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PREVENTING A DIGITAL DOWNFALL

The fate of reference services in today's academic libraries

Our inherent desire for learning—and the capacity to retain and apply that information—is one of the key elements that differentiates humans from other species. In a sense, we are still hunters and gatherers, but instead of seeds, berries and animals, scholars are often on the lookout for in-depth studies, statistical analyses and other forms of content to support a particular research project.

Adelphi Associate Professor Aditi Bandyopadhyay, Ph.D., studies the compilation of these materials, which have undergone a remarkable transformation over the past several decades. Her new article poses a compelling question: Is the need for mediated reference service in academic libraries fading away in the digital environment?

With four degrees to her credit, Dr. Bandyopadhyay is very much at home in academic libraries. A chance meeting during her Ph.D. studies, when she overheard a librarian mention a master's degree in library science, set the wheels in motion. “A library has science in it?” questioned Dr. Bandyopadhyay, who was fascinated by the idea and feeling frustrated by the repetitive nature of her Ph.D. experiments.

Days later, she saw an ad for the library science program at the University of Calcutta, and, without telling her family (or her Ph.D. academic adviser), took the entrance exam and was accepted. “It was not as glamorous as becoming a scientist, and it was taboo to go against the flow,” Dr. Bandyopadhyay said. “Nobody thought I could do it, but I completed both degrees.”

Dr. Bandyopadhyay has drawn upon her expertise to help researchers, faculty and scientists across a broad range of fields extract different volumes and indexes that might otherwise be missed. Throughout the years, she's kept tabs on the shifting tides in academic settings, as well as how students and faculty were using available resources.

In collaboration with co-author Mary Kate Boyd-Byrnes, Dr. Bandyopadhyay conducted a “detailed literature review to document and analyze the current trends in reference services in academic libraries,” discovering that human interaction is still a vital part of the research process. “A library is a place of knowledge, but there needs to be some kind of science in place to organize, classify and retrieve information as quickly as possible,” said Dr. Bandyopadhyay. “Otherwise, it's a chaotic situation, which we're seeing in the digital age.”

“The other science is human behavior—how we understand and organize knowledge,” continued Dr. Bandyopadhyay. “What are the systems to retrieve information in different formats? This is what attracted me.” And it's not just students. Professors, too, often turn to Dr. Bandyopadhyay for citation analysis of their work, recognizing that Google Scholar and other search engine tools often deliver conflicting results.

Referencing more than 100 articles, Dr. Bandyopadhyay and Boyd-Byrnes concluded that there is still a pressing need for human-to-human communication. The study emphasized one crucial point in particular: “Technology cannot process information and connect the concepts using knowledge and experience like a human brain. At present, no digital resources or technologies have the abilities to interpret and synthesize information from multiple sources the way an intelligent and knowledgeable human being can do.”

Information literacy programs and formal instruction have continued to evolve with technological advances. For both students and faculty alike, it's becoming increasingly important to take full advantage of the reference services available in academic libraries. Dr. Bandyopadhyay suggests that there's a fluidity into how this can be implemented, which may include personal interactions, video instruction, electronic guidelines and other means that extend beyond a typical reference desk inquiry.

Adelphi recognizes the power of library science—not only for students on campus, but also as a benchmark for giving future scientists and academics the tools to effectively utilize reference services. With this educational pillar in mind, Adelphi is one of an elite number of universities that hires librarians as faculty, making studies like Dr. Bandyopadhyay's possible.

“I am very grateful to help make information literacy a fundamental goal for student learning, and Adelphi has encouraged us to do it,” said Dr. Bandyopadhyay. “Research is not easy—it takes a lot of time. But I've always been very curious to learn a science from the field of knowledge.”

Adelphi librarian Aditi Bandyopadhyay, Ph.D.'s research interests lie in plant physiology, especially in plant tissue and cell culture. She was a research fellow at Bose Institute in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, from 1985 to 1990 before emigrating to the United States and accepting research positions at Farmingdale State College (State University of New York) and Picower Institute Medical Research, Manhasset. She joined the Adelphi faculty in 1994 and has been an associate professor since 2001.

ASSAULT BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Uncovering post-traumatic stress
among psychiatric hospital staff

Psychiatric nurses are trained to handle some of the most challenging cases in a hospital setting, but what happens when their patients try to do them harm? A comprehensive new research study by William Jacobowitz, Ed.D., assistant professor in the College of Nursing and Public Health, "Post-Traumatic Stress, Trauma-Informed Care, and Compassion Fatigue in Psychiatric Hospital Staff: A Correlational Study," reveals the circumstances and consequences of this complex issue.

During his 30 years of experience in the field, including a position as the chief nursing officer of a psychiatric hospital, Dr. Jacobowitz witnessed the high assault rate among nursing staff and those of other disciplines, as well as the ineffective response that followed. "For many of the staff on the unit, it was not uncommon after being assaulted—or for those who witnessed the act—to go through an anxiety response," he reflected. "This manifested in staff asking for more support, better security and protection against violence, security guards and so on. Then it would tail off and start over again."

Dr. Jacobowitz knew he had the tools to break this vicious cycle. "About six years ago, I left working in hospitals and started teaching at Adelphi so I could take a closer look," he said. "There is a body of literature but the research has been spotty, and I thought we could do something better by looking at the variables: why some people have these post-traumatic reactions and others don't."

With approval from Adelphi's Independent Review Board and a partnership with a local hospital, Dr. Jacobowitz turned to two graduate research assistants for help studying a sample of psychiatric healthcare workers. His students put the classroom into action with a variety of data collection tools, including a new measurement that would attempt to control for traumatic experiences outside of the work environment.

Dr. Jacobowitz faced several challenges when implementing the study. For one, the workers most profoundly affected by a violent experience may have left their positions—possibly transferring to a different unit or changing fields altogether—which meant his findings could miss some of the most potent possible data. What the research did reveal was a lack of significant correlation between trauma and decreased compassion for patients. Instead, workers most frequently showed

a "burnout" factor regarding productivity, indicating that resilience is not necessarily completely protective with respect to post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS).

Yet, workers still need to build resilience to traumatic events before they happen. Dr. Jacobowitz maintains. The ability to self-soothe under stress and activate an internal calming dialogue is vital, which can be cultivated through psychotherapy and orientation programs. "If we can talk with people about what they may encounter well in advance, they'll have more tools to respond to a traumatic event," said Dr. Jacobowitz.

This research also has useful applications for other fields, particularly when it comes to raising awareness and creating coping strategies that can be employed post-trauma. PTSS is not unique to psychiatric nursing, Dr. Jacobowitz points out, and is often diagnosed among the military, emergency workers and field doctors and nurses. "We even see this among drone operators, who are affected by the images they see when bombs are dropped," he said, noting the global relevancy of his work. "When I started to get interested in this subject, I spent a number of weeks in the Middle East training how to debrief people who have been exposed to terrorism. We hear a lot about terrorism in the media, but what gets missed are the tremendous needs of the survivors."

That far-reaching perspective is an asset to Dr. Jacobowitz's role at Adelphi, particularly for his doctoral students from diverse backgrounds exploring the interjection of healthcare and society. One African-born student is examining racial bias in the treatment of hypertension, while another student from the Middle East is focusing on how antipathy toward the Muslim community is impacting Muslim-Americans' pursuit of healthcare.

"In my own way, I'm providing a small part of the greater body of literature," said Dr. Jacobowitz of his study's important contribution to the field of PTSS and public health. "It's a debilitating condition that not only affects people personally, but also work productivity, family and relationships. It's a big issue that we need to address."

**Christine Moran, Cheryl Best, M.S. '13, and Lucy Mensah, M.S. '13, also contributed to the study.*

William Jacobowitz, Ed.D.'s research focuses on post-traumatic stress syndrome and mental health nursing. He holds master's degrees in both psychiatric mental health nursing and health policy, as well as a doctorate in education, all earned from Columbia University. In addition to being an assistant professor at Adelphi, he is director of Lynnbrook Supportive Therapy.