University of Toronto
Faculty of Information

INF 1005H sect 0102/8 Information Workshop Winter 2016

The Library as Conversation
The Information Professional as Facilitator of Conversation

Time and location: Wednesdays, 9:00 a.m. – Noon and Thursdays 6:30-9:30
Bissell

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

Office hours: Bissell 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)

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.
- 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 texts


Evaluation

50% Assignment 1
40% Assignment 2
10% Participation (please note that this includes active, engaged presence)

Assignment 1 is due at 6:30 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 School of Graduate Studies’ Graduate Grading and Evaluation Practices. 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: The School of Graduate Studies’ Office of English Language and Writing Support provides free support to graduate students. Services are designed for both native and non-native speakers of English, and include non-credit courses, single-session workshops, individual writing consultations, and online resources. Students are urged to use these services as needed.

Please note the Add/Drop deadlines for Workshops:
- INF1005H Information Workshop – Add: January 15th - Drop: January 25th

SCHEDULE
WEEK 1 (Jan.13/14, 2016)
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)
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=XDwH7cqWic

WEEK 2 (Jan. 20/21)
GUEST: Wendy Newman, iSchool Fellow
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 while new relationship with our members.”
Readings:
*Atlas:* “Knowledge creation” thread (p. 31-64)

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

*Atlas* “Scapes” (p. 352-364) (or online here: [http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=1127](http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=1127))


### WEEK 3 (Jan. 27/28)
**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](http://www.newlibrarianship.org/wordpress/?page_id=44) 23 minutes)

### WEEK 4 (Feb. 10/11)
**NOTE THAT THIS WEEK’S CLASS** (tentative) **WILL BE HELD IN THE SEMAPHORE LAB IN THE ROBARTS LIBRARY BUILDING. WE WILL MEET AT 8:45 AM IN THE iSCHOOL LOBBY AND BE SHOWN THE WAY THERE. WE WILL BE DOING 3D PRINTING!**

**Guest:** Daniel Southwick, iSchool Doctoral Candidate

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

### WEEK 5 (Feb. 17/18)

**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)
ASSIGNMENTS

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”.

Another option:

Select ONE of the individual questions in the “week of questions” in the 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 (Feb. 3/4)

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 example 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 (Feb. 24/25)