

**Higher Education in the
Internet Age: Libraries
Creating a Strategic Edge**

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Reviewed by Wayne Brown

The purpose of this updated version of the 1989 book *The Information Literacy Revolution in the Library* is to promote use of the library to focus on the three primary missions of higher education: teaching, research, and service. The authors also endorse the use of the library and its resources to help the institution deal with technology and the flood of information it has brought. The book is authored by a university librarian and president/chancellor who have firsthand experience implementing these ideas in the libraries of several higher education institutions.

Breivik and Gee state that rapid changes in technology, combined with a shortage of funds, results in more dollars flowing to technology usage than to a review of how the library—the holder of the majority of campus information—could help. They point out that the library tends to be seen in its traditional role of providing books, journals, or interlibrary loan, not in the functions it could fulfill to enhance learning. The authors convincingly argue that the institutional library could assist students throughout their academic careers and that it could also help the institution achieve some of its primary goals. The authors cite works from the early 1900s in which student academic success was directly connected with libraries. They also highlight how various college presidents since then have echoed that theme. The authors do concede, however, that the library can face fiscal and administrative challenges that may result in its not receiving the attention it is due.

According to the authors, the college library is more than a place to store journals, books, and databases. It should partner with academic departments and leadership to help fulfill the mission of the college. Through this partnership, the library can help with a number of challenges the institution faces. For instance, the Internet has changed how we communicate. At the same time, it has resulted in a lot more information being available to students and teachers. This overload results in a problem for students because they may have difficulty differentiating between good and bad information. Furthermore, learning should require more than the ability to recite information a student has read or heard. It should be an understanding of the information. Libraries can create programs to help with both issues.

The second mission of the higher education institution, research, can also find a partner in the library. The authors point out that teaching and research can be a challenging combination for faculty. The faculty member may have difficulty finding information in the library or using other available resources. Partnership with the library can provide assistance in the research mission.

Involving the library in the third higher education mission, service, is another potentially overlooked benefit. Making the library and all its resources available to the community provides for the greater good. It can also result in other partnerships that help the institution share the cost and benefits of the library with the community.

Breivik and Gee highlight how the library can also enhance administrative operations and initiatives. For instance, the flood of information brought on by technology can be attacked with the help of the library staff, who traditionally have been the managers of knowledge. Library staff can also educate faculty and staff about how to manage and search the information.

Breivik and Gee write that libraries have gone through major changes and,

thanks to technology, continue to do so. These changes have brought the library and the information technology (IT) department closer together and, in some cases, have merged the two functions. According to one study the authors cited, as many as 16 percent of institutions have merged the library and IT departments, and the authors present a good deal of information on the pros and cons of this approach.

Technology has also changed how library collections are built and maintained. The building of the collection and spending of the budget require constant monitoring and adjustment to keep up with changes in technology. How the library budget is spent has shifted from paper to bits and bytes as material moves to an electronic format. The authors do point out that electronic books still face challenges to widespread adoption.

The last area the authors review is library leadership. They highlight the current shortage of librarians and the predicted continuation of that trend. The book also covers the qualifications of the librarian, job duties, placement in the organizational chart, and faculty status for librarians. Finally, the authors discuss options for contending with library funding challenges, including potential fees and grant possibilities.

Breivik and Gee make a strong case that the library should be made a full partner in the institution's missions of teaching, research, and service, arguing that the benefits the library can bring are undeniable. The authors also describe additional value an institution can derive from the library's involvement in other areas of the college, such as administration. Finally, they give the reader insight into who the librarians are, where they may fit on the organizational charts, and the funding challenges and possible solutions that can be pursued. *e*

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