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Definition

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Definition

About Author

Elyse Meyers served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Student Research Journal* from May 2012 through May 2013. She received her MLIS from SJSU SLIS in May 2013. Prior to pursuing her MLIS, Elyse received a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and a B.A. in Linguistics from the University of California, Berkeley.

When I studied for the elementary school spelling bee, I enjoyed a child's-eye view of what a "definition" could be. If I needed more than pronunciation to attempt spelling a word, I asked to have the word defined. In return, I received a simple, straightforward statement of meaning, which I believed to be the universally accepted explanation of the word or concept. That naiveté made a brief reappearance as I sat to write this essay. In a journey back to my nine-year old self, I started to believe that the act of defining the verb "to define" was incredibly easy: to define something (a word, a phrase, an idiom) is to state its meaning—right? A quick look in the dictionary brought me back to the reality where even the idea of "defining" has multiple permutations, related but distinct. We define by stating meaning, but also by determining the boundaries of something, by making a clear distinction, etc.

As we proceed through school, work, and life, we likely find ourselves trying to define terms, ideas, feelings, experiences—anything/everything—nearly all the time. Our definitions may be in flux, may be contentious, may be idealistic, may be true or false. In our professional and scholarly library and information lives, we confront the act of defining when we try to explain "planning, management, marketing, and advocacy" in Competency D of the San Jose State University SLIS E-portfolio, when we catalog an item based on its subject matter, when we struggle through understanding what it means to do our work well. Above all, we begin to realize how complicated it is to define.

In this first issue of the third volume of the *Student Research Journal*, we proudly present the work of our homegrown SLIS graduate students who have tackled the challenge and sought their own definitions in library science based on research and hard work. Their three articles show us how to define and re-define aspects of our profession in widely divergent arenas but with equal success.

This issue's first article, Julia B. Chambers' excellent piece "Library Cartoons: A Literature Review of Library-themed Cartoons, Caricatures, and Comics," gives us a view of how cartoons have helped to define the public's perception and understanding of "librarians, library funding, and the digitization of information" as well as "the history of libraries in the U.S." Chambers analyzes the literature on library cartoons to present critically the existing discussion of the historical trends, themes, and value of these cartoons. She sees room for much more scholarship regarding library cartoons, caricatures, and comics, offering suggestions for several ways that future researchers can expand our understanding of how this medium helps to define our profession through the ages. All this, plus some very entertaining images.

In our next piece, Anthony Burik argues in "Embedded Librarians and the TEACH Act" that librarians embedded into online courses must redefine their perspective to "embrace" the Technology, Education, and Copyright Harmonization Act (TEACH Act) and its implications for their practice. Burik (2013) offers three excellent pieces of advice to embedded librarians regarding the TEACH Act. First, he encourages librarians to consider where they walk the line between "librarian" and "teacher" for purposes of the statute, and whether their role in an online course necessitates defining themselves as a "teacher" who is covered by the act's requirements. Second, Burick persuades all embedded librarians to "rais[e] the level of understanding of the law's provisions" on copyright, enabling better decision-making about how to define which materials are permitted to be used in an online course. Third, by urging embedded librarians to become "experts on the TEACH Act," Burick pushes them to continue to

define their critical role in the academic environment and to reassert the importance of the library. These lessons provide important insight and should be taken to heart.

Our third article, Tracy L. Micka's "Demonstrating the Value of the Public Library: Economic Valuation and the Advocacy Imperative," surveys the evolution taking place in the field of public library valuation, as scholars and practitioners apply a variety of traditional and modified valuation methods to define the true value of the public library. As Micka (2013) explains, the search for a satisfying, accurate way to calculate public libraries' value is challenging because of the intangible, indirect nature of so many of the library's benefits. Defining some dollar value for the impact of the public library (the effects of children's story time or public computer access, for example) presents no easy task. And, Micka points out, once—or really, *if*—such a value can be defined, libraries may test whether that value can help successfully advocate for additional funding and continued community support. After sharing her knowledge about library valuation tools that may "articulate the tremendous socio-economic value the public library brings to our communities," Micka concludes with several ideas that encourage public libraries to explore the connection between defined value and advocacy.

This issue's thematic thread strikes me as especially appropriate given the timing of publication. With SLIS graduation at our door, many students (and their families, friends, employers, and others) undoubtedly find themselves in their own period of self-(re)definition. As one such student, going through my own period of re-definition as I transition from "student"/"Editor-in-Chief" to "information professional," I am struck by how powerful it is that we have the power to make or find our own definition.

To conclude, I extend my gratitude to the tremendous members of *SRJ*'s Editorial Team. Their intellectual curiosity, breadth of knowledge, and quality of work still astonish me. I could not be prouder of the efforts they put into this issue. I also say thank you several times over to Dr. Anthony Bernier, *SRJ*'s Faculty Advisor. His mentorship and support has been a defining part of my SLIS experience and my professional development. His vision and dedication help us to define the *SRJ*. I have complete faith that this journal will continue to make a meaningful impact in growing the research community at our school. And finally, congratulations to all of the graduates and best wishes as you continue to define yourselves.

Julia B. Chambers is a MLIS candidate at San Jose State University's School of Library & Information Science. She holds a BA in Political, Legal, and Economic Analysis from Mills College, in Oakland, California.

Anthony Burik graduated from the MLIS program at San Jose State University in December, 2012. He has an A.B. in History from UC Berkeley and an M.A. in Social Studies Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. He currently works as a distance learning teacher for Mt. Diablo Adult Education in Concord, California.

Tracy Micka is a graduate student at San José State University, School of Library and Information Science and holds a BA in Sociology from the University of California San Diego.