Libraries 2.3

What will your library be like in the post COVID environment? Will things return to "normal" or will you use the almost sixteen-month pause to re-invent your library? A lot of people feel that their work is largely meaningless. David Graeber developed the thesis that we are creating more and more meaningless jobs to fill the need for work for those who need to pay off student loans. Some jobs are so worthless that if the employee vanishes, no one notices. One Spanish civil servant moved to another town and took up a different line of work and no one noticed. Some people are employed in jobs that are designed to make other people look good: door keepers for example. Another example are people who use Microsoft Excel and claim to be software engineers. Employees who think their work is useless are anxious and depressed according to Graeber. This is similar to what happened to artisans in the 19th century when they started working in factories rather than individually owned benches at home. This alienation is often connected to how workers are treated by those in charge. If employees feel that they have the opportunity to participate in decision making, are given time to do a good job, and have a real say in how things are done, they are less likely to feel that their work is useless. It's often said that people don't leave bad jobs, they leave bad managers. Recent surveys have revealed that up to forty percent of workers are either dissatisfied with their job or where they live and plan to change as soon at possible.

Will forty percent of your library staff change jobs? Probably not, but COVID has caused many individuals to take a long hard look at what they do and where they live. Some people no longer want to live in urban areas, while others and eager to move to urban centers. Some staff will undoubtably decide that librarianship is just not for them. Some will take early retirement. Bee keeping and goat herding can seem to be good switch from a job that you don't like. It's clear that people are again on the move. This means increasing library recruitment costs and more search committees, but it also provides an opportunity to re-engineer positions in your library for the better. What will you do in the post-COVID Library 2.3 age? Just fill positions as they become vacant, or will you take the opportunity to review what staff do with the goal of making positions more meaningful to employees. Are your staff happy to return from remote work, or will they miss working from home? You can shape their world for the better. Let's make the COVID pause a time to improve what we do as librarians.

Letters to the editor should be addressed to the editor and mailed to:
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