



# Changing the Pattern – Changing the Narrative

by Dr Kelly Campbell

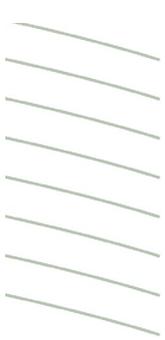
John Bulow Campbell Library,

Columbia Theological Seminary, Atlanta GA



I bring greetings from Columbia Theological Seminary, my home institution, located near Atlanta, GA, and especially from the John Bulow Campbell Library staff. And I want to bring greetings from Nalini, one of the ANZTLA scholarship recipients.

This year's conference theme of *Boundless* was described to me as exploring the idea of endless possibilities for growth and development for libraries. Throughout my career as a librarian, libraries have experienced consistent change and have had to adjust or adapt due to those changes, thus they have encountered endless possibilities for growth. To provide us with some historical context, let

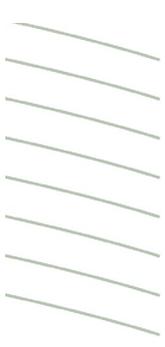


me give a quick review of some of these changes. When I began my library career, the public was just starting to utilize the Internet. Then google arrived on the scene and changed research possibilities for everyone. Next, electronic journals and ebooks became available. Finally, the accessibility and mobility provided by cell phones has impacted libraries greatly. As these technological changes have impacted the library and our work, we have had a choice to stand still, to move backward, or to move forward with new possibilities i.e. to be boundless. In my career, I chose to move forward, and I moved forward by *Changing the Pattern—Changing the Narrative*.



*Changing the Pattern—Changing the Narrative* is symbolic of my 26-year journey as a librarian, and especially as a theological librarian.

My current context includes leading a stand-alone seminary, with a collection of 150,000 materials and a large archive housing denominational church records and institutional records. We provide a center for academic literacy. As the library director, I supervise 12 staff members while serving and supporting 250 graduate students and 25 faculty members, yet, I began my library career in a public school district overseeing nine elementary school libraries. During my career, I have worked in school libraries, public libraries (both large and small), and theological schools (both large and small). In these varieties of settings, I have found myself asserting my leadership to change the pattern and change the narrative in order for the library to thrive. As I am presenting today, I am sharing my firsthand experiences, yet I am aware that these ideas will not work in every library nor for every



person. My hope is that you can find something that helps you and will work within your context to allow your library to be boundless.

As I reflected on my journey as a librarian, I was reminded that I am a theological educator, a librarian, an organizational leader, and a quilter. A quilter, you might ask? I am sure this is not information you might expect me to provide. What does my being a quilter have to do with changing the pattern—changing the narrative? Well, let me explain.



## Traditional Roles

- ❖ Primarily a servant mind-set
- ❖ Warehouse of knowledge and information
- ❖ Costly investment
- ❖ Limited accessibility to resources

A beginning quilter starts learning traditional patterns that have straight seams and are easy to construct. This block, one of the first patterns I learned to make, is called the Log Cabin. Once a quilter has the basic concepts of the process down, it is time to begin to experiment with color and designs.

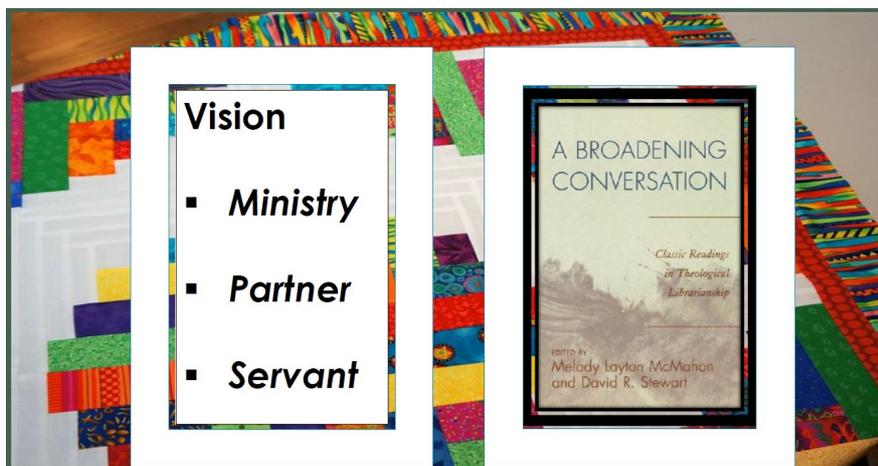
Through my library education and in my early career, I learned the traditional roles of libraries and librarians. Libraries maintain basic patterns or foundational roles. Since these traditional patterns or roles provide stability for the library, they permit librarians the opportunity to create new possibilities—to go beyond the basics and to be boundless. Through the decades of change, part of the library’s foundation has been maintained, while other parts of the foundation have been replaced or retrofitted with new roles or patterns. This retrofitting is where librarians can change the pattern and change the narrative.

As a librarian, you know the traditional roles. That means having a servant philosophy, following the rules, and fitting into the current structure; however, as institutions and particularly theological institutions are experiencing a constant season of change, a leader needs to adjust and discover new possibilities. In order to adjust and discover new possibilities, library leaders need to be assertive in their

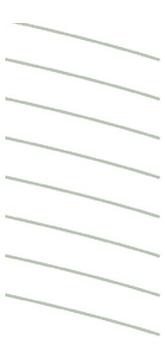
leadership style. In other words, librarians have to make changes in the structure and function of their library, and they must “sell” the library users on the changes as well.



In broad strokes, libraries were traditionally known as warehouses of information and knowledge. They were passive (waiting for people to come and discover them). They held a servant mindset from being faculty-chaired or led by the library committee. They also offered limited accessibility, with no electronic resources after hours. If we, as librarians, are challenged to be boundless in opening up opportunities and possibilities, we need to start by changing our mindset, our perspective, and our philosophy.



Thinking in terms of boundless, possibilities, and opportunities, we need to start with our foundational concept or philosophy of the library. How do you envision your library? Is the library a servant to the

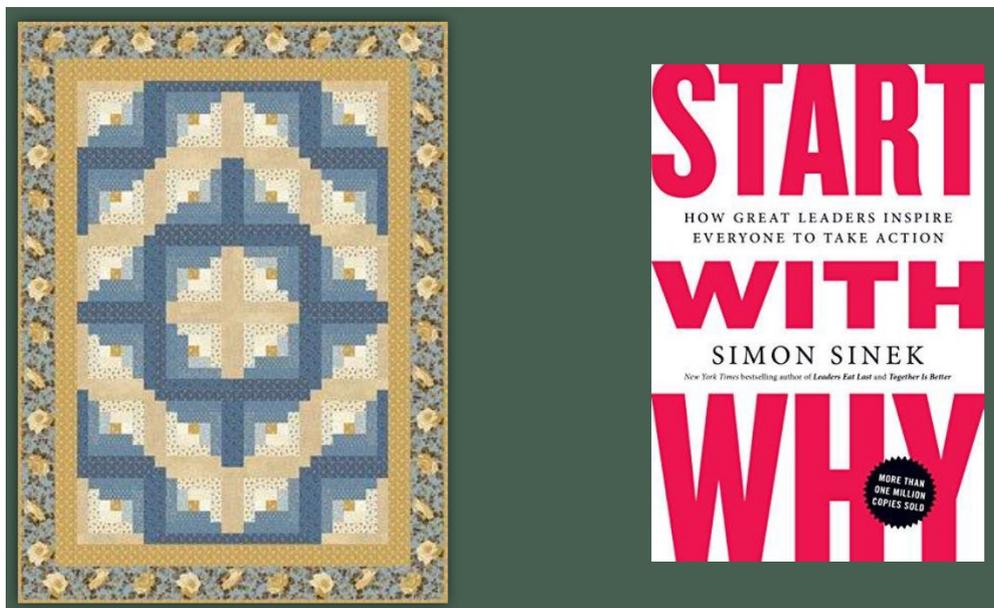


rest of the campus? Is your library a place of ministry? Do you see yourself and your library as a partner in the educational process? Or is it a combination of the three? By answering these questions both broadly and specific to certain situations, you can define your leadership approach and the positioning of the library within the larger institutional structure, thus impacting the library's possibilities and opportunities.

Let me give you an example. Whenever I am going to a faculty meeting, or in particular a budget meeting, I take a moment and think to myself, how do I see the library and its mission? Am I a servant to the faculty, a ministry to the students, or am I a partner in this educational endeavor? While I agree that I serve faculty and students and I personally feel that my career is a ministry, I need to remind myself that the library is a partner in the educational endeavor. It is not just a partner but actually an equal partner particularly when engaging in certain meetings or activities. Changing my pattern or changing my narrative allows me to think creatively about ways to partner with faculty and with administration and to actively engage in the educational mission of the institution. Changing my pattern and changing my narrative asserts my leadership role and causes me to start leading from a different role or perspective. Partner is an active word while servant is a passive word; the one we consider ourselves to be can determine our actions.

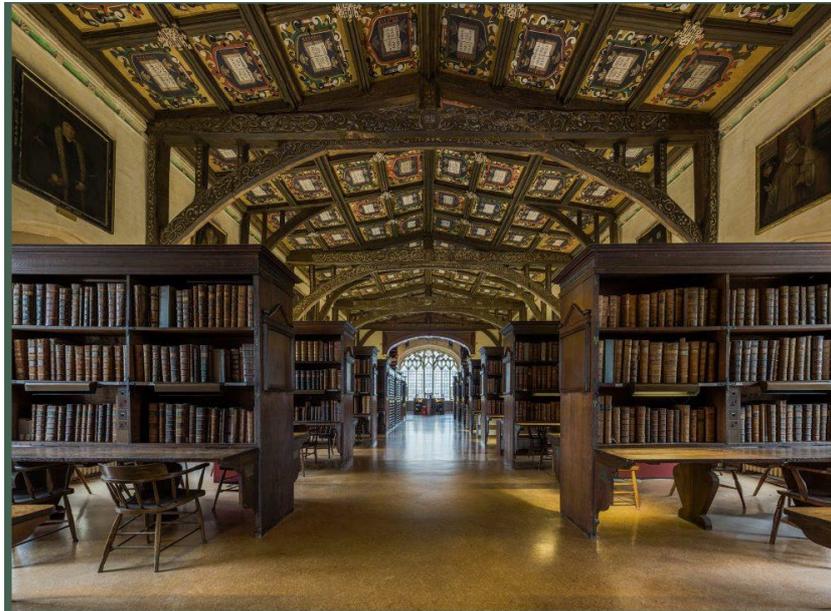
These concepts of ministry, servanthood, or partnership are from the book titled *A Broadening Conversation: Classic Readings in Theological Librarianship*, edited by Melody McMahon and David Stewart. In this resource, you can find various essays about how library leaders approach their mission/vision. Thanks to Atla, the book is a freely available open resource on the Atla open press website.

In this slide, the quilt pattern contains the traditional log cabin block; however, the quilter decided to imagine possibilities through color. Notice that one side of the log cabin block is all white while the other side contains color. By making one simple change, the traditional log cabin block now looks modern. The quilter leveraged the basic foundational pattern to design an intricate, dynamic pattern. The same is true for us in determining our library philosophy. Is your library's mission to be a servant, a ministry, a partner, or all three? If you experiment with these concepts, you may find the possibilities are boundless.

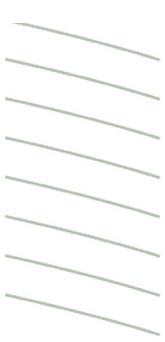


Another resource that helped me refocus my current library’s philosophy is the book *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* by Simon Sinek. Sinek challenges organizations to ask the “why” question. In this case, why does the library exist? As Sinek points out, “why” is distinct from the mission, values, or purpose of an institution. Most people can answer “what” a library does; the trick is knowing “why” the library does it.

For example, everyone knows what the library does: buys books, circulates books, helps people. The “why” question, however, is harder for persons to ask. Why does the library exist within your particular institution? “Why” is a core question to ask concerning every library. It is especially helpful when the need is to keep a library future focused. Everyone on your library team should be able to answer the question of why the library exists, not just what the library does. Once you are laser focused on “why” the library exists, then possibilities start to abound.



In this slide, I see traditional and foundational pieces of a library such as tables, shelves, and books; however, I notice the ceiling, which looks like a quilt to me. This picture is an example that traditional and boundless can co-exist and actually enhance each other. Once you are clear on your library's philosophy/role, whether ministry, servant, or partner, and why your library exists, you can start to change the pattern--change the narrative. For our remaining time together, I want to propose three perceptions that librarians can implement to change the pattern—change the narrative, thus creating possibilities and opportunities.



## Leading a library to Leading an educational enterprise

The first perception I am proposing to change in order to be boundless is the perception of leading a library to leading an educational enterprise. Traditionally, the library was a large warehouse filled with materials and staff, and the librarian was charged with overseeing them. However, in today's consistently changing environment, the librarian is leading an educational enterprise. Libraries are active, busy places that host a wide variety of educational endeavors. These educational endeavors include but are not limited to archives, writing centers, computer labs, scholarly communication resources, and training opportunities. They are places for developing and hosting exhibits and related receptions, overseeing maker labs filled with technology, and a variety of other services and activities supporting the educational mission and goals of a particular institution.

In order to lead an educational enterprise, the assertive librarian needs to have a strong and entrepreneurial team. To develop such a multi-skilled and talented team, I have utilized two resources in two different library settings with success. The first resource is defining the library's core values. The second is utilizing the *StrengthsFinder* evaluation tool with my staff.

On this slide, the block is the log cabin; however, the light sides of the block are joined to form the swirls. By building on the basic pattern, the quilter has created new possibilities by leveraging the color and placement of the blocks.



## Core Values

The John Bulow Campbell Library (JBCL) is an active learning space where students, faculty, and community access and engage information. Space is not defined as a physical location, but as the dynamic epicenter at the heart of the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and thoughts. Access is defined as reading, thinking, reflecting, and engaging with the material thus to equip and transform individuals. The JBCL values **hospitality, inclusion, diversity, collegiality, collaboration, creativity, innovation, transformation, accessibility, information exchange, and discourse** and thus seeks to ensure the widest possible access to relevant information and ideas while providing excellence in library collections and services. The JBCL relies on cross-campus collaboration to adjust collections, space, services, and programs to meet the changing needs of students, faculty, staff, and other learners.

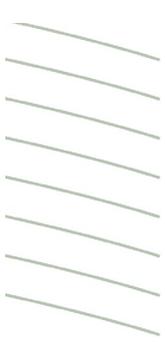


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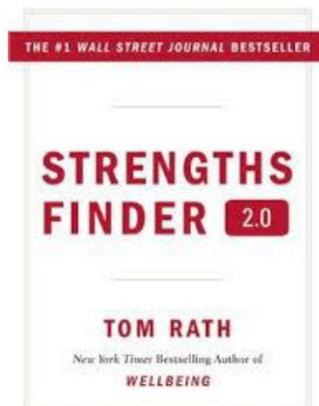
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In leading an educational endeavor, an assertive librarian needs clear core values that support the “why” and the philosophy of the library. Core values guide the librarian and staff on a daily basis. Core values do not change; they are different from strategic goals that change over time. Core values are exactly what they are called, “values,” and they should remain consistent and still resonant over time. The number of core values will and should vary from library to library. There is no perfect number or perfect value.

Since I began serving as librarian at Columbia Theological Seminary six years ago, I have experienced changes in funding, changes in administration, changes in technology, and changes in our student body. The library’s core values, however, have remained the same. On the slide, I have listed my library’s core values, which are included in the library’s identity statement. My library’s core values are hospitality, inclusion, diversity, collegiality, collaboration, creativity, innovation, transformation, accessibility, information exchange, and discourse. The core values are not simply words; they are guiding principles. On a daily basis, the library team can encounter and ask a variety of questions. For example, how does this library service encourage creativity? It may be by hosting a pizza event after the library is closed so students can play in the library. Another question might be whether this new proposed space configuration will encourage discourse? When the library team can answer these questions about programs, collections, and services contextualized with the core



values, the library remains stable, yet flexible, and new possibilities begin to emerge. Further, the library team feels trusted and empowered to make connections to the philosophy, why, and mission of the library. In other words, they can “see” their contribution to reaching the mission of the library and they can be boundless in how they implement their responsibilities.



## Effective Teams

Director: Achiever, Learner, Intellection, Strategic, Input

Archivist: Connectedness, Strategic, Empathy, Developer, and Learner

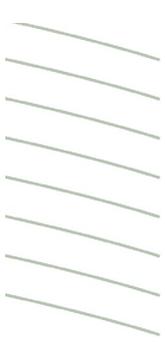
Archivist: Harmony, Input, Connectedness, Learner, and Intellection

Writing Center: Empathy, Harmony, Developer, Discipline, and Includer

A second resource I have used in leading an educational enterprise is called *StrengthsFinder*. By reading around 80 pages and taking the online assessment, a person learns his or her top 5 strengths out of a possible 16 strengths. By utilizing this resource, the library team has developed a common language, and they have been encouraged to focus on the positive instead of the negative with each other.

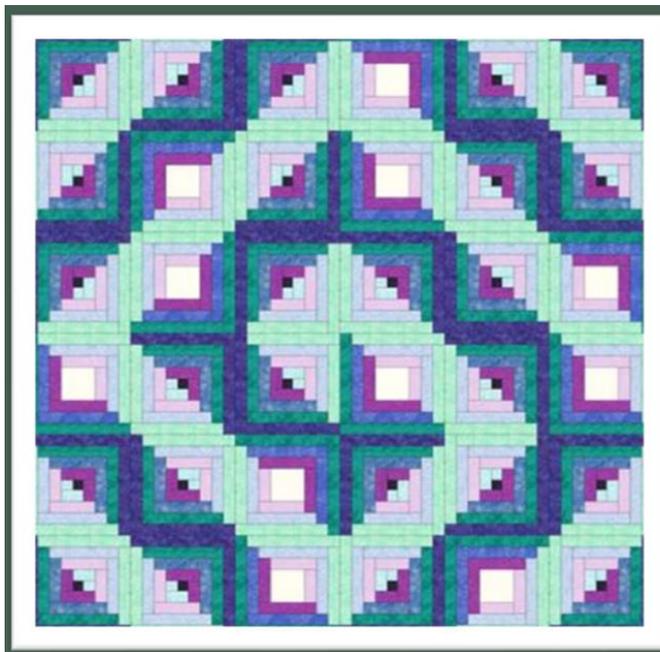
As an example, my reference librarian does not like conflict. I understand this about her because one of her strengths is harmony. She prefers to forgive library fines instead of making students pay them; however, we work well together in that one of my strengths is strategic. In certain situations, I can use my strategic strength to enforce a policy strategically while she can provide the forgiveness of a policy by showing grace. Instead of blaming her for not engaging in conflict, as an assertive leader utilizing this resource, I can adjust and look at new possibilities that guide us to reach a win-win situation.

At the beginning of each academic year, the entire library team review our strengths. This practice provides us an opportunity to appreciate anew the uniqueness of each of us. As you can see on the



slide, some strengths are unique to one staff member while other strengths are shared by several staff members. Having an effective team who are utilizing their strengths allows the library to change the pattern—change the narrative and to see that the possibilities are boundless.

On the past two slides, you saw pictures of quilts using the same basic log cabin block pattern; however, the quilter leveraged color, size, and layout of the pattern to create two unique and different quilts.



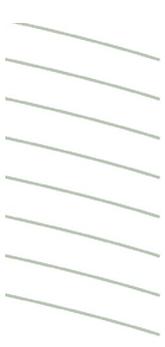
Being a warehouse  
of information and  
knowledge

To

Being a curator of  
content

The second perception that I want to challenge is that the library is known as being a warehouse of information and knowledge to be a curator of content. Curation communicates an active process compared to the image of an old warehouse filled with dusty materials. Curators are responsible for assembling a collection, overseeing the documentation of the collection, conducting research based on the collection, providing proper packaging, and sharing the research with the public through exhibitions and publications. Do these tasks sound similar to library processes? A librarian's essential functions include but are not limited to acquisitions, collection development, accessibility, and preservation. As curators of content, the assertive librarian is free to curate or collect any and all types of content, thus moving the institution's perception away from the book only model and actively communicating the broad responsibilities and activities of a library.

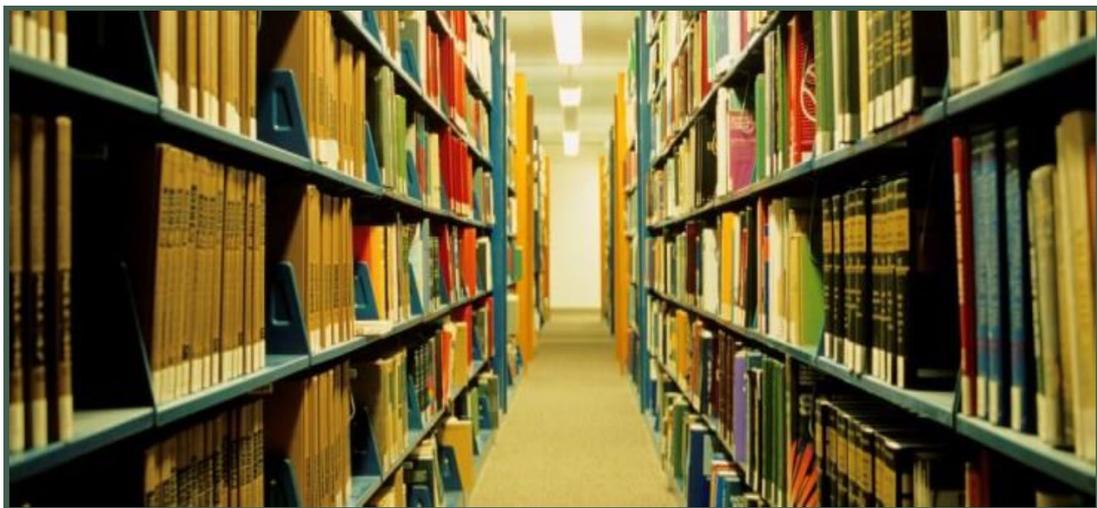
Secondly, curation embodies an expertise and value that is sometimes not given to librarians. Although we might not be the expert in a wide variety of subjects, we are experts in collecting,



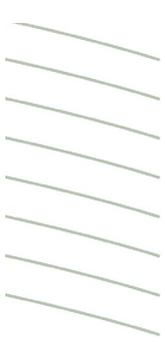
organizing, providing access to information and knowledge, and creating and maintaining digital fluidity.

One way that I have changed the pattern—changed the narrative is by partnering with faculty to help curate the library’s content in two different institutions. Annually, I send library staff members to the Society of Biblical Literature and American Academy of Religion conference. This conference is the largest theological/religious conference in the United States, with an attendance of over 7,000. The library staff spends three days on the vendor floor “shopping” or purchasing materials recommended by our faculty members and occasionally by students who attend the conference. The librarian’s efforts make this selection process as easy as possible for the faculty members. Faculty can simply take a picture of a resource on their phones and text it to the librarians, who will then purchase it.

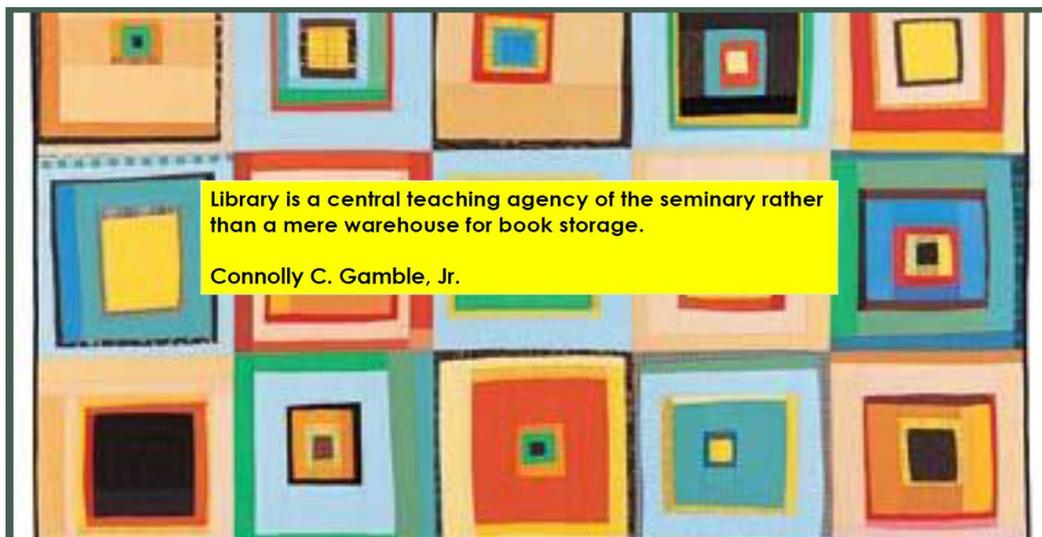
Although this activity is expensive in travel funds and staff time, the benefits outweigh the investment. The faculty see the library as a partner in this educational process partially because library staff are in their “space.” They see library staff at their conference, attending their workshops, and directly supporting their teaching and research. The cost of sending library staff to the conference is minor compared to the changing pattern—changing narrative that results. Faculty are more engaged with library staff throughout the year, they are more supportive of library endeavors throughout the institution, and they see the library staff as curators of content, not merely keepers of warehouses of information and knowledge.



Another recent example of changing the perception of a library being a warehouse to being a curator of content occurred when I was visiting with a fellow library director. His library has a regional campus and he was trying to fill a part-time librarian position that had been advertised and open for six months and not received a single applicant. In our conversation about staffing ideas and possibilities, I



challenged his perception of the library as a warehouse. The library, which is located in an online and commuter campus, had a collection of around 3,000 items that were not catalogued into the system catalog. Instead of trying to create a warehouse of information and knowledge at this regional campus, we decided to think about solving the problem of staffing as curators of content. The result was he added the open staffing hours to those of the reference librarian at the main campus. In addition, he increased the electronic resources that can be utilized by all of the institution's faculty and students instead of trying to sort through and catalog the 3,000 volumes. Through existing technology, the reference librarian, with increased hours, can host reference and information literacy sessions for all students, plus create online resources for the library system. By freeing up the open staffing resources, travel funds exist that can be used to fly the reference librarian or director to the regional campus during new student orientation to meet and greet the regional campus students. Changing the perception of the library from being a warehouse of information and knowledge to being a curator of content provided a solution that was more economically wise than setting up a new library that functioned as the traditional warehouse of information and knowledge.



In researching for this presentation, I found this quote: “A library is a central teaching agency of the seminary rather than a mere warehouse for book storage.” If you notice, the quilt behind the quote is still a basic log cabin block. The quilter made the center square of each block either smaller or larger. The results show in different possibilities.



From a costly  
investment  
to  
a revenue  
enhancer

We all know that a library is an expensive investment for an institution, so the third perception I am proposing to change is that the library can be a revenue enhancer rather than a costly investment. Through my career, the question of what percentage of the institutional budget should be allocated for the library has been discussed. While there is not one number as each library and institution is unique, we as assertive leaders need to change the pattern—change the narrative, especially in the area of finances. Even in tough financial times, the perception of the library as a revenue enhancer can provide more possibilities than a costly investment. If the library has a clear mission, core values, an effective team, and is actively curating the collection, the library already has the crucial pieces in place to tackle this proposed perception.

One way that I believe all libraries can make this change is to be or become an advocate. Advocacy is not a natural characteristic of most librarians and particularly theological librarians. Being an advocate, especially in the area of funding, is crucial in these changing times. By advocacy, I am referring to the structural and functional changes we can make as librarians and then advocating these changes or selling these ideas to our users, who include administration, faculty, and students. I am going to share two examples of how I am advocating for my library in this area.

In this picture, the quilt is still using the log cabin pattern; however, you can see how the blocks are turned to create the fan effect.

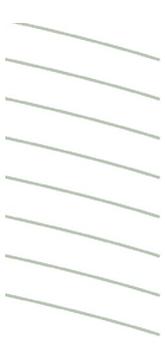


One way I have advocated from my library is to publicize or market all grants received by the library. For the past several years, my staff have applied for and received several small grants, ranging from \$500 to \$7,500 in value. Each time the library receives one of these grants, I let administration know we received this money. I am communicating to them that the library is a revenue enhancer instead of only a costly investment. I also announce these grants in faculty meetings, to our communications' personnel, and throughout all possible marketing channels. By doing so, the faculty and administration are reminded that the library can bring money into the institution. Although these grants are small on the broad scale, changing the image of the library to be a revenue enhancer instead of a costly investment is effective in changing the pattern—changing the narrative.



The second example of providing value to the institution and creating possibilities is in the area of scholarly communication. For several years, I heard this term but did not pay much attention to it. Last year, however, I attended an Atla hosted workshop on the topic. I was excited to learn about small ways my library can participate in scholarly communication. I am planning on enhancing some activities and implementing others this academic year. Scholarly communication can be defined in a variety of ways and is therefore definitely scalable depending on the size of your library setting.

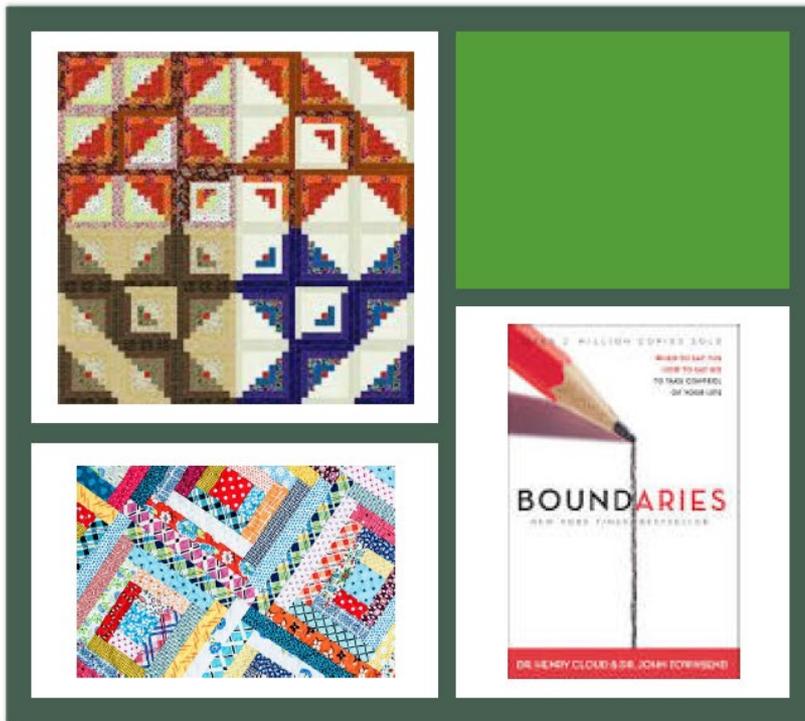
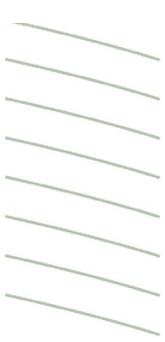
Supporting scholarly communication supports the institution broadly. The faculty and administration at Columbia contact the library fairly regularly about copyright issues. Instead of addressing these questions individually, I assertively led the library to develop some institutional guidelines about copyright. After developing these copyright guidelines, I presented a short presentation on them to the faculty and updated the information in the student handbook, institutional catalog, and degree program manuals. In this upcoming year, I plan on reviewing these policies and seeking faculty input again. By supporting scholarly communication broadly, the library can be seen as a revenue enhancer to the educational process instead of the traditional costly investment.



The other scholarly communication activity I am going to implement is to review the institution's intellectual property policy. The policy exists but no-one refers to it. In combination with reviewing the intellectual property policy, I am planning to meet with long-term faculty to learn about the faculty review/tenure process and faculty publication policies. I am guessing both are quite broad. The purpose of the meeting is the first step of a goal of requiring faculty to secure an electronic copy (open access copy) of their publications into the institutional repository. My faculty is a publishing faculty and they have not thought about preserving a copy of their publications in the institutional repository. Based on this conversation and review of the intellectual property policy, I learned at the workshop that the institution can have a policy requiring faculty to submit an open access copy of their publications before sending it to the publisher. Dependent on my learning, I hope to develop such a policy and seek faculty and administration approval.

Second, depending on what my faculty's review/tenure process is, I am going to encourage the use of open access publishing in the faculty review and tenure processes if possible. Open access publishing can include open access peer-review journals, blogs, websites, etc. My goal is to support the faculty in this process and let them know that the library is an active partner and is especially interested in their publishing.

Finally, probably the following year, I am going to investigate the library becoming a resource for faculty in regard to copyright and publishing contracts. In the workshop, I learned that faculty can request a variety of contracts from publishers; however, they normally do not as they are not aware of the options. I can see possibilities in this space of scholarly communication for the library to engage faculty and for the faculty's perception of the library and librarians to change.



When to say yes:  
How to say no.

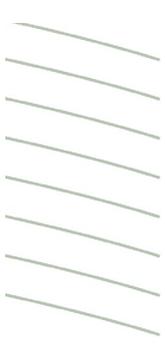
*“Work will grow to fill  
the time you have set  
aside for it.”*

*“The reward for wise  
boundaries is the joy of  
desires fulfilled in life.”*

Finally, a note of caution. In making all of these changes, having clear and strong boundaries is essential. Without good boundaries, you will start responding to all the new ideas without dealing with heritage ones. Everyone will think his or her idea is the best to follow and you will have to make decisions to say no. The earlier documents we talked about (mission, why, and core values) will help you to say no; however, setting boundaries is harder to do than to say.

In working with my staff and within my institution, I have found an invaluable resource. In their book *Boundaries*, Henry Cloud and John Townsend cover topics like “What are Boundaries?,” “Boundary Conflicts,” and “Developing Healthy Boundaries.” In regard to leading a staff and working within a changing institution and field, I find myself referring to this resource for help in determining when to say yes and how to say no.

For all the resources I mentioned today, I purchase a copy of the book for every staff member and let them read the book on work time. We then use time in staff meetings to share our readings and learnings and talk about how to work together better. I have found that instead of my having a stack of professional reading by my bed, it is better to spend the small amount to purchase a copy for each person on my staff to read the same material at work. In this way, we are practicing work-life balance while changing the pattern—changing the narrative.



Well, those are my thoughts for today on starting to change the pattern—change the narrative. If you start with one block in the pattern and make small changes as you go, you will eventually have a brand-new quilt with a whole new design. The possibilities are endless, and you only have to set the stage for the opportunities to start coming.

As I stated in the beginning, I am sharing ideas that have worked in my career and particularly in library settings. I hope that you have found one small area or idea where you can change the pattern—change the narrative. Start leveraging your work in new and small ways to create an environment where boundless opportunities abound. Thank you!