

# <The Next Generation of Professional Librarians>

Are LIS Schools Teaching  
the Right Competencies?

or, to phrase the question in another way ...

## <Academic Librarians, Research and the Disciplines>

What Kind of Creatures are We?

What Kind of Creatures Can We Be?

# The Main Themes

- ✓ A Digression into Insect Taxonomy for Metaphorical Purposes
- ✓ Some examples of “Scholar Librarians”
- ✓ Idea of “Scholar Librarian”
- ✓ The RLC’s Library Academy
- ✓ South Africa and Library Education
  - ✓ Managerial-Administrative and Technological
  - ✓ An Alternative Vision

# Provisional Ideas

- An intervention in “the debate”
- But is there a debate?
- Library education appears to assume commonality across sectors
- Academic librarianship is a *specialisation*
- Users seem to want specific kinds of support

# More Provisional Ideas

- ✓ What's *character* of our relationship to academics?
  - ✓ Partnership in the academic project?
  - ✓ Hierarchical – they decide, we implement?
- ✓ What's a “scholar-librarian”?
  - ✓ A scholar with a library sinecure?
  - ✓ A librarian who does a bit of research?
  - ✓ Somebody who *integrates* scholarship and LIS?



# <A Digression into Insect Taxonomy for Metaphorical Purposes>

# Completely Different Species

Ants



Bees



# Closely-Related Castes

“Workers”



“Soldiers”



Soldiers are basically just “armed workers”

A soldier ant is just a worker with  
over-developed mandibles ...



# The Metaphor

- ✓ Thing compared  $\leftrightarrow$  thing [implicitly] stated
- ✓ Insect taxonomy  $\leftrightarrow$  librarians and academics
- ✓ Conclusion: *ambivalence at heart of SA LIS education ...*
- ✓ What species are we trying to [re]produce?

# <Some Famous Scholar Librarians>



# Merle Fainsod, 1907-1972



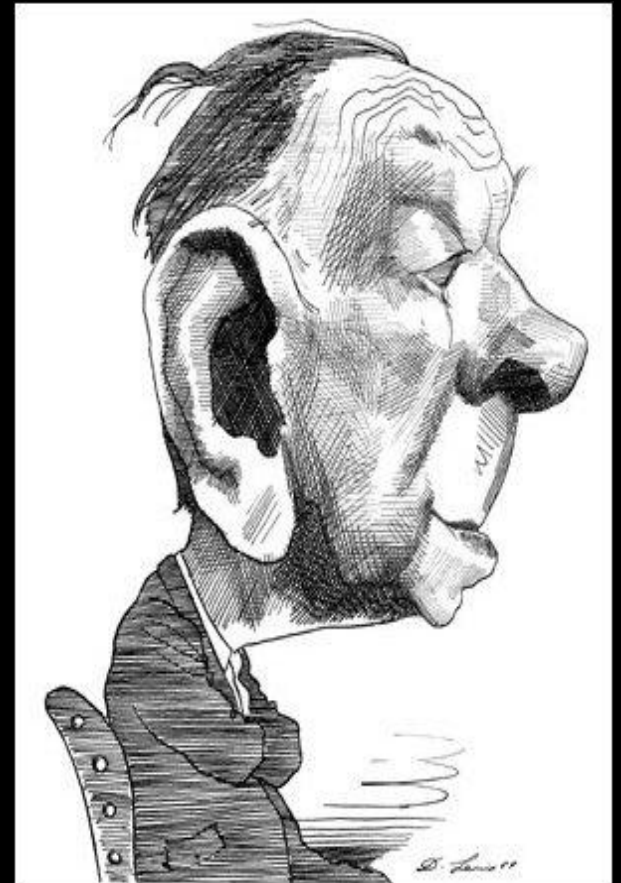
**Director of Harvard University Library, 1964 to 1972**

Student of Soviet politics. Worked with Russian-language archival materials. Author of *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*, and *How Russia is Ruled*

# Jorge Luis Borges, 1899-1986

**Director, Biblioteca Nacional,  
Buenos Aires, from 1955-**

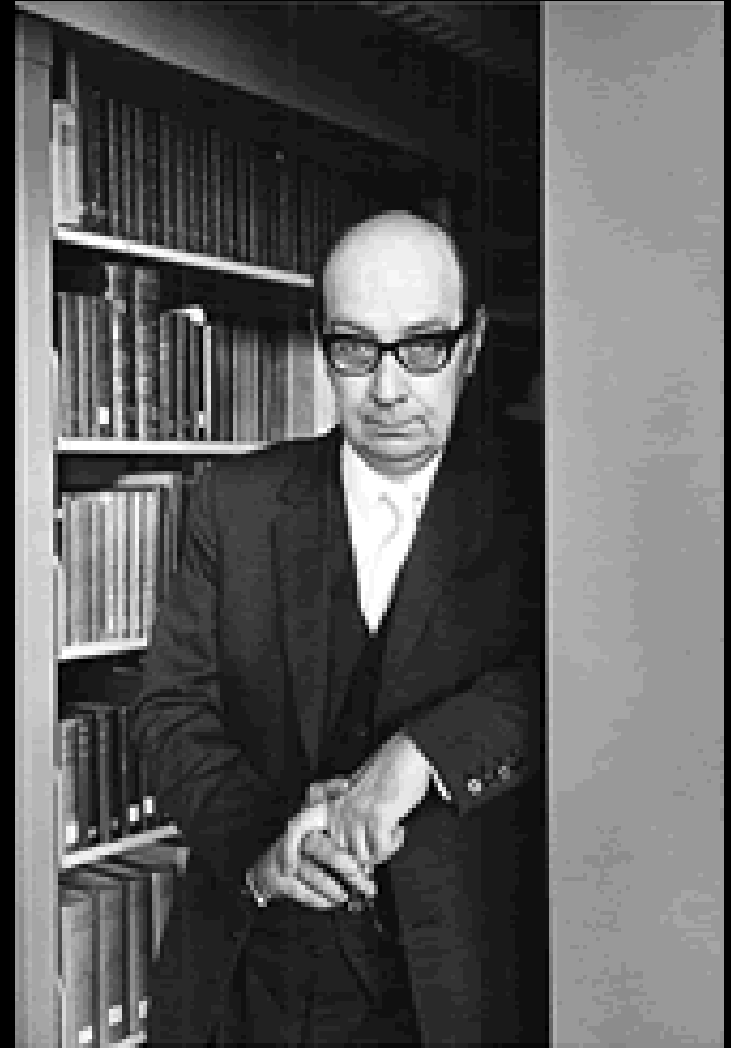
Multi-lingual, poet, essayist, writer,  
conversationalist. Author of *Ficciones*  
and other books. Wrote «The Library  
of Babel».



# Philip Larkin, 1922-1985

**University Librarian, University of Hull, England, 1955-1985**

Poet [*Whitsun Weddings*], novelist [*A Girl in Winter*], scholar of jazz





# Daniel Boorstin, 1914-2004

Librarian of Congress, 1975-1987

Historian, author of over 20 books,  
numerous scholarly articles

Nomination opposed by ALA – *not  
a "library administrator"*

**N.B. – not a library administrator**

# Are These Good Role Models?

- ✓ All at Director level ...
- ✓ Possibly all scholars or litterateurs first, who then landed library sinecures ...
- ✓ Arguable that scholarship was not integral to their librarianship ...
- ✓ Are they librarians at all [*not administrators*]?

# <The *Idea* of the Scholar-Librarian>



# Bears on Bicycles?

- ✓ Boorstin *not an administrator*
  - ✓ therefore not a “real” librarian
- ✓ Self-image depends on mystique
- ✓ Quality of scholarship?
- ✓ Scholars of what – not LIS?
- ✓ Existence of compound phrase gives game away
  - ✓ Librarians are not *normally* scholars
  - ✓ But why not?

# Librarians as an “Academic Caste”

- ✓ Overdevelopment of bibliographic “mandibles”
- ✓ But still basically ants [academics], not bees [administrative staff]
- ✓ A special “caste” within the academic project?



# Some Better Examples, Maybe

- ✓ **Frederick C. Hicks, 1875-1956**
  - ✓ Law librarian at Columbia, and then Yale
  - ✓ Wrote “seminal book on legal research”
  - ✓ Integrated LIS and scholarship
- ✓ **Adolf von Harnack, 1851-1930**
  - ✓ Director of Prussian Royal Library, 1905-
  - ✓ Major German church historian
  - ✓ “rendered invaluable services to the cause of librarianship”

Is it true that the  
time of the  
scholar-librarian  
really passed away  
completely?





# <The RLC Library Academy>

- ✓ Crisis of South African research enterprise
- ✓ One leg of a three-part *library* strategy
- ✓ Other legs are physical and virtual research spaces [*Commons* and *Portal*]
- ✓ Why the Academy?
  - ✓ UCT LibQUAL+ results in 2005
  - ✓ Domain knowledge
  - ✓ Research experience

# Class of 2007, Wits Participants



# The Track Record

- ✓ Three academies have been held
  - ✓ September 2007
  - ✓ October 2008
  - ✓ April 2010
- ✓ Two more planned
  - ✓ October 2010
  - ✓ October 2011
- ✓ Seven universities – UCT, Wits, UKzN, UP, UJ, Rhodes, Stellenbosch

# Class of April 2010



# Character of the Academy

- ✓ Two week residential course
  - ✓ 18-20 participants – mid-career subject specialists
  - ✓ They must apply
  - ✓ Selected by own institutions
- ✓ Lectures, work-shopping, reading groups, even yoga
- ✓ Must produce a “publishable paper”
  - ✓ Cf. special issue of *Innovation* [December 2009]

# Continuous Evaluation Using Different Methods



For  
example,  
“analogue  
tweets”

# Structure of the Academy

- ✓ Week One
- ✓ University researchers describe work
  - ✓ Wide range of disciplines
  - ✓ No “talking down” to librarians
  - ✓ Shift from positivist epistemology
- ✓ Week Two
  - ✓ What do we need to do now?
  - ✓ No easy answers
  - ✓ Renfrew Christie: demand more of yourselves



Renfrew Christie believes librarians can do everything that supervisors can do, and then some

# The US Internships

- ✓ Subset of participants visit US research libraries
- ✓ Two weeks orientation at Mortenson
- ✓ Six-eight week visits at host universities
- ✓ Continuous report-back
- ✓ Mid-visit evaluation meeting
- ✓ Public blog at <http://salibraryacademy.blogspot.com/>

# What's the Impact?

- ✓ We have had substantial feedback from individuals and institutions
- ✓ Short-term
  - ✓ Shifting of mind-sets
  - ✓ Problems → opportunities
  - ✓ More space than you think
- ✓ Long-term
  - ✓ Unpredictable
  - ✓ Worth tracking



# <South Africa and Library Education>

- ✓ Too many confusing qualifications
  - ✓ B.Tech., B.Bibl., PG Diploma, etc.
  - ✓ Too early as professional degree
- ✓ Too much “management”
- ✓ Too much technology and too little technosavvy
- ✓ Too little subject knowledge
- ✓ Too little research experience

# The Library Academy as a Critique of Current Practices

- ✓ *Why* did RLC decide a Library Academy was necessary?
- ✓ “Continuing professional education” model – analysis or excuse?
- ✓ Trying to fill gaps left by South African LIS education [i.e. training]?
- ✓ A stop-gap while we sort ourselves out?

# Future Library Education

- ✓ Simplify the qualifications
  - ✓ The two masters model
  - ✓ One accredited LIS qualification
  - ✓ Employable graduates
- ✓ Technology skills *articulated* with epistemologies and real subject knowledge
- ✓ Research practices *plus* intellectual curiosity

# Minimalism vs. Maximalism

- ✓ Minimalism

- ✓ Library technicians

- ✓ Undergraduate courses

- ✓ Hand-maidens of the users

- ✓ Maximalism

- ✓ *Referenten* [German model]

- ✓ Librarians with subject doctorates

- ✓ Partnership with the academics

- ✓ Time for a return to maximalism – scholarship, LIS skills and techno-savvy all together
- ✓ Let's demand more of ourselves
- ✓ Let's demand more of our students
- ✓ Let's measure ourselves against the best competition

# Thank you

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