

ASSIGNMENT #2
FOUNDATIONS
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Naisbitt's first megatrend states that we are moving from an industrial society to one based on the creation and distribution of information. No longer does this country rely on the old steel and auto industries for its economic well-being. What is making us prosper now are the information producing and processing industries.

This megatrend has profound implications for libraries and librarians. First of all, and most obviously, with such an increase in the amount of information created, there will have to be more people working in such fields to make it accessible. Libraries will have to expand and the number of librarians will have to increase in order to process and classify all the information that is produced. Those who are in the library profession will have to learn new skills in order to be able to handle the information overload. These skills must include a thorough knowledge and understanding of computers, how they work and what they are capable of doing. Because most of the information produced nowadays is accessible only via computer, librarians, if they are smart, will continue to learn more about computers and they will prosper by becoming intermediaries between the patron and the machine. In this new era of computer technology, librarianship seems to be a very undervalued profession. This must change, because as professional compilers and classifiers of information, librarians already have many of the skills that will be needed and in demand in the coming years.

Because computer technology is at the forefront of the information boom, librarians must respond to it at all levels. For example, the more computers are made available, the more people will want to learn how they work. Librarians should respond to this challenge by supplying the materials needed to learn about computers, and they should also begin to offer hands on experience with computers for their patrons. Already here in Tucson, there are some public branch libraries offering work-

shops in computer fundamentals. This is very positive because the library is serving a very important function by doing this. Knowledge of computers, according to Naisbitt will be one of the most fundamental and important skills to have in the coming years. Sadly enough, however, as Naisbitt has pointed out, the education system in this country is in a shambles. High schools across the country are full of young people that can't even read or write a single paragraph. I think that something drastic must be done about this. It is my contention that it is up to educators, parents, and librarians to work together to find ways to get these kids to read and to take an interest in learning. It is a downright shame that in the richest country in the world we are turning out an increasing number of illiterate high school graduates. Because we no longer need a poorly educated labor force, those who are poorly trained will have to get the training and knowledge from somewhere. I think that as part of the function of serving the needs of their communities, librarians must begin to respond to the needs of the disadvantaged, the undereducated and the poor. These people are the ones who need to learn basic skills, and I think that librarians should take part in reaching out to these groups. Someone has to take the initiative, and as public servants I think it is the duty of librarians to meet the needs of everyone who pay taxes, not just the people who patronize the library already.

With the advent of increased information, librarians must also re-think what their goals and missions are. Many businesses are now forming their own corporate libraries, information brokerage firms are booming, and many people are turning a profit from the buying and selling of such information. It seems that for librarians, whose salaries are among the lowest in the professional world, the lure to go for the money is a strong temptation indeed. With increased budget cuts from

the federal level on down, all libraries, and public libraries in particular, are having an increasingly difficult time surviving. I think that all this leads to the conflict of viewing librarianship as a moneymaking venture versus a people-oriented service profession. I hope that there will remain people in the profession who really care about the people they serve. It seems too easy to look at the information boom as something librarians can make a profit from.

The second megatrend deals with the duality of high tech/high touch. According to Naisbitt, for every technological innovation that occurs, there must occur a corresponding human response. This response must compensate for the impersonality of the innovation. If there is no counterbalancing response, then the technology is susceptible to failure and rejection.

In our library systems today, high technology is everywhere. The most obvious use of it is in computer data-bases and on-line catalogs. Some people think that this is advantageous, but as Naisbitt has pointed out, a high touch response must take place in order for the new technology to take hold. It seems to me that there are a lot of things which librarians can do to balance the high tech/high touch duality. First of all, in the area of children's services, librarians have already begun to respond by offering increasing amounts of storytelling time for children. Here in Tucson, it is thriving in all the area branches. Librarians can go even further, however, by doing more than just this. The library, if promoted and funded adequately, can become a place where people of all ages spend time together. Events could take place that would be suitable for entire families. Movies, games and workshops can and have been utilized to bring people into the library. The public library of the future can become a very important part of people's lives if *it is* promoted and perceived as such by those who use them.

On another level, librarians can respond to the high tech revolution by once again advocating the role of the reader's advisor. This service, although controversial, is another way people in the library can interact. In order to prepare for all this high touch that will have to occur, I think that library science students should seriously consider adding to their course load classes in communication and in computer education. This would prepare the librarian of tomorrow for more quality interaction with the public. Today's librarians should also supplement their education with such courses.

Finally, librarians are in a very exciting position in terms of being intermediaries between their patrons and the computer. I think that it is very important that as librarians work with patrons on such things as data-base searches that the librarians let the patrons know what is happening, how the computer works and why it works so efficiently. The general public must learn about this new technology somehow and somewhere, and librarians, because of their increased practical hands-on experience with computers, are in a very good position to teach their patrons about computers in a very practical and informal way.

The third megatrend states that we no longer have the luxury of operating within an isolated, self-sufficient, national economic system. Now we must acknowledge that we are part of a global economy. We have begun to let go of the idea that the U.S. is and must remain the world's industrial leader.

In this area, there are several factors which are important in terms of their impact on and relationship to libraries. First of all, as we become a global economy, we will have to let go of our deep-rooted sense of ethnocentrism, the idea that we in this country are the best and that all other people are inferior. We must begin by opening our

minds to the vast array of human culture and language. Americans must realize that as the world economy grows, so will the interdependence between the different people of the world. As librarians, I feel that we must promote cultural and linguistic understanding for our patrons by providing the necessary materials needed to foster a better view of the world. Again, many things can be done at all levels of librarianship, from the elementary school level to the public, research and university levels. We must take the initiative and we must work together with educators, with parents and with the other sectors of our society in order to achieve a broader, better understanding of *humanity*.

In the area of language, librarians can begin to acquire more materials which are bilingual and more materials in foreign languages. Specifically, Naisbitt says that we must learn English, Spanish, and computer language in order to function competently in tomorrow's world. Recently, there has been a backlash in the promotion and funding of bilingual materials for libraries and schools. This is very unfortunate because we can no longer afford to avoid and dismiss different languages and cultures. America is no longer the mythical melting pot, according to Naisbitt, but a vast array of different ethnic groups, many of whom are proud of their heritage and would like to preserve it.

In the area of computer technology, librarians can *or arrange if not teach* offer workshops in computer language, in the options available in terms of software and by, as has been mentioned, offering hands-on experience through the use of computers in the library. These services must be expanded to include access to the working classes as well as the middle classes. Equal access is very important in this area.

Finally, as the world economy grows and becomes increasingly interdependent, so will the need to obtain information in all the corners of the world grow. This means that there will have to be an increased

number of libraries and librarians to fill all those new positions.

Contrary to what is happening today, I think that there should be better and more library schools offering intensive undergraduate and graduate programs that ^{CAN} train students to be able to fill the gap.

The fourth megatrend states that we are restructuring from a society run by short-term considerations and rewards in favor of dealing with things in more long-term time frames.

I think that librarians must begin to look at their libraries from a very critical point of view. They must, as Naisbitt says, ask themselves what business they are in. If they don't really know, then they must decide. They must have a "~~Strategic~~ vision" of what they are all about. In library schools and in the library profession, comprehensive collection development policies must be emphasized. Such policies can be a very important component of a library's long-term planning scheme because they can outline in very specific terms who the library is serving and what the library is collecting. Because of decreased funding at virtually all levels of the field, it is imperative that librarians begin to look to the future in terms of what they must do in order to survive. I think that librarians will have to be creative fund-raisers and community planners and that they must get their users and potential users to back them. In turn, they must serve those populations well. They must be aware of their constituents needs and they must serve those needs. The survival of libraries depends on it.

In terms of library education, students must be trained to anticipate future trends, and they must learn how to bend and compromise in any given situation. Knowledge of the theories of librarianship should be something that graduates from library schools have, because knowledge of the philosophy of the field gives one a better understanding

of what is important and of what is flexible. Librarians of the future must have the ability to make small amounts of money stretch a long way. One area in which librarians can re-think their philosophies is in terms of meeting their patrons short-term needs versus their long-term needs. Both are important, but a balance must be attained whereby both are adequately satisfied. Short term needs, such as reference service and information and referral are very important services libraries should offer, but the collection of a library, because of decreasing funds, must be durable and stand the tests of time. In the Tucson Public Library system, it seems that the librarians focus much of their spending energy on materials that will not last. By ordering multiple copies of current bestsellers, they are meeting a short term need, but I think they are being rather wasteful. *perhaps being in the shadow of a large research library, like the UA contributes to their decision*

Naisbitt's fifth megatrend states that in cities and states, in small organizations and sub-divisions, we have re-discovered the ability to act innovatively and to achieve results from the bottom up. We no longer depend on hierarchies and representatives to get things done for us; we do them ourselves.

The implications of this trend on the library profession are very crucial. First of all, since the federal government has continued to cut funding for libraries for the past several years, many libraries across the country are becoming financially drained. These libraries must continue to look for support from other sources, including their state and local governments. Furthermore, they must continually ask for support from their patrons. They need local support in order to survive. Some people have argued that public libraries may have to once again resort to charging for their services through the implementation of user fees. I hope that this doesn't occur, because access to the

disadvantaged would be greatly curtailed. Somehow, local government, community groups, and librarians must organize plans to keep our library systems alive. Free libraries are part of the foundation of a free society, one where access to knowledge is available to everyone.

Increased de-centralization is a major component of Naisbitt's fifth megatrend. In big public library systems such as Tucson's, the de-centralization process may have to include the ordering of books on a branch-to-branch basis. That is, in contrast to the central ordering department that now acquires materials for the entire city, each branch should have the ability and power to order its own materials. This would help the libraries to better serve their respective patrons. Those librarians who come into daily contact ^{with patrons} should play an active role in acquiring materials, primarily because these librarians know who their patrons are and what they look for when they do come into the library.

Finally, part of the de-centralization process which Naisbitt speaks of is the migration of people from urban areas to rural areas. As more people do migrate, its only logical that they would still need the services a library has to offer. Librarians can function, if they so wish as entrepreneurs in a rural library movement. That is, by promoting what a library can offer, these librarians can organize local rural communities to donate funds for the creation of libraries in their respective areas.

The sixth megatrend states that we are moving from institutional help to more self-reliance in all aspects of our lives.

In regards to the library profession, I think that this megatrend is also very important. The impact of this trend will be felt the strongest in the service component of the library field. As more people seek out information on their own, the more they will use the library as a re-

source center. Librarians must be ready to accommodate the patrons needs. They must also somehow anticipate user needs in order to have materials ready for use when the need arises. At the same time, librarians should take an active role in promoting self-education. Options should be discussed and programs in self-help should be made available for the patrons. All this involves money, time and commitment on the part of the library and the librarian, as well as community support. Materials should be purchased which outline how one can go about setting up ways to implement alternative education, alternative methods of health care and consumer information.

On another level, librarians must put in extra time to learn more about their specialties and their profession in general. In order to keep up with this rapidly changing environment, we must take it upon ourselves to learn all we can about our field, in order to be as helpful to our patrons as possible.

The seventh megatrend states that we are discovering that the framework of representative democracy has become obsolete in an era of instantaneously shared information. Now, participatory democracy, from the bottom up, is taking hold all across the nation. According to Naisbitt, "people whose lives are affected by a decision must be part of the process of arriving at that decision."

Participatory democracy must also take place in the area of librarianship. Because libraries are usually hierarchical institutions, many decisions are made by those at the top. A change will have to occur whereby lower level librarians and patrons have a voice in the decision making process of the library. This is especially true in public libraries, because materials are purchased with public funds. This trend seems to have both positive and negative effects. On the positive

side, if patrons and lower level librarians can participate in such endeavors as collection development, then it seems that it will be for everyone's benefit. However, if citizens groups begin to demand a voice in what will and what won't be collected, then a careful balance must be maintained in order to avoid conflicts with the censorship issue. We must preserve people's rights to access to all sides of a story and one's right to free speech while at the same time we solicit their suggestions and ideas.

the mechanism for input should be such that one group doesn't control it

Participation in such processes may have to extend to the graduate library school level. Library science students are beginning to demand a voice in the decisions made by library school administrators. Here at the University of Arizona, library science students are very active in voicing their concerns regarding the curriculum offered here. I think that it is important that this continues, because it is the students who are paying to get an education. Although some library science students are very inexperienced and just beginning to learn about the field, there are many who already have lots of practical experience needed to help make decisions. These students must be given a voice because they are the ones who need to know what they must learn in order to function better in the job market. Communication between students and faculty should be open, honest and reciprocal.

Naisbitt's eighth megatrend, simply stated, says that we are giving up our dependence on hierarchical structures in favor of informational networks.

This megatrend seems to be strongly related with the previous one. That is, the more hierarchies are abandoned, the more participation on all levels of librarianship will occur. Networking, the sharing of information and resources, involves the participation of many parties. It is already occurring in many libraries. Inter-library loan is one

example. This has occurred primarily because of declining funds and the ability of computers to transfer information quickly and inexpensively. Many libraries just cannot afford to buy everything they need, so they must share their resources with others. I think that the formation of networks in libraries is a positive example of what Naisbitt is referring to. However, one factor which he mentions that may be seen as a threat to libraries is the sharing of information through business related information networks. Companies are now forming which specialize in the sale of information. In addition, more and more corporate and special libraries are popping up, taking away the clientele of the public and university library systems. Naisbitt himself claims that he can get information quicker and easier through such informational networks than he could through the use of a library. Libraries must assess whether or not they need to compete with such networks. Maybe it would just be wiser to move onto serving the needs of those who don't have the luxury of such networks. Once again, the collection development policies and mission statements of each library must be defined which services will be rendered and to whom they will be given. Finally, with the information-networking boom, there are also an increasing number of librarians getting involved in the information selling business. Actually, this isn't so bad because it means that the field of librarianship is expanding. No longer do librarians have to find jobs in libraries, but they can now use their knowledge to begin their own businesses or become librarians in corporate institutions.

yes,
its important that distinctions be made between types of libraries and the services they provide

The ninth megatrend states that more Americans are living in the South and West, leaving behind the old industrial cities of the North.

This megatrend will also affect our libraries. First of all, as

more people move into the South and West, more libraries will have to be built in these areas in order to accomodate the larger populations. This, in turn, means that more librarians will be needed to run these institutions. This seems to be a positive occurrance, yet there is at the same time, a decreased emphasis on the funding of libraries. If people don't begin to organize their support for libraries, there won't be enough adequate service available. At the local level, since more people are moving into the South and West, there will be an increased need to supply these new residents with information on local history, local events, and local culture. Because Spanish is a language commonly used in these areas, librarians will have to learn it for their own good as well as that of their patrons. Naisbitt emphasizes that in a few years there will be many more Hispanics and Blacks in this country than ever before. We can no longer afford to ignore these populations, and we must continue to provide them with materials that are relevant to their needs. Because Hispanics and Blacks are the least educated, poorest segments of our society, I think that libraries should seriously consider providing more services for these people.

The last megatrend states that from a narrow either/or society, with a limited range of possibilities and personal choices, we are expanding to a multiple-option society.

The multiple option society has already invaded librarianship. No longer does a graduate of library school have a limited number of choices. Now he/she must decide, from a vast array of opportunities, which segment of the library profession he or she will enter. As was already mentioned, there is a boom occurring in the sub-field of special librarianship, in information broking, and in other types of related fields. Because such options are and will continue to be available, library students must balance their education so that it is flexible enough

in providing them with the skills needed to find a job in more than one area, in case they can't find one in what they are really interested in. This argument conflicts with the idea that librarians must become specialists in a very specific field. As was discussed in class, however, librarians of the future must be able to be both specialists and generalists at the same time. This means that library science students must carefully plan how they are going to balance and integrate their general knowledge of librarianship with their specific areas of study. As professionals in this multiple option society, we must be able to take advantage of all the possibilities available to us.

In terms of service, librarians must begin to supply patrons with more materials on alternative lifestyles, alternative education, and alternative media. Because many libraries use blanket order plans, I think that librarians should reconsider this. They should begin to look to the alternative press and other forms of media, because so much that is available in these areas is good quality material. Media should also be purchased in various forms. Now that there is new entertainment technology, librarians should begin purchasing materials such as videotapes and audio discs. These options must seriously be considered along with the traditional books and media that are now being acquired.

Finally, librarians must continue to know their communities and they must continually re-evaluate their missions and collection development policies. This is necessary in order to keep up with the changing world. It is also a matter of survival. In such a changing-multiple option society as ours, librarians must be on their toes at all times, anticipating user needs, providing new materials, and providing innovative services for their communities.

In conclusion, I think that the megatrends identified by Naisbitt will greatly affect the library profession. Because our economy is

changing to one based on information, librarians will have to decide what their roles will be in this new economy. There is no time for speculation. Change is already occurring, and we must keep up with it. If not we will surely lose our ability to serve the communities we are supposed to be accomodating.

*nicely stated!
you've done a thorough
job of discussing some new
implications as well a reemphasizing
some that have fallen by the
wayside due to funding cutbacks
(i.e. services to minorities)*

A