Nexus

NEW CHIEF SETTLES IN
INTERVIEW WITH CATHY MATTHEWS

Daniel Phelan, October 17, 2000

Cathy Matthews has a Master of Library Science degree from the University of Toronto. Following her graduation she worked for one year as Reference Librarian at the Ontario Ministry of Labour. From there she went to the University of Toronto where she managed the Criminology Library and Information Service from 1976-1996, and for the years 1996-2000 was Chief Librarian of the University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM) campus. She received the 1994 OCUFA Academic Librarianship Award, for her contributions to academic librarianship, and the 1992 Librarians Association of the University of Toronto Award of Merit.

Cathy was Principal Investigator in a SSHRC grant leading to the publication of *Canadian Criminal Justice History: An Annotated Bibliography* (University of Toronto Press), which she co-edited. She has been Trustee of the Toronto Public Library Board (1991-1994), a member of the Board of Directors of the Policy Research Centre on Children, Youth and Families (1987-1992), and a member of the International Steering Committee of the World Criminal Justice Libraries Network. Her research interests include knowledge management in private police agencies, information literacy, and performance indicators for academic libraries.

Nexus: *What attracted you to the Ryerson Library as a place to work?*

Cathy Matthews: Specifically it was the position of Chief Librarian. It afforded me the opportunity to develop my professional and administrative skills in an innovative urban university. Ryerson is moving full stride in its progress as a university, and the Library has become a place with a centrality and value consistent with the evolution of the University. I felt Ryerson was a place where I could contribute to the team to help effect change and move forward.

I was also attracted by the reputations of the librarians here as being an excellent group – good and bright professionals, many with strong reputations in library professional associations. I was delighted to learn that the rest of the staff also turned out to be quite dedicated and excellent.

Nexus: *How has your past experience at the University of Toronto prepared you for this job?*

CM: In my role as Chief Librarian and as a senior officer at UTM, I dealt with issues of administration, educational planning and recruitment. I participated in and lead initiatives to meet the needs of faculty and students on campus.

These skills will help me with strategies to advance and move the library and the University forward at Ryerson. Through my connections with academics and other librarians, often cultivated through professional associations, I have a good network of useful contacts to facilitate future partnership opportunities.

Nexus: *What most surprised you about Ryerson during your first weeks at the Library?*

CM: I was pleasantly surprised by the warmth and welcome of the staff. I was also surprised by some "murkiness" as to the understanding of the academic value of the library
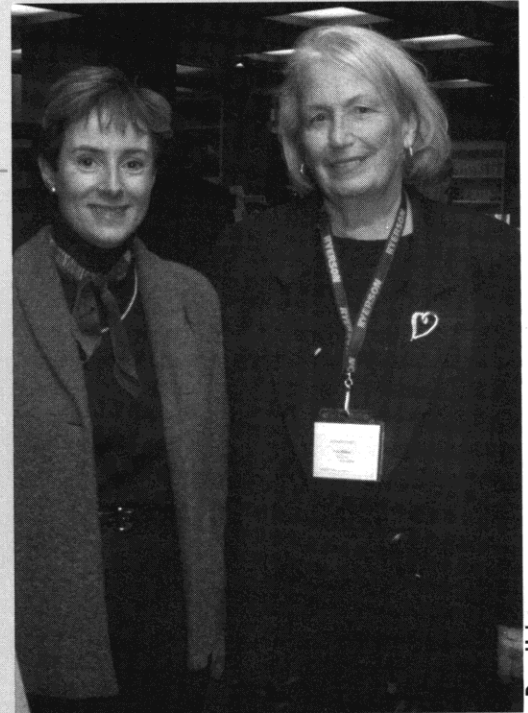
Dave Upham

(L to R) Cathy Matthews, new Chief Librarian, and Joyce Wilson, member of Ryerson's first graduating class, at the Ryerson Library and Archives during Homecoming celebrations, October 28, 2000.

RYERSON LIBRARY

to Ryerson. Some faculty do not seem to understand the value of a good university library, although there are many who are strongly committed to it. In applied learning university students need to be knowledgeable about information sources. This is a knowledge economy, and the role of the Library continues to be strong in identifying, acquiring, organizing and facilitating access to quality information in a variety of formats, equipping the students for success here as well as in life-long learning. I believe there should be a re-affirmation of the role of librarians regarding information literacy.

In a university with a low residential component I am aware of the importance of the Library as an academic place – a place that becomes "home" to most students between and after classes. It is a place where students can collaborate with other students, working with both the information resources and the staff dedicated to their interests, all in one space.

There were some things I was NOT surprised about as well. I was not surprised to hear and see how accommodating the librarians are in working with faculty in developing and delivering library orientation, and in creating pathfinders or study guides on the Web pages for various departments. And I was not surprised at the strong engagement of the librarians and staff in the academic mission of the university.

Nexus: *Where do you see the Ryerson Library heading in the next 5 to 10 years?*

CM: The electronic resources of the Library will continue to grow. In addition we will be striving to introduce people to these resources in new and helpful ways. One initiative is the proposed Information and Learning Commons – a technology-equipped space that delivers services focused on student learning. Many students today are increasingly "computer literate" but do not always understand the context of the information they are seeking. They also lack the ability to critically assess the information they do find. They often are unable to formulate and execute search queries or assess the information-seeking processes they use. Teaching those skills is part of the library's job.

Led by librarians and in partnership with other services at the University, the Information and Learning Commons will assist students in developing "information literacy". Through increased space, technology and services, we can act as a team to enable students to find and use information more efficiently. And that is a skill they will use during their careers too.

Another initiative must be to refurbish the library. Age and wear and tear have taken a toll on what is, for many students their "home away from home". We must replace chairs, tables, carpeting and other furnishings. We also want to work with students in making this happen in such a way that students know and appreciate that this is their space.

There is also a need to reach out to our distance or "virtual" users, those who access our electronic systems even if they are never on campus. Our Call Centre project is one step in supporting remote users. We will implement new ways to help virtual users while continuing to support our onsite users.

Digital won't entirely meet our needs hence we will continue to develop our book collection. The big-box bookstores have shown that people continue to read books. However, we will be facing a serious space problem in the next two years and we must take steps to deal with that, which includes digital resources and weeding of our stacks. Our current Net Library trial of e-books will be interesting to monitor.

Finally we will begin to recognize the presence of graduate students and their special needs and provide dedicated study space, collections and services for them.

Nexus: *How have libraries changed over the course of your career? Can you predict any future trends for academic libraries and Ryerson in particular?*

CM: When I first started working in libraries I was a book-shelver and we still have shelvers today. Some things do not change! I haven't met a machine yet that shelves books.

I see four major changes ahead:

- **The rise of digital information and digital libraries**

- **The convergence of information providers and the blurring of distinctions as to who provides information.**

- **A recognition of the need for information literacy.**

- **The double cohort demands on library resources.**

The Internet has blurred the understanding of "information source", and the corporate map of information providers is experiencing considerable reconfiguration. These present new challenges. We need to step back to understand the context of information to legitimate it, and this is why the Library, in its role of acquisition and aggregation, adds value for the user. The very criteria for selection of what we make available on our shelves or through our Web site validates the information as having met some important criteria. The manner in which information is packaged will grow even more complex and so we now find our greatest advantage is in consortia-based acquisitions with other university libraries. And we need to assist members of the University in understanding our capabilities with regard to information in a variety of formats. This is especially true as we move to accept the double cohort of students.

Advancing the quality of scholarship is also our concern. Students must "grow" their Web "hobby" skills into research skills for university-level learning, and the courses we offer can assist them. In mastering knowledge management and information literacy, they may enhance the quality of their student work and improve their place in the knowledge economy when they graduate.

Finally, more customization of information seems inevitable. Portal initiatives that pre-define a user's "universe" are now developing. Look forward to a "my library" concept in the future, customized to user specifications.

Nexus: *You have a demanding job but when you are not at work, how do you spend your leisure time?*

CM: I am married and have three children – two boys and a girl. We also own a Portuguese water dog named Java. I play bridge, belong to a book club and curl. For the last 5 years I was a co-coordinator of an Out-of-the-Cold shelter, and today am still a volunteer. I enjoy jazz and blues music.

Nexus: *Thank you for an enlightening interview and welcome to Ryerson.*

PREVENTING

Plagiarism

Diane Granfield

This article is a summary of a session entitled "Downloading workload: the Internet and plagiarism," delivered by Diane Granfield and Trina Grover at the Faculty Conference held this past May.

Term paper mills or pen-for-hire enterprises have received considerable attention in the press over the last few years. Internet sites such as "School Sucks" and "Evil House of Cheat" boast of millions of visits, round-the-clock support and customized, top-quality services.

The proliferation of such sites and the increasing ease of access to "pre- and custom-written" essays pose continuing challenges for educators in their battle to discourage dishonesty in student assignments. Much can be said about disturbing developments in online plagiarism, however, this article will focus on issues in prevention.

By and large, the literature on prevention (Leyand), (Fain; Bates), (Turner; Carter) recommends that educators promote academic integrity in student assignments in the following basic ways:

- Define and explain plagiarism. It is surprising how many students do not find plagiarism a meaningful concept. In addition, let students know how incidences of plagiarism are handled.

- Let students know that you know about term paper mills. Check these sites out and consider covering them in class.

- Talk about copyright and the Internet. Copyright misconceptions abound in relation to Internet documents. Internet resources must be as properly referenced as any other format. In addition, since it is possible to cut and paste parts of electronic documents, mistakes in note taking and referencing are easy to make. Encourage students' vigilance in this regard.

- Make clear how to document sources, both traditional and electronic.

- Clarify group work. Group work is a reasonable way to promote original thinking but students often find it difficult to determine the difference between acceptable collaboration and plagiarism.

- For research oriented courses, integrate library research skills sessions into the curriculum. Demystifying information sources supports students in a vital piece of the research process.

- Use the stratified method to guide the research paper process. Require students to deliver their reports in stages over the course of the term.

The stratified method can be time consuming for instructors but is a proven approach to preventing plagiarism and maximizing student learning. The following is a summary of some interesting research that explains why.

University of Western Ontario Library Science professor Gloria Leckie has spent a number of years researching the information-seeking problems that the typical research paper assignment creates. These problems are largely based on "expert assumptions" inherent in the way research papers are assigned, Leckie notes. As experts, faculty members have in depth knowledge in their field — their approach to the research process has evolved over time and is essentially non-sequential and non-linear. Their research stresses personal contacts and citation trails and libraries may or may not play a large part in these strategies. In addition, faculty participate in a system of informal scholarly communications and it involves a long process of acculturation.

So what does this have to do with the research paper assignment? To begin with, faculty have a lot to impart in any given course and this seems to get more challenging as time goes on – disciplines grow, experts multiply, theories and practices expand and change – so the tendency is to focus on content, especially because the processes involved in becoming an expert have become second nature. When instructors assign the research paper and let students loose to find their way, three basic assumptions are at play. First, students will do introductory reading of a general nature where they will read widely without knowing the outcome. Second, they will be able to focus on a specific question of interest – this is where a point of saturation occurs and specific ideas emerge. Third, students will have the required patience and faith to see this process through.

In Leckie's research, the evidence points to the following. Undergraduates:

- Do not have much patience or faith
- Do not feel authoritative
- Have difficulty narrowing either readings or their topic
- Do not understand the way scholarly literature works
- Are much more focused on the mechanics of research rather than the content
- Experience library anxiety.

Leckie concludes, "all this suggests that there is likely to be a large disjuncture between the expectations of the faculty member as the expert researcher, and the capabilities of the undergraduate as the novice researcher."

What is to be done?

The research paper can best be guided by stratifying the process so that the students all work on a specific component of the assignment at once. Some call this method "process evaluation" and as such it is better suited to the students' abilities. It definitely discourages cramming. The following lists possible steps in a stratified research paper.

1. A thesis statement/abstract

2. Written proposal for the paper

3. Working or annotated bibliography

4. Rough draft or working notes

5. Outlines

6. All working drafts turned in with the final paper

7. Copies of cited references

To assist faculty in the stratified method, librarians can offer in-class guidance on planning information-seeking strategies; help students develop more effective search techniques; offer approaches to evaluating sources and citations; and show students how to navigate through the technological options.

Whether or not all seven steps in the research paper are employed in the evaluation of student work will depend on various factors. The thing to keep in mind is to find ways to encourage students to do the hard intellectual work, and in the process, help us all sleep a little better, knowing a few more students will have avoided the trap of cramming and the temptation to plagiarize.

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Sites to Visit

Academic Term Papers
www.academictermpapers.com

Avoiding Plagiarism
www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/avoidingplagiarism.htm

Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers
www.vanguard.edu/rharris/antiplag.htm

Cheating 101: Paper mills and you
www.coastal.edu/library/papermil.htm

Evil House of Cheat
www.cheathouse.com

Glatt Plagiarism Services
www.plagiarism.com

Halt! This is the Copyright Police! Plagiarists will be Shot
http://gator.naples.net/~dugast/research/week13a.htm

IntegriGuard
www.integriguard.com

Research Assistance
www.research-assistance.com

School Sucks
www.schoolsucks.com

Strategies for Preventing Plagiarism
http://cisw.cla.umn.edu/preventingplagiarism.html

Congratulations

To Briget Deciantis and Paul on the birth of their son, Nolan, August 24, 2000.

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CONTRIBUTERS

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