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Letter from the Editor

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Letter from the Editor



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What is scholarship? Historically, scholarship has been seen as research, service, and teaching, with research playing the upper hand (Boyer, 1990, p. 13). Subsequently, when asked this question many of us will turn to scholarly peer-reviewed articles, a manifestation of research, as an indicator of scholarship. It must be remembered, however, that a scholarly, peer-reviewed publication only accounts for *a* manifestation of scholarship, not *the only way* which scholarship can be manifested.

I am sure that many librarians are familiar with Ernest Boyer's work, published in the early 1990's, entitled *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Boyer provided a new vision for scholarship. His efforts were not simply to build upon the trilogy of research, service, and teaching, but to provide a new lens through which scholarship could be seen (Boyer, 1990, p. 13). This work has become a landmark and foundation for any modern discussions regarding the definition of scholarship. Boyer (1990) stated that historically, to be a scholar was to be a researcher, and publication was the primary yardstick by which scholarship was measured (p. 1). While Boyer had no intention of dismissing this claim, he desired to broaden the manifestation of scholarship. In so doing, Boyer provided four dynamics through which, he felt, scholarship could be manifested: discovery, integration, application, and teaching.

Boyer's (1990) scholarship of discovery is envisioned as a manifestation of scholarship that contributes "not only to the stock of human knowledge, but also to the intellectual climate of a college or a university" (p. 17). A published article is often seen as this type of scholarship. While this dynamic of scholarship is critical, it should be noted that Boyer's ideology of scholarship does not stop here.

Boyer's (1990) scholarship of integration is practiced when scholars give meaning to isolated facts and put them in perspective (p. 18). Integration takes places when individuals make "connections across the disciplines, placing the specialists in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating nonspecialists" (Boyer, 1990, p. 18) in the process. An excellent example of this is what is taking place with data mining in many libraries. The results of data mining may, at times, be manifested in a formal paper published in a peer-reviewed journal. However, there are several different means through which the results of data mining can be manifested, all of which are manifestations of scholarship.

The ambiguity that comes with the idea of the scholarship of application leaves some concern. However, Boyer (1990) notes that “[c]learly, a sharp distinction must be drawn between citizenship activities and projects that relate to scholarship itself” (p. 23). When a librarian is using their level of expertise to aid a community entity, this is when, Boyer (1990) argues, application can be manifested as scholarship (p. 23). For example, if a cataloger uses their skills to aid a community archival organization in organizing their small collection, this could be a manifestation of Boyer’s scholarship of application.

Boyer’s last domain of scholarship is teaching. To teach well manifests scholarship.

There has been much discussion regarding how Boyer’s ideology fits into assessing and practicing scholarship. While Boyer’s definition definitely opens doors it also forces academia to ask some questions.

In the early 90’s, shortly after Boyer’s work was published, Diamond and Adam asked several professional organizations how their definition of scholarship had responded to Boyer’s work. The results of these inquiries were manifested in Diamond and Adam’s works: *The Disciplines Speak* and *The Disciplines Speak II*. A response from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) was published in *The Disciplines Speak II*.

In their statement, ACRL used the concepts of scholarship, teaching and service to define scholarship for librarians. The only distinction between this definition and the traditional trilogy of scholarship (research, teaching, and service) is that research has been replaced by scholarship. This raises some concern.

Attempting to integrate Boyer’s ideology, ACRL breaks down their first concept of scholarship into four ideas: inquiry, integration, pedagogy, and application. While much has changed since the late 1990’s when this was published, the basic principles of these four points remain. These four elements of scholarship can range anywhere from relying on learning theory to prepare an online course (pedagogy) to constructing means that can be used to assess the library (inquiry). This redefinition enables much of what librarians do in their more administrative responsibilities to fit into the concept of scholarship – and rightly so.

Unfortunately, the integration of Boyer’s concept ends here and the trilogy of scholarship, which Boyer’s work attempted to counter, dominates the remainder of ACRL’s work. Subsequent efforts to challenge or refine ACRL’s definition of scholarship for librarians are few and far between.

A key element in defining scholarship is epistemology, how we see knowledge. Some have suggested that one of the reasons why Boyer's concepts of scholarship have been embraced by some and resisted by others, comes down to one's readiness to embrace a new epistemology (Schon, 1995).

With the two dynamics of the intentional ambiguousness of Boyer's definition and the critical role epistemology plays in defining scholarship, there is a call for individual disciplines and groups with differing epistemological beliefs to define scholarship.

In many respects, this call has been heeded. If one looks at Marsden (1997), Jacobsen and Jacobsen (2004), Ream and Glanzer (2007), Noll (2011), and Sweetman (2016), one begins to see the many ways that Christian scholars have responded to Boyer's call for more work on defining the concept of scholarship. Unfortunately, the work for defining scholarship does not end by providing a Christian platform upon which it can be built.

As Diamond and Adam (2000) recognized in their work: differing disciplines will have differing concepts of scholarship. With this and the fact that Christian epistemology demands a new look at the concept of scholarship (Schon, 1995), the question looms: "what should scholarship look like for believers in Christ who are librarians?"

As librarians who work for institutions of higher education, many of us are asked to manifest scholarship as part of our responsibilities. Some of us work for institutions that have defined what scholarship should look like for our institution. While both of these are great assets, the variety of disciplines often represented in an institution of higher education make it difficult for an institution to define scholarship in anything less than broad, sweeping concepts, often mimicking Boyer's ideology. Subsequently, even with institutional definitions, individuals are often left with ambiguity and uncertainty in knowing how to define scholarship and subsequently produce works of scholarly demeanor.

Who would be best suited to define scholarship for Christian librarians? Part of the mission of ACL includes "strengthening libraries through professional development of evangelical librarians, scholarship, and spiritual encouragement for service in higher education." Having the concept of scholarship embedded into ACL's mission, and the ambiguity of the concept of scholarship, I feel, calls for work to be done on defining scholarship for the association. What does scholarship look like for

ACL? This, I feel, is a looming question. Before any efforts are made to advocate for scholarship in ACL, a definition of scholarship for librarians that integrates a Christian epistemology is critical. †



Soli Deo gloria

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