

2018

Mayflower: Ode to New Beginnings – A New Columnfor New Times with a Positive Mission

Antje Mays

University of Kentucky Libraries, antjemays@uky.edu

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



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Mays, Antje (2018) "Mayflower: Ode to New Beginnings – A New Columnfor New Times with a Positive Mission," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 30: Iss. 4, Article 57.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.8286>

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.

Mayflower: Ode to New Beginnings — A New Column for New Times with a Positive Mission

Column Editor: **Antje Mays** (Director of Collections, University of Kentucky Libraries) <antjemays@uky.edu>

Column Editor's Note: Welcome to this new column on positive strategies for library futures! This column is a call for librarians to stop internalizing negative pronouncements purporting to prove libraries' trending toward irrelevant skillsets, obsolescence, and demise. This column offers a positive counter-voice in pursuit of a dignified self-image for the library profession, which, after all, has been a superb steward and community connector.

The inspiration for this new column sprang from the stream from fearful expressions about existential pressures within the library profession. Articles emphasizing library defunding, layoffs, and outright closures, along with studies on the waning usefulness of libraries based on flawed quantifiables have fueled fear and dissatisfaction in the library profession.

The first article in this column frames library pressures in a context of broader trends, examines professional stewardship and the library profession's enduring value, and portrays the wide range of skill and knowledge areas to which libraries are natural contributors. — **AM**

Winter is Coming: Post-Growth, No-Growth, and Existential Value Judgments

The 2018 Charleston Conference theme of “*Oh, Wind, if winter comes, can Spring be far behind?*” (Charleston Library Conference, 2018) reflects today's harsh winds of no-growth environments and ponders prospects for revitalization. The theme is from **Percy Bysshe Shelley's** (1820) poem “Ode to the West Wind” which ponders both the annihilating and cleansing power of autumn's sweeping westerly storms ushering in the night of winter and concludes with an expression of hope for regeneration in the following spring. Editors **Drabble, Stringer, and Hahn** (2007) declare the poem's “total effect [as] one of transcendent hope and energy, achieved through suffering and despair.” Similarly, the **American Economic Association's** (AEA) unofficial 2016 conference theme of “Winter is Coming” is drawn from **Gregory Clark's** keynote presentation titled “Winter Is Coming: **Robert Gordon** and the Future of Economic Growth” (Clark, 2016). Going even further than **Gordon** (2016), the pessimism in **Clark's** (2016) central premise is rooted in his view that growth and widespread transformation in the U.S. economy have run their course. **Clark** argues that technological impacts prevail mostly in high-end niche markets whilst the broader economy declines toward a medieval economy, ca. 1300 A.D., anchored by cooking, serving, and cleaning work in which technological transformation is irrelevant. Economics correspondent **Paul Solman's** (2016) interview during the AEA conference uncovered that

the dark economic symbolism of “Winter is Coming” was named after an episode of *Game of Thrones*, whose zero-sum fictional premise struck the keynote speaker as a fitting analogy to the stagnation he sees in the U.S. economy.

Libraries and higher education feel the effects of this stagnation in the form of flat or declining budgets triggered by the 2008 financial crash, subsequent recession, and eventual recovery unaccompanied by restored funding levels (Clark & Brandon, 2009; Domonell, 2011; Douglass, 2010; Hebel, 2010; Lewin, 2011; Maatta, 2011; Rosa, 2018). Libraries and their functional infrastructures are portrayed in the spirit of **Baumol's** (2012) cost disease: Rates continue to rise in uniquely high-skilled service fields where the human touch remains central and high-level expertise is at a premium. **Archibald and Feldman** (2010) examine underlying factors of rising costs of college attendance and identifies high-skilled expert labor and library infrastructures among higher education's cost ingredients. **Cappelli** (2011) laments widespread unwillingness among business and institutions to invest in education and training infrastructures; the costs of attending public universities are increasingly shifting from states to students (Domonell, 2011; Lewin, 2011), spurring debate on the economic returns on college attainment (Cappelli, 2015). An **OECD** study on skill development in the United States notes rising costs, reduced institutional funding, and growing indebtedness among students attempting to self-fund their educations (Kuczera & Field, 2013).

In the library world, this economic context translates into cuts in pay and jobs (Maatta, 2009) as well as largely flat budgets (Rosa, 2018), contributing to difficulties in retaining top performers (Wolff-Eisenberg, 2016). At the same time, libraries are tasked with ever-expanding ranges and quantities of services (Horrihan, 2015). Libraries fall prey to low-value judgments from academic administrators where value measurements rely solely on methods borrowed from business: Library outputs as returns on investment calculated solely on financial accounting measures of income and cost of production fall short of fully capturing libraries' impact and value to their users' professional and academic success (King & Tenopir, 2013; Tenopir, 2010; Wolff-Eisenberg, 2016).

Impact and Existential Value Judgment: How Do Professions Deserve To Exist?

Part A: Financial industry – poor judgment and global economic consequences: Seeking growth in investment returns, the

financial sector facilitated increasingly exotic investment instruments derived from securitized subprime loans, then found itself unprepared for the resulting financial collapse which ushered in the deepest recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Bierman, 2010). Mainstream thinkers

were wedded to the notion of ever-rising asset values and stable returns (Hartcher, 2006) and viewed collapse in housing and debt markets as improbable (Taleb, 2007; Taylor & Williams, 2008). The financial crash of 2008 and the recession it triggered

took the prevailing school of financial thought by surprise (Bayoumi, 2017; Palley, 2012).

Yet despite the economic devastation triggered by blind spots and poor judgment in the financial professions, no one, including finance practitioners, declared the financial industry unworthy of further existence. Rather, business and finance worldwide took aim at business ethics, core values, and placed intentional emphasis on ethics in business education programs. Rather than aiming to self-destruct, business and finance sought to self-correct (Aydin, 2011; Buchko & Buchko, 2009; Catacutan, 2013 Galagan, 2009; Oates & Dias, 2016; Sigurjonsson et al, 2015; VanHise et al, 2013).

Part B: Library profession – trusted brand of enduring value: The library profession is trusted for providing vital information, instruction, and services to wide user populations aiming to read, learn, upgrade their skills, and educate children. Public library users continue to value these library services (Horrihan, 2016; 2015). The State Library of Maine's recent survey of trustworthiness and ethical standards across professions found librarians ranking highly among the most trusted professions — second only to nurses. Specifically: (1) Nurses took first place, with 81% of respondents expressing high/very high confidence in the nursing profession's trustworthiness. (2) Librarians came in second, at 78%; (3) pharmacists, 74%; (4) medical doctors, 68%; (5) high school teachers, 59%; (6) police officers, 59%; (7) clergy, 54%; (8) funeral directors, 44%; and (9) accountants, 43% (Lockwood & Ritter, 2016). The **Pew Research Center** found that Americans, especially millennials, see libraries as sources of trustworthy information, indicating new generations placing value on libraries (Geiger, 2017). A similar poll in Great Britain also ranked librarians among the professionals most likely to provide trustworthy information (CILIP, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c). In academic settings, library resources and services enhance researchers' productivity,

continued on page 38



grant-writing success, professional growth, and academic success (King & Tenopir, 2013; Tenopir, 2010).

Key knowledge needs and the library profession as strategic partner: Numerous studies across the fields of business, economics, education, and the military identify several key skill and talent shortages that harm organizational functioning, economic strength, and national security (Klein, Rice, & Levy, 2012; Manpower Group, 2012, 2013; Onsomu et al, 2010; *Our Troubled Education System*, 2012; Preston, 2010; Schwab & Sala-i-Martin, 2012, 2013; Wagner, 2010).

Key hard skills found lacking across student bodies and the workforce comprise content knowledge, technical skills, and industry-specific competencies. Hard skills include basic skills, literacy, numeracy including mathematical reasoning and applied measurement, academic foundations and subject mastery, and the skill of practical application of knowledge in real-world work settings. Soft skills in the analytical realm encompass oral and written communication skills, information literacy characterized by ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources, scientific literacy, critical thinking, analysis and synthesis, interdisciplinary thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills, innovation, creativity, global awareness, cultural intelligence, and engaged citizenship. Values-centric soft skills include ethics and character, professionalism, work ethic and motivation, initiative, flexibility, social skills and business etiquette, self-awareness, collaboration and teamwork, leadership skills, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to continuous skill development (*Closing the Gap*, 2012; *Critical Skills Survey*, 2010, 2012; Gerver & Robinson, 2010; Hart Research Associates, 2010; Hirsch, 1988, 2007; Hofmann, 2008; Jacobs, 2011; Kuczera & Field, 2013; Nagle, 2010; OECD, 2012; Pohl, 2000; Plum et al, 2008; SHRM, 2008; Suárez-Orozco, 2007; Thornburg, 2002; Wagner, 2012).

These key skill families are a natural outgrowth of libraries' instruction in research-pertinent skills in information technologies, critical evaluation of information, reflection upon purpose-appropriateness of findings, and practical application of knowledge uncovered through research. The library profession can and should take a page from the business playbook and inject its expertise into the wider community — a topic covered further in the next article.

References

- Archibald, R. B., & Feldman, D. H.** (2010). *Why Does College Cost So Much?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Aydin, N.** (2011). The 2008 financial crisis: A moral crisis of capitalism. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(22), 8697-8706.
- Baumol, W. J., & De Ferrandi, D.** (2012). *The Cost disease : why computers get cheaper and health care doesn't*. New Haven : Yale University Press.
- Bayoumi, T. A.** (2017). *Unfinished business : the unexplored causes of the financial crisis and the lessons yet to be learned*. New Haven : Yale University Press.
- Bierman, H.** (2010). *Beating the bear: Lessons from the 1929 crash applied to today's world*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger.
- Buchko, A., & Buchko, K.** (2009). So We Teach Business Ethics-Do They Learn? *Journal of Business Ethics Education*, 6, 119-146.
- Cappelli, P.** (2011). *Why good people can't get jobs: The skills gap and what companies can do about it*. Philadelphia: Wharton Digital Press.
- Cappelli, P.** (2015). *Will college pay off?: A guide to the most important financial decision you will ever make* (First ed.). New York: PublicAffairs.
- Catacutan, R.** (2013). Education in virtues as goal of business ethics instruction. *African Journal of Business Ethics*, 7(2), 62-67.
- Charleston Library Conference** (2018). Conference Theme. Retrieved from <https://www.charlestonlibraryconference.com/about/>.
- CILIP** (2018a). Top professionals for trustworthy information revealed. London: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. Retrieved from <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/trusted>.
- CILIP** (2018b). We are trusted professionals: Librarians named as a source of trustworthy information in public poll. London: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. Retrieved from <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/trustedprofessional>.
- CILIP** (2018c). *Trustworthy information*. London: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. Retrieved from <https://www.slideshare.net/CILIP/trustworthy-information-87989804>.
- Clark, G.** (2016). Winter Is Coming: Robert Gordon and the Future of Economic Growth. *American Economics Review*, 106(5), 68-71.
- Clark, K., & Brandon, E.** (2009). Rising Prices, Shrinking Access. *U.S. News & World Report*, 146(8), 27-35.
- Closing the Gap: 2012 Skills survey of North Carolina employers* (2012). Raleigh, N.C.: North Carolina Association of Workforce Development Boards.
- Critical Skills Survey* (2010). New York: American Management Association.
- Critical Skills Survey* (2012). New York: American Management Association.
- Domonell, K.** (2011). Budget Season Means Hefty State Cuts to Higher Ed. *University Business*, 14(2), 12.
- Douglass, John Aubrey.** (2010). *Higher Education Budgets and the Global Recession: Tracking Varied National Responses and Their Consequences*. (Research and Occasional Papers Series). Berkeley: UC Berkeley.
- "Ode to the West Wind." In **Drabble, M., Stringer, J., & Hahn, D.** (Eds.), (2007). *The Concise Oxford Companion to English Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from www.oxfordreference.com.
- Galagan, P.** (2009). Not Your Father's MBA. *T + D*, 63(1), 26-29.
- Geiger, Abigail** (2017). Most Americans – especially Millennials – say libraries can help them find reliable, trustworthy information. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/30/most-americans-especially-millennials-say-libraries-can-help-them-find-reliable-trustworthy-information/>.
- Gerver, R., & Robinson, K.** (2010). *Creating tomorrow's schools today: Education – our children - their futures*. London; New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Gordon, R. J.** (2016). *The rise and fall of American growth: The U.S. standard of living since the Civil War* (Princeton economic history of the Western world). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hart Research Associates** (2010). *Raising the bar: Employers' views on college learning in the wake of the economic downturn. A survey among employers conducted on behalf of the Association of American Colleges and Universities*. Washington, D.C.: Hart Research Associates.
- Hartcher, P.** (2006). *Bubble man : Alan Greenspan & the missing 7 trillion dollars* (1st ed.). New York: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Hebel, S.** (2010). State Cuts Are Pushing Public Colleges Into Peril. (Cover story). *Chronicle Of Higher Education*, 56 (27), A1-A22.
- Hirsch, E. D.** (1988). *Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know* (1st Vintage Books edition). New York: Vintage.
- Hirsch, E. D.** (2007). *The knowledge deficit: Closing the shocking education gap for American children*. Boston: Mariner Books.
- Hofmann, P.** (2008). Learning to learn: A key-competence for all adults? *Convergence*, 41(2-3), 173-181
- Horrigan, J. B.** (2015). *Libraries at the Crossroads : The public is interested in new services and thinks libraries are important to communities*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/09/15/libraries-at-the-crossroads/>.
- Horrigan, J. B.** (2016). *Libraries 2016*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2016/09/PI_2016.09.09_Libraries-2016_FINAL.pdf.
- Jacobs, H. H.** (2011). *Curriculum 21: Essential education for a changing world*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.
- King, D. W., & Tenopir, C.** (2013). Linking information seeking patterns with purpose, use, value, and return on investment of academic library journals. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 8(2), 153-162.
- Klein, J. I., Rice, C., & Levy, J.** (2012). *U.S. Education Reform and National Security*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.

continued on page 39

Mayflower: Ode to New Beginnings from page 38

Kuczera, M., & Field, S. (2013). *Skills beyond School: Review of the United States*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Lewin, T. (2011, January 24). Students, Not States, Are Now Paying More to Cover Costs for Public Universities. *New York Times*, p. A18.

Lockwood, B. M., & Ritter, J. (2016). *Maine State Library: Trusted Professionals Survey 2016*. (Library Documents. Paper 101). Portland, ME: Portland Research Group. Retrieved from http://digitalmaine.com/msl_docs/101.

Maatta, S. (2009). Jobs & Pay Take a Hit. *Library Journal*, 134(17), 21-29.

Manpower Group (2012). *Talent Shortage Survey*. Milwaukee: Manpower Group.

Manpower Group (2013). *Talent Shortage Survey*. Milwaukee: Manpower Group.

Nagle, R. (2010). *Hiring, retention and training: employers' perspectives on trade and soft skills in South Carolina. A project conducted by the University of South Carolina for the South Carolina Workforce Investment Board*. Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Workforce Investment Board.

Oates, G., & Dias, R. (2016). Including ethics in banking and finance programs: Teaching "we shouldn't win at any cost." *Education Training*, 58(1), 94-111.

OECD (2012). *Literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Onsomu, E.N., Ngware, M.W., Manda, D.K. (2010). The impact of skills development on competitiveness: empirical evidence from a cross-country analysis. *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 18(7): 1-21.

Our troubled education system: A threat to national security (2012). Washington, D.C.: Mission: Readiness - Military Leaders for Kids.

Palley, T. (2012). *From financial crisis to stagnation: The destruction of shared prosperity and the role of economics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Plum, E., Achen, B., Dræby, I., & Jensen, I. (2008). *CI: cultural intelligence: the art of leading cultural complexity*. London: Middlesex University Press.

Pohl, M. (2000). *Learning to think, thinking to learn: Models and strategies to develop a classroom culture of thinking*. Cheltenham, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Pty Ltd.

Preston, R. (2010). American kids score 'C' in math, science. *InformationWeek*, (1287), 46-51.

Rosa, K. S., ed. (2018) *The State of America's Libraries 2018*. Chicago: American Library Association. Retrieved from <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018-soal-report-final.pdf>.

Schwab, K., & Sala-i-Martin, X. (2012). *Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Schwab, K., & Sala-i-Martin, X. (2013). *Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014*. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

Shelley, P. (1820), "Ode to the West Wind." In: Shelley, P. (1820). *Prometheus unbound: A lyric drama in four acts with other poems*. London: C. and J. Ollier.

SHRM (2008). *Critical skills needs and resources for the changing workforce*. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.

Sigurjonsson, T., Arnardottir, O., Vaiman, A., & Rikhardsson, A. (2015). Managers' Views on Ethics Education in Business Schools: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 130(1), 1-13.

Solman, P. (2016, Jan. 28). Are the best days of the U.S. economy over? (Making Sense). Washington, D.C.: PBS News Hour. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/are-the-best-days-of-the-u-s-economy-over>.

Suárez-Orozco, M. M. (2007). *Learning in the global era: international perspectives on globalization and education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Taleb, N. (2007). *The Black Swan: the Impact of the Highly Improbable* (1st ed.). New York: Random House.

Taylor, J. B., & Williams, J. C. (2008). *A Black Swan in the Money Market*. Cambridge, Mass: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Tenopir, C. (2010). Measuring the Value of the Academic Library: Return on Investment and Other Value Measures. *The Serials Librarian*, 58(1-4), 39-48.

Thornburg, D. D. (2002). *The new basics: education and the future of work in the telematic age*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

VanHise, J., Koeplin, S. J., & Whitty, M. D. (2013). Honesty and ethics in business: the task of educators: Jesuit business education as a model. *Business Renaissance Quarterly*, 8(1), 1-16.

Wagner, T. (2010). *The global achievement gap: why even our best schools don't teach the new survival skills our children need -- and what we can do about it*. New York: Basic Books.

Wagner, T. (2012). *Creating innovators: The making of young people who will change the world*. New York: Scribner.

Wolff-Eisenberg, Christine (2016). *US Library Survey 2016*. New York: Ithaca S+R. Retrieved from <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/us-library-survey-2016/>. 

Invitation to authors: In light of libraries' strategic strengths, why does the library profession denigrate itself? Many of the above skill families globally deemed in short supply fall within libraries' roles of information expertise. Come join this gathering place around library strategies for positive futures!

This column invites you to submit research articles, case studies, and how-we-did-it articles. Article submissions are welcome in a wide range of topics including strategic partnerships and outreach, collaborations, sharing expertise in and beyond our profession, getting out into the broader community to share our information savvy, as well as specific examples of successful library strategies with positive outcomes.

Rumors from page 21

I am bummed that the awesome **Rick Anderson** has decided to speak at the Arab Emirates instead of Charleston this year! Oh well! But I do want you all to know that his latest monograph, *Scholarly Communication: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford University Press, 2018) was just published.

More **Charleston author books just published** — *The Complete Guide to RFPs for Libraries* by **Frances Wilkinson** and **Sever Bordeianu**. (Libraries Unlimited/ABC-Clio, 2018.)

Joey van Arnhem has just finished co-editing a **LITA guide on Augmented and Virtual Reality in Libraries** with **Christine Elliot** and **Marie Rose**. Here is the link: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781538102909/The-LITA-Guide-to-Augmented-Reality-in-Libraries>. **Joey** is one of our staff at the **College of Charleston's Addestone Library** and can be counted on to know all that's innovative and exciting.

Speaking of **book reviews and ATG**. This is a very developing area as you have no doubt noticed. **Corey Seeman** is taking over **Regina Gong's Monograph Musings** column. He is planning a meeting for interested book reviewers and publishers in Charleston during

the Conference! Stay tuned! <cseeman@umich.edu>

The **Oxford English Dictionary (OED)** has announced its latest update. More than 1,000 new words, senses, and subentries have been added to the **Oxford English Dictionary** in the latest update, including worstest, fungivorous, and corporation pop. This quarter sees the inclusion of both obsolete words, such as afound, and new words such as fatberg. See the list at <https://public.oed.com/updates/new-words-list-september-2017/>.

The **University of North Carolina Press** has been awarded a major grant from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** to support

continued on page 54