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ADVISOR REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Heard at the Conference

Recap of the 2017 Charleston Conference

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For me, the best part of the annual Charleston Conference is the time spent with colleagues talking about where their current interests lie, what their biggest pain points are, and what successes they can see. This year's political environment and current zeitgeist in the nation had everyone subdued and a bit maudlin about future predictions. There were no exciting "a-ha" moments at this year's conference. There were quite a number of presentations given on the practicalities of getting work done and services provided with fewer resources and lesser funding. In reply to one colleague remarking on this fact, my answer back is that we all are tired and weary of getting by and making do. Another thought that occurred to me when I got home was that we're also spending too much time trying to have and know all the stuff instead of focusing on what we professionally do best, which is developing better pathways and ways to stuff. We have let the overriding concerns of having the stuff and knowing the stuff become tantamount in many of our local institutions. We need to remember that our professional abilities and strengths reside not in the stuff itself but in focusing on better descriptions, delivery mechanisms, and structures that allow us to get to stuff and to alternative stuff than what we may have readily available at hand. Librarians are like cartographers, we develop the maps to things and the making of the connections that allow things to have broader appeal, and the designing of more comprehensive structures within our spheres of knowledge.

In part because we focus so hard on the stuff in our libraries instead of focusing on pathways, frameworks, and the ontological aspects of stuff, we have also become much more timid and victims of imposter syndrome in regards to the stuff we manage. From talking with highly intelligent people who are extremely skilled and talented in so many ways, what is striking is how we downplay our professional abilities to make finding information, resources, and services better. There have been successes in this realm since the advent of the twenty-first century but, more often than not, we feel as though we are not doing enough or doing it in a successful way. This is in part because we did get caught up for a long time with the stuff we had to have and justifying pay for the stuff people said they wanted, and focusing on the edifices that held all this stuff. This focus on the stuff was endemic to the entire profession. The librarians who are collaborating on research teams, working directly with innovation centers on campus and collaborating more directly with faculty and students are the ones blazing the new trails and developing the structural network elements forward. Our biggest problem is that we have not fully developed the resonate voices that allow us to fully own these spheres of influence.

One conversation I had in Charleston was how we do not self-study well. We use a myriad of reasons not to study our own professional behaviors and actions. The most common reason is that we tell ourselves that we are not worthy of being studied. We tell ourselves that our behaviors and ways of working are so unique to our profession

that these studies would mean nothing to any other profession outside of ourselves. Which when you think about it, if we are those special snowflakes, should there not be a study done on it? We do need the reflective practice of studying our own behaviors. We need our professional bodies to consider our acts and behaviors as a model of how others, especially in academia, may also behave. Our roles are as significant as any other role in academia. We need to have our major research bodies accept that a study of ourselves is as vitally important as it is in any other professional discipline. The constant dismissal of our own importance leads to the erosion of our profession and the increase in our imposter syndrome. We especially need the deans and leaders of academic research libraries to quit pretending like librarians professionally do not matter within our local environments and help us find the rights chords to strike together.

In one area, where I think our imposter syndrome is holding us back is in the authentication of access so that end-users can connect more directly to content. The development of RA21 (resource access for the twenty-first century) <<https://ra21.org>> is an interesting initiative. The group members consist of scholarly publishers, researchers, and a couple of members of the academic research library community. One fascinating aspect about this group is the obvious and apparent direct focus on academia accessing resources but not the needs of other communities. There is a seemingly strong focus on research faculty involvement with this initiative but not teaching faculty. The work and development with RA21 does not resonate with many librarians for these reasons. Trying to develop the next level of resource access beyond IP authentication and proxy servers seems like it would appeal to many librarians in many different settings. Despite presentations on this topic at large library events, it does not seem to resonate within our communities due to the singular focus on research. Librarians need to join into this conversation sooner as opposed to later in order to insure the representation of all need cases with resource access.

One area where librarians have made strides to develop better pathways and structures for access is with OA material. Librarians are instrumental in the development of various Open Access projects released this past year. In some cases, it is with the development of open educational resources and in others evidenced by the explosion of preprint subject portals, and mechanisms such as oaDOI and the OA Button to allow for searching across multiple repositories and subject portals. Librarians are exploring ways to help provide better connections between local campuses and global information needs. Through testing and supplying feedback, librarians are helping to usher in improvements and to develop these resources to make them more visible and more functional.

An evident theme from this year's conference repeated itself like a refrain each day. Libraries are no longer about the stuff we have in

them. Libraries are about the people librarians work with in our local environments and meeting these demands. This means librarians must sit at more tables outside the library than we have in the past. In academia, librarians need to find ways to be part of curriculum committees, to be on the campus bookstore vetting committees, to be part of the research process, to be an integral part of the online learning course construction, and still provide the study and research space with tangible resources students and faculty want immediate-

ly. This is a recalibration of the roles of our profession with respect to academia in particular. We do need to take ownership in our local environments of the skills we possess regarding metadata management, ethical and equitable access to resources, the structural mechanisms that allow for both the ready creation and access to knowledge spheres. If what is past is truly prologue, then librarians should be leading the dialogues that carry us forward. ■