

Studying Library Studies Sarah Gorman (University of Toronto)

In this paper I discuss the terms used for 'library studies' to facilitate an exploration of the relationship between the library and the academy. I argue that 'library science' is an inadequate term because it embodies a positivist, rational, and empirical approach to libraries that is not characteristic of all library work. But if we move beyond 'library science,' the academic discipline that studies libraries can be rebranded in two ways: according to a new object of study or a new methodology. The former is already common, with the object of library studies changing from 'library' to 'information.' This encourages us to study the library as a nexus of data without boundaries. The discipline can alternatively be renamed according to the profession's methodology – for example, referring to the study of libraries as 'library philosophy' instead of 'library science.' This encourages us to study the library according to its meaning for society, understood through the teaching and administrative principles of librarianship. These interpretations offer different possible futures for the status of the academic librarian and encourage us to think through what constitutes our profession.