

# The Yoga Sutra of Librarianship: Towards an Understanding of Holistic Advocacy

Courtney M. Block & Christopher L. Proctor

## **Defining Holistic Advocacy**

In an era inundated by information fluidity, rapid and immediate access, and the shift from library as information center to library as socially productive hub, the current authors argue that there is an inherent need for a new paradigm of library service. Specifically, the authors argue that certain yogic philosophies enable the creation of a new triadic model of librarianship that advances the cause of advocacy, which is ultimately rooted in self-awareness (yoga), compassion (karuṇā), and interactional fluidity (āsana) that encourages a more nuanced understanding of librarianship. In this instance, however, advocacy does not simply refer to the promotion of library services in the traditional marketing sense. Instead, it extends further into the realm of considering how an embedded ethos consisting of yogic philosophies can result in organic, naturally occurring advocacy – one predicated on a holistic paradigm – for the library patron, the individual library, and the profession at large. Though lofty, the new paradigm presented below posits that librarians are in a unique position to change lives. By focusing on the human interaction at the core of every librarian-patron transaction, this new model aims to enhance user experience, thereby allowing librarians to become advocates for far more than simply their profession or individual libraries. One may question this rather aspirational statement, but through this new service model, librarians can become stewards for democracy and the philosophical proponents of living compassionately and critically.

The authors coin this paradigm-shift as the Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy. Succinctly stated, the authors start with the claim that the sum-total of librarianship, itself, is holistic advocacy. To breakdown the components, this mindset centers on the core belief that access to library services is a fundamental right held by all people, and this right should be reflected in the quality of service provided by library professionals. The authors would like to note that this mindset is one that transcends role and title, and, to most successful, it should be embedded in the institutional ethos of the library as a whole. Thus, regardless of role or title, holistic advocacy requires a consistent, empathetic, and flexible approach to every interaction taking place in the library. It also requires placing no judgment on the type of information need and paying no higher regard to the librarian assisting someone with a research paper than to the

part-time paraprofessional assisting in circulation duties. These inspirations coalesce into the final outcome of librarians advocating for the information literacy skills of all patrons, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, religious background, personal opinions, attitudes, and more. This, in turn, advocates for the growth of a more compassionate, critically thinking society rooted in democratic principles.

In addition to inspiration from yogic philosophy, this new paradigm borrows from the concept of servant leadership. While servant leadership is the most closely aligned Western concept that readers may recognize, where this paradigm begins to shift into a new service model of librarianship is the direct influence of certain Eastern philosophies. Before delving into a greater exposition of these philosophies, it would be beneficial to contemplate why holistic advocacy is needed, how it differs from traditional notions of advocacy, and how it can assist with the general problems facing librarianship today.

### **Traditional Advocacy and General Problems Facing Librarianship**

To understand the need for a paradigm shift, let the reader first consider the traditional usage of advocacy in librarianship. At its most basic level, advocacy is defined as "the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal" (Merriam-Webster, 2018). In librarianship, the authors argue, traditional notions of advocacy include a vision of large-scale campaigns centered on political and legislative arenas. Consider, for example, the American Library Association's (ALA) targeted advocacy efforts surrounding National Library Card Sign-Up Month, Banned Books Week, the Libraries Transform campaign, and specific funding endeavors. To be clear, these targeted campaigns are both beneficial and necessary, and they are wonderful examples of enhancing a very macro-level type of advocacy. One could argue that engaging in these targeted endeavors will motivate and rejuvenate the professional spirit of library professionals while, at the same time, instilling in communities an enhanced vision of the value of libraries. The authors are certain that these benefits occur. However, the paradigm of holistic advocacy differs as it proposes that advocacy should emerge, take root, and grow from the most basic of library services – the human interactions taking place between patrons and every member on library payroll.

While advocacy is often assumed as an ever-present concern at the macro level, the authors argue that most people consider it to be a targeted campaign that tends to have set

timelines. In other words, advocacy has connotations of beginnings and endings; consider, if you will, targeted campaigns during National Library Week, or the library card sign-up drives that take place annually within many libraries in September. What sets holistic advocacy apart from these traditional types of practices is that it relies on the consistent, daily practice of advocating for patrons' needs at each moment of interaction, with no targeted campaign ending in sight. While advocacy transcends all library types, the authors argue that when thinking of targeted campaigns, many will likely bring to mind the national campaigns associated more closely with public and K-12 libraries. Since there are more public and K-12 libraries than academic libraries in the United States (American Library Association, 2015) this natural assumption makes sense. Fortunately, the academic voice is not lost when it comes to advocacy. The Association for of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of ALA, has an advocacy agenda that includes efforts at enhancing and promoting information literacy, marketing, building community and campus relations, and investigating various legislation affecting academic libraries (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2018). It is important to note that advocacy is already recognized as an important endeavor, but while the efforts of formal advocacy institutions are necessary and noble, holistic advocacy is something quite different, as it strives to embed a service ethos that plays out through the daily one-on-one interactions between librarians and patrons.

One factor at play in this discussion of embedding an ethos of holistic advocacy is the lack of advocacy as an explicitly stated goal in mission and vision statements. Of the top five largest academic libraries and four largest public libraries in the United States (American Library Association, 2012, 2016), a brief content analysis of mission statements and strategic plans reveals that the word advocacy is not mentioned in seven of the total nine institutions (Berkeley Library, 2018; Boston Public Library, 2018, n.d.; Columbia University Libraries, n.d.; Harvard Library, 2017; Los Angeles Public Library, 2015, n.d.; The New York Public Library, 2018a, 2018b; The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, 2018, n.d.; University Library, 2018; Yale University Library, 2018). Of note, the University Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign includes being user-focused as one of its guiding principles, and it is dedicated to being guided by users when it comes to various services, collaborations, and features (University Library, 2018). It is laudable that both the New York Public Library and the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County mention the concept of advocacy specifically,

This dedication to being user-focused certainly has implications for holistic advocacy, which centers on the patron-librarian interaction, but the absence of the word advocacy in 78 percent of the sample is certainly curious. To be sure, goals such as positive customer service, welcoming environments, marketing, and outreach are all components, one could argue, of advocacy as a whole. The purpose of this discussion is not to dissect indicators of advocacy and their presence or absence in mission statements. Rather, the authors argue that without a clear and defined dedication to advocacy via channels such as mission and vision statements, one cannot expect that it will become embedded in the day-to-day ethos of typical library goings-on. In order to attain holistic advocacy, which is advocacy that occurs at every single point of interaction, one must first consider how to embed the importance of advocacy across the institution. An easy way to begin embedding this is to include advocacy in our daily vocabulary and within foundational and governing documents.

Financial barriers and shrinking budgets are other issues facing librarianship today. The authors believe that these issues can be mitigated by engaging in holistic advocacy, which – as stated above – seeks to create positive and meaningful interactions at every point of contact. The authors posit that traditional modes of advocacy assume that there already exists a political goodwill towards libraries in general, and their goals differ from the goal of holistic advocacy, which is to build relationships and trust at the individual level. This traditional assumption is no longer one that libraries or librarians can afford to be making. Take, for instance, the individual who holds traditional (perhaps, outdated and inaccurate) views of libraries and library services due to impersonal interaction. Then take the individual who has developed relationships with librarians and experienced interactions built on mutual trust and respect. Imagine the perceptions each takes to the ballot box when legislation regarding taxes and library funding arise. In order to achieve the best possible political outcome, the authors believe that patrons who have experienced positive and meaningful interactions at their library will be more likely to support their libraries and advocate on their behalf.

Another issue facing libraries is the dizzying abundance of digital information. This is a double-edged sword. On one hand, the ability for a society to access and locate vast amounts of information can be understood to be very democratic and beneficial. However, just as the increasing ability of people to self-diagnose due to a plethora of medical information can frustrate medical professionals, the ways in which people use and navigate information can

frustrate librarians. It is quite an amazing thing that current society is able to access so much so quickly. However, it becomes even more critical in today's climate for librarians to actively be on the forefront of teaching patrons how to ethically and critically engage with information so that information consumption and sharing does more good than harm. One way to achieve this is to embed critical skills into each point of patron-librarian interaction. This is where holistic advocacy can begin to influence the overall creation of a more critically thinking information-consuming society. Patrons may begin to employ these new skills in future information endeavors and slowly, like ripples echoing in water, the effects will be immeasurable.

For example, in an era when information and media outlets are being uncritically discredited, resulting in an overabundant reliance on propaganda to inform sociopolitical opinions, the need for an information-literate voter-base becomes essential. Librarians teach these skills, and this can impact advocacy in a number of ways. Firstly, when legislation arises that impacts libraries, patrons – as voting citizens – will be able to more effectively separate propaganda from credible information. Secondly, and more holistically focused, when patrons realize that librarians helped form these new skills that can be used in a variety of ways, the overall perception of that their individual libraries will be enhanced, and, as a result, their overall perception of librarianship as a profession will likely enhance as well. This is another instance of how the one-on-one relationships between librarians and patrons will supplement the meta-level efforts of advocacy groups.

The authors further argue that the general problems facing librarianship, such as shrinking budgets and the ever-growing prevalence of digital information (many with their own exorbitant subscription fees), are not the biggest problems libraries face. Rather, a lack of an embedded ethos of librarianship as a fundamentally social-service-based profession is the biggest barrier. A library institution with a culture that places relationship building at every single point of librarian-patron interaction above all else will be a library that can weather any of the aforementioned problems, and which, most likely, will be able to weather them with aplomb. In the end, holistic advocacy is a very grass-roots paradigm because it places the one-on-one relationship between librarian and patron as the key to all progress. The authors are not suggesting that institutional advocacy is unimportant or not needed, but that focusing on the one-on-one human relationship will naturally, organically expand to include advocacy at the institutional and professional levels. This new model actively prioritizes the individual needs of

patrons and suggests that, as a result of that focus, advocacy will occur at all levels. There will be much more effective institutional and professional advocacy if there is advocacy for individual patrons first. This is the essential first step, and it facilitates the efforts of those organizations engaging in traditional meta-level advocacy.

In summation, the authors argue that traditional notions of advocacy limit themselves to individual institutions and to the profession at large. What sets holistic advocacy apart is that it plays itself out in the daily interactions occurring between individual patrons and library professionals. During these moments, all patrons and information needs are seen on an even level. Specifically, in each moment of compassion-driven contact, service to patrons becomes the focus, and this, in turn, creates trust and builds relationships. This, over time, creates a sense of community that then enhances perceptions of specific institutions and of librarianship as a profession. The following section will consider the role that servant leadership plays in this new paradigm and why it is important for Western scholars to be open to Eastern worldviews.

### **The Role of Servant Leadership and the Influence of Eastern Philosophy**

Western readers may begin to better understand holistic advocacy through a discussion of servant leadership. In fact, no discussion of holistic advocacy would be complete without this, as it is from the concepts of servant leadership (and the subsequent discussion of yogic philosophies) that holistic advocacy blossoms.

Robert K. Greenleaf, the father of servant leadership, wrote in 1973 that “the great leader is seen as servant first” (1973:p. 2). This concept, according to Greenleaf (1973), requires two components: firstly, that one must naturally indicate a preference to serve others, and, secondly, that one must make the deliberate choice of wishing to engage in leadership via service (p. 7). When one places a service mentality above all else, the resulting behavior is that one becomes meticulously (and naturally) concerned with the needs of others, and it is through this manifested concern that one can craft positive, meaningful interactions. In fact, according to this model Greenleaf (1973), the servant leader is always asking him or herself: “do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous...and, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will he [or she] benefit, or, at least, will he [or she] not be further deprived?” (Greenleaf, 1973: p. 7, emphases original). This passage is the ultimate test of true servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1973), and it strikes at the

very core of what holistic advocacy aims to achieve: i.e. serving others in such a way that it leads them to a freer and wiser version of themselves, while simultaneously moving an institution forward. At the very least, holistic advocacy aims to lead patrons to a more content state of being (i.e. devoid of feeling deprived). and has been described as being on “the edge of the shift in management practice from rigid and compartmentalized, to open and holistic” (Katopol, 2015: 2).

Multiple authors have noted that it is paradoxical to imply that one can be a servant and a leader simultaneously (Finley, 2012; Focht and Ponton, 2015; Russell and Stone, 2002). However, through the lens of holistic advocacy, the ability to occupy both roles at once makes sense. In this model, it is never the goal to blindly provide a service, but, rather, to impart wisdom, skill, and compassion during service so that a patron may be led to establish a particular skill or, at the very least, build a positive relationship with librarians that can be called upon time and again. This serves to establish a sense of belonging and community. Greenleaf (1973) himself writes that “just as there may be real contradiction in the servant as leader, so my perceptual world is full of contradictions...my good society will have individualism amidst community. It will have elitism with populism” (1973: p. 6). In other words, it is natural for seemingly disparate components to exist in tandem, and as such, the ability to be servant and leader is no different. Cementing the idea that two seemingly opposite terms can exist in tandem, Walter Kiechel (1995) urges professionals to “think of the two words not as an oxymoron but rather as a sort of Zen koan, a juxtaposition of apparent opposites meant to startle the seeker after wisdom into new insight” (1995: p. 122).

While Greenleaf’s concept of servant leadership was crafted to indicate how organizational leaders can best influence, motivate, and support employees, this concept does have implications for the relationship between provider and consumer. Expanding this concept to librarianship, the provider becomes the library professional and the consumer the library patron. For holistic advocacy to be achieved, librarians must first see themselves as servants to patrons, and they must also view this service as essential to leading patrons to new skills and discoveries. Patricia Katopol beautifully links the concept of servant leadership and libraries when she explains that it is “a leadership style in which the leader believes that she has a moral responsibility to those with whom she interacts, from staff, to patron, to vendors. Servant-leaders are common in religious and nonprofit organizations, which expect their leaders to be driven by

motives other than profit and power” (2015: 3). Her concept perfectly illustrates how natural the servant-leadership model ties into philosophies of librarianship. This service mentality will lead not only to enhanced perceptions of individual institutions and the profession at large, but will also contribute to the general growth of a more critically thinking, compassionately engaged society. In the end, the axis upon which servant leadership moves is based on the quality of one-on-one interactions taking place between individuals (Greenleaf, 1973; Van Dierendonck and Patterson, 2015), and this is equally important when curating holistic advocacy.

Servant leadership does not only have implications at the level of the individual; this model does not lose sight of the forest for the trees. Engaging in servant leadership will also enhance a sense of community, which creates a sense of belonging for the library patron vis-à-vis specific institutions. This helps librarians embed their institutions as third places, a concept coined by Ray Oldenburg in *The Great Good Place* (1999). Third places are marked as uniquely liminal spaces that are neither home nor work but are places where individuals can go and engage with the same group of people repeatedly (Oldenburg, 1999). Oldenburg (1999) argues that these third places foster an enhanced sense of personal and societal well-being while, at the same time, embedding a sense of belonging to one’s community. Holistic advocacy can help embed the library as a third place for patrons, enhancing the overall perception of the library as a significant community establishment.

Servant leadership also has particular implications for future library leaders. Current administrators who value the concepts of servant leadership and who are servant-leaders themselves can mold and mentor future library leaders. So, too, can instructors in library science programs. Professors who understand the implications of how servant leadership can affect libraries are critical for current library and information science (LIS) students who may not fully understand the social service nature of librarianship.

In many ways, the mindset of servant leadership is strikingly similar to holistic advocacy. A willingness to act as servant first and leader second places the quality of human interaction as tantamount, and this is the basic building block of the proposed model. Taking the concept of servant leadership and joining it with certain yogic philosophies will help finally seal a complete understanding of this new paradigm of library service. To prepare the reader for an exploration into Eastern philosophy, the concept of *seva*, which is a Sanskrit word meaning selfless service, will be introduced (Rabbitt, 2017). *Seva* occurs when one realizes the inherent



interconnectedness of humanity and asks oneself how one can most usefully give back (Rabbitt, 2017). O'Dea (2003) writes that "taking the hierarchy out of service and adding a touch of humility" helps people navigate the "sacred dance between self and others," ultimately revealing that all are part of one connected whole (2003: p. 1). This striking parallel between servant leadership and selfless service is not accidental. Greenleaf (1973) acknowledges that his development of service leadership was directly influenced by Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East*, a novel that introduces readers to Eastern philosophical concepts.

Just as the Eastern concept of *seva* can be explicitly linked to the Western concept of servant leadership, so too do the authors feel that library and information science, as a discipline and practice, can benefit from the integration of other Eastern philosophical worldviews. Shelton A. Gunaratne (2013,; 2015) argues that Eastern philosophies must be interjected into the Western scientific paradigm if a fuller, more balanced, and systems-focused knowledge of the world is to be achieved. Gunaratne (2013) criticizes the Western scientific method as having an "atomistic focus of the parts" (2013: p. 165), and he disapproves of its tendency to disregard Eastern philosophical knowledge. Ultimately, he argues, this West-centric bias serves only "to perpetuate its [own] intellectual dominance in the world" (2013: , p.169). "But the scientific method, dependent heavily on variables, has failed to capture the non-linear dimensions of society based on cultural, social (impact of families, peer groups, schools), and other differences" (2013: pp. 168-169). In other words, the reductionist tendency of the Western scientific worldview reduces complex phenomena to such a degree that it distorts contextual reality, and, as a result, cannot account for the complexity it is trying to understand (Gunaratne 2013,; 2015). On the diametrically opposite hand, Eastern philosophical systems tend to view phenomenological reality as a complex system; "systems thinking presumes that understanding the parts in relation to the whole is the best way to study the unraveling of any phenomenon" (Gunaratne 2013: , p. 167).

The complex phenomena of libraries and information services necessarily require a complex, system-focused approach to account for the multifaceted nature of advocacy. While this is a somewhat novel framework, the authors would be remiss without discussing the contributions of Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan, considered one of the seminal thinkers in library and information science. Partha Pratim Ray (2015), when analyzing Ranganathan's *Laws of Library Science*, was able to trace the ancient Indian textual and philosophical influences that

helped shape the principles that even Western library-practitioners view as canon. However, few Western authors have attempted to bridge the gap between librarianship and Eastern philosophical concepts. One such author, Louisa Toot, who has attempted this bridge, utilized “core Zen Buddhist ideas and viewpoints to discuss ways of dealing with difficult patrons” (2008: 217). The current authors chose to view library advocacy and librarian-patron interaction through the philosophical lenses of Yoga and Hinduism, and, from that, have crafted the Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy. More specifically, The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali, as translated and annotated by Sri Swami Satchidananda, was actively employed in the development of this model. Like Homer in the Western intellectual tradition, the historicity of Patañjali, Satchidananda (2013) reminds readers, is uncertain. What is certain, however, is that his work, consisting of nearly 200 sutras, is seminal in the development and expression of Yoga as both a philosophical and physical system (Bresnan, 2007, p. 82; Satchidananda, 2013). The discussion below will address the three central components of the Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy that were derived from Patañjali’s magnum opus. Specifically, the three components consist of yoga (union), karuṇā (compassion), and āsana (posture).

In those instances when Patañjali, through Satchidananda, presupposes a knowledge of the Hindu worldview, additional authors have been referenced to supplement the primary text.

### **Yoga: Professional Union**

Throughout many of his commentaries, Satchidananda (2013) informs his readers about the underlying goal proposed within Patañjali’s seminal work on yogic philosophy and praxis. This goal is summarized by a single Sanskrit word, yoga. At its most basic level, yoga can be translated as union. But union with what? The answer to this question, from the Hindu perspective, is simple: the divine cosmic energy pervading all reality (Brahman). Thus, in a sense, ultimate union implies union with the ultimate nature of reality (Bresnan, 2007, pp. 46-49, 52-54, 84; Eliade, 1990, pp. 4-5; Satchidananda, 2013).

Practitioners achieve union not through arcane, esoteric practices, but rather through engaging in successive stages of increasingly deeper levels of focus and reflection (Bresnan, 2007, pp. 83-84; Eliade, 1990, pp. 47-53; Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 29-33). These reflective stages are achieved by way of what Western readers typically refer to as meditation. There seems to be a common misconception that the goal of meditation is the wiping of all thoughts from the

practitioner's mind, but that is grossly misrepresenting the process of meditation outlined by Patañjali. In brief, engaging in the successive stages of meditation allows practitioners to more fully focus and concentrate on chosen objects of reflection without allowing subjective judgements to interfere with direct perception. According to Satchidananda (2013), this process encourages meditators to identify, analyze, and –eventually – better understand the objects of reflection.

Achieving yoga with objects via meditation encourages a greater understanding of how those objects (as parts of nature) exist and operate. In the view of yogic philosophy, this process allows those with this kind of valid knowledge to acquire some amount of control and power over the thing understood. Satchidananda (2013) avers that this power to control different objects of reality is no different from that power which is gained through scientific reasoning, and he cites the scientific exploration of the atom as an illustrative example. “[Scientists] went deeper and deeper and ultimately went into the atom itself. It’s all meditation. They’re Yogis, no doubt. They were able to plumb the secrets of the atom” (Satchidananda, 2013: pp. 67-68). Thus, by gaining deeper knowledge of how the world seems to be comprised at the level of matter, scientists have been and continue to be able to perceive and gradually increase their understanding of the universe. With this understanding, they have been able to make both beneficial and deleterious advancements for humanity. This process of using meditative analysis in order to gain union constitutes the first leg of the Triadic Model and should be applied to understand the subtler nature of librarianship and librarians’ relations to it.

The authors argue that all information professionals should strive to engage in yoga with two interconnected and mutually dependent elements. The first is their own professional Ātman, and the second is the library Brahman. The former has been adapted from the yogic concept of the true Self, which is the underlying, deepest identity and nature of the individual (Bresnan, 2007, pp. 46-49; Eliade, 1990, pp. 15-19; Satchidananda, 2013, p. 38). The latter, as stated above, has been adapted from the yogic concept referring to the underlying, divine cosmic energy pervading all reality. Since holistic advocacy attempts to advocate for the three classes of librarian, patron, and profession, librarians should engage in deep meditative analysis in order to better understand the subtler, more crucial aspects of librarianship and what it means to be librarians. The authors argue that once this level of understanding is achieved, the librarian will

gain valid knowledge and greater control over his or her profession. In the end, the professional possibilities will be legion.

For the authors, engaging in these types of reflective practices has led them to the joint conclusion that librarianship and librarians are ultimately embedded in service to others. Both have spent over a decade working in libraries (academic and public), and both have engaged in the reflective, meditative practices encouraged by Yoga. This type of reflection led to the union of the aforementioned professional Ātman and Brahman (the nature of one's identity as a librarian and the underlying nature of librarianship as a profession, respectively). In this process, each major component one typically associates with libraries and library services gave way to subtler components until an underlying nature was revealed. Neither books nor databases nor reference nor circulation nor information literacy instruction nor programming proved to be the predicating principle upon which librarianship is built. In the end, the authors identified the library Brahman as something more fundamental, information service; and the librarian Ātman, the underlying nature of librarian-as-professional, revealed itself to be nothing more than information servant. Thus, in the Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy, service to humanity is the starting point from which librarianship, regardless of its unique manifestation, arises.

The authors fear that library professionals not engaging in deeper reflection may develop certain misconceptions (avidyā) that can impact their professional experiences, enjoyment, and satisfaction. This, in turn, can directly impact user experience. While entering the library profession out of a fondness for books or out of a nostalgic twinge for libraries as physical spaces –, which the authors have often heard throughout their own careers as librarians –, has merit and validity, an inability to understand the profession at a deeper level can cause anxiety and displeasure when faced with the real-world manifestations of librarianship. Adopting this information-servant model will also help provide an antidote for professional unrest when the traditional surface-level elements of librarianship continue to evolve. One of the most important misconceptions that humans tend to hold onto the strongest is the belief that phenomenological reality is constant. This is another lesson of yogic philosophy that can aid librarians: all phenomena are impermanent and in a constant state of flux (Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 98-103). Library and information science is no different; its manifestations will continue to evolve as shifting-contexts necessitate. In fact, librarians who understand impermanence and adopt the

information-servant model will be eager to occupy the vanguard of change in order to better serve patrons and, as an extension, humanity.

The authors acknowledge that the conversation presented above may be a bit abstract for those not already versed in Yoga practices. To illustrate an immediate, practical example of how meditation practices can assist in the everyday workflows of professionals, the authors would like to introduce the work done by Richard Moniz et al. (2015), who investigated how mindfulness can impact user experience in multiple service areas. For example, “practicing mindfulness addresses one’s tendency to focus on mindlessly running through a to-do list for the day... [It] teaches an individual not to be imprisoned by such thoughts or concerns, but rather to accept them, acknowledge them, and let them go, focusing instead on the task at hand or the patron in need of immediate assistance... In order to be more approachable at the reference desk [for example], one should meditate, or at least take a few moments to breathe and reflect on...the potential needs that patrons may bring to the desk” (Moniz et al., 2015: 117). Similarly, the current authors expand these practical benefits to each point of librarian-patron contact.

### **Karuṇā: Professional Empathy**

If one had to isolate the most important leg of the Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy, it would undoubtedly be *karuṇā*, typically translated as compassion or empathy (Iyengar, 2009, p. 26). Patañjali’s thirty-third sūtra states: “By cultivating attitudes of friendliness toward the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous and disregard toward the wicked, the mind-stuff retains its undisturbed calmness” (Satchidananda, 2013, p. 51). The authors suggest that readers should work diligently to adopt this one principle into their work as librarians. In many ways, engaging in compassionate, empathetic interactions with all individuals encountered within libraries (patrons, coworkers, community partners, etc.) will not only naturally facilitate advocacy but will increase the enjoyment of interaction-based experiences for all involved. In the contexts of Yoga and other Eastern philosophical traditions – Buddhism being a prime example – compassion and empathy, as the concepts most closely linked to *karuṇā*, mean something very simple: a deep-seated, universal desire for all sentient beings to be free from suffering (Iyengar, 2009, p. 26). The yogic view of material existence posits that life carries with it an implicit suffering (*duḥkha*) at every stage, and this suffering is engendered by misconception (*avidyā*) (Eliade, 1990, pp. 11-15, 27; Satchidananda, 2013). Whether it is the

sharp, visceral pain of stubbing one's toe, the emotional aching that accompanies the death of a loved one, the ennui that plagues mid-life crises, or the pain associated with aging, no one is above suffering. Everyone has and will continue to experience it. This is a perfect opportunity for librarians to administer antidotes to help alleviate the misconceptions and suffering arising out of unmet information needs.

In the Eastern worldview, however, sentient beings do not suffer through the course of only one lifetime but, rather, over countless lifetimes. The cyclic existence of suffering that manifests in birth, death, and rebirth is collectively known as *Samsāra*, and escaping *Samsāra*, through union with the demiurge, constitutes the final goal of Yoga (Bresnan, 2007, pp. 51-52; Eliade, 1990). With this, one can begin to understand why the concept of compassion (*karuṇā*) is so fundamental to yogic philosophy. Since all sentient beings suffer, since no sentient being actively desires to suffer, and since all beings are connected through strings of interaction, it stands to reason that each should each be sympathetic to the suffering of every other being (Rabbitt, 2017; Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 104-105). This, in its truest sense, is compassion. These two aspects of compassion and empathy (*karuṇā*) are fundamental to the current model of librarian-patron interaction under discussion and, as a result, the axis upon which it moves.

While Yoga cosmology is ultimately outside the scope of this discussion, the authors have found that the concept of *Samsāra* can be adapted to help librarians better understand their responsibilities to their patrons. Let the reader now consider the role of what will likely be a familiar Sanskrit concept in this process: karma. It simply means action; any action performed by a sentient beings is karma. However, the word karma also includes the nuance of reaction and consequence to performed actions (Easwaran, 2007, pp. 91-95; Kyabgon, 2015; Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 89-91). This is not some esoteric, mystical concept. It simply means that all actions will have their corresponding consequences. To use a Western scientific paradigm, consider Isaac Newton's Third Law of Motion: "Every body is acted upon by reaction to the same extent that it acts upon another" (Cohen, 1971: , 65). Thus, karmic theory suggests that positive actions will naturally have positive reactions, and negative actions will have negative reactions. Moreover, yogic philosophy implies that the accumulation of positive and negative actions and reactions fuels *Samsāra* and directly influences the personalities and subsequent rebirths of individuals (Easwaran, 2007, pp. 91-95; Kyabgon, 2015; Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 92-93).

This should not be a philosophical stretch for Western readers; the more one acts, the more likely that actualized modes of action will come to be integrated as ingrained habits within the individual. These ingrained habits and personality traits influence the future worldviews, behaviors, and actions of the individual and constitute the sum total of the person (Easwaran, 2007, pp. 81-86; Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 88-89). Yoga refers to these as *saṃskāra* (not to be confused with *Saṃsāra*). To make this a little more clear, Easwaran (2007: 84-86) uses the mental habits (*saṃskāra*) associated with coffee as an illustrative example. If one smells an aroma and then identifies said aroma as freshly brewed coffee, all of the habitual ways of thinking about and understanding coffee will quickly flood his or her mind. If past conditioning suggests to the individual that he or she loves the taste of coffee, then this conditioning will be more likely to influence the future action of obtaining a cup of steamy hot java to further please the palate. If, on the diametrically opposite hand, the habitual way of thinking about coffee engenders distaste and aversion, then the individual is more likely to run screaming from the malodorous assault on the senses. Either way, the resulting karma of action will only go to strengthen the *saṃskāra* associated with coffee, which are then used by these hypothetical individuals to identify an aspect of their respective personalities: coffee-drinker vs. non coffee-drinker (pp. 84-86). Thus, in this view, the human personality consists of a nexus of past and present actions that have solidified into habitual mental tendencies. The important point to remember for the forthcoming discussion concerning library-patron interactions will be that since these *saṃskāra* are nothing more than mental habits influenced by actions and consequences, they can be broken down and rebuilt.

Patient readers are probably asking: How does all of this relate to library and information science? The answer resides in the fact that the Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy views librarian-patron interaction as a microcosmic analogy of this macrocosmic worldview. Library *Saṃsāra*, then, implies that individuals are cyclically reborn as patrons with each successive visit to the library. The same holds true for librarians. Based on the previous discussion of karma and *saṃskāra*, with each successive visit, the patron and librarian bring with them the sum-total of all their past experiences and knowledge, effectively bringing with them semi pre-programmed personality traits associated with being a patron or librarian. This can have positive and negative connotations. Each type of action and consequential reaction (i.e. negative, positive, or neutral) will form a feedback loop that will directly influence the character and personality of each

subsequent birth within Library Saṃsāra. To give real-world examples, the more negative a library patron's actions, and the more negative the resulting consequences, the more likely that said patron will develop a library-based saṃskāra that is also negative. On the diametrically opposite hand, the more positive a patron's actions and resulting reactions, the more likely that his or her library saṃskāra will be positive. One will identify as non-library-user, the other as library-user. In the case of the former, negative mental habits vis-à-vis libraries and librarians will directly influence future decisions to employ consult librarians and their services when information needs arise. The opposite can be said of the latter.

These habitual mental tendencies that go into forming the underlying characteristics of patrons play the exact same role for librarians. The more that negative actions are committed by librarians within libraries, and the more negative the consequences that are reaped, the more likely negative, unhealthy professional characteristics will develop. Thus, understanding interaction as components of both action and reaction, in addition to seeing how habitual actions and consequences go into influencing one's worldview, the authors now transition into the fourth and most important component of this section: the role of karuṇā within Library Saṃsāra. Readers will remember from a previous discussion that misconception (avidyā) is the root cause of suffering (duḥkha). Due to this, librarians should earnestly seek to reduce the suffering of both themselves as professional incarnations and of individuals who manifest as library patrons. If no sentient being actively desires to suffer, why then should librarians contribute to any being's suffering? Based on the cause-and-effect nature of karma, contributing to patrons' suffering will only contribute to librarians' own suffering. When karuṇā for patrons develops as a conscious professional practice, librarians will actively help to reduce their own suffering and dissatisfaction and the suffering and dissatisfaction of their patrons. This compassion-focused approach will also help librarians change any negative saṃskāra that may have developed during individuals' previous incarnations as patrons, which can lead to people shifting their identities from non-library-user to library-user (remember, this worldview posits that the process of identity formation is fluid and dependent on contextual experience and, therefore, is not fixed). This positive type of interaction with positive consequences will strengthen the feedback loop for professionals and library users who will continue to benefit from this altruistic worldview in two intersecting ways. Firstly, it will encourage library patrons to feel as though they are respected and valued as fully enfranchised human beings. This will lead to more positive rebirths in



Library Samsāra, and the resulting positive saṃskāra will remain with patrons as they leave the library and are reborn into their other roles within society. Through their outside interactions, they become the profession's most valuable advocates. Secondly, it will do the same for librarians, thereby making the day-to-day professional incarnation both a happy and truly fulfilled one.

### **Āsana: Professional Posture**

And now the authors come to the final leg of the Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy: āsana, or posture. This will be the element most people think of when hearing the word Yoga, and all kinds of physical exercises with amazingly creative names and complicated contortions can be conjured: Downward Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Śvānāsana), Corpse Pose (Śavāsana), King Pigeon Pose (Rājikapotāsana), and many, many others. Undoubtedly, as Satchidananda (2013) and Bresnan (2007) agree, these mental images of poses have led to the common misconception that Yoga is merely a physical exercise system, effectively devoid of the deeper, more holistic philosophical elements addressed above. However, the āsanās and the physical health resulting from engaging with them are a means to an end – neither constitutes the final goal of this system of practice, which is yoga (union) with the demiurge by way of self-reflection and understanding. Complete union results in escaping the cyclic existence of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth (Samsāra). All aspects of Yoga, as a system, work in tandem to assist the practitioner in the realization of this final goal. This includes the āsanās (Satchidananda, 2013).

In addition to having physical benefits, which inevitably contribute to mental clarity and a greater quality of life, the poses of Yoga assist practitioners in several related ways. Firstly, they are used to focus the mind of the practitioner (Coulter, 2001, pp. 17-20; Iyengar, 2009, pp. 40-43). In the daily flow of life, people tend to live inside of their own heads, fruitlessly chasing one thought after another in an endless rhythm of mental distractions. Engaging in an āsana, however, pushes the body into less familiar physical territory and, as a result, helps the practitioner descend from the mental ether to be more fully present in the sensations of the body. This linking of the mental and physical faculties fosters an awareness, a calmness, and a sense of peace that is often lacking when one spends a prolonged amount of time living in head-space.

Secondly, and pertinent to a previous discussion, practicing the āsanās helps participants foster and increase their compassion (karuṇā) for both the individual self and others by reducing

the amount of judgements allowed to be made (Iyengar, 2009, pp. 26, 42). This has certainly been the case for the current authors. Even for the most advanced yogi and yogini, there will be certain poses that push practitioners beyond the brink of their physical capabilities. Students of Yoga are often taught in these moments to be present and aware of the body and its limitations; to refrain from self-criticism and judgement for not having a perfect, seamless mastery of the āsana; to engage in self-love and compassion so that over-effort does not lead to injury (Coulter, 2001, p. 19); and to strive for patience as time and consistent effort conspire to render the pose effortless (Coulter, 2001, p. 20). By engaging in these lessons with the self, the sphere of compassion and love continues to expand to embrace others.

Lastly, as Satchidananda (2013) highlights, the Yoga āsanās teach suppleness and flexibility (pp. 142-144). However, this is not a teaching learned by the body, alone, but is also applicable to the psychosocial development of individuals. In some forms of Yoga (e.g. Vinyāsa), āsanās are not practiced in complete isolation of one another, but, rather, the practitioner strives to effortlessly flow from one pose to another, all while linking specific breathing patterns (prāṇāyāma) to specific movements (Coulter, 2001, pp. 18; Eliade, 1990, pp. 53-73; Iyengar, 2009, pp. 43-46). When coupled with the philosophical underpinnings of Yoga, the need for physical, mental, psychological, and social flexibility emerges. Due to the nature of Saṃsāra, all phenomena exist in a constant state of impermanence and flux (Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 98-103). The illusion of fixity encourages rigidity within the individual, and when that illusion is shattered (as it must always be), the individual unable to adapt will suffer (Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 111-112). Yoga, however, teaches people to flow, to adapt, to be flexible in the face of change and uncertainty (Satchidananda, 2013, pp. 142-144). Acknowledging another Eastern philosophical system, Daoism, the need for flexibility and adaptability is expertly and poetically described by Laozi in his seminal work, *Dao De Jing*, thusly: “A tree that is unbending is easily broken” (Feng and English, 1991).

The relevance of this discussion to librarians and other information professionals has prompted the authors to liken the series of events comprising different library-patron interactions to a series of Yoga āsanās that flow from one pose into another. The specific poses and routines employed by librarians will differ based on context. For example, if a practitioner of Yoga wants to relieve tightness in the lower back, he or she will have to employ an appropriate pose. Similarly, the needs of patrons at circulation will be different from those at reference, and the

instruction needs of university freshmen will be significantly different from middle-aged digital immigrants. Thus, the Librarian Scans Book pose will not look like the Reference-Facing Librarian pose, and neither of these will be remotely similar to the Librarian Catches Patron Watching Porn pose (a favorite of public librarians). However, the ability to effortlessly flow from one into another, while also being able to learn from the lessons of suppleness and adaptability, is central to the Librarian Āsana concept.

The first lesson is that successful and enjoyable librarian-patron interaction – resulting in enhanced user experience for the latter – is dependent upon being fully immersed in the present moment of the experience. By linking one’s physical and mental faculties into a single moment of awareness, librarians will be fully present in their interactions with patrons. Being present with undivided attention will not only assist librarians in fully grasping and responding to the unique needs and nuances of patrons, but it will also demonstrate to patrons that both they – as individuals – and their needs are respected and valued. Further, even if a particular library or librarian is unable to fulfill a patron’s specific need, this type of embedded awareness conveys that the need was understood and taken seriously, and that the person was seen as a valued individual worthy of attention and consideration.

The second lesson of Yoga āsanās that can inspire librarian-patron interactions is the active practice of non-judgement and compassion (*karuṇā*), which was more thoroughly discussed in the second leg of the Triadic Model. However, to briefly recap, compassionate actions result in better karma for the actor and less suffering for both the actor and actee. Similarly, patrons and their accompanying needs should be met with a decisive attitude of non-judgement. Librarians can never fully understand the natures and motivations of the specific information needs of their patrons, and in the light of intellectual freedom, information professionals should work diligently to refrain from snap-judgements. Moreover, the librarian, as a helpful exercise, should also reflect deeply on the many times he or she had specific needs that required the assistance of a professional third party. That feeling can be one of embarrassment and powerlessness, and just as the yoga practitioner should not judge those in poses around him or her, the librarian should strive to respond to patrons with an eye towards empathetic understanding, compassionate interaction, and mutual respect.

The final lesson librarians can glean from the poses of Yoga is that success depends on one’s ability to be flexible and adaptable. Library interactions cannot be ideally packaged into a

single, one-size-fits-all framework because of the one element that often brings structure crashing down around librarians: the brutal yet beautiful unpredictability of human interaction. In other words, things do not usually go according to plan, and librarians capable of adapting their techniques, positions, tactics, and assumptions will be better equipped to more fully assist the unpredictability of human information needs.

An excellent argument highlighting the need for flexibility in library settings was made by Emily Drabinski (2014), and though her argument focuses on instruction within library classrooms, its implications are both pertinent and applicable to this discussion. Drabinski (2014) argues that, in terms of information literacy instruction, reliance on overarching standards is actually an obstacle to student learning. Why? “Because Standards [sic] are abstract and posited as universal [and fixed], they fail to account for the local and contextual nature of teaching and learning” (Drabinski, 2014: p. 480). As an alternative to standards, Drabinski (2014) employs the *kairos* model, which is an ancient Greek concept that “measures both time and its context, allowing us to understand the present as sociohistorically informed” (2014:p. 481). In this view, instruction librarians cannot teach to a set of standards because doing so ignores the natural fluidity of human interaction within the classroom. Not every class will be the same, nor will every student; and in light of this fact, the most effective teaching can only be done within the contextually defined moment. To accomplish this, Drabinski (2014) urges instructors to “privilege flexibility and sensitivity to the particular context in which instruction takes place” (2014: p. 484).

The current authors argue that the same critique offered by Drabinski (2014) against fixity within the library classroom necessarily applies to other instances of human interaction within other library settings. Paradigms of library service that do not account for the natural, organic flow of human interaction – one need only think of the traditional reference interview – run the risk of reducing interactions to mechanical absurdity. The ability to understand and adapt to the contextually dependent moment, however, will encourage librarians to empower both themselves and their patrons, and it will allow the former to address more fully the needs of the latter. Just as Yoga practitioners learn to be flexible in both mind and body, and just as they strive to seamlessly flow from one *āsana* to another, so too can librarians perfect their own poses that maximize their own professional potential.

### **Conclusion: Developing a Librarian Sādhana**

After this discussion, it should be clear that The Triadic Model of Holistic Advocacy is an intentional integration of Eastern and Western worldviews from the perspective of library and information science. More specifically, it focuses on the role advocacy plays in advancing individual, institutional, and professional growth. In this light, it differs from traditional notions of advocacy ensconced in marketing that only seem to affect individual institutions and which often have set beginnings and determined endings. Holistic advocacy, however, relies on an embedded institutional ethos that plays itself out in the daily interactions of all library professionals and their patron counterparts. Like Saṃsāra, it is a continuous cycle of advocacy that has no pre-determined beginning or ending. By having a deeper understanding of librarianship as a servant-oriented profession (yoga), by engaging in compassionate and empathetic interaction with all who enter the library (karuṇā), and by assuming a contextually flexible posture with every patron (āśana), librarians not only become advocates in those moments but create advocates out of patrons by fostering enhanced user experiences. In response to positive, meaningful interactions, these advocate-patrons will continue to advance the causes of individual institutions and the profession at large. Furthermore, because these interactions may often contain pedagogical elements, librarians advocate for the growth of a more compassionate, critically thinking and democratic society.

For readers interested in integrating the Triadic Model into their daily professional practices, the authors recommend adopting a Librarian Sādhana (professional practice). The authors believe the following three exercises will help establish a commitment to the tenets of holistic advocacy:

- Introduce some form of mindfulness meditation into the daily routine. Mindfulness practices have been shown to increase empathy (Chanler, 2017; Danucalov et al., 2017; Koszycki et al., 2016; Laneri et al., 2017; Leppma and Young, 2014), enhance focus and concentration (Basso et al., 2018; Zanesco et al., 2016), reduce stress and anxiety (Barrett, 2017; Basso et al., 2018; Millegan et al., 2015; Victorson et al., 2017; Waelde et al., 2017), foster creativity (Muller, Gerasimova, and Ritter, 2016) and mitigate burnout (Bostock et al., 2018; Charoensukmongkol, 2013; Heeter et al., 2017; Schnaider-Levi et al., 2017). It can be viewed as a powerful tool that can enhance any librarian's professional toolkit.

- Employ a visualization technique that encourages empathy and kindness. In this practice, every patron who enters the library is visualized as a significant loved one in the librarian's life (e.g. a parent, sibling, partner, or close friend). This exercise arises out of the common Tibetan practice promoted by H.H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (2003: 150-156) to visualize all sentient beings as one's mother and then to actively try to repay maternal kindnesses (pp. 150-156).
- Dedicate one's professional actions to some higher principle of one's choosing. Whether it be to library patrons, specifically, to humanity in general, or to fulfilling democratic ideas, librarians should actively seek to understand how their efforts benefit more than just themselves. As Satchidananda (2013) writes, "let us all dedicate our lives for the sake of the entire humanity. With every minute, every breath, every atom of our bodies we should repeat this mantra: 'dedication, dedication, giving, giving, loving, loving.' That is...the best Yoga which will bring us all permanent peace and joy and keep the mind free from...disturbances" (2013: p. 79).

The authors suggest constructing a Librarian Sādhanā consisting of these practices – or ones similar to them – in order to bring the concepts of holistic advocacy to life. For example, though outside of the scope of this particular article, librarians interested in learning more about how Yoga can influence professional practices may wish to consider Patañjali's exegesis on the ethical components of Yoga: Yama and Niyama (Satchidananda, 2013). In other words, Regardless of one's level of yogic involvement, understanding the philosophy espoused herein is a necessary first step, but and library professionals will not see the impact unless when they actively engage in manifesting these principles.

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