2001

Objectivity, Values, And The Christian Librarian

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The central questions of Christian librarianship in the postmodern world involve the philosophical grounds of collection development. Are there reliable objective grounds for attempting to build balanced collections? What values ought to guide the librarian in this task? How will the application of those values differ in the context of an evangelical Christian institution?

It is no secret that librarianship is now in the midst of a severe crisis. One symptom of this is the debate surrounding the future direction of library education.[1] It seems that the extreme pressures of societal change have driven us once again to re-examine the theoretical grounds of our profession. For this reason, the presentation by Michael Gorman at the Association of Christian Librarians Conference 2000 was particularly timely. As a member of ALA's Task Force on Core Values, he has been involved in the process of recasting the values that characterize the profession.[2] His thoughtful reminder of the essential values that have guided our profession, along with the open discussion of those values on the final day of conference, served to stimulate my own thinking. As librarians whose professional practice is intentionally informed by evangelical faith, we need to give serious thought to the theoretical basis of librarianship. Only then will we be prepared to formulate a theory of librarianship that is both philosophically coherent and informed by our faith.

In our daily routine few of us consciously reflect on the philosophical basis of our work, but sooner or later we run headlong into circumstances that force us to examine the nature and implications of our professional value system.

Recently, one of our more thoughtful students came to me with several books on Catholicism that she wanted to donate to the library. She indicated her dissatisfaction with the quality of the collection with regard to Catholic Church teaching. Being a practicing Catholic, she was obviously offended by some of the books in our collection. The books she offered dealt with several areas of Catholic dogma from a clearly Catholic perspective. As one might expect, being an institution of Baptist tradition, our library does not have an extensive Catholic collection. It primarily consists of academic monographs dealing with the history of Catholicism, some biographies of outstanding church figures, and the works of a few major Catholic writers. Added to this mix are a number of apologetic texts from the Protestant perspective. It was obvious that our collection was somewhat biased at this particular point. Believing that there is great value in maintaining some semblance of balance in the collection, I gladly accepted this student's gift and had them added to the collection. If at some time in the future these newly added books caused controversy, I must be prepared to present a well reasoned defense of my actions.

After reflecting on this event and the words of Dr. Gorman I pose the following questions. Are there any reliable grounds for building balanced

collections in a postmodern world? If so, what are the defining values of librarianship that might give guidance and where did they originate? Then too, how will the application of these library values in the context of evangelical Christian faith differ from their application in some other setting? In partial answer to these questions I attempt three things in this paper. First, I examine some of the challenges that postmodernists present to our professional values. Second, I briefly review some of the intellectual roots of librarianship. Third, I look at some of the current alternatives for establishing a coherent grounding for our profession and build them into an evangelical framework.

OBJECTIVITY QUESTIONED

Librarians are not alone in feeling uneasy about the tenuous ground upon which their professional values are based. All disciplines of the Western liberal academy face a similar predicament. Since the 1960s objectivity, a basic tenet of the academy, has been under heavy attack from postmodern thinkers. They have effectively demonstrated that value free inquiry is a chimera; one always brings values and a degree of subjectivity to areas of inquiry. Even disciplines long considered to be particularly objective, such as those in the sciences, now find their objectivity called into question. The pure objectivity of the sciences is no longer taken for granted, as shown through the work of Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn challenged the objectivity of the hard sciences through a careful analysis of the social process that lies behind one scientific theory overturning and replacing another.[3] As he explains it, within the scientific community there are certain established criteria which, when taken together, "provide *the* shared basis for theory choice."[4] As Kuhn rightly points out, the application of these objective criteria do not always agree. When two criteria point toward opposing choices it creates a problem that may only be resolved by some individualized means.[5] As he puts it, "every individual choice between competing theories depends on a mixture of objective and subjective factors, or of shared and individual criteria."[6] Such problems of objectivity are a central

theme in postmodern thought. If objectivity in the scientific fields is open to question then all disciplines face a common objectivity problem. This is certainly the case in librarianship.

The American Library Association codified neutrality in 1948 with the adoption of the Library Bill of Rights.[7] This document remains the central philosophical statement of librarianship the present debate over core values notwithstanding. More than any other document, it provides librarianship with shared objective criteria for decision making and operates as a powerful disciplinary catalyst. At its July 2000 meeting ALA adopted an official interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights concerning intellectual freedom. This interpretation begins with the following suggestive language:

A strong intellectual freedom perspective is critical to the development of academic library collections and services that dispassionately meet the education and research needs of a college or university community.[8]

This unambiguous reminder to build collections and design services "dispassionately" points up how deeply the profession is committed to value free library service. Echoes of David J. Foskett's classic statement on the objectivity project in librarianship can be heard in virtually all statements like this that emanate from ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom.[9] One can almost hear the phrase "no religion, no politics, no morals" reverberating through the halls of deliberation.[10]

A librarian who sensed early on the shaky foundation of objectivity in librarianship was Jesse H. Shera. He remains one of the profession's most creative thinkers of the twentieth century. He and others at the University of Chicago were studying the intellectual forces at work in society and attempting to build a new discipline they called "social epistemology."[11] In his 1954 commencement address to Western Reserve University, Shera briefly outlined this new discipline and the problem it was meant to address. It was aimed at providing the knowledge base necessary to accomplish an effective coordination of the

increasingly fragmented world of scholarship. Shera believed the only two choices for affecting such coordination were authoritarianism and democracy. The discipline of "social epistemology" was to provide tools to ensure that democratic processes guided this coordination of scholarship.[12] Since he viewed librarianship as a profession primarily focused on the "management of knowledge," he closely aligned it with this new discipline.[13] He also recognized that in librarianship the problem of objectivity was particularly acute, as the following passage suggests:

The only rule that governs research is the rule of objectivity... Reasoning or observation diluted with emotion becomes sophistry or dogma. We submit that these are particular threats to research librarianship, for librarianship is a service, and a service is always in jeopardy from emotion. *The librarian means to do good, and by dint of self-sacrifice and hard work he does what he means to do, and therefore that which he does is good.*[14]

Shera understood that the very nature of the librarian's task is laden with value; that there is a "essential tension" between objectivity and subjectivity in its practice. While his goal of establishing a new discipline never materialized he was prophetic in one significant way. He accurately pointed to the choice librarianship must make between authoritarian vs. democratic means for the coordination of its own purpose.[15] This choice would become a defining faultline for the profession's commitment to objectivity during the last quarter of the twentieth century, as it struggled to find its purpose in the post-industrial information age.

During the 1970s and 1980s many in the profession began advocating the adoption of an information science model in hopes of securing its place in the new information age. In the process, the profession's historic commitment to objectivity was challenged because of the model's threat to our shared democratic values. Jorge Sosa and Michael Harris have argued that librarianship in the 1970s and

1980s largely adopted the post-industrial information model as a paradigm for the profession. According to this model, libraries would in time become nothing more than museums or warehouses as their content migrated into virtual libraries accessible through computer networks. Unfortunately, the pursuit of such a model for libraries has contributed to the creation of a *digital divide* separating the information rich and poor.[16] The continuing pursuit of this model calls into question the profession's long standing commitment to objectivity.

In the decade of the 1990s much of the philosophical basis for librarianship's commitment to objectivity came under a more direct attack from postmodernism.[17] Much of that assault took the form of an attack on the claims of positivism similar to that which had been going on for many years in other disciplines. Jim Zwadlo provides a useful review of some of these recent postmodern critiques of librarianship. These include the interpretation of librarianship from the perspective of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Michael Foucault's analysis of knowledge as discourses of power.[18] Zwadlo then adds his own postmodern twist by adopting a radically pragmatic stance that totally abandons any normative truth for librarianship. He seriously doubts that positivism ever operated as a working philosophy for librarianship. Even if it did, according to him, it would be futile for librarians to worry over it because they don't need a philosophy anyway. Zwadlo seems to be lost somewhere on the far side of the Tower of Babel. As he puts it, "Librarians should use methods that work, that serve the ends of the library, its users, and the community, instead of trying to justify privileged claims of truth.["19] Yes, the postmodern challenge to the philosophical grounds of librarianship has caused some to question the meaning of our professional value system. For those who despair of finding normative professional values the path to authoritarianism, like the lure of power presented by the information science model, may be a temptation that proves irresistible. But for many librarians, and especially

those who view the world through a lens of evangelical faith, such despair and hunger for power will not satisfy. For them the task remains to establish new theoretical grounds for the profession.

Other disciplines are already well on their way toward such regrounding. Librarians would do well to follow the paths being laid by historians, who in recent years have been reestablishing the philosophical grounds of objectivity. In 1994, a trio of historians published an important book entitled *Telling the Truth About History.* In it they attempted to reconstruct the basis for objectivity in historical scholarship. Starting with acceptance of the postmodern understanding of knowledge and its subjectivity, they argued for a new theory of objectivity called "practical realism." This admittedly limited view of objectivity is rooted in an understanding of how language, narrative, and memory operate in the human mind. For them knowledge is always subjective, in the sense that it is perspectival. However, some limited approximation of objective truth is still possible. Take for example the courtroom testimony of three eyewitnesses to a murder. When called to the witness stand each communicates a subjective perspective of a real event to the jury. While their testimonies may differ in some details, taken together they can provide an approximation of objectivity close enough to convict or acquit. Such approximation of objectivity is what practical realism aims to establish.[20]

Another historian who has attempted to reestablish grounds for objectivity is Thomas Haskell. His approach has been to follow the basic contours of pragmatic philosophy. He argues strongly for confidence in the truth claims established by communities of the competent. The title of his recent collection of essays, *Objectivity Is Not Neutrality*, is suggestive. Haskell carefully differentiates between the dispassionate stance that is devoid of any judgement whatsoever and the self-conscious detachment that arises out of involvement in an authoritative community.[21] The following passage from his essay on academic freedom illustrates his approach:

The fate of academic freedom

cannot be disentangled from prevailing conceptions of the good and the real…the founders of the modern university were not wedded to a naïve correspondence theory of truth, and they made important concessions to truth's historicity, to its conventionality, and occasionally even to it cultural variability. Fallibility they accepted. But they did not doubt that some interpretations were better than others, better in the strong sense that did not necessarily depend on correspondence and yet was not reducible to perspective.[22]

Haskell aims to provide a way out of the relativist dead-end of postmodernism. He does this by advocating a moderate historicism that admits the contingency of all truth claims but makes room for the possibility that some claims retain value over time and place. Furthermore, these truths can be discovered through the process of causal reasoning.[23] The work of these historians suggests that there are coherent ways to counter the postmodern threat to objectivity and traditional library values.

Librarians have a large stake in the questions of objectivity and truth these historians worry over. If there is no answer to the postmodern formulations that truth is unattainable and all ethical judgements are relative then knowledge itself is hopelessly culture bound. In such an intellectual world libraries become meaningless structures. Assume for a moment that a carefully selected and painstakingly cataloged collection of medical resources is nothing more than one representation of current medical knowledge among myriad other possibilities some of which are constructed on much less rigorous standards. Would anyone have confidence in a doctor who believed that one library is as good as the next in gathering data for diagnosis and treatment? Fortunately, the reputable physician knows that access to an authoritative collection of medical knowledge is essential to positive outcomes. By training and professional association librarians are part of a community of competence important to all areas of scholarly enterprise and to the public enterprise of democracy as

well. Their work of selecting, categorizing, preserving, and making accessible the collective memory of humanity is inherently value laden. When the public librarian places restrictions on a certain video because the content is not suitable for all audiences, s/he does so on the basis of some moral principle.

When the academic librarian recommends one book as the best among several others of similar content s/he does so from some value judgement. At the same time, if these librarians do not exercise a degree of detachment then they run the risk of doing a disservice to their patrons. They probably cannot maintain pure *neutrality* in the conduct of their work; but if they do their work well, they certainly can maintain some measure of objectivity. What I mean is librarians by training and association have developed the tools and techniques that equip them to make judgements which in some limited ways approximate the objectivity of truth; or at the least, reflect the consensus of an authoritative community.

ENDURING VALUES

In his most recent book, *Our Enduring Values*, Michael Gorman outlines eight core values of librarianship.[24] It would be difficult to argue with the importance and efficacy of these values as general principles.

· Stewardship
· Service
· Intellectual freedom
· Rationalism
· Literacy and learning
· Equity of access to recorded knowledge and information
· Privacy
· Democracy

However, there are times in librarianship when two or more of these principles come into direct conflict. In one recent article, Ann Symons and Carla Stoffle documented some of the more painful of these conflicts within our profession. The episodes they documented provide ample warning of the dangers involved in raising legitimate library values to the level of absolutes. Their wish for the development of some "hierarchy of professional values" will probably never be

forthcoming.[25] The process might turn out to be as painful as any previous value conflict we have yet experienced. A more productive approach is to explicate more fully the philosophical grounds of professional librarianship. This will lead to a better understanding of how librarians got to the place where they are and where they are headed in the future.

Gorman's list of values is derived from examining the philosophical writings of S. R. Ranganathan, Jesse Shera, Samuel Rothstein, and Lee Finks. His initial analysis of their respective contributions is couched in a discussion about "the continuum of pragmatism to idealism."[26] In his view, these two competing philosophies are deeply rooted in librarianship and a constant source of conflict. While Gorman does not explore this tension in any detail, his insight is suggestive. He understands that behind the values he expounds there are fundamental philosophical ideas that give those values meaning. Admittedly, both idealism and pragmatism are philosophical constructs that have animated the course of library history in profound ways. On the other hand, there is something much more complex about the philosophical roots of our profession. A fuller understanding and appreciation of those roots will serve to provide us with better guidance as we seek to make application of our professional values.

Some vary capable historians have traced the historical development of libraries in the West.[27] From these we can identify some major philosophical currents that have influenced the formulation of library values. The great explosion of book publishing made possible by the invention of movable type, coupled with the fundamental changes in medieval thought patterns sparked by the Renaissance and Reformation, led to a more prominent yet circumscribed role for the library by the seventeenth century. Beginning in the early modern period and continuing to the Enlightenment, libraries were heavily influenced by the principles of freedom and humanism inherent in the social, religious, and cultural changes taking place at the time. The emphasis on the classics, the expansion of literacy rates, and the focus on

man provided libraries with an abiding attachment to realism and rationalism. This is well illustrated by the development of the classical college in Europe. In the library of the classical college the shelves were stocked with the works of classical writers along with current texts in history, mathematics, logic, the natural sciences, and moral philosophy. Its purpose was to support the institution's goal of creating gentlemen of sound reason, good character, and refined taste.[28]

Certain aspects of the realism and rationalism found in the classical college are still reflected in some of today's liberal arts colleges and the "great books" debate. The literature on the philosophy of librarianship expresses a good bit of such thought. Some of the most profound statements of library realism can be found in the work of Louis Shores, who boldly characterized librarianship as "the profession of destiny."[29] He wrote eloquently of the "generic book as the *sum total of man's communication possibilities*."[30] His definition of the library profession stands as a hallmark of realism and rationalism.

> Librarianship is the profession dedicated to the preservation, dissemination, investigation, interpretation of the knowledge most significant to mankind.[31]

More recently, Lee Finks reminded librarians that "philosophical values reflect our traditional love of wisdom and the truth…that human reason is a priceless thing, and the edifice of scholarship and learning that has built up through the ages has our respect and commitment."[32] Realism and rationalism continue to be meaningful intellectual constructs that provide grounding for library values. However, the history of librarianship in the West has demonstrated that the ideal of building collections "of the knowledge most significant to mankind" is fraught with danger. In the past library collections were built in part to support the ideology of the elite as a means of controlling others.[33] The temptation of power is relentless.

The Enlightenment period ushered in more radical influences that had a profound effect on Western intellectual tradition. The emergence of a powerful egalitarian spirit

and the enthronement of the empirical method fundamentally altered the outlook of the Western mind. These impulses brought about revolutionary change in all areas of society, including the library. The demise of authoritarianism and the march toward democracy in the West was instrumental in the development of library values, as we understand them today. It is no coincidence that the appearance of public libraries both in Europe and in America followed shortly after more democratic forms of government took hold. Then, as Western society became further democratized in the later nineteenth century, public libraries experience dramatic growth. The founding of the American Library Association in the year of America's centennial celebration is symbolic of librarianship's close connection to democratic values. Public libraries have from their inception played a key role in fostering the kind of informed citizenry essential to healthy democratic institutions.[34]

The empirical method as first advanced by Locke, Berkeley, and Hume was concerned with understanding the connection between knowledge and sense experience. Over time empiricism became more rigidly focused on that which was verifiable by the senses as the only knowledge open to the mid. This extreme formulation, commonly known as positivism, effectively eliminated revelation and other forms of special knowledge from intellectual discourse on the grounds that they were not verifiable. This theory of knowledge had a profound impact on the development of the academic enterprise. It resulted in a dichotomy between the sciences, which lent itself easily to the empirical method, and the humanities, which found large areas of its intellectual framework undermined. Most disciplines undertook efforts to reformulate their work on the basis of empiricism, which contributed to a further splintering of the academy. This typically included a heavy emphasis on objectivity, or value free inquiry. When the German model of the university developed as a system in the nineteenth century it was intrinsically connected with empiricism. As new disciplines emerged and older ones were recast they were frequently character-

ized as "social sciences" to indicate their ground in empirical methodology.[35]

The influence of empiricism on librarianship is most strongly felt in its emphasis on objectivity. This is reflected in the work of some of librarianship's most creative thinkers. Early in the twentieth century S. R. Ranganathan applied a rigorous scientific method to the study of libraries and developed his five laws of library science.

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his book
3. Every book its reader
4. Save the time of the reader
5. Library is a growing organism[36]

These laws are so deceptively simple that their fuller implications may not be readily apparent. The deductive logic of these laws is essentially an application of the empirical objectivity project. Taken together they strongly imply that libraries should dispassionately provide books for all readers.

AN EVANGELICAL APPROACH

So far what has been said here concerning the philosophy of librarianship may hold equally for librarians of Christian faith, other faiths, or no faith at all. So one question remains. Just how will the library philosophy of the evangelical Christian be distinctive? Christian librarians would do well to study serious Christian scholars from other disciplines to find models for integrating faith perspectives into their own discipline. A good example is the work of historian George M. Marsden. For several years Marsden has been arguing that Christian perspectives should be accepted in the realm of scholarship on equal footing with other popular perspectives such as gender, race, or ethnicity.[37] A key emphasis in his argument is that Christian scholarship ought to play by the generally accepted rules of the academic game. He reflects on these at length in his book, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. First he suggests that Christian scholars give due respect to the liberal pragmatic method that has proven so effective in furthering knowledge. They also should refrain from appeals to special knowledge since this is frequently off limits in professional

discourse. Then too, they should acknowledge that in some ways ideology shapes all scholarship. Lastly, they ought to make their particular perspectives as transparent as possible.[38]

One very important rule that Marsden challenges is the rule of objectivity, which too often has been invoked as a way of excluding religious perspectives from scholarly discourse. It is important to note that he is arguing against the strict positivist construction of objectivity that cannot allow for anything beyond the empirically verifiable. Unfortunately, he doesn't attempt any reestablishment of the objectivity rule on grounds more amenable to religious perspectives except to argue for their acceptance by analogy to other perspectives such as gender and race.[39] Christian scholarship should be careful not to dismiss wholesale the rule of objectivity, for doing so only invites all manner of error from uncontrolled bias. For Christian librarianship especially, some working grounds for objectivity seems to be essential to our task. Otherwise, much of our professional reason for being is thrown into question. Christian librarians might do well to adapt the approach to objectivity found in the practical realism or the moderate historicism of Haskell described earlier.

Also, for those of evangelical perspective who may find these limited supports for objectivity unacceptable, there are possibilities for constructing a more substantial philosophy. The well-respected evangelical historian, Mark Noll, advocates "chastened realism" as one such possibility. His point of departure is the "common sense" realism of the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers. From there he develops a moderate form of realism which affirms a rational and purposeful universe. This conceptual framework provides a strong support for the objectivity of knowledge while at the same time allowing for certain limitations on objectivity which have been accurately portrayed by postmodern critics.[40]

Returning now to Marsden, it may be helpful to see how he qualifies Christian scholarship in three important ways. To begin with he affirms that "Christian perspectives on academic topics will not change everything, but will change some

things."[41] On the one hand, much of the scholar's work in terms of technique and methodology will be unaffected by a faith perspective. On the other hand, when the scholar's work addresses more fundamental questions of meaning and purpose, then a faith perspective will make a significant difference. As he illustrates, "There may not be a Roman Catholic chemistry, but there is a Roman Catholic view of nature."[42] This line of thought recognizes that while there may not be a uniquely evangelical librarianship, there certainly is an evangelical view of the freedom, which will inform the task of librarianship.

Secondly, according to Marsden, "for Christianity to make a difference it does not mean that the perspective must be uniquely Christian."[43] Though we may at times refer to Christian scholarship as something distinctive in and of itself, it may be more accurate to say that our scholarship is rooted in some uniquely Christian ideas. Two scholars, one Christian and the other atheist, may arrive at the same conclusion or ask similar questions about an issue but the scholar of Christian perspective will find guidance in principles that the atheist cannot consider. So when a Christian librarian and a librarian of secular humanist perspective each arrive at the same conclusion about restricting access to pornographic internet sites, they may do so based on very different principles.

Lastly, Marsden points out "that there are no set formulae for *the* Christian perspective."[44] This simply recognizes that Christianity is a broad and diverse category. Among evangelicals alone there are many flavors of belief, each of which brings its own distinct perspective. This is not to say there are no normative Christian perspectives; rather, it is a humble admission that all of our knowing is unavoidably perspectival. On this side of eternity we all "see through a glass dimly." Marsden seems to be partially accommodating a postmodern conception of limited objectivity.

At this point, it may be helpful to make certain distinctions between types of postmodernism. As with most other patterns of thought, it contains elements that both benefit and threaten Christian perspectives. In a recent essay the evangelical theologian,

Millard Erickson does this by distinguishing between "soft" and "hard" post-modernists.[45] According to Erickson, "soft postmodernism" effectively challenges the strict limitations placed on knowledge and human communicability by the positivists. It also allows for a certain degree of relativism, due to the effects of the social construction of objectivity. Its open epistemology allows for knowledge beyond the empirically verifiable and the influence of social perspectives. This has the beneficial effect of opening the way for Christian perspectives to get a hearing. On the other hand, "hard postmodernism" poses a direct threat to Christian perspectives, indeed to all perspectives, since it adopts a plural conception of truth.

Knowledge is so thoroughly subjective that rationality and objectivity become meaningless. Not only are there various perspectives of truth but there are many equally valid truths.[46] Such conceptions of knowledge and truth are detrimental to the evangelical understanding of truth.[47]

All this points toward new possibilities for developing a coherent philosophical framework upon which to base a Christian approach to librarianship. I am not the first to make such attempts and much of what I offer here attempts to build upon their work. Three who warrant special consideration for the depth of their thought are Richard Waller, Stanford Terhune, and Gregory Smith.[48] These three Christian librarians have each ventured well-reasoned philosophies of librarianship from a Christian perspective. All three advocated an informed theism as the best starting place for a coherent philosophical base for Christian librarianship. However, much of what they say would be consonant with a moderate form of realism that will more easily reach audiences outside the faith. Richard M. Waller's extended essay entitled, "Philosophy and the Librarian", provided a useful analysis of several current philosophical systems and how their application to librarianship might operate. Of these, only humanism and theism met his six essential criteria for a viable philosophy of librarianship:

·Some sort of assertion that there is such a thing as truth.

·Grounds for believing the world to be rational and orderly.
·Hold to purpose in the world…that there is always a reason why things happen.
·Satisfactorily explain how communication between individuals is possible.
·Should not be totally disinterested.
·Must…not be narrowly intolerant[48]

For obvious reasons he understood that humanism would be better suited to the secular librarian, while theism provided a sturdy grounding for the Christian librarian.[49] The humanism and theism he explored essentially return to the claims of rationalism and realism for answers although they start from different places. Waller seems to have been either unaware of the philosophical systems of postmodernism emerging at the time of his writing or he simply ignores them.

In 1982, Stanford Terhune provided a helpful analysis of Christian library service that was well grounded philosophically. He started with the classic theistic assertions that all truth is God's truth and that the universe is rational and purposeful. From this basis, he went on to draw a number of helpful insights into Christian library service. Terhune made the profound observation that the collection of the Christian library may be viewed as symbolic representation of God's truth and its essential rationality.[50] Such an understanding has important implications both for the manner in which collections are organized and the criteria by which they are developed.

Also, according to Terhune, the manner of service provided by Christian librarians ought to be motivated by both high standards of professional competence and the calling to servanthood common to all committed disciples.[51] While his comments on this point are all well taken I would extend them further by making an explicit connection to the task of encouraging intellectual growth by the stretching of the mind. Our students will benefit from encountering ideas that cause them to think critically about their own presupposition.

Lastly, the Christian librarian is obligated to follow high ethical principles in

the workplace.[52] Here Terhune overstated his case. I certainly agree that Christian librarians ought to be diligent in observing applicable laws and conduct themselves by high moral standards. However, his proposal that Christian librarians adopt a stance toward the student or patron which aggressively advocates personal moral understanding should be taken with due caution. Such advocacy may run the risk of turning the librarian's educational task into nothing more than a form of indoctrination. Even the evangelical librarian should be careful not to abandon a prudent detachment.

More recently, Gregory A. Smith has provided a finely crafted grounding of Christian librarianship. He affirmed the following philosophical ground for Christian librarianship by positioning them within a more general philosophy of Christian education that includes the following elements:

·The knowability of truth
·The objectivity of truth
·The unity of truth
·The practicality of truth
·The spirituality of truth[53]

His approach, like the others mentioned here, was theistic and provided a solid grounding in realism. However, he reflected a keen awareness of postmodernism and offered some cautionary words about the limits of objectivity in a way similar to Marsden. As Smith puts it, "while truth itself is absolute, human interpretations of it are subject to error."[54]

Upon this theoretical base of theistic realism Smith sketched some implications for various areas of librarianship. Like Terhune, his comments on collection development are the most helpful. He asserted that the Christian library collection should be developed within a framework that all truth is God's truth. Such a framework requires that the collection be sufficiently expansive to allow for knowledge that is not particularly Christian.[55] Indeed, it might require the inclusion of material that some may consider anti-Christian, if it contains elements of truth or content essential to the library's educational task. Also, his comments on reference service and bibliographic instruction,

though well intentioned, could be interpreted as an abandonment of professional detachment that borders on a kind of missionary advocacy.[56] My previously stated words of caution apply here as well.

At this point I will briefly outline what a coherent evangelical approach to the philosophy of librarianship will look like. Admittedly, what is provided here is sketchy. It is my hope that others interested in these concepts will take up the task of developing them in a more complete fashion. First, an evangelical perspective of librarianship will be rooted in a uniquely Christian worldview. This ought to include some understanding of the knowability, objectivity, and communicability of truth. Such a concept of truth may be formulated around the classical theistic statement that "all truth is God's truth" or some other moderate form of realism. It will also include some recognition of the essential rationality of the universe.

Second, evangelical librarianship, as a distinct discipline and part of the larger academy, ought to play by the accepted rules of the game. It ought to follow the established practices of the liberal pragmatic enterprise of which it is a part. This should include a clear commitment to professional detachment that is both honest about the impossibility of neutrality but supports objectivity as an essential methodological stance. In other words, a certain degree of humility about the veracity of truth claims is prudent because all of our knowing is unavoidably perspectival.

Lastly, the evangelical librarian will understand that a faith perspective makes a significant difference when fundamental questions of meaning and purpose are at stake. The collection developed by an evangelical librarian will stand as a symbolic representation of God's truth and the essential rationality of things. The desire for professional competence coupled with the common Christian calling to servanthood will motivate the evangelical librarian to high levels of excellence.

CONCLUSION

Earlier in this paper, I listed Gorman's

eight "enduring values" of librarianship. It is most interesting to discover that of all these Gorman cites stewardship as the only one unique to our profession. All the others are shared to some degree with other professions and institutions. Librarians alone are charged with the responsibility of preserving and transmitting the complete transcript of human knowledge. Gorman rightly calls this "our singular value."[57] I am convinced that this paramount task gives the profession its core meaning. It is also the reason why objectivity is so crucial to its work. The collections which librarians build, whether they are made up of physical objects housed in majestic halls or electronic representations residing only in some indefinable virtual space, exist as symbolic statements of their institutions' ultimate values. The long intellectual traditions of realism, rationalism, democracy, and objectivity must continue to be foundational to library values. Without them librarians risk losing the meaning of their profession and the purpose of their institutions. That is what is at stake for them in the questions of knowledge and truth raised by postmodernism. By their training and association librarians possess the intellectual resources to make judgements that in a limited fashion approximate the objectivity of truth. Evangelical librarians must not shy away from engaging the broader audience of the profession with Christian perspectives on librarianship.

[2] See Don Fallis and Martin Fricke, "Not by Library School Alone," *Library Journal* 124 (October 15, 1999): 44-45; "Not by Theory Alone," *Library Journal* 125 (February 15, 2000): 134-136; and John Berry, "Library Education Series, Part 2: Students Sound Off About Their Schools," *Library Journal* 124 (November 1, 1999): 46-48. See also "Congress on Professional Education: Focus on Education

for the First Professional Degree," April 30-May 1, 1999, American Library Association; available from http://www.ala.org/congress/

³ See "American Library Association Core Values Task Force," American Library Association; available from http://www.ala.org/congress/corevalues/; Internet; and Michael Gorman, "Values of Steel in 30 Days," *American Libraries* 31 (April 2000): 39.

⁴ Thomas S. Kuhn, "Objectivity, Value Judgements, and Theory Choice," in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977), p. 320. The classic statement of Kuhn's is found in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962).

⁵ Ibid., p. 322.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 322-325.

⁷ Ibid., p. 325.

⁸ For the text of this document see the ALA webpage "Library Bill of Rights," American Library Association; available from http://www.ala.org/work/freedom/lbr.html; Internet.

⁹ "Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries," American Library Association; available from http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/ifprinciples academiclibraries.html; Internet.

¹⁰ Many of these documents can be found online by consulting "Office of Intellectual Freedom," American Library Association; available from http://www.ala.org/alaorg/oif/; Internet.

¹¹ David J. Foskett, *The Creed of a Librarian : No Religion, No Politics, No Morals* (London: Library Assoc., 1962)

¹² According to Shera it was Margaret E. Egan, an associate at the University of Chicago, who coined this phrase which became a major focus of his work.

¹³ Jesse H. Shera, *Libraries and the Organization of Knowledge* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1965), pp. 5-7

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 211-212.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁷ Jorge F. Sosa and Michael H. Harris, "Jose Ortega y Gasset and the Role of the Librarian in Post-Industrial America," *Libri* 41 (1991): p. 15.

¹⁸ See John M. Budd, "An Epistemological Foundation for Library and Information Science," *Library Quarterly* 65 (July 1995): 296-318; Archie L. Dick, "Library and Information Science as a Social Science: Neutral and Normative Conceptions," *Library Quarterly* 65 (April 1995): 216-235; and Gary P. Radford, "Positivism, Foucault, and the Fantasia of the Library: Conceptions of Knowledge and the Modern Library Experience," *Library Quarterly* 62 (October 1992): 408-424.

¹⁹ Jim Zwadlo, "We Don't Need a Philosophy of Library and Information Science—We're Confused Enough Already," *Library Quarterly* 67 (1997): pp.117-119. See also Gary P. Radford and John M. Budd, "We Do Need a Philosophy of Library and Information Science—We're Not Confused Enough: A Response to Zwadlo," *Library Quarterly* 67 (1997).

²⁰ Ibid., p. 119.

²¹ Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994), pp. 254-70.

²² Thomas L. Haskell, *Objectivity is not Neutrality: Explanatory Themes in History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998), pp. 148-151.

²³ Ibid., pp. 203-204.

²⁴ Ibid., pp.9-12. For a fuller explanation of Haskell's approach see the last section of hi s book and especially chapter 10.

²⁵ Michael Gorman, *Our Enduring Values* (American Library Assoc., 2000), pp. 26-27.

²⁶ Ann K. Symons and Carla J. Stoffle, "When Values Conflict," *American Libraries* 29 (May 1998): 56-58.

²⁷ Gorman, *Our Enduring Values*, p. 18.

²⁸ The standard work on the origins of the public library in the U.S. is Jesse H. Shera, *Foundations of the American Public Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1949). A useful and more comprehensive work is Michael H. Harris, *History of Libraries in the Western World* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1984). For the historical development of the academic library see the similar but complementary works of Arthur Hamlin, *The University Library in the United States: Its Origin and Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1981) and Orvin Lee Shiflett, *Origins of American Academic Librarianship* (Norwood, N.J.:Ablex, 1981). An indispensable reference is Wayne A Wiegand and Donald G. Davis, eds., *Encyclopedia of Library History* (New York: Garland, 1994).

²⁹ O. Lee Shiflett, "Academic Libraries," in Wayne A. Wiegand and Donald G. Davis, eds., *Encyclopedia of Library History* (New York: Garland, 1994), pp. 8-9. For a fuller treatment of the classical college see chap. 1 of Shiflett, *Origins of American Academic Librarianship*.

³⁰ Louis Shores, "A Philosophy of Librarianship," in Barbara McCrimmon, comp., *American Library Philosophy: An Anthology* (Hamden: Shoe String Press, 1975), p. 212.

³¹ Ibid., p. 215.

³² Ibid.

³³ Lee W. Finks, "Values Without Shame," *American Libraries* 20 (April 1989), p. 353.

³⁴ Hector J. Maymi-Sugranes, "Social Class Issues in Library History," in Wayne A. Wiegand and Donald G. Davis, eds., *Encyclopedia of Library History* (New York: Garland, 1994), pp. 580-582; See also Harris, *History of Libraries in the Western World*, pp. 224-232.

³⁵ Harris, *History of Libraries in the Western World*, pp. 202-205,224-231.

³⁶ See George M. Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship* (New York: Oxford, 1997), pp. 25-31.

³⁷ S. R. Ranganathan, *Five Laws of Library Science* (London: Edward Goldston, 1931); For a brief analysis of Ranganathan's laws see A. K. Mukherjee, *Librarianship: Its Philosophy and History* (New York :Asia Publishing House, 1966), pp.31-40.

³⁸ George M. Marsden, "What Difference Might Christian Perspectives Make?" in Ronald A. Wells, ed. *History and the Christian Historian* (Grad Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 12-13.

³⁹ Marsden, *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, chap. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., chap. 2.

⁴¹ Mark Noll, "History Wars IV: A Peace of God?" *Books and Culture* 5 (November/December 1999), pp. 42-44.

⁴² Marsden, "What Difference Might Christian Perspectives Make?" p. 13.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Millard J. Erickson, "The Postmodern Challenge: The Christian Mind and Heart in a Postmodern Age," in David S. Dockery and David P. Gushee, eds., *The Future of Christian Higher Education* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), p. 98

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See Richard M. Waller, *Philosophy and the Librarian* (Wales: College of Librarianship, 1977); Stanford Terhune, "The Impact of the Christian Faith on Library Service," *The Christian Librarian* 26 (November 1982): 4-10, 14; and Gregory A. Smith, " A Philosophy of Christian Librarianship," *The Christian Librarian* 43 (April 2000): 46-51, 58-59.

⁴⁹ Waller, *Philosophy and the Librarian*, 17.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.32-34.

⁵¹ Terhune, "The Impact of the Christian Faith on Library Service," pp.5-6

⁵² Ibid., pp. 8-9

⁵³ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵⁴ Smith, "A Philosophy of Christian Librarianship," pp. 49-50.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁸ Gorman, *Our Enduring Values*, pp. 173-174. ✶