The New University Library
ALA Editions purchases fund advocacy, awareness, and accreditation programs for library professionals worldwide.
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To my parents,

for their unwavering support through thick and thin.
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This book has a very personal beginning. At the end of 2009, while finishing out a term on the Committee on Professional Governance (CPG) of the Librarians Association of the University of California (LAUC), I received a call from the LAUC president asking if I would chair the committee through the next year for a new project. Along with the rest of the profession, the University of California (UC) sought to assess its position amidst the vast changes of a new millennium whose alarming instability had been brought into painful focus by the national economic recession of 2008. The economic effects were especially evident in California, which featured in the Guardian as possibly the first “failed state” of the Union (Harris 2009). Would I design a systemwide conversation on the future of the UC system libraries for the twenty-first century? I said yes.

As the first part of the charge, my committee was given a month to prepare a workshop for the annual assembly of the LAUC membership (encompassing the ten campuses of the UC system) at UC Berkeley to initiate the systemwide project. I began reading in earnest, and I found that there was a big difference between a passing familiarity with issues of the profession and a systematic study of them. As Samuel Johnson observed, “When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” To my consternation, I found that the library profession, which is almost synonymous with order, was, in its deliberations about itself, wildly unorganized. The future of the library is discussed from every possible angle: electronic versus print formats, books versus periodicals, the role of the Internet, the implications of copyright law, the habits and very brain function of a new generation of library users—the millennials—budgets, library education, any number of technologies, the library building facilities themselves, and far too many other topics to name. These issues are projected into the future in various degrees from the next few months to years and even decades. And the projections range from calls for rebirth and new frontiers to (more
commonly) apocalypse and the end of librarianship and even of organized knowledge. To an extent, one might take all of this as a healthy ferment of research. But it certainly would not do for someone expected to talk coherently before a large number of people. And I suspect that everyone would gain from some basic shape to the conversation, or a set of priorities, or at least a few reference points.

Having completed one course in cataloging (about which more need not be said), I essayed a basic classification of topics to frame the professional literature. I ended up with nine categories: reference, scholarly communication, personnel, technology, collections, buildings, campus roles, library networks, and library culture. So much for a new classification system! Yet, this did not seem sufficient either. Projecting ahead (accurately as it turned out), I imagined a sea of upturned faces of librarians who had taken time from busy schedules to hear something of value. And with a sense of unease, it seemed to me that the professional literature, even neatly classified, was just not going to meet the expectations for it. If the literature has any common characteristics, they fall into two categories. One is an eager, prophetic mode that seems to grow more enthusiastic as it reaches farther into the future. Libraries will disappear, to be replaced by electronic delivery systems. Librarians will need complete retraining in business or technologies. The entire category of technical services will cease to exist! Such literature is highly speculative, and the very complexity of change that fuels these scenarios makes it unlikely that any of the predictions will be accurate. Anyway, they certainly wouldn’t do any good to my audience. The second category is marked by a belief that there is no problem that cannot ultimately be swallowed up and dealt with through an appropriate networking and leveraging of organizations. (The term “networks” recurs frequently.) According to this logic, it seems that any problem can be administrated away simply by redrawing organizational charts and workflows. But while this sounds comforting in the abstract, I was left wondering just what this would look like to a line librarian. Not much, it appeared to me.

I concluded that not only was I not in a position to tell librarians about their profession but that there was probably no one who really could. Of course there are any number of qualified and knowledgeable people to give keynotes and presentations. But I thought here of a keynote speaker at the 12th National Conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in Minneapolis in 2005. Dr. William J. Mitchell, Professor of Architecture and Media Arts and Sciences at MIT, claimed that his graduate students in seminar had taken to Googling his every statement
on the spot and coming up with rejoinders and counterclaims. The experience, he said, was “exhilarating” but “exhausting,” and he realized that there was no way that anyone could keep up with the whole world. Taking this to heart, it seemed more appropriate that information should flow from the line librarians to me and that there should be some mechanism for facilitating this transfer. It occurred to me to use the direct experience of the librarians and the organization of the University of California, whose ten campuses as envisioned in the Master Plan for Higher Education in California in 1960 would form a sort of utopia of higher education. The UC’s ten campuses are highly diverse and adapted to their environments, and as such they provide a large slice of the experience of higher education. Brought into conjunction, the ten campuses are a problem-solving machine for investigating different issues of the future and determining different directions. As reported through line librarians, their operation would serve to check and assess theory about the profession and speculations about its future. What emerged was a two-part program: reporting on theories and speculation about the future, and then testing these ideas against the experience of working librarians. The annual meeting was a success, and the ensuing yearlong study conducted through different venues was fruitful enough that it seemed worth extending into a reflection on the profession as a whole. Thus was the origin of this book.

One significant question of methodology is how to justify any set of categories as a suitable frame for studying the profession. The categories one chooses for analysis will inescapably determine the answers to a degree. How many categories should there be? Which are the right ones? The debate could go on forever. The categories selected for the UC project were conceived as a starting point to be winnowed and adapted if there was a need. As it turned out, in the course of the year, the full slate survived and produced useful discussions. They also turned out to make a close match with the ACRL Top Ten Trends for the Future of 2010.

1. Academic library collection growth is driven by patron demand and will include new resource types.
2. Budget challenges will continue and libraries will evolve as a result.
3. Changes in higher education will require that librarians possess diverse skill sets.
4. Demands for accountability and assessment will increase.
5. Digitization of unique library collections will increase and require a larger share of resources.
6. Explosive growth of mobile devices and applications will drive new services.
7. Increased collaboration will expand the role of the library within the institution and beyond.
8. Libraries will continue to lead efforts to develop scholarly communication and intellectual property services.
9. Technology will continue to change services and required skills.
10. The definition of the library will change as physical space is repurposed and virtual space expands. (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee 2010)

And here are the categories for the UC project:

1. Reference
2. Scholarly communication
3. Personnel
4. Technology
5. Collections
6. Buildings
7. Campus roles
8. Library networks
9. Library culture

All but numbers 2 and 4 of the ACRL list fit exactly into the UC project list, and 2 and 4 are dealt with implicitly in the UC list. Even so, it is more important to have a framework than to decide exactly what it will be. Making the executive decision to have some categories enables reflection, which will turn up better categories or other modifications where necessary. For this book, categories 2 and 8, scholarly communication and library networks, were absorbed into the other seven.

In keeping with the rationale for the original project, this study tests theory against lived experience in the form of case studies. A second critical question, then, is, Which case studies to choose? The University of California as one single system should not be extended to the entire profession. Two libraries come to mind as natural choices. UC Merced (UCM) was the first major university built in the twenty-first century in the United States, and its library, in accordance with the rest of the campus, was built as the library of the future. It is an ongoing life-size experiment on the latest and most venturesome ideas in library
design and service. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (generally known as Illinois, which I will use also to refer to its library) is a colossus of the library world whose collection size is among the very largest and whose associated library school, the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS), has been consistently ranked as the best in the nation for many years. Illinois stands at the pinnacle of the profession and is the very paradigm of the traditional research library, with a vast collection and a decentralized departmental structure. Its efforts to grapple with change from the collection of print materials that has defined academic libraries to some new model will be instructive to any academic library. These two, juxtaposing newness and tradition and the small and the large, make up half of the case studies. What of the other two?

An academic library is a vast organization like a miniature city, and going into any depth at all requires great time and effort. Studies across institutions now are largely based on groupings of peers, defined generally from quantitative factors. I adapted the basic principle of familiarity, underlying this method, to use my knowledge of specific institutions, acquired through years of personal and professional exposure, as a starting criterion—though not the sole interest—for my remaining case studies. And where these selections may cross the boundaries of peer institutions, this is all to the good in reconsidering definitions that are frequently arbitrary anyway. By starting with the known as a stepping-stone to the unknown, such introspection repeated for institutions throughout the profession will give us a better sense of the work that we do. Furthermore, predicting the future is difficult to do. It seems more worthwhile to study the future in terms of how institutions are grappling with change now rather than investing in particular institutions as models of what will be.

Growing up in Honolulu, I spent many hours in the main library of the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM). And while I was far from an adept user of the library, I absorbed its campus environment and its unique island culture beyond what any project-based researcher could do. A midsized public university library, its location as a crossroads of the Pacific makes it of particular interest now. The always deep cultural sensitivity of the islands has fused with educational movements in multiculturalism to place the university library and its area collections at the forefront of cultural preservation. In a more literal sense, the library has engaged with its environment in the form of a catastrophic flood in 2004 that wiped out the basement floor and most of the government documents collection as well as other services. Such an invasive action and its after-
math had the effect of exposing the dynamic principles of the library in a way that is instructive for the profession.

The last four years of my career have been spent as an instruction librarian at the University of California, Davis (UCD). This has afforded me a vantage point for observing not just this library in transition but also the campus, the UC library system, and the entire state of California during a period of unusual turmoil. Paired with UCM, UCD offers an opportunity to meditate on the pros and cons of library networking within the largest and most cohesive public university system in the world. But perhaps the greatest value of UCD is one that it shares with UHM—neither one is exceptional (at first glance). Case studies of the unusual, while informative and thought-provoking, are not typical by definition. For the purposes of representation, it is more useful to have case studies of what seems normative. This material can be more readily generalized and, as I hope to show, is not normative at all upon closer inspection.

Taking off from the original project, this book examines seven professional trends, then tests them against the four case studies to match theory against practice. While the library profession favors hard data, preferably quantitative, in the current vogue for assessment, this study takes a slightly different tack. Appreciating librarians as the experts on their profession who combine training, professional knowledge, and the irreplaceable experience of running libraries, this study as much as possible relies on the voices of librarians themselves, talking about their work.

While this book essays a comprehensive view of the profession, a few words are in order about what it does not cover. The case studies are limited to academic libraries from medium to large universities that are publicly funded. One hopes that the findings will be relevant outside this scope to include other academic libraries and perhaps public libraries as well. But there are significant differences, too, between the libraries of large public universities and those at small liberal arts colleges or community colleges, and one should extrapolate to these and other situations with care. The book also does not treat cataloging and technical services work in much detail. In part this is because their detailed procedures are less important than their roles and organizational structures, which I do discuss. But it is also because there are others who are much better-equipped to discuss these topics than I am. Finally, space limitations require a regretful brevity in the treatment of initiatives of great richness and complexity. Instead, I invite readers to investigate further the programs discussed here, which are easily searchable online.
Acknowledgments

This project draws on my entire library career, so first I wish to thank David Wuolu and Ardath Larson, friends and colleagues, who got me started in librarianship at the University of Minnesota, Morris. For my case studies, I particularly wish to thank Randolph Siverson, David Michalski, Amy Kautzman, Xiaoli Li, and MacKenzie Smith at UC Davis; Donald Barclay and Jim Dooley at UC Merced; Paula Mochida, Martha Chantiny, Patricia Polanski, and Shanye Valeho-Novikoff at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa; Paula Kaufman, Susan Searing, and JoAnn Jacoby at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and far too many other librarians to name. If anyone had had the privilege to work with them as I did, they would feel very optimistic about the future of libraries. I also gratefully acknowledge research grants received from the Librarians Association of the University of California that allowed the completion of this book. Finally, I wish to thank Christopher Rhodes, J. Michael Jeffers, Rachel Chance, and Russell Harper, my editors at the American Library Association, for their invaluable encouragement and guidance.
Part One :: History
CHAPTER ONE

Overview

As custodians of the past, it behooves librarians to use the knowledge that they steward to understand the challenges they face. As the saying goes, in the past we may discern the present or even the future. Much current futurism assumes a historical vision that recurs frequently in the literature in the following form. From their very birth at the dawn of civilization, libraries served to collect and store knowledge, mostly for the purpose of the state or other institutions, not the public. Even the invention of the printing press in the early modern period had little effect on this pattern since the size of collections remained small. A new phase identified as modern librarianship began with the founding of the Boston Public Library in 1848. The emphasis remained on the storage and preservation of print documents. Yet collections expanded to become much larger, reaching into the millions of volumes in American libraries in the early twentieth century. And these materials were now thrown open to the public, as opposed merely to specialists. Academic libraries as one category of the profession followed the same developmental path, as we shall see. A third phase began at the end of the twentieth century and surrounds us now. This phase remains to be fully characterized. It is associated closely with the Information Revolution, which belongs on a level with the invention of writing and the printing press. Central to the new phase is the Internet, which makes vast amounts of information available to all. New technology has refashioned the learning and communications practices of a whole generation, reshaped the economy, and altered the very form of education and its structures of authority. The one thing that seems to be clear is that libraries will never be the same. In fact, for the first time in its history, the very existence of the library is being called into question.
Yet is this extreme scenario so certain? Some circumspect voices argue that predictions about the death or total reinvention of the library, like similar predictions of the end of books in the 1990s, are premature. More likely, these voices say, is a “hybrid model” in which libraries adopt some new technologies where useful while keeping the old (Pinfield et al. 1998). Yet another voice has argued that, in fact, libraries are based on a set of permanent principles and since their beginnings have never really changed at all (Thompson 1977, 11). Most of these principles sound surprisingly modern:

1. Libraries are created by society.
2. Libraries are conserved by society.
3. Libraries are for the storage and dissemination of knowledge.
4. Libraries are centers of power.
5. Libraries are for all.
7. A national library should contain all national literature, with some representation of other national literatures.
8. Every book is of use.
9. A librarian must be a person of education.
10. A librarian is an educator.
11. A librarian’s role can be an important one only if it is fully integrated into the prevailing social and political system.
12. A librarian needs training and/or apprenticeship.
13. It is a librarian’s duty to increase the stock of his library.
14. A library must be arranged in some kind of order, and a list of its contents provided.
15. Since libraries are storehouses of knowledge, they should be arranged according to subject.
16. Practical convenience should dictate how subjects are to be grouped in a library.
17. A library must have a subject catalog. (Thompson 1977, 202–224)

Thompson also notes that the administrators have generally tended to be male while most librarians are female(!) (Thompson 1977, 103).
So we have the full spectrum of possibilities here. We are at a revolutionary new stage (or possibly the end of) libraries. Or we are in a new phase of growth that has some continuity with the past but moves in a different direction. Or nothing has really changed at all, and we are just seeing new manifestations of fundamental principles. How to choose among the possibilities? We can only look harder at history, to which we now turn.

Academic libraries in colonial America, according to one observer, provide a backwards look at the practices of the Middle Ages (Hamlin 1981, 25). Some limitations were imposed by the demands of settling a new continent. But libraries were also constrained by the educational system. Colleges essentially preserved the medieval subjects of the trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy). The emphasis was on the maintenance of classical knowledge rather than innovation, and the mode of teaching was lecture-oriented and fundamentally hierarchical. Students listened and were expected to recite their lessons. There was little need for books at all. Accordingly, college libraries had small collections, mostly the result of private donations. The physical plant of the libraries consisted of a single room or sometimes even a set of cabinets. Rooms were unheated and virtually unusable during the winter for extended reading. In order to safeguard the books, no fire of any kind was allowed, so reading was possible only during the day. Libraries were typically open for a few hours a day or even on a weekly basis. In part, this was because the position of librarian was held in such low regard that he received little pay and, accordingly, was not disposed to keep long hours. Thus, added to the physical constraints, a culture operated whereby books were hedged about with barriers and made as inaccessible as the remote past that the students were supposed to imbibe (Rothstein 1976, 79). A case in point was the severe restrictions that surrounded the use of books themselves. Hamlin writes, “Pity the poor wretch who might be charged with injury to a volume while in his care; the regulations covering that problem go on interminably.” It was the custom of students at Dartmouth College to express their resentment of overdue fines by throwing books downstairs (Hamlin 1981, 31, 36).

Nevertheless, the culture of academic libraries extended to a second, quite different system running in parallel with the official ones. University students reacted against their dull curriculums by compiling libraries of their own (Hamlin 1981, 38). This movement was assisted by the propensity of nineteenth-century Americans to form associations. Alexis de Tocqueville writes:

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Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types—religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. . . . In every case, at the head of any new undertaking, where in France you would find the government or in England some territorial magnate, in the United States you are sure to find an association. (Tocqueville 1840, 513)

This trend was at work at colleges, where students formed literary and debating societies which charged members a fee to build up their own libraries. In contrast to the classical and historical works of university libraries, those of student societies emphasized novels, the natural sciences, and current topics. Many of these libraries outstripped those of the colleges. So a student-centered library culture thrived on its own, standing in the place of sports and other extracurricular activities which would arise later.

The year 1876 has been defined as the *annus mirabilis* of librarianship in America. The American Library Association (ALA) was founded that year, along with its companion publication, the *Library Journal*, as was a major source for specialized library equipment, the Library Bureau, founded by Melvil Dewey (fig. 1). The classification systems of Dewey and Charles Ammi Cutter were also both published that year. Dewey, indeed, was a colossus of the period; his innovations in every aspect of librarianship will be covered in more detail.

The accomplishments of 1876 meet most of the qualifications for a profession: an official organization, a body of standards and knowledge, and an official journal (Budd 2005, 62; Edgar 1976, 304; Hamlin 1981, 46; Rothstein 1976, 79; Carroll 1970, 9). This year of creativity for the library profession was also the start of modern academic librarianship, with the founding of Johns Hopkins University and its new vision of a library. But 1876 was as much the culmination of gathering trends as it was the fulcrum of innovation.

Many observers have noted the attraction of American universities to the German model (Rothstein 1976, 80). In contrast to the British model focused on teaching, the German model emphasized research by scholars, and this shift had profound ramifications. Research, most fundamentally, requires source materials in the form of books. The examination of books and the research they produced led to the seminar format,
which displaced the lecture. For convenience, seminars needed their material readily at hand, and so private libraries were built that became the basis of departmental libraries. University libraries needed rapid expansion. They required larger collections, additional space to house the collections, more hours to access the materials, and a professionally trained staff to manage the larger, more valuable collections and guide users through them. The founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876 is a convenient marker for the adoption of the German model in America, which took place over a period of time. The university’s first president, Daniel Coit Gilman, was given a large endowment by eponymous benefactor Johns Hopkins to build a library suitable for the university. And such was the success of both the library and the university that they became models for other universities to follow (Budd 2005, 23; Hamlin 1981, 3; Rothstein 1976, 81).

Yet the foreign influence was not the only one. As part of the vast influence of the Civil War on American society, some have included changes to higher education (Hamlin 1981, 40, 47). Veterans as well as an entire society tempered by the war became less willing to follow tradition blindly. Students demanded more relevant subjects. Curricula and whole institutions were redesigned along the lines of efficiency based on the hard lessons of the war. And just as many of the volunteer associations of prewar society were absorbed into larger corporate structures, the libraries of student debating societies were typically absorbed into the collections of the university libraries.

Another American influence was Melvil Dewey. His lifetime of vast achievement and obsessive labor has been traced to his origins in a
“burned-over” district of New York. The “burned-over” descriptor applies to successive waves of religious revivals that swept the region. While the various movements had different aims, they shared a general theme of reform and a religious fervor. The teenaged Dewey found himself musing in his journal about the “world work” that he would choose. Upon reaching adulthood, Dewey had determined that his goal was the reform of education in the broadest sense, and the rest is history; his defining contributions to librarianship were only part of his achievements. Dewey began work on his decimal classification system in his teens and revised it over the course of years as he applied it to various libraries. He was instrumental in founding the ALA, and he became one of its presiding members. He also founded the Library Bureau and helped to found the Library Journal. He moved on to become the head librarian at Columbia University. There, he dramatically expanded the size of the library collection, instituted the first reference service in an academic library, created an interlibrary loan (ILL) service, and inspired a new level of professionalization in libraries. Working with a system of five different colored fountain pens, he processed 550 pieces of mail a day. Moving on to become state librarian of New York, he created inspection systems that drove reform throughout the public school system. Dewey’s relentless zeal, rooted in his religious upbringing and a certain Puritan streak, thrived in the expansion of the post–Civil War period and drove a professionalization of libraries that the original German model could hardly equal.

After 1876, the course of librarianship followed the broad outlines of the development of the nation. Academic librarianship had some differences from its counterpart in the public libraries but followed a similar trajectory. The post–Civil War era which saw the westward expansion of the country, and rapid industrialization saw the founding of new libraries, the construction of larger buildings, and the growth of collections. The original Morrill Act, which created land grant universities, became law in 1862 (Budd 2005, 22; Hamlin 1981, 46). Though suppressed in the short term by the Civil War, public state universities were becoming a powerful force in higher education. Libraries shrugged off centuries of lassitude and began building collections as fast as they could. Large collections drove not only technical developments, including innovations such as the card catalog and the metal multi-tier bookshelf, but also the formalization of cataloging rules. Librarians themselves became specialized, branching into technical and public services.

The period between the World Wars, even after factoring in the Great Depression, had little effect on libraries. Some budgets decreased,
building projects were postponed, and some positions were closed. Yet libraries as a whole were buffered from the worst of economic hardship. Public libraries, in fact, enjoyed increased activity, as people retreated there for shelter, amusement, or information about jobs (Gambee and Gambee 1976, 175; Rogers 1976, 228).

The Second World War inaugurated a new phase of development. After the war’s victorious conclusion, the revitalized American economy turned its energies to enjoying the fruits of peace. Funding for education increased, and the technologies created by war were applied at home. The Cold War, especially the launch of Sputnik, further energized the nation (Budd 2005, 28). More funding for libraries appeared, enhanced in the 1960s by Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs. In the 1970s, however, funding began a long retreat that has continued to the present day and become markedly more pronounced with the economic crash of 2008 (Budd 2005, 4, 119). Meanwhile, technology continued to advance as a more and more capable servant of libraries. Library automation developed, and the personal computer appeared, enabling users to take advantage of electronic access. But with the rise of the Internet in the 1990s, technology broke its chains like Frankenstein’s monster to become a serious competitor to libraries in ways that are still unfolding. This vast exfoliation of library development can be understood more fully in terms of our seven trends.
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UCD University of California, Davis
UCM University of California, Merced
UHM University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

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