

**Fishing with Grenades or Greening The Mind:
Value, Values and Municipal Libraries for the New Millennium**

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I have been asked to talk about the value of the public library. In order to highlight the public library's actual, potential and unrealised value, I propose to examine some issues which could inhibit or facilitate the extent to which a local library is able to contribute to the prosperity of the local area. Thus, to a large extent, I will be exploring the types of things Artemus Ward was referring to when he reminded us, *'It ain't so much the things we don't know that get us into trouble, it's the things we know that just ain't so.'*¹

While in some senses the start of a new millennium is merely an accident of Western counting, the turn of the century will be a watershed in two important areas. For the majority of this millennium, and all those preceding it, the greatest dangers individuals have faced arose from agents outside ourselves - diseases, natural disasters, famine. In both Palaeolithic and Neolithic economies, the survival interaction was entirely between people and nature; in the Industrial economy, the survival interaction was between people and things. In the Cyber economy (variously also called the Information economy and the Service economy) for the first time the survival interaction is between people and people. In the early years of this century, economics, politics, and personal values were studied together in the university departments of moral philosophy. It was understood that they are inextricably linked as well as intensely practical. We appear to have forgotten about these natural linkages.² As we move into the next millennium, uneven distribution of resources, together with pollution and exploitation, all of which have their source in personal human motives and values, will constitute the greatest danger to individuals. For example, more than half of the world's one hundred largest organisations are now corporations, not countries. The world's ten richest men have one and a half times as much money as the combined national incomes of the world's 48 poorest countries, representative of one tenth of the world's population. The combined wealth of the world's seven richest men is more than enough to provide access to basic social services and income transfers to provide for the basic needs of the poorest one quarter of the world's people³.

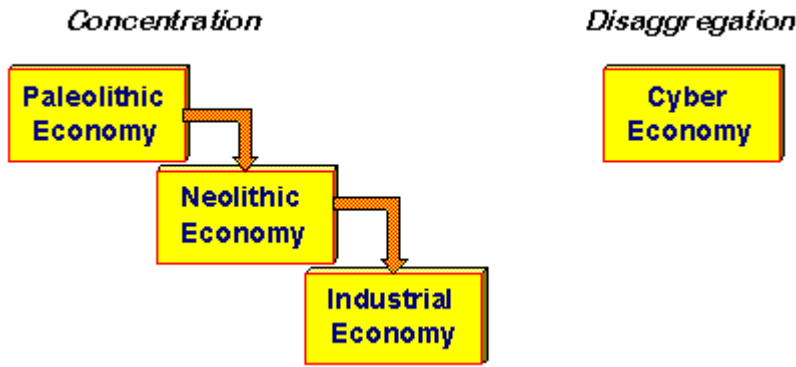


Figure 1: The Information Age is Reversing Previous Trends

Though Cyber economy interactions are between people and people, the Information Age reverses the previous trend of aggregation of people and the resources and services they need. The development of collections of information sources is a prime example - from a few paintings in a cave, to a moderate number of handwritten manuscripts, to very large collections of factory printed books, to the huge but distributed collections of documents accessible through the Internet. The transition from Palaeolithic to Neolithic and from Neolithic to Industrial economies required concentration of resources and populations and each resulted in a capacity to support a tenfold increase in population. The Cyber economy no longer requires that concentration. People can work independently of location, and even where groups of workers are required, those workers can be located anywhere in the world. In the truest sense, Australian workers compete for their jobs on the world market, and the quality of our people is clearly linked with prosperity.

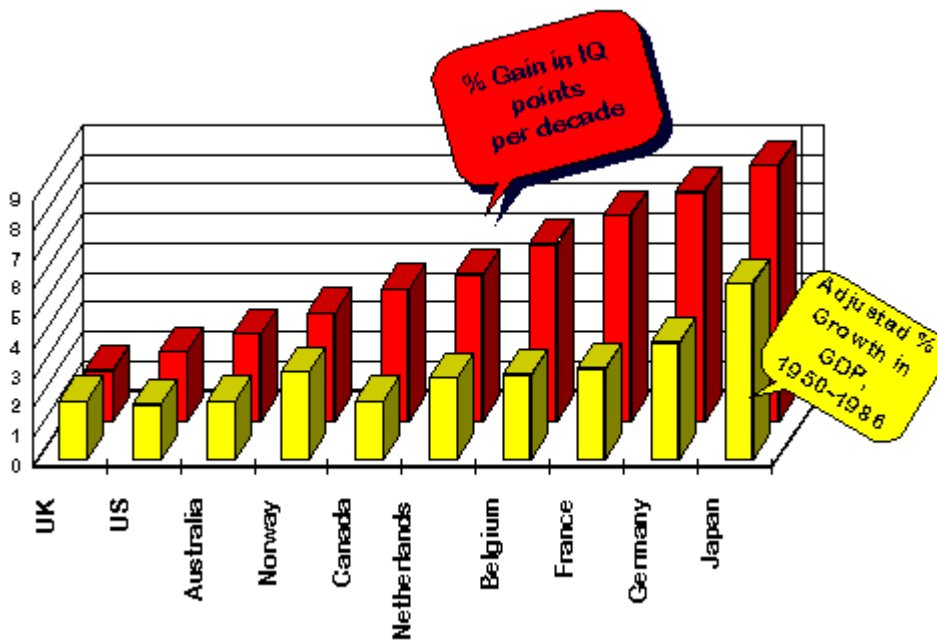


Figure 2: Correlation between Intelligence and Prosperity

Increasing IQs are positively correlated with increasing Gross Domestic Product.⁴ This sends a clear message that smarter more productive workers and more well rounded individuals contribute to increasing prosperity. We know enough about IQs to know that intellectual stimulation causes them to increase.

The roads, rates and rubbish orientation of local councils results from responding to basic needs as populations became more concentrated. The roots of the public library, at least in its British genesis, lay in the desire of the employing classes to control the working classes who were starting to read seditious literature about worrisome things like human rights. Providing 'good' literature, that is literature that had the imprimatur of the establishment, was seen to be a mechanism for keeping workers passive and malleable. Public libraries were thus a mechanism for controlling the canon of knowledge. Though much current cost-cutting would lead one to believe that a passive and malleable workforce is still a priority for many organisations, to be competitive in a global economy, local areas need creative, intelligent, adaptive and continuously learning people. By supporting that end, a municipal library can make a significant contribution to the competitiveness of the local community in a disaggregated world.

In this paper I will use the word *competitive* in two senses. The first, the sense in which I have just used it, is the extent of survivability, viability or future prosperity of a local community in the global environment of the twenty-first century. The second is in the sense of being competitively priced or costed, that is, no dearer, and preferably cheaper, than other similar services.

The first part of the title of my paper was inspired by a joke:

Bluey joins a new council in a fairly senior position and on the very first weekend is invited to go fishing by a colleague named Tex. They arrive at the boat ramp and as they load their fishing gear in the boat Bluey notices Tex has a fishing box, a bucket and a net, but he can't see a rod. He assumes that Tex has a high-tech collapsible rod, so he says nothing. They cast off and head for the reef, where they drop anchor. Bluey starts to get himself organised. He prepares his bait and puts it onto the hook. Tex nonchalantly opens his box, lifts out a grenade, pulls the pin, and tosses it into the water. Boom! The explosion rocks the boat violently and soaks Bluey from head to foot. Dead fish rise to the surface all round them. Tex grabs his net, scoops up the fish, and puts his catch in the bucket and then sits back and cracks a tinny. Bluey just sits there staring at him like the proverbial stunned mullet. Noticing this, Tex reaches into his box, hands Bluey a grenade and says, 'Well, are you just going to sit there or are you going to fish?'

Fishing with grenades is a good analogy for two of the fads in modern management identified by Hilmer and Donaldson⁵: the 'action approach', management by action rather than by reflection and analysis, and 'techniques for all', that is, find the appropriate solution and apply it quickly. As such, fishing with grenades is an apt metaphor for many of the change projects that are implemented in both public and private sectors. I use the word *project* in preference to *program* quite deliberately. Under the overall umbrella of change what tends

to occur is sequential implementation of projects designed to effect change, rather than an integrated program of change.

One of the reasons we laugh at jokes is because jokes depend on mismatches in assumptions. Bluey knows fishing is a precise act. Tex has a different view. People who fish generally know what type of fish they are going after and what bait and conditions are optimal for catching that type of fish. They also value the environment because they know that if they destroy it, they will not be able to fish any more. However, fishing with a rod is an unobtrusive occupation, results can be a long time coming and the tales' fishers tell tend to be taken with a grain of salt. Use a grenade and you get a great deal of noise, but you also get a quick return for your effort and people sit up and take notice.

In the public sector we have definitely taken notice of the change projects and methods used in the private sector. Al Dunlap has probably matched on the speaking circuit the \$US100 million he walked away from Scott Paper with for his twenty-month stint as CEO. Yet, Dunlap's contribution to the company was cutting its research spending in half, eliminating staff training programs, and laying off a third of his thirty-three thousand employees. As one commentator stated, *Dunlap didn't create value. He redistributed income from the employees and the community to the shareholders.*⁶

I will digress for a moment to point out that the theorists wanting to describe the stockholder, or shareholder, relationship in the public sector, coined the word stakeholder. Stakeholders are all those who have a vital interest in the activities of the public sector organisation and on whom decisions and activities impact. If you substitute public sector vocabulary and apply the comment about Dunlap redistributing income you start to see that rather than robbing Peter to pay Paul, as in the private sector, you end up robbing Peter and Peter's descendants for the illusion of saving Peter a little on his rates. While corporations may differentiate clearly between the organisation and the community, I am not so sure that the difference between the local authority, as an **organisation**, and the local community is always fully understood and articulated with regards to competitiveness.

Unfortunately, it seems that structural changes are assumed to unfailingly result in competitive improvements. In this context, competitiveness means 'as cheap as'. Competitive cost has nothing to do with competitiveness. Indeed, price based competitiveness, which has lead us down the route of business process reengineering and benchmarking, is vastly different from learning based competitiveness. When you look at process benchmarking, benchmarking your library against another can tell you how cheap or economical or efficient your library is compared with that other, and that is important to know, but it will tell you nothing about how it contributes to local **community** competitiveness in a global economy. Indeed, while globalisation highlights the weak points in the economic systems of industrial nations by increasing competitive pressures and pushing for efficiency, competitive pressures can make organisations myopic, cutting costs in the short term at the expense of programs and policies that would make sense in the long term⁷.

The second part of my title is a reference to something said by Mohsen Zahran, project director of the new library at Alexandria.

You can spend all your money on roads and housing and on the poor but in the end you simply find yourself needing more money. Real civilisation always starts in the mind. It is ideas that make life grow green. Even our greatest problem ... is a matter of ideas. If we do not have them and cherish them, we shall be tied forever to the wheel of circumstance. I think the Bibliotheca [Alexandrina] will be a beacon of ideas for peoples like us all over the world⁸

Remember the perennial fairy story scenario in which some magical being offers the granting of three wishes. When we were children, my sister and I would spend hours examining the choices made by the characters in those stories. Inevitably, self-serving behaviour compounded by imprecise language resulted in things going wrong, and the last wish always had to be used to put things right again. The television advertisement in which Tim's wish to be rich, irresistible and really-really cool results in him being turned into a packet of Tim-Tams in the refrigerator, prompted me to revisit those childhood conversations and think about what I would wish for now. Apart from the obvious - to be thin and rich - it seems to me that what would I wish for is what every citizen would wish for: that all elected and appointed officials were incapable of telling anything but the full and unvarnished truth. This is not to say that all councillors and council officers deliberately tell lies, though, of course, some of them do. Rather, I am referring to what my father used to characterise as 'Handling the truth carelessly'. Sometimes that does incorporate outright lies or deliberate distortions, but more often it results from unchallenged assumptions and unquestioning acceptance that what we 'know' really is so. None of us are immune to holding questionable beliefs. We all have limitations on our ability to detect and correct for biases in incomplete and unrepresentative data. We eagerly interpret ambiguous and inconsistent data in the light of our pet theories and *a priori* expectations. These are a measure of our values and they motivate us to indulge in wishful thinking and self-serving distortions of reality. We accept second-hand information and the distortions introduced by others who summarise the data for us, and we tend to see in random data regularity and order where only the vagaries of chance are operating.

It is commonly predicated in local government that one of the reasons for requiring fast and radical change is that elected representatives have a notoriously short-term view, largely because they have their eyes only on the next election. Appointed officers, however, it is assumed, take the long-term view and make unbiased decisions based on the facts while the decisions of elected representatives are self-serving and biased and based on their need to ensure they are re-elected. Occasionally a politician will do something that appears to confirm this assumption, for example, Bob Hawke's recent advice to an African government that implementing gambling as a revenue-raising mechanism is **politically** risk-free.

I contend that we must vigorously challenge all of these assumptions. Psychological research shows that the model of unbiased judgements and decision-making is unrealistic and objectivity is a psychological impossibility. Humans suffer from a cognitive inability to eliminate bias from their interpretation of information. Bias typically enters unconsciously and unintentionally at the stage of making judgements, though this does not preclude deliberate misrepresentation at reporting stage of performance measurement or in justification of a decision. So-called impartial judgements are therefore likely to be unconsciously biased in a

manner that is commensurate with the individual's self-interest,⁹ something the psychologists call 'self-serving bias,'¹⁰ regardless of circumstances and methodology. The hierarchical nature of the accountability chain in the public sector together with the asymmetrical nature of authority relationships,¹¹ though designed to eliminate bias, facilitates self-serving bias. The traditional hierarchical view of accountability to official superiors serves only the party who delegates responsibility.¹² In particular, individuals who know the expectations of those to whom they are accountable tend to conform to those expectations.¹³ Judgment quality may suffer because an individual's views are shifted in the direction of the person to whom they report.¹⁴ It is also worth noting that many of the mechanisms that increase cost-based competitiveness, such as outsourcing, are also mechanisms that reduce traditional public sector accountability.

It is possibly superfluous to remark that, in local government, elected representatives are just that, local. They tend to be long-term residents with deeply rooted associations. They are also far less mobile than career minded appointed officers who are more likely to have a short-term view because they have their eyes on their next job. It tends to be the appointed officials who go fishing with grenades, attract attention, and move on to a bigger pond and a bigger grenade before the full impact of the explosion becomes apparent. Local elected representatives are fully aware that more than just their immediate re-election hangs on their decisions. Propensities for self-serving bias aside, there is a fundamental difference in responsibility. The appointee is an employee tasked with providing services within the context of an organisation (whether library or council). Thus the officer is responsible for ensuring that the operation is competitive in the sense that it is leanly run, that wastage is minimised to maximise return on available funds. The elected representative is ultimately responsible for ensuring the long-term survival and prosperity of the community. The challenge is to ensure that cost-based competitiveness does not compromise the capacity to compete for those things that deliver prosperity. There is a whole lot of difference between saving and wealth-creation.

The current development cycle in public organisations starts with legitimacy being conferred by the population in the local area. The politics area then defines the development and mandates the management area to arrange for it to be implemented. The services area carries out the actual implementation and finally the population area passes judgement on the politics area, every three to four years, on how this has all occurred.¹⁵ Instead of the current convention of elected representatives setting the direction of what should be done and appointed officers filling in the detail (which in the case of libraries tends to come down to virtually all decision-making) perhaps, in order to minimise the impact of self-serving bias, these roles should be reversed. Appointed officers would be charged with identifying and justifying what should be done, and elected representatives, who are closer to the local community, would take responsibility for fleshing out the details of how it will be done, because, in terms of impact on the community and propensity of solutions to cause problems, process is as important as the result. As Glyn Thomas said in his autobiography, a rare example of an autobiography that is neither self-serving nor self-aggrandising, *'the truth is in the walking. We are betrayed by the destination'*¹⁶

I want to turn now to examine how we measure the value of a public library. I have to say that I am particularly cynical about the generic approach to demonstrating the value of libraries. When you are talking about a particular community, the generic value of libraries is a nonsense. If you are talking about contribution to local competitiveness, libraries are not interchangeable.

Defining value in the context of libraries is complex. Even where it is centrally defined and formally shared, value is a context-dependent, subjective, social construct.¹⁷ It is attributed by a person. Your answer to the question: ‘What is the value of your public library?’ will depend entirely on your definition of the word ‘value’, your own personal values, and the distance of your horizon. When we talk about value we tend to be thinking value-for money. It would appear to me that most decisionmakers in local government think - ‘*What can we charge for it?*’ There is a very good reason for that a reason which lies in the reality of performance measurement.

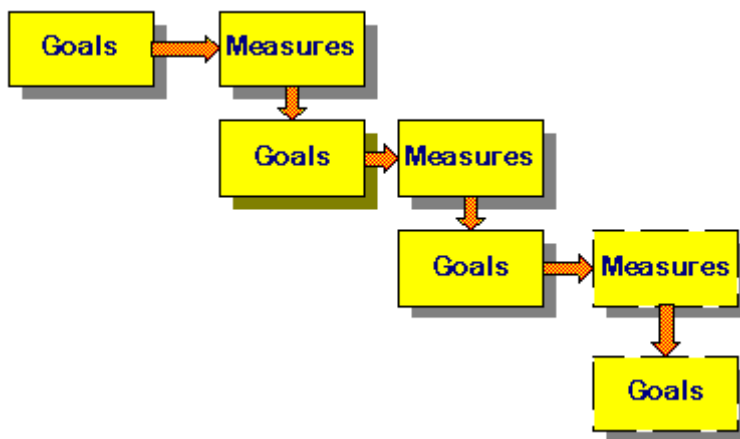


Figure 3: The Reality of Performance Measurement

I have written at length about the methodologies I have implemented to measure the value of individual libraries,¹⁸ but those methodologies focus on justifying annual budgets. The bottom line is that librarians have to be able to demonstrate the value that libraries add to the goals set for senior officials. Whatever the rhetoric about services and benefits the truth in publicly funded organisations, is that the CEO has mandated goals which are usually short-term and financial. The goals have measures, which, of course, become the goals of the person(s) who report to the CEO, and this is replicated all the way down the line. So, unless you can demonstrate that your operation contributes to the CEO being seen to be a good financial manager, you have little hope of survival, of ensuring that those who allocate resources will continue to support allocation of funds to the library. Therefore, short-term performance reporting requires demonstrating value in terms of return on expense, on the budget for the year, in order to demonstrate that your operation benefits the personal agendas of decision-makers.

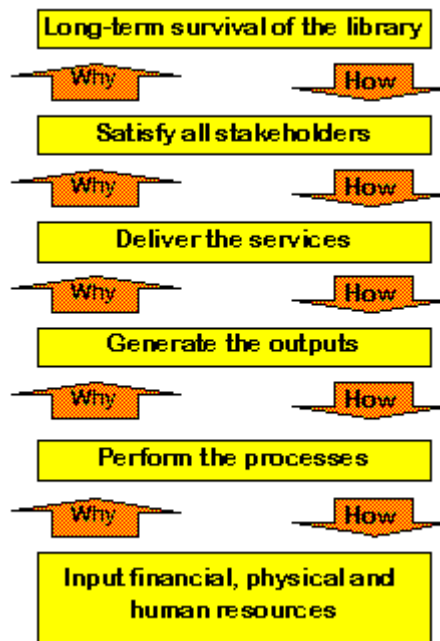


Figure 4: The Purpose of Current Short-Term Performance Measurement

Even though municipal libraries, by and large, report in terms of outputs, in reality most output measurement in libraries is a surrogate input measurement. It focuses on cost, on quantity for money rather than value for money. Reporting on value for money tends to revolve around short-term immediate return on expenditure, that is, the library tries to make manifest its contribution to good financial management. Demonstrating value, however, should be more than a matter of merely showing that allocation of funds is skewed towards areas of highest demand. It is also possible to demonstrate that expenditure on libraries contributes to the current economy of the area, and results in some cost-reduction in delivering other Council services. All of these benefits can be quantified in monetary terms.

For example:

- A large proportion of the money spent on providing a library service goes in staff salaries. Most of those salaries are recycled into the community or returned to the community in tax-funded grants and subsidies, or spending on local infrastructure and services by other levels of government
- A public library allows many users to share library resources, reducing the community's expenditure on books, magazines, newspapers and other library materials (of which very little remains in the community and a proportion of which goes overseas) and therefore frees up personal discretionary income to be spent in other ways in the community. Even assuming a small amount, say \$100 per annum per capita, the cost of 6-8 paperback books at today's prices, would mean an economic benefit to local business of \$100,000 per 10,000 population
- Council can realise considerable savings by distributing council information through the library rather than delivering it by other means. In addition, the 'recycling' inherent in

library provision of access to books, newspapers and magazines, reduces the amount of paper waste and therefore the cost of waste disposal.

- As an added benefit, participation in resource-sharing activities such as the inter-library loan system, provides local residents with access to a far larger resource than that owned by the council. Wherever you are resident, the local library allows you to receive the same benefit from the national distributed collection.

Outcome reporting is still in its infancy. However, the main outcome of public library provision tends to be seen to be current customer satisfaction. In the short term, achieving customer satisfaction requires reliably and consistently satisfying customer requirements for quality, quantity, timeliness and service performance, and satisfying those demands cost-effectively, which means reducing or avoiding costs to customers.

If, as it should be, current customer satisfaction, though undeniably an important measure, is identified as a short-term, interim outcome which does not displace the ultimate outcome, competitiveness in the sense of long-term community viability and prosperity, the main outcome we should be looking for is **gains** in community competitiveness which can be **directly attributed to the library**. In such a climate, the library becomes a beacon of ideas.

The bridge between short and long-term value of the library is the value of the librarian. Though this is normally not factored in, it is a matter of survival for librarians to demonstrate their value. Counting people as costs, not assets, constitutes a powerful incentive to minimise costs. The mechanisms which tend to be put in place to ensure that staff are worth the money spent on them tend to be mechanisms for control, rather than mechanisms for valuation. If we apply the logic of modern accounting practice, a librarian is an asset. Where current year bottom line is the watchword, this raises some interesting questions as to how we calculate the total value of a librarian. Organisations generally find it difficult to distinguish between the cost of paying people and the value of investing in them. How do we assess the value not only what a librarian does, but of what that librarian knows. This is an issue I explored in depth in a paper I gave at the ALIA Specials Conference last year.¹⁹ To summarise, we tend to fully expense salaries and training, but some of what people learn, and some of what they do, in the accrual sense, returns value only in subsequent years. Therefore, instead of saying our librarian cost us \$50,000 this year, it might be that you can say that, say, 75% of the salary is expensed, which means that, in subsequent years, you look for a return on the 25% of the salary that represents an investment. This should put librarians on notice that they have to keep ratcheting up the benefits they return to the organisation and to the community, increasing it every year to reflect the increased size of the investment in them and to demonstrate that the skills and services provided by librarians are a critical contribution to the overall benefits realised from provision of a public library.

It is not unusual for libraries to both justify annual expenditure by stating that in addition to the short-term returns on expenses, expenditure on libraries delivers the benefits that accrue to a community from its access to life-long learning and culture-transference opportunities, and fail to quantify the actual value of this aspect of libraries. It is imperative to implement appropriate performance measurement and reporting to demonstrate the long-term

contribution of the library to community learning and development outcomes. Perhaps, the benefits can be demonstrated by something the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said. *'It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change.'* How responsive is your community to change? Accurately demonstrating the actual value will always be difficult if we take the long-term view because it will entail conducting longitudinal studies, but it should not be impossible. For example, funding for libraries can be correlated with the relative success of a resident cohort over time, or the financial benefit of reducing leakage of population to metropolitan areas can be charted.

There is no other more effective method than education for increasing the capacity of humans for change. As a society, we invest a lot in the education of our children because we know from experience how impossible it is to predict what the future holds for them, and therefore we believe that the body of science and understanding we can bequeath to them is still the best investment we can make for them and their future. We are also recognising the importance of life-long learning. However, while we talk about the role of the public library in life-long learning, we appear to fail to make the connection between those opportunities within a local area and the overall competitiveness of the area, and we certainly have not focused energies, resources, knowledge and skills towards improving life-long learning outcomes. There is much compelling evidence that, of the determinants of student learning outcomes over which the school has influence, the teacher is the most significant. In a library, I would argue, it is the **collection** that assumes the significance that the teacher has in a school. The collection represents a long-term investment in intellectual capital. The stock market prices high-tech stocks at a higher premium-to-book-value than stocks in industries with mature technologies. In other words, it sees the intellectual capital as seeding for the future. In mergers and takeovers, this is clearly manifested. A good business is typically valued at several times the value of its tangible assets. The difference is the potential added value of the intellectual capital in its key people. Therefore, the better the intellectual capital of a community, the more competitive it will be.

Lest anyone is sitting there thinking, 'But the Internet will replace libraries' let me say a couple of things. When I use the word 'collection' I do so in the broadest possible sense, including Internet-based resources to which the library facilitates access. I must make a couple of points about the essential differences between Internet-based information and resources and those that are part of the physical collection in the library. On the Internet, the information available represents a rapidly expanding piece of the real world with all its imperfections and diversity. You will find the views of experts and thus some material on the Internet is an extension of the accepted canon of knowledge presently to be found in the libraries. In some cases, you will also be able to correspond directly with those experts, thereby adding the enriching experience of debate to the distilled knowledge to be found in the publication. There is, however, no guarantee that The Internet will deliver the depth, comprehensiveness and reliability of a good library collection. Indeed, on some subjects the large majority of articles are biased towards one side of the argument²⁰ or are frankly advertorial. There is also the question of invisibility. If a library holds an item, users will be able to find it in the catalogue. On the Internet there is no such guarantee. The major search engines only find a small proportion of the documents actually available because search

engines' indexes are not exhaustive. Search engines are not equal. For example, Alta Vista covers only 28% of the documents on the Internet, while Infoseek covers only 10%. In addition the number of hits any topic achieves appears to be a measure of popularity, celebrity or notoriety, particularly in the United States, rather than importance to society. For example, a search on Bill Clinton will result in three times as many hits as a search on Albert Einstein, who is also just beaten by Ronald Reagan, and ten times as many hits as on Marie Curie.

Getting to the truth about our libraries depends on the performance measurement that goes on in those libraries and around those libraries. Small things have large consequences. Measuring the quality of a collection by its average age (that is, the date of publication of the volume) can result in anomalies. For example, a copy of Virgil's *Iliad*, published in 1998, being seen to be 'better' than a copy of the *Iliad* published in 1928. A copy of *The Diet Cookbook for Royal Dogs*, a title I made up to highlight trivial content, published in 1998, would be regarded to be infinitely more meritorious than a collected works of Shakespeare published in 1968. Worse, and this is something I have seen happen, collections may be weeded of valuable content, including rare out of print items and first editions, in order to reduce their average age. Trend analysis on the rate your collection is aging can provide some insight into the appropriateness of funding for collection purposes. The annual budget can be a proxy for one indicator of collection quality. However, unless you also monitor the rate at which the content of the collection is becoming obsolescent together with the breadth and depth of the collection, you will gain no useful insight into whether your library has the **potential** to be a beacon of ideas.

In the accrual accounting sense, the value of a library collection represents deprivation value based on commercial price, not on the value of the ideas in those collections. Of course, on an idea by idea basis, an idea that is priceless to one can be worthless to another, but overall, like education, we do not know what the collective value of the collection, or even the value of a single idea is except in hindsight. So we need other means of establishing the value and quality of the collection.

My colleague Charles Willett, editor of *Counterpoise*, the review journal for alternative literature, provides one insight into the complexity of this. He recounts how, when he entered Harvard as a freshman in 1950, Lamont Library, the first undergraduate library in the United States, was very new. It boasted a beautiful collection of 100,000 volumes selected by the best bibliographers and professors. This library greatly enriched his study of philosophy, literature, history and political science over two years, at the end of which he asked for a leave of absence, enlisted in the army, volunteered for Korea and nearly got killed. Nothing he had read in Lamont Library, Charles says, gave him any indication that he was being very stupid.

Charles' story, and my own personal observation, suggests that one indicator of library collection quality - the 'balanced collection' - is often nothing short of a fallacy. It was bad enough in the 1950s, when the issue was merely the views of the establishment, the accepted canon of knowledge. In that regard, I think it behoves everyone who has anything to do with library collection management or funding, to remember that the discoverer of

blood groups kept framed on his wall for the rest of his life, the rejection letter he received from *The Lancet*. In the 1990s, as the discipline of the market-place increasingly drives our libraries, we are led to believe that demand creates supply. Quite often it is the other way around. Supply creates demand and this can happen on more than one level. The supply system to a library can be heavily weighted and rigged by all sorts of things other than readers' preferences. These things can range from outsourcing of selection, as we have seen from the Hawaii experience, to over-reliance on one library supplier. The 'free market of ideas' is a myth, at least in relation to the ideas conveyed through books and media. The book market, like the commodity market in general is an oligopolistic system. It is a free market for those who have the big money.²¹ Certainly, collections tend to be heavily weighted towards mainstream trade publications because those are the ones that are heavily advertised, and thus easy to identify and buy. Alternative voices tend to be scarce in our library catalogues. Compared with books from alternative publishers, books from one of the big publishing conglomerates are likely to be more widely distributed and displayed, and therefore bought by libraries. In a market place of ideas, information is assessed for its ability to grab market share, not for its value or truthfulness.²² How much of your budget over the past year has been gobbled up by what a staff member of mine refers to as 'The Diana Industry'?. Even readers' preferences can be rigged by supply. In the 1960s and 1970s a number of studies demonstrated that little old ladies like to read romances, and little old men like to read westerns. Those studies tended to be conducted in old peoples' homes or other situations where the available collection was already pre-selected in line with those assumptions, which goes some way to demonstrating the potential pitfalls in purely demand-based collection development. Some years ago I started questioning our acceptance that women use public libraries more heavily than do men.²³ I pointed out that there is an uneven distribution in public library collections that favours English-speaking women. Nothing I have seen subsequently leads me to believe that this bias has been eliminated.

Then there is the issue of censorship. We tend to think in terms of incidental censorship, cases where individual books are challenged, but systemic censorship is more of a problem. That is, the censorship that occurs when the system limits the coverage in the collection in order to avoid controversy, whether by not buying particular books, not providing access to certain points of view - which can be as basic as demanding the removal of the condom pamphlet from the AIDS information kits distributed in the 1980s - or by implementing filters on Internet access. These are all examples of the personal values of some individuals being allowed to compromise the range of content offered. While I do not want to belabour the point about censorship, I will just comment from my experience as part of The Internet Filter Assessment Project²⁴ last year, that Internet Filters are software products that, in some cases, represent much wider personal values than concern about pornography. There can be a strong far right influence on the criteria used for blocking, so be careful. If you install a filter to protect library users from sexually explicit materials, you may find that you have also bought into racist and pro capital-punishment values. While your users will not be able to access pictures of bare bits, they will also will be blocked from accessing facts and figures about the racial composition of prisoners on death row in US prisons or the web-sites of anti capital punishment organisations. On the other hand, they **will** be able to access photographs of convicted prisoners taken during and after execution.

The disciplines of the market place entrench in libraries short-term focus and short-term goals. What results is tantamount to 'managed intellectual care' by analogy with the managed care common in the United States and now being introduced into our hospitals and health services. While managed health care is justified as being a method of allocating scarce community resources, if you saw the movie, 'The Doctor', in which William Hurt played a doctor suffering from cancer, the real effect of managed health care becomes apparent. Hurt's character befriends a fellow patient who is dying because her HMO refused to allocate \$1,000 for an MRI that would have picked up her brain tumour at the treatable stage. In the event it was not a saving because when eventually it was diagnosed, treatment cost much more and failed to save her life, which denied the community a life-time of talents and taxes.

Anticipating the new millennium, Australia has been stressing self-actualisation, on becoming a republic, but what about the republic of the imagination? Humans live much of their lives quietly within the stories they tell themselves, in their own minds, and the better informed, more flexible, more imaginative, and more stimulated those minds are by language itself and the total cultural iconography available through it, the more informed, flexible, and imaginative the outward behaviour of the person will be in resolving life issues. People who are unable to develop, enrich, and guide the evolution of the story they are telling themselves about themselves cannot be said to be capable of the creative, intelligent, adaptive and continuously learning behaviours that are required if an individual is to prosper. The mindful content and stimulation of the library produces the dreaming or sufficient awareness of potential to produce new growth paths.²⁵

Municipal libraries can return significant short-term and long-term financial benefits to a local area. To ensure they do so, two significant changes need to take place, both of them changes in perception. First, to paraphrase Clark Kerr, former president of the University of California: it must be accepted that the purpose of a library is to make people safe for ideas - not ideas safe for people. Secondly, to paraphrase Socrates, it must be accepted that an unexamined library is not worth having. Library staff can safely be left to deliver the day-to-day services. Library management can safely be left to ensure that the short-term return on expenses is realised. It requires the whole community to ensure that the investment in intellectual capital is wisely allocated and that the intellectual capital represented in the collection is compromised neither by the so-called discipline of the market-place, nor by the personal values of individuals. In the 21st century, the global society will be an information-based, knowledge-work society. In such a society, information provides the primary means by which work is accomplished²⁶ Therefore, to ensure that a local area is competitive, its residents have to be able to function effectively in the world of ideas, to think critically and creatively, and be lifelong learners. To ensure that community outcomes will be optimised, the task for local authorities is to provide the vehicle and systemic frame by which transformation in their public libraries can occur. As representatives of the community, elected representatives must, therefore, take a close interest in the overall quality of the library collection and its potential to contribute to gains in community competitiveness. Real leadership transcends perceived limitations. Local councillors must provide such leadership.

Finally, I cannot stress strongly enough the need to reconceptualise public library services. This involves understanding the difference between the library's place as part of an organisation, the local authority, and the library's role in improving the long-term competitiveness of the local community. It requires being committed to embedding an outcomes based philosophy. It will be facilitated by bringing the library into the mainstream of the council, rather than allowing it to occupy the place so many public libraries do occupy - that of a friendly alien.

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