

**George Needham and Joan Frye Williams**

**This is what we believe...**

**G: I believe that libraries**

- Are part of the weave of every community: college campus, political subdivision, school district, or office. Pull that thread out and the community begins to unravel.
- Exist for communities, not for collections.

**J: I believe that libraries are important because community is important.**

- People are hard-wired to be social creatures, and that's a good thing.
- People are inherently complex, fascinating, and outrageously funny, and appreciating them in their delightful variety can be life-affirming.
- You're never completely alone if you have books/DVDs/music/Internet - or whatever medium allows you to think with somebody else's brain – to connect you with the rest of humanity.
- Sharing stories – in any medium – builds community.
- Libraries help people discover and engage with each other in a sustained, constructive way. They enhance our experience of community.

**G: I believe that libraries**

- Provide a respite from a world of unyielding commercialism.
- Protect both the spirit and the practice of independent inquiry in a free society, and that the rights of the communities to pursue that free inquiry with respect and in privacy should never be abridged.

**J: I believe that libraries are important because ideas are important.**

- No matter what else is going on, ideas can set you free, keep you sane, maybe even save your life.
- The ability to consider and express a wide range of different ideas is one of the surest signs of a free society.
- Great ideas come from everyone and everywhere.
- Even “bad” ideas are worth preserving because they can shed light on other ideas. Or maybe they're just ahead of their time.

- Ultimately, ideas will out – despite any efforts to suppress them. Over the long haul, ideas are mightier than the sword.
- Libraries help people freely develop, nurture, exchange, and preserve ideas. They increase our intellectual capital.

**I believe that libraries are important because thinking is important.**

- People who develop their mental capacity have a better chance of living a safe, productive, and happy life. And their success benefits us all.
- Keeping your brain in shape is just as important as keeping your body healthy.
- Mental achievement is as exciting as physical or financial achievement.
- Reading is one of life's great pleasures, and the gift of reading is a precious gift indeed.
- Words matter – using words well is an extraordinarily useful skill.
- Learning is seldom linear – it is serendipitous, iterative, inefficient, playful.
- Libraries help people get – and stay – smarter. They celebrate the life of the mind.

**G: I believe that libraries**

- Have lived throughout history in a world of information scarcity, and now must learn how to function and thrive in a world of information abundance.
- Exist in a multi-faceted, complex world where simple equations of “either-or” and “this, but not that” no longer apply.

**I believe that librarians**

- Are the only people who can make a difference in the future of the library or of the profession.
- Have proven remarkable adaptability in the past, and that we can do it again in the future.
- Have a responsibility to transfer knowledge frequently and respectfully within the profession. This means mentoring by veteran practitioners and up-training by newer members of the profession. It also means the synthesis of youthful enthusiasm and hard-won experience into a rebirth of the concept of the profession.
- Must also turn outward for inspiration, to gain infusions of excitement and insight from the broader worlds we serve.

**J: I believe that librarians**

- Do well to cultivate our innate curiosity. We benefit when we listen to and learn from other people, especially people who aren't just like us.
- Are responsible for the consequences of our professional choices – including when the choice is to take no action, and even when the consequences are unintended.
- Need to be steadfast in support of our principles, and flexible in pursuit of new techniques for implementing those principles.

**G: I believe that to thrive in the future, libraries and librarians must**

- Understand our value proposition. What do we bring to our communities that no one else does? Is this valuable to our communities?
- Understand how the roles have changed (reference service, AV).
- Understand how the rules have changed (privacy, open source).
- Embrace the stereotype. Books are our brand. Reading, and by extension learning, is our most important product. Secular transformation is the outcome. But entertainment is OK, too.
- Avoid confusing the community with extraneous details or symbols.
- Avoid antagonizing the community with rules that are a holdover from the age of scarcity.
- Talk to non-librarians in words that are meaningful to them, not us.
- Develop meaningful ways to measure and describe the work we do.
- Build teams that look like our communities.
- Continue to provide the respite from commercialism, while understanding that adopting a sanctimonious avoidance of the commercial world is not in the best long term interest of the institution, either.

**I believe this can be accomplished when we**

- Realize that the time to act is now, not after the strategic planning retreat, not after Google announces its next big idea, not after the budget process is complete...NOW.
- Embrace marketing, not as advertising or public relations, but as the means for developing bone-deep understanding of our communities and our environment.

**J: I believe that**

- We need to be community specialists, not just subject specialists. Human behavior over time reveals patterns, and those patterns can and should inform our work.
- It's OK for the individuals and communities we serve to want what they want, and it's not our job to bring them around to our point of view.
- Our most important product is the user experience, and that we are most effective when we support and facilitate – rather than control and deliver – that experience.
- We should pay attention and notice when things change. It's healthy to make adjustments based on new data – and possibly fatal not to.

**G: I believe that we will be most successful if we**

- Recognize that professionalism mandates two types of service, micro (to the individual users, to the attendees at story hour, to the faculty) and macro (to the community, to the profession).
- Jettison the things that don't work or aren't necessary --- to the user and the community, not to the librarian --- anymore.
- Take a hard, unsentimental look at the totality of our work and dump the 70% or 80% that is redundant or unnecessary, and focus the scarce resources on the 20% or 30% of our work that only we can bring to our communities.
- Sacrifice perfectionism on the altar of utilitarianism and service.

**J:** And even if you don't believe in karma, we both believe that...

**Both:** You might as well be a mensch!

**G:** We both believe that, if we're not having fun, we need to make it fun.

**J:** And we believe that we should invest ourselves wholeheartedly in our work

**G:** And never be embarrassed to show our passion for libraries and librarianship.

**Both:** This is work worth doing.

*Build on the past  
Understand the present  
Embrace the future*