

LibraryCrunch

Service for the Next Generation Library: A Library 2.0 Perspective by Michael Casey

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Serving Your Community

By Laura Savastinuk

On Wednesday John J. Miller of the National Review [had a scathing editorial](#) on the Wall Street Journal's Opinion Journal website of the Fairfax County Public Library's weeding practices and what he sees as the general direction of public libraries. Miller is worried that public libraries are struggling to become Amazon.com and Barnes and Noble at the expense of classic literature. While I don't disagree that libraries should be cautious and very sure of what their public needs before jumping head first into a bookstore model, I am particularly bothered by the following statement:

The particulars of this task will fall upon the shoulders of individual librarians, who should welcome the opportunity to discriminate between the good and the bad, the timeless and the ephemeral, as librarians traditionally have done. They ought to regard themselves as not just experts in the arcane ways of the Dewey Decimal System, but as teachers, advisers and guardians of an intellectual inheritance.

As I was taught in library school and as I believe as a practicing librarian, librarians are here to provide information service and access, not to pass judgment on this information or those who seek it. Libraries need to be neutral zones, not a place for librarians to dictate what is worthy information and what is not.

Similarly, libraries must craft their services and collections to reflect the needs of their individual communities. If your community is crying out for the latest in popular fiction or a collection of classics (or likely a combination of both), then by all means that is what you should provide. As librarians we are here to serve our users by providing them with the information and resources they want, not glare down our noses at them because of their reading choices.

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