I am a practitioner, a department head at an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) library. I have also worked in the commercial sector supplying services primarily to the academic library market. What I have to say here stems from two beliefs I have formed in the course of my experience. They have guided my actions and thinking and have crystallized into the functional equivalent of axioms. The first is that librarianship today is very much a technology-dependent discipline and so is driven by the enormous technological changes and incipient paradigm shifts swirling about us. The second is that libraries will need to adopt a much more businesslike model and develop superior management expertise. I do not accept that management of not-for-profit institutions is in any significant way different from that of for-profit ones. From these twin principles it follows that libraries are in perilous times. To prosper or even survive as a repository of "legacy documents" (old books and bound periodicals) in an environment of permanent technological turmoil, they must be able to satisfy the information needs of the future at least as well as their competitors in the information marketplace. To meet market demands will require fundamental change beyond those positive steps we are already taking toward becoming libraries without walls. These changes in how we perform our tasks, in what we do, and, most important, in our mindset will of course not stop at the library.

In the words of James J. O’Donnell, a classicist at the University of Pennsylvania, networked information "will change the economics and the landscape of higher education dramatically."1

What is true for libraries is even more true for library schools, since their function is to train the librarians, or "knowledge workers," of the future. It will be my thesis in this column, first, that library schools must change radically and, second, that a commitment to reinvigorated continuing education (CE) may represent an excellent, if difficult, first step for a library school ready to redefine what it does.

As the following examples illustrate, the issues raised by technological progress and our need to redefine or reinvent what we do extend beyond the library profession and library schools. At its October 1995 meeting of the Society of Information Management, Warren McFarlan of the Harvard Business School told the gathered corporate computer managers that there were only twenty good years left in their profession. The reason is disintermedia-

Continuing Education and the Reinvention of the Library School

L. Hunter Kevill
tion, the freeing of the information consumer from the intermediary of the information technology (IT) and library professional, which will result from the increasing technical sophistication of users. Joseph Monne, the new dean of the Lally School of Management and Technology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, states that most business schools are obsolete because the market place is being transformed by a technological revolution. Even programs in information and computer science are being criticized for the inadequate skill levels possessed by recent graduates, and a national task force is working on a revised model curriculum in a project named IS95. While these issues are not library specific, it could be argued that library professionals are more vulnerable than others, such as IT professionals. Library schools, after all, have long been criticized for teaching too little of use on the job. A recent issue of Technical Services Quarterly echoes the potential complaint: "[Library schools do little] if anything to prepare future catalogers to do serials cataloging."

Indeed, this complaint and similar ones will assume increasing force as what is taught in library school falls further and further behind the real needs of practitioners. A recent survey of ARL members indirectly tackles the question of the worth of a library school degree. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents stated they would consider hiring applicants without the M.L.S. degree. 110 of 750 professional openings in the previous three years had been filled by "non-M.L.S. professionals." A full report on this survey is contained in ARL SPEC Kit 212, which concludes:

As librarianship continues to debate the scope and content of its knowledge base and attendant educational requirements, librarians are left to promote, if not protect, their profession with a less than clearly articulated sense of what constitutes librarianship as a distinct profession.

Our need for knowledge, particularly new knowledge, has never been greater. This is because our profession is losing to obsolescence the core set of practical principles that once defined it. These losses appear to be occurring faster than the rate of change in library school curricula. And since librarianship is no longer, and perhaps never was, a professional discipline in the usual sense, library CE on the model of continuing medical education for physicians is out of the question. For if the basic competencies required for library practice are in flux, and what we have been taught is becoming obsolete, the very existence of the traditional library school will be highly problematic. Thus the notorious aversion of librarians for CE—at least that available from library schools—may have a rational basis. Since library schools cannot supply what we need, we simply get it elsewhere or do without.

It is clear to me that only those library schools reinvented pretty much from the ground up in response to the present and future needs of practitioners will succeed in their educational mission and survive. Before turning to...
attention to concrete suggestions for products, let me suggest a general point of departure for this reinvention. Library schools would do well to abandon the model of intellectual work inherited from the nineteenth-century German seminar, that of the Ph.D. research scholar, generally working alone, adding permanent bricks to the edifice of learning. We can no longer sustain the notion of a single library discipline, with new advances building on previous ones. We must become conversant with a large number of rapidly changing disciplines, over which we will have no control or ownership. For example, World Wide Web technology has come from outside library science and has quickly been embraced by the library world. But while there is a present need for library specialists in WWW technology, there may no longer be such a need in a few years when the successors to Web browsers have taken root.

This frozen inward-looking intellectual model gave rise to the discipline of library science and still affects to some extent the ethos of academic librarians, many of whom still go through the tenure process. I recommend instead the model used in the engineering and business disciplines, which recognizes the primacy of the practical intelligence responding to a dynamically changing world of new tools and new kinds of technology. This is not a new idea. Nor is it just a rehash of the tried and true: the opposition between theory and practice. Let me cite Axel F. Enström, of the Swedish Institute of Technology, who wrote at the turn of the century:

I maintain that what has appeared to be too much theory is instead too little theory, that is to say young engineers have a great deal of knowledge which is called theory, but this consists largely of rigid theory, dead knowledge. I have arrived at the definite opinion that our present scientific education is inadequate in the light of modern requirements. By science I do not mean what many people mean, the involvement with mathematics and formulas... I would go so far as to say that a cobbler could be a scientist in his field. A person involved in practical work, an engineer or a cobbler, may, by reflecting on his work or his experience, achieve insights which can be compared with learning ready-made theories.

If there are to be successor disciplines to library science, there must be a prominent place for Enström's scientific cloggers and engineers. These people should be recognized as experts, and their recruitment is a sine qua non of the revitalized library school. Many of these people are in engineering and business faculties; this fact should not deter their recruitment for library or information offerings. Many others are consultants working outside the university structure, are instructors in corporate "universities," or work in libraries or library consortia or utilities. Some will be certified trainers in Total Quality Management (TQM) or possess other desirable special skills. It cannot be long before an entrepreneurial library school offers academic homes to the best of these people, holding out the opportunity to ply their trade, maintain their usual income, and at the same time contribute to the university. Some could be residence on campus. Many would not, particularly those who would conduct training sessions around the country or by means of distance education. I would strongly advise against forcing them into the usual faculty Ph.D. tenure-track researcher mold. Tenured but permanent clinical physicians exist nicely in medical schools with tenured full-time researchers. There is no reason why li-
brary schools cannot forge a similar ar-
angement. Similarly, the implicit as-
sumption that most courses must be
taught by a single instructor resident in
the library school should be questioned.
I can see great advantage in library
schools' brokering experts wherever
they can be found and adding value by
creating marketable new products.

What then are the prospects for en-
trepreneurial library schools with re-
spect to CE? Let me make a few
suggestions. First, because so much of
our knowledge is rapidly becoming ob-
solate and the useful half-life of what
we learn is often five years or less, I
would recommend always designing CE
products based on what is likely to be
needed in five years as well as what is
needed now. Consistent with the new
academic model recommended above, the
new products should not necessar-
ily be "owned" by a tenured faculty
member. Team ownership as well as
team teaching are appropriate. Many if
not most should be designed by the li-
brary school management, and appro-
priate experts recruited as needed to fill
specific roles. Second, because of the
intense competitive environment and
the fact that existing library schools are
generally not very competitive, I recom-
 mend an initial strategy based on niche
marketing. The goal should be to iden-
tify empty niches to fill, as it would be
futile to go head-to-head with an estab-
lished presence. An example to avoid is
CE in the 1960s attempting to compete
with IBM simply by claiming its com-
puters were superior. Be dead serious
about identifying the incentives that
would motivate people like me to want
CE and choose a particular CE product,
as well as the disincentives. Successful
niche marketing hinges on developing
value-added custom education pro-
gams and courses tailored to real
needs. Library schools need to practice
the customer orientation they should be
preaching. A reinvented library school
should be able to develop new products
as quickly and as successfully as Toyota
does a new model or a new kind of
motor vehicle. Marketing research tech-
niques, surveys, and focus groups are
all useful tools. Graduates, old as well
as recent, particularly those who no
longer work in libraries, and the people
who hire graduates should be among
the groups heavily surveyed. Recently I
have seen several messages on listservs
boiling down to: "I ain't a book cataloger.
I have recently been asked to catalogue
serials and feel lost. Can anyone help?"

A short distance course or self-study
materials would fill this particular
niche.

Just as important as the content of a
CE product is the packaging, such as
how, when, where, and by whom the
product is delivered. The increasing
practicality of distance learning means
that continuing education can be
brought to the student-customer. Mak-
ing it available when needed might fill
an empty niche and increase accep-
tance in the marketplace. Convenient
sessions could be offered before or after
library conferences. This is the ap-
proach of the library school at Long
Island University, which has timed its
two summer institutes to attract those
attending the summer 1996 ALA confer-
ence in New York City. Self-study mate-
rials would be very popular, particu-
larly computer-based instruc-
tion for the more technical subjects.
Abandoning the one-size-fits-all ap-
proach would lead beyond CE as we
know it to programs and certificates
customized to the individual level? 7 And
if we extend the range of potential
customers to include individual librar-
ies or library systems, a new range of
consulting and training services would
open. These consulting services could
range from assistance in choosing a li-
brary system to periodic cultural and
other audits, seminars on an as-needed basis, planning a migration to a new-generation library system. The vision statement of the IBM Rochester business unit, winner of the 1999 Baldridge Quality Award, says something we all should take very much to heart: "[T]he niches are the market and the ultimate niche is the individual customer." An overview of the competitive environment reveals a great deal of competition. First of all there are the library conferences and Internet listservs, which can be extraordinarily helpful in practice. The ARL Office of Management Services offers a series of very good short management courses. Some of the most formidable competitors are division services and academic departments outside the library school. Several examples will suggest the variety of what is available. Short extension courses on technical topics relating to PCs and networking are very popular.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Department of Engineering Professional Development offered a tempting two-day course on standard generalized markup language (SGML) publishing in January 1996. The course was advertised over the Internet. The instructors were not academics but published consultants and practitioners. They have credibility few library school faculty can match. The faculty of law at the University of Montreal has organized an SGML conference at which Charles Goldstech, the father of SGML, will be the keynote speaker. The competition extends far beyond academic institutions. CAPCON, a library network in the Washington, D.C., area, is offering nine GE workshops this spring. All classes will take place in CAPCON's Training and Education Center and will be conducted by "nationally known instructors." Only one of the eleven instructors is a library school faculty member. Another example is the SGML Author Solutions Conference sponsored by Microsoft, January 31–February 2, 1996. There are well-established ways to receive any of the four Microsoft technical certificates or a Lotus Notes certificate or become a certified Novell engineer, all of which would be marvelous on a systems librarian's résumé. Other competitors are private companies offering training services. They usually travel around the country, making attendance less expensive. One company increases its credibility by offering training materials published by Que. So far my examples have been technical, but there is just as much, if not more, competition on management training.

Following are a few ideas for new products that might answer market needs.

One possibility is a library systems certificate that means the holder is actually able to perform a broad range of technical tasks. The program might encompass both general computer technology as well as library applications of that technology. For instance, the student could receive a solid grounding in Internet and network management with an emphasis on LANs and TCP/IP, be encouraged or required to get a Microsoft or Novell certificate, gain a basic competence in WWW, HTML, CGI, perl, as well as some basic programming using Visual Basic for Applications, C++, or an application macro language. An exposure to client/server would be a real bonus. Of course there should also be a thorough grounding in all aspects of one or more of the major systems, such as Innovative, Data Research, Ametrich, or Sisis. (As an aside, I wonder how library schools can possibly justify not having one or more of these systems in their labs.)
think that a bachelor's degree, preferably in a technical field, and a year or two of library systems experience should be required for admission, but not the M.S. Most of the instruction could be done asynchronously by distance, with minimal required time on campus. Or the instructors could be brought to the students.

Another product idea is not particularly new: a library management certificate. I would investigate including some of the content required for the library systems certificate discussed above—supplemented by management topics such as cultural change (in my view the number-one problem in library organizational behavior and change or transformation management; CQI or TQM; spreadsheets, databases, statistics, techniques of surveying users; communication skills. Both certificates would need to be refreshed every few years and so would lead to new CE products.

For the past fifteen years, the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Library and Information Studies Continuing Education Services (CES) has been offering a certificate of professional development consisting of two-day seminars. Designed as a cohesive curriculum of continuing education, this program has offered seminars in management, automation, technological applications, library buildings, archives, and a variety of topical electives. CES will receive the LITA/Library Hi-tech Award at ALA-New York for its "record of providing continuing education in information technology over many years." Practitioners, vendors and consultants have been teaching this program since its inception.

More attention should be paid to technology management, which has become a growth discipline. Enrollment in traditional computer science programs has been dropping by as much as 50 percent over the last ten years. Institutions like MIT are graduating fewer computer science majors, showing a 45 percent drop from 1983 to 1995. Students in this new field, which the University of South Carolina calls computer information systems, take a balanced program of technical computer science and business courses. MIT, Stanford, and others offer master's degrees. Many of us would benefit from a good introduction to this new discipline.

Let us turn to another area ripe for CE products. Libraries and library vendors are forging many new partnerships and creating new services. Libraries are increasingly going out to bid for new and old services. Library literature is very weak on the subject of bidding. A quick CE seminar on the collective wisdom of how to write good requests for proposal, requests for quotation, and the like, would answer a big need. This would lead into negotiating skills and how to cost out and evaluate vendor proposals. Just as interesting would be a course or series of courses on how to select a library systems vendor, beginning with the identification of local needs and getting consulting help and extending to negotiating a really good contract. How to select a consultant or systems integrator and how to negotiate the contract might make another very marketable product.

A final idea, an old-fashioned one, is a book summarizing new developments applicable to the library field. Most of these will come from outside the field. Such a book could be published under the aegis of a library school or a professional association. A model might be the American Marketing Association's Marketing Encyclopedia: Issues and Trends Shaping the Future, edited by Jeffrey Hellbrunn (1995). For this book fifty prominent practitioners, consultants, and academicians were invited to
contribute articles of an average of six pages summarizing their expertise on timely subjects. The emphasis is on handling the challenges of the future. The editor’s introduction recommends: “Use this book as an update course in marketing; use it as a source of ideas; use it as a way to constantly challenge your thinking about how you do business.” This book contains articles about new product development, creativity in marketing, positioning, and others that are very pertinent to a library school seeking to come up with good new CE products. A book like this on library topics would prove a positive force in the profession. It too, could, of course, be updated every few years.

References and Notes

4. For a summary of these criticisms, see Joseph Maglitta, “IS Schools: Need Improvement,” Computerworld (Feb. 1995): 78–83. For IS95, see http://www.isworld.org/isworld/isworld.html.
10. MIT calls its degree program management of technology. Blanford SEEM, industrial engineering/engrering management.