



Editor's Keyboard

Gregg Sapp

On Subjectivity, Taken Out of Context

It sometimes amazes me how often other people get everything wrong. They will look at the same set of data, conditions, and circumstances as I do, but come to completely different conclusions than the correct ones . . . which, obviously, are those I have reached. I consider myself to be an extremely objective person. That's how I know that I'm always right. "Duh?" my kids might ask.

When you were in grade school, did your class ever conduct that exercise whereby the teacher would whisper a message to the first person in the row, who would then whisper it to the next, and so on until the message had been relayed around the entire class? At the end, the last person repeated the message aloud, which, invariably, was a greatly modified and mistaken version of what the teacher had originally spoken. I have never forgotten the essential life lesson that I learned from this demonstration. Of course, I *knew* that I had gotten the message exactly and precisely correct. So, therefore, anybody and everybody else could not be trusted to get things right!

Here's further proof of my unerring perspicacity with regard to details. The first time somebody gave me this little exercise, I thought it was some kind of joke. But, I have implemented this personally in library instruction classes for several years now, and rarely does anybody get it right. The task is simple. Read the following. Count the number of times the letter *F* is used. (Spoiler alert: Don't read ahead in this column before completing this task.)

- Finished files are the result of years of scientific study combined with the experiences of many years.

If you, dear reader, are anything like my library instruction students, then you will have carefully analyzed, interpreted, and deconstructed this sentence and determined that it contains three *F*s. Maybe there is something weird in my personal cognitive neuropsychology, but I saw this once, and just once, and it was immediately apparent to me that there were six *F*s, if you don't miss the *F*s in the

word "of." Why do so many people miss this? I don't know. Why didn't I? I don't know. I guess that it just reinforces my absolute belief in my perfect rightness. Or weirdness.

But there is a double edge that comes with being right. (Or weird.) Not everybody agrees with you. Not everybody sees things your way. And—this is the galling part—it turns out that when most people disagree with me, things tend to work out better if I do things *their* way, not *mine*. That's my management observation for this column: being "right" does not always lead to the best results. I have learned that, of course, from the impeccable perspective of my own self, I may always be right, but even so, if I always followed my own instincts, to the neglect of others, I'd find myself in a very bad situation indeed. I have to sometimes give in to the will of others. And, amazingly, it does work out.

I was considering the matter of objectivity and subjectivity with regard, in particular, to the content of this issue of *LA&M*. A lot of what we do as library administrators is a matter of personal perception, and our success can depend upon our abilities to convince others that we are "right." Look at Beatrice Priestly's article on equating the funding rationale for public libraries to the research and development funding for a company. Most often, public library funding is argued for as a matter of public good. I do wonder, though, if a more persuasive contention might be made by maintaining that the library is an investment in the future economic health of a community, like corporate research and development. Similarly, Laura Bender, Georgie Donovan, and Janice Simmons-Welburn's article on transforming the library might make some people reel dizzily—haven't we changed so much already? How can it be argued that we've not changed fast enough? Maybe, though, we in libraries have been too timid about confronting the epochal changes in our profession, and we must or we will not endure. If that is the case, then, maybe we need to retool ourselves, as Elizabeth Nelson might contend, so that we think of ourselves as librarians, sure, but also as "knowledge managers."

There's more food for cognitive dissonance in this issue. Dennis Defa suggests that the whole realm of library human resources management has changed so much and is so increasingly complex as to warrant the creation of a library HR specialist. Part of the reason that these issues have become so uniquely complicated is because, in librar-

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on the evolving “green” opportunities for library buildings, including degrees of green.

- **BES Interior Design Awards**
ALA-IIDA Library Interior Design Awards Reception—Wildly successfully biennial event first staged in 2006. Ticketed format.
- **BES Functional Space Planning Committee**
“Avoid Gray Hair! Jumpstart a Passion for Building: Three Steps to an Extraordinary New Library for Your Community or Campus”—A step-by-step strategy for a successful capital project.
- **BES Library Interiors, Furnishings, and Equipment Committee**
“Ergonomics in Libraries: Human-Centered Design for Library Facilities”—How ergonomic issues affect the design of furniture, equipment, and facilities, and how users and staff interact with the designed environment.
- **Fund Raising and Financial Development Section (FRFDS) Trends and Marketing Committee**
“Fund-raising in HD: The Effects of Marketing, Development and Communications”—Program will discuss best practices in marketing for academic, public, and special libraries.
- **FRFDS Fund Fare**
“Sharing the Wealth: Fundraising Tactics That Won’t Break Your Budget (LAMA Fund Fare)”—Collaborative efforts of sponsors and fund-raisers help ease the burden of fund-raising and cultivate community relationships.
- **FRFDS Program Committee**
“Turn Numbers into Facts: Using Data Analysis and Branding for Fund-raising Success”—Learn how to use the institutions’ data for donor cultivation. Discusses the importance of branding in fund-raising. Program proposes to provide a \$750 honorarium to primary speaker, a research consultant.
- **Library Organization and Management Section (LOMS) Financial Management Committee**
“Shift Happens: Aligning Financial Decisions with

Strategic Directions”—Will discuss the link between strategic planning and resource allocation among competing program needs.

- **Measurement, Assessment and Evaluation Section (MAES) Data Collection for Library Managers Discussion Group**
“And Now for the Good News: Appreciative Inquiry”—Approach to organizational change using principles of Appreciative Inquiry, developed in the healthcare industry, as applied to library organizations by engaging library staff in assessment.
- **Public Relations and Marketing Section (PRMS)**
“Are You in the Game? Harnessing Millennial Learning Strategies to Market Your Library”—This is a “Hot Topics” program that will feature an academic and a public librarian sharing experiences putting on gaming and Second Life programs in their libraries.
- **PRMS Swap and Shop**
“Swap and Shop: Hot Ideas for Cool PR”—Annual event that presents public relations tools that have been effective in libraries across the country.
- **Systems and Services Section (SASS) Management Practices Committee**
“You’ve Been Shopped: Mystery Shopping for Better Service”—Applying evaluation techniques used in banking and retail to library services.

LAMA has long played a critical role in developing library leaders. These programs represent an enormous commitment of volunteer time and energy to achieve LAMA’s mission statement: “The Library Administration and Management Association encourages and nurtures current and future leaders, and develops and promotes outstanding leadership and management practices.” I encourage current and prospective LAMA members to take full advantage of these professional development opportunities and check out the many avenues for getting involved in our division.

I look forward to seeing you in Anaheim!

ies as in corporate America, we are witnessing the passing of a generational baton, from Boomers to Gen X-ers and Millennials. In part two of their perceptive article on these differences, Pixey Mosley and Wendi Kaspar consider what must be taken into account when hiring across generations. Finally, our columnists also touch upon these topics. John Lubans, Bob Moran, Bonnie Osif, and guest columnist Denise Shorey write eloquently about changes they have witnessed in this field.

So, here’s what I think about this issue of “rightness.” I would rather get things right than be right. Alas, when it

comes to getting things right, I have found that my opinion alone is less helpful than the opinions of other people. Even if they *are* wrong!

Postscript: Your humble editor will soon leave his position as head of the science library at the University at Albany (SUNY) to become the dean of library and media services at Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. However, I will maintain contact information at my current institution until after I have relinquished editorial responsibilities to Eric Shoaf. I am thankful for LAMA’s support and can’t wait to get started at my new gig.