

Writing this column, a month in advance of its May publication, is a little surreal. The world is firmly entrenched in the COVID-19 outbreak, which has turned “normal” activity on its ear. All over the country, international and domestic travel is discouraged if not outright restricted, public schools are closed, university classes have moved online, many libraries are no longer open to the public, cities and counties have issued “shelter in place” orders, states have made disaster declarations, and the National Guard has even been called out.

So considering where we are as I write this column, at the beginning of April, it is difficult to predict where we will be when the column goes out in May. There is a lot of apocalyptic rhetoric—and runs on toilet paper, as if enough absorbent product will be enough to clean up this mess and stave off disaster. Not to make light of the realities of the situation, the illness is spreading to fatal outcomes in some cases and impacting livelihoods everywhere.

It does feel as if time is a tangible, weighty construct—as if there is a 14-day countdown clock that resets after each new event or discovery, after each new policy or intervention put into place—and the community watches as the seconds tick, waiting to see what will happen, whether life will continue in this alternate reality that resembles the plot of a major motion picture or bestselling novel. And in the meantime, we all try to approximate “normal” as much as we can—hence, I give you this column and the articles in the May issue of *College & Research Libraries*, and if they are framed in view of recent events, I hope you will have patience as COVID-19 is much on the mind these days.

Although not in the context of a pandemic, one of the articles in the May issue

of *College & Research Libraries* addresses the concept of time. “A Question of Time: Sociotemporality in Academic Libraries” looks at perceptions of time by library personnel related to schedules and deadlines.

“A Question of Time: Sociotemporality in Academic Libraries” by Lora L. Lennertz and Phillip J. Jones. The clock and calendar regulate many library activities, but the seasonal and temporal dimensions of libraries are largely unexplored. Intrigued by observations of colleagues’ temporal attitudes and behavior, the authors drew on the work of sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel to investigate the perceptions of time, schedules, and urgency among professional library personnel. The data showed almost no statistically significant relationships between demographic categories and the employee’s approach to time; however, multiple significant relationships existed between the latter and the employee’s department. These findings can help academic librarians understand—and bridge—differences among themselves to build more vigorous organizations.

The article on “Exploring the Research and Library Needs of Student-Parents” brings a valuable perspective from “nontraditional” students, who arguably now have additional competing priorities and a full plate of commitments to navigate. I can’t help but think of this group in the midst of this pandemic and sympathize with all that they must now balance while maintaining some semblance of normal life for their children.

“Exploring the Research and Library Needs of Student-Parents” by Rachel E. Scott and Brannen Varner. This paper presents the results of focus groups conducted with student-parents at the University of Memphis. The objective of this study was to explore the research services and library spaces student-parents need to thrive in higher education settings. The results identify several ways in which academic librarians can support student-parents’ research needs and contribute directly to their academic success.

---

Wendi Kaspar is *C&RL* editor and policy sciences librarian at the Texas A&M University Policy Sciences and Economics Library, email: warant@tamu.edu

“Information Literacy and Cultural Context: Chinese English Language Learners’ Understandings of Information Authority” offers a study of cultural norms and how they influence Chinese students’ perceptions of information and authorship, which can be a significant factor in the students’ academic success and retention. Librarians are in a unique position to educate and empower students’ understanding of information authority and appropriate practices related to it, in addition to being a sounding board and trusted source of advice, which may also be needed during the current crisis.

“Information Literacy and Cultural Context: Chinese English Language Learners’ Understandings of Information Authority” by Emily Crist and Diana Popa. Chinese international students are attending higher education institutions in the United States in ever-increasing numbers, and librarians must consider their cultural, sociopolitical, and linguistic backgrounds in information literacy instruction. This exploratory study examines how Chinese international students at a public American university describe, understand, and interpret information literacy concepts, such as authority, through qualitative vignettes and in-depth interviews. The findings of this study further the use of vignettes as a methodological tool in academic librarianship and help librarians resist one-size-fits-all information literacy instruction by addressing and building upon students’ cultural understandings and practices of information literacy that they bring into the classroom.

Another outcome that has occurred out of this situation is a push for open access to books, journals, audiobooks, textbooks, etc. It is actually heartening to see that, in a time of crisis, even commercial enterprises are contributing to the public good. One of the articles in this issue addresses open access on a more everyday context: “Analysis of an Open Textbook Adoption in an American History Course: Impact on Student Academic Outcomes and Behaviors” examines student perceptions, as well as the impact on academic outcomes.

“Analysis of an Open Textbook Adoption in an American History Course: Impact on Student Academic Outcomes and Behaviors” by Penny Beile, Aimee deNoyelles, and John Raible. Textbook costs can have a significant impact on the purchasing behaviors and academic success of higher education students. Open textbooks promise significant cost savings, yet perceptions about quality and efficacy still linger. This study explored the impact of an open textbook adoption in an American history course on student academic outcomes and behaviors. Using a mixed-methods design, significant savings were realized with no decrease in student academic outcomes. Further, students reported having a positive experience using the open textbook, perceived the textbook as being of high quality, and expressed gratitude about the free cost. The authors describe the respective roles of the librarian/instructional designer team and note the importance of working collaboratively with instructors to ensure successful implementation of open textbook adoptions.

Another article also looks at selection of materials, “Library Book Selection Decisions and Selectors’ Effectiveness: Differences among Librarians, Faculty, and Students” compares the selection preferences and performance of different groups, in general and by discipline.

“Library Book Selection Decisions and Selectors’ Effectiveness: Differences among Librarians, Faculty, and Students” by William H. Walters, John Gormley, Amy E. Handfield, Bernadette M. López-Fitzsimmons, Susanne Markgren, Laurin Paradise, and Sarah E. Sheehan. This study examines the book selections of 22 Manhattan College librarians, faculty, and students who were asked to make yes or no decisions for 287 books reviewed in CHOICE. It focuses on four research questions. First, What characteristics are associated with selected and nonselected books? Although there is only modest agreement among selectors, yes decisions are associated with favorable reviews, appropriateness for lower-division undergraduates, reasonable

price, publication by a university press, and the absence of caveats in the review. The results suggest that selectors are willing to relax certain selection criteria if others are exceeded, that selectors' generally favorable attitudes toward multidisciplinary works do not extend to all such books, and that titles in areas unfamiliar to the selector are less likely to be chosen. Second, What are the key differences among the book selections of librarians, faculty, and undergraduates? Although there are minor differences among all three groups, the main finding is that students' selections are relatively unpredictable and less closely linked to particular book and review characteristics. Third, What are the key differences among the book selections of specialists (faculty and librarians) in the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities? Although the three subject groups are similar in their yes/no decisions and in the characteristics of the books they choose, most selectors demonstrate a strong tendency to favor books in their own subject areas. Finally, What individual characteristics are associated with effectiveness as a book selector? Librarians and faculty are equally effective, overall. Faculty have an advantage among selectors without book selection experience, but the positive impact of experience is greater for librarians than for faculty. In contrast, students are relatively ineffective selectors, and their choices are not closely related to those of other students, faculty, or librarians.

Lastly, there two articles that consider the gender inequities within the profession, looking at issues of pay and of professional development and mentoring: "The Gender Wage Gap in Research Libraries" and "Getting into the Club: Existence and Availability of Mentoring for Tenured Librarians in Academic Libraries."

"The Gender Wage Gap in Research Libraries by Heather Howard, Meara Habashi, and Jason Reed." The gender wage gap impacts millions of women throughout the United States and world, with women in the United States making on average 82 percent of men's salaries (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). In re-

search libraries, a field dominated by women, this has historically been true as well, with men rising to top positions at a higher rate and making more money than women in the same positions. Over the decades following the implementation of Affirmative Action, the number of women in administrative positions in research libraries has increased dramatically. This article explores the issue of women's salaries in research libraries in five job tiers. The five job tiers group library positions based on power dynamic, with the first tier including positions that run academic libraries, through the fifth tier, which includes frontline positions. An analysis of data from the Association of Research Libraries from 1976 through 2016 demonstrates that, though women have made progress in obtaining higher-level positions, salary disparities continue to exist between men and women at all levels.

"Getting into the Club: Existence and Availability of Mentoring for Tenured Librarians in Academic Libraries" by Juliann Couture, Jennie Gerke, and Jennifer Knievel.

Great attention has been devoted to mentoring for early-career librarians, but little has been paid to the post-tenure experience of academic librarians. Researchers sought to understand the mentoring experiences and barriers to promotion for academic librarians who hold faculty status at public R1 institutions. Surveys sent to tenured academic librarians at 40 institutions invited them to share their experiences with post-tenure mentoring, promotion, and professional development. The study suggests that few structured mentoring programs exist for post-tenure faculty librarians. Additionally, results suggest that five factors influence intent to seek promotion: financial, political, workload, work/life balance, and process/procedural.

I hope that readers will take as much from these articles as I do and that reflecting on them will contribute to their own work, particularly during this time of disruption in higher education and academic libraries. Keep well. *W*