to order books and journals on shelves. The traditional author, title and subject methods are standard. I am not exactly aware of people ordering by size, except perhaps when we consider "oversized" materials. Are you familiar with horizontal arrangement or those by color? (We used to have students come to the Reserve Room and ask for the "blue" or "red" books. If I knew what course they were taking, I knew the book in question.) Some folks, in their own homes, organize by hardback versus paperback, but I am unaccustomed to those who order by publisher. I think this gets into more hard-core collectors and their needs. I have known souls who have arranged by "read versus unread" or by purchase dates or even publication dates, but I have never seen anyone order by number of pages. Have you seen anyone arrange by ISBN numbers? We will always have those who do so by Dewey or LC numbers. New and used are friendly classes, but price eludes me (except for collectors again). There are times when I could side with those who arrange by enjoyment or sentimental value. I guess I do tend to place Pooh Bear nearer me every time I move. Is that for comfort? *The House at Pooh Corner* is my salvation when I get agitated, "tiddly pum."

Have you ever had to merge collections when you got married or shared quarters with another person? Each person has such unique ideas of how they view their books or magazines. If you ever agree on a merging, each person can be seen eventually wandering back to their original habits of order, no matter how hard they try to stay within the guidelines. It's sad, in a way. Some folks require dust jackets and others despise them. Some like color and excitement which tends to create periods of disorder, while others want to maintain strict order. I generally start out well ordered in subjects, then by author for fiction and use for other topics. I like to keep my books separate from my magazines because of the messiness of the latter and their upkeep necessities. When I have had the luxury of multiple rooms, I organize specific books in specific rooms. For example, I keep The Great Books in the living room, while the music room houses the arts, religion and philosophy. The guest bedroom houses my collections of fiction, mystery and sci-fi. My own bedroom protects the newest investigations and my very oldest favorites. This room has a lot of ebb and flow. I am in total distress right now, because I am in a small apartment with no room for books. I love books and am in total agony over the present situation, not to mention the fact that the train runs about twenty-five or thirty feet in front of my abode. The shimmies keep books falling over and the dog pounces on the magazines and stacks of books no matter where they are. I am contemplating covering up windows with bookshelves and even have the wood cut for my first try. I think I will follow Petroski's idea of dark real wood to give me at least a feel of comfort in my turmoil. I can't expose the over 2000 volumes I have in storage, but perhaps I can arrange my small bunch onsite. Now I can fill hours trying to decide what "order" I will use and how I view my shelves. They are nearly as important as the books that fill them. When you see me in November in Charleston, ask me what I did. It should make for a fine conversation. 🐻

Adventures in Librarianship — Position Description

by Ned Kraft (Ralph J. Bunche Library, U.S. Department of State)
<kraftno@state.gov>

Darkmound University seeks a professional Librarian. MLS from an ALA accredited program required. Additional PhD in a social science field is preferable.

- Must have some experience clearing paper jams. That experience may be practical or through formal training. Please describe the brands of copiers used and the general location of each jam.
- Applicant will demonstrate technical

savvy by assisting the director set her typeface for fund-raising letters. Include with your application your theory (max. 500 words) on how to find and remove unwanted format coding in MS Word.

- Candidate will take full responsibility for signing electronic resource licenses. Must have sufficient liability insurance and some experience posting bail. Additionally, the candidate

continued on page 89

Bet You Missed It

Press Clippings — In the News — Carefully Selected by Your Crack Staff of News Sleuths

Column Editor: **Pamela M. Rose, M.L.S.** (Web Services & Library Promotion Coordinator, University at Buffalo; Phone: 716-829-2408 x129; Fax: 716-829-2211) <pmrose@acsu.buffalo.edu> wings.buffalo.edu/~pmrose

Biting The Hands That Feed It by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Two years ago, **Bertelsmann**, the world's fifth largest media company, abandoned its efforts to become an **AOL-Time Warner** and refocused on publishing, its traditional trade. It closed the NY office to remain stodgily German.

But then in a surprise move, it merged its music division **BMG** with **Sony Corp's** to become **Sony BMG**. Enter **Avril Lavigne**, **Britney Spears**, **Aerosmith** and **Bob Dylan**. How's that for stodgy?

Now they're on the front-lines of the music piracy business. They see themselves handling it through a combination of 99 cent pricing, user-friendly downloads and — yes, litigation. And they want a bigger piece of the artists' share to compensate for losses.

See — **Matthew Karnitschnig**, "Bertelsmann's Latest Tune" in *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 27, 2004, p.B1.

All Is Vanity by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Hollinger International, the brain-child of **Conrad Black**, owns multitudes of small newspapers and big ones like the *Chicago Sun Times* and the *Telegraph*. But now **Black** has been shoved out and an investigation by a board committee has detailed how he ripped the company off via lavish expense account living and exorbitant fees to management companies he owned.

Black had a gay old time while it lasted. \$42,000 tab for an intimate dinner for 80 at La Grenouille; \$90,000 to refurbish the Rolls Royce; \$218.4 million in management fees to his outside companies doing the work he was supposed to be doing as CEO.

Litigation rages, and board members like **Henry Kissinger** are growing distinctly uneasy. They seem to have rubber-stamped all these expenditures while the board functioned "more like a social club or public-policy association" than as a real life board with fiduciary duties.

See — **Mark Heinzl** and **Christopher J. Chipello**, "Report Slams Hollinger's Black for a 'Corporate Kleptocracy'" in *The Wall Street Journal*, Sept. 1, 2004, p.A.1.

And Speaking of Hubris by Bruce Strauch (The Citadel)

Google's attempt to cut out *Wall Street* backfired and forced them to halve the offering size and slash the price. The hottest IPO of the 21st century finally muddled through. \$108-to-\$135 became \$85-to-\$95. Which was where the *Wall Street* analysts had estimated the price to begin with.

And then there was the famous *Playboy* interview that riled the SEC with its "quiet period" rule barring public solicitation by the company.

See — **Kevin Delaney** and **Robin Sidel**, "How Miscalculations and Hubris Hobbled Celebrated Google IPO" in *The Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 19, 2004, p.A.1.

Adventures in Librarianship from page 88

will evaluate pricing schemes for commercial database access. Graduate-level calculus and statistics course work is required. Some casino experience is preferable.

- Candidate will be responsible for the

Library's home page. This involves adapting to the changing needs of the University, the Library, its patrons, mark-up languages, and the information marketplace. Please include with your application an itemized list of your current antidepressants. Generic names only, please.

- Candidate must demonstrate a commitment to customer service and should not have

continued on page 90

alibris
for libraries

Your online source
for used, new and
hard-to-find books.

- ✚ Tens of millions of titles
- ✚ Purchase orders, consolidated shipping and personal service
- ✚ Collection development and replacement project tools

save

\$25 off

an order of
\$100 or more

Enter coupon code

ATGN

at checkout.

Expires Dec 31, 2004.

VISIT ALIBRIS TODAY:
www.alibris.com/library

Contact us at:
libraries@alibris.com

Or call toll-free:
1-877-ALIBRIS

When Content Goes Digital

by **Judy Luther, MLS, MBA** (Informed Strategies, LLC.; Phone: 610-645-7546)
<judy.luther@informedstrategies.com> www.informedstrategies.com

In less than a decade librarians have seen user expectations change from the idea that if an intellectual work or company didn't appear in a print index, or directory, it didn't exist, to the idea that if these items can't be found on the Web, they don't exist. For many of our users whether something is virtual determines whether it is real.

In this same period large volumes of content have been made available on the Web. Initially, it was bibliographic databases, then journals and now books — both reference books and eBooks. Publishers are beginning to realize that their content must be available digitally if it is to survive and be used.

The impact of the Web on publishing means that content previously updated by editions must now be updated based on developing events as users expect what they see online to be current. This has a tremendous impact on the publication cycles for existing works and requires that publishers reengineer their editorial workflow to provide for more frequent review and revision.

But what happens to the content when it appears on the Web? The print works so familiar to librarians lose their context without the wrappers that indicate their function. When encyclopedias, books and journals are all available online, they appear simply as digital content to the user.

Loss of <format> Identity

Each format used in print was designed to meet a specific need for information. Encyclopedias are referenced by librarians as a good place to start research with an overview of a topic to learn enough about the terminology to effectively search it. Scholarly journals typically convey a slice of research in process and books present the in-depth treatment of a topic.

However, when users begin their search online and link through to full text, the intent previously conveyed by the format is lost.

Market research conducted by **Informed Strategies** provides insights into this gradual change. Some public librarians feel that the term "encyclopedia" is a dead word and not understood by their users. Students in a focus group stated that "we don't use journals, we use JSTOR" not making the connection between the individual articles they use separately and the complete journal. Without seeing a print journal with its familiar structure of volumes and issues, the user views the work without knowing whether it's a summary of a topic, a slice of current research or an in-depth treatment of a topic.

Evolving Nature of Content

Cliff Lynch pointed out that with any new technology such as the Web, the first applications simply "transition" content from the old system to the new with minimal enhancements. It usually takes awhile before innovative applications begin to "transform" content. This occurred in the CD-ROM era when the first CDs presented information without an index or any search capability. In just a few years we've seen electronic journals begin to evolve and many today incorporate linking, allow emailing articles, exporting citations and creating an alerting service — taking advantage of the network. These capabilities of the online version offer a level of functionality far superior to print.

Melding Formats

New formats are emerging such as the "Lectures" created by **Morgan & Claypool** which will be launched in the fall of 2004. These are born digital and serve the needs of engineers and computer scientists who want an in-depth

treatment of a topic (like a book), that is current (like a journal) and that synthesizes the research providing an overview (like an encyclopedia). There are likely to be new terms applied to indicate the intended function of content that is launched free of a more familiar structure.

As we learn more about how people interact with information and navigate databases, it will be interesting to see what new functions emerge and the formats that are designed to address those needs. While content is evolving, so are the tools being introduced with existing formats to aid in searching and in processing results.

A User-Friendly Discovery Process

Databases are beginning to provide a higher level of intelligent interaction — allowing for multiple spellings of a word and responding to a search with suggestions or options that enable the user to learn about the topic as they search and not requiring training to use it.

For instance, **Oxford Reference Online** which was launched in 2002, offers the user a wide range of search options. In addition to the standard quick search and advanced **Boolean**, the user can choose an extended search which will bring up synonyms so that those looking for "state" will also find "land," "nation," "province," "states." They also offer a pattern search that allows for misspelled words, for example "liason" will bring up "liaison." People and date filters can be also applied.

Microsoft and the Web have effectively rewired our circuitry from training manuals to learning on the fly and trial and error. Those who grow up with the Web expect to be able to use services without training. Certainly the simplicity of **Google** is reorienting expectations to an ease of finding answers.

Usability studies conducted by database providers such as **ProQuest**, **Oxford University Press** and **Elsevier**, confirm that there is a growing difference between the requirements of today's librarians who still want **Boolean** and those of today's users who want customized services that save them time.

Search skills have been taught because that is what our systems have done well. The introduction of new visualization technologies deliver powerful browsing capabilities which have been lacking from the online environment which is great for delivering specific documents but has not provided the context for them.

Visualizing Results

There are a variety of tools that are just beginning to be adopted in library software that enable users to navigate databases by seeing the results of their searches grouped into clusters that can be further explored by mouseovers. Some appear in the form of hyperbolic browsers that provide a fish eye view of results. **Rick**

continued on page 91

Adventures in Librarianship from page 89

assault convictions on record for the last 18 months (indictments are acceptable).

- Will plan, direct, and implement all functions of the Acquisitions Division including managing procurement contracts, circulating birthday cards, and settling refrigerator feuds.

- Must have a basic understanding of Italian, Farsi, and Creole as used in the fields of astronomy, genetics, professional tennis, and international law.

- Proven professional leadership will characterize the successful candidate. Officer positions with CLAP (Committee for Library Alternative Proposals) or SLAP (Special Librarians for Attractive Paper) a plus.

- Will manage the work of student assistants by regularly waking them; lecturing them on the value of good work habits; explaining the complexities of call number shelving; describing for them, as often as is necessary, the difference between the real world and their current, parent-funded **Disney** theme park life; and reminding them that they are being paid to work, not talk to their cohorts about Friday's Delta Kappa party or their many trivial romantic escapades.

Please send your resume to: Ida Trench
Human Resources
Manager
Knott-Coscher

Library, Room 32
Darkmound University
Tossitalloway, NJ 12345