Introduction: Composing Information

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Librarians once were futurists. Our everyday activities hinged on a set of practices and theories directed toward known, although distant, outcomes. What was the term of our mandate to provide access to the cultural heritage in our trust? Essentially forever. We included new media formats as a matter of course, with necessary preservation, conservation, curation, and archiving. Many and multivaried constraints strained our knowledge industries, yet our vision embraced unprecedented growth in creation, acquisition, collection, indexing, digesting, abstracting, finding, delivery, and research. Our group intellectual capacity accommodated complexities of kind, scope, identity, and audience. We could budget, plan, and serve despite limitations on funding, cooperation, and support. Librarians understood one another globally, even as libraries became known as *repositories of things* rather than as *organizations of people.* Something happened along the way to the future: in sustaining our status of authority, we became ubiquitous, and in our passion to extol our mindset, we became universal.

Perhaps everyone now speaks *librarian* as a *lingua informatica.* I am thinking here beyond the librarian role in every form and equivalence, or similarly that of the information specialist, in all our functions and services. I have described this vast librarianship as the last of all disciplines to traverse intellectual history and digest its contents—an awkward mixed metaphor that hints at what has changed, perhaps fundamentally. The traverse has become accelerated into a cycle of shared or common knowledge for which we are companions and guides throughout. The future has no longer a certain distance, where all participants are acting in concert, with every signal and message communicating in the online/augmented reality. Or so goes the ideal wherein the transparency is between minds and lives, and our information technologies serve us and our purposes.

Where the life-cycle model is tired and shopworn is in its over application to things. The collective memory in real time does not equate to instant agreement, nor to total uniformity. We mean to unify our informational lives through tolerance, equal access, and equal opportunity in line with existing library values. We require an interfacial literacy concomitant with what we perceive as new understandings of those values. The following essays speak to a thriving world community of interest in expounding the philosophical aspects of information from, for, and within library and information science.

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