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Back Talk: NYU's Shanghai Library and My Experiences Here

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Notes from Langlois from page 76

indeed upon moving beyond the already established foundations of regional library support to something more grounded, more stable, and ultimately more unassailable than what has gone before. If we cannot fashion a measured solution to the basic question of *how do we keep this thing going*, the citizens of Curry County will be without library services.

That libraries need to do a better job of marketing is not news. That we need to incorporate advocacy as an ongoing, daily facet of our service delivery is not news. How we accomplish this is a more opaque question.

For us, the first steps will be to disband the independent districts and form a single county system. Far easier said than done. The political canyon that exists just between Langlois and Port Orford, thirteen miles apart, is enormous. In recent years the two schools in Langlois were closed and merged with Port Orford; this has left a bitter taste in the mouths of Langlois residents, and that toxic legacy will make it very difficult to accept the idea of combining

just these two districts. Port Orford's tax rate is lower; persuading their voters to approve a new district with a higher rate may prove impossible. Add to this the idea that north county, already convinced that the officials in the county seat of Gold Beach ignore or conveniently forget this neck of the woods, might ever be persuaded to join forces with the rest of the county, and — well, you get the picture.

This will require a ballot measure. Voters will have to approve it. Talk with many here, and they'll tell you it's impossible. The challenge for the likes of me is to demonstrate that if they don't, everyone suffers.

As noted earlier, simply forming a county system isn't a guarantee of success. Just because Hood River and Jackson Counties reopened doesn't assure survivability. We need to grow beyond being a unified system, and beyond understanding ourselves to be libraries in the traditional, historical sense. We need to re-invent ourselves yet again.

Do not misunderstand me. I remain committed to the core values of librarianship. I spent thirty years as a book vendor and serials agent before becoming a librarian, and I still

have to pause when someone asks me what I do for a living without answering, "I'm a bookman." To change into what we must re-shape ourselves to be is not to abandon what we have been or where we come from, but to reaffirm those values while embracing new ones.

Cynics might also read personal ambition into this, but they are mistaken. My goal is not to build a fiefdom within this obscure little corner of the state — the country — the world — with Langlois as its center. My goal is to ensure that Langlois continues to have a library at all; one that reflects the interests, concerns, and virtues of its odd, quirky, and fundamentally wonderful little constituency.

My job is to secure this Library's funding and support. My job is to steer this district to its future. Ultimately, my job may be to put myself out of a job. Sustainability is about the institution, not the individual — and besides, getting there is a journey unlikely to be achieved in my lifetime. In my next column I'll talk more about what I think the coming versions of the **Langlois Public Library** might just look like. 🌱

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online to NYU's Digital Studio for specialized teaching support.

Conclusion

NYU's libraries have the overall goal of providing excellent equivalent library services to its students and teachers, irrespective of their location on the globe. Since there are now branch campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai, in addition to the main campus in NYC, this is both a wonderful aspiration and a source of great challenge. It is a wonderful goal because it says to the students and staff that their library experiences should be equal and familiar on whichever campus they might find themselves in the future. But it also says to the parents and government officials paying for the educations

of local students that their investment is well spent, that their sons and daughters are being treated equally.

But this goal also poses great challenges. Culturally these three locations, beyond the shared academic functions they pursue, have little in common. Linguistically, they are different. Their histories are different. Their core values come from radically different sets of experience. The students in Shanghai come from near 30 different countries. They eat and dress differently. Although all bureaucracies have much in common, the specifics of how things are supposed to get done differ. So, those who work in places like Shanghai have to be flexible when finding the right balance between how things are done in Manhattan and how the local people expect things to be done. For me, it has been exhausting at times but overall a lot of fun. Besides, the food is better in Shanghai.

The Final Question

As I have gone through this experience, time and again the same question has come to my mind, since we can meet so many of the needs of students without all the bricks and mortar or the arm's length access to the millions of volumes that I enjoyed at the seven other universities where I worked or studied: how much of all that is needed? In the print world, I have always stuck to the dictum that ownership is the fastest form of access, and therefore I loved huge libraries with as many bound books and journals as could be purchased. But now, I wonder if quite modest physical surroundings (but cooled in the summer and heated in the winter) with immediate access to millions of electronic resources and the sort of delayed access enjoyed by NYUSH students to the huge printed archives of the world wouldn't be just as good. 🌱

Rumors from page 69

And returning to **Oscar Wilde** and London, be sure and notice the picture in this issue, p.1 of **Mike** the incredible **Markwith**. I know for sure that **Mike** was at the very first **Charleston Conference** with twenty other people! What a guy!

Speaking of another what a guy, we told y'all about **Bill Potter**'s retirement on the **ATG NewsChannel** a few weeks ago. Did you see it? The incomparable **Bill Potter** is retiring as **University Librarian and Associate Provost** at the **University of Georgia Libraries** this August. What a career **Bill** has had! **Dr. William Gray Potter** is a former editor of **College and Research Libraries**, has served on the boards of

the **Association of Research Libraries**, **OCLC**, and **Solinet** and is a past-president of the **Library & Information Technology Association**. **Bill** holds a doctorate in Library Science and Information Technology, as well as Master's degrees in English and in Library Science, from the **University of Illinois**. He earned a bachelor's degree in English from **Southern Illinois University** at Edwardsville. He has been head of the Libraries at **UGA** since 1989. **Bill** was an early adopter of technologies and digitization and was one of the main architects of **GALILEO**. He spoke at the **Charleston Conference** many years ago. I can't find exactly when right now but it must have been 1990 or 1991 that **Bill** was a keynote speaker. I remember that he stayed at the **Charleston Place Hotel** which had just opened in November 1986 amid many lawsuits and hoopla! I also remember

discussing the germ of an idea, a publication for **Charleston Conference** regulars, the idea was to become — ta da — **Against the Grain**! "I'm retiring because I want to," **Bill** says. "I've been doing the same thing for 25 years. I'd like to think about doing something different." Have fun in retirement, **Bill**! <http://www.against-the-grain.com/2014/02/rumors-from-the-atg-newschannel-22414/>

Against the Grain just keeps on truckin'! This is our 26th year! And the **Conference's** 34th! And we have plenty of new columnists and initiatives happening! Coming up — **Tim Devenport** (EDItEUR and ICEDiS) are going to keep us updated on events in the UK. **Tim** is planning a meeting in conjunction with the **2014 Charleston Conference**. And I believe that **SSP** and perhaps **ITHAKA** are considering sessions as well. When it rains, it pours! 🌱

Back Talk — NYU's Shanghai Library and My Experiences Here

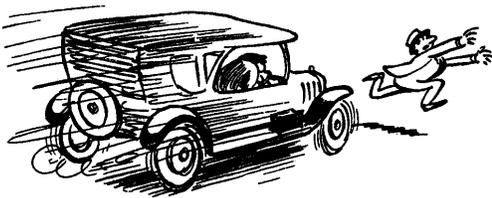
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Last June I wrote a **Back Talk** column entitled “**To China or Not to China: International Branch Campus (IBC) Libraries.**” In that article I reviewed the reasons why universities in one country would want to establish branch campuses elsewhere; the major challenges such institutions face when doing so; and what would it be like to work in one of these **IBC** libraries. One of the major reasons for writing it was to help me decide if I really wanted to leave the comforts of sunny Arizona for a six-month assignment at **New York University's Shanghai (NYUSH)** campus as its interim library director.

I did of course decide to go, but as my stint in Shanghai is about to close, I decided I would tell you a bit about this library and my experiences here.

This was my first opportunity to work in a brand new library. I was the second staff member to arrive. Preceding me was a very resourceful young librarian who was to eventually be in charge of access services. But with no one else around, for several months she had been **THE** librarian in charge of everything. She did a great job. Fortunately, we had a month to get in shape before the first class of 300+ freshmen arrived.

Let me begin by telling you a little about **NYUSH**. It is the third Sino-US Higher Education Joint Venture in China. It is partnered with the **East China Normal University (ECNU)** and is physically situated on its campus in northwest Shanghai. Next year **NYUSH** will still be linked with **ECNU**, but it will move to its own custom-built vertical campus on the south side of the river dividing Shanghai.



NYUSH is very strong in science and technology, but it also provides a broad liberal arts education for its students. English is the official language of instruction.

Certainly, starting a new library in the digital age is a much easier job than it must have been in the print-only days. Because of the nearly one million eBooks, 90,000 electronic serials subscriptions, 1,000 or so online databases shared by all in the **NYU Libraries** system, we had much to offer our new students from the first day they arrived in Shanghai. But I don't want to get ahead of myself. What I want to do is give you a functional description of how we meet our readers' needs:

Collection Development

We have a seasoned professional subject specialist in Manhattan to coordinate the collection building work in Shanghai. He was with us here for the first two months when the students first arrived. He is now being helped by two, soon to be three, resource and reference librarians who arrived in November. As coordinator, he uses email to communicate with the faculty while the local reference librarians, as departmental liaisons, make face-to-face contact with students and teachers to help identify what is needed. The printed collection is now being built, but by the end of 2014 it should have many tens of thousands of general research materials. Now, in addition to a few thousand books needed to meet the immediate needs of its freshman class, **NYUSH's** library has a leisure reading collection of English and Chinese bestsellers. Its students also have access to the very substantial Chinese language electronic and print holdings of **ECNU**.

Technical Processing

Most of the western language materials we add to the collection are ordered, received, and paid for in New York. Once received there, they are cataloged and processed by **NYU's** Knowledge Access and Resource Management Services division. This takes advantage of the ex-

perience and broad range of skills possessed by these professionals with only a few added staff to take care of our needs. Once materials are shelf ready, they are shipped via an approved importer in China, or for rush materials sent via a super fast courier service.

Public Services

As already indicated, we currently have two reference librarians. Departmental liaison work is one of the most important things they have to do. Once we get the third professional, they will divide up the responsibility to work with the humanities, social sciences and science/technology. Now we only provide face-to-face service ten hours during the week, supplemented by 24/7 opportunities to email questions or chat with a **NYU** reference librarian stationed in some part of the world. In fact, during the afternoon hours our reference librarians help answer the questions of researchers on the other side of the world. As the staff grows, we plan on extending our own hours to evenings and weekends. Researchers in Shanghai also benefit from having access to the many library subject guides developed by librarians throughout the system. These guides provide lists of useful indexes, reference tools, etc. We also take advantage of online citation management and alerting services for newly acquired materials to help researchers meet their information needs.

Access Services

We have one professional who oversees this function but is helped by 2.5 support staff. We provide paper reserves but we also help teachers create links between online resources and the single learning platform used by them. Interlibrary loans, between the Shanghai and Manhattan campuses, are of great importance. Shanghai's students and teachers can all place non-mediated online request for books to be shipped using a courier service, at no cost to them — this will also include books borrowed via ILL from other libraries as well. If they prefer, they can instead request the tables of content, or one or two chapters from books held by **NYU**, to be scanned and sent to them electronically.

Other Forms of Support Services: So that our readers can enjoy the same access to electronic forms of information as those in Manhattan, they are provided access to a **NYU** Virtual Private Network (VPN) that connects them to the main campus' Internet backbone. This means that what they see and do electronically is just like it would be in New York. Part of the Shanghai library staff includes an experienced professional who is in charge of providing electronic classroom teaching support for the entire campus. Teachers can also go

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