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The Idea of “Community of Practice” as Paradigmatic in Library Collaboration

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General Editor

This issue of Collaborative Librarianship (as does every issue) explores modes of intra- and inter-library partnerships that expand and strengthen library services, but Volume 7, number 2 probes the topic in terms of Jong-Ae Kim’s article, “Integrating Communities of Practice into Library Services.” It defines “communities of practice” as intentional knowledge sharing opportunities for all types of libraries—public, academic, school and special libraries. Essentially, communities of practice (CoP) can be a re-invented paradigm for libraries to widen their roles as cultural and educational institutions through enriching creativity by using new tools for sharing information, improving skills and reducing costs.

While not explicitly addressing the notion of communities of practice, Karen Bordonaro expresses a key value of information sharing by exploring the idea of “scholarship as conversation” and how librarians can participate more fully in classes designed to enhance English language speaking and writing proficiencies. The metaphor as conversation, Bordonaro finds, actually deepens an understanding librarians have of the activities of sharing knowledge, formally and informally, within communities of scholarship.

Another “community of practice” librarians commonly engage is that of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), especially in academic and special libraries. Laureen Cantwell and Doris Van Kampen-Breit discuss the functions of the IRB and possible roles librarians play in its operations. IRB’s, for all intents and purposes, operate on the basis of a CoP, and librarians can contribute expertise concerning literature and research reviews, in promoting the work and operations of the IRB, and ultimately in helping assure the safety and ethical treatment of research subjects.

A profile of the program, “Innovative Librarians Explore, Apply, and Discover – Utah” (ILEAD Utah), represents another community of practice with a multi-type library base. The program, using online tutorials, is designed to deepen the understanding and utility librarians have of technology created for persons with disabilities. The notion of a CoP also encapsulates one of the key purposes of Collaborative Librarianship itself, namely, to share information, ideas, critique and experience of libraries and librarians working together and with other individuals and organizations on the local, regional and national levels. The interesting article by Kotti Thavamani explores at least one aspect of how well the journal engages in collaboration—that is, in publishing multi-author articles—over its first six years of publication.

Collaborative Librarianship welcomes your participation in the community of practice represented by the journal. Join the growing number of authors contributing to this welter of information about how libraries and librarians work together in myriad ways to advance the development and dissemination of knowledge and information.