



GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the IT Section SC meeting *How a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future*

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16 May – 16 June, 2017

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Introduction

On 16 May 2017, IT SC members (and some nominees with known email addresses) were invited to respond to the IFLA Global Vision discussion document. A Google Sheet was compiled to rank the responses (Appendix A), and an online meeting was held on 16 June.

Together we represent 157 years of library experience. The composition of the group who responded to the discussion document:

1. Edmund Balnaves	Australia	Private enterprise
2. Almudena Caballos Villar	Spain	Academic
3. May Chang	USA	Academic
4. Maria Kadesjö	Sweden	National
5. Wouter Klapwijk	South Africa	Academic
6. Lynn Kleinveldt	South Africa	Academic
7. Nthabiseng Kotsokoane	South Africa	Academic
8. Jie Li	USA	Academic
9. Peter Lienen	Germany	National
10. Youssef Salah	Egypt	National
11. Shawky Salem	Egypt	Academic
12. Lars Svensson	Norway	National
13. Kazuo Takehana	Japan	National
14. Alvaro Sandoval	Chile	National
15. Joan Wee	Singapore	Academic
16. Evviva Weinraub	USA	Academic

A vision for libraries

Libraries enable literate, informed and participative societies. When we look at the future, according to our online debate/discussion, this means that:

- *“Libraries can inform across a range of different sources in order to best benefit the information needs of the client. They can also assist the client in analysing, detailing and resolving their information needs. They can manage and build a collection of resources to meet the current and future information needs of their clients/organisation.”* (EB)
- *“Libraries connect users and information, and leverage information technology to do it more effectively and efficiently. To realize this, librarians have common shared professional values (irrespective of library type, size, or location) that embraces open access for an informed citizenry.”* (MC)
- *“For me, the National library in Sweden and many of the Swedish Libraries the question of untampered information, that the libraries should be the source of factual information is very important. That has also been the goal for the National library for many years. For the public libraries, the question of access to everyone, free of charge is also high up on the agenda. Especially since we in Sweden have welcomed many (but still too few) fleeing from war to our country in the past two years. Sharing and exchanging information is also important and an opportunity for libraries. So, I think that the sample response (in the IFLA GV document) is good!”* (MK)

- *“Libraries continually evolve to remain leading citizens in society, thereby providing individuals the digital literacies to live, learn and work in an informed and participative way in digital societies.” (WK)*
- *“Libraries are now more than ever the 24/7 one-stop shop. Therefore librarians need to continue being the learning agents in the game, and lead in supporting users. Be open to welcoming young library professionals for the future success of libraries.” (LK)*
- *“There is a need for untampered information and places where this information can be accessed and processed. The user groups (sc. patrons) with those needs are very diverse, so libraries of all kinds work together in order to serve all patrons equally well according to their needs.” (LS)*
- *“Libraries contribute to the development, management, and preservation of knowledge; provide excellent services, tools, and resources for learning and research; teach our user community how to locate and evaluate information; and support life-long learning.” (EW)*

The core values of libraries (Q4):

[LIST ANSWERS Q4: Remove text in italics]

1. Information services for society and access to that information that is available to everyone. Everyone is welcome.
2. A record of human progress collected and stored providing preservation and dissemination of knowledge.
3. Center of community and resource sharing valuing the diversity of thoughts, resources, services, and the communities we serve. Resource of credible and reliable information. Knowledge management and informatics.
4. Lifelong learning. Educating the community. Information training, literacy and awareness. Support teaching and learning; research; community engagement.
5. Objective and fact driven.

Comments:

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

[LIST ANSWERS Q5: Remove text in italics]

1. Providing and making information discoverable and accessible to general public. Organization and management of information. Information access, management and dissemination. Deconstruct and construct information. Giving value to online information. Being the source of reliable information.
2. Functioning as community hubs and information centers, both online and offline. Breaking down all cultural boundaries. Building communities and creating community sense. Collaboration.
3. Supporting scholarly communications and research. Coexisting with education and development. Information literacy training. Talking to our users about their needs.
4. Embracing emerging and cutting edge technologies and technology innovation.
5. Doing more with less (due to factors such as budget cuts and increased demands).

Comments:

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

[LIST ANSWERS Q6: Remove text in italics]

1. Information technology awareness. Collaborative projects that leverage the power of technology. Use their ICT infrastructure to ensure that important library information is well indexed by major search engines. Develop ITC common tools. Improve skills in technology. Helping with innovation. Experimentation and permission to fail. Technological innovations & initiatives (e.g. eBooks).
2. Cooperate with local authorities, national and international standards bodies in order to increase interoperability of their information systems. Cooperation with developing countries providing more information to low-information population via online & off line services. Work as a group to ensure equity in access to information.
3. User needs assessment/profiling. Embedding their services fully in the researcher and student workflow. Focus more on the needs of the researchers. Support research communities like the Digital Humanities with specific services and should go into deep cooperation's with these communities.
4. Helping people use information more effectively by instructing how to use information and teach literacy and information retrieval skills. Expanding opportunities for information sharing, with e-learning and social networking tools. Fight against the limits to access to the scientific production. Inspiring users to find and use information responsibly and correctly. User education especially public libraries. Work for open access and open licensing.
5. Promoting library use by highlight success stories where the library had an impact, marketing and branding. Cultivating communities with arts. Being more visible, attractive and open. Creating inclusive spaces for open, frank, and thoughtful conversation. Be an open space where people can meet.

Comments:

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

[LIST ANSWERS Q7: Remove text in italics]

1. Taking on too many projects at the same time, not unless there is enough manpower to carry out activities over and above the normal duties. Trying to do more with less – we have a “yes AND” problem. Increasing workloads to keep up with trends.
2. Limiting to one or two types of media, such as printed books/ materials and focusing on usual library materials (printed books). Over stacking of non-enjoyable and non-useful books. Physical collections. Books. Relying only on books. Only care for printed books.
3. The same thing many times (cataloguing and not sharing metadata). Working in silos.
4. Support the large information suppliers (Elsevier) by paying huge amounts for access to information.
5. Lying to ourselves that we are protecting privacy – with our focus on metrics, we really aren't. Speaking about ourselves. Complaining.

Comments:

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

[LIST ANSWERS Q8: Remove text in italics]

1. Economic criteria. Financial inequity. Growing inequality in access to wealth/information. High unemployment rates.
 2. Demographic shift. Population growth. Serving people with different cultural and language background. Providing literacy & education to diverse communities with different interests and needs. Digital natives.
 3. Regime change. War/conflict. War, social inequity and oppressive government causing dislocation and migration.
 4. Infrastructure. Bandwidth, connectivity.
 5. Free access to public information.
-

Comments:

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

[LIST ANSWERS Q9: Remove text in italics]

1. Perception of no need for libraries in the electronic database age and changing the narrative around “everything is available online”. Commercial competition for information access and delivery services (e.g. Google, Amazon, etc.). Changes in modes of access to information that sideline libraries.
 2. Budget cuts. Lack of investments and projects. Meeting clients’ requests for content while facing financial constraints. Lack of funding.
 3. The disappearance of library’s values and its benefit to the community. Public perceptions about value of libraries and librarians. Recover its image as the center of a community and culture events. Being more visible to the university community – remains confusion about the role of the academic library.
 4. Impact of information technology. Changes in technology. (Upskilling of staff).
 5. Conveying the value of librarians to researchers & engaging students. Staying ahead of research trends. Getting young people interested in the profession. Unqualified staff in some countries.
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Comments:

The main professional challenges (Q10):

[LIST ANSWERS Q10: Remove text in italics]

1. Transition to digital content with the attempt of preserving data. Keeping up with technology and follow up to date ICT related to libraries. Balancing technology innovation with providing basic services. Greater information technology awareness in the profession.
2. Articulating and advocating for the relevancy of libraries (and understanding how to perform advocacy). Political interference and regulation of library schools.
3. Understanding that our profession is more about project management and relationships than about books and periodicals. Believe in our role in society. Ever changing job role with the idea that we can do more with less.
4. Re-aligning services to changing expectations and users. Be more visible and useful to society demands. Keep in touch with young users.
5. Lack of recognition for the LIS profession. Redefining the core set of principles that represent the library professional.

Comments:

How a united library field can make a difference

How should a united library field help meet the challenges identified (Q11)?

[LIST ANSWERS Q11: Remove text in italics]

1. Collaboration between libraries and all stakeholders towards creating an inclusive information society. Supporting and forming consortiums. Collaborating. Networking. Collaborating across boundaries. Sharing ideas and knowledge. Mutual support. Sharing experience and knowledge.
2. Promote professional education programs for existing staff to sustain proficiency in a rapidly changing environment. Introduce programs to facilitate the reconfiguration of staff to integrate the skills of librarians with the needed skills from related professions. Professional development – eg through sector-based programmes for best practice in their field.
3. Work on creating a network for sharing and preserving cultural heritage both physical and digital that transcends national borders. Support group for learning and getting the library community up to speed.
4. Provide a strong aggregate view to maintain access to information in a context where publishers and owners of information are increasing pressure in every way to limit access to information based on ability to pay. Setting up access to content for easier use. Linked data.
5. Standardized services or at least minimum standards.

Comments:

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

[LIST ANSWERS Q12: Remove text in italics]

1. Collaboration among libraries both within and beyond the different library types. Visible collaborative efforts in state, national or wider level. Strong synergy between and within all types of libraries. Stronger voice in a context of reducing strength of libraries individually.
2. Agreeing on a set of core values, well set and defined library standards, while being respectful of cultural issues whether collections based or community based.
3. Use of information communication technology to find ways of sharing our stories with a larger community – whether through social media, or more concerted efforts with traditional media like press releases, etc. Use the same tools as our users.
4. Having outreach, literacy, & library exchange programs. Good services to the patrons. Young people are a target audience. Communication. Think like the user.
5. Stronger voice in the context of reducing strength of libraries individually. Sound advocacy skills.

Comments:

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

[LIST ANSWERS Q13: Remove text in italics]

1. Making visible efforts to join forces, collaborate, network and cooperate together to share experiences, knowledge and metadata.
2. International voice and recognition. Advocacy, especially for information access and information equity.
3. Open access and openly sharing information and knowledge giving easy access to information for everyone.
4. Inclusivity. Respect. Reflect important democratic values.
5. Archiving and preserving historic artifacts and digital history projects.

Comments:
