

## PREFACE

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I've always had a hard time figuring out the purpose of a preface. If it's important stuff, why isn't it just chapter 1? Well, here's where I ended up on the topic and why you are now reading a preface. It is not about the content itself; it is more about the author's intent and frame of mind. Ironically, it is written last and, although a bit self-indulgent, gives me a chance to reflect on the whole process.

The first thing I'd like to make clear before you read this is that I do not claim that everything in here has sprung like Athena from my head. There are some old ideas in here. In some cases, they are brilliant and radical ideas that have either become lost or so widely adopted that we have forgotten they were once radical.

There are also some current ideas culled from dedicated practitioners from around the globe. It may not seem like a large chunk of text is an interactive process (it is not—as I hammer on over and over again—it is an artifact), but the thinking behind the Atlas was very interactive. From the initial forums set up to comment on the first drafts of a white paper in 2006, to the hours of sometimes heated debate in an office, an airport, a conference center, or over good food in good cities, the Atlas may be my words, but it is the thoughts and experiences of hundreds.

This leads me to a personal note. The writing of the Atlas and the years of work that it took to develop these ideas have renewed my faith in librarianship. It is easy, in the daily grind, to see the worst of our profession. Often I am invited in to help fix outdated practices and ideas. It seems like conferences are just as much an opportunity to bemoan what is not happening as to learn about what is possible. What I have come to understand is that the complaints about the recalcitrant old school librarians that don't "get it" have, in fact, increased because there are more folks who do "get it" to complain.

It's like that scene in the West Wing when a liberal staffer is complaining about the National Rifle Association (NRA) and a conservative Republican points out that if everyone who wanted to ban assault rifles simply joined the NRA, they could vote the organization out of

existence. In other words, if people like me would simply stop yelling about the laggards and look around the room at everyone else who is complaining, we might realize that there are fewer and fewer folks left to complain about.

One last note; a plea really. This book is all about conversations. The Atlas is my latest contribution to that conversation, and it is really an invitation for you to join in. What do you agree with? What do you disagree with? What is offensive or supportive? What did I miss? What should I know? What do we need to change? Let's talk.