The Keystone Principles

An action plan for values-based librarianship

Preamble

In September 1999, 80 academic library leaders came together to engage in a series of discussions and working sessions at the ARL/OCLC Strategic Issues Forum for Academic Library Directors in Keystone, Colorado. These discussions created "The Keystone Principles," a set of principles and action items to guide academic libraries' efforts and establish a foundation for joint future-oriented action based on traditional academic library values.

"The Keystone Principles" invoke and express the urgency of three areas requiring explicit action based on a vivid set of user-centered principles.

• **Access to information as a public good.** Scholarly and government information is created at the expense of public and/or academic institutions. Therefore, there is a public interest in the availability of this information. Yet some commercial interests have disrupted availability through unreasonable pricing policies, restrictive licensing practices, and legislative assaults on the traditional American copyright balance between the rights of the individual creator and the public interest as embodied in the concept of educational fair use. The right to read and know without cost is threatened. Further, in the online environment, commercial access services are distorting search results for profit without defining how these results are obtained and organized. Individuals are receiving biased information without any way to recognize or identify the source of the bias.

• **Need for bias-free systems and for libraries to create these new systems.** At the same time as the technological and economic environments of higher education have changed, academic institutions are being forced to look for ways to create and disseminate knowledge in support of the learning and research programs that are more affordable and sustainable over the long term. To date, these systems have been created largely outside academe and most certainly outside libraries, thus they exist without the benefit of the expertise gained by librarians in how information is used and the academic and societal values librarians bring to the enterprise. As new access and storage systems are developed, it is important that the knowledge and values that surround the traditional academic library be incorporated and systems be developed which restore affordability, provide access, and embody the values of the educational community.

• **Affirm the idea of the library as a nexus for learning and the sharing of knowledge.** In addition, institutions of higher education are actively seeking ways to assess and improve the quality of learning and research programs. There is increasing public demand for demonstrating value-added outcomes for the dollars invested. Technology is seen as a potential enabler, but most campuses lack the human and fiscal resources to make radical changes and to provide the necessary infrastructure for large-scale programs. There is fear among the faculty and many administrators that education will be dehumanized by the introduction of the new technologies in the learning program. A leadership vacuum exists. The academic cachet of the "library as heart of the print university" must become "the library as intellectual crossroad, the hub of the knowledge network."

Principle One

Scholarly and government information is a "public good" and must be available free of marketing bias, commercial motives, and cost to the individual user.

Action items:

1. Libraries will direct resources to mobilize the academic community to adopt Principle One and act in accordance with its spirit.

2. Libraries will direct resources and establish coalitions to create local, state, and national legislation consistent with Principle One.

3. Libraries will direct resources to create outlets for academic institutions, government agencies, and scholarly societies for their information products that operate by policies consistent with Principle One.

4. Libraries will support academic institutions, government agencies, and scholarly societies that maintain outlets that operate consistently with Principle One.

5. Libraries will make purchasing decisions and licensing agreements that embrace the concepts embodied in Principle One.

6. Libraries will create only those software and hardware products that embody the concepts espoused in Principle One.

7. Libraries will support aggressively colleague institutions or colleagues in institutions that challenge unfair licensing and copyright restrictions.

8. Libraries will direct resources to implement this principle by:

    a. establishing true collaborative resource development and programs;

    b. establishing buying consortia; and

    c. partnering with other libraries, publishers, societies, faculty groups, etc., to create a more competitive information environment thereby reducing the cost of commercial information.

Principle Two

Libraries are responsible for creating innovative information systems for the dissemination and preservation of information and new knowledge regardless of format.

Action items:

1. Libraries will direct resources from traditional library budgets to create a digital publishing capability and new access systems.

2. Libraries will direct resources to create new access systems free of bias and ulterior motive and based on customer information seeking patterns.

3. Libraries will partner with faculty, other libraries, and/or other entities to quickly identify, create, manage, and disseminate new digital content critical to learning and research programs of their institutions.

4. Libraries will create interoperability in the systems they develop and create open source software for the access, dissemination, and management of information.

5. Libraries will accept responsibility for campus "information" management as an extension of their traditional role.

6. Libraries will foster the development of systems that ensure long-term access to scholarly knowledge.

7. Libraries will develop new measures of quality and educate the campus, accrediting agencies, and profession to the need for these new measures.

8. Libraries will develop assessment techniques and identify outcome measures that help streamline and redirect resources for these activities.

Principle Three

The academic library is the intellectual commons for the community where people and ideas interact in both the real and virtual environments to expand learning and facilitate the creation of new knowledge.

Action items:

1. Libraries will direct librarian activities to establishing partnerships with faculty in the design of the learning activities of the institution.

2. Libraries will direct new and existing resources to create real and virtual environments to support research and learning activities, e.g., electronic reserves, online content, access tools, etc.

3. Libraries will create spaces where people and ideas can interact regardless of format or location.

4. Libraries will direct resources and create partnerships that ensure 24/7 availability of expertise in support of student and faculty research needs.

5. Through their own efforts and in collaborative endeavors, libraries will create new learning materials and Web-based instructional packages to teach users the skills needed for successful information searches.

6. Libraries will create new measures that demonstrate the value-added contributions of the library to the learning and research programs. ∎