CURIOSITY, COMMUNICATION, DELIGHT, OBLIGATION, AND POSSIBLY FAME:

A Practitioner’s Role in the Growth and Evolution of the Discipline

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Birth of a Paper
Worrisome Observations

Many LIS practitioners
- Are reluctant to express their opinion in a public setting
- Do not believe that what they have to say may be of interest or benefit to others
- View their work as just a job
- Don’t see that inquiry is an integral part of their work
- Do not recognize an obligation to contribute to the profession
- Work for other practitioners who don’t view contribution to the discipline as a necessary, worthwhile, or permissible way to spend time
- Believe that the only reason to publish is to get tenure, and so they believe that only academic librarians and LIS faculty have any reason to do it
- Believe that only those with tenure have academic freedom
- Regard writing as painful drudgery
- Believe that if it doesn’t have numbers and statistical tests, it isn’t research.
Worrisome Thoughts About LIS Programs

What do LIS programs do

- To help their masters graduates know how to do research and publishable work
- To convey a message about professionalism that includes the idea that inquiry, thought, research, and communication of ideas … including through publication is an appropriate part of a library career
- To try to make the prospect of research and publication less daunting and more enticing

And

- If they, in fact, believe it (and if not, why not)
- If they think it’s part of their responsibility (and if not, why not)
- Whether LIS programs with PhD programs unconsciously think that research and publication are mainly relevant to PhD graduates, and if so, how that affects what they teach to whom
They Call it a Profession Because it is Something You Profess

- To profess is to acknowledge something publicly or in front of others
- It’s a calling, not just a job
- We have an obligation to contribute not just directly to users, but also indirectly through contribution to the profession
Who is “We” and Why?

- “We” is the practitioners, and not the LIS faculty
- There are so many more of us
- We inhabit the laboratories
- We have a direct and visceral understanding of what matters operationally
Is This Us?

• Rules matter
• Following protocol matters
• Experimentation can be dangerous
• Making a mistake can be disastrous
Or is This Us?

Or something in between
But We All Need Help

- Permission
- Understanding
- Time
- Support
- Hospitality
- Resources
- Skills
Life is a Seminar, and Your Participation is Required
Why Do People do Research and Publish?

External Motivations

- You have to publish to get tenure
- The best raises are reserved for those who publish
- You accept and invitation to give or write a paper

Professional Motivations

- You need to find a better way to do something, or to choose among options
- You need to make a case for a change you want to make – or one you want to resist
- You need to explain the rationale for a particular course of action, or to convince others of something
- You need to provide information so others can make decisions
Why Do People do Research and Publish?

**Internal Motivation**

- You are a curious person and you can’t resist following up on your curiosity
- You are an opinionated person and you can’t resist sharing your opinions
- You want to influence others
- You believe you have a special understanding or skill, and believe that your understanding, skill, or explanation may be of value to others
- You want to leave your mark on the field
- You enjoy it. You are unable to resist it. You get a kick out of seeing your name in print.
What is the Role for LIS Programs?

Acculturation – Convey:

- Appreciation of what a profession and what that implies for those joining it
- The practitioner’s role in advancing the discipline

Competency – Convey and Provide:

- Knowledge of and practice in identifying useful areas for inquiry,
- Knowledge of and practice with various research methods
- Skills for and practice at analyzing a problem, and synthesizing resultant data or information
- Learning how to, and getting practice at presenting the issue, the method, the analysis, and the conclusion in cogent, comprehensible, grammatical, readable English
- Knowledge of the body of professional literature
- Understanding of the publishing process
Finally ....

The responsibility to advance the profession through research and publication falls to all of us – whether we have only a professional Masters degree or additional degrees, and no matter what kind of library we work in.

Fortunately, it’s rewarding, and can even be fun.