

DECOLONIALIZING THE EAST-WEST INFORMATION FLOW IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES

ANDREW B. WERTHEIMER

*Library & Information Science Program, University of Hawaii at Manoa
1680 East-West Road, Honolulu HI 96822 USA*

wertheim@hawaii.edu

This paper briefly reviews the influence of North American educators on LIS education in Asia. It cautions that this has been greatly influenced by colonialism and the Cold War, which fueled a North-South flow of LIS information. The author suggests that there is a lack of awareness of Asian developments among Library and Information Studies (LIS) researchers in North America and Europe. The paper also raises questions about the relevance of the North American model on LIS education in Asia, and offers suggestions on how we can improve relations and mutual awareness among LIS researchers on both continents.

Despite a relative wealth of studies on the history of LIS education, few works – or at least those available in English – have challenged a traditional narrative of LIS education as a series of developments; extending from Melvil Dewey’s establishment of the School of Library Economy at Columbia College. This story continues as one of Dewey’s graduates establishing schools gradually westward in other parts of the United States. The next chapter of this traditional meta-narrative is one of a century of primarily North American missionaries, librarians, LIS educators, and returning international students exporting this “package” overseas, primarily to Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. North American sources suggest this is a history of generosity and professionalism. This brief paper suggests that while there indeed are some truths to this oversimplified history, it is important for us to critically deconstruct this meta-narrative in order to understand how it continues to shape our perceptions.

This article argues such a mindset has led to an information imbalance among LIS researchers and educators -- with research and translations flowing from North America to Asia with very little work on librarianship trickling in the reverse direction. This paper briefly gives an overview of the situation, and offers some tentative proposals on how we might rectify this information flow problem and also deepen our mutual understanding. I hope that this article ties in with three of the questions that frame the A-LIEP 2009 call for papers:

- How are we preparing library and information professionals for international collaboration?
- What are the challenges facing librarians and information professionals aiming for collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region?
- Is there a uniquely Asia-Pacific perspective of library and information science?¹

I titled this paper decolonizing the East-West information flow because I believe that this problem can be traced back to the origins of LIS education in North America, and its continued developments in Asia. To a large extent we must recognize the influence of Melvil Dewey’s School of Library Economy at Columbia College, which became the model school. Dewey’s school, founded in 1884, reflected the dominant ideologies and prejudices of Postbellum America.² Although there was considerable debate as

¹ “About A-LIEP 2009” <http://a-liep.kc.tsukuba.ac.jp/> Accessed 28 September 2008.

² For an excellent critique of Dewey’s prejudices, and how they shaped his construct of librarianship, see Wayne A. Wiegand, *Irrepressible Reformer: A Biography of Melvil Dewey*. (Chicago: American Library Association, Chicago, 1996).

to the nature of the shape of professional education for librarians, Dewey's school clearly became the model for the development of professional education for librarians in North America.³

Only three decades later, this model was introduced to Asia by American librarians and missionaries, such as William Alanson Bodren (Baroda, 1911), and Asa Don Dickinson, (University of the Punjab, 1915) who offered librarianship courses in what would later become India and Pakistan.⁴ Other early pioneers included missionary-librarian Mary Elizabeth Wood (Boone School, which later became part of Wuhan University) in China,⁵ and Mary Polk and James Alexander Robertson, who taught at the University of the Philippines 1914-1916. Following the end of the Pacific War, American influence in library education was felt at the National Taiwan University (1961), Yonsei University (Korea, 1957), Chulalongkorn University (Thailand, 1955), and perhaps most famously at the Japan Library School at Keio University (1951) during the occupation of Japan.⁶ Reflecting American confidence in Library Science, as well as a Cold War competition for influence in Asia, LIS educators were funded by Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations to assist establishing pioneering schools in Iran, Turkey, and elsewhere.⁷

The development of my own school – the Library and Information Science Program at the University of Hawaii --- parallels this story. Dr. Robert Gitler, who directed the Japan Library School at Keio, was asked to be a consultant in considering the appropriateness of a school in Honolulu. While some librarians there had called for the establishment of a library school in Hawai'i to assist with vacancies created by library development tied to statehood, it only became a possibility with the creation of the East-West Center, which was designed to educate leaders from Asia and the Pacific at the Honolulu campus. Some in ALA felt that the University of Hawaii and University of Puerto Rico would largely function to spread American library practices overseas. Indeed, many UH graduates became LIS faculty and leaders in the profession throughout Asia.

There were, of course, other competing influences on LIS education in Asia. The most celebrated Asian LIS educator, S. R. Ranganathan studied at the University College London before establishing the School of Library Science at the University of Madras in 1931. During the postwar era one can imagine a competing Marxist-Leninist philosophy of LIS education in the parts of Asia under Soviet influence.⁸

It is important to stress that this brief oversimplified and ahistorical overview, overlooks missing organic developments within these schools, and independent schools, such as the Tokyo Imperial University (University of Tokyo) and the Ueno Library School, which were established in the Taisho and Meiji eras.

However, in addition to this flow of consultants, teachers, and library school administrators, other forms of influence have come from returning graduates of foreign schools, and the many translations that form the basis for so much of modern librarianship. I do not want to suggest that foreign influence on LIS education is necessarily a negative, however, one has to deconstruct foreign models of librarianship and LIS education in order to determine elements which might be best recognized as cultural baggage that may have even hampered development or spread of libraries based on local models and needs. My point is that many of the pioneers of LIS education in Asia, especially those coming from abroad often had other agendas be it a missionary impulse towards a promoting a certain religion or philosophy (either for free markets or state socialism).

³ Justin Wisnor and Azariah Smith Root were among the American librarians pointing to an earlier European model that stressed scholarly learning of languages, diplomatics, history, and other disciplines taught by Professors of Reading. See Carl M. White, *The Origins of the American Library School* (New York: Scarecrow, 1961), 65-73. This was largely ignored by most US LIS educators

⁴ Mumtaz Ali Anwar, "The Pioneers: Asa Don Dickinson" *World Libraries* 1 (1990/1991). Online version http://www.worlib.org/vol01no2/anwar_v01n2.shtml accessed 28 September 2008; Nagar, Murari Lal. *Contributions of Asa Don Dickinson (1876-1960) First American Library Pioneer in British India* (Columbia, MO: International Library Center, 1990).

⁵ Huanwen Cheng, "The Impact of American Librarianship On Chinese Librarianship In Modern Times, 1840-1949." *Libraries & Culture*, 26 (1991): 372-387.

⁶ See Michael. Buckland, ed. *Robert Gitler and the Japan Library. School: An Autobiographical Narrative*. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow, 1999).

⁷ University of Illinois Dean Robert B. Downs assisted with establishment of LIS School at the University of Ankara in Turkey 1955, seven years after his work in Japan.

⁸ Of course colonial thinking is not limited to Europe or the United States. The emergence of modern librarianship in Korea is tied to the Japanese occupation.

I would argue that although Asia has been free of colonialism for over half a century, the Cold War and other factors have often hampered critical reflection on the origins of LIS education that could give birth to a re-energized and organic librarianship on the continent.

The establishment and continuation of this A-LIEP conference however is a decisive step towards finding commonalities and a place for critical dialog on the future of librarianship in Asia and the Pacific. As a North American, I hope that we can still be at the table, and benefit from this discussion as colleagues. I strongly believe that those of us in LIS in Asia and North America have much to offer each other. We are researching the same topic, after all. What is amazing to me is that Japan, as one example, probably has more LIS students and perhaps even faculty than the United States, the birthplace of professional education for librarians. The problem, as I see it, is that while Asian LIS students are exposed to the work of North American writers, only a handful of North American LIS researchers know anything about LIS research in Asia. This problem of reversing, or at least balancing awareness of each other's scholarship is the central theme of my talk today, although I hope you will forgive me for exploring several subjects that strike me as related.

Recalibrating the Information Flow

If I were you, at this point I might ask myself "why should I care?" or "what should Asian LIS scholars do about this information balance." I might also wonder why a North American is coming here to offer comments rather than addressing this topic back home. I would also be anxious to point out that comparing the numbers of students or faculty in Asia and the USA is problematic as our education systems are quite different. There is truth in both points, so let me briefly address them. In terms of the importance of understanding, let me say that ignorance breeds distrust, fear and apathy. Our nations' history shows the impact of such problems. As the research and educational arm for librarianship, LIS education should be both international in scope and reflective of national needs and heritages. Critical understanding of library contexts in other nations helps us to better understand and develop our own libraries.

Of course, we in North America must take responsibility for our side of the imbalance, but there are many things that you can do to help improve the situation. I've been discussing this topic for several years with Japanese researchers in LIS as I've tried to understand Asian librarianship from afar. One key problem is that there is very little information on LIS in Asia that is available in English or other European languages. On Japan, for example, the main exception is Welch's 1997 monograph, which is essentially a cosmetic rework of his 1976 University of Tokyo dissertation.⁹ Many of the studies published in English and other Western languages on librarianship in Asia are all too often superficial overviews of library development featuring uncritical readings of secondary sources, such as professional literature.

Higher education these days is a fascinating topic as Japan's national universities have become semi-privatized. This creates opportunities for innovation and experimentation if viewed positively, or could be a warning of market-driven education, which might not be so advantageous for LIS education.¹⁰ On the other hand, this might be a catalyst to review the legislation regarding librarian's status.

It would be interesting to see if Japan's Diet reconsiders the advantages of requiring graduate LIS degrees for managerial positions in libraries. Such a change from professional education in an undergraduate minor to a graduate degree should allow for better-trained students with a liberal arts or science background.¹¹ That does not negate the validity of the undergraduate LIS Bachelor's degree minor or

⁹ Theodore F. Welch, *Libraries and Librarianship in Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997).

For a critical perspective, see my H-NET (H-LIS) May 1998 book review.

¹⁰ LIS educators were anxious for the future of LIS education in the 1980s and 90s, following the closings of library schools at Columbia University, the University of Chicago, the University of Southern California, etc (and other schools were merged into other schools, including UCLA, Rutgers, and the University of Hawaii). Many historians now see that these private schools were making decisions based on their fiscal priorities, noting that LIS alumni tend not to become millionaires who donate to universities, and that LIS research attracts considerably less research funding.

During the years following the Reagan era transformation of higher education, Education, Nursing, Social Work, and other female-intensive professions in the United States faced similar threats of closures and mergers.

¹¹ This "new" graduate would have more professional self-confidence to serve the long-term interests of her/ his institution and profession.

the certificate. Although the USA no longer has undergraduate degrees in librarianship, several two-year community colleges train paraprofessional library technicians. If Japan wanted to emulate this aspect of the North American model, perhaps it would be best to require graduate work in LIS for supervisory positions. You are probably not surprised that I advocate the American model, but you should be aware that there are many perceived problems with this system in North America. Many librarians with a Master's degree in LIS question the value of their degree -- and LIS "research" at large. Personally, I think this primarily reflects the problem that not all schools are of equal quality. Although the American Library Association accredits all graduate LIS Programs, it primarily measures if programs meet strategic planning goals established by the schools themselves. In other words, there is no universal metric of quality, which means that some schools have a high student-teacher ratio, a high teaching load, and depend largely on adjunct faculty to teach courses via distributed learning. Under these conditions faculty understandably have a harder time to engage in meaningful quality research or instruction, while other accredited programs emphasize recruiting good students, small class sizes, and encouraging scholarship.

Reflections on the State of Library & Information Studies: Some Key Questions

Before reflecting on LIS research, it is imperative for us to look critically at the social function of libraries in society. People at large, and especially those of us in librarianship, tend to think that libraries are inherently good and promote democracy and lifelong education. The truth of course, though, is that libraries can be agents of social control just as easily as they can serve as sources of inspiration and liberation. An easy example is that there were more public libraries in the Soviet Union per person than anywhere in the world in the 1950s. Libraries under Stalin did some positive work, such as promoting literacy and self-education, but they also were explicitly agents of propaganda for the "education" of the masses. Librarians then were Communist Party *apparatchiks* who received approved literature published by party organs. It is easy to vilify these libraries as ones clearly resembling Orwell's anti-utopian *1984*, but this should not make us complacent about our own situations. Libraries are part of a wider society. The United States and most Asian nations have endured historical periods when truth was suppressed or people were not allowed free access to libraries or archives. Library historians in the United States are coming to terms with the impact of apartheid in the American South, and how that left poor or no library service for the majority of African Americans for decades. Thanks to research by Louise Robbins and others, we also have been forced to accept that the idea that librarians' fight against censorship is actually a recent one. It was only really in the late 1930s that American librarians began to use patriotic images contrasting American freedom with Nazi book-burnings to show there was national support for intellectual freedom as part of the cannon of librarianship.¹²

As the research of professors Nakamura Yuriko, Nemoto Akira, and Miura Taro shows, American librarian consultants brought this idea to postwar Japan during the occupation. Like many partially "imported ideas," it seems to have a mixed reception here, which is understandable. It is worthwhile to compare American occupation policy for libraries in Japan (1945-52) with the situation in Okinawa, which was occupied twenty years beyond the rest of Japan. You will not be surprised that American military authorities in Occupied Okinawa did not promote libraries as sites for critical democratic learning, but as agents of "USA-Okinawa friendship" propaganda. I think this is equally important research, which helps us to challenge ourselves to ask what is the real mission of libraries.

I would also like to read more such critical research on libraries in Japan and the rest of Asia, which emphasize shifting attitudes towards libraries – as well as their response to militarization and nationalism. An examination of libraries in occupied Taiwan, Korea, and the Pacific would be a key part of such an understanding. As with Weimar Germany or the United States during the Senator McCarthy's anti-

¹² Stephen Karetzky recently published a quite reactionary critique of what he sees as a left-wing bias of American library historians' focus on the underside of American librarianship. See Christine Pawley's balanced critique of his *Seeing Red*. Karetzky especially targets Louise S. Robbins' key work *Censorship and the American Library: The American Library Association's Response to Threats to Intellectual Freedom, 1939-1969* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996). Kawasaki Yoshitaka translated this into Japanese and also conducted an interesting interview with Robbins that was published in *Lifelong Education and Libraries* 1 (2001): 63-79.

Communist “Blacklisting” era, it is fundamental to observe how libraries and free discourse were silenced. Like the U.S. during the previous administration, many Asian nations seem to be drifting towards resurgent nationalism and military buildup, so this question is not an obscure historical one, but something that should help us navigate a policy that advances the potential of libraries to be temples of free lifelong education, international understanding, and unfettered discourse.

Beyond employing “tunnel vision” on library history, I believe we take a similarly narrow lens when reflecting on the so-called publishing crises, as suggested by a recent Japanese bestseller. In Japan and North America publishers and librarians point to each other for the problems. The problem, in my opinion, is that we are not doing enough research on how we are becoming nations of “aliteracy” (when people *can* read but choose not to do so), although the United States still has serious problems with basic functional literacy. Libraries too are parts of the publishing cycle – from readers to publishers to book distributors. The tragedy is that we in LIS often tend to only look at our own small role in the cycle from publisher to reader, and thus ignore the larger socio-economic context of publishing, reading, and education. It is nothing short of suicidal folly not to examine its impact of the publishing crisis on libraries. Yet, in the United States, courses such as collection management largely continue to neglect the traditional emphasis on publishing as if it was irrelevant in today’s electronic world.

Some American librarians have tried to raise the conglomeration of publishing as a professional issue, but this is not reflected in the curriculum of LIS education or research, and many of these critical librarians are close to the age of retirement. The current generation of American library leaders who shaped intellectual freedom policies, the baby-boomers who were in library school during the Anti-/Vietnam War era are now retiring. They are being replaced by recent graduates who reflect the more managerial and technological viewpoint of their LIS programs. The problem is that many classes and professionals give only a token nod to IF, and don’t appreciate how these are recent victories that were won by activist librarians working together through professional associations.

Reflections on the State of LIS Education

I hope that this part of my meditation clearly suggested that we might be facing a serious crisis in librarianship, at least in the United States. Schools of Library & Information Studies (or LIS Programs) are largely responsible for imparting the professional ethics of the next generation. Despite this, fewer and fewer LIS educators in the USA have ever worked in a library. Instead, many they see themselves as information scientists who are anxious to jettison “the L-word” (Librarianship) as a feminized, service-oriented “sub-profession.” Such educators ignore that most of our students enter LIS programs to become librarians or archivists. Of course, I am not trying to dispute the value of information science, but we must be careful to offer holistic programs to educate the next generation of professionals who are competent with the newest in information technology, and can also critically understand the philosophy behind the service. This way they can make judicious choices in adapting new technologies to services. I am fascinated by how these changes are echoed by Asian LIS schools.

Although some senior LIS faculty and librarians discuss these issues, there is little written on this crisis. One fascinating exception is Christine Pawley’s *Library Quarterly* article, “Hegemony’s Handmaid.”¹³ Pawley’s article relates to the Kellogg-funded Project to redefine LIS education in North America. When combined with recent research on the history of the Carnegie Corporation, we can perhaps see it as part of a long history of trying to redirect library science education away from the profession’s traditional focus on reading books, and free library service for all towards a value system that prioritizes what people saw as elite male interests in information and technology - even predating computers. More research is needed to explore these questions deeper, but I think it is worth sharing here as I think Japanese LIS educators and students should seriously question using the North American situation raised by the Association for Library & Information Science Education (ALISE) as a model for the Japan Society for Library & Information Science’s LIPER and LIPER2 projects, with their implications for the future of LIS education in Japan.

¹³ Christine Pawley, “Hegemony’s Handmaid? The Library and Information Studies Curriculum from a Class Perspective.” *Library Quarterly* 68 (April 1998): 123-144.

Questioning the North American Model

Please forgive my oversimplification of LIPER Project, but I fear that this is typical of North America-Asia (similar to North-South) “dialogue” in that it is a one-way importation of foreign models. This reminds me of how my undergraduate university’s “Japan expert” explained that education in Japan was usually ten years behind the United States in adopting trends. This, of course, was a highly unfair portrait, but I would encourage my colleagues to carefully question adoption of the North American model wholesale. The politics and finances of higher education in North America have shaped LIS education there. Universities want faculty who publish in peer-reviewed journals (rather than professional journals read by practitioners), and apply for grants (meaning research that often relates to the needs of those who fund grants, like the military, rather than the public interest). This has led to a growing divide between practitioners and professional educators. Personally, I am very fortunate to be at an LIS Program that is well balanced between information scientists/ information technology experts and those of us who research more traditional aspects of professional librarianship such as reference and cataloging. I might add that UH also has good relations with our state’s professional association. Unfortunately, I believe UH is somewhat of an exception on both points rather than the norm as we need graduates who can master information technology as well as traditional library skills in order to serve our users.

Three Proposed Solutions

I don’t wish to portray such a gloomy state of affairs. I am truly optimistic about libraries and LIS. I am an idealist who believes in the potential and continued relevance of librarianship, which is why I believe it is important to discuss these issues.

I hope it is clear why Asian and North American LIS researchers should engage in discourse and see what we can learn from each other. I think that many Asian researchers already appreciate (or at least read) several foreign studies in LIS. This is evident by the sheer number of translations of articles ranging from studies of cataloging to information policy published each year. I think that Asian librarianship is far richer because of this diversity. The problem is that the reverse does not seem true. There is precious little available in English (or other European languages) about LIS research either by Asian scholars in English or translations. Of course, part of the problem is that it is hard to translate into English, but there are other issues that we can explore.

Proposed Solution Area 1: Institutional Affiliations

The first broad topic we could explore is improving institutional ties. Some North American and Asian librarians already meet each other at IFLA international conferences. IFLA conferences and journal indeed are places of international discourse, but most of the attendees are library administrators rather than LIS educators, so the quality of research and scholarly discourse ranges greatly. Of course, LIS educators in the North America do not only have “informational trade” imbalance only with Asia. We have few connections with our colleagues in Europe, Africa, Australia, or other parts of Asia.¹⁴ American researchers do read Australian, British, and Canadian journals because of similarities of language and content, but meet each other only infrequently.¹⁵ An interesting exception to this professional ethnocentrism was the 2003 joint ALISE-EUCLID conference in Germany of LIS educators in North America and Europe.¹⁶ The USA and Japan had several joint library conferences in the past, but these stressed policy talks by administrators rather than researchers.

As mentioned, the establishment of A-LIEP is a dramatic step forward in terms of sharing research. I was pleased that A-LIEP organizers promoted the conference with posters and a website in English. Perhaps the organizers of A-LIEP, ALISE, and EUCLID might consider alternating to host truly international conferences that could become regular fora for LIS research – perhaps alternating continents. Another option would be for Asian universities with graduate LIS programs to consider joining ALISE, which is the professional association of LIS educators and graduate students. The majority of ALISE members are in North America, but there also are institutional members in Europe, Australia, and Taiwan. It would also be ideal to have an Asian member on the ALISE International Relations Board, or at least someone who is in contact with the schools.

Proposed Solution Area 2: Publishing¹⁷

¹⁴ One exception is LIS educators in Taiwan who cooperate with educators and practitioners in the Chinese American Library Association to produce a bilingual LIS journal.

¹⁵ I have not conducted a citation analysis of this, but this is clearly visible when one reads footnotes of LIS journals published in North America.

¹⁶ See Fachhochschule Potsdam. “Coping with Continual Change – Change Management in SLIS.” <http://forge.fh-potsdam.de/EUCLID/> Accessed 28 September 2008.

¹⁷ Although the majority of LIS scholars basically avoid exploring the world beyond libraries or information technology, there are a few of us who examine social and historical dimensions within LIS. There is a growing debate among us as to the best approach to understand the social context for libraries. The traditional response since the 1930s at the University of Chicago has been quantitative sociological studies – most often meaning statistical analysis of surveys. My brief reading in Japanese LIS literature suggests that this is the dominant model here too. Scholars are questioning the traditional social scientists’ claims of unbiased research, and are keen on pointing out the perils of such research. If I am not mistaken, in some fields Japanese researchers have already experimented with postmodernism and often-times cases rejected it. This is not yet the case in LIS in the USA. We are still experimenting with critical analysis of LIS. For example, when Wayne Wiegand took over the editorship of our most prestigious journal *the Library Quarterly*, he and his co-editor argued that future research would come from the model of American Studies, including such postmodern theorists as Bourdieu, Gramsci, and Habermas. America’s leading professional periodical, *Library Journal*, published a response by deans of several LIS programs debating the various possible approaches.

This new agenda has already produced some amazing works, such as Christine Pawley’s *Reading on the Middle Border: The Culture of Print in Late-Nineteenth-Century Osage, Iowa* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), but has also contributed to a body of work that is frankly hard to read and actually has little to offer once understood. I hope you will forgive me for not giving any specific examples, but there is a growing postmodern LIS literature that appeals to professors who need to publish in venues that appeal to academics in other disciplines. I wonder how much of this is readable by other librarians or users.

It is sadly true that librarians still place highest value on what Ralph Shaw called “how me did it good” articles, rather than anything critical, but there has to be something between the two extreme positions that advances our critical understanding of libraries. I believe that we have to be able to use the

The next area I would like to explore is publishing itself. Several Japanese journals help researchers abroad like myself by publishing foreign-language abstracts of research articles, like their European counterparts. Some even are indexed by *Library & Information Science Abstracts*. These abstracts and indexes help us to have some idea of articles that we might want to get translated. Even if we do not go beyond that, these abstracts are invaluable for providing an overview of trends in LIS research in Japan. Another contribution to the number of English / other language articles on LIS is Kyoto University's journal *Lifelong Education and Libraries*. I am not sure how many of my colleagues in North America frankly read the journal though because of the bifurcated nature of the journal and because it is not fully indexed. I hope that it will spark more Japanese researchers interest in writing in foreign languages to share their research. Of course, Asian scholars are welcome to contribute to North American journals, but I understand the criticism that Suzuki Takao wrote about "international English" and non-native speakers. Of course, collaboration is another potential source for interested researchers.

LIS researchers abroad also have a hard time with the scattering of published LIS research in Asia, especially with articles published by university departmental journals. These are harder for us abroad in terms of awareness, lack of indexing, and added difficulties to order articles from Inter-library loan.¹⁸ It also would be beneficial for non-native speakers to have an overview of Asian LIS journals, indexes, encyclopedias, and well-respected monographs. Literature review essays would be equally well-received introductions for foreign researchers to LIS trends.

Proposed Solution Area 3: International Exchange

The last solution I'd like to raise is promoting international exchange. Thanks to the East-West Center and American Asia policy during the Vietnam War era, the federal government subsidized numerous scholarships for Asian students to pursue graduate work in LIS at the universities of Hawaii, Michigan, and Chicago. Quite a few Asian LIS faculty as well as Asian Studies Specialist librarians went through these programs. Although we continue to receive several good students from Asia, this is far from an organized effort, and students aren't always matched with the school that best matches their needs or interests.¹⁹

Students from certain parts of Asia who enter our graduate program also have a harder time to find professional positions if they return. Many tend to remain in North America and become Asian Studies specialists because employers in their home countries seem to find them overqualified for entry-level positions, while at the same time viewing their MLISc/MLS as insufficient preparation for administrative positions. This seems to be a waste of human potential as these graduates would be dedicated bridges between LIS researchers in both nations.

Besides the commitment of completing a degree abroad, I would suggest that LIS schools in North America and Asia explore reciprocal exchange programs. The LIS School at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee arranged numerous exchange programs. It would seem ideal if the University of Hawaii, for example, could pioneer such efforts by arranging formal or informal exchange of LIS faculty and students. Even brief exchange programs or study tours ranging from one month to a year, could do wonders to promote mutual understanding and discourse.

research questions from postmodernism, but hope we could write in a way that is readable so practitioners can understand the relevance.

¹⁸ I might add that overall North American researchers tend to be somewhat skeptical of departmental journals as there rarely is evidence of peer-review.

¹⁹ On this topic, see essays in Julie I. Tallman and Joseph B. Ojiambo's *Translating An International Education to a National Environment* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1990). Lawrence Wai-hong Tam, Ross Harvey, and John Mill raise similar questions in "How relevant are Library and Information Science Curricula Outside their Geographic Domain?" *Education for Information* 25 (2007): 73-91.

Conclusion

I am sure there are many other possibilities to explore in terms of promoting mutual understanding, but I hope that my brief talk has inspired you with the importance of approaching LIS education from a critical and international perspective in order to avoid our traditional “tunnel vision” approach. I sincerely hope that we can build on the long history of Asia-North America ties in LIS education. Such an international grounding – not only between Japan and the United States would help us to be both local (preserve local cultures, in age of mass media) and international in our professional outlook. Libraries can be centers for learning, democratic exchange, and the preservation of local cultures, but we must commit ourselves to this, and actively create policies as well as LIS education and research that reflects this critical agenda.

Such an agenda may be problematic for us on several levels. The first problem is that our philosophy includes a commitment to serve everyone regardless of ideology. This value may be in opposition to the mainstream political discourse some nations. Until recently, the United States (under Bush) was moving towards nationalistic, and militaristic thinking that could be typified more by intolerance than questioning and a commitment to diversity. This is echoed in some parts of Asia, as well.

To be honest though, I wonder if North American librarians will continue to be fighters for intellectual freedom (IF). These values are not necessarily being taught as part of our professional education. It is a mistake that we sometimes say that libraries are historic defenders of IF. The actual history is that librarians gradually came to this idea. Books like Louise Robbins’ *Censorship and the American Library* show this gradual development. It is not clear if we will continue to advance this agenda or if we will change “with the times.” Libraries are being crushed by declining budgets, high technology costs, astronomically skyrocketing journal price gouging. Some library managers are responding with an increased emphasis on managerial approaches, such as charging for services. Universities have also responded by emphasizing information science values (emphasis on information technology and managerial, free-market values, such as entrepreneurship and information brokerage) over traditional library values.

As academics and students, you should be careful in evaluating the advice of anyone who comes offering prescriptions (especially one based upon such diagnosis). I offer these thoughts and reflections as an expression of my desire to communicate greetings and thank those of you who have made efforts to internationalize LIS.

Working together, I am confident that we can continue to improve the situation. We have yet much to learn from each other about libraries, books, information technologies – as well as our larger cultures. I am hopeful that increased exchange of ideas will broaden our thinking. This at least is my dream.

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About the Author

Andrew Wertheimer earned a BA in Journalism and Asian Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, an MLS from Indiana University, and a Ph. D. the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is Chair of the Library and Information Science Program at the University of Hawaii, where he teaches Collection Management, Management, Library History, and Archival Studies. He serves on the Executive Board of ALISE.