



V O L U M E 1 N U M B E R 3

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FEATURE – Sanford Berman

Libraries "Dumbing Down?"

Sandy Berman, articulate shit-disturber and stentorian advocate for the democratic ideals the Library upholds, shares a rant with NewBreed readers. We hope you enjoy it as much as we did.

INTERVIEW – Hector Escobar, Jr.

Hector Escobar, Jr., a librarian at the University of Notre Dame, is a strong voice for diversity and public relations chair for this year's Spectrum Institute. We interviewed him about ALA's Spectrum Initiative and the need for diversity in the profession.

PEOPLE

Peter McCracken talks about his double life as both a librarian at the University of Washington and a principal of Serials Solutions.

ASK SUSU

Susu, our sometimes irreverent advice columnist, answers your questions about work, school, the job hunt, and librarianship in general. In this issue, Susu advises on selecting a library school.

TECH TALK

Conferences like the upcoming ALA conference in San Francisco provide you with a cornucopia of technology offerings from vendors, but you won't find *these* technological gems in any exhibit booth.

LETTERS

Say What? If you have something to say, we want to hear it. [Send us](#) your letters and we'll post them here. If you're responding to an article or interview, place the headline in the subject of your email.

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Libraries "Dumbing Down?"
SANFORD BERMAN



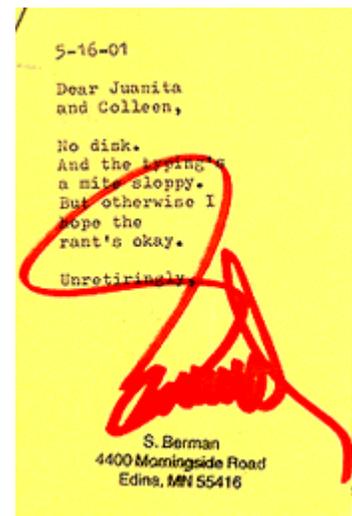
There are rare visionaries, so relentless in their quest for fairness and so uncompromising in their fight for correctitude, that they break out of their corner of the world and ultimately influence a generation of like-minded individuals. Sandy Berman is one of these people. For 26 years, Sandy strove to bring the Library to the people. As Head Cataloger at Hennepin County Library in Minnesota, Sandy consistently created common sense subject headings for the catalog that reflected everyday useage rather than the Eurocentric, homophobic, often racist and non-intuitive language the Library of Congress seemed to conjure up. He fought to avail the library to all, especially the poor, fervently opposing restrictions such as increased library fines. Sandy insisted on actively collecting fringe material that reflected the multevity of interests, including sexually explicit books and videos. Throughout his career, he upheld his commitment to diversity, neutrality and openness. Sandy understood and connected to people, spoke their language, and endeavored to make the library more human.

After years of service, the directors at Hennepin County rewarded Sandy with a demotion as he clearly didn't fit into the "bizness" of bureaucratic mindlessness when he expressed his concern about adopting non-user friendly standards. He resigned four days later.

Thankfully for all of us, Sandy continues to be an articulate shit-disturber and stentorian advocate for the democratic ideals the Library upholds. We hope you enjoy the following rant as much as we did.

Psychologists can maybe explain *why*, but there's no doubt about the *what*: library administrators and "leaders" are increasingly gripped by - in Jim Danky's words - "adoration of the mainstream, the corporate mainstream." They readily embrace such "business values" and practices such as making money, downsizing, outsourcing, stealthy decision-making, contempt for individuality and dissent, a "we-know-what's-better-for-you-than-you-do" attitude toward the public, and product-merchandising that emphasizes celebrity, faddishness, and pure image.

Too many of today's library managers really wannabe CEOs. Too many book selectors really wannabe Borders or Barnes & Noble superstore buyers. Too many have forgotten - if they ever knew - the essential public library ethos and mission: To freely provide materials and information in a variety of formats, representing widely divergent opinions, experiences, and perspective - and to do so in a noncommercial, "neutral" environment for the entertainment, enlightenment, and both intellectual and spiritual growth of the whole population, unlimited by age, income, sex, disability, ethnicity, or occupation. The public library, unlike the bottom-



line-driven superstore or corporate media, is precisely where citizens *should* expect to find challenging, vital, unusual, and unorthodox books, magazines, videos, and CDs, works both old and new that may never make "bestseller" lists, but nonetheless, satisfy human cravings for knowledge and excitement and beauty.

the diminution of the library as a place, a physical space to gather, talk, browse, read, hear, and think. Perhaps suffering from a deep-seated inferiority complex, they fervently welcome and uncritically promote every piece of fluff or drivel their commercial mentors lay on them. Having abandoned the long-touted objective to be the "people's university" and a partner in "lifelong learning," the wannabes are now managing institutions where the most intellectually and spiritually challenging materials available to library users may soon be artificially-hyped "blockbusters" and the collected works of Martha Stewart, attractively displayed alongside the expanding banks and towers of buzzing computers.

The bizness-oriented wannabes now dominating many libraries don't agonize much over knowledge, excitement, and beauty. They demand ever-higher circulation numbers to impress their funders and emulate their corporate models. They passionately embrace digitization - of nearly everything - as the irrepressible wave of the future, even if that means the severe reduction or possible elimination of traditional print and AV resources, as well as the diminution of the library as a place, a physical space to gather, talk, browse, read, hear, and think. Perhaps suffering from a deep-seated inferiority complex, they fervently welcome and uncritically promote every piece of fluff or drivel their commercial mentors lay on them. Having abandoned the long-touted objective to be the "people's university" and a partner in "lifelong learning," the wannabes are now managing institutions where the most intellectually and spiritually challenging materials available to library users may soon be artificially-hyped "blockbusters" and the collected works of Martha Stewart, attractively displayed alongside the expanding banks and towers of buzzing computers.

Think this is a fevered, delusional rant? Well:

- Children's book selectors have been told not to bother examining the publisher's review copies because everything necessary to place orders is already online. No need to look at the books.
- Subscriptions to alternative review media like *MultiCultural Review*, *Counterpoise*, *Small Press Review*, and *Women's Review of Books* - the gateways to vast treasures of human activity and ideas - are either never placed, scaled back, or totally dropped. After all, who needs more than Baker & Taylor's online "best lists?"
- Potentially valuable government documents are not added to collections because cataloging staff has been cut.
- Libraries order hundreds of copies of conglomerate-produced "best sellers" that within six to eight months will be sold for 25¢ apiece in the used bookstore. Worse, mega-copies may be ordered of titles that haven't even been published yet - and occasionally haven't been *written* yet! Why? Because Random House or Simon & Schuster announced that it will spend Big Bucks on hyping the new Grisham or Mary Higgins Clark novel or celebrity memoir. Quality, relevance, accuracy, style? None of that's as important as sales and hype.

- One wannabe Director, convinced that his system was subscribing to far more journals than other comparably-sized operations, did not regard this excellence as something to be proud of, but rather decided - unilaterally - to flatten the periodical collection by extracting some \$80,000 from the magazine budget, these "savings" to be expended on DVDs, more e-resources, and other "popular" (i.e., circ-inflating) materials. Some 1,120 current periodical subscriptions were slated for cancellation, about 340 or those *not* being available online and another 170 not received by a neighboring metro-area library. Further, standard professional and review titles like *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Choice*, and *PW* were to be restricted to a staff library, no longer cited in the catalog nor accessible to ordinary readers and library school students. Among the axed items are such business, cultural, scientific, and political staples - as well as stimulating out-of-the-mainstream mags - as *Science*, *New Scientist*, *Lancet*, *Advertising Age*, *Human Events*, *Spotlight*, *Z Magazine*, *Monthly Review*, *Index on Censorship*, *American Economic Review*, *Dollars & Sense*, *U.S. Banker*, *Journal of Business*, *African Arts*, *Rock & Rap Confidential*, *Big Beautiful Woman* (but not *Glamour* or *Cosmopolitan*), *Off Our Backs*, *Film Quarterly*, *Public Art Review*, *Yale Review*, *American Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of American Indian Education*, *Labor's Heritage*, and *Playboy*.

+An ongoing epidemic of wanton, mindless weeding often consigns worthwhile, frequently unique items to the dumpster, remote storage, or used book store. Common reasons: they lost their dust jackets, appear slightly tattered or dogeared, or--worst of all defects!--they haven't circulated for the past 4 or 5 months.

- An ongoing epidemic of wanton, mindless weeding often consigns worthwhile, frequently unique items to the dumpster, remote storage, or used bookstore. Common reasons: they lost their dust jackets, appear slightly tattered or dog-eared, or - worst of all defects - they haven't circulated for the past four to five months. (For more on this biblio-wipeout, see "The Weeding Epidemic in American Libraries," <>, no. 118, p. 17, and my "'Inside' Censorship," *Progressive Librarian*, no. 18, p. 52-3.)
- Pervasive self-censorship effectively excludes whole genres - like comics, zines, and small press fiction and poetry - plus multitudes of labor, ethnic, free thought, erotic, and radical titles from library shelves. (For details on this underreported phenomenon, see James P. Danky, "Libraries: They Would Have Been A Good Idea," in *Alternative Library Literature, 1996/1997* (McFarland, 1998), p. 3-6; "Self-Censorship: Librarianship's 'Dirty Little Secret,'" *Unabashed Librarian*, no. 119, forthcoming; and "'Inside' Censorship," *Progressive Librarian*, no. 18 (Spring 2001), p. 50-52.)

So what's the remedy for this "dumbing down" malaise? Not easy, but library users and frontline staff must resist the degradation and warping of America's once-premier democratic institution. And it would be helpful if the wannabes underwent Reparative Therapy. Or submitted job applications to Wal-Mart.

Editors' note: If you don't know who Sandy Berman is, or about his legendary status in librarianship, we encourage you to read [Sandy Berman's Last Stand](#) by Burl Gilyard. It's an inspirational kick in the pants!



F E A T U R E I N T E R V I E W

::: JUNE 2001 :::



Communities are a living thing: they are constantly growing and changing. In order to be effective, libraries must keep in touch with these changes. Not only that, libraries should reflect their communities - a fractal of the parent organism. As populations change and communities become more diverse, the most successful libraries will be those that reflect the community changes in the people they employ. Given the latest census data, it is clear that many cities are experiencing significant demographic transformations. How will the Library meet new challenges that these changes bring?

By celebrating diversity and making the effort to recruit representative people into the profession.

With these issues in mind, we bring you Hector Escobar, Jr. Hector is the University of Notre Dame's first librarian in residence. He is a former Spectrum Scholar from the class of 1999. Aside from being an advocate for diversity and cultural enrichment, he loves doing reference and administrative work. You can sometimes find him in the basement of the library working on projects while listening to bootlegs of U2. He also enjoys outdoor festivals in the Midwest and Southwest, and on some occasions can be spotted sipping a pint or two at some dive in his ever-persistent search of hearing a great local band. A former adviser to the El Paso chapter of the Green Party, Hector enjoys politics and lengthy discussions of public policy and culture.

NewBreed Librarian: What is the Spectrum Initiative?

Hector Escobar, Jr.: In 1996, the [American Library Association](#) (ALA) received a report from the Council Committee on Minority Concerns and Cultural Diversity concerning a nationwide under-representation of minorities as librarians. As a result, ALA's Executive Board approved and created the Spectrum Initiative a year later. The Spectrum Initiative, in a nutshell, is ALA's effort to increase cultural and ethnic diversity within American libraries.

I mentioned the term *nutshell* for a reason. Although Spectrum's main component is the [Spectrum Scholarship](#), it also includes a leadership institute, networking opportunities, and diversity advocacy. The Spectrum Initiative is run by ALA's Office of Diversity, but comprises input from across the board. For example, there is the Spectrum selection committee that selects scholars, a steering committee charged with guiding Spectrum, and an institute planning committee which develops the content for the Spectrum Leadership Institute. Members to these committees are appointed annually. Members are devoted to the cause of increasing under-represented minority groups within libraries and are strong advocates for diversity.

NBL: Why is Spectrum needed?

HEJ: Spectrum grew out of the concern surrounding the cultural issues for communities that American libraries serve. Let me explain: In 1998, ALA's Office for Research and Statistics conducted a **study** in order to determine library demographics across the nation. The report indicated sharp differences in the ethnic makeup of American libraries. Why should this be a concern? Libraries are community institutions. The term community is important because with community there is culture, people from different backgrounds, and people who use libraries for personal advancement. The goal of Spectrum is to fill in the gaps between representation and advocacy of culture within libraries. Culture is something that we as librarians tend to forget. We get tied down in today's high tech society with things like "information retrieval," "knowledge management," "adding a bib record," often allowing cultural recognition to slip on by without realizing it. We cannot let the important benefit that diversity brings of truly tuning into our communities fade away. We need to be advocates for culture as it is the direct link between our profession and the people we serve.

NBL: How are scholars selected?

HEJ: Scholars are selected by a number of criteria. Potential scholars must belong to either one of the four largest minority groups (African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander), and must have less than 12 credit hours in a graduate program when the scholarship is awarded. Applicants first have to send in an application, letter of purpose, transcripts, and letters of references. ALA applies strict guidelines in the application process, so it is important that interested applicants follow the directions. Fully completed applications are sent to the Spectrum selection committee who selects scholars based on their potential to complete a graduate program, value diversity, commitment to the library profession, and most importantly, their ability or potential ability to be future library leaders. The committee is given the authority to select a total of 50 scholars each year. Originally, Spectrum scholarships were funded for three years, but because of an increase in funding, a fourth year, *this year*, has been added. Next year's scholarships will be funded by endowments so there is a chance that not all 50 scholarships will be awarded.

NBL: About how many people apply and has the number increased over the years?

HEJ: When the Spectrum Initiative began, the most difficult task was getting word out for both publicity and for funding purposes. In the summer of 1998 when the first group of scholars were selected, there was a total of 167 applicants. In 1999, there were more than 200 applicants. Last year, there were even more. Again, this year the number has grown! Features in *American Libraries* magazine and other publications have done a great job highlighting Spectrum. The publicity has had a trickle down effect of informing potential applicants. For example, there might be an undergraduate student who is interested in library school. He or she visits the reference desk and begins talking to a librarian who has heard about Spectrum - you may want to think of it as a little grassroots approach. The more word gets out on Spectrum, the more applicants the program will have.

NBL: Do you think this growth reflects more ethnic minorities entering the profession?

HEJ: One of the expectations from Spectrum Scholars is that they will advocate and promote the Spectrum Scholarship to others who might be considering library school. Granted, sometimes when you mention the word "librarian" it immediately conjures up an image of an old lady who wears glasses and tells everyone to keep quiet. We know images and roles of librarians are changing. Library students now have more opportunities and choices that will hopefully dispel the discouraging, inaccurate stereotypes.

All it takes is inspiration about the profession to turn someone onto a career. I remember sitting in a library orientation and watching this extremely cool librarian. He was this Mexican/Irish guy, talking about what he did as a librarian. At the time he was also a community leader as the Democratic Chairman for the city/county of El Paso. I was sitting there thinking, "Wow!!...This dude is cool! I want to do what he does!" As time would have it, this librarian became my best friend and mentor. Again, this goes back to what is expected as a Spectrum Scholar: the power of inspiring others, advocating the profession, and always willing to help out others who are considering librarianship are key in attracting more minorities to the profession.

NBL: You mentioned a leadership program early on. What is the Spectrum Leadership Institute and where does it fit in?

HEJ: The Spectrum Leadership Institute is probably the highlight of being a Spectrum Scholar. Each year, ALA flies in each scholar from the current year to a location that's near or in the city of ALA's annual conference. In 1999, the 1998 class of scholars attended the Institute in New Orleans. Last year it was held in a suburb of Chicago. This year it will be held in San Jose. The Institute is probably the most unique component of the Spectrum Scholarship. Spectrum scholars are required to attend the institute upon receiving the scholarship. The Institute brings together Spectrum Scholars, library directors/directors, educators, authors, poets, leaders who are library and non-library related but who are committed in advocating diversity. Scholars are put through an intensive, exhaustive, and exhilarating 3 and ½ day institute in which they are exposed to leadership styles, leadership techniques, organizational change, professional development, and many more tenets that are vital for these scholars as they embark on their library careers. Scholars have the opportunity to meet their peers from across the nation and network with library professionals. Scholars are exposed to a wealth of knowledge that is typically not covered in any library school class or professional development seminar. Scholars leave the institute tired, but extremely inspired as they enter the librarian profession.

One neat session that scholars are exposed to at the Institute is the Professional Options Fair. The fair showcases library professions that scholars can pursue and provides these future professionals with career options they may have never had an opportunity to consider. This year's fair will present more than 16 career options available to MLIS graduates and will cover everything from public libraries, to information brokerages, to preservation. Scholars will get the inside scoop by asking questions to individuals directly involved within specific library arenas that interest them.

Diversity, aside from leadership, is another tenet that is highlighted at the Institute. Scholars realize that they are ethnically different and fill the gap of cultural diversity. True diversity encompasses appreciation for individuals who are outside the "norm" and are also potential users of library services. Scholars are informed about library services for individuals who are physically challenged, or face discrimination based on their sexual orientation. Diversity is not only based on skin color - its premise centralizes on the appreciation and acceptance of everyone. At least there is an institute that embraces diversity and focuses on leadership within the library profession.

NBL: Where are past Spectrum Scholars now?

HEJ: They're all over the place. Some scholars are librarians in public or academic libraries, and some work as information professionals in non-traditional settings. Others have been appointed to various library committees within library organizations. A few have even returned as volunteers at Spectrum Institutes to facilitate a component of the institute. I can tell you that based on a survey taken in November 2000 of nearly 90 scholars, 37 indicated they are currently or were interested in working in

public libraries, 15 mentioned school libraries, 23 specified academic libraries, and 14 were interested in other library related fields. These 90 scholars comprised surveys that were returned from the 1998 & 1999 classes. We can only hope that these numbers will rise when we survey the 2000 & 2001 classes.

For more information on Spectrum and the Spectrum Institute, contact **Hector** or **Sandra Balderrama**, or visit the Spectrum website at <http://www.ala.org/spectrum/>. Deadline for the next Spectrum Scholarship will be in March 2002.

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P E O P L E

::: JUNE 2001 :::



Peter McCracken talks about his double life as both a librarian at the University of Washington and a principal of Serials Solutions, which was the first company to track the full-text journals available through database aggregators and make it possible for librarians or patrons to determine which database has the specific article they are seeking, without checking (or even knowing about) every database they could access.

Over a pitcher of beer, I told my two brothers about the idea behind Serials Solutions and we realized that between us we had most of what we needed to make this happen. We added people to fill out the other spots we needed, and after a lot of research and product development, we eventually founded a company.

How has your MLS allowed you to explore areas outside traditional library jobs? Did your training in library school prepare you for what you're doing now?

I started Serials Solutions because I saw a definite need for the service we provide, and I didn't see anyone else doing it. I didn't feel that the few other options then available were reasonable solutions in the library where I was working, so I doubted they would work in other libraries, either. While I still maintain my traditional library job, my work with Serials Solutions would never have been possible without the knowledge and experience I obtained in library school and on the job. Serials Solutions will continue to hire librarians, and freshly-minted MLS/MIS recipients, because we know that they bring a unique combination of skills to the process of developing and creating our current and future products. Technical skills are important, but so is a theoretical understanding of what we're doing, and why. I am convinced that the MLS/MIS coursework provides that. Luckily, Seattle has a strong MLS school at the University of Washington, and we are taking advantage of that local connection, though we welcome inquiries from people across the country.

As a vendor run by a librarian, we work hard to act in the manner we'd like vendors to act, which means, for example, that we put all our information on our web page for all to see. We keep our web pages simple and straightforward, and we respond promptly to requests and comments from librarians and other users. Our pricing is based on the amount of work we do for a specific client, not on the size of the client's user base, and all of our pricing information is also on our web site.

How do you balance work as a librarian with work as a vendor?

Being a librarian and a vendor can be a bit schizophrenic, to say the least. I've had interesting experiences doing both. At ACRL, I went as a vendor and as a librarian. At one point, while looking over poster sessions and with my University badge on, another librarian came up to me and said, "Hey, aren't you the Serials Solutions guy?" and the discussion immediately turned to business. One evening I

talked with aggregators about the Serials Solutions product and the company's relationships with the aggregators, and the next day I talked with them about purchasing or using their products in my library. I can understand why this isn't always easy for some vendors, but I work very hard to separate the two and I believe I do it successfully.

I enjoy attending the conferences, though I wish I had time to attend more sessions and programs of interest to me as a librarian. Although I attended ACRL as a librarian and as a vendor, I don't think I'll do that again: it's just too difficult to split the time fairly. In Washington, DC, I saw a program on reference statistics that I very much wanted to attend, but I just couldn't leave the booth for the session. In San Francisco, I have two events I must attend -- one as a librarian, and one as a vendor -- and of course they're both scheduled at the same time. In the end, I find that if I try to do both, I don't devote enough time to either one, so I am getting used to spending my library-earned vacation days at library conferences!

People ask if it is difficult being both a vendor and a librarian. I find that it is a lot of work, but it has many benefits. The most difficult part comes from trying to hold down two different demanding jobs and still have a life afterwards. I find significant benefits from having feet in both worlds, and hope to maintain the combination of the two positions for as long as I can. I am lucky to have support on all sides in doing this work: the full-time employees at Serials Solutions so clearly understand our mission and goals that they manage all aspects more ably than I ever could. My colleagues and supervisors at the University of Washington also provide support, and I was careful to discuss my ideas about starting a company, and get their blessing to do it, before I began the endeavor.

At the same time, however, I find significant crossover, and I know that my work as a librarian benefits from my work as a vendor, and vice versa. I am more aware of critical issues affecting electronic publishing and access to electronic resources as a result of my work as a vendor, and I am more aware of the utility of the Serials Solutions product in a practical setting as a result of my work as a librarian. It is a lot of work, but in the end, I thoroughly enjoy being a librarian and being a library vendor.

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A S K S U S U

::: JUNE 2001 :::

Susu, our sometimes irreverent advice columnist, answers your questions about work, school, the job hunt, and librarianship in general. In this issue, Susu advises on selecting a library school.

Dear Susu, After much deliberation and serious consideration, I've finally decided to go to library school. I've been looking at library school web sites, programs, costs, etc, and I'm wondering, does it really matter where I go?

Dear Wondering,

The short answer is no: as long as the school is **ALA accredited**, it really doesn't matter where you go. But you might want to consider a few key things if you're interested in getting the most out of your education.

Key thing number 1: How mobile are you?

"Students overwhelmingly agreed that "proximity to where I live" was by far the most important reason they selected a particular program or school. The second most important factor was the "reputation" of the school. In appended comments many pointed out that "reputation" might mean anything from rankings in a national magazine to individual assessments from librarians and graduates. Cost was, predictably, important and ranked third." (*Library Journal*, 11/01/99)

If you can pick up and go, the field is wide open for you. But if you're committed to a certain geographical locale, don't feel bad. You're not alone. In fact, in a 1998 library school survey conducted by *Library Journal*, students overwhelmingly agreed that "proximity to where I live" was the main criteria in selecting a school. What students find, and so will you, is that it's not the *where* that matters, it's the *what*.

The What:

Ask yourself these questions:

- What's the student-to-teacher ratio and what are the faculty like?
- Do the course offerings reflect current issues in librarianship and information technology?
- What practicums are available, and are there some good libraries nearby to get some solid work related experience in?
- What are the real costs?

In the same *Library Journal* survey mentioned above, students commented extensively on the faculty. Teachers are the core of any library program. These are the folks you will see day in, day out. If they're burnt out and boring, you'll get precious little out of the experience unless your self-motivation is curiously strong. However, take a class from a passionate, enthusiastic instructor and your optimism toward the profession will soar. I was lucky enough to have one such scintillating instructor who empowered me through his passion and incredible depth of knowledge. It was his lectures that inspired me and made me feel I had chosen the right profession. He didn't know it, but he was a role model just by being himself. Knowing he genuinely enjoyed his profession was another affirmation in becoming one myself. Plus, I, and many others, really looked forward to his class. He was amazing.

Check out the faculty. What have they published lately? How long have they been there? Are there adjunct instructors too? Oftentimes, working outside the school and teaching at night helps breathe some (much needed) real-life experience into the curriculum. Most importantly, visit the school if at all possible and talk to the current students to get a feel for the faculty and the place. Be sure to stop by the library and the department's computer lab while you're there.

Librarianship and information science is changing rapidly. You want to pick a school that's keeping up with these changes, a curriculum that is progressive. A school's curriculum indicates how committed they are to providing a first rate education. It's less work to stick with the tried and trusted and with courses that reflect the state of the information landscape five years ago than to continually incorporate new courses or even workshops into the curriculum. But if you find a program that reflects a healthy balance between core courses and new directions, bookmark it!

In making the most of the *where* you go, focus on *what* you do there by getting some good experience under your belt. When considering schools - or even if you have only one consideration - look for practicums and hands-on opportunities outside the classroom. The MLS will get your resume on a desk. Your experience will get you the interview. While you're in school, take advantage of those work study hours and place yourself in as many different departments as possible. Split your credit hours and do a credit in cataloging, another in reference, and the third in circulation if possible. Find an independent study that interests you to gain specialized knowledge and, at the same time, a long-term mentor to provide a reference for you. Working across a myriad of environments will furnish the experience you need to land a job directly out of library school and the insight required to determine what it is you enjoy doing. So when you're weighing school options, consider the outlets available for practical experience.

As an aside, if you can fit it in, volunteering, joining library and student associations, and publishing are always smart ideas as they fatten up your résumé and make your name stand out in a pile. After being on a few hiring committees, I can tell you, these are the self-motivated extras potential employers look for.

In scrutinizing costs, remember cost per credit hour isn't your sole consideration. Cost of living is, too. A quick way to compare locales is with a [cost of living calculator](#) found at [moving guides](#) on the web. Remember that schools have established connections with their communities and recruiters are often local. Upon graduation, you may well find yourself staying in town even if you hadn't originally intended to. Is this a place you could see yourself living in for a year or two or ten?

Bottom line: in the long run, the school doesn't matter; what you make of your experience there does. Seek instructors that inspire and motivate you. Find a fresh curriculum that balances new advances in the field with foundational courses. Get as much out-of-class experience as possible. Again, the degree will set your résumé on sail. Your experience will get you the interview. But your passion, commitment,

and professionalism garnered from those special instructors, those memorable lectures, the work study and practicums, and your unique personality will ultimately land you the job.

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Wandering through the Exhibit Hall at big conferences like the upcoming ALA conference in San Francisco provide you with a cornucopia of technology offerings from commercial vendors, but you won't find *these* gems in any exhibit booth.

Companies like Microsoft, fearing the potential threat to their bottom line, would **love to see the end** of open source software, which is not only freely available, but allows those using it to make modifications and improvements to the source code, then redistribute the new software. Open source software originated with the Unix community and the **GNU Project**, and has been invigorated by the incredible growth and popularity of the open source operating system, **Linux**.

But for libraries, **open source software** can stretch those shrinking budgets and provide solutions to problems for which commercial software products may not exist. Open source software perpetuates the library community's tradition of sharing by harnessing the resources, creativity and capabilities of a few and making them available to the community as a whole.

The **oss4lib project**, conceived by **Dan Chudnov** of Yale University's Cushing/Whitney Medical Library, serves as a clearinghouse for open source software for libraries. Below is a sampling of the diversity of gems you'll find available as open source software; these are all listed on Dan Chudnov's site, but you can often find others mentioned or discussed at conferences - through poster sessions, presentations, and networking. Many are licensed under the **GNU Public License**, and - best of all - they're all free.

- **Prospero** functions as a complement to RLG's **Ariel**® software for interlibrary loan. Prospero captures scanned files - whether sent via Ariel®, imported as TIFF files, or scanned directly into Prospero - converts them to PDF format, and makes them available for pick up through a secure web transaction. Developed by the Prior Health Sciences Library, Ohio State University.
- **jake** (Jointly Administered Knowledge Environment) tells you where you'll find indexing and full-text of e-journals. jake also supports searching against local holdings, and will create MARC records you can import into your local catalog. Developed by the Cushing/Whitney Medical Library, Yale University School of Medicine.
- **yourTILT** is the open source version of the award-winning Texas Information Literacy Tutorial, a web-based, interactive tutorial designed for undergraduates that focuses on fundamental skills. It is designed to be non-tool specific. Developed by the University of Texas System Digital Library.
- **Database Advisor** (DBA) uses the Z39.50 protocol to search several databases at once using a single query, and returns the number of hits for each database in a list. DBA tells the researcher

which databases will return the best results, and allows the searcher to repeat the search in a selected database with a single click. Developed by the Sciences Libraries, University of California, San Diego.

- **MyLibrary** allows your library users to create a personalized library page, or portal. Developed at North Carolina State University Libraries.
- **Greenstone** allows you to build and organize digital collections for the web or CD-ROM. It includes multilingual, multimedia, and Z39.50 support. Developed by the New Zealand Digital Library, University of Waikato.
- There are a number of Z39.50 servers and clients available: **Cheshire**, a joint project of the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Liverpool; Knowledge Integration's java-based **JZKit**; the Simon Fraser University Library Research Instrument (**SLRI**); Index Data's **SimpleServer**, **YAZ**, and **ZAP!**; and **Zeta Perl**.
- Java-based **XMLMARC** converts MARC records to XML. Developed by Lane Medical Library, Stanford University Medical Center.

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L E T T E R S

::: JUNE 2001 :::

01 JUN 01 :: **"This is a polite way to handle it. Why the schizophrenic approach? The recommendations site is courteously worded - why not the originating page?"**

WARNING: Warpig-ugly web pages ahead, brought to you by your non-compliant browser.

Not complying with what? The latest MS attempt to make the Web into television? How DARE you make a judgment on my computer system? Without knowing me or my circumstances, would you remark on the age or model of the car I drive?

Personally, as a member of the Computer-Human Interface SIG of the ACM, my attitude is that if your page doesn't show up well on my browser, *you* need to fix the page. And how do you know what my browser is? Checked up before displaying the page? What's your latest article on personal privacy?

To experience NewBreed Librarian in all her glory, upgrade your browser.

This is a polite way to handle it. Why the schizophrenic approach? The recommendations site is courteously worded - why not the originating page? As to the recommendations themselves, I don't regard any MS product as an 'upgrade' only a change, usually bad. Netscape 6 is so buggy that all the user groups warn against it. I have Opera but can't understand it, so, while it's supposed to be excellent technically, I don't want to put in the time to learn it.

What does "new breed" mean, anyway? I was middle-aged when I became a librarian, but regard myself as as hip as the next one and as technically sophisticated as I keep learning to be.

This was my first look at your publication and...

Nancy Baiter

NBL's response:

Hello Nancy,

We're sorry you don't like or understand our web site. We haven't made any judgments on any computer system. But, if you receive the warning message when logging onto our site, it means that you're using a browser that doesn't comply to the W3C standards.

In our last issue, we interviewed Jeffrey Zeldman on [standards and why it's important to uphold them](#). We hope you take the time to educate yourself on the issue as it's an important one.

Colleen and I are both reference librarians, with full-time jobs and full-time lives. We wanted to give back something to the profession as we're inspired by the changes we see, new people entering the field, and ultimately about librarianship. We do this on our own time, and for no money. We love hearing from our readers. It's my hope that we have not offended you to the point that you won't return and get to know NewBreed Librarian a little more.

Thanks for your comments and your time,
Juanita

01 JUN 01 :: **"I found it ironic, however, to find praise for and a piece about fighting for information access for all on a site designed to be graphically viewed only with the very latest browser versions, Netscape 6.0 and IE 5.5."**

I very much enjoyed the Sandy Berman piece in your latest issue. I found it ironic, however, to find praise for and a piece about fighting for information access for all on a site designed to be graphically viewed only with the very latest browser versions, Netscape 6.0 and IE 5.5.

I don't think I would find it **quite** as ironic were I not urged by your web pages to upgrade my browser and then directed to a site which accused me of holding back the development of the entire world wide web by using an outdated browser, in my case Netscape 4.7. Perhaps those with 5 year old computers, slow modem connections, hard drives which don't have room for the newer browsers, or who simply want to wait until bugs are worked out of new browser versions should just throw in the towel and give up on this Internet thing, since they are obviously holding the "haves" back.

Megan Fitch

NBL's response:

Actually, our "information" (content) is accessible to anyone with a web browser. The only thing you won't see unless you're using a standards-compliant browser are those aesthetic touches we've added to give our site its signature.

We're very proud of the fact that our content is accessible in a text-based browser like Lynx, in Netscape 2.0, and in Internet Explorer 5. That's what the web *should* be.

We're glad you enjoyed our feature, and thanks for your comments,
Colleen

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