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Final Exam Essays
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I, Austin Spiller, will not consult with another person in regard to the preparation of the content

of my responses for this exam. Consulting with another living person includes the following:

conversation in any venue or through the use of any channel or device; email; blog post;

Facebook wall post or status; and, any other means of communication with another living person.

I will consult my LIS 4000 textbooks, readings, assignments, and class notes but not the

textbook, readings, assignments, and class notes of another student in the LIS 4000 class,

Autumn 2018.

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2. This is a stressful time to be making guesses about what the future will hold for librarians,

archivists, and the practical domains they find themselves within. Will they be around to

document and disseminate collective experience in whatever form it takes? Will they have to, as

Terry Cook (2013) puts it, "give up their recently hard-won mantras of expert, of control, of

power, and, instead, to share archiving with communities" (p. 113) in a new model of total

sharing that redefines the professional experience? I get caught in a postmodern loop when I try

to sort it out. There are domains outside social experiences of particular groups in which archives

and archivists could still be effective, and perhaps even necessary. No, certainly necessary! The

problem lies in who or which organization the archivist is serving and their adherence to things

like oppressive policy.

If the executive administration in this country continues towards oppressive, murderous,

and authoritarian policies, it will be the administrators at all levels below the top that influence

what actually happens. That is, it's an individual's responsibility to do what is right at the time to

do it, especially when no one is looking. A seemingly mundane record-keeping position can be instrumental regarding positive effect on human lives. World War II comes to mind with stories of record-keeping Jewish allies forging or altering documents, delivering warnings of patrols and kidnappings, very literally saving human lives. I don't mean to romanticize war. I only want to make it unavoidably clear that in situations like the one we find ourselves in, where it seems like things are getting worse and worse and people are being hurt- we must commit ourselves to holding everyone around us up as worthy humans under the weight of institutional and systemic oppression. **To do nothing is to be complicit.** The need for humans to intentionally and conscientiously manage relationships, with other humans and with the wider world, will always exist. The need for guidance will always be present and the LAIS professionals of today and tomorrow will continue to step into that role for as long as they are able.

Turning toward technology in another line of thought, we are still in a time where the *human element*, usually described in information science and artificial intelligence as being related to the ability to (accurately, precisely, and relatively quickly) infer meaning from natural human language or textual representations of human speech (Liddy, 2010, p. 1) is still a necessary part of the process. This means that for tasks that involve a *judgement* of any kind (aside from the easily described or obviously binary kind, but even these are predicated on flawed representations), a human judge is always going to influence the system and must do so in order to ensure it is accurate and won't cause inadvertent damage. Whether that human is a librarian or archivist and if their motivations are working towards a cohesive social good is yet another unknown. An information retrieval engineer came to speak for Shimelis's information retrieval class and said something that really stuck in my head: "Bias in, bias out". Computers and statistical modeling (A.K.A. artificial intelligence, machine learning- those are fancy terms

for statistics) are only good at doing exactly what they are told. If someone writes a function into a bit of code that teaches another bit of code how to judge a set of items against a given criteria, it will do exactly that- to the extreme.

It recently came out that the company Amazon was using a statistical modeling tool to recruit new employees that was programmed in such a way that eventually the tool became biased against women candidates (Google AI hiring bias). This is another illustration of why humans will continue to be necessary for the fields we currently find ourselves in as librarians and archivists. There is an incredible amount of work to do in order to achieve a working representation of the consciousness needed to make those tools as effective as human judgement. Many people are dedicated to the undertaking, but I see it as folly. Well, mostly folly. With any stretch of human capability there are inadvertent boons and paradigm-shifting secondary applications for technologies. For example, NASA and its various parts played big parts in developing technologies behind memory foam, athletic shoes, smoke detectors, and artificial limbs (https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/infographics/infographic.view.php?id=11358).

The bottom line is this: Wherever humans are flourishing and peaceful, the bulk of the work will be performed by humans. An important factor to this is the relationships that form between humans and their work. In oppressive, damaging, futurist-dystopian contexts, all but a select few will be removed from decision-making opportunities, and the true effectiveness of machine learning will be "neutrally" applied by the functions it was engineered with. I hope a dystopia like that isn't upon us, but in these pivotal moments of change hope is no longer enough. We must be proactive as activist-archivists and activist-librarians to do what we can to set the world on a better course. Think big, start or join projects with goals to be realized after your lifetime, but most of all, do the work that needs doing.

3. The first practice that I will discuss regarding why and why not it should be reformed is the practice of requiring publications for academic librarians. I chose this because it's not exactly clear if publishing requirements fall under the purview of the LAIS field or the Academy (academic institutions), or if the American Library Association (ALA), has taken a formal stance on the matter. The webpage for ALA "Guidelines for Recruiting Academic Librarians" (2017) makes no mention worth the space here. To be clear, I am against publishing requirements for academic faculty and staff across the board. To equate academic and scientific rigor with ability to educate and to espouse writing ability as the only standard is foolish and misguided at best. I believe library staff fall particularly unfairly under publishing requirements, as they are professionals and not necessarily academics or researchers.

To immediately counter that idea, Barbara B. Moran and Elisabeth Leonard's encyclopedia entry for Academic Libraries uses language that is vague and generalized about *some* academic institutions requiring publication but make the important point that library staff who are required to publish are usual also members of faculty. In any case, librarians are not in academic libraries to teach, play university politics, and receive tenure (to be sure, some are). Even instruction librarians who primarily teach shouldn't face those kind of barriers to promotion. Moran and Leonard (2010) go on the recognize this by saying academic librarians are:

> sometimes not as familiar with research as their faculty counterparts and they also lack the flexibility in their jobs that classroom faculty have. In many instances, librarians are required to work at their "real" job 40 hours a week; any research/writing must be done on their own time. (p. 8)

This makes it clear that universities overall have not made efforts to include academic librarians as "true" faculty and that not every circumstance where unilateral publishing policies apply contains the same freedoms and tools to pursue research and writing. It is time to either show academic librarians they are treasured as faculty, or remove them from the category and let them focus on more pressing matters- like social justice or information literacy.

Reforming academic librarian publishing requirements can be as simple as exchanging time commitments originally intended for creating publication (if there is any, of course) for creating a bigger emphasis on information literacy on an institutional level. There are other ways to encourage librarians to think, to grow the field, to cultivate the next generation of information facilitators and informed users besides this outdated practice.

As I have experienced recently, the adage of Parkinson's law (1955) states "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion". One potential benefit to retaining publishing requirements for academic librarians is that it represents some impetus for the timely, formal presentation of research and ideas from professionals who may otherwise silo their information, potentially to the detriment of the rest of the field. A lot of us need a good push to get going and remain committed to writing endeavors.

The other practice in need of reform I examine here is essentially about archival pedagogy. First, I want to note that I have not yet been able to take a formal archives course at DU, but the literature review I created for this course was about practices that bring social justice to archives. I wanted to get a holistic sense of the archival field, but time constraints mean my knowledge is still fragmentary. It appears that archival pedagogy in its relatively traditional form is an artifact of the evolution of the professional field.

In an encyclopedia entry under "United States: Part 1 Archives and Archival Science", Cheryl L. Stadel-Bevans of the National Archives and Records Administration and Danna Bell-Russel of the Library of Congress (2010) make sure to include that fact that the first academic archival and library program didn't exist until 1938 at Columbia University. Until that time, archivists were largely self-taught, or learned through an apprentice program or on-the-job training. Even then, it was more than 40 years until archival and library academic programs started to expand in a meaningful way. To me, this is indicative of loosely formed pedagogy (if it can be called that)- an amateur (I recognize this term as problematic) attempt to pass on knowledge, skills, and competencies, but without the intentionality, formalization, and attempt to remove bias that we expect of teaching practices today. The proper care and attention wasn't applied to the emerging need for archivists and the result is an educational and attitudinal lineage that was left to propagate exclusionary practices as it saw fit.

The Archival Education and Research Institute (AERI) and Pluralism in Archival Curriculum Group (PACG) argue that expanding pedagogical practice and being a part of imagining new possibilities benefits the field as a whole. Embracing change can be as simple as allowing nontextual scholarship as dissertations. That alone would force all archivists-in-training to confront the question of "If this isn't text, how can this be a dissertation?"- which is sure to unsettle some minds and stimulate others. It expands cognitive possibilities, it opens paths to confronting exclusionary close-mindedness, and it can be a step towards healing for those who have been overlooked. For a particularly salient example, AERI and PACG (2010) write:

> By acknowledging multiple views of existing concepts, standards, and practices, archivists and archival educators can work together to expand the field to include nondominant views. For example, the inclusion of oral recordkeeping traditions and their

differences from oral history practices in curricula moves ideas about the record and the role and practice of recordkeeping in different communities beyond the current emphasis on written documents. (p. 21)

Expanding the curricula in this manner fits into the first idea in Kelvin L. White's (2009) proposed framework for pluralizing the archival paradigm, named "Conceptual expansions" (p. 119).

White's framework does a fantastic job at addressing important missing parts in archival education. One of the most glaring items in the framework comes from the section on developing leadership, activism, and ethics to address "identifying how records and archives (however defined) contribute to the constitution of national and individual identity and history" (p. 199). The fact that this hasn't been a priority in the field or society at large indicates the passive, background role that archives often fall into. Archives are almost an afterthought to many people, perhaps because their use hasn't been promoted and people are unaware of how archives could lift them up. The real beauty of White's framework is how the ideas all feed into and reinforce each other. The argument for pluralism now comes with a framework for how to actually do it, so excuses are running out for professional archives staff who are resistant to social change (or admitting society has always looked different than they imagine.

Expanding or changing archival pedagogy, even if it just started slowly with part of the framework at a time, is necessary and important work. This is another opportunity for passive violence to be visited upon people who fall into nondominant cultural and social categories. To do nothing, again, is to be complicit to this violence. As a group, as a profession, as fellow humans, we must take the steps to repair existing relationships with other humans. In this case,

starting down the best path simply means changing the way we teach, learn, and practice. It is

scary, it will be difficult, and we can do it. We MUST do it.

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