In Search of Library Philosophy

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Sandra Cowan, M.Phil., MLIS
University of Lethbridge Library
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada
“An expressed concern in librarianship is survival. While this concern is legitimate in the sense that those external to the field must have an understanding of our purpose, a more central element is self-understanding of our purpose.” (Budd, 1995, p. 315)
Library Philosophy

- WHY?
- Theoretical
- Meaning
- Values
- Reflective
- Analytical
- Essential Principles

Library Science/Practice

- HOW?
- Pragmatic
- Technical
- Applied
- Technique/activity focus
- Empirical
- Instrumental

“[Academic libraries] are products of the Enlightenment and its promotion of reason and freedom. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake wherever it might lead, the examination of every possible topic in the light of reason, and the freedom to publish that research to the world – the underlying principles of modern universities – led to the inevitable creation of libraries capable of supporting those goals.”

(Bivens-Tatum, 2011, p. 91)

“This vision of libraries as secondary institutions with the principle role of ‘service’ has considerably retarded the development of library science, because it has placed theory – the principles and knowledge base of the discipline outside of professional practice – in a region outside the sphere of influence of librarians themselves.”

(Cossette, 1976, p. 39)
PLEA FOR A PHILOSOPHY OF LIBRARIANSHIP

Philosophia vero omnium mater artium

THE purpose of this paper is fourfold: (1) to point out the lack of any adequate existing philosophy of librarianship; (2) to consider briefly the place of the philosophical approach to the study of librarianship; (3) to indicate some of the ways in which the lack of a professional philosophy has proved a detriment, or, put positively, the ways in which the creation of a philosophy would prove advantageous; and (4) to suggest briefly some of the problems and questions which should be considered in the formulation of such a philosophy. Because civilizations and national cultures are what they
“The bewildered groping which characterizes so much of our activity is largely the result of lack of a definite conception of our purposes. Not only that, but we can scarcely expect society to think of the library in terms of its own constituent elements until we have made some progress in defining what the library’s ends are or should be.”

(Danton, 1934, p. 545)


“One of the problems with positivism in the social sciences in general and LIS in particular, is that its functioning as an epistemological foundation has not been recognized. It has remained latent, assumed, and taken for granted, and, as such, has not been subjected to much critical scrutiny.”
(Radford & Budd, 1997, p.318)
Positivism

Social Epistemology

Philosophy of Information

Hermeneutical Phenomenology
• The belief in and the quest for objectivity and certainty, the ultimate authority of science and its methods, and the rejection of the metaphysical

• The conviction that knowledge in all disciplines depends on the empirical methods of natural science, which will lead to objective knowledge

• Generalizing the results of empirical research will reveal the general laws or rules that exist but are obscure

(summarized from the work of John Budd)
Social Epistemology

“The study of those processes by which society as a whole seeks to achieve a perceptive or understanding relation to the total environment—physical, psychological, and intellectual.”

(Margaret Egan & Jesse Shera, 1952, p. 132)
“Provides us with a way to see ourselves and our actions that will enable us to understand these actions and ourselves. Or, stated another way, it gives us a means to gain knowledge....a way to investigate reality.”

(John Budd. 2002, p. 288)
Philosophy of Information

“The philosophical area that studies the conceptual nature of information, its dynamics and problems.”

(Luciano Floridi, 2002, p. 38)
Praxis
“the critical, rational, interpretive, epistemic, and ethical work of a discipline or profession.”
(Budd, 2003, p. 20)
Thank you!


