

# The Importance and Influence of Philosophical Thinking for Librarians

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## Introduction

The library, which has survived for centuries as the memory of mankind and a social force, librarianship, an old and influential profession, and librarians, whose professional identity enjoyed recognition, all face the challenge of opponents who claim that they are outmoded. To meet opposing views successfully, librarians must attach importance to Philosophical Thinking (PT) and produce philosophical thoughts. The views of Butler (1933), Danton (1934), Foskett (1962), Shera (1962, 1969, 1971), Nitecki (1964, 1993, 1995), and Mukherjee (1966) are still useful for countering the challenge of opponents and for carrying the profession into the future.

Various definitions have been suggested for "philosophy." Passmore (1967:218), for example, says, "philosophy can tell us what life and nature 'mean,' what value or purpose they have. ... In its most general form, philosophy elucidates the meaning of the 'universe as a whole'." According to Cevizci (2002) philosophical thought emerges as a result of asking, and it develops along with interest in the problems of life. This approach emerges from curious, questioning, investigating, and critical minds. Answers and solutions resulting from PT are based on analysis and synthesis. Thought (the outcomes of information, experience, perception, and intuition) is analyzed and clarified, and is carried to a synthesis. PT, which may focus on any issue, simple or complex, enables an individual to assess life, nature, the world, the universe, and his or her own personal life through a systematic and rational approach; thus PT adds meaning and value to existence.

The relationship between the one who wants to know and that which is to be known constitutes the essence of PT. According to Öner (2005), thinking requires acquisition of information about something to be known. This information can be obtained directly by perception, or indirectly through reading or other means of communication. In order to convey information obtained by perception to another person, it must be organized into a concept. The mind does not merely take the image of something, it strives to grasp the essence and meaning of that image and makes the image dependent on the concept. Thinking becomes possible with concepts. Since concepts can be expressed in words, thought is

transferable. The mind reaches premises by linking concepts, and premises are prejudgments reached by thinking. The mind makes inferences and reaches conclusions by establishing relations among premises. Knowledge is inferences placed in order. "Thinking" is in fact a process of making inferences and reaching conclusions. Öner (2005) also speaks about the individual's power to grasp the general through intuition. PT is a process which starts with an individual focusing on something and establishing connectivity with it. As a result of this mental process which proceeds systematically through critical approaches, one reaches a meaningful judgment and a conclusion about that something which is questioned. This conclusion can be termed "philosophical thought." Philosophical thought can be defined as the product of a PT process. According to Tamdoğan (2006), when an individual finds a new answer to a query, as a result of learning and thinking, a value is created by that individual. The output or product of the process is knowledge having the value of being new.

## Philosophical Thinking of the Librarian

In librarianship and the information professions, PT reflects the critical and questioning intellectual activity of theorists and librarians engaged in exploration. PT makes it possible to disclose "whats", "hows," and especially "whys"; it makes it possible to explore the meaning, value, or purpose of a subject, an object, an entity, an event, a phenomenon, a concept, a relation, a practice, through systematic, consistent, logical, rational, critical, and questioning approaches and to reach a meaningful judgment. Theorists and practitioners may take different approaches. These differences stem from the fact that librarians may combine their thinking directly with their practices or their ability to engage in PT during their practices.

From the perspective of practitioners, PT is found in librarians who are open to conducting professional activities accompanied by thinking, questioning, and investigating. It is crucial for the librarians to know what they do not know. Reflective thinking may lead to the systematization of what is in the mind. At the end of the PT process, a philosophical thought may emerge, and this outcome, if it is completely new, may be a value created by the librarian.

PT may be influential in the emergence and development of a professional philosophy. Just as the PT exercises of reflective librarians may be initial steps in the development of a professional philosophy, the philosophical thoughts they generate may serve as basic building blocks of this philosophy. The views of Butler (1933), Danton (1934), Foskett (1962), Nitecki (1964, 1993, 1995), Mukherjee (1966) and Shera (1971) are particularly remarkable in the context of PT by librarians and the role of librarians in the formation of a professional philosophy. It may be fruitful to elaborate further and to discuss the PT of librarians in the light of the views of these authors.

By saying "...philosophy which is blind to experiments and practice will be speculative only and of little or no value," Danton (1934: 543) implies that the philosophy of librarianship must be born in the library itself and that it would not be correct to exclude librarians' philosophical thoughts resulting from these activities. The philosophical approaches of librarians during practice are of specific value. Nevertheless, librarians' PT processes must be based on theory too; any practice without a theoretical base may hinder understanding. The importance theory is nicely expressed by Shera (1971: 151), who bases his views on Butler (1933): "...librarians 'know very well how to do things,' they 'have only vague notions of why

they do them.' They have evolved... 'highly efficient systems of practices,' but they failed to formulate 'a corresponding system of theory to elucidate, justify, and control that practice'." He continues: "...a theory tells librarians not how to do things, but why such things should be done" (Shera, 1971: 153).

At this point it is necessary to clarify the theory-practice-philosophy relationship. Danton (1934: 536) observes that if a philosophy is closed to experiments and practice, it will remain speculative and have no significant value. Foskett (1962: 3), on the other hand, emphasizes the positive impact on practice of scientific. In order for these principles actually to direct and inform practices, however, a philosophical basis is essential. Furthermore, Soysal (1998) holds that a professional philosophy must present an integrated whole, with practice, theory, and scientific principles developed in the quest for a philosophical basis. As practice relies more on theoretical grounds, librarians will be able to open up to PT and their profession will move further away from the merely pragmatic.

Foskett (1962: 3) says:

"...a *professional* outlook is one's attitude towards the body of knowledge and technique that constitute professional equipment is coloured by a sense of purpose; and that the putting in order of that knowledge, in the professional mind, is inspired and directed by the end for which it is acquired."

This expresses the philosophical outlook of the librarian. The PT process does not exclude a "sense of purpose." Efforts to clarify the purposes of their practices by making use of theory, and especially to establish a purpose-function relationship, are activities that develop or improve PT. Danton (1934) and Nitecki (1964, 1995) imply that the librarian should focus on a purpose-function relationship in the PT process. According to Danton (1934: 536), "a philosophy ... is interested in aims and functions, in purpose, and meaning." Nitecki (1964) says, as quoted by Mukherjee (1966: 11) "... a philosophy of librarianship presupposes a theoretical formulation, which would relate the objectives of the library to its operations in a consistent, logical pattern." Nitecki (1995: part 2.2.1.) also states that the "Philosophy of librarianship is a pursuit of truth, principles guiding action, and theories explaining reality: what is known, how it is put to work, and for what purpose it exists." Foskett (1962: 5) states that librarians' outlook may depend " ... upon the function that libraries carry out, the purpose for which they are established."

Librarians' philosophical approaches suggest that they are relatively closer to a practical philosophy. Quoting Houle (1946), Mukherjee (1966: 9) says:

" ... a philosophy of librarianship should be a practical philosophy, contrasting it with the philosophy of nature, which seeks to re-discover what nature *is* ....a philosophy which is practical achieves valid meaning only in terms of its operation...[It] has its fullest meaning when it is evolved by and operates to guide the actions of an individual librarian or a group of librarians, who are working together in a single institution."

On the other hand, Brewerton (2003: 50-51), starting with the views of Blackburn (1999), states that philosophical answers to the "why" of anything can be given on a high, middle, or low ground:

"The high ground approach would question the question....Pure reflection has no real practical application: it is just that we wish to understand ourselves better....For most of us, the high ground approach probably holds limited appeal....The middle ground response would be that reflection matters because it is *continuous* with practice: how you think about what you are doing affects how you do it or, indeed, whether you do it at all....The low ground answer goes one step further down the practical path. Without reflection we get stuck in our ways and refuse to see the viewpoints of others....the field in which we really need to equip ourselves and build up our philosophical armour is the low ground, for it is here that we will face our most life-threatening battles."

Even when it is accepted that it is appropriate for a librarian to adopt practical philosophical approaches, it is difficult to accede to a view which holds that "a librarian must not be expected to explore high ground answers." In line with the views of Nitecki (1993: part 6.2.1) librarians may launch systematic PT attempts on any philosophical dimension of things they want to know: metaphysical, ethical, epistemological, or historical. However, the view that librarians' PT activities should target practical philosophical approaches is more widely adopted.

### **Librarians' Interest in Philosophical Thinking: From Past to Present**

While Shera (1971: 153) criticizes librarians for lacking a professional philosophy, he emphasizes that they can play an important role in the development of such a philosophy. According to Çakin (1982), the failure of librarians to give enough weight to PT and their reluctance to build the intellectual fabric of the profession are reasons for the delay in the emergence of a philosophy of librarianship.

It is clear from the literature of the first half of the 1930s that reflective librarians using PT have long been needed. As quoted by Danton, Joeckel (1932) says:

"...the librarian himself, always a pragmatist, has been much too busy doing things to take time for an objective view of himself and his works. The great responsibilities confronting him on every hand have left him little leisure for mere contemplation or philosophical speculation as to the meaning of what he has been doing" (Danton, 1934: 532).

In Butler's (1933: xi-xii) well-known and often cited words:

"...the librarian is strangely uninterested in the theoretical aspects of his profession....The librarian apparently stands alone in the simplicity of his pragmatism: a rationalization of each immediate technical process by itself seems to satisfy his intellectual interest. Indeed any endeavour to generalize these rationalizations into a professional philosophy appears to him, not merely futile, but positively dangerous."

It is worth wondering whether the pragmatic librarians of the past have now been replaced by newer ones performing their work mechanically on a computer, without exploring the true meaning, value and purpose of their work. The points quoted from authors in the past are still being debated today. Authors like Budd (2003) and Cronin (2004), for example, discuss the points raised by Butler (1933) in the context of the present state of the profession of librarianship and LIS. Brewerton (2003), on the other hand, in re-appraising Foskett's (1962)

pamphlet, examines the extent to which it could be relevant to present day librarianship. Budd (2003: 20) says, "Wiegand's observation is not far removed from Pierce Butler's criticism that the librarian stands alone in the simplicity of his pragmatism." Stressing that "practice" and "praxis" are not identical terms, Budd (2003) maintains that practice today goes its way without theoretical basis. Budd (2003: 20) says:

"...it is important to address an implicit limitation that both Butler and Wiegand touch on. Much, though certainly not all, of the practice (and I do emphasize *practice* here) of librarianship goes un-theorized. Within library and information work there is a fairly long-standing antipathy toward "theory" ....as though there is some chasm between the two that stands in the way (necessarily) of their intermingling. To the extent to which such thinking exists, librarianship and information work will always be prevented from realizing the goals of praxis, defined here as the critical, rational, interpretive, epistemic, and ethical work of a discipline or profession. Praxis refers to action that carries social and ethical implications and is not reducible to technical performance of tasks. [It has a] richer meaning; 'practice' is used when narrower senses of action are referred to."

PT is a process which may be developed by having interest in "praxis." By focusing on praxis, librarians can base their work on theory, reach a synthesis through purpose-function relations, and head towards PT. Doherty (2005) focuses on reflection and the principles of praxis in librarianship. Some things suggest that present day librarians have more affinity to philosophical approaches than their predecessors. Some librarians reflect on professional issues and make an effort to find answers and solutions. They publish their research findings in professional journals or expose their conclusions at meetings. As stated by Brewerton (2003), although purely philosophical investigations are still rare, philosophical and practical answers to philosophical questions find space in the literature. The number of librarians who are not purely pragmatic but engage in some sort of scientific activity, thereby adding value to their profession, is increasing. Examples of practices not purely pragmatic and activities that have the potential of leading to PT, include participation in continuing professional education and professional meetings; research and evaluation studies done in libraries; reading the professional literature; interest in national and international professional; use of professional websites; exchange of ideas with colleagues; sharing reflections with their colleagues or engaging in intellectual activity connected to the profession. Believing that the profession still has a practical philosophy, Brewerton (2003: 51) emphasizes that the reflective practice shared in various channels carries the profession and practical philosophy forward. Meanwhile, some professional journals (e.g . , *Library Quarterly*) are encouraging librarians to reflection or practice-related PT and trying to stimulate their interest in philosophy. The electronic journal *Library Philosophy and Practice* is directly related to this issue and publishes articles exploring the connection between library practice and the philosophy and theory behind it.

The librarian still has a long way to go toward a philosophy. In any case, philosophy is a continuous process of advancement. Thus there is a need to take steps to stimulate librarians' interest in philosophy and to strengthen and promote PT. These steps include, *inter alia*: including courses and/or themes related to philosophy of librarianship, history of libraries and librarianship, PT process, philosophical thought generation, learning to learn, learning by reflection, critical thinking, applied research, theory-practice and purpose-function relationships, etc. in the curricula of all LIS schools, focusing especially on "why" in

the context of various courses and encouraging students at all levels to PT; establishing groups/branches related to library philosophy within all professional associations and organization of interesting activities on librarians' PT; encouraging working librarians to undertake PT by library management; having more professional journals encourage librarians to write articles on reflection or PT; encouraging librarians to add philosophical comments to their articles reporting the findings of their research and studies.

## Why Does PT Matter Today?

The importance of PT in making the library, the librarian and the profession stronger has been discussed since the early 1930s. If librarians do their work without any interest in PT, and without questioning what they are doing, how can they give meaning and value to their profession and contribute to its development? This applies even to those librarians who are highly skilled in the use of computers and can perfectly conduct their computer-based work. Unless supported by PT, the practices of librarians may be approached with doubt by outsiders, some of whom claim that the time of the librarian, the library, and the library profession has passed due to revolutionizing changes in ICT and the Internet. As Brewerton (2003: 52) says, "it is increasingly commonplace to hear that we do not need libraries ... [and] ... librarians in the Internet Age."

Libraries in our day have, as stated by Yurdadog (1997), entered a process of re-engineering rather than re-organization, and transformation rather than modernization. We all know what the library has realized or proposes to realize in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; according to Subasioglu (2004), the library today is a social centre aiming to provide information services, to act as a gateway for access to information, and to create free access to information transmitted in any format by using technology intensively. There is still need for the physical existence of the library. This need is felt not only in the context of transferring a body of memory to future generations, but also for the fact that the library is a space for social gathering, a space creating an environment for interaction among individuals, and a space which provides all individuals with the means to use modern technology. Librarians have felt the need to find a niche in the market; they have assumed new roles and titles in order not to be overwhelmed by rivals; and they have transformed their information mediator role. In this new role of information manager, the librarian provides users with support to allow them to navigate the ocean of information. It is now the responsibility of the librarian not only to find information, but also to analyze, evaluate, organize, and present it. Librarians also want to create a future while respecting and protecting the past.

Negative assertions persist despite the fact that libraries have already entered a process of transformation. This means either that critics simply ignore successful professional work or that librarians fail to publicize their successes. It may be safe to assert that this failure of librarians is related to their lack of PT. PT can help create a strong debate and convincing arguments. In order to stand truly firm against opposing arguments, librarians must understand the historical background of the book, library, librarian, and the profession through PT, and focus once more on the meaning, value, and purpose of all these, as well as on the role of mediator between those who need information and the sources of information. As Wiegand (1999: 26) says:

"Like society in general, every generation of library and information professionals must apply to the past it has inherited a set of questions unique to its time and



circumstances in order to better understand its present, so that it can prudently plan its future. Our own generation is no different."

If present day librarians base their philosophical approaches on the literature, as in the case of Jochum (2004), this may give additional power and respect to librarians and, at the same time, present a sound background to their opposing arguments. Jochum (2004: 21-22) argues that,

"...those who propagate the Internet as the coming information paradise, subsuming and superseding libraries, are mistaken and that the claims they advance are fundamentally flawed... what makes a careful analysis of the current media change more necessary than ever is the fact that this change is very different from earlier ones. First, this is the first time in media history that a new medium is claiming to absorb almost all older media. Second, the Internet as superintegrative medium takes one step further and claims to leave the physical ground of the older media... finally, the current media change is negating the individual...claiming to transpose this person into a noncorporeal being... According to the advocates of the Internet and hypertext, the new media have already moved 'beyond the book' ."

If our present day librarians, distancing themselves from pure pragmatism by adopting a theoretical orientation, can focus on the meanings, values, purposes, or whys of things of interest to the library, librarians and the profession; if they can re-evaluate the purposes of the library by linking them to its functions and services, eventually reaching a purpose-function synthesis; if they can derive meanings and conclusions from philosophical questioning tracing back through historical concepts and advancing to evidence-based original philosophical answers and thoughts adaptable to innovations, then they will have the power to challenge the views of opponents, invalidate their arguments and eventually win them over. In circumstances altered by technology, PT by today's librarian is important and necessary for this.

The question, "why does PT matter today?" has been answered by Butler (1933), Danton (1934), Foskett (1962), Shera (1962, 1969, 1971), Nitecki (1964, 1993), and Mukherjee (1966). Some of their views were discussed in broad terms by Alkan (2004). The answers given by these authors are timeless. Among the key messages, Ranganathan's (1931), "Save the time of the reader" is especially important. I shall discuss the views of above-mentioned authors, re-appraising them where appropriate in the context of the present day. Among the answers, one is particularly telling:

- *Librarian's PT may be influential in maintaining the library's existence as the memory of humanity and a social force and the respectability of the profession.*

As librarians bring their pragmatic side to the fore, the library itself may be subject to negative appraisals by society. In such a case, as stated by Mukherjee (1966: 27) "The library will continue to be left out of the social picture." Avoiding such a situation depends on PT. In order to explain why the library should exist as a social institution, librarians may focus their PT on the objectives of the library, the relationship between these objectives and library operations, or on the society-knowledge-library interrelationship. Philosophical thoughts produced by reflective librarians will show why the library is still important today as a social force.

Discussing and sharing philosophical thoughts on professional platforms may be influential in ensuring their adoption by colleagues and LIS theorists and may contribute to building consensus on the right direction for the profession to follow and to the emergence of a professional philosophy. Librarians' PT, however, should not be isolated from the philosophy of a given society.

- *PT enables the librarian to gain a positive outlook, self-confidence, and a respected reputation within society.*

Those who criticize or dismiss librarians may lead some to doubt the importance of their professional existence. A focus on PT will help them avoid pessimistic situations. In a somewhat exaggerated manner, the positive outlook that PT gives to a librarian is stated impressively by Foskett (1962: 3), and this statement gives the meaningful message that the present librarian needs:

"...if indeed we have no philosophy, then we are depriving ourselves of the guiding light of reason, and we live only a day-to-day existence, lurching from crisis to crisis, and lacking the driving force of an inner conviction of the value of our work."

Although things are different than in the past, the driving force that comes from the sincere belief of librarians in the value of their work is especially needed today. The first condition for librarians to gain power, to make society accept their professional existence, and to stand firmly against opponents, is the positive outlook that they can develop through PT. Such an outlook will make them sincere adherents of the profession unfazed by any negative influence.

One of Danton's (1934: 539) benefits to be derived from a professional philosophy is still important: "a precision and sureness in action resulting from clear knowledge of purpose." This clear knowledge of purpose may also open the way to PT. There is a close relationship between librarians' realization of PT and their credibility in society. Librarians can build their reputation in society by making use of theory, and with the self-confidence they gain from knowing what role they play and why.

- *PT maintains the connection of the librarian with theory and provides a means to strengthen the theory-practice relationship.*

PT enables the librarian to understand that practices not based on theory will be futile. The extent to which present day practices are based on theory is open to debate. This problem requires librarians to be comfortable with theory, which may add new perspectives to their professional life. Theory-based PT will produce stronger evidence against critics. Here the issue is not only theory supporting practice, but also theory being fed by practice. According to Fenerci (2004), production of sufficient and effective solutions to problems faced by practitioners ensures this feeding of theory by practice. PT is a process that can put these things in place.

On the other hand, more librarians can be expected to be involved in PT with the emergence of new theories. If LIS fails to produce new theories, librarians will be deprived of a sound basis for their philosophical approaches.



- *PT gives meaning to the practices of the librarian.*

To give meaning to their practices, librarians must first understand why these practices are not purposes on their own and reach synthesis by establishing a purpose-function relationship. Danton's (1934: 545) remark on this point is meaningful:

"There is...far too much hit-or-miss, trial -and- error library practice, but even this, which will slowly be altered by the development of a library science, is not so pernicious as the carrying out of procedures without a clear consciousness of their purpose and a synoptic understanding of ends and aims."

So, if today's librarians are content with "business as usual," it means that they cannot give meaning to their practices. Since such librarians avoid PT, they are not aware that they are preventing the consolidation of their profession and playing into the hands of their opponents.

- *PT provides an opportunity to the librarian to contribute to the formation of a professional philosophy.*

A systematic body of concepts formulated by librarians and a theoretical structure explaining why certain things must be done may help them shed light on their practices, establish a purpose-function relationship, and steer their PT activities. By establishing such structures and making use of them during PT, librarians have the chance of contributing to the formation of a professional philosophy. It is pity that librarians have not paid much heed to this for a long time. To compensate for time lost, it is time to formulate a theoretical structure and to create a systematic body of concepts, adaptable to modern technological innovations, by investing the necessary time and effort.

- *PT prepares the librarian for changes and innovations.*

The smooth adoption of changes and innovations by librarians depends on their capacity to develop a philosophy. PT will enable librarians to confront changes and innovations without panicking:

- *PT does not let the librarian overlook the user; it keeps the user-librarian relationship alive.*

PT enables the librarian to focus on the humanistic aspects of the profession and especially on the notion of "user." This basic notion must still remain at the centre of PT activity of the librarian. A philosophical approach is irreconcilable with doing routine work with no regard for the notion of "user." Since all practices by librarians are carried out in support of the mediating mission of the library to meet information needs of users, PT activity must be focused on the notion of "user."

Efforts are being waged to maintain the basic mission of the library by adapting it to new technological environments. If these efforts are to have meaning, it is necessary to preserve major values inherent in the user-librarian relationship. What is even more important is to show on philosophical grounds why this relationship must be kept alive. We

assume that during their professional education librarians must have learned that the *raison d'être* of libraries is to bring users' information needs and information sources together. In spite of this, there are some who bypass the user while trying to do their best in their computer-based practices.

Alkan (2006) touches on the problem of the weakening relationship between the librarian and the user, which derives from the fact that some users claim to be accessing information rapidly and easily through the Internet without any need for the support of the librarian. The user invests energy, time, and money, often accompanied by stress, to filter the information actually needed from an immense amount of information. It is to the advantage of the user to make use of a librarian's competence. As stated by Atlas (2005), when the librarian gives the user the impression of being excessively busy, the latter may avoid any further communication with the librarian. Such a situation is an important reason for the lack of a relationship. Librarians who fail to communicate with users due to time constraints or poor communication skills miss a basic professional and philosophical value. Foskett's (1962: 9) view is still valid:

"Such librarians lack the very basic professional sense, and can never learn it because they have no contact with their readers. They do not know anything of the ways in which the need for knowledge arises, nor how their libraries fail to meet the need once arisen."

Sturges (2002:209) advises us to "remember the human," which is the first rule of netiquette:

"This is intended to encourage more tolerant and considerate behaviour amongst Internet users. It could also be taken as a reminder to librarians that they should not let the attractions of new technology cause them to forget the human dimension. A major aspect of the relationship between the librarian and the user is the confidentiality of transactions and the librarian's commitment to preserving the user's privacy."

The important aspects of privacy in terms of the modern library are psychological integrity and confidentiality. This requires sensitive behaviour from the librarian. Further, RUSA (2004) provides guidelines that are a conceptual framework and service ethics for reference librarians in establishing positive communication with users in both traditional and electronic environments. This document can guide all librarians who want to engage in PT regarding the notion of user and especially user-librarian relationship.

By enabling the users to save time, librarians find an opportunity for their profession. While suggesting that present day librarians take the law "Save the time of the reader" (Ranganathan, 1931) as their key message, Brewerton (2003: 53) also stresses that effective and efficient service delivery is by no means limited by the medium used:

"Of Ranganathan's Laws, 'Save the time of the reader' seems the most important and offers the greatest opportunity for librarians today. We all have more pressure on our time, more information we need to digest....There is a huge opportunity for us here and if there is a future role for us, if we are to remain Foskett's 'key figures'...and end users are still to turn to us...it must be tide up with Ranganathan's Fourth Law. As

advocates, brokers, re-packagers and teachers we must help to provide information effectively and efficiently in whatever form and at whatever time is most appropriate for whatever user. Here, like Foskett, it is easier if we step back and take a more philosophical approach. We should worry less about the medium, more about the outcome."

The librarian's desire to help users has a philosophical connection. This assistance must be kept in a balance. Brewerton (2003) prefers to see the help of the librarian not in statements made with spiritual ecstasy, but in explanations based on facts, figures, and quantitative and qualitative data. For example, an evaluation study by a librarian who uses a performance indicator such as what proportion of reference question responses actually met the information needs of users (Abbott, 1994: 36) will indicate that this librarian has combined a philosophical approach concerning helping users with quantitative data.

- *PT may motivate librarians to challenge problems that degenerate the society to which they belong.*

Librarians are sensitive to the problems of their respective societies, and should be expected to challenge negative trends and ideas. For example, when a librarian is fully engaged in a user's IR problems and helps find a solution through a humanistic approach, this is tantamount to the rejection of what is observed as negative in a society. In our present day societies where individuals behave selfishly, where the strong can oppress the weak and money is held above everything else, true librarianship can be performed so as to present a good model and librarians can win their potential opponents to their side.

- *PT equips the librarian with the discipline and habit of questioning why.*

Once adopted by librarians, PT enriches them with the discipline and habit of questioning through systematic, consistent, logical, rational, and critical approaches. These librarians may find it easier to examine complex areas of the profession and seek solutions to existing problems. Librarians capable of standing up to opponents, contributing to the survival of the library, will probably be those who have made systematic and disciplined philosophical questioning a part of their daily work.

## Summary and Conclusion

Since the early 1930s librarians have been criticized for not showing any interest in theory, philosophy of the profession, or PT. Today there are glimmerings of an affinity with philosophical. Products of their thinking processes appear in the professional literature. This is of course encouraging. However, the level of interest in reflection is not yet enough to demonstrate PT in its true and fullest sense, and PT is not yet commonly accepted by librarians. PT enables the librarian to challenge strongly the views of extreme adherents of the Internet dogma and/or those who oppose the book, library, librarian, and the profession, to invalidate such views based on sound philosophical evidence and to convince such opponents to change their views. PT may enable the librarian to contribute to development in the right direction, strengthening and carrying the profession into future by giving it meaning and value, and to the creation of a sound professional philosophy. PT may enable the librarian to contribute to efforts to stop the threat to the very existence of the library, which has survived for some 5,000 years as the body of memory of humanity. PT may enable the

librarian to contribute to the preservation of the basic mission of the library, which has not changed since it came into existence, as well as its important role and force in society. PT keeps librarians at a distance from pragmatism; it gives them the discipline and habit of questioning; it gives them a positive outlook and self-confidence; it helps them gain value in the professional sense; it enables them to ascertain the importance and value of their professional existence in society and to prove their indispensability for users; and thus it makes it possible for librarians to gain a respectable and distinguished professional identity. PT also enables librarians to carry such an identity into the future.

Today there are conditions both necessitating and facilitating the adoption of PT activity; opposing views stimulate librarians to engage in this activity. Indeed, such views offer extraordinary chances to librarians to prove the essential importance of books, libraries, librarians and the profession through philosophical approaches and to put on their agenda the real meaning, value and purpose of things related to them. It is the task of the present day librarian to convert criticisms and threats into opportunities, to use these opportunities to move towards PT to produce evidence-based philosophical thoughts, and to impress society with such thoughts. They must undertake the responsibility of proving the indispensability of the library, the librarian and the profession and to keep them alive. This respectable responsibility, which librarians can undertake only through full involvement in PT activity, should be accepted at least to pay homage to the toiling librarians of the past. It is probable that contemporary librarians will be recalled with respect by future members of the profession (their titles may have changed) and by humanity as a whole for having fulfilled this responsibility.

It will be appropriate to conclude this paper with a view by Shera (1965: 176):

"Librarianship is the management of human knowledge, the most interdisciplinary of all the disciplines - and because it is concerned with the philosophy of knowledge it is potentially the most deeply philosophical of all the professions'.

Thus it is most fitting for present day librarians, as members of such a profession, to carry on their careers embracing PT.

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