

Three entries from the Reflective Journal of Jessica D. McClanahan
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The Greater Good 1/29/11

As I've been going through the readings and discussion in Learning Module 1, the topic that is most recognized and easy to talk about seems to be censorship. I think because of my undergraduate education in art and art history, I am tired of talking about censorship. The reading I've done so far that interests me the most tells me that the primary job of librarians is generally believed to be providers of knowledge and information, as well as to uphold truth, intellectual freedom, and democracy. This might be the most beautiful job description I have ever heard of and I cannot wait to try my hand at it. I like the quote from Pierre Butler that Rubin (2010) used on page 406:

The cultural motivation of librarianship is the promotion of wisdom in the individual and the community... to communicate, so far as possible, the whole of scholarship to the whole community. The librarian undertakes to supply literature on any and every subject to any and every citizen, for any and every purpose... [These actions], in the long run, will sharpen the understanding, judgment, and prudence of the readers and thus sustain and advance civilization.

I've never thought that I would have the opportunity to change the world or "advance civilization," however I've always agreed with the adage, "Each one, teach one," and I think that is a step in the process of creating change. As a future librarian, I am excited at the prospect of having the so-called "human record," at my fingertips, and I am up to the challenge of preserving it for all to access. Out of the seven values that Rubin lists in chapter 10, the ones I related to the most were Truth, Tolerance, The Public Good, and Aesthetics, although I think they are all of equal importance. As an artist, I strongly value the conservation and preservation of works of art, great or not. The public good is something that I find more important as I get older. The notion of public good "assumes that people and society as a whole are changed and, in the long run, improved by ideas... [it] recognizes people's right to enjoy life and that the library has a role in promoting entertainment and pleasure... [and third] that LIS professionals place service to the community above personal interest, and that service to the community requires LIS professionals to actively reach out to those who could benefit from library services, regardless of age or economic status." I love the fact (and forgot about it up until recently) that the public library is a safe place, where people of all backgrounds, nationalities, religions, races, sexualities, class, etc. can go to achieve knowledge and higher learning. I'm not a community activist by any means, but I do place increasing importance on the value of a good community where people are treated with fairness and equality, especially in the realm of education - the young people now are the ones who will be deciding things and taking care of me in the future when I am old and cannot necessarily make decisions for myself.

One of the reasons that I chose this program, is because after I first heard about the MLS and was doing research about librarianship, I read that not only was it a career in which professionals were in high demand, but that it was ultimately a *satisfying* and *fulfilling* career - something I have never really experienced. If it is what I have to do to wake up every morning to aid people in their search for the truth and promote wisdom to the community, then how awesome is that? Since I got my first job when I was 16, I have worked in a position of service, albeit food service. I'm finding out now, that being of service to others is what suits me, but I have to know that what I'm serving up is of value to the greater good, not just a way to make a dollar.

Rubin, R. (2010). Foundations of Library and Information Science 3rd ed. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.

In Class Entry – Two Questions 3/12/11

In my understanding, intellectual freedom is a person's right to use and find the information that they need in order to gain knowledge and understanding of a certain subject, as well as to express themselves in whatever way they deem fit. Intellectual freedom means that it doesn't matter what age you are or what you believe; the only thing that matters is whether you are free to pursue any idea or thought and that you have the freedom to learn and show what you know. A library patron has the right to privacy in seeking information and his or her intellectual progress should not be impeded by censorship. In the Rubin's (2010) text, he uses Dresang to define intellectual freedom: "freedom to think or believe what one will, freedom to express ones thoughts and beliefs in unrestricted manners and means, and freedom to access information and ideas regardless of the content or viewpoints of the author(s), or the age, background, or beliefs of the receiver" (p. 375). My favorite part of that definition is about the age and background of the receiver. We sometime think that children should be restricted from certain types of information, however when I look back at being a kid, I recall that most of my discomfort and angst was caused by being treated like I didn't know anything. I also feel that in America, we are privileged to have this freedom because in some countries, people are not permitted to think and feel and believe on their own and will be prosecuted for having different ideas. In this country, I think we sometimes take all of our freedoms for granted.

Censorship seems to be intellectual freedom's biggest threat. There are people out there who do not believe in intellectual freedom and will make it very difficult for this right to exist. Censorship focuses on part or parts of a work that are deemed inappropriate, offensive, or what have you, and damns the entire work. A lot of people that want to have things censored don't even read the entire work in question. It is subjective and often comes from one individual or group with certain ideals and belief systems that are sure they need to "protect" society from said

work. Censorship seems to come from extreme places and does not offer cooperation between different viewpoints.

Selection, while still involving the omission of certain works from a library collection, is different than censorship. In the selection process, the overall value of the entire work is considered. Selection is a more objective decision making process about whether to include a work or not. In selection, the policy of the organization determines the how's and why's of collection management. Selection processes recognize that it is impossible to keep every single book ever written on the shelves, so therefore implements policies for managing what books should have space there and which should not. This involves understanding the user needs of a particular collection and the demographic that the library mainly caters to; censorship does not take these things into account at all when advocating for the ban of a book.

Rubin, R. (2010). Foundations of Library and Information Science 3rd ed. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn 4/30/11

For the final assigned journal entry, I decided to read A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith (1924). I have never read it before; my only knowledge of this book is from watching Looney Tunes, when the city dog would stroll by the bookstore, see the book in the window, and high tail it across the Brooklyn Bridge. Since it is a classic, and one of my goals is to become better versed in the classics, I picked the title from our recommended reading list. In all honesty, though, I am not going to finish this book before May 2nd, so I decided to write about it now, with my first impressions.

I have gotten through the first few chapters, and I will say that although it is not the type of story that I would normally find myself engrossed in, it seems so far like a sweet little story and an easy read. One passage from chapter two, however, almost brought me to tears. When we are first introduced to Francie and her love for the library as she goes to pick out her book for the day and so sweetly admires all of the books. Only a child could decide that she will read every single book, and also believe that the library holds every book ever written. In this chapter, she has a less than desirable encounter with the librarian:

Each week Francie made the same request and each week the librarian asked the same question. A name on a card meant nothing to her and since she never looked up into a child's face, she never did get to know the little girl who took a book out everyday and two on Saturday. A smile would have meant a lot to Francie and a friendly comment would have made her so happy. She loved the library and was anxious to worship the lady in charge. But the librarian had other things on her mind. She hated children anyhow (Smith, p.24).

That passage made me so mad! I realize that this story is set in 1912 and a lot of things have changed since then, but this behavior from a librarian is unacceptable. I would never want to be this kind of librarian; information professionals should always remember that theirs is a position of service to the community. Children are so special and genuine, and should never be treated like their questions are a waste of time. Not only does the lady not give Francie the time of day, but she also recommends the same two books to her every week. Francie gladly takes the recommendation each time, and gobbles the words up like candy, but she shouldn't have to. There are so many books in the library and it is a shame that a professional would not take one minute to understand her patron's desires.

So far, this book has reminded me of a few things: how important reading is; how wonderfully excited children can be about learning when given the proper resources; how amazing libraries can be; how librarians need to get away from the stereotypes that they are compared to (like this librarian that Francie encounters). I have said it before, but I am very excited to be a part of this wonderful profession. I have learned so much in this one semester, and I cannot wait to learn more. I want to learn new things all the time, and I think that even when my career is fifty years old, I will still be learning. People, knowledge, reading, information, technology - all of these things are amazing and can reach their fullest potential with the right resources.

This will be my final journal post. I have loved this exercise and can't wait to read these entries at the end of my time in this program.

Smith, B. (1943). *A tree grows in Brooklyn*. New York: Harper & Brothers.