THE JANUS CONFERENCE A DECADE LATER

In early October 2005, while the leaves turned color on the bluffs above Lake Cayuga, about 80 thoughtful librarians gathered at Cornell to discuss collection development in research libraries. As suggested by the conference's logo, the image of the two-faced Roman god Janus, the participants were there to consider the contrast between how we'd traditionally done our jobs in the past and what we would need to do to meet the challenges of a new, digital age. Ross Atkinson, whose presentation charged the breakout sessions, asked one fundamental question: "Why are we building these collections, and why should we continue to build them in this new environment we're moving into?" But Janus wasn't just about reflection. Ross, and the participants, were looking for actions, "practicable actions," that could be taken to meet the challenges of the new age. And Mark Dimunation put it perhaps most succinctly – "Where are we going?"[1]

A little more than a decade has passed, since we all gathered in Ithaca. So I'm motivated to ask myself, did we see the challenges clearly, and did our proposed actions prove meaningful? Janus was a god of doorways, of beginnings. But he was also the god of endings. I think we all knew libraries were at a critical juncture. But did we really know what was coming, and did we understanding what was coming to an end? Was

[1] The Janus website is still available at: http://wayback.archive-it.org/2566/20130608040504/http://www.library.cornell.edu/janusconference//. The videos of the conference presentations, along with some of the papers and PowerPoints, have been archived in Cornell's digital repository, eCommons, at: https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/3767.

Dimunation right, when he posited that, “the barbarians are at the gates,” that it we might be witnessing “the end of the world as we know it.”

It is amazing to think what has changed in the course of the intervening decade. The Google Books Project, which formed the backdrop to Mark Sandler’s talk and in some ways to the entire conference, was less than a year old. Millions of volumes, endless debates, the lawsuits were still ahead. And the project had yet to spawn the HathiTrust, which has really transformed the meaning of the entire enterprise. But there was so much more. Walmart looked like the new face of merchandizing. Amazon hardly got a mention at the conference, and widely available cloud computing services from Amazon, Microsoft and others was still in the future. Chris Anderson’s *Wired* magazine article popularizing the term, “the long tail,” was only a year old, though Mark Sandler wisely saw the wisdom of the idea. So clearly things were changing, and many of those changes hadn’t yet been imagined, thus escaping our consideration.

Of course, one incredible event transpired that none of us anticipated. Barely two years after the conference, the world economy fell off a cliff. And the budgets of most of the libraries represented in that room at Cornell, and many others that weren’t there, went toppling down with it. The endowments of the wealthy privates slid, and state funding, an already shrinking pie, shrunk still faster. Amazingly, the impact on library collection budgets wasn’t as devastating as it surely felt. Between the 2006 and 2015 total materials expenditures by ARL libraries actually grew by 26.5%. That’s almost 10 percentage points above the increase in the consumer price index for that period. But, of course, books and periodicals aren’t petroleum or automobiles, whose radical price decline defined the index. Nobody discovered new sources of books in the shale of North Dakota.

Even a conservative figure for real materials inflation in that period, 4.5% annually, would have taken expenditures up c. 49% for the period. So, we did fall behind. The collapse spawned a lot of creative ideas for curtailing expenses, though I'm not a fan of the most prevalent, user-driven acquisition. And I do continue to worry that the national collection is growing weaker, and with it the amazing potential of interlibrary loan that has so defined the world of scholarship in the last three decades. But, financially speaking, as much as we all felt like the shadow of poverty was creeping over us – and we complained accordingly - things could have been much worse.

The budget limits of the last decade did spawn growth in one of the fundamental aims of the Janus conference. They fostered a host of renewed cooperative collection development efforts. The list is long. The WEST consortium has made strides in a building collaborative print archive for serials. The EAST group, though still in its infancy, promises e-book collaboration, and other consortia like PALCI and CIC have made important steps in that direction as well. The HathiTrust has become a welcome partner in these efforts, as the Center for Research Libraries always has been. The BorrowDirect partnership of Ivy Plus institutions has taken some initial steps, and my own institution has seen important progress made through our consortium with Columbia and the New York Public Library, MaRLI. It's impressive, and it's a level of cooperation that really seemed a remote dream, when we met at Janus.

One of the concerns that Ross Atkinson expressed and that filled much our breakout conversation turned out, I think, to be something of a straw man – the hybrid collection. There was concern that collections composed of both paper and electronic resources – hybrid collections – generated great confusion and frustration for researchers

and students. That concern drove conversations directed at pressuring publishers, vendors and even scholarly societies to hasten the abandonment of print and move more rapidly toward an electronic-only knowledge landscape. It's true, of course, that our discovery systems, and even our cataloging rules, have often made such hybrid collections more difficult to navigate than our users would wish. But, to my knowledge, we never have and very possibly never will see scholars complain that portions of our collections are still in paper – or indeed that other portions are composed of media, vertical files and all the legacy formats we still care for and preserve. The problem, as users tell us again and again, lies not with the hybridity but rather with the discovery systems. Ross' charge to us on hybridity did spur some stimulating conversations about the relationship between formats and discovery, and perhaps, being the insightful man of wisdom he was, that was all he was after. If it was more a symptom than a cause of our users frustrations, it still made us think carefully about those frustrations, and that was and is a very good thing.

But I would want to acknowledge one element of hybridity that has been anything but a frustration to the communities we serve – our rich and complex special collections. Our rare book collections, our manuscript collections, our archives have moved to the center of not just research, where they've always been crucial, but also to prominence in the teaching mission of our universities. Mark Dimunation's presentation at Janus made that potential very clear. If he saw the barbarians at the gate, when some digital enthusiasts described the book as "a container," he also saw the magic that could come of our increased ability to make our special collections visible. Repositories that once barred their doors to all but an illustrious few now welcome droves of students and new categories of researchers, anxious to experience the history of our culture first-hand. We

certainly need to worry about the impact of smaller budget on our general collections, on both the local and the national levels, and struggle to find discovery systems that make such general materials more easily found. But, in this age of vanilla information, we must also acknowledge the growing importance of the unique materials in our special collections. It's a topic that received less attention at Janus than it should, and the last decade has proven that.

But I think the most essential development to take place in the wake of the Janus conference is a rather complex phenomenon that both Ross Atkinson and Mark Sandler touched upon in their presentations, each in his own way. Ross spoke of the role that building the local collection had always taken – the "privileging" of some materials over others that was represented by our choice to acquire some and not others. It was a way of making the world of knowledge more manageable for local researchers, deciding for them what is and isn't important. He acknowledged that role had begun to disappear in the face of increased access to the national collection and our users' decreased concern that the materials they need be close at hand on their own library's shelves. He recognized that the privileging no longer happens as we build the local collection. Instead it happens, as we offer an array of services to researchers and students, helping them to navigate the much larger world of resources beyond the library's walls, helping them to sift through that world and, once again, to find what is most valuable. So, in this sense, a role that once lay at the heart of collection development was now passing into the realm of public service. In the parlance of a former age, the role of the reference librarian, the role of the instructional librarian, and the role of the bibliographer have merged.

Mark Sandler saw the same phenomenon, as he looked around the commercial world for models that weren't being rendered obsolete by the internet. He may have been wrong, when he said the gas station had an assured future, though of course he was right that delivering gas over the net isn't really tenable. Electric cars may not make gas stations obsolete any time very soon, but there may be far fewer of them. But Mark seemed on target, when he spoke of the cosmetics counters that still fill the main floors of most department stores and, in the years since Janus, have spread to chains like Sephora. In the seemingly infinite universe of makeup and scents, people value someone's ability to help them navigate, to find the best product for their individual needs. In Ross' language, they want someone to privilege some cosmetics over others on their behalf.

In simple terms, as the broader world of knowledge and information has become more accessible to students and researchers, they increasingly need intermediaries to make some sense of it for them. More than anything else that has transpired in the decade since we all gathered in Ithaca, this transition in the role of those who work with library collections has been perhaps the most important development, because it creates a more nuanced role for librarians in the academy of the 21st century.

It seems worth taking a look back at how we've organized ourselves for collection development over the years, as Hank Edelman did in his presentation at Janus, but with less on an eye to mechanisms and more focus on librarian roles. I started my career thirty years ago as History Bibliographer at Columbia University Libraries. That slightly arcane term, bibliographer, which a few institutions still employ, meant that I was responsible for building the history collections of the library system. How I might choose to manage that task was a more open question. Theoretically, I needed to know my constituency –

the university historians and their students. But the nature of that relationship could be quite distant – knowing who they were, what sort of research they did; whether or not I actually consulted them and actively functioned as a member of the university's history community was a matter of choice. I remember meeting a bibliographer at Harvard in those days. I asked her, if she considered herself a member of the academic community at Harvard, interacting with the scholars and students, attending lectures and the like. She looked at me with horror, saying with ire, "I just want to be left alone to buy the books." There was enough money at her disposal that she didn't need to consult the faculty to tailor her collection. The expectation was that Widener would have everything they could ever want, and achieving that took every minute of her day. Similarly, when I started at Columbia, a colleague warned me, "Don't go near the reference desk. They'll try to suck you into sitting on the desk." I was a bibliographer. Liaison was optional, and public service was genuinely inadvisable.

Whether or not an institution has gone to the opposite extreme, leaving collection development to the faculty and students through patron-driven acquisition, current budgets – and the expectations of our users – simply cannot justify any librarian functioning in that sort of isolation any longer. On the one hand, the mechanisms with which we build collections have made it unnecessary. Approval plans, which many libraries still avoided when I began in 1985, now drive most of our paper acquisitions. Licensing has completely shifted journal selection away from the old title-by-title selection – the serials committee, gathered in a room and passing around sample issues – replacing it, like it or not, with the "big deal." And, in the last decade since Janus that same licensing environment has defined our acquisition of e-books. In a data-driven

university, devoting extensive staff hours to the intimate process of building a collection just doesn't sell to administrators.

It doesn't mean we don't need to be careful building our collections, ensuring they meet local needs on a reasonable level and thinking consortially to ensure that the national collection is as complete as we can make it. But dedicating anyone's day to doing just that is no longer the world in which we live. For some it still was, when we met in Ithaca. It no longer is.

The alternative, which has emerged over the last thirty years, is the subject specialist librarian – someone that builds collections, yes, but also someone who provides reference and consultation services and actively teaches in the curriculum. This someone has been paired with an academic program, not just to build a collection for those scholars and students but increasingly also to help those patrons navigate both the local and the national collections. We became partners with the faculty, the history librarian for the historians, the biology librarian for the biologists. It's a model that many of us have been shaping over the last two decades, and I think it's been successful. Budgets permitting, it's built strong collections, perhaps better-targeted collections. But, more importantly, it's built stronger relationships between academic libraries and the communities they serve.

But, in the years since Janus, conditions have begun to call for a still more significant change in the role of collection librarians. On the one hand the growth of interdisciplinary research and teaching has broken down many of the subject delineations with which we've been aligned – philosophers working with chemists, historians working with sociologists, literary scholars delving into anthropology. Whose librarian is whose?

In addition, scholars across the disciplines, ranging beyond the sciences into the social sciences and the humanities, have begun to rely on technical tools to do their work. Digital scholarship in the humanities and other fields, the increasing desire to integrate data management, media and web technology into research and to teach students how to do that – these are the initiatives that are shaping much of what our constituents are doing today. Much of it was unimaginable at Janus. But it's requiring that we build partnerships in new ways, with technologists, media experts, special collections librarians and archivists. If the subject specialist is no longer isolated in his/her cubicle, busily buying books, that same librarian now requires a whole network of specialists to meet the needs of the community.

So increasingly I think we're seeing the emergence of what I might call the "research specialist," in addition to and in collaboration with the subject librarian. Each of us needs to know about data, about media, about web technology, about special collections. But the specialists we increasingly employ in those fields are also reaching out into the community, as our faculty want an expert to help them do research and teach with these resources. The collections we're building, as Mark Sandler already noted at Janus, need to include data and all these other resources. But our expertise needs to expand into these areas as well, and our partnerships need to include those who know them best. The "privileging" that Ross Atkinson saw moving from the building of collections to the building of services now relies on a more expansive and varied network of specialists, one that is not necessarily subject-based.

So, if those "bibliographers" who built collections have now become "research specialists," whose time is primarily spent building services, then what's really happened

to collection development in the eleven years since Janus? On the one hand, in the face of the new age's budget constraints, and in an environment where usage data drives funding, it's become harder and harder to justify the acquisition of low use collections. It's not just difficult for the public universities that need to face increasingly parsimonious and skeptical legislators, nor is the problem limited to the poorly endowed liberal arts colleges and smaller privates. Administrators at Ivy League and other well-endowed institutions are asking questions about the millions of books piling up in offsite storage. Our circulation statistics simply are not what they once were. They seem to drop faster than the budgets. And our administrative funding sources are not immune to the meaning of those facts. The balmy autumn climate in which we met in Ithaca in 2005 soon saw the onset of the grey skies of an upstate New York winter, and the climate in which we built our collections underwent a similar transition.

In this new climate, collections nonetheless remain vitally important. Behind the technology, scholars still need to share the results of their work, and we need to make sure they can find what they need. In the new environment, the collaboration we discussed at Janus, and which we have begun to see realized in so many places in recent years, is essential to our mission. It needs to be the basis on which we manage our low-use collections. It needs to shape the ways we allocate our budgets. And it needs to expand into the licensed resources that are now the very centerpiece of the collections we're all building. The students to whom I teach collection development in the Palmer School of Library and Information science perhaps grow tired of hearing me talk about the national collection. But, as we busily build local services, "privileging" information

in the new way, the collection about which we need to be thinking is the one that spans all our institutions, the national resource on which scholarship will continue to rely.

That's not an easy concept to sell to the leadership of budget-strapped universities. "The national library collection" doesn't really resonate in a world where universities are still extraordinarily competitive. Far-sighted funders like the Mellon Foundation can and have helped. But to a very large extent we're going to have to make it happen on the financial and staffing resources we already have. Librarians, I have always believed, are an inherently collaborative people. But collaborative collection development has always been illusive, as Ross Atkinson so often reminded us, perhaps because, unlike collaborative cataloging, it wasn't quite necessary. It is now, and we need to make it happen.

As I said in an article that appeared in the same year as Janus, it's still about the user. As we think about the national collection we're building, just as we think about the local services and discovery mechanisms that provide access to that collection, it's the partnership with scholars that has to drive us. I genuinely believe they're no longer so deeply rooted to their local institution and its collection. They often have more in common with scholars at other universities than with their colleagues down the hall. I think they're prepared to work with us in thinking through what is most important to build and to preserve. I think they see us as partners more than ever before – in the navigation of this complex universe of information and scholarship, in helping their students see the physical artifacts on which our knowledge is based, and in helping them learn about the technologies that can foster their research and teaching. The faculty are our natural partners, and we need to ground our initiatives in a common perspective.

Above all, recognizing that these scholars and their students aren't checking out books the way they once did, a vital part of our mission needs to continue to be insuring that they can nonetheless find and get their hands on those books, when they do need them, whether they're paper or electronic, local or a thousand miles away in some other institution's storage facility. In that sense, collection development, despite all the changes since Janus, needs to remain at the center of our minds. Acknowledging that a dwindling cadre will actually call themselves "collection developers," the development of collections remains a vital part of what we do.

When Mark Sandler gave his brilliant and amusing presentation at Janus, he talked about how much he'd always enjoyed attending ALA and being a part of the Chief Collection Development Officers group, the forty-plus people who gather around a table at every ALA, the same "family," as Mark described them, that gathered at Janus. We have shared common goals, issues and challenges together for a great many years, and I can say too that it's always been a privilege to sit and talk among them. But the simple truth is that the club has changed since Janus, and we need to acknowledge what that means. Looking at the research library landscape that provides our context today, one might actually say that the group of people in that auditorium in Ithaca were not entirely the right group. Mark Dimunation was there, representing the special collections world, and that was a very good thing. Probably more of his colleagues should have been there, too. But the data people, the technologists, the media specialists were missing. And, in truth, so were the scholars. Given the group who gathered at Cornell, we could only frame the conversation about collection development, and that was probably fine at the

time. But now the conversation needs to be broader, the room needs to be a bit bigger, and the family needs to expand.

As we look at the research library world a decade and more after the Janus Conference, there is clearly much that we got right, or at least we did accurately glimpse many of the challenges coming our way. But it is, in fact, a very different world now, and it needs a new conversation.