

upstream

Unexpected Ideas, Uncensored Opinions

**FEATURING LIBRARY
THOUGHT LEADERS**

Susan Campbell
Edwin Clay
Steven Cohen
Linda Cook
Theresa Fredericka
Sarah Long
Michael Stephens
Gary E. Strong
Jessamyn West
Cathy Wilt



SPRING 2006

“What is the best example of *libraries building communities* that you have come across or experienced? How will libraries in the future be empowered to play even a greater role in their communities?”



Welcome to Upstream

As an invaluable facet of the SirsiDynix Institute, the *Upstream* quarterly eZine represents another top-quality professional development tool offered at no cost to the entire library community. In addition to the SirsiDynix Institute Web Seminar Series, featuring industry thought leaders, and “Word to the Wise,” a glossary designed to update you on the latest information-technology terms, *Upstream* makes an additional unique contribution.

As its subtitle suggests, *Upstream* offers unexpected ideas and uncensored opinions aimed at provoking thought, generating discussion, and fueling creative approaches to contemporary industry topics. Each issue asks an important question and includes responses from a variety of industry leaders. The result is a refreshing array of ideas, each valued for its potential to grow your skills.

Our Question

“What is the best example of **libraries building communities** that you have come across or experienced? How will libraries in the future be empowered to play even a greater role in their communities?”

We asked 10 experts—all leading thinkers in the library community—for their insight on this important topic. We are pleased to present their reactions on the following pages.

Our Thought Leaders



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SUSAN CAMPBELL

Library Director,
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Professor Susan Campbell has been the library director at York College of Pennsylvania for 21 years and was previously science librarian at Colgate University and urban documents librarian at the University of Florida.

She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Miami University and a Master of Library Science degree from the University of Maryland. Her areas of expertise include information literacy, library renovation and library staff reorganization.

Libraries have long been touted as the heart of academic institutions, and in spite of many dire predictions, academic librarians refute claims that the demise of libraries is imminent. In fact, they highlight reams of data on increased gate counts, collection use, information literacy sessions and other measurable statistics. However, the library's role as the center of the community cannot be so easily quantified, though it is this role that will keep libraries alive, viable and vibrant in this new century.

There is much in our literature about libraries as place, as information commons, as learning commons and other iterations of "commons" – all of which share a root with communities. There is much traffic on listservs about these topics as well. There is much buzz about understanding the new generation of students and how their brains are actually different from ours, how they think and learn differently and how they seek information differently, i.e., from their various communities. A final, perhaps older, trend worth noting is partnerships.

It is the confluence of all these concepts that cements the library's place at the center of our communities. As part of designing a totally renovated library, the library faculty and staff of Schmidt Library, York College of Pennsylvania, had the opportunity to examine what so many other recently built or renovated libraries had done

to create new learning environments for students and faculty and to put those ideas into practice. It was an amazing experience to see how our colleagues had transformed traditional libraries into dynamic places with many different types of learning and study spaces. It is exhilarating now to see how our own students congregate to work together to learn, to create, to collaborate and to grow.

While the physical space fosters community, there are other important ways to actively promote community engagement. Recent events in Schmidt Library are perhaps the best examples I can cite. The library has long housed the Student Art Gallery for drawing and painting. More recently, we have opened our lobby for sculpture and large installation art. Annually, students in world music make instruments from cultures in many countries and display both the instruments and research they have done on them in our lobby. It is indeed fascinating to see other students focusing on the work of their peers and taking so much time to understand it. The student artists are so grateful for the "gallery" exposure. Students in history of the Renaissance also annually create illuminated manuscripts to display in Special Collections. These exhibits also include music, period costumes and food. We continue to work with faculty in many disciplines to create opportunities for the display of student scholarship. Increasingly, students are seeing the

library not only as a place to learn, but also a place to see their own work and that of their peers in a much more meaningful way.

The library is the center of our larger community in another important way: physically hosting lectures, readings, seminars and discussions with regionally and nationally acclaimed authors. A partnership with the History and Political Science Department brought authors involved in an Iraq hostage crisis together with almost 200 of our students in the east wing of the library. Our historians all felt it was a defining moment in the history of our college. Joining with colleagues in Counseling Services, the library provided a seminar setting for a group of about 30 students. The poet in residence on our campus is meeting with students in an open forum in the library today as I write this.

There have been great successes as well with partnerships with our public library colleagues. For National Library Week last year, the York County

Library System and the Schmidt Library hosted a conversation with Mary Pipher for our students and our community in the Schmidt Library. This year, we are joining the library community in nine counties for the *One Book One Community* program. Our incoming freshmen will read the same book as people in all the surrounding counties and will participate in programs jointly sponsored by York College and many public libraries. I would love to divulge the display we hope our graphics design students can create, because it is going to be spectacular, but the book is a secret and the display details would give it away!

We have been most fortunate in Schmidt Library to have had the luxury and latitude to begin anew. We totally gutted our building and reinvented it. We had years of assessment data from students and faculty, and we listened carefully to what they said they needed and wanted. The resulting spaces and the activities that take place in them provide a solid testimony to the strong sense of a community of actively engaged learners.

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SAM CLAY

Director,
Fairfax County Public Library

Since 1982, Edwin S. (Sam) Clay III has served as director of the Fairfax County Public Library, the largest public library system in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and has served as president of the Virginia Library Association.

Clay has received numerous honors and was named Outstanding Library Director by the Virginia Public Library Director's Association in 2002. His article "Beyond Numbers" appeared in the winter 2006 issue of *Library Journal NetConnect*.

To discuss how libraries can play a central role in their communities, let's start with a definition. Merriam-Webster defines a community as a "unified body of individuals," but with variations such as "the people with common characteristics living in a particular area," "society at large" and "common character." Libraries that are most successful as centers of their communities, whether physically or virtually, understand they must be more than a presence – they also must create relationships.

This is not easy. Libraries are shaped by the societies in which they exist. We are buffeted by shrinking tax revenues, defined by changing demographics and live at the mercy of rapid technological change. Yet these disruptive forces also create opportunities that enable us to become more necessary to our communities.

Libraries have evolved from purely information dispensers to places where consumers themselves exchange information. In 2005, an estimated 7,000 groups used Fairfax County Public Library meeting rooms to host support groups, civic association meetings, book clubs, literacy tutoring and other types of gatherings where information was exchanged and community reinforced. The use of library meeting rooms – which our system offers free of charge – is one of our most popular services and is an excellent example of libraries evolving into community centers.

In an address at the 2005 American Library Association convention, Michael Sullivan, director of the Weeks Public Library in New Hampshire, pointed out that a recent survey of the top seven Internet search engines showed they field 300 million requests for information a day. That's about the same number that all public and academic librarians field in a year. This does not mean reference librarians don't have a future, but as predicted many years ago, their role is becoming more and more that of teachers and guides.

At the 2004 Virginia Library Association conference, during my tenure as its president, we invited representatives from library systems we felt were redefining their roles to better respond to their communities. In a workshop called "The Unquiet Library," Nancy Tessman, director of the Salt Lake City Library system, described their new downtown library, which takes its inspiration from successful book stores and popular gathering places. The building covers an entire city block and includes a public plaza and shops that the library rents to businesses on the condition they partner with the library for activities such as film festivals and other cultural events. The library has multiple meeting spaces, 163 computers and an art gallery, and plays music on all floors. It serves as a non-partisan location for public forums, a destination of choice for business and pleasure and as a gathering place for youth.

“It’s a mistake not to be responsive to the new generation and how they communicate,” Tessman said in a *USA Today* article on the library. The Salt Lake City library is truly positioning itself as a cultural center in an urban environment.

In a very different community, Cate McNeely, deputy librarian for the Richmond Public Library in Vancouver, Canada, described her efforts to “make a library that is so loved that people will support it.” When the small Cambie Branch opened in 2004 in a shopping plaza that served an immigrant population mostly from India and China, its layout was inviting to customers not familiar with traditional libraries. A concierge meets customers in a small kiosk at the door to direct them where they need to go. A 22-section “Power Wall” displays books face out according to popular topics. The system’s Web site URL – www.yourlibrary.ca – also reflects the system’s welcoming philosophy.

One of McNeely’s key principles is to “figure out what customers need and match services to their needs.” During its first month of operation, the Cambie branch circulated 29,095 of its 30,000 items – 96 percent of its collection!

These are but two examples of libraries that are successful centers in their communities by reflecting those communities’ needs. To find out what a community needs, you have to gather data about its members’ likes, dislikes and demographics. The library system I direct serves a county with more than one million residents in the largest suburb of Washington, D.C. We established an Office of Planning and Evaluation more than 20 years ago, which regularly takes the pulse of

our community. This data helps us mold services to the needs of the communities that each of our 21 branches serves.

To become the centers of their communities, libraries in the future will have to reach out more to their customers. Within our facilities, it might mean providing “roving reference” or combining reference and circulation desks or more aggressively marketing library services.

Within the community, it might mean using some staff exclusively for outreach. Two years ago, we created an early literacy outreach position. This children’s librarian markets library services to Head Start programs, preschools and caregivers.

Within virtual space, becoming a center of a community might mean answering reference questions through online chat applications. It certainly means providing the wireless environments that our customers request.

Our profession must continue to ask: Do we reflect our community? Do we respond to our community? Do we create communities? The answers to those questions will determine our success.

Patricia Bangs, a writer with the Fairfax County Public Library’s Public Information Office, contributed to this article.

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Steven is the creator of the *Information Today* Library Stuff professional development weblog (created in 2000), has been a contributing editor of the "Internet Spotlight" column for *Public Libraries* magazine since 2001, and became a columnist for *Information Today* magazine in 2006. He is also the co-manager of the Public Library Association weblog and received a *Library Journal* Mover and Shaker award in 2004.

Steven is the author of *Keeping Current: Advanced Internet Strategies to Meet Librarian and Patron Needs*, published by ALA in 2003. Working with Chrystie R. Hill, he is currently working on a book that will explore the topic of libraries building communities, which will be published by ALA in upcoming years.

To address the question posed here and to get a sense from those in different aspects of librarianship on how libraries can help build communities, I would like to share some of the research done for the book that Chrystie R. Hill and I are writing on this topic. We are attempting to gather case studies and stories from as many diverse libraries as possible to reinforce our process-based approaches and methodology.

Here, I will focus on the Brentwood Public Library, which serves more than 80,000 residents in a multicultural community in Suffolk County, New York. At the PLA conference this past March in Boston, I had the opportunity to meet with the director, Tom Tarantowicz, also one of the library trustees, who subsequently answered numerous questions via e-mail. Most of the prose below comes directly from his responses.

When asked about the make-up of the community that the library serves, Mr. Tarantowicz responds, "Our population is very diverse with 51 languages (last census) spoken throughout the Brentwood School District.... Our strength is in serving our diverse population.... There are many programs now offered in Spanish, such as adult computer classes and driver education. Furthermore, through our Reference & Adult Services Department, we now offer Friendly English Conversation 'meetings' [where] people from all over the world get together to speak English in a relaxed situation. Our children's

services department now incorporates outreach into its plan of services to foster library awareness throughout the community."

Tarantowicz mentions that the library actively works with community groups, such as the Brentwood Summit Council and the local Chamber of Commerce, on various initiatives and involves staff in decision-making responsibilities in the process – an important part of working with outside agencies. He writes, "It has been the goal of this administration to actively involve staff in community outreach and in-reach on a grass-roots level. This resulted in more than 500,000 visits last year, along with over 40,000 patrons in attendance for our library programs. The library just created a young adult service area as a new service (2004). In addition, the creation of the Career Information Resource Center in 2005 has been very successful."

The library obtains funding from all of these projects through tax support, as well as from New York State grants. Tarantowicz, however, mentions that he would like to do "a million other service programs.... State funding increases would certainly help library systems and local public libraries."

One main feature that I have found to be of utmost importance in community-building efforts is the buy-in from administration. In fact, one article that I read on the subject went

so far as to mention that if decision-makers do not fully approve of the initiative, there is no sense in moving forward with it. While this is a fatalistic approach, it does underscore how crucial

buy-in can be to make or break a project. Tom Tarantowicz not only buys in, he uses his position to push community-building approaches further by heavily involving staff.

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LINDA COOK

Director,
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Linda C. Cook is the director of the Edmonton Public Library, one of the largest and busiest systems in Canada. She is the president-elect of the Canadian Library Association and chairs the Alberta Library Board, a province-wide library consortium that works collaboratively with its members (public, university, college and special libraries) to promote universal, barrier-free access to the materials and resources among Alberta's diverse libraries. She is also an adjunct professor for the Faculty of Education, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Alberta.

Throughout her 30-year career, Cook has been the recipient of numerous awards for excellence in service to the library community, including the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal.

A browse through a variety of Web sites quickly reveals the importance placed on community development in libraries. For instance, Calgary Public Library's Business Plan is entitled "Building Community: Building Capacity." The Edmonton Public Library Board's new Strategic Plan is called "Enriching People's Lives." The Canadian Library Association's president, Barbara Clubb, has as her 2006 conference theme, "Building Library Communities." "Libraries Building Communities" is the title of the study initiated by the Library Board of Victoria and the Victorian Public Library Network in Australia, and it is crammed with concrete examples of how public libraries bring value to their communities.

The library is a public place that welcomes everyone and in which people feel comfortable – this in itself builds community. Traditionally, however, the library has aimed its services at the "individual" within the confines of its walls. When it did venture beyond its walls, it practiced something called "library outreach," in which it took services and programs that already existed into the community. "Community development" or "community building," as it is variously known, moves the library beyond its walls so that it can engage in activities designed to strengthen its community, not just the individuals. Community building is a relationship-building activity that involves listening deeply to what the community is saying and then developing services and programs designed to meet needs expressed by

the community. Perhaps libraries are uniquely positioned for the task of relationship building and community building because both rely on trust, something that libraries have quietly gained one customer at a time – those individual customers being members of communities.

The library is able to play such an important role because of the valuable partnerships it enters into that provide opportunities and synergies that would not exist in isolation. Partnerships with schools, community leagues, other types of libraries, government departments, multicultural groups, businesses, health facilities, youth groups and seniors' groups mean getting outside the doors of the library and asking – instead of just assuming – what is needed.

Building communities is about creating environments where interaction is encouraged and facilitated, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity or age. By their very nature, public libraries have the ability to create these environments and help people transform their lives. Because there are countless examples of libraries being the center of the communities in which they serve, it is extremely difficult to select the "best" or "most significant" occurrence, as the following instances illustrate:

Would the best example be the creation of children's programs in a newly established library located in a busy shopping mall in an inner-city neighborhood? As a direct result of these programs

and the library's physical proximity to an elementary school, every student achieved the pass level in language arts, something that had never before occurred.

Perhaps the best example would be the special evenings for teens, created and designed by teens, at another inner-city library, where evening hours were extended with only those aged 12-17 taking part in the special activities, giveaways and, of course, free food. The second time this event was held, teens lined up around the block to ensure their entry. Evaluations ranged from "Had Lotsa Motsa fun—keep it going on!" to "This is sure a lot better than staying home and staring at my bedroom wall."

What about the newly arrived immigrant who would say that the English-as-a-Second-Language program offered on Saturday mornings at the local library is the best example? As a result of her studies and contacts made with other attendees, she has obtained full-time employment.

The visually-impaired senior who describes the library's monthly book talking meetings with other visually impaired seniors as his "lifeline" would argue in favor of his example of building communities as the "best." The opportunity for social interaction provided by the library is of the utmost importance in the life of this and other seniors.

The mother of a learning-disabled child, after exposing her son to the programs and resources at the public library, went from imposing loss of privileges if he did not read on a daily basis to imposing loss of privileges if he did not get outside to play instead of reading in his room all day and says that "the library made a difference in my son's life." Basic literacy skills through children's programs and book and electronic collections are highly valued.

A child's first introduction to education is often through the public library. A formal partnership between a public library and a school board has as its mission: "Every child – reading, succeeding, contributing." When the children that these two organizations are working with can read, are

successful in their educational careers and become contributing citizens, their community will have been strengthened immeasurably.

In each of the foregoing cases, the library in question has been engaged in its community and within each of these communities – students, teens, immigrant community, seniors, learning-disabled – the lives of individuals have been transformed as a result. There is no doubt that each would say that his or her experience was the "best." Practically everything a library does builds community – book and movie clubs, program rooms for community use, literacy programs, ESL conversation circles where English skills are practiced – community members and volunteers come together in our spaces.

So, what is the "best" example of community building? The answer changes as often as you ask the question.

As for the future, a number of factors will empower libraries to play increasingly significant roles in their communities. Globalization will increase our immigrant populations and there will be even more communities with individual personas to which the library must respond. Libraries will be recording more transformations than transactions, a trend that has already begun. Communities want to tell their stories and have them preserved in some way, and libraries provide a forum for this to take place. Constant changes in technology will continue to affect the way people access information, and libraries will play a major role in helping communities continually develop skills in the use and management of new technologies.

Libraries will continue to play a significant role in the lives of most people, either directly or indirectly. "Lifelong learning" is here to stay, with libraries providing the necessary places, the necessary programs and the necessary opportunities to assist communities on their pathways toward their individual and collective goals.

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Theresa M. Fredericka is a former school librarian and consultant for school libraries in the Ohio and Kentucky Departments of Education. Currently, she is Executive Director of INFOhio, the Information Network for Ohio Schools (www.infohio.org).

INFOhio is a virtual pre-K-12 library for all public and non-public schools that transforms teaching and learning by connecting educational resources with the power of information technology. INFOhio's components include electronic resources for all schools, instructional development for teachers, library automation, media booking, and a statewide union catalog.

Let me take you back to the late 1980s. The Information Age was taking off with the widespread availability and acceptance of personal computers. And the Internet was just starting to break through onto the everyday scene.

K-12 schools were struggling to install stand-alone library automation systems that left the library isolated and unconnected to resources beyond its own four walls. And some school librarians were still teaching information retrieval skills using the card catalog, even though it was clear this was not a necessary life skill.

In this setting, imagine a small group of school librarians from a few Ohio schools lamenting the fact that they couldn't check each other's catalogs to see what resources were available so they could share them. "Why not?" they asked. With that question, they imagined the future and wanted to connect school libraries to it.

Today, a little more than a decade later, INFOhio is more than we could have imagined. It is the state's virtual library and information network for all pre-K-12 schools. It offers a wide range of electronic databases, instructional resources, standardized software and technical support. It is available anytime, anywhere, from any Internet-accessible computer at school or at home. Its educational services can be linked to student achievement and performance, standards-based instruction, teacher effectiveness and technological competence.

But INFOhio is also one of the most inspired and most important examples of libraries building communities, because in order to succeed, INFOhio had to begin by reaching out to its own – to school librarians, themselves – to build a strong community of support and interest for this endeavor.

How did we do it?

With a clear vision: To provide all Ohio students and teachers with equal access to resources and to promote statewide information sharing through a single library automation system and union catalog.

A simple strategy: To create networks of interested parties and to partner with colleagues to get things done.

And an overarching goal: To position school libraries and librarians as catalysts for bringing the new resources and the "know-how" to use them to students and teachers.

We started in 1989 by investigating what others were doing. We found an example in northeastern Ohio of two schools on a shared mainframe system. "Why can't others do this?" we wondered. We studied both OhioLINK and OPLIN, the academic and public library networks in Ohio. We formalized goals, developed a strategic plan, sought out funding and began preaching the gospel of INFOhio: *All school libraries are important. All schools libraries need to be*

automated. The passion grew and librarians started to understand their role in the transformation.

We talked to colleagues from across the state seeking support. Looking for money, we lobbied administrators, legislators and foundations. Each year, more schools joined the program, and each year, we expanded the offerings just a little. And, somehow, each year, we received funding – from various sources – to continue for a little while longer. And each year, more and more librarians became advocates.

What are INFOhio's keys to success?

First: We used the existing infrastructure and technical support of the Ohio Education Computer Network. We didn't create our own. We capitalized on the fact that every school had connectivity to a statewide backbone network. We just added an INFOhio technical team to provide specialized support to the regional sites.

Second: We looked to our colleagues for guidance, relied on them for support and gave them credit for every idea and bit of cooperation they offered along the way. We needed to have a strong library community with a shared long-term goal to make it possible for anyone, anywhere to borrow anything from an Ohio library. As our school libraries grew stronger, so too did our ability to work with academic and public libraries.

Third: We took advantage of every possible opportunity for funding, especially Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) dollars. In the past eight years, K-12 schools in Ohio have received nearly \$12 million LSTA dollars for automation, thanks to the foresight of the library community and the leadership of the State Library of Ohio.

Fourth: INFOhio was and remains to this day a grass roots initiative. People from every level – local, regional and state – are involved in program direction, product development, annual planning conferences and evaluation. But most importantly, the school librarian still provides the basic, critical voice that sets the direction for INFOhio.

Fifth: Relationships. Partnerships. Collaboration. Our success is a tribute to the ability to work together to achieve goals that are in the best interests of our students, teachers and librarians. Our past is a testament to our partnerships—our future depends on them.

As we all know, education is changing. The future of education requires blending traditional school resources with the power of technology and the electronic tools of the Information Age, and nowhere is this marriage of old and new more critical than in our school libraries.

INFOhio has transformed teaching and learning in Ohio by providing a tool for librarians to help students learn and teachers teach. Just ask high school librarian Paula Deal (North Olmsted, OH): "INFOhio is our lifeline to the world and our advocate to the state government. Without INFOhio, we would still be individual libraries trying to do the impossible task of providing for the information needs of our students."

School libraries can provide the environment for the entire breadth of student abilities to grow and develop. They can be the portal to the world of knowledge that is available to everyone. They can and should include access to services and content unimagined in previous generations. But to accomplish this, we need to take risks.

That group of librarians in Ohio in the late '80s took a big risk. Now, we must let go of our traditional models in order to find ways to succeed. But, first, and always, we need to build our strength as a community of librarians and speak confidently with our voice. We must succeed in our efforts to create new opportunities for building students' love of learning and libraries early and nurturing that love for a lifetime. The consequences are too great if we don't.

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SARAH LONG

Director,
North Suburban Library System

Sarah Long serves as director of the North Suburban Library System, an organization of 650 academic, public, school and special libraries in the north/northwest suburbs of Chicago. She held director and consulting positions from Oregon to Ohio to Pennsylvania prior to her role in the Chicago area.

Long served as president of the American Library Association in 1999-2000 and as president of the Public Library Association. She has also participated in numerous library and community projects, in addition to pioneering Internet access in libraries throughout the NSLS area. She has provided leadership and guidance to NSLS that has resulted in its reception of the coveted John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award four times, most recently in 2005.

I have just seen a library that truly is the heart of its community, both geographically and in services offered. Interestingly, it was in Mexico.

I vacationed in San Miguel de Allende, a city of about 80,000 in the state of Guanajuato in Mexico's mountainous region about four hours north of Mexico City. Founded in 1542, the city later became an important stop for the silver trade. By 1900, when San Miguel was in danger of becoming a ghost town, the Mexican government declared the downtown area a historic district and restricted development in order to preserve its colonial character.

After World War II, many demobilized U.S. GIs used their education grants at the local U.S.-accredited art school, Institution Allende (www.instituto-allende.edu.mx/indexeng.htm). This was the beginning of an ongoing attraction of Americans and Canadians for San Miguel de Allende. As many as 5,000 U.S. citizens have found permanent or semi-permanent homes in San Miguel, and last year a top travel magazine named it one of the 10 best places to visit.

One of the reasons I wanted to go to San Miguel de Allende was because I had read that the Biblioteca Publica, located in the center of town, effectively serves as the heart of the community. The library was established in 1954 by Helen Wale, a Canadian, assisted by a few other women, all propelled by a desire to reach out to local children.

The library collection has both English and Spanish materials and is the largest bilingual privately funded, publicly accessible library in Mexico. It features not only reference and circulating books, but also audio tapes and new and developing collections of CDs and DVDs. The oral history of San Miguel residents with comments on the architecture, festivals and activities is also being collected. There is a computer center with about 20 computers with Internet access available for public use. I was impressed with the fabulous range of programs and services for adults and children, locals and expatriates.

Juan Manuel Fajardo Orozco, the librarian, and Gabriel Rubiera, the library manager, generously gave of their time on short notice and met with me in the library's beautiful outdoor café.

I was fascinated to hear that the library gets very little ongoing monetary support from either local or national government. Money-making enterprises include a café that serves gourmet snacks and meals and a gift shop that sells unusual Mexican crafts, new books and maps. There is a Thursdays-only sale of used books, clothes and household items, a weekly house and garden tour – much appreciated by the many foreign visitors – featuring three local houses every week, and a weekly newspaper, "Atencion San Miguel" in both English and Spanish, with very interesting articles, advertisements and classified ads. (Have a look at the newspaper online at www.atencionsanmiguel.)

org.) Revenue from these sources supports about 40 regular employees and the general operating expenses of the library, totaling about \$1 million. An extensive corps of volunteers augments the many services and programs offered.

Perhaps most impressive of all is the library's scholarship and outreach program. Since 1953, the library has supported school attendance for young Mexicans. This year, 105 students from rural junior high and high schools were sponsored, as well as 64 university students from both rural and urban areas. Also in the rural areas, maps, bookcases, dictionaries, encyclopedias, books and other supplies were given to nearly 350 schools.

Actually you could change someone's life with your tax-deductible contribution. The library's money-making enterprises pay all overhead and administrative expenses, so every penny donated goes directly into programs such as this scholarship program, as well as to other important programs of the library. (Consider writing a check to the Biblioteca Publica. Mail it to: Library Public San Miguel de Allende, Insurgents 25, San Miguel de Allende, Gto., Mexico 37700. The library will reply with a letter and a receipt deductible from either Mexican or U.S. taxes – the Biblioteca has 501(c)(3) status.)

Here are my reasons for holding up the Biblioteca Publica de San Miguel de Allende as a model for those libraries who would be at the center of their communities:

First: It pays careful attention to the demographics of the community. They've figured out the languages, ages, educational levels and interests of all community residents. They plan their programs and services with something for everyone.

Second: It is ready to change. Most libraries can't see beyond their past successes. Because this old model has worked, it's difficult to even envision how things might be different. Perhaps more importantly, there is a constituency for the old model. Change is hard and change is risky. Why do it? One reason is that if libraries want to be as easy-to-use as the Internet and Google, we need to get rid of some rules. Make changes to be open and accessible to the community on their terms.

Third: It has embraced technology. With a public computer center, computer training for adults and children, an automated circulation system and other innovations especially impressive for the location, this library is a model of not only giving people what they want, but also offering the latest in what will be needed. The computers available are the best money can buy. They're not used or old cast-offs.

Fourth: It has found the money to support not only its core programs, but also to undertake outreach into rural areas. There is no moaning here about loss of funds or lack of funds. The board and the staff have become entrepreneurs for library service.

The library facility was not as modern or as tidy as most libraries in the United States, but the spirit and willingness to stretch the bounds of what it means to be a library makes the Biblioteca Publica de San Miguel de Allende a true learning and cultural center at the heart of the community. Have a look at the library's Web site to see what I mean: www.bibliotecasma.com.

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MICHAEL STEPHENS

Library Industry
Author and Speaker

Holding an MLS from Indiana University, Michael Stephens has spent the last 15 years in public libraries working as a reference librarian, technology trainer and manager of networked resources and training. Most recently, he has served as a special projects librarian, focusing on technology, policy and planning. Michael received a fellowship from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to pursue his PhD from the University of North Texas and will join the faculty of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Dominican University in River Forest, IL, beginning in the fall of 2006.

In 2001, he published *The Library Internet Trainer's Toolkit*, a series of technology training modules on CD-ROM. In 2005, he received a Mover and Shaker award from *Library Journal*, and his *Library Technology Report* "Best Practices for Social Software in Libraries" will be published by ALA in 2006. He writes the *Tame the Web* blog at www.tametheweb.com.

For 15 years, I've worked in a public library—mostly in positions relating to the Web or technology training. It's with that background and paradigm I address this question. I love the examples of libraries building community via physical space and through interactions between users and librarians, but for my example, I'd like to point to the communities being built online.

For the last few months, I've been touring various parts of the United States with Jenny Levine, presenting what we call our "Social Software Roadshow," which highlights how libraries can create online conversations, collaborative spaces and, yes, community with inexpensive tools. We no longer need static, one-way Web sites for libraries, when the Read/Write Web enables us to interact with each other and our users. We point to concrete examples of libraries that have found new ways to improve existing services or built new services. Large systems to small libraries are included, as are public, academic, special and school libraries.

This is not cool for the sake of cool, or a push for techno-worship or a plea for librarians to give in to technolust. Simply, these online spaces are where our users are living and interacting, and, according to the recent *Newsweek* cover story, sites like *MySpace.com* will only grow. Libraries need a presence in these social spaces.

I believe the best example is the innovative, online presence created by the librarians and IT staff of the Ann Arbor District Library (Ann Arbor, MI). Through the use of an open-source content management system, several blog mechanisms that allow easily updated content to display on the front page and a dedication to interaction with library patrons, AADL has created a thriving community within the cyber walls of its online branch.

On July 5, 2005, AADL launched a new Web site and a new catalog system. Posting to the Director's Blog, Director Josie Parker said: "The Web site launch is providing an additional forum for public communication with the library. This blog is one of several. The intention is to make regular postings here from administration that will encourage discussion about library policies and services." The blogs include the mechanism for registered users of the library to comment—to enter into a dialogue with the director and other librarians. Key word here: Transparency.

Scanning the AADL site (www.aadl.org), one finds both posts with a few comments and those with many. In the Teen area and gaming blogs, it is not unusual to see a thriving discussion with 200- or 300-plus comments. In sessions on Weblogs in libraries, Jenny and I have asked the audience: "How many of you can say you have a thriving teen presence inside your library Web site?"

How many libraries have actively engaged their users in this way? Many libraries have blogs, but the movement to turn on comments creates a whole different environment, that can scare some librarians or overwhelm others. Enabling comments, however, is one of the ways to utilize Web 2.0 technologies to create community. IM, wikis and RSS feeds offer other opportunities to create community, as well. This to me is the promise of Web 2.0 for libraries: Creating new means to communicate, interact, collaborate and create inside library Web space, as well as out in the community online spaces.

Libraries can play a greater role in their communities by building sites such as AADL's, reaching out to users via instant messaging, feeding out content such as library holdings and library news to other community-based Web sites, and offering mechanisms for users to create or mash up library content. Before there will be success, however, there must be a commitment by the librarians to sustain successful services and participate in the ongoing conversation. A library's Web presence can never be an afterthought or something that just one or two Web librarians contribute to. There should be a collective voice comprised of the individual voices of the library staff. This involves a shift in thinking: Can we let go of our most useful online services and information to actively be driven by our users through their comments, questions and input?

A trip through the technology blogs of the Biblioblogosphere and sites such as the *LibSuccess* wiki yield numerous case studies, advice and grass-roots best practices for all of these technologies. We can explore how, for example, Butler University Library built a wiki of annotated reference resources for its librarians, faculty and students, or the innovations by school media specialist Margaret Lincoln and the collaborative weblog she set up to allow students at two different high schools the opportunity to discuss Elie Wiesel's *Night*.

Browsing libraries' and librarians' presence at the image-hosting social site *flickr* yields a surprisingly

thriving community of practitioners. We will find images of library programs, materials, buildings and the faces of this new breed of librarianship in 2006. Visit the grass roots READ posters initiative at *flickr* to see a mash-up of librarians, library users and an effective use of 2.0 technologies.

We can examine Casey Bisson's application of library catalog as Weblog, complete with user keyword tagging, comments enabled and static URLs for every record. We can subscribe to RSS feeds of subject guides at Kansas City Public Library or create our own RSS-enabled catalog search at Hennepin County Public Library that notifies us when our favorite authors or subjects are added to the library.

All of these examples point to the future of online community building in libraries: librarians will be able to enhance current systems or create new ones with Web 2.0 technologies to customize and build experiential environments. Library users will be able to meet within these systems and interact. They will have conversations. They will be human, as will the librarians, as they put a human face and give a human voice to the library via social software.

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Butler Reference Wiki:
www.seedwiki.com/wiki/butler_wikiref/

Flickr READ Posters:
www.flickr.com/groups/readposters/pool/

Hennepin County Public Library:
www.hclib.org

Kansas City Public Library:
www.kclibrary.org/guides/

LibSuccess Wiki:
www.libsuccess.org

Newsweek:
www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12015774/site/newsweek/

Night Blog:
nightwiesel.blogspot.com/

Word Press OPAC:
www.plymouth.edu/library/opac/



GARY E. STRONG

UCLA University Librarian and Former
State Librarian of California

Gary Strong's career spans more than 30 years as a librarian and library administrator, giving him a unique perspective on the ramifications of the Information Age. Strong has been UCLA university librarian since September 2003. In the recent past, he also served as the director of the Queens Borough Public Library and as the state librarian of California.

During his distinguished career, Strong has served on a variety of special boards, committees and policy panels and has received numerous professional recognitions and awards, including the 21st Century Librarian Award from Syracuse University, the Charlie Robinson Award from the Public Library Association and the Humphrey Award from the American Library Association's International Relations Round Table.

"The real community of man...is the community of those who seek the truth, of the potential knowers."

ALLAN BLOOM, *The Closing of the American Mind*

Controversial though Bloom's well-known work might have been, he concisely described the type of community that academic libraries seek to create. Our community of "potential knowers" is right on our doorstep, close at hand; the university campus is filled with "those who seek the truth." But how to entice them to enter the library and, more importantly, to enter into a spirit of community with their fellow "knowers"?

We begin by identifying conditions we hope will foster a community, which means – given that the pursuit of scholarship is often a solitary one – creating settings and circumstances in which students, faculty and staff come together.

At its most basic, a community is a place where its members feel comfortable. And perhaps the most obvious example of that at UCLA is the Powell Library building, which houses our undergraduate library. One of the four original buildings on campus, it has served as a landmark for generations of students. We hear countless stories from alumni of the people they met on its steps, the friendships that developed over late-night study sessions in its stacks, the romantic relationships that blossomed within its walls.

When we get any two current or former students together and begin talking about the library, their membership in this community of people with shared memories and a real affection for the building is immediately evident.

We foster that sense of community surrounding the undergraduate library with a variety of activities. Afternoon and evening concerts by student performers attract crowds of undergraduates, as well as faculty looking for a break from study, a source of inspiration or a chance to relax with friends. And monthly ballroom dances entice novices to dress up in historic costumes, whirl off to Renaissance Italy or nineteenth-century London for an evening and experience a tangible encounter with the history contained in the library's books.

But the focus is not only on entertainment. At UCLA, freshmen can enroll in what are called general education "clusters," which are yearlong interdisciplinary courses on topics ranging from the global environment to interracial dynamics. The undergraduate library has capitalized on this program by assigning a librarian to each cluster: the librarian offers customized tours and in-class instruction focusing on resources and services relevant to the subject, creates course Web pages linking to useful resources and participates on class discussion boards to answer research questions and provide assistance.

We realized this program was building a community, along with research skills, when we started hearing students referring to “their” librarian. Individually and in groups, they developed a relationship with the librarian in their cluster, one that persisted even after the students finished the course. They continue to consult with their librarian on research projects for other classes, and they also introduce their friends to library resources, research strategies and, often, to “their” librarian.

Community-building among graduate students is more challenging. They tend to study individually rather than in groups, and – already confident in their research skills and familiar with their subjects – they tend to consult with librarians less frequently. But a program the UCLA Library launched two years ago, the Center for Primary Research and Training, has taken a step toward building a community of graduate students.

The center provides graduate students in the humanities and social sciences with a substantive educational experience by training them in archival methods, which they use to process and make accessible special collections. They receive compensation competitive with other similar on-campus employment options such as teaching and research assistantships, and they also gain experience working with primary sources and exposure to possible subjects for theses and dissertations. The library – as well as future generations of scholars – benefits because unprocessed or under-processed collections are organized, described and made accessible.

The community-building aspect becomes apparent on a visit to the space where the students work. An open area illuminated by natural light, it’s a comfortable setting in which the students can spread out collections, ask advice of one another and share in a sense of a common goal: academic enrichment, both their own and that of current and future library users. The program has proved to be so popular that we’re now looking for

funding to add more positions and to expand it to other special collections on campus.

A third potential audience for community-building may be less frequently thought of in the academic setting, but is no less important: donors. Since a library has no alumni of its own, unlike schools and departments across campus, building and sustaining relationships with current and potential donors presents an enormous challenge. The UCLA Library has developed an approach that has been very successful, both in terms of money raised and relationships built.

Our approach has been to create small-group events in which donors can get to know one another and library staff in the setting of a common interest. These include:

- *UCLA Programs in Medical Classics*, which feature presentations on the links among famous medical writings, clinical practice, basic research and humanistic scholarship, followed by a dinner with the speaker
- *Food for Thought*, an intimate lunch with a UCLA faculty member talking about his or her area of expertise
- Private views of selected library collections, in which donors can touch and page through rare books and other unique materials

We’re currently exploring the possibilities for translating physical communities into the online environment and for using technology to build virtual communities. On the Web, the populations of “potential knowers,” in Bloom’s lovely phrase, are endless, as are their needs to connect with information and with each other. So we hope the community-building possibilities are, as well!

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JESSAMYN WEST

Editor of *librarian.net* and
Community Technology Mentor

Jessamyn West lives in Central Vermont, where she teaches rural librarians how to use technology. She's a member of the ALA Council and speaks frequently about the intersection of technology, politics and libraries.

West contributes to *Wikipedia*, is a co-admin of the community Web site *MetaFilter*, and maintains her own weblog, *librarian.net*. Teaching email to old people is her favorite job. She hopes to eventually live in a library.

Libraries build communities. I work with many small libraries that are integral in their communities, where the library is so inseparable from the people, it serves that the notion of “the library” as an individual entity is absurd. While it's impossible to play favorites, I'll tell you about the library in Tunbridge.

Tunbridge is a community of 1,300 people in a rural part of Vermont. Tunbridge Public Library is about 10 miles from the nearest highway and is one of the town's few public spaces. The library has no high-speed Internet access, so they use a complicated routing system to share dial-up access between four computers. When the library was renovated, they had local craftsmen not only build the library's external structure, but also custom cabinetry to store the computers, making them safe and out of the way during evening events. Many townspeople helped with the renovations. People come to the library and see something they made or something they helped with.

When you arrive at the library, you trade your (often muddy, often snowy) boots for a pair of slippers to wear around the (dry, clean) library. Library cards are free for everyone. Last time I was there, I helped the librarian learn to use the scanner. She made big “Thank you!” signs for Town Meeting honoring all the merchants who had donated food for the supper the town ate together that evening. The librarian coordinated

the pie baking for that event—pies for eating and pies for fund raising.

The library is used as a community meeting space for the local rural broadband initiative, for author events on snowy evenings and as a gallery for local artists to show and sell their work. The library publishes a brochure listing the town's community organizations. Library volunteers coordinate with nearly 20 different groups to solicit descriptions and contact information that are printed by the library and made available to everyone. The brochure doesn't have one author, it has 20 authors.

It's easy to wax poetic about libraries that are doing it right. I could tell similar stories about all seven public libraries on my route, and many librarians could do the same. It's harder to ask the question “Why aren't all libraries like this?” or “In what ways do libraries inhibit community building?” What would empower libraries? A few things. One of the things public libraries often lack is...

Money

In rural areas like mine, funding is a huge hurdle. Libraries receive their operating budget directly through Town Meeting votes—a new way of eyeing the pies. Most librarians I work with are part-time employees and have no benefits—even library managers. This makes it hard to view

a library job as a permanent position and thus makes the librarians themselves impermanent. The Vermont Library Association published a salary guide (*Increasing Public Library Compensation: a How-to Guide for Vermont Libraries*) which will go toward more community building and sustaining than any one puppet show ever could. Librarians who are supported will reflect that support back toward their communities. That bidirectional support leads to...

Sharing

Even though the notion of community is focused on the group and not the individual, directing attention and resources towards charismatic, effective and networked individuals within your community can multiply results and bring more information to more people. Send your librarians to conferences and make sure they share what they have learned when they return. Have a reading with a beloved local author or a regular skillshare with a rotating series of community members. Encourage communication within the organization but also with the entire community; break down barriers to communication whether they are imposing reference desks, complicated procedures or awkward Web sites. Bring what we have all learned in the large world back home to the library where it can be reflected brightly back into the community. Sound familiar? Of course sharing isn't as useful if it doesn't come with a healthy dose of...

Honesty

Working with the public isn't always easy. We often walk a line between trying to provide total happiness for our patrons and providing total happiness for our staff, collections and our

bottom line. Maintaining a space and a collection means you must have one eye on the long-term sustainability of the organization at the same time as you offer as many services and resources as you can. There are often situations where everyone is not going to be happy. Being able to accept criticism, explain situations honestly and make the structure of the system and its feedback mechanism as transparent as possible to as many people as possible includes everyone in your decision-making process. This deputizes each member of your community to help you help them. Demand honesty and openness from your partners, suppliers and vendors, as well as from staff and patrons. Ask questions about things you pay money for. Tell people where their money is going. Spend their money as you would spend your own money.

These three notions could come in any order—they all lead to each other. I've been to small libraries that see their support from the town diminish yearly, and I go to libraries bursting at the seams with people, ideas, projects and general good will. Most libraries are somewhere in the middle, though I like to think that many of us are helping them go from point A to point B. The more we can say "This is what a library *is*" and point to the libraries that are functioning, humming and alive with community, the more that model will reinforce our ideas and dreams of what we want libraries to be.

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CATHY WILT

Executive Director,
PALINET

Catherine C. Wilt, is the executive director of PALINET, one of the nation's largest library consortia, serving 600-plus members located primarily in the mid-Atlantic states. Cathy is a librarian, educator and library cooperation advocate with 25 years' experience in higher education and training, marketing and public relations, customer service, information systems, technology applications and strategic management.

A graduate of James Madison University, Cathy received her MLS at the University of Pittsburgh and a master's in education from Temple University. She started her career as a PALINET member librarian and is pleased to be leading the consortium in this, its 70th anniversary year, celebrating and expanding upon PALINET members' long-standing successes in resource sharing and technology leadership.

The competitive pressure on libraries to retain community leadership positions and mindshare has certainly been intense in recent years. In this age of Google with bookstores like Borders bringing coffee and books together with musical events, author signings and Saturday morning story hours, many have asked whether libraries have a viable future. One positive result of this competition is that we find the energy to innovate for the purpose of re-engaging our customers, even if for no other reason than self-preservation.

Indeed there are many outstanding examples demonstrating how we have positioned our library organizations more effectively at the center of our communities—and those numbers grow every day. We have learned much from our colleagues in public libraries and museums with their long, rich traditions of community outreach, achieved through a great variety of programs, exhibits, events, newsletters and press releases. And we have learned from our for-profit competitors too.

Using these programming techniques, I believe academic libraries have a great opportunity to re-engage constituencies and build community. Academic library colleagues typically have stressed a mission to focus on research through collection building and access to information. A few colleagues have even told me “programming is not appropriate for us.”

Joe Lucia, university librarian and director of Falvey Memorial Library at Villanova University, takes a different tack. In his article, “Between the Monastery and the Marketplace: Forging Community Connections,” he states “the social dimension of the library is almost as important as its physical and digital collections” (*PALINET News*, Winter 2004/05 issue). We have also recently rediscovered, thanks to the *OCLC 2003 Environment Scan*, that our patrons, clients, customers still value “library as place,” even in these high-tech times.

So, it is Falvey Memorial Library that I put forth as the best example of a library “building community.” In a very short time, staff at Falvey have transformed their role in the “life of the mind.” They have instituted an impressive program of lectures entitled *Scholarship@Villanova*, poetry readings, concerts (“Sing A Song”) and even a highly successful, campus-wide “One Book Villanova” program that involved several discussions and culminated with a book signing with the author. This spring, you will see an active calendar that includes three to four scheduled events each week. They even keep a list of the past events so you can see what you missed! Now that's a clever, “reverse-psychology” marketing tool.

To accentuate Joe's point about the social dimension of the library, the Falvey Library Web

site is organized to follow that philosophy completely. They have three main service areas: Library Services, Libraries and Collections, and Events and Exhibits, with a library news crawler – another good marketing communications technique.

Joe will tell you the transformation started slowly with the opening of their café. New people made their way to the library, faculty started scheduling meetings with students there, and small groups of students working on projects began to congregate. At one of their first lectures, they observed students studying in the library being drawn into the lecture and ultimately participating in the discussion. The level of engagement of faculty, students and library staff has been unexpected and remarkable. I congratulate our colleagues at Villanova on building community and recommend that you take a look at their model.

Empowering Ourselves

I am pleased to see us embracing how important effective marketing, promotion and partnerships are to the vitality and success of our libraries and to positioning us as indispensable parts of our community. Certainly, a key part of our mission is collections, but it's just the start. The opportunity is for us to empower ourselves to step away from the focus on warehousing materials and embrace the opportunity to be a catalyst, bringing our communities and those collections together in proactive, meaningful ways. We need to be the first one to reach out.

Applying standard business marketing concepts and tools to mold our outreach program is a key to our success. Determining need (surveys and focus groups), focusing on the different parts of our constituencies (market segmentation), and

communicating and developing new services using different methods and media (multiple distribution channels) are but a few ways we can increase the effectiveness of our outreach.

The integration of new technologies into our marketing efforts and new services are also opportune. Do you have a news crawler in your library or on your Web site? Have you started using or offering RSS Feeds? Are you creating podcasts yet? Have you blogged today?

Libraries are highly regarded, treasured community assets, a characteristic of our library brand that Carla Hayden, executive director of the Enoch Pratt Public Library (Baltimore, MD) accurately states is highly under-utilized. Empowering ourselves to be proactive and incorporate marketing tools and new technologies will aid in capturing the power of our brand. Let's find those ways to delight our customers and truly make a difference.

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Visit *PALINET* online at:
www.palinet.org

Read Joe Lucia's article "*Between the Monastery and the Marketplace: Forging Community Connections*" at:
www.palinet.org/publications/newsletter/palnews-winter04-05-web.pdf

Visit the *Falvey Memorial Library* community at:
<http://library.villanova.edu/>.

upstream

Unexpected Ideas, Uncensored Opinions



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