Chapter 2

Developing an Approach and Methodology for the Continued Progress of Library Studies and Information Management

ABSTRACT

Libraries and related information institutions cannot afford to rest on their laurels. The primary objective is not to fail, but to adapt and overcome the challenges that face all of our institutions today–adapt our institutions, adapt our profession, adapt our tools, and services; all of them must be considered in the end. The library user environment and information management, leveraging and developing them to support superior patron services, becomes the primary focus of information expertise and is what the library professional must evolve into in order to remain relevant and thrive in the Information Age. With information expertise as an engine, the library field can guide the development of new technologies providing information services. But only a developed and utilitarian system can bring about technology when applied by skilled and intuitive professionals. Such technology, understood as a practical process or tool for use in the everyday world by overcoming the rigors of real life, is established by the testing, observation, and documentation of accurate data for adaption of working theory to those of real-time results and efficient production/reproduction of the finished product for purposes of a general application–the introduced NITA Methodology as a key pillar of information expertise is this system. Surveyed in this chapter are the developments in approach and methodologies needed if the library field is to thrive into the future.

INTRODUCTION

In order for the library profession to advance into the future, we have to remain focused not only on changes to our marketable skills in the societies around us but also to the methodologies we employ for continued development and the educational approaches of each practicing professional. This includes the name we give to our degrees when expressed in public. It has become sort of a fad to rechristen some older, traditional liberal arts based vocations as 'sciences' when university

programs attempt to sell their programs to potential students–e.g. the MLS, Masters in Library Science. Usually, there are dubious attempts to apply an archaic and ambiguous definition of the meaning of the term science that the academic fields and the general population have moved well beyond some century and a half ago. This marketing ploy is patently unscrupulous, unprofessional, and frankly seen as an insult by the rigorously defined sciences of today, such as biologist, physicist, and chemists and their many corollaries. Even if we were to utilize an older and defunct form of the term 'science,' going so far back as the 16th century where the science discipline was a nebulous idea of any type of systematic inquiry based on the natural philosophies, to include Astrology and Phrenology among many other now debased fields of study, the liberal arts professions could still not lay claim to the epitaph of a 'science,' as it had its own ancient academic traditions at that time. Rebranding or not, the library field is a liberal arts based profession.

The insult of these misguided attempts at rebranding our educational degrees comes from the historical foundations of today's modern scientist. The first scientist had to fight centuries of entrenched scholasticism at the hands traditional academics, mostly doctors in the very same liberal arts heritages that today's Library Science programs are directly descended from. The pioneers of the true scientific professions, men such as Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, suffered hundreds of years of physical and intellectual persecution and martyrdom at the hands of conservative theologies and other jealous masters throughout universities all across Europe from the 17th-19th centuries–most of these prosecutors being the forerunners in what would today be called the traditional liberal arts–who feared the encroachment of these new natural philosophies, the precursor term to the scientific fields of today, in what they saw as their traditional spheres of knowledge and information control among academia and the general literate population. Anyone who reads the history of the tortuous and long development of the modern sciences would be ashamed to steal its mantle without sharing in the hard struggles to establish itself and prove its worth in the face of popular ignorance.

A Modern Science is Defined by the Use of the Scientific Methodology

The raise of the sciences in Europe was an often-times bloody story full of a few brave men and women standing against the collective and in-grained fears of the population, usually reinforced by the religious and civil authorities, challenging preconceptions and sometimes forfeiting their lives for it–one need only read Plato's *Apology of Socrates* to see the extreme social forces that the first philosophers of the Western civilization faced in their attempts to subject knowledge to a systematic process. Even fathers of natural philosophy, such as Aristotle, could only conduct their research under the aegis of rich and powerful foreign powers. He was only allowed to teach in Athens by outside forces, being considered a semi-barbarian, as he was from the Macedonian controlled Chalkidiki city-states, which was an unforgivable offense to the classical Greek, particularly Athenian, racial sentimentality. Aristotle was only kept secure in the city-state by Philip II and his ruthless son, Alexander III, popularly known to us as Alexander the Great, after the pivotal battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE that saw the subjugation of the traditional Greek independence to this raising northern hegemony to would go on to conqueror the Persian Empire. Though he studied with Plato at his Academy and established his own school of thought at the Lyceum, the Athenians never accepted Aristotle as a welcomed member of their community, no matter how much of a genius he might have been, and was driven into exile when the foreign Macedonian powers lost their grip on control in the region following the death of Alexander III. In this case, even his philosophical works and teach-

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