

**University of Toronto
Faculty of Information**

INF 1006H–S-LEC104 Information Workshop Winter 2017

**The Library as Conversation
The Information Professional as Facilitator of Conversation**

Time and location: Wednesdays, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Mar. 1 to Apr. 5, 2017

Bissell

Instructor: Stephen Abram, MLS
stephen.abram@gmail.com (preferred)
stephen.abram@utoronto.ca
Cel: 416-669-4855

Response time: End of next business day, Monday to Friday

Office hours: Bissell Inforum by appt.

This six-week course is one of the Workshop courses in the Master of Information degree program. Each student spends six weeks on one workshop, followed by six weeks in another workshop, to make up a complete course in one semester. This Workshop introduces students to the concept of the library as conversation, and the roles of librarians and libraries as facilitators of conversation and knowledge creation in their communities.

Overview

David Lankes observes “It is not about cataloguing, or books, or buildings, or committees – it is about learning, knowledge, and social action.” It is commonplace to observe that our society is increasingly knowledge-based. If, as Lankes asserts, knowledge is created through conversation, and recorded in millions of artifacts like books and images, what are the roles of libraries and similar information organizations, and of information professionals, in facilitating and leading conversation in the future? This course explores the systems and assumptions within which libraries, in particular, have functioned in carrying out their mission of knowledge creation, curation, and dissemination. It examines the potential for radical extension of these systems into ever more participatory models, within a framework of timeless values. To achieve this potential, there are challenges to be addressed as well as opportunities to be developed. The course will take a practical perspective in integrating insights associated with policy, operations, technology, and ethics. We do this by exploring sections of Lankes’ *Atlas of New Librarianship* (Cambridge: MIT Press and the Association of College and Research Libraries, 2011)

Course Objectives

This course explores the thinking, concepts and philosophies of David Lankester's master work, *The Atlas of Modern Librarianship*. The readings come from the textbook and provide content and stimuli for the discussions, while the course also provides a number of experiential opportunities to understand and advocate for libraries and librarians as well as other cultural institutions like museums and archives. By the end of this half credit learners will have the perspective they need to promote their own passions and philosophies of librarianship, and the other cultural sciences.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Articulate a future for librarianship that reflects understanding of the past, the opportunity and obligation of principled and creative leadership in the present, and the advancement of the human condition in the future.
- Articulate the major implications of conversation theory for librarianship.
- Articulate a value proposition for librarians and libraries.
- Identify significant challenges and responses in librarianship related to an increasingly participatory information and knowledge creation environment.
- Design (or redesign) processes, tools, and services consistent with participatory assumptions and timeless principles of librarianship.

Relationship to Master of Information Student Learning Outcomes

(<http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/studies/learning-outcomes>)

1. Students understand and are conversant with fundamental concepts, theories, practices, and the diverse horizons of information disciplines, and can respond to changing information practices and needs of society. *This course develops an understanding of traditions and assumptions of librarianship in an increasingly participatory digital environment.*
2. Students develop knowledge and values appropriate to their future exercise of economic, cultural, and/or social leadership, and thereby provide leadership in defining the social responsibility of information professionals to provide information services for all, regardless of age, educational level, or social, cultural, or ethnic background. *This course challenges students to develop practical and ethical professional responses to changing societal needs.*
3. Students develop the ability to contribute through research and publication, to the continuous expansion and critical assessment of the body of knowledge underlying

the information and archives sciences.

4. Students develop an understanding of the development of theory concerning information, where it is found, and how it is used. *Students develop an understanding of conversation theory and its implications for information professionals.*
5. Students develop an understanding of the application of new technological developments to the preservation and communication of information, and in the identification of the impact of such developments on society. *Students understand the potential of librarianship to be more beneficially embedded in facilitation and service roles in society through technology.*
6. Students continue in life-long intellectual growth beyond graduation.

Course text

The Atlas of New Librarianship, by R. David Lankes (MIT/ACRL, 2011) – available at the Book Store.

Evaluation

40% Assignment 1

50% Assignment 2

10% Participation (please note that this includes active, engaged presence)

Assignment 1 is due at 1:30 p.m. on the due date.

Late assignments are penalized one grade a day and weekends count as two days. Extensions will be approved in advance of the deadline only, and only in the event of illness or other documentable reason (i.e., not for reasons of time management). Extensions are not approved for Assignment 2. All assignments are best submitted online to stephen.abram@gmail.com.

Grading: Evaluation of student work will conform to the Faculty of Information's *Guidelines to Grade Interpretation* (<http://www.ischool.utoronto.ca/grade-interpretation>) and the University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>). Written assignments that do not meet a minimum standard of writing (in terms of clarity, grammar, and proofreading) will be returned for re-submission, with late penalties in full effect.

Academic integrity: Students are also reminded of the Faculty of Information's zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, as defined in section B.I.I.(d) of the University's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. Students should familiarize themselves with the policy,

review the material they covered in *Cite it Right*, and consult the University's site *How not to plagiarize*.

Disability or health consideration: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodation, please approach the instructor or the University's Accessibility Services office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner arrangements are made, the sooner we can help you.

Writing support: As stated in the iSchool's Interpretation Guidelines, "work that is not well written and grammatically correct will not generally be eligible for a grade in the A range, regardless of its quality in other respects. With this in mind, please make use of the writing support provided to graduate students by the SGS Office of English Language and Writing Support

(<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/English-Language-and-Writing-Support.aspx>)

Please note the **Add/Drop deadlines for Workshops:**

INF1005H Information Workshop – Add: January 23rd - Drop: Feb. 27th

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Mar. 1, 2017)

Topics:

Course outline, purpose, and context

Discussion: mission of librarians

What vs. why

The *Atlas*' "mapping" of librarianship

Think about: ("Mission" thread – p. 16) "I have long contended that a room full of books is simply a closet but that an empty room with a librarian in it is a library. Will that librarian build a collection of artifacts over time to help in his or her mission of facilitating knowledge? Probably. If that empty room has an Internet connection, there is a good chance that the room will soon also serve out a web page full of links. Over time, the room may fill with magazines, computers, or (hopefully) whiteboards and meeting spaces. However, these things come from the librarians doing their jobs; they are not the job itself. Librarianship is not the only profession currently dealing with a worldview that has too closely co-mingled a mission with the tools of the trade."

Readings:

Atlas: "Mission" chapter (p. 15-29)

Look at these references: ALA 's *Core competencies of*

librarianship <http://www.ala.org/educationcareers/sites/ala.org.educationcareers/files/content/careers/corecomp/corecompetences/finalcorecompstat09.pdf>; the CARL competencies list http://carl-abrc.ca/uploads/pdfs/core_comp_profile-e.pdf; the Research Libraries UK document (<http://www.rluk.ac.uk/files/RLUK%20Re-skilling.pdf>); and the ARL 2030 Scenarios document (<http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/arl-2030-scenarios-users-guide.pdf>)

Video excerpts: David Lankes, Introductory lecture in IST 600: Participatory Librarianship (http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=44. 29:56 minutes) and “Mission Thread” (http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=44 41:10 minutes)

Optional: *Participatory Networks: the Library as Conversation*, by Lankes, Silverstein, and Nicholson (ALA Office for Information Technology Policy, 2007). <http://www.ala.org/offices/sites/ala.org.offices/files/content/oitp/publications/booksstudies/Participatory%20Networ.pdf> You can watch Lankes on video on this subject at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDwH7ctqWic>

WEEK 2 (Mar. 8, 2017)

Topics:

Librarians and knowledge creation through conversation

Knowledge creation process and outcomes: conversants, language, agreements, memory

“Scapes”

Think about: (“Knowledge creation” thread – p. 62). “When you change your thinking from artifacts and items to conversations and knowledge, new possibilities open up – new systems for us to develop (not simply adopt or copy), new services to offer, and a whole new relationship with our members.”

Readings:

Atlas: “Knowledge creation” thread (p. 31-64)

Video on Knowledge (http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=44 18:46 minutes)

Atlas “Scapes” (p. p. 352-364 (or online

here: http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=1127)

Video and text (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4867328898935259711> 26:25 minutes) on Scapes

WEEK 3 (Mar. 15, 2017)

Topics:

Librarians and the facilitation of learning

Facilitation types: access, knowledge, environment, motivation

Think about: (“Facilitating” thread – p. 80). “So there you have it, four means of facilitation (access, knowledge, environment, and motivation) that boils down to: get them to a conversation knowing what they are doing and help them feel safe and compelled to participate. . . . Reading, gaming, getting people’s attention, driving people to the table, and mediating communications between members require a powerful facilitator, not a weak or subservient one.”

Readings:

Atlas: “Facilitating” thread (p. 65-82)

Video on Facilitation Thread

(http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=44 23 minutes)

WEEK 4 (Mar. 22, 2017)

Assignment 1 due.

Topics:

Librarians and their environments and communities

What does it mean to “go to the conversation”? (Lankes, p. 114)

Think about: (“Communities” thread – p. 83). “. . . When people have an information need, they’ll always ask people they know before they ask a librarian. The trick is making sure that librarians are some of the people they know. (Jessamyn West)”

Think about: (“Communities” thread – p. 101) “It is not enough to hang out an empty canvas and expect art to occur. Aside from the tools of creation – paints and brushes – the artist needs a community from which to draw. The artist draws inspiration, learns new techniques, gets feedback, and ultimately develops an audience. Similarly, the library can’t simply say that it has arrayed a set of generic resources and services and expect great knowledge to occur. Rather, the community must be groomed, inspired, and given direction to achieve their aspirations.”

Think about: (“Improve society” thread – p. 135) “. . . we too often undersell the importance and raw power of what we do. We are a noble profession. We don’t shelve books and change toner cartridges – we maintain an infrastructure for social action. We don’t reference resources and catalog artifacts – we teach and inspire.”

Readings:

Atlas: “Communities” thread (p. 83-116) and “Improve Societies” thread (p.117-136)

Video on Improve Societies Thread

(http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=44 45:46 minutes)

WEEK 5 (Mar. 22, 2017)

Guest: Daniel Southwick, iSchool Doctoral Candidate

Guest: (Tentative Topics:

Librarians: knowledge, skills, transitions

Think about: (“Librarians” thread – p. 181) “Schools of library and information science have to make the transition from school to school of thought. A school is simple. It means that there is some organizational recognition within a university. A school of thought, on the other hand, is amazingly difficult. It requires the members of a school to come together and answer the question, ‘Why is the world a better place because we are here, at this moment?’”

Readings:

- *Atlas*: “Librarians” thread (p. 137-185)

WEEK 6 (Apr. 5, 2017)

Assignment 2 (In-class presentation) and Wrap up.

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment 1:

Select ONE of the individual questions in the Lankes **Week of Questions** below from the original companion Web site to The Atlas of New Librarianship and prepare a considered response in the context of the course. Length comparable to the Alternative above.

Due: Week 4 (Mar. 22, 2017)

Week of Questions

Librarians: Monday's Question

"The real debate, and it is sure to be vicious, will come from within our own ranks. It will be from the annoyed librarians of the world who seeks the status quo and see their mission as recorded knowledge, the collection of artifacts, and the maintenance of organizations labeled libraries." Lankes believes that change-averse "bibliofundamentalists" can be "convinced and shown the way," but also that there comes a point when "the debate must end," and "we will have to leave them behind." This is a hugely important issue I can almost promise you that you will be dealing with after graduating and getting a job. What will you do when, bright, bubbly and full of ideas and ideals, you are faced with the staunch 'old guard,' unwilling to change or entertain new approaches to things? Will you try to convince them? Make the changes seem innocuous? Fight them? Let them have their way? Wait for them to retire? Or just walk away and leave them behind?

Librarians: Tuesday's Question

In the Librarian thread, Dave talks about the role of new librarianship in relation to the notion of public service. He suggest that new librarianship is not about artifacts; it's about facilitation. Artifacts are no longer the primary focus of librarians, but rather tools that aid the process of knowledge creation. If providing access to artifacts is no longer the primary public service function librarians, what capacity do reference librarians serve in the information age? Should reference transactions be a specialized area, or should every new librarian make reference work their primary function in order to facilitate knowledge creation? How can new librarians become socially active reference authors in order to meet the demand of the public?

Librarians: Wednesday's Question

Also, in addressing the discourse of “Public Service,” Dr. Lankes illustrates the Reference Librarian as an active facilitator of the patron’s general knowledge and not simply an agent that “[provides] the member with a pointer” (pp. 155). Specifically, he make the claim, “you must facilitate the knowledge from access, to knowledge, to environment, to motivation.” The passage goes on to make some very interesting and provocative claims about user tracking; however, what I’m interested in is the role of the librarian as motivator. (See also pp. 26-27 for a brief overview of Lankes’ more broad treatment of motivation). If part of librarianship and knowledge facilitation is motivation, how must we rethink the relationship that the librarian has with his/her patron? Does the motivation begin with user-initiated transactions and behave like a cycle or are librarians responsible for preemptive motivation (be it user-specific or broad)? Can motivation (perhaps in excess) problematize the relationship between the librarian and the user?

Librarians: Thursday’s Question

David Lankes wrote, “Rather than cataloging artifacts and assuming they are self-contained, we need to build systems that focus on the relationships.” This quote proposes the idea of building catalogs which are functionally different from what we see in libraries today. Instead of basic inventory systems, which can be cumbersome or useless for members of the library, Professor Lankes proposes that future catalogs be structured to include information that is more contextual in nature. This poses a few questions. If we push for this new system of cataloging, who should contribute in the design and development of this new system? How much influence and involvement should members have in their design? How should librarians address value of contextual information and judge its inclusion in the catalog? Should contextual information value be differentiated based on categories of the materials within the catalog (ex. fiction vs. historical, etc.)?

Librarians: Friday’s Question

On page 159, Professor Lankes describes how a public library reached out to the local (Syracuse) community by interacting with a children’s hospital. In this way,

they were reaching out to their community in a unique way. How does collections development affect community, but also how does the community affect collections development?

This concept also ties in with the innovative ideas occurring in circulation. As librarians start thinking about the community and how to develop their collections, they need to figure what materials can be lent out. The idea that "...[y]ou can "check out" a lawyer, accountant, or librarian for... one-on-one attention..." (from page 169) is fantastic. How does this change in the communities around us? This is not a rhetorical question. Think about the community that you live in and other communities you have been a part of (your hometown, where you went to college, etc.). How would you like this unique process to affect libraries and the communities they serve and how they grow?

Librarians: Saturday's Question

As new LIS students, many of us feel eager and excited to enter the career of Librarianship amidst great uncertainties and change for the profession. Our lack of investment in traditional libraries may make it easier for us to adapt to the new environment than other long-term librarians, including bibliofundamentalist. How do you feel about entering a profession in a time of rapid change with an ambiguous future job description? Does this make it an ideal time to be receiving an LIS degree? What difficulties do you anticipate encountering in the long awaited "refreeze" period in library innovation?

Librarians: Closing Post

Thank you for your participation in the Librarianship thread. Our thread aimed to highlight new directions and dilemmas that we as librarians will most likely face. The results of this week's discussion leave us with the following reflections: In the future of libraries, resources beyond artifacts will become increasingly important. While this will expand the capabilities of the library, it will also add new complexities to catalog design and organization of information. With expanded information access, should all librarians focus on knowledge creation and reference, or will this expanse change the role of the librarian from being a source of information towards a motivator of members. Finally, given that a constant state of change is not beneficial for any industry or

society, how will we as librarians adapt and assure that our field settles into a usable service for a diverse set of members.

Another option for Assignment 1:

Select a question of interest to you and design (outline only) a Wikipedia article (one page outline) and a “Scape” (represented graphically on one page– use any software. The point is not graphic polish, but the relationships between and among the elements, and the role of librarians) on it and compare their usefulness to a member of your community (community as you define) in a two-page comparison (double spaced 12 pt. plus title page for the assignment). For the Scape, you can use, as a guide to showing relationships, the models in Lankes p. 352-364 (or online here: http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=1127) **Note:** Take care not to create a pathfinder to “artifacts”.

Assignment 2: Group assignment to be done in groups of 4 or 5. (Based on Lankes’ challenge to LIS students, p. 186-87) If you were to take an interest that you have, and build a community to serve (your choice of setting: place-based, or online, or any combination) in a service consistent with the “new librarianship” of the *Atlas*: What would your service look like? Whom is it intended to serve? How does it differ from what librarians typically offer now? What improvements does it make in the living of the mission of librarians? If your service were to be offered by a publicly funded institution, what challenges does it pose in policy, operations, technology, and/or ethics, and how would you address these challenges? How would you justify the service and how would you measure and assess outcomes? Share your findings in a 12-minute presentation supported by a group report not to exceed 10 pages, including references, and a one-page summary of your group process, including a statement of responsibility. (For two examples of large-scale services, see the U.S. Department of Justice example here http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=403 and the Entrepreneurium here http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=552. Your service may be much smaller in scale; it’s up to you.)

Due: Week 6 (**Apr. 5, 2017**)

Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home of many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work this land.