Libraries & Humanism: A Book Discussion of
Andre Cossette’s *Humanism and Libraries:
An Essay on the Philosophy of Librarianship*

“Why Libraries?” (5, 40).

Cossette posits that the problems that confront librarians such as “recruitment, technological development, salaries and work conditions, not to mention the difficulty of improving [our] image” are a direct result of the lack of a philosophical perspective on librarianship. (24). Are we still facing these problems today? If so, is it due to the lack of a philosophical stance as a profession?

Respond to the statement, “Even if it made a thorough application of the scientific method in all its sectors, librarianship would remain no less a secondary discipline if it does not arrive at a definition of its goals, to justify its existence.” (25). What are the definitive goals or aims of librarianship in the 21st century?

Cossette describes libraries as "social institutions" with the main aim to disseminate knowledge rather than to educate the public to meet some arbitrary class standard. With this perspective as the vantage point, discuss the 21st century library as the “third place" for the community. (27).

If librarianship is an art(38), a social science (37) and a science(36), can you deconstruct your daily practice according to these broad strokes?  How does this division apply or not to your library or day to day workload?

Currently, what are our ideals that provide our momentum for "forward movement" and that remain "possible to progressively realize"?(28)

Can anyone cite books or articles written since 1976 that have built on Cossette's ideal for a philosophy of librarianship?

Cossette discusses value judgments made in librarianship that “translate[s] a vision of the world into the social engagement that follows.” (8)  What do you see your role in social engagement as a librarian? Is this social engagement true of every kind of library job?

Cossette argues that the individualistic nature of human experience can lead to a philosophy. (9). If this is the case, how then, would we come to agree on a unified philosophy of librarianship?

Cossette argues that if we have a solid articulated philosophy of librarianship, we’d be better suited to face our battles of relevance. Do you agree with this statement? Have you ever been in the position to substantiate your work and had to come up with a philosophy? If so, what was it?

Cossette discusses libraries as being inherently classist. Do you agree or disagree? If libraries are inherently classist, what could we do to break down that barrier? Is it necessary to break down those barriers? (46)

Is technological innovation pushing us toward a path to deem necessary a philosophy of librarianship?

How would you respond to Cossette’s assertion that pedagogical definitions of libraries are dangerous to the profession? (49)