

What does “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!” mean to libraries and vendors?

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The phrase, “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!” is an invitation for us as the librarians and vendors to think out of the box and collaborate proactively to provide access to the needed information to our end-users promptly. The process of information mediation and purveyance involves a myriad of steps that represent for me a process of traveling side by side with our vendors and institutional partners with one and only one goal of meeting the information needs of our patrons efficiently.

In the contemporary era, the older “just in case” collection development model gives way to the organizational and economic realities of “just as needed.” Our collections and services have become closely integrated with other academic libraries. Besides this lateral integration of co-dependence by having our partner libraries as an ally, the academic librarians have to rely heavily on our vendors to provide us with or provide robust, sustainable access to both valuable analog and electronic sources in a timely fashion. Thus, the genesis of the idea of the access model implies a destination

Several other ways to transform the phrase “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!” can lead us to the land of magical realism. For example, if we replace the “You” in words with a pronoun, “We.” We can allude to exhaustive respectful co-toiling between the librarians and the vendors. I would thus discuss the phrase, “Oh, the Places We’ll Go!”. Rest assured that it is in no way an effort to undermine the plurality of community building that the pronoun “You” alludes to in a semantic sense.

As an academic librarian in Area and International for the past sixteen years, I have seen the journey that we call our librarianship taking turns and detours as the COVID-19 pandemic hit us hard. While one cannot forget the tragedies that unfolded in the early days of COVID-19, the opportunities to think about how we can enhance our services to our students, researchers, and faculty by leveraging existing technologies meant being constantly prepared and to be flexible.

I can provide a couple of examples to help illustrate what is meant by that metaphorical travel that the action verb to go implies. One example that comes to mind was providing access to the heavily used high-quality Caribbean and Latin American imprints published in paper and electronic format by Iberoamericana **vervuert**. As the pandemic hit us, the access to paper copies became highly problematic as the libraries went on limited lock-down. I began to think about how I could provide access to e-versions of these editions seamlessly. Hence, an idea of collaborating with DeGruyter and Harrassowitz was born, and we could purchase all of the frontlists of the editorial house Iberoamericana Vervuert in electronic format. We indeed are problem solvers, we “go places to find solutions.”

The other example that comes to my mind is maintaining our academic neutrality when providing access to the materials. While one can harbor personal opinions about the nuanced aspects of world politics, one, as an academic librarian, cannot allow these opinions to hinder our services to our audiences. Recently, a faculty member in the department of History reached out to me with a plea to locate a copy of a publication that dealt with the 19th-century Russian Empire. Currently, there is a war going on in

Ukraine as a result of the unjust Russian invasion. The request came as the Russian army was on the outskirts of Kyiv. And the publication that our faculty needed was not available anywhere else but in a couple of libraries in Russia. I thought, Oh, My God, that is the end of my journey as an academic librarian to make possible the miracle of getting this publication for the faculty member for my country's government; the United States was busy adding sanctions and travel restrictions on Russia. The faculty had tried to obtain the publication through our expert ILL department but without success. I could not travel to Russia given the limits and the State Department's advisory against such travel.

Furthermore, I did not want to be an object of ridicule locally that this crazy librarian requesting to travel to Russia for one publication. So the Charleston conference theme served as a magic message, "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" became my phrase. I reached out on our Slavic librarians' list, and voila, a librarian from the Russian State Library out of the blue reached out to me with an electronic copy of the needed publication. So miracles happen, and as librarians, we represent a community of practice stretching from Vladivostok to Tierra del Fuego. We, through collaboration and academic neutrality, travel and go places far beyond our dreams and reach. These experiences condense the beauty and essence of the phrase "*Oh, the Places You'll Go!*" for me. I know that providing an example of collaborating with a Russian librarian to meet American faculty's needs might not mean the politically "sexy" thing these days. And it might not even get me this coveted Harrassowitz scholarship that would allow me- the librarian with a "third world" heritage with a "first world" presence to attend for the first time the Charleston Conference. Still, it illustrates the value of "collaborative travel" implied by the verb to go places.

Respectfully, submitted by Liladhar R. Pendse