A LOOK AT TODAY'S LIBRARY
STUDENTS AND FACULTY: IU

by Ryan O. Weir

CAROL CHOKSY

Name: Carol Choksy
Title: CEO, IRAD Strategic Consulting, Inc. and Adjunct
Professor, School of Library and Information Science,
Indiana University, Bloomington

Carol Choksy is President of ARMA, International, a 10,000 member association dedicated to the profession of records management. She is a records management consultant, as well as an adjunct professor at the School of Library and Information

Science at Indiana University, Bloomington. She has more than 30 years experience with records management in every phase of the records life cycle and in nearly every industry, including federal, state, and local government. She has a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Her focus on taxonomies and classification in her Ph.D. studies continues through her research and consulting.

Recent clients include: Rolls-Royce, GE Commercial Finance, OneAmerica Financial Partners, CPG (the primary insurance company for Episcopal Church clergy). All recent work has involved creating taxonomies to marry business processes to the retention schedule and to ensure success in the management of electronic records using a content management systems.

How have things changed in library schools over the time you have been associated with them?

SLIS has become more focused on library studies over the past 10 years. Rob Kling died about the same time there were several library science retirements. The replacements were library science appointments. I believe this makes SLIS stronger because library science is more focused on the user getting the information required. Information science can become as abstract in

its quest for information in culture as computer science.

The other recognition many library schools have made in the past 10 year is a recognition that archives and records management contribute significantly to our understanding of user-focused information seeking. The component of records management that has not made it into schools of library and information science is its focus on business information rather than cultural information—the focus for library, archives, and information science.

How have library students changed?

Library students see the benefit in being information management generalists. Very few want to be librarians and nothing else. Even those that want to be reference librarians see that greater variety of classes taken and experience in other information management areas is a benefit to their end goals. This makes teaching a lot more fun!

How have library teaching faculty changed?

Library faculty also encourage a broader variety of classes and experience among students. They still do not read as broadly as they should, focusing on a narrow set of "classics," but they are more open to works in the social sciences. They still eschew the idea that they are humanists and do not read humanist literature, which would broaden their social science perspectives.

In your experience, are there differences between public and private academic libraries?

Definitely. The "patron" for each is quite different. The private university library is truly focused on the faculty and Ph.D. students, whereas the public university library has a great deal of generalist literature. This means you can get a better grounding in a public university library, but you can specialize more in a private university library.

In your opinion, what are some of the most pressing issues facing the library community?

I believe the library community undervalues itself. Library students and librarians should understand that

they are the vanguard of our society. They have the voice and the opportunity to provide the "information age" with the tools it needs. For example, how many library students have gone to Google Books and really looked at what is there and estimated its value? I believe this stems from the narrow range of "classics" read and the emphasis on social sciences. A good dose of W.J.T. Mitchell and some linguistic pragmatics would go a long way towards understanding how important they are. For example, how are you going to check out an e-book? Should we even worry about e-books?

In your opinion, what are some of the most pressing issues facing library administration?

The same as the above, not valuing itself enough. Library administrators need to get a leg up on all the different opportunities presented to patrons and users and then educate the library trustees about what is hitting now and what will be hitting in the near future.

What role do management skills play in the modern academic library environment?

Management skills, not supervisory skills, are key to getting where you need to go, most particularly understanding strategic planning. A well-phrased vision, something different from "serving our patrons really well," would go a long way toward getting the attention of trustees and patrons that there is an avalanche of information and access methods coming and not all of them are good.

Has this changed over time?

I don't believe so. The past 100 years has seen a explosion of media and methods for delivering information. If anyone had asked a question about checking out the original radio version of "War of the Worlds" we might be a lot further than we are now in terms of organization, delivery, and preservation.

How does this differ from the corporate environment?

I believe there are more pressures in a library environment than in a business environment. The need to answer to so many different masters in the library environment as well as strategize and execute means juggling many more balls. Again, I believe librarians and library administrators often undervalue themselves and what they do.

Has this change over time?

No, when we look back at censorship, segregation, funding problems, the view of the role of the library and librarian, you see the same challenges. The difference now is that I believe librarians and library administrators see this as well.

How have experiences in the profession attributed to your teaching of SLIS classes?

Records managers have viewed themselves in the same limited way as librarians and library administrators, pointing people at a file or a document and believing their role ended there. Records managers saw themselves as supervisors rather than managers and certainly not as leaders. This is changing as corporations and even government agencies are going to their records managers for answers to thorny and complex questions. I have been fortunate to work in situations where I was asked to manage and lead rather than supervise and point. Knowing that my colleagues did not have these opportunities makes it easy to explain the difference and why it is important to lead and manage.

What advice would you give to current library students or students considering attaining an MLS degree?

Take the time to understand that the fate of the world is in the hands of your profession. You have the skills that every organization needs and will depend upon until our civilization dies because you can sort, find, deliver, and preserve what will make change for good or for bad.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Only that it is a great privilege to be a part of the library and information science community. I find it stimulating and very enjoyable to teach students at IUB and IUPUI. Every student is like a gem that only needs a little polishing for one to say, "Kohinoor!" which translates loosely as, "What brilliant light!"

ANDREA FALCONE

Andrea Falcone earned her MA in English from the University of Toledo in 2004 and will graduate in December with her MLS from Indiana University's School of Library and Information Science. In addition to being a Merit Scholarship Recipient, she is a part-time Bibliographic Instruction Assistant and works in the English and American Literature Collection Department. Andrea also is the editorial assistant for the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* and the copy editor for the forthcoming volume of the *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*. She plans to pursue a career in academic librarianship.

Why did you decide to go to library school? Why did you choose IU SLIS?

My commitment to information fluency is what initially attracted me to library and information science,

and it continues to be my primary professional focus. As a university composition instructor, I realized that students needed to be taught the skills for accessing, evaluating, and using information early in their academic careers. As a result, I began collaborating with librarians and was exposed to their important roles in academia. This exposure inspired me to enroll in the MLS degree program at Indiana University where I have focused on instruction and the evaluation of user-centered services. I chose to attend IU SLIS because of its reputation as one of the top library science programs, the year-round curriculum (which supports the completion of an internship), and the great number of opportunities available to gain professional experience through the IU Libraries.

Has your current perception of libraries changed from your perception before you started your graduate degree with SLIS?

As I started my degree at SLIS, I was unaware of the issues facing most libraries. I have since realized that libraries are challenging environments that deal with rapidly-changing technologies and diverse patron needs in addition to budget and space restrictions. As a result, I have developed a greater understanding of the responsibilities held by library administrators, librarians, and staff.

Tell me about some your experiences while going to SLIS. What has been a surprise?

Some of the most important experiences I have had at SLIS involve gaining hands-on experience. My internship in the English and American Literature Collection Department, teaching bibliographic instruction sessions in the Information Commons, and working as the editorial assistant for the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* are all experiences that have prepared me for joining the profession. Through these experiences, I have been surprised by the wealth of information and insight provided by faculty and practicing librarians.

What do you see as the current role(s) of a librarian at an academic institution?

We always hear about librarians wearing multiple hats, and that is, indeed, their role. They should serve as leaders in the institution, teachers to students, and facilitators of change. Fortunately, librarians have a unique opportunity to shape the experiences of students in higher education.

What do you see as the current role(s) of academic libraries?

Academic libraries continue to be the hub of their respective academic communities, but the way in which libraries fulfill that role is changing. The sources and services provided by academic libraries have moved beyond the physical building, and the library has expanded its role to virtual spaces. Libraries will need to strengthen their virtual presence in order to provide services to the growing number of distance education learners and patrons seeking services and resources while outside the physical library.

What are you future plans? Where do you see yourself in 5 years/ 10 years?

I hope to work in an academic library where I can promote information literacy standards for both on-site and distance education learners. In five to ten years I hope to work more closely in collection development, manage student employees, and serve as a mentor to beginning librarians.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ryan Weir is currently employed at Indiana State University in the Electronic Resources Department. He graduated from IUPUI SLIS in June with his Master in Library Science.