In Search of Shifting and Emergent Librarian Identities Sara Klein (University of Calgary); Bartlomiej Lenart (University of Calgary)

Shifts in librarian identity and praxis have occurred throughout the profession's long history. For example, in the ancient world, scholars engaged in the precursors of the modern practices of cataloguing, indexing, classification, fact checking, and source verification (Sandys, 2010; Gray, 2012). In the Middle Ages, monastic libraries added collection development and management (Hessel, 1950; Gray, 2012) to the librarian's repertoire. More recently, S. R. Ranganathan's (1931) focus on resource usefulness yet again shifted how librarians viewed both the library and their roles within it.

In recent years, the library profession has once more undergone significant changes in response to technological innovations, user needs, and political and economic pressures. These changes have prompted attempts to reconceive librarian identity and librarian roles within the context of new and emerging engagement models. For example, according to Nelson & Irving (2014), while librarians conceived of their professional pre-internet roles as "masters of search," the widespread adoption of the internet prompted a shift to a conception of librarianship as "teachers of search." Librarian responsibilities, and even their very functions, however, are continually shifting and adapting as librarians assume new roles in "research services, digital humanities, teaching and learning, digital scholarship, user experience, and copyright and scholarly communication" (Jaguszewski & Williams, 2013, p. 16) within research institutions.

In a time when librarian roles are continually evolving, both due to emerging technologies as well as shifting social and institutional needs, in a direction that is not yet fully predictable, rethinking librarian identity is certainly quite timely. We argue, however, that rigidly defining or stubbornly adhering to a single, even if compound, conception of librarianship is restrictive, inhibiting, and can be counter-productive. Librarian identities, like other kinds of identities, are, we argue, context-sensitive and socially dependent; it is more desirable to allow an organic emergence of multiple shifting professional identities responsive to various needs rather than prematurely pre-defining generalized roles.