

# Editorial Board Thoughts: Issue Introduction to Student Essays

Sandra Shores

The papers in this special issue, although covering diverse topics, have in common their authorship by people currently or recently engaged in graduate library studies. It has been many years since I was a library science student—twenty-five in fact. I remember remarking to a future colleague at the time that I found the interview for my first professional job easy, not because the interviewers failed to ask challenging questions, but because I had just graduated. I was passionate about my chosen profession, and my mind was filled from my time at library school with big ideas and the latest theories, techniques, and knowledge of our discipline.

While I could enthusiastically respond to anything the interviewers asked, my colleague remarked she had been in her job so long that she felt she had lost her sense of the big questions. The busyness of her daily work life drew her focus away from contemplation of our purpose, principles, and values as librarians. I now feel at a similar point in my career as this colleague did twenty-five years ago, and for that reason I have been delighted to work with these student authors to help see their papers through to publication. The six papers represent the strongest work from a wide selection that students submitted to the LITA/Ex Libris Student Writing Award competition.

This year's winner is Michael Silver, who looks forward to graduating in the spring from the MLIS program at the University of Alberta. Silver entered the program with a strong library technology foundation, having provided IT services to a regional library system for about ten years. He notes that "the 'accidental systems librarian' position is probably the norm in many small and medium sized libraries. As a result, there are a number of practices that libraries should adopt from the IT world that many library staff have never been exposed to."<sup>1</sup> His paper, which details the implementation of an open-source monitoring system to ensure the availability of library systems and services, is a fine example of the blending of best practices from two professions. Indeed, many of us who work in IT in libraries have a library background and still have a great deal to learn from IT professionals. Silver is contemplating a PhD program or else a return to a library systems position when he graduates. Either way, the profession will benefit from his thoughtful, well-researched, and useful contributions to our field.

Todd Vandembark's paper on library Web design for persons with disabilities follows, providing a highly practical but also very readable guide for webmasters and others. Vandembark graduated last spring with a masters degree from the School of Library and Information

Science at Indiana University and is already working as a Web services librarian at the Eccles Health Sciences Library at the University of Utah. Like Mr. Silver, he entered the program with a number of years' work experience in the IT field, and his paper reflects the depth of his technical knowledge. Vandembark notes, however, that he has found "the enthusiasm and collegiality among library technology professionals to be a welcome change from other employment experiences," a gratifying comment for readers of this journal.

Ilana Tolkoff tackles the challenging concept of global interoperability in cataloguing. She was fascinated that

a single database, OCLC, has holdings from libraries all over the world. This is also such a recent phenomenon that our current cataloging standards still do not accommodate such global participation. I was interested to see what librarians were doing to reconcile this variety of languages, scripts, cultures, and independently developed cataloging standards.

Tolkoff also graduated this past spring and is hoping to find a position within a music library.

Marijke Visser addresses the overwhelming question of how to organize and expose Internet resources, looking at tagging and the social Web as a solution. Coming from a teaching background, Visser has long been interested in literacy and life-long learning. She is concerned about "the amount of information found only online and what it means when people are unable . . . to find the best resources, the best article, the right website that answers a question or solves a critical problem." She is excited by "the potential for creativity made possible by technology" and by the way librarians incorporate "collaborative tools and interactive applications into library service." Visser looks forward to graduating in May.

Mary Kurtz examines the use of the Dublin Core metadata schema within DSpace institutional repositories. As a volunteer, she used DSpace to archive historical photographs and was responsible for classifying them using Dublin Core. She enjoyed exploring how other institutions use the same tools and would love to delve further into digital archives, "how they're used, how they're organized, who uses them and why." Kurtz graduated in the summer and is looking for the right job for her interests and talents in a location that suits herself and her family.

Finally, Lauren Mandel wraps up the issue exploring the use of a geographic information system to understand how patrons use library spaces. Mandel has been an enthusiastic patron of libraries since she was a small child visiting her local county and city public libraries. She is currently a doctoral candidate at Florida State University and sees an academic future for herself. Mandel expresses infectious optimism about technology in libraries:

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People forget, but paper, the scroll, the codex, and later the book were all major technological leaps, not to mention the printing press and moveable type. . . . There is so much potential for using technology to equalize access to information, regardless of how much money you have, what language you speak, or where you live.

Big ideas, enthusiasm, and hope for the profession,

in addition to practical technology-focused information await the reader. Enjoy the issue, and congratulations to the winner and all the finalists!

### Note

1. All quotations are taken with permission from private e-mail correspondence.

## A Partnership for Creating Successful Partnerships *continued from page 5*

Looking ahead, it seems clear that the pace of change in today's environment will only continue to accelerate; thus the need for us to quickly form and dissolve key sponsorships and partnerships that will result in the successful fostering and implementation of new ideas, the currency of a vibrant profession.

The next challenge is to realize that many of the key sponsorship and partnerships that need to be formed are not just with traditional organizations in this profession. Tomorrow's sponsorships and partnership will be with those organizations that will benefit from the expertise of libraries and their suppliers while in return helping to develop or provide the new funding opportunities and means and places for disseminating access to their

expertise and resources. Likely organizations would be those in the fields of education, publishing, content creation and management, and social and community Web-based software.

To summarize, we at Ex Libris believe in sponsorships and partnerships. We believe they're important and should be used in advancing our profession and organizations. From long experience we also have learned there are right ways and wrong ways to implement these tools, and I've shared thoughts on how to make them work for all the parties involved. Again, I thank Marc for his receptiveness to this discussion and my even deeper appreciation for trying to address the issues. It serves as an excellent example of what I discussed above.



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