Bibliographic Instruction and Postmodern Pedagogy

TAYLOR E. HUBBARD

ABSTRACT

POSTMODERNIST DEBATES IN ACADEMIC CIRCLES provide expanded opportunities for making information studies an integrated part of the academic program. Past bibliographic instruction (BI) practices have been based on a reductionist scientific model that dislocates the focus of instruction from the documents of a discipline to a structure of disciplinary literature frequently imposed from without and often having little to do with the information content. Postmodern concepts provided by textual criticism and the sociology of knowledge can turn libraries into learning laboratories for studying information in the context of the academic discourses that create it. Postmodernist approaches allow students to compare, at one level, methods of information organization and, at a more basic level, how knowledge is claimed in a variety of scholarly disciplines. Rhetoricians, especially composition teachers with whom bibliographic instruction librarians have much in common, have already realized the importance of postmodernism as a strategy for teaching composition. Rhetorician Richard Lanham even maintains that elements of postmodernism applied to emerging information technology provide ways to reform the undergraduate curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

> D'ya know the creed a
> Jacque Derrida?
> Der ain't no reader.
> Der ain't no wrider
> Ider
>
> —Anonymous

This bit of wit might be the abstract of many responses to postmodernism—the projects of deconstruction, irrationalism, and other forms of the virulent "French disease" spraying through ink jets onto sacrificial trees around the country. Canonical outrages rumble across the academic landscape. Strong programs battle weak responses, agents unfix, texts destabilize, boundary disputes flourish. Of these academic wars going on in the texts we buy and the disciplines we support, librarians and campus information specialists might well ask Gertrude Stein's (1937) famous question: "Is there a there there" (p. 289)? From the paucity of references to postmodern *anything* in our professional literature, the answer would appear to be negative. A quick search through the 1982-1994 ERIC can link librar* and (deconstruct* or postmodern*) only seven times total. LISA finds eleven links. Despite the odds, however, this author maintains that postmodernism is worth consideration.

For one thing, as information managers, we should have front row seats at discussions that go to the heart of our profession as collectors, codifiers, and deliverers of information. In many ways, we seem to have settled on definitions of information that resemble a cargo manifest of hardware and artifacts. We take pride in volume counts and holdings but take the Nuremberg defense when asked how, except by shear weight of numbers, these tomes and tools function to support the disciplines for which they were brought into being. Postmodernists would like us to consider that there may be no knowledge, only knowledges, that our reference and circulating texts are curiously ambiguous as communicators of information, and that each text (document) is a knowledge claim that follows local rules made by social agents we call disciplines—the human factor.

For those involved in bibliographic instruction (BI), postmodernism implicitly invites us to revisit our concepts of information as we go about our instructional business. If all knowledge is local, should not our instructional focus be on those who create it rather than on the subsequent acts of others who publish, collect, and organize it? If we accept the reflexivity principle prescribed by postmodernists, should not we be looking at the preconceptions, values, and biases we and others have imposed during the classifying and organizing process (Hubbard, 1992)? This has already occurred to others on campus. Among composition instructors, for example, there has been movement toward reorienting student research from a top-down structured exercise to a bottom-up discovery experience. Rhetoric is being rehabilitated. Perhaps we have been looking through the wrong end of the telescope.

Finally, we should seek out as many perspectives as possible in the face of advancing technologies to help students interpret what authenticity, value, and use is to be made of the deluge of information raining down on us. On the Evergreen campus, as I suspect on many others, the question of whether or not to deal with electronic media, which I will shorthand as "The Net," has been supplanted by the more pressing question of *how* to deal with it. It is a question being asked, naturally, of the library—the self-proclaimed "heart of the university." A great deal of useful material has been compiled about what is out there and how to get to it; my issues of ALA and ACRL journals are filled with helpful surfing hints and addresses, not to mention some disquieting access and administrative tempests of the talk show variety. But questions and answers about the knowledge value and relevance of The Net are less easy to find in library literature. For example, what qualities of knowledge or information are transcendent in either codex or digital form, and how is this decided? The Net is now, and may well continue to be, an unorganized collection of knowledge or information. If what we have taught in the Industrial Book Age is the organization and structure of codex knowledge and all we teach about The Net is communications software, data manipulation, and liberal attitudes, the Information Age may be more threat than promise for our pedagogy if not our profession.[1]

POSTMODERNISM

"Postmodernism" presents lexicological problems because of wide acceptance and local use by academics and professionals as well as by the popular culture. The definition that follows is reductionist to a degree and no doubt annoying to anyone versed in philosophical or epistemological niceties, but my interest here is on the pedagogical opportunities presented by postmodernism.[2]

Defining "postmodernism" first requires defining "modernism," to which it is a response. For present purposes, "modernism" (and the related term "structuralism") is a philosophical attitude that ripened in the twentieth century. It has intellectual roots in rationalism, positivism, and evolution, reaching back as far as Plato's ideal forms (idealism). It is given to speculation and theories of the grand universalizing kind, attempting to hand down laws that govern the natural and, increasingly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, social worlds. It implies order and orderly linear thinking and systematic approaches to problems and exposition. This in turn implies structure and hence structuralism. From the postmodernist perspective, modernism privileges science and the scientific method as its exemplar. Much like Plato, in defining knowledge, modernism tends to discount, marginalize, or dismiss individual or collective acts which, by their spontaneous nature, lack systematization. This extends to the arts in which, in order to be granted recognition, a work

must conform to rigid rules and sensibilities pronounced by the critics and priests of high culture. Modernism craves certainty and predictability. Keats would say it has no negative capabilities.

Postmodernism's tangled roots, along with those of poststructuralism, reach into the materialism of Epicurus, existentialism, hermeneutics (the theory of interpretations), phenomenology, and especially linguistics. While it is not immune to speculation, its gaze is most often to the past and present rather than to the unpredictable future. It avoids grand theories or "metanarratives" as Jean-François Lyotard (1984) calls them (p. xxiv). Like Tip O'Neill's politics, postmodernism maintains that all knowledge is local. It particularizes rather than generalizes, thus privileging social, cultural, political, and philosophical diversity. Its interest in marginal groups created by modernism is shared to some degree by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and communication theory of Harold Innis. Since this attitude denies universal laws, postmodernists may find themselves labeled irremissible relativists by modernists. Particularizing gives postmodernism a pronounced interest in linguistics insofar as it studies acts of communication and the play of language—the "linguistic turn." In its literary and legal deconstructionist form, it challenges the ability of texts to connect readers with authorial intent. In architecture, it tosses off playful façades, inversions like the inside out Pompidou Center in Paris, and eclectic quotes from other buildings, periods, and styles. It challenges traditional aesthetic theories by turning the everyday and banal into art (e.g., works by Oldenburg and Warhol). In short, it defies the aura and doctrines of orderliness and certitude found in modernism by turning them on their heads and asserting the vagaries and diversities of human intervention. Keats might have been a postmodernist.

THOROUGHLY MODERN BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

Snow Crash, one text being used in Evergreen's information course this year, is a witty cyberpunk sci-fi thriller heroed by the pixelesque Asian-African-American, Hiro Protagonist (Stephenson, 1993). The action takes place in the not-too-distant future when government has been franchised and privatized, and the only employment possibilities are music, movies, software programming, and pizza delivery. Given these uncomfortably imaginable possibilities, life is lived as little as possible in sentient reality, more so in virtual reality constructed in a Metaverse. As his source of information, Hiro is served by his librarian, the keeper of all wisdom stored in the universe. Tweedy, rumpled, aged to dusty maturity, the librarian is, "cheerful; he can move through the nearly infinite stacks of information in the Library with the agility of a spider dancing across a vast web of cross-references . . . the only thing he can't do is think" (p. 107).

The librarian is a piece of very expensive, user-friendly, retrieval software–a digitized Randtriever. If storage and retrieval are the only roles possible, what might this librarian's BI program look like? What would its learning objectives be?

Unfortunately, the answer to these questions may already be at hand in the form of that venerable campus institution, the Research Paper Assignment (RPA), in whose interest much BI is expended. According to one criticism: "Students generally view the research paper as informative in aim, not argumentative, much less analytical; as factual rather than interpretive, designed to show off knowledge of library skills and documentation procedures . . . as an exercise in information gathering, not a discovery" (Schwegler & Shamoon, 1982, pp. 817-24).

BI's contribution to these conditions is apparent: teaching information gathering is *not* teaching discovery. Some would maintain that libraries are primarily organizing activities complex enough to require some explanation in order to make them useful. In the instructional event, the emphasis falls on explaining organization (indexes, catalogs, bibliographies, etc.), implicitly assuming, it would seem, that figuring out our complex rules and organizing puzzles is somehow central to students' intellectual discovery of the world. That we assume the structure we have imposed on information is itself a topic of academic value outside our own discipline is implicitly a modernist argument that can be reduced to the premise that structure equals substance. There are obvious flaws in this thinking as struggles for librarians' faculty status attest.   What composition reform faults (see below) is that finding information is only part of the lesson, and that the focus of our attention needs to be on educating *about* knowledge—why the documents in our collections figure in that inquiry and how they can challenge students. In pursuing how postmodernism can contribute to creating conditions of discovery for BI, it is necessary to make a few observations about the modernist/structuralist paradigm that has become imbedded in BI.

STRUCTURAL BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

National attention to BI was ushered in by the Monteith College report in the mid-1960s (Knapp, 1966). By the 1970s and 1980s, one particular modernist model, taxonomy, brought scientism to BI methodology. This model maintained that, with the regularity of a conveyor belt, knowledge moved from field work, to the lab, to conferences, to journals, to the apotheosis of a text sitting on a library shelf. Diagrams suggested knowledge arranged in a hierarchical structure with reference works at the apex, primary works at the foundation, with a varied assortment of publication formats in between. This Newtonian building block paradigm maintained that the bibliographic structure was isomorphic with the reality. "The correlation between the structure of the literature in a discipline and the reference sources in that discipline can be illustrated by tracing the progress of a piece of research from the time of its inception to its appearance in specialized texts," as a leading BI proponent claimed (Frick, 1975, p. 13). Friedes's *Literature and Bibliography of the*

Social Sciences (1973) was perhaps the most extended example of this model. In it, Friedes proposed structural concepts that explained disciplines as reifications of their literature as molded by the science paradigm. Again, "the basic bibliographic structure mirrors the structure of scholarly literature," she maintained (p. 257). The success of the model was so widely accepted, it became part of professional library education.

A study by Hopkins (1987) illustrates the extent to which this taxonomic model of disciplinary literature was promoted in library school curricula around the country to at least one generation of librarians. The article, which appeared in the library schools' professional journal, begins by admonishing the profession that "to be considered professional[,] librarians would need to learn and understand something about the *content* of the various materials they... deal with" (p. 136). The author then proceeds to elaborate in a very detailed fashion about various formats of literature and how they can be schematized to the point of having students construct diagrams (p. 146), concluding that "in a structured approach, students should develop a clear understanding of how scientific/ scholarly communication, the substantive component of literatures, and the reference/bibliographical component, are all part of one integral process" (p. 150). The obvious question is whether this conclusion really supports the author's contention or whether "content" here is being confused with structure.

What this and similar articles firmly maintain is that the taxonomic model suggested by a reductionist conception of the scientific method provides a one-size-fits-all BI mold for all disciplines. This was clearly the assumption when the *Social Sciences Citation Index* came into libraries in the 1970s followed shortly thereafter by the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*. These products assume that all disciplines do or should follow the example of scientists. At the same time, the taxonomic structural model is appealing as a BI model. Not only does it have the beauty of simplicity, but it also incorporates principles from the library's own organizing activities such as establishing conceptual hierarchies and emphasizing characteristics that, rather than capturing the messiness of knowledge making, distinguish and deceptively order materials through subject cataloging and classification. Symbolically, much BI activity took place in the reference area looking at the superstructure organizing creates, while the actual knowledge-bearing documents rested undisturbed and unquestioned in distant stacks. We learned and taught about the organizing process. In the event, as one composition teacher suggests, we were teaching about ourselves and not about academic knowledges (McDonald, 1990). Moreover, by fixing knowledge-bearing documents in a hierarchical dimension, this method reinforced disciplinary boundaries and creates "fugitive" literatures of which those of a multicultural nature are only the most glaring example. It lends credibility to the Great Books concept by allowing reference works to speak as authorities about what constitutes "substantive literature" even if this is calculated by adding up

(with Eugene Garfield's help and products) the frequency of citation without considering whether this sort of canonicity perpetuates in students the awe-inspired uncritical attitudes lamented by their instructors. Literature documented as "significant" in this manner achieves a level of Arnoldian privilege that discourages students from directly questioning its authority. In return, the method legitimates our organizing activities and products with a certain insouciant symbiosis.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

The late Foucault (1972) has informed the postmodern attitude as much, if not more than, any contemporary thinker. A key interest in this French philosopher's works is the diverse and subtle ways in which social power evolves and is exercised. In a widely read and cited work, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault poses the questions that can be asked of any form of communication claiming authority:

> [W]ho is speaking? Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language (*langage*)? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? What is the status of the individuals who—alone—have the right, sanctioned by law or tradition, juridically defined or spontaneously accepted, to proffer such discourse? (p. 50)

Obviously, this is a different concept of "content" than that of structural BI. If we spin a BI program out of it, Foucault's method proposition might be: if information has its roots in human activity and its expression in human action, then questions of authority, and the discourse analysis embedded in them, are worth considering in what we teach about information. What is going on in the texts we collect? How do they create the knowledge that places the library at the center of the university? However, library literature seems to be ignoring, or studiously avoiding, these basic questions. For example, in a recent review of "Library Literacy," the BI column of *RQ*, a twenty-five-year summary of the column could cite only two articles related to discourse studies (Arp, 1994).

The inattention to texts is an odd circumstance when we consider that our shelves are virtually groaning with works on the social aspects of knowledge. Woolgar's (1988), *Science, the Very Idea*, which addresses both science and social sciences, is a good example, as are Latour and Woolgar's *Laboratory Life*, McCloskey's *The Rhetoric of Economics*, and Nelson, et al.'s *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences....* Gross, in his *Rhetoric of Science*, appends a twenty-page list of them (pp. 221-42). Becher (1989) has made a career of writing delightful articles and a book, *Academic Tribes and Territories*, on the behaviors of knowledge communities. Lodge and others (*Small World*) have contributed satiric looks at our academic worlds. Together, they are a reminder that knowledge, like life, "is not an orderly

progression, self-contained like a musical scale or a quadratic equation" (p. 69), as Leonard Woolf (1970) observed. These are examples of humanistic tools we can give students to break into the disciplinary ivory towers.

One study used frequently in information courses at Evergreen is *Shaping Written Knowledge*, by rhetorician/writing instructor Bazerman (1988). The work is a collection of Bazerman's published articles, one of which, "What Written Knowledge Does," is especially useful for illustrating how a text can be analyzed by students (pp. 18-55). In the article, Bazerman dissects three illustrative articles taken from journals in literary studies, social sciences, and science, each by disciplinary heavyweights—i.e., Hartman, Merton, and the well-known duo of Watson and Crick of DNA fame. Bazerman uses these articles in a Sherlockian manner to compare how these authors go about constructing statements of knowledge that are recognizable and accepted by their disciplines. "In mediating reality, literature, audience, and self, each text seems to be making a different kind of move in a different kind of game" (p. 46). He concludes by pointing to these four components of composition as the defining elements in disciplinary knowledge:

> Getting the words right is more than a fine tuning of grace and clarity; it is defining the entire enterprise. And getting the words right depends not just on the individual's choice. The words are shaped by the discipline—in its communally developed linguistic resources and expectations; in its stylized identification and structuring of realities . . . in its literature; in its active procedures of reading, evaluating, and using texts; in its structured interaction between writer and reader. The words arise out of the activity, procedures, and relationships within the community. (p. 47)

A BI program predicated on the bottom-up approach suggested by Bazerman and others looks radically different from the top-down taxonomic model. It turns the focus of research to the truly primary documents of a discipline and de-emphasizes the possibly cognitively unrelated bibliographic web by which they are currently located or dislocated. Information curricula formed around such concepts as Bazerman's rhetoric-based discourse analysis invite students to look critically at the claims of knowledge with which they will be barraged throughout their college careers and beyond. Indirectly, the same methods can give librarians a more critical reflexive stance toward our own armory of bibliographic creations. We destabilize our own references.

COMPOSITION AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

Composition (writing/rhetoric) instructors and BI librarians have much in common, not only in instructional matters but in their emergence and status among their respective professional colleagues. Both

the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and the Modern Language Association (MLA) date from the latter part of the nineteenth century—1889 and 1883, respectively. However, despite their academic orientations, neither organization proved particularly attentive to pedagogical concerns. According to Goggin (1994), from the very beginning of MLA, rhetoric and writing instruction were shunted aside in favor of literary scholarship. As a result, MLA formally disbanded its pedagogical section in 1903 to focus solely on high-culture concerns of literary criticism, philological scholarship, and linguistic discipline (pp. 1-2). As a consequence, rhetoricians and composition teachers embarked on establishing independent forums to meet their own needs. However, no sooner was a series of associations and journals established to represent and communicate the interests and practices of composition teachers, than these organizations and journals were invaded by theoreticians seeking outlets for tenure-rewarding publications and status—the ascendancy (and glamour) of theory over practice (pp. 14-17). Since 1955, writing interests have been represented by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), far removed from their original homestead in MLA.

The bibliographic instruction movement—the pedagogical interests within ALA and ACRL—shares some of the homeless aspects of composition. Those present at the 1976 Chicago ALA annual meeting may recall the charged meeting of disappointed, even outraged, BI librarians trying to gain legitimacy for pedagogical interests within ALA. With Mimi Dudley as our leader, those gathered in that crowded hotel room plotted something like armed rebellion to gain reluctant recognition from the organization. LOEX, a semi-autonomous organization outside of ALA, in fact developed as the real home of early BI. My belief is that, since library literature is clearly management oriented, there is little place for either theoretical speculations or pedagogical methodology in it.

The working alliance that developed between writing teachers and librarians is suggested by McDonald in a paper documenting the history of the RPA (1990). McDonald contends that it was librarians who were instrumental in shaping the RPA earlier in this century by creating and making available a variety of indexes and other bibliographic aids (p. 8). Library information organization provided writing instructors with a ready-made structure on which to base the format for the RPA. Thus, librarians figure as unindicted co-conspirators in the dubious achievements of the RPA as a retailer of undigested facts. Echoing Schwegler and Shamoon (1982), McDonald's criticism of the RPA is that fact-finding is not education; it is a treasure hunt of sorts with rigid rules of conduct in which a student is neither asked nor encouraged to question or analyze the facts being assembled. Citing colleagues with similar concerns, he calls for writing assignments which reward critical analysis by students, assignments

that allow students to become more than outside admirers of disciplinary edifices. They should be brought inside to see and learn firsthand the illusive and situational character of facts, and implicitly the social environments that bring them into being. McDonald's concern about the current state of the RPA transfers easily to BI.

McDonald looks to theories from Paulo Freire and like-minded reformers as solutions to the research paper problem. Referring to Freire, McDonald (1990) maintains that, by using postmodernist concepts, "[w]riting a research paper could involve more than merely gleaning information from sources but could be a study of the discursive practices of texts on a particular subject in which writers consciously situate their own text in the discourse of others." He concludes: "I believe that we can work out pedagogies informed by postmodernism that can transform, if not explode, the genre of the research paper to help students become better readers, researchers, and writers" (p. 15).

RHETORIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION

The Net promises to be the working model of postmodernism proposed by Jean-François Lyotard. Physical and textual dimensions of community are abolished; all knowledge is local. As Archilochus might wonder, will there be any all-knowing hedgehogs among the local-knowledge foxes? As a BI person, I wonder if our response to the invasion of our text-based domains by media will be only a replay of our past association with knowledge, merely substituting the word "media" for "text." The quantity of Net lists, management discussions, product reviews, and just plain wavy speculations on metatopias in library literature are not always encouraging. But the biggest concern is whether our shelves of texts teach us anything about the knowledge creation process that can be productively applied to the raucous electronic environment.

One answer worth considering comes from Richard Lanham (1993), yet another rhetorician/writing teacher. His book, *The Electronic Word*, addresses a wide-ranging interrelated list of academic concerns, among them: liberal arts curriculum reform; the "meaning" of electronic information; the dominance of the sciences on campuses; what is wrong with the E. D. Hirsch/William J. Bennett canon; why Plato is bad; and how to return values to the curriculum. Despite some repetitiveness, Lanham lays a lavish intellectual board, too lavish to pursue in its entirety in this brief article. There are, however, a number of points bearing on the present discussion.

Based on Eric Havelock's (1986) work on the transition from orality to literacy in ancient Greece, Lanham proposes that electronic media are fundamentally changing our experience of knowing and therefore our criteria for what constitutes knowledge. According to Lanham and Havelock, before the development of literacy, knowledge in ancient Greece was expressed orally using the five elements of classical rhetoric—invention, argument, arrangement, style, and delivery. Before Plato and the

shift to literacy, education consisted of mastering these five elements. Plato and the academy disallowed decoration [style] and emotion [delivery] as valid elements of knowledge, banishing them and their poetic licenses from the academy's paideia. Plato's abridged rhetoric was ideally suited to establishing abstract facts and truths, circumstances that privilege scientific, linear reasoning, and which accelerated dramatically with the Newtonian revolution, reaching an all pervasive apotheosis in modernism.

According to Lanham, the codex book has been an accomplice in establishing and maintaining the ascendancy of science and linear thinking in the curriculum. It is the icon of Platonic tyranny. By its very existence, the book represents irrefutable facts—aloof, unalterable, inhospitable to interaction with the user. The emphasis on "facts" implicit in the Platonic curse results in the Great Books of the Canon. These rely on the Canon as the ideal means for teaching students dumb respect for facts— a catechism of reverence—rather than providing them with the process by which to pose and solve problems themselves. Even the physical attributes of the codex book–beginning, middle, end—imply a misleading linear reality, a world with directional orientation and purpose. The complicity of libraries in this seems clear. Echoing McDonald, Lanham congratulates the deconstructionists (Derrida and others) who have destabilized not only the text but also the Platonic foundations on which it rests, just as chaos theory, according to him, has destabilized the scientific world.

For Lanham, Western industrialism has fostered a culture of objects (such as books) which has fed upon, and been fed by, Platonic linear thought. But information has no substance; attempting to objectify it as an industrial product is like trying to drink from a fire hose. In the face of these vagaries, electronic media returns knowledge to its classical balance (or perhaps imbalance), which turns out to be remarkably like the democracy of local knowledges described by Lyotard (1984) in *The Postmodern Condition*. The paideia turns from teaching objective facts to teaching effective interaction with facts based on a student's individual experience. In a curriculum incorporating the electronic word of Lanham's title (hypertexts, images, sounds), a student has the potential to alter, embellish, comment on, and criticize the subject of study, thereby returning the playful humanizing rhetorical elements of style and emotion to the educational endeavor. Effective use of information requires a student to engage in rhetorical individual negotiating processes; no two of them will produce the same results, but there are no wrong answers.

How can all five elements of classical rhetoric be reunited? Lanham proposes a bipolar model, maintaining that learning is both an unconscious and a self-conscious act. We have been taught, against our basic instincts, to accept the objective world of Platonic forms by unconsciously looking "through" texts as though they were windows on a higher reality beyond personal experience. Computers and the

electronic word allow—even encourage—manipulation of text, thus al-
tering the privileged status of facts by forcing us to look consciously "at"
the media as well as "through" it, a process Lanham calls "toggling." Elec-
tronic information is heavily influenced by the arts and humanities—the
emotional and the playful. Computers are rhetorical machines that in-
vite students to manipulate text, images, and sounds, thereby participat-
ing in the creation of knowledge. On the one hand, students would con-
tinue to be taught to look "through" linear narratives [books] to the Pla-
tonic world of facts and truths. On the other, students learn the reflexive
act of looking "at" how information is altered and acted upon by the
medium which presents it. To illustrate the reunion of the lost tribes of
rhetoric, Lanham points to twentieth-century art.   He maintains that,
since the Italian Futurists in 1909, modern art has been toggling between
making statements about art (looking "at" it) by contradicting viewers'
expectations, while at the same time using art as a medium of communi-
cation to an aesthetic experience (looking "through" it). Every work
answers the question: "What is art?" Using rhetorical analysis and the a-
historicism of postmodernism as one pole and the conventions and con-
structs of Platonically based disciplines as the other, we can begin to ask
the same "What is . . . " question of any discipline or subject.
    What might a BI program based on Lanham's ideas look like? For
one thing, it would probably look critically at how the codex book func-
tions as an icon of knowledge. This, after all, is the form of knowledge
we as librarians deal with constantly. Has, for example, the physical com-
position of the book determined that the acceptable formula for fiction
is beginning-middle-end? Does the book suggest a closed argument, a
dispenser of information that will only answer questions posed by itself,
resisting interrogation by any user?
    Few of those riding in the posse of postmodernism and curriculum
reform may be willing to jump over the bookless precipice to keep up
with Lanham. However, his concept of "at" and "through" is an impor-
tant model aimed at creating in students a self-consciousness about their
own and others' role in the information creation process, while at the
same time looking through the media to disciplinary matters beyond.
This, of course, returns us to the postmodernists' perspective of inquiry
through discourse analysis, the sociology of knowledge, deconstruction,
and other manifestations of postmodernism. Knowing knowledge requires
knowing the how and why of its creation and uses as well as its expression
and claims in presentation. Its organization should not obscure these
basics.

CONCLUSIONS
    The above discussion is a prospectus for an experimental informa-
tion course that was offered at Evergreen State College this spring. With
students, we read and held seminars on Havelock, Lanham, Stephenson,
and Bazerman, among others. Against this backdrop of knowledge cre-

ation and issues of information policy, students learned Internet basics, graphic imaging (visual information), subject bibliography, and wrote literature reviews. The course was in large part an extension of Evergreen's BI activities in recent years aimed at integrating information study as part of other college programs. Its purpose was to test the model proposed earlier. At the same time, its aims were also humanistic, for which it is again worth quoting Leonard Woolf (1970) who, in describing his approach to autobiography, captures a perspective postmodernist BI might agree with:

> Life is not an orderly progression, self-contained like a musical scale or a quadratic equation. For the autobiographer to force his life and his memories of it into a strictly chronological straight line is to distort its shape and fake and falsify his memories. If one is to try to record one's life truthfully, one must aim at getting into the record of it something of the disorderly discontinuity which makes it so absurd, unpredictable, bearable. (p. 69)

NOTES

[1] For an excoriation of librarianship on this theme, see Michael A. Harris and Stan A. Hannah. (1993). *Into the future; the foundations of library and information services in the post-industrial era.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

[2] For philosophical terminology and a summary discussion of current issues see Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa. (1992). *A companion to epistemology.* Oxford, England: Blackwell. For literary terminology, see Chris Schreiner's appendix, Modern critical terms, schools, and movements. In *Dictionary of literary biography* (vol. 67, pp. 287-303). Detroit, MI: Gale Research Co.

REFERENCES

Arp, L. (1994). An analytical history of "library literacy." *RQ, 34*(2), 158-163.

Bazerman, C. (1988). What written knowledge does. In *Shaping written knowledge: The genre and activity of the experimental article in science* (pp. 18-55). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Becher, T. (1989). *Academic tribes and territories: Intellectual inquiry and the cultures of disciplines.* Stony Stratford, England: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language.* New York: Pantheon.

Freides, T. (1973). *Literature and bibliography of the social sciences.* Los Angeles, CA: Melville Pub. Co.

Frick, E. (1975) Information structure and bibliographic instruction. *Journal of Academic Librarianship, 1*(4), 12-14.

Goggin, M. D. (1994). *Position, composition, recomposition: The disciplining of rhetoric and composition.* Unpublished paper presented at GRIP Conference, "Knowledges: Production, Distribution, Revision," April, Minneapolis, MN.

Havelock, E. A. (1986). *The muse learns to write: Reflections on orality and literacy from antiquity to the present.* Hew Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hopkins, R. L.(1987). Perspective on teaching social sciences and humanities literatures. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, 28*(2), 136-151.

Hubbard, T. E. (1992). The values added in information processing. In J. Fiscella (Ed.), *Issues in Integrative Studies.* (No. 10, pp. 27-46). Hamden, CT: Association for Integrative Studies.

Knapp, P. B. (1966). *The Monteith Library experiment.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press.

Lanham, R. A. (1993). *The electronic word: Democracy, technology and the arts.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
Latour, B., & Woolgar, S. (1986). *Laboratory life: The construction of scientific facts.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Lodge, D. (1984). *Small world: An academic romance.* New York: Macmillan.
Lyotard, J. F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge.* Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press.
McClosky, D. N. (1985). *The rhetoric of economics.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
McDonald, J. C. (1990). *The research paper and postmodernist pedagogy.* Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College English Association. Buffalo, NY: (ERIC. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 322 536)
Nelson, J. S.; Megill, A.; & McClosky, D. N. (Eds.). (1987). *The rhetoric of the human sciences: Language and argument in scholarship and public affairs.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
Schwegler, R. A., & Shamoon, L. K. (1982). The aims and process of the research paper. *College English, 44*(8), 817-24.
Stein, G. (1937). *Everybody's autobiography.* New York: Random.
Stephenson, N. (1993). *Snow crash.* New York: Bantam.
Woolf, L. S. (1970). *The journey not the arrival matters: An autobiography of the years, 1939-1969.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
Woolgar, S. (1988). *Science, the very idea.* New York: Tavistock.