

The Future of Librarianship A Roundtable

Arthur Kiron

Description: Please join us for a wide-ranging, thought-provoking discussion on the future of our profession. The participants will bring expertise from a variety of perspectives on the innovations currently taking place and ones they envision will take place in the future. Given the rapidly changing nature of librarianship, what skill sets will librarians and information professionals need to fit this new reality? How can librarians prepare for the new changes? At the same time, how can we retain and hone our core skills in this new marketplace? How can we encourage information and cultural literacy and sustained critical analysis in the era of Twitter and apps and Internet surfing?

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LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

Remembrance: Cynthia G. Hurd, public library librarian, killed last week at the shooting at the “Mother Emanuel” Church of Charleston. Also moonlighted at the College of Charleston library where she worked with the staff of William Rosenthal Collection.

In thinking about the future, need to change perceptions and assumptions about the role and character not only of librarianship but of Judaica Librarianship as well.

Five Changes I've witnessed over last sixteen years since I came to Penn.

- 1) **From Digitization to Integration to open Data;**
- 2) **Understanding of Digitization as enhancing access by putting things on-line;**
- 3) **Integrated search and discovery – not only of data but opportunities to discover matches among physically dispersed yet related material, the “Genizah” model of Judaica Librarianship;**
- 4) **Enriched data, interoperability, networked knowledge, social media, digital humanities. Namely, not just displaying images, but playing with the data, making it possible to download raw files to be re-purposed in any way imaginable;**
- 5) **Shift from Collection-Building Emphasis to Patron Services, “Embedded Librarianship”, digital partnerships, librarians as co-participants in the teaching, learning, designing curricula, syllabi, activities, and programs.**

Five Future Challenges:

1) Closed Door Syndrome:

- a) barriers to open data exchange: commercial copyright and intellectual property laws;**
- b) non-profit fear of “giving away the house” by sharing data, especially raw files, images, freely;**
- c) legitimate concerns about protecting privacy, limiting access;**
- d) QUESTION: how to negotiate an open data societal model that balances freedom and privacy.**

2) Becoming Team Players

- a) increasing role of librarians as co-participants in the learning process (library-based pedagogy);**
- b) developing new skill sets and changing perceptions and assumptions about who librarians are and what they do, and in particular who Judaica librarians are and what they do.**

3) How? With apologies to Robert Fulghum: “All I really ever wanted to know I learned in Kindergarten”:

- share everything**
 - play fair**
 - when you go out in the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together**
- And my favorite: “Take A Nap every afternoon.**

4) Be careful you don't get what you wished for

As we learn to expect more from our libraries (public, university, synagogue, etc.) and more from our librarians (all kinds), we will face increasing demands on our time, patience and resources;

Question: how to balance these competing demands?

5) Quantity vs. Quality

Balancing costs and resources, especially for university research libraries focused on metrics, aggregation, and efficient workflows vs. humanistic librarianship, which is qualitative, customized, inefficient, and focuses on the unique, different and particular.