

**Año 2 Número 38 agosto 2017**

**Contenidos de este número**

1. Libraries Are Not Neutral Spaces: Social Justice Advocacy in Librarianship | ALA Annual 2017

By [Stephanie Sendaula](http://lj.libraryjournal.com/author/stephanie-sendaula/)



L-R: Cory Eckert, Kendra Jones, Karen Jensen, Debbie Reese, Nicole Cooke, Jessica Anne Bratt

For Cory Eckert, doing social justice work in libraries is not radical. “It’s what we’ve always been doing, but now we’re thinking about it through a different lens.” Eckert, a 2014 LJ Mover & Shaker, reminded attentive listeners on Sunday, June 25 that libraries are not neutral and have never been so.

Before embarking on her current role as a librarian at the Post Oak School (TX), Eckert worked at the Houston Public Library and the Octavia Fellin Public Library (NM). In this latter role, she served a primarily Navajo community where children rarely saw themselves positively represented in literature. Eckert asked the audience to consider whether their libraries perform outreach in English (or other languages), and which parts of town they advertise in (or don’t).

Collection development, organizing displays and shelving, labeling materials with stickers, and taking a stance for or against legislation such as the PATRIOT Act are other common library decisions that may appear neutral but lack objectivity. For those interested in further reading, she cited April Hathcock’s blog [At the Intersection](https://aprilhathcock.wordpress.com/). “These are our patrons,” Eckert asserted. “If we can’t make the library nice for them, what are we doing?”

**THE MYTH OF NEUTRALITY**

Kendra Jones elaborated on her 2014 blog post for SLJ, [Ditch Holiday Programming](http://www.slj.com/2014/11/diversity/ditch-holiday-programming-opinion/). A District Manager for Youth & Family Services at Timberland Regional Library (WA), Jones reaffirmed her decision to stop holding holiday-related programs. “Having Santa come to your library is not a neutral stance.” She suggested talking directly to members of your community to see what they want. “What would happen if you stopped doing holiday programs?” Eckert reminded the audience that, “We don’t live in an America where it’s safe for people to speak out.” Panelists advised figuring out which members of your community do not visit the library and why. “Even when you think libraries are being neutral, they’re not,” Jones added.

SLJ contributor Karen Jensen, founder of [Teen Librarian Toolbox](http://www.teenlibrariantoolbox.com/), relayed her efforts at creating successful Black Lives Matter and Pride displays in her conservative, mostly white town. Although she admitted that not all of her coworkers have agreed with her decisions, she stated, “I talk to teens and listen to their fears…My job is to create a library where people feel safe.” Jensen recommended developing or re-writing your display policy to focus on your needs. To achieve this goal, she suggested including circulation staff in the process since they might have a different idea of what the library is (and should be). Most importantly, she stated that her goal was for all patrons to be able to find books about themselves in the collection-—and for her daughters to read these books too.

A video contribution by Debbie Reese, founder and editor of [American Indians in Children’s Literature](https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/), examined the complicated facets of native identity. After informing listeners that colonialism is not neutral, she mentioned that librarians may not realize they have native patrons in their communities as people may not “look” the part or may not vocally identify as native. To counteract this, she asked if materials about native nations and sovereignty are available at your library and whether the materials are written from the perspectives of settlers or native peoples? Does your library provide resources about laws affecting native peoples? She also reminded listeners that Library of Congress Subject Headings subject headings can be misleading; native creation stories are treated as folklore and mythology, while Christian creation stories are not.

**http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/07/shows-events/ala/libraries-are-not-neutral-spaces-ala-annual-2017/**

1. Asking for a Friend: Tough Questions (and Honest Answers) about Organizational Culture | ALA Annual 2017

By [Stephanie Sendaula](http://lj.libraryjournal.com/author/stephanie-sendaula/) on July 6, 2017 [Leave a Comment](http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/07/shows-events/ala/asking-for-a-friend-ala-annual-2017/" \l "respond)



L-R: Susan Brown, Richard Kong, Megan Egbert, Christopher Warren, Natalie Nation

Do you have questions about your library’s organizational culture? You’re not alone. On Monday, June 26, more than a hundred people attended a standing-room only session on how to work toward change within library management structures, whether academic, public, school, or special. Audience members were able to submit questions beforehand and via Twitter, creating an interactive experience.

Panelists included Susan Brown, Director of the Chapel Hill Public Library (NC); Richard Kong, Director of the Skokie Public Library (IL); Megan Egbert, District Programs Manager at the Meridian District Library (ID); Christopher Warren, Director of the Auburn Public Library (GA); and Natalie Nation, Branch Manager at the Boise Public Library (ID). They emphasized that this was neither a gloat nor gripe session; instead it was intended to remind people that they are not alone.

As the only non-director on the panel, Egbert said began, “From the questions we’ve received, it sounds like a lot of you have [not-so-great] bosses.” There were nods as agreement when Brown stated, “Organizational culture is defined by the worst behavior a director allows.”

Warren recounted his experience of still being referred to as the new director after four years; his predecessor had held the position for 42 years. “If you’re trying to define organizational culture, you can’t do it alone,” he pointed out. ” It will take longer and be more difficult than planned.” However, he advised those working toward change to not get discouraged if they take a few steps forward and then a step back, as change is rarely a linear process.

**MANAGING UP**

Throughout the panel, members of the audience were encouraged to offer advice and ask questions. One suggestion was to lead from where you are; de facto leadership does not necessarily require a leadership position, and those who hold those positions are not necessarily leaders. Follow-up questions related to handling workplace difficulties, such as what to do when there are a lot of insecurities at the top of the hierarchy, and how to retain younger workers when there is no room for growth. Brown answered both questions with, “Look at who you’re trying to serve. Is it patrons, staff, or both?” Kong replied that all decisions must come from a place of compassion. “You can’t judge staff or patrons,” he affirmed.

When asked how middle managers working for a toxic director can create a better work environment, Brown noted that all managers have the ability to mold a team. Warren reminded listeners that creating a sense of safety and security among the people you supervise is a manager’s primarily responsibility. “You need to make sure staff have all they need to do their job,” Warren noted.

Another question referred to managing personalities; what to do when you accidentally create “princesses” (allowing admiration for their competence to create an expectation of veto power) and how to remove their tiaras. Is it better to wait until the person leaves on their own? A suggestion offered by panelists was to ask yourself, what am I doing to contribute to the problem or what can I do differently, since in these situations, it can be easy to blame everyone else.

**PLANNING CHANGE**

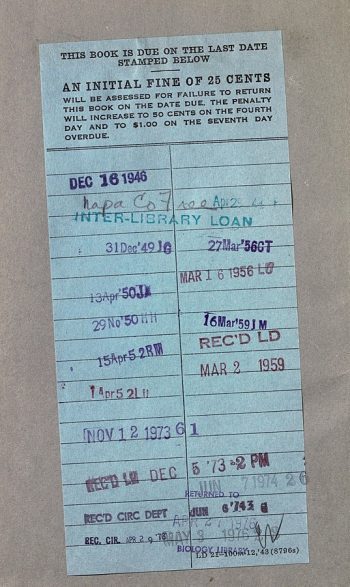
In relaying advice about managers not communicating with staff, Brown mentioned that management may relate better to what you say if you tie it something bigger. “Say you can’t complete your goals because you don’t know what the larger picture,” Brown advised. “It’s impossible to over-communicate.” Responding to a question about what to do where there is a lack of trust in an organization, Brown shared words of wisdom from a friend: “Trust is when you say you’re going to do something and then do it.”

Among other statements that received nods of agreement from the audience were the statement that you’re not supposed to fix a problem by making someone feel like their feelings aren’t real. “If someone feels like they don’t fit in, there’s a genuine reason for that,” panelists maintained. Warren advised managers and directors against being non-reactive when staff are fatigued or frustrated. To boost morale, Brown admitted that it took making time to sit down with staff and simply listen to them.

**http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/07/shows-events/ala/asking-for-a-friend-ala-annual-2017/**

1. Nashville, Salt Lake City, Columbus Eliminate Fines

By Jennifer A. Dixon on July 11, 2017 [2 Comments](http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/07/funding/nashville-salt-lake-city-columbus-eliminate-fines/" \l "comments)

Starting the first week of July 2017, the Nashville Public Library (NPL) and the Salt Lake City Public Library system (SLCPL) have joined the increasing number of public libraries in the United States that no longer collect overdue fines from patrons. These changes will also wipe out fines that users have already accrued. The SLCPL policy took effect July 1, while the Nashville policy started July 5. For both systems, this shift reflects their missions to remove a barrier to library borrowing—blocked card privileges due to fines and to provide equitable access to as many patrons as possible.

**TRADING MONEY FOR ACCESS**

According to Emily Waltenbaugh, public information officer with NPL, library staff were concerned about the number of accounts that had been blocked because of fines exceeding a $20 limit. They discovered that as many as 50,000 cards were blocked at any given time, out of a total of 300,000 cardholders. This is a “huge percentage,” she said, and the library was eager to “bring patrons back to the library.”

Library books in Nashville will still receive a due date, and librarians do not think that this shift will have a meaningful impact on whether or not patrons return materials on time. Patrons will still receive reminders when a due date approaches and when it has passed. In addition, once 31 days have passed after a due date, the materials will be considered “lost” and patrons will be billed. If patrons have two more “lost” items on their account, their card will be frozen until they pay for or return the materials. In this way. there is “still accountability,” said Waltenbaugh.

The move to a fine-free NPL received overwhelming support from local government as well as from the library board, which officially endorsed the eradication of fines in February 2017. The change removes approximately $159,000 collected in fines each year from the local Nashville general fund; Mayor Megan Barry reflected this reduction in the budget approved in June. This amount works out to .02 percent of Metro Nashville Government’s $1 billion budget.

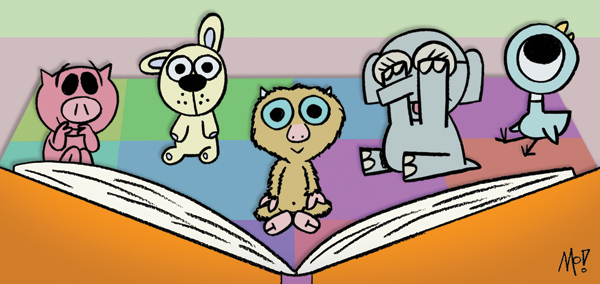
As Waltenbaugh told LJ, “it’s not an insignificant amount of money, but in the scope of the larger [metropolitan Nashville] budget, it’s something that to us is worth losing if it means more access to patrons.” She noted that for patrons who hit the library’s previous $20 limit, simply knowing that their library card was blocked could make them stay away from the library. The library does not “want any barrier, whether it is financial or psychological,” she explained.

The amount of fines collected had been declining in recent years because of the increasing popularity of electronic materials, which automatically return on their due date. The library has no plans to make up the reduction, as fines were never meant to be revenue generating, Waltenbaugh said. “We just want the items back, we don’t want to profit off patrons.” According to NPL Director Kent Oliver, “accessibility for all in our community is a core value for Nashville Public Library; it’s at the center of how we view our library. That’s why it makes sense to do away with late fines.”

**http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/07/funding/nashville-salt-lake-city-columbus-eliminate-fines/**

1. Storytime: A Classic Library Service Boosts Literacy and More, Studies Show

By [Linda Jacobson](http://www.slj.com/author/ljacobson/) on July 3, 2017 [Leave a Comment](http://www.slj.com/2017/07/standards/early-learning/storytime-a-classic-library-service-boosts-literacy-and-more-studies-show/" \l "respond)

http://www.slj.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/1707-EarlyLearningIssue-header.jpg

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**[Slideshow: Cleveland Public Library storytimes through the ages](http://www.slj.com/2017/07/standards/early-learning/storytime-a-classic-library-service-boosts-literacy-and-more-studies-show/" \l "ST)**

When Annisha Jeffries started working as a library assistant at the Cleveland Public Library (CPL) 21 years ago, she would sometimes pull a random book off the shelf, sit down with a group of children, and hope for the best.

“It was a lot of trial and error,” says Jeffries, adding that sometimes she hadn’t even read the book herself. Two decades later, she approaches storytime armed with preparation and forethought about the needs of her audience. She reads more nonfiction books because of the Common Core State Standards’ emphasis on informational text, incorporates songs, delivers “pop-up” storytime sessions in childcare centers and hospitals, and uses a large touch screen to complement the story she’s reading.

“We are well aware of what’s important as far as the development of children,” says Jeffries, now youth services manager for the system. “We want to make sure we are fresh.”

As the first library system to create a children’s room in the late 1800s and among the first to offer organized children’s programs, CPL provides a window to the multiple ways libraries have adapted the simple storytime to respond to research on how young children learn and the importance of early literacy.

**A FOUNDATION FOR SCHOOL**

Multiple reports and studies emphasize the need for young children to be surrounded with books, to hear and learn big and interesting words, and to interact with language through play. In addition to those vital elements, storytimes in libraries and other learning opportunities in the community are now viewed as a critical component of young children’s preparation to enter school. They are also vehicles for giving parents guidance on how to encourage early literacy skills at home.

Librarians “have entered the early learning world, and in doing so, there is more pressure on that storytime than ever before,” says Susan B. Newman, an education professor at New York University and an expert on early literacy. “We’ve called it a more expansive view of literacy development.”

According to an April 2017 [Brookings Institution report](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/consensus-statement_final.pdf), children’s engagement in learning before pre-K can make a big difference in how they progress during the pre-K year.

“Children enter pre-K classrooms with widely varying prior experiences,” according to the report. “The science is clear: early experiences in the home, in other care settings, and in communities are built into the developing brain and body with lifelong effects on learning, adaptive behavior, and health. These experiences provide either a sturdy or fragile foundation upon which young children’s pre-K teachers construct the next stage on their educational progressions.”

As part of an evaluation of [Every Child Ready to Read](http://everychildreadytoread.ning.com/) (ECRR), an initiative of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children, Newman and Donna Celano, an assistant professor at La Salle University in Philadelphia, are observing the variety of ways in which storytime has evolved. ECRR emphasizes the importance of five simple practices to support early literacy: singing, talking, reading, writing, and playing.

Beyond introducing young children to stories, book characters, and print concepts, storytime expectations today range from encouraging executive functioning skills in children to introducing them to the latest technology and learning apps. It is no longer a passive listening experience—it is as much about play as it is the stories, Newman says.

Tailoring storytime to specific audiences and taking these events outside of the library are also strategies for libraries to stretch themselves to reach more families with young children.

In Cleveland, Jeffries holds a weekly gathering for refugee women and their children in which they sing songs and read books. She partners with a music school for “Read to the Beat,” and librarians bring storytimes to the local Rainbow Babies and Children’s Hospital. Elsewhere, libraries hold bilingual and sensory storytimes; [ones involving dogs](http://www.slj.com/2016/03/programs/libraries-invite-dogs-to-storytime/) and other animals are also popular.



**Mary Kuehner, with ukulele, leads storytime**  
**at Arapahoe (CO) Libraries.**  
Photo by Cynthia Kiyotake

**ENGAGING PARENTS**

It’s no secret that parents also play a much larger role in storytime than they used to. “There’s an expectation, almost a requirement” that caregivers participate in the activities with their children, Newman says. In addition, many librarians—taking on the “media mentor” role—are ready to offer suggestions about how parents can help their children at home or to explain normal stages of development if a child doesn’t want to participate with the rest of the group. Story sessions often end with take-home handouts or even books and other materials parents can share with their children at home.

In Colorado, for example, Mary Kuehner, early literacy outreach librarian for the Arapahoe Libraries, runs Stories and More. The monthly program includes a read-aloud for ages birth to five, followed by literacy activities and handouts or books parents can take home. Kuehner also offers a “make and take” program in which adults can create tools—such as sensory bottles or story cubes with pictures on them for visual storytelling—and then receive suggestions on how to use the tools with their children.

In the Pierce County Library System in Tacoma, WA, storytellers often explain why they are leading children in a specific activity so that parents and caregivers will better understand how the activity connects to early skill development.

“Research is really clear about how we can help parents be stronger parents,” says Judy Nelson, a customer experience manager for youth with the Pierce County system. “We’re here to work with the kids, but we’re also here to help parents work with their kids.”

Newman and Celano are finding, however, that while some children’s librarians have embraced the emphasis on parent engagement, others are not as comfortable with that new aspect of their mission.

Kuehner believes improving young children’s early literacy and skill development is too important not to actively involve parents in storytime. That presents a challenge for some children’s librarians, she says. “A lot of us feel super comfortable being silly and talking with the kids, but when you have to talk to the parents, that can be really scary,” says Kuehner, who founded Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy, which provides training in storytelling skills and collaborates with other organizations to increase awareness of early literacy.

While most children and youth librarians see high-quality early literacy experiences as a “core library service,” convincing library administrators to support funding for materials and training can be a challenge, she says.

“We still occasionally see pushback. Not everybody outside of children’s services always gets it.”

**ADVANCES IN RESEARCH**

Librarians continue to respond to the body of research on early learning, but until recently there was no hard data that storytimes could improve children’s pre-literacy and school readiness skills.

Researchers at the University of Washington (UW) Information School found that when storytellers intentionally focus on early literacy skills, children demonstrate increases in those skills. Funded with a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the study [Valuable Initiatives in Early Learning that Work Successfully 2](http://views2.ischool.uw.edu/) (VIEWS2) was conducted in 40 small, medium, and large libraries across Washington State.

Graduate students from the UW Information School were trained to use two research tools—the Program Evaluation Tool (PET), which focused on the delivery and content of the storytime, and the Benchmarks Curricular Planning and Assessment Framework (BCPAF), used to record observations about children’s behavior during storytime.

During the first year of the project, the graduate students videotaped 120 storytimes. Researchers found that when storytellers incorporate early literacy skills in these sessions, children are more likely to exhibit those skills. During the second year, they split the libraries into a control group and an experimental group to determine if training for librarians would lead to an increase in skills among children. Librarians in the experimental group participated in a series of webinars focusing on skills such as phonological awareness and alphabetic knowledge. A community of practice was also formed so the participants could share ideas and feedback with one another as they practiced what they learned.

“We took a look at the year-two data and we saw a significant difference in the experimental group,” says Katie Campana, a doctoral student at UW Information School and part of the research team. “Being intentional in including early literacy makes a difference.”

Since the study, the [Online Computer Library Center](http://oclc.org/) (OCLC), which provides training and other services to libraries worldwide, has developed the intervention into [Supercharged Storytimes](http://www.webjunction.org/explore-topics/supercharged-storytimes.html), a professional development course now available across Washington and five additional states. A [guidebook](http://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2016/05/early-literacy-techniques-supercharged-storytimes)based on the intervention is also available.

**STORYTIME COMPETENCIES**

Besides the VIEWS2 project, libraries are also implementing their own surveys and tools to measure librarians’ storytime skills and encourage strategies that build literacy skills.

At the Los Angeles Public Library system, with a central library and 72 branches, librarians provide feedback to peers according to “storytime competencies”—a set of expectations covering a broad array of skills. The competencies fall into six categories: preparing for storytime, setting the stage, presentation, interaction, literacy message, and professional development.

“In a system as huge as ours, there is an infinite variety of programming options for the zero-to-12 age range,” says Madeline Bryant, a principal librarian and associate director of the Youth Services Department. “We use it as an opportunity for peer mentoring and collaboration, as well as a mechanism for identifying areas in which Youth Services can offer training.”

Since the competencies were introduced four years ago, Youth Services has used the feedback, Bryant says, to “identify areas in which librarians could use additional training,” such as fingerplays, rhymes, songs, and other components of baby storytimes and techniques for managing disruptive children or handling large crowds.

Research on the impact of library services—particularly storytime—can be challenging due to the drop-in nature of such programs. In VIEWS2, the BCPAF instrument addressed this issue by capturing a snapshot of skills across the whole group, without focusing on individual children.

Because families often sign up for Kuehner’s Stories and More in advance, the library system has been able to use a variety of measures in a pre- and post-test format—from parent surveys to individual child assessments—to see if there is growth in children’s skills. Comparing the results to those of toddlers and preschoolers not in the program, Kuehner says that in “some areas, we were moving the needle.”

Librarians’ efforts to model good literacy practices and encourage at-home learning might also be contributing to [another recent study’s findings](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2332858416657343) that gaps in school readiness skills between children from high- and low-income households have declined since 1998. According to the study, which appeared in the August 2016 [American Educational Research Association Open journal](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2332858416657343), the improvements can be partially attributed to “cultural changes in parenting practices that have increased low-income children’s exposure to cognitively stimulating activities at home.”

“We’ve started to understand the role that we could play [in] helping a child grow and play, even before they entered school,” Kuehner says. “Now we have the knowledge to be able to share that with parents. We understand the importance of the work we do.”

**http://www.slj.com/2017/07/standards/early-learning/storytime-a-classic-library-service-boosts-literacy-and-more-studies-show/**

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1. Academic Librarians Have Something to Sell | From the Bell Tower

By [Steven Bell](http://lj.libraryjournal.com/author/sbell/)

Salesmanship is rarely considered the work of academic librarians. Librarians responsible for outreach and building connections with students and faculty might benefit from embracing the idea they have something worth offering and then selling it.

[Last month’s column](http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/06/opinion/steven-bell/what-academic-librarians-can-learn-from-retails-meltdown-from-the-bell-tower/) took a deep dive into the retail industry’s ongoing struggles. It offered academic librarians suggestions based on the strategies retailers are exploring to revitalize their business. Those who work in libraries clearly have different motivations in working with their community members, but some of what we do would hardly seem out of place in a retail store. We put books on display. We use our knowledge of the products and resources, referred to in the business world as “executional excellence,” to guide and support community members to achieve good results. When something goes wrong, we use our service skills for problem resolution. Done well, as is the case with retailers with reputations for great service (think Nordstrom’s), we create the type of user experience that keeps our community members coming back for more. Successful retailers and libraries both excel at creating awareness about the resources and services they offer. If the community has little knowledge or appreciation of what academic librarians can do for them, it’s our responsibility to establish the connections to create the change we desire. That’s where the selling comes in.

**THAT “S” WORD**

In pre-Internet days, the sales game took a different tone. Profit-minded salespeople kept tight reins on scarce product information. Today, when consumers arrive at a store in search of a product or service, they come with considerable knowledge. The customer-salesperson dynamic is altered because consumers now gather much of what they need to know about a product or service from websites, articles, and user reviews. A salesperson, or customer service representative, now spends less time articulating the differences between competing products, their features, and price differences. Instead, they focus on establishing a connection with the consumer that leads to an in-store purchase instead of a [showrooming visit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Showrooming). Librarians likewise need to move beyond anonymous desk-bound transactions that are void of potential for emotional connection. That’s why many of us, as well as our colleagues in other academic support and education positions, are developing personalized student success–oriented services. They offer the opportunity for libraries to be about more than content. Everything we know about student success emphasizes the value of building relationships with students.  But success is not the “S” word I had in mind. Academic librarians need to embrace that part of their work that involves some selling.

**IT’S ALL RIGHT IF YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER**

At the 2017 American Library Association Annual Conference, held in Chicago, I attended the Association of Research Libraries (ARL)–sponsored program “Talk to Faculty So They’ll Listen and Listen to Faculty So They’ll Talk.” Its intent was to help academic librarians learn how to better engage faculty in conversation that leads to a better relationship. Similar methods could be equally valuable in working with students. Attendees heard from three speakers, all of whose jobs depend on selling and communicating in academic settings. They divulged something important right at the start of the program: According to a survey of faculty conducted by the moderators, faculty indicated they would be unlikely to open email from librarians, unless they already had an established relationship. Sending email blasts to faculty may allow liaisons to feel like they are doing something, but it’s a low-impact communication strategy. Two speakers addressed the role of the academic liaison librarian, offering experience-based recommendations for emotionally connecting with faculty. The third speaker capitalized on this by encouraging liaison librarians to embrace the role of salesperson because it is a positive, high-impact strategy, affirming that we have something valuable to sell: our expertise. Doing so, for the benefit of our students and faculty, is more than just sensible; it should be a primary function of the liaison role.

http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/07/opinion/steven-bell/academic-librarians-have-something-to-sell-from-the-bell-tower/

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