![IFLA logo]

GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the Literacy and Reading Section Committee Meeting
How a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future

This report was prepared following a questionnaire to the Literacy and Reading Committee via Survey Monkey. This was followed by an online meeting on Friday 30th June via Zoom. The draft report was then circulated for comment to the LiR committee.
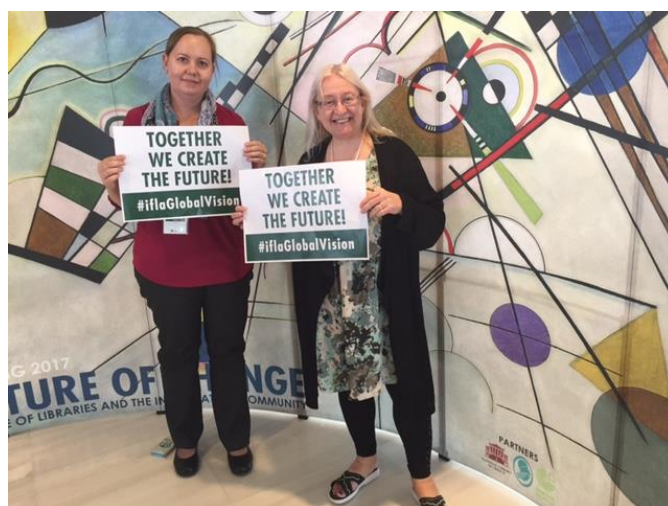
Annie Everall, IFLA Chair of Literacy and Reading Section and Atlanta Meyer, new committee member of the LiR Section at the Global Visioning workshop in Athens

Contributors

This report is created by:

Annie Everall

Atlanta Meyer

Literacy and Reading Committee member participants are highlighted with *

Heidi Best *

Rashidah Bolhassan

Jimmy Borgella

Barbara Combes *

John Cole (Corresponding Member)

Elena Corradini

Cecile Coulibaly

Maria Ehrenberg

Annie Everall *

Lesley Farmer (Corresponding Member) *

John Oliver Gonzales

Sarah Harper *

Allison G Kaplan *

Linda Koo Seen

Elena Kolosova

Lianne Knobel *

Lisa Krolak *

Mireille Lamouroux

Adriaan Langedonk *

Seong Deok Lee

Ruben F Martinez

Yulia Melentyeva

Atlanta Meyer *

Linn T Sunne *

Maureen White

Sylvia Vardell *

Linda Willander *

Weesook Yeo *

Index

Introduction

On Friday 30th June 2017 seven members of the IFLA Literacy and Reading Section Committee participated in an online Zoom conversation about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. Prior to this a Survey Monkey with the questions had been circulated to all members of the committee. 6 committee members responded and the Zoom meeting was held to agree a final response in terms of priorities. This was then shared again with all members of the Literacy and Reading committee and they were given a final opportunity to contribute and a further five committee members sent in additional comments or agreement of the document

Together those who participated in the preparation of this report represent **323** years of library experience.

Participants from the Literacy and Reading Section Committee represent the following library types and have worked in the following sectors during their careers: Public Libraries (children's and young people's services, adult services and library development services); School Libraries; College Libraries; University Libraries; Universities (as Library Educators, Professors or Programme Co-ordinators); National Libraries; Academic Libraries, Government Libraries; NGO's; UNESCO; Education Department; National Author Agency; National Reading Foundation; Bookselling and Publishing Industry.

The opportunity to prepare this report and participate in the IFLA Global Vision initiative has given rise to some interesting and thoughtful discussion and observations which I am sure will continue. I hope that those committee members who were unable to contribute or participate at this stage will do so in Poland at Congress.

A vision for libraries

Libraries enable literate, informed and participative societies. They already form an extensive information and community network that is global in its extent and predicated on a philosophy of equity and sharing, supporting the UN 2030 Agenda's vision of information access and equity for all peoples. It is this global network that positions libraries as an excellent starting point for the global vision enshrined in the UN 2030 Agenda. Libraries also hold a wealth of resources and provide community spaces for people of all walks of life to have access to human expertise and digital tools to enable the development of universal literacy and access to information. They are also cultural hubs and repositories of cultural treasures.

When we look at the future, according to the discussion within the Literacy & Reading Section committee, by the year 2022, this would mean that :

• Libraries have survived and are adequately funded and professionally staffed.

• We have made excellent progress towards meeting the UN 2030 agenda particularly around global literacy.

• We have a much stronger global network of library organisations and libraries, interconnected, working together, sharing resources and expertise, etc.

• We have a strong advocacy programme which we are delivering with one unified voice and its messages about the role and value of libraries and librarians and what they offer are clear – that

libraries are fundamental community hubs and a global resource, as provider of activities and space with professional staff who have knowledge, expertise and specialist skills. This message is being given to governments, politicians, partners and communities.

- We have seen a digital transformation and better integration of digital services to provide library services for a 21st century world and its communities.

- We have ongoing evidence based academic research demonstrating the impact of libraries

The core values of libraries (Q4):

1.	*Supporting Literacy, Reading and Information*
2.	*Providing knowledgeable staff to enable access to a wide variety of information and services*
3.	*Delivering a Local Service for Communities*
4.	*Accessibility…*
5.	*Equality*

Comments:

1. This includes: universal, equitable and intellectual access to recorded information; cultural heritage; the right to literacy; access to a range of resources in all formats; promoting and supporting reading for pleasure and lifelong learning and collection development that is responsive to community / clientele needs
2. This includes: providing high quality knowledgeable services and assisting with locating and interpreting information
3. This includes: providing in house and outreach services and resources that are community centric; responsive to community needs and inclusive, as well as offering a community space
4. This includes: providing an inclusive, community space for all that is safe, welcoming and available
5. This includes: equity of access, freedom of expression and right to privacy

Libraries represent equality amongst people as they provide access to information for everyone. Professionally staffed libraries enable citizens to navigate successfully an increasingly complex and overloaded information landscape so citizens can access information across multiple formats, platforms and delivery modes. They are not the gatekeepers or keepers of the books any more, they are the keymasters and open the world to the everyday citizen. In a world that is increasingly awash with information, much of it dubious or irrelevant, libraries perform an incredibly important function for citizens around the globe.

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5)

1. *Being a local place for their communities*
2. *Information and Life-long Learning*
3. *Providing resources and services to meet needs and demands*
4. *Literacy and Reading initiatives and activities*
5. *Building and maintaining community partnerships*

Comments:

1. This includes: being accessible; a safe space for children and adults to explore ideas; offering a space and environment for learning, providing physical and online access to resources
2. This includes: free access to information; supporting learning and education; access to all forms of information and pedagogical/educational information and learning
3. This includes: collection development; collections in many formats; equitable access to physical, digital and virtual resources; resource sharing; delivering a wide range of resources and services and frugal innovation i.e. doing a lot with a little
4. This includes: promoting reading for pleasure in many different ways; storytelling; building and maintaining literacy and promoting reading and literacy
5. This includes: programmes and activities to meet community needs; building community relationships; building partnerships with community and other organisations

There was a strong discussion point around the fact that libraries aren't necessarily good at anything unless they have effective staff. It is the staff who are the front face of the service and who make the library work for communities.

Libraries should do more of (Q6)

1. *Partnership development and working and being a community place*
2. *Professional Development and Continued Professional Development*
3. *Literacy Development and Promotion…*
4. *Public Relations – advocacy, marketing and promotion…*
5. *Widening access to services and resources*

Comments:

1. This includes: collaboration working; capacity building; enabling user influence; networking; outreach and relationship building; library advocacy and funding outsourcing, makerspace; responding to the needs of the community being served
2. This includes: HR capacity building of library teams; ensuring trained librarians are available to deliver library services; provision of professional staff to assist users & strategic position of the library and improving instructional practice

3. This includes: activities to promote literacy and reading for pleasure; programmes to develop information literacy skills; encourage maintenance of literacy and programmes that particularly target the 20 – 40 age group and programmes for ethical and appropriate use of information
4. This includes: library advocacy; reaching out through marketing, developing effective campaigns for promotion
5. This includes: maintain quality of access; prioritise strategically and target groups (you can't reach everyone all of the time); ensure access to digital resources other than the internet; develop excellent collections that are used and promoted

Libraries should do less of (Q7)

1. *Holding onto negative attitudes*

2. *Operational tasks and attitudes that keep the service from moving forward*

3. *Spending too much time just focusing on collection development instead of spending some of that time on promoting and encouraging and increasing use of the collections*

4. *Being too insular*

5.

Comments:

1. This includes: Being negative; being unwilling to change; looking inwards instead of outwards; not challenging others negative perceptions of libraries
2. This includes: doing things the same way because 'that's the way we have always done them'; doing things that others can do better than us and who could maybe do them in the library for us; bad or no instructional practices and trying to be everything to everyone
3. This includes: bad collection development practices
4. This includes: staying within the confines of the library instead of taking the service out and doing more work with the community

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

1. *Achieving global universal literacy*

2. *People – population growth, migration, life longevity and the impact of global conflict*

3. *Climate change – the impact on the earth's resources, food, renewable energy etc*

4. *Achieving global equality and eradicating poverty – including the growing disparity between those who have wealth and those who don't*

5. *The rapid changes of technology and its impact on society*

Comments:

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

1. Service provision and delivery
2. Professionalisation and staff training
3. Attitudes
4. Where do libraries fit into this 21st century world
5. Privatisation of libraries and changing attitudes as to how libraries can be provided

Comments:

1. This includes: changing demands and use; how to maintain relevance to all and especially children and young adults, connecting with users and responding to user diversity; digital services and rapid changes in ICT; provision of programmes for literacy, reading and digital literacy; competing for the attention and time of potential users; developing the library as an educational and informational space in the physical and virtual world; strategic alignment of libraries as an information network; partnerships and collaboration; illiteracy and aliteracy
2. This includes: decreasing professionalisation of librarians and increasing use of volunteers; definition of the role of librarians; how to stay current and to upgrade the skills of librarians; the ethnic and cultural diversity makeup of library staff; dealing with poor/uneven quality of staff; succession planning and on-going education for library staff; ensuring staff in libraries reflect the citizens demographic of the communities they serve; time and funding; succession planning (in the face of an aging staffing average) and on-going education for library staff
3. This includes: finding new ways of advocating for the role and value of libraries and librarians; dealing with political pressures; how to educate those outside of the profession e.g., politicians. Governments; lack of appreciation, support and understanding; public perceptions of the role of the library staff; being more innovative and thinking outside the box
4. This includes; defining the modern role of libraries and librarians, finding new ways to advocate for the value of libraries and librarians and getting others outside the library world to advocate for us
5. This includes: where funding will come from; how to ensure quality services if service is being provided by unskilled volunteers; how to build and develop partnerships in this 'brave new world'

The main professional challenges (Q10):

1. Professional Development
2. Providing effective services
3. Changing negative attitudes of library staff and of others toward libraries
4. Resources
5. Advocacy

Comments:

1. This includes: how to ensure modern Continuing Professional Development practice; ongoing education of library staff, especially professional staff; staff training/motivation and qualifications; encouraging young people from diverse backgrounds to enter the profession; keeping up to date in terms of knowledge, trends IT etc; professional staffing and resourcing for all libraries; responding to the needs of new citizens as a result of social movement or migration / refugees
2. This includes: providing services beyond the usual e.g. provision of extended services during times of crisis; networking and letting others deliver events in libraries; social inclusion – how to reach those who don't use libraries and don't understand why they should; meeting changing community needs; ensuring literacy support for children and young people
3. This includes: encouraging young people from diverse backgrounds to enter the profession; stop naval gazing and focus on the big strategic opportunities and developments; look outward not inwards; help others understand and value the role of libraries and librarians; being able to speak about controversial issues without fear of upsetting someone
4. This includes: lack of funding, staff and resources and the need to do more with less; managing funding when it may be coming from a new source
5. This includes: creating and attracting library advocates from outside he library world; advocating for the 'library' part of the Information Profession

How a united library field can make a difference

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

1. *Advocacy – a strong message delivered consistently with one voice*
2. *Professionalism – raising the status of librarians*
3. *Service and resource provision*
4. *Creation and development of strong, effective partnerships*
5. *Equity of access*

Comments:

1. This includes: development of a consistent message; global advertising under a single banner / badge across all countries; creation of strong advocacy messages highlighting the value of professional librarians; a call on all Governments to acknowledge and implement the 2030 sustainable goals which includes access to information and universal literacy; recognition of libraries as the original information access networks; recognition of the role libraries can play in achieving literacy goals worldwide; intensify community outreach and engagement to create grassroots advocacy
2. This includes: sharing expertise more effectively; learning from each other; creating common guidelines on developing the librarians role; better training and continuing professional development; lowering barriers between types of libraries; better collective sharing of knowledge, skills, activities; as part of the literacy and information agenda include professionally staffed libraries
3. This includes: intensify community outreach and engagement to create grassroots advocacy and get support for service provision, development and funding

4. This includes: creating and developing a wide variety of partnerships at local, regional, national and global levels
5. This includes: any work done globally will have an impact on ensuring equity and equality of access to the services and resources that libraries provide

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

1. *Advocacy*
2. *Professionalism*
3. *Services*
4. *Partnerships*
5. *Honest transparent communication, participation, decision making and action*

Comments:

1. This includes: an effective global advocacy campaign; strong use of social media to ensure global connections; consistent messaging; a single banner badging for a global Campaign; a single voice; a single strategy to approach governments worldwide, a single strategy with a clear, cohesive message to reach people world-wide
2. This includes: shared knowledge, skills and training and new ways of doing this; mutual respect and support; strong proactive network of Library Associations linked to IFLA with strong membership creating an effective community of practice; reduce barriers between library types to leverage value from whole library community working together
3. This includes: ensuring equality and access for all; reflective of community needs and responsive to changing needs and demands; community engagement and participation; using all methods and formats – digital and print; shared development of user programmes and knowledge
4. This includes: a network of partners at all levels who advocate for libraries, who work effectively with libraries, who deliver services through libraries, who meet some of their own agendas through libraries and who support libraries in identifying funding
5. This includes: at all levels and all types of library

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

1. *Advocacy*
2. *Partnerships*
3. *Professionalism*
4. *Ensuring universal, equitable physical and intellectual access to resources needed and wanted by communities*
5. *Literacy, Reading and Information Literacy*

Comments:

These are the key areas that the Literacy and Reading Section felt should be the focus of a united library field.

For the IFLA Literacy & Reading Section, Literacy and Reading are the golden threads that stitch all the elements together and allow us to develop a coherent response around the Global Vision themes. All the library values covered in our responses to the questions could help frame how libraries deliver a coherent response to literacy and information agendas locally, nationally and globally.

Better and more focused advocacy to change attitudes and understanding of the role of libraries is crucial. There is a need for a global advocacy campaign with clear strategies for getting our message across to the widest range of people and organisations worldwide, to help advance the cause of local/ national agendas and challenges. Libraries must also be part of national development plans and relevant policy and strategy documents. There is also the need for advocacy within the profession to improve networking and sharing of knowledge and expertise as well as a need for advocacy at local level in terms of community outreach/engagement, building effective partnerships, changing attitudes of politicians and funding bodies, etc. Alongside any advocacy campaign, there is a need for more academic research to show the impact of libraries.

The value of Partnership working comes through as key to help promote awareness of the role of libraries and librarians, and again could benefit through this area being promoted through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) type courses, as well as being integrated into advocacy campaigns. Positioning the role of libraries in the wider canvas of work that is being done by other educational institutions in the area of literacy and reading would also help partner organisations better understand and appreciate the contribution libraries are making.. There is an ongoing need to link our work with related agencies, in the case of Literacy and Reading for example, the work of libraries needs to be linked to the work of other literacy agencies in order to have greater impact. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) could also support librarians in this area by giving them the confidence and skills to get involved in local/professional peer networks/partnerships.

Breaking down barriers between libraries to enable people to tap into the wider resources of the whole library community/providing access shared support, expertise, resources, innovative good practice, etc. is also a great idea but needs to be quite focused else runs the risk of being impractical. Using the golden threads of literacy, reading and information could help provide the focus to promote engagement of a wider library community in responding to what is a global challenge.

Final thoughts link to some of the challenges about lack of funding, doing more with less, etc. – this also points to the need for better service planning at all levels of library operations: local, regional, national. Improving standards of service planning (via CPD) would arguably help librarians better

articulate how they are using their available resources and build arguments for additional resources in terms that funding bodies are more likely to respond to – if they are able to demonstrate benefit and impacts, e.g., in terms of literacy outcomes that will help raise their profile with partner organisations and maybe help them retain their resources.

Please note that the Literacy & Reading Section can provide case studies on many aspects of this if IFLA needs them.

A global conversation

This report is created in an interactive process on 30 June 2017. It is part of a global conversation initiated by IFLA on how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future.

Over the course of two years (2017-2018), IFLA will involve as many librarians and others as possible in this global conversation. Participants are encouraged to continue the conversation in their own networks and organization and share the results with IFLA. At the end of 2017, the first results of all the workshops and online discussions will be turned into a *Global Vision Report*, which in turn will be adapted into concrete strategies, processes and work programmes in 2018.

To learn more about the global conversation, and download supporting materials to support your own activities, visit globalvision.ifla.org.

Stay tuned for news about the IFLA Global Vision discussion following #iflaGlobalVision and make sure to cast your vote in August when the online voting platform is available on https://globalvision.ifla.org/.