GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the Reference & Information Services Section meeting
How a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future

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Contributors

This report is created by: Christine Brown & Edwin Qobose

Participants in online session: Christine Brown (Canada), Edwin Qobose (Botswana), Jooza Al Marri (Qatar), Julie Biando Edwards (United States), Laverne Page (United States), Laura Ballestra (Italy), Elena Rosales-Salinas (Mexico)

Participants reviewing notes from online session and/or adding comments: Philippa Andreasson (Sweden), Lilianna Nalewajeska (Poland), Marydee Ojala (United States), Jin Hongya (China), Melissa Miller (United States), Jane Sanchez (United States), Hong Jiang (China), Veronica Kulczewski (Chile), Rania Shaarawy (Egypt), Yurkio Watanabe (Japan).

Introduction

On June 22, 2017, online using Zoom meeting software. A librarians participated in a conversation about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. Together we years of library experience.

The librarians participating in this session are all members of the IFLA Reference & Information Services Standing (RISS) Committee. They represent National Libraries, Academic and College Libraries, Government Libraries, the Publishing Industry, and Public Libraries. The librarians participating in the online session represent an average of 15 years experience which when totalled would be at least 120 years of experience. The entire RISS Committee reviewed the notes of the meeting and provided input to finalize our response to the questions.

A vision for libraries

Libraries enable literate, informed and participative societies. When we look at the future, according to the debates in the various countries of the participants. Since we met online participants were asked to provide the details for question 1 and 2 via email. Here are some quotes from participants regarding the state of Libraries in 2022.

"By the year 2022 libraries will be fundamental places to support people in creating new knowledge, researching and experiencing any kind of relevant information, for human well-being, personal development and enrichment. The value of accessing relevant and authoritative library and information collections, selected and properly organized, will be recognised by communities against the idea that any information has the same value. Librarians will be present in helping users and readers in the process of creating new knowledge, in educating to literacy and information literacy development and in enquiry answering. The relevance of ICT will be balanced by the core values of the libraries." Laura Bellastra (Italy)

"By 2022 libraries will have actively supported the social change required to move onwards away from the fake news, quick fix, short term thinking that has prevailed for too many decades. They will be valued for their independence, reliability, consistency and new thinking in providing society access to the historical and current collective knowledge and media that is required for stimulating a sustainable tolerant society. New libraries will be opened where old ones have closed, new funding will arrive if not from governments then from crowd-sourcing as the public vote with their wallets to keep their access to the wealth of knowledge provided by libraries in their community. What will stay the same is that libraries will not all be the same, they will reflect their community and its needs and develop accordingly. Librarians will continue to be one of the most trusted professions in society. The quietness offered by libraries will be lifted up as an vital antidote to humanities worries; where mindfulness, reflection, brain training, research, contemplation, education and people to people support can be found, for everyone, for free." Philippa Andreasson (Sweden)

The core values of libraries (Q4):

- Empower Community culture
- Access to information
- Social space
- Protection of privacy
- Knowledge creation and cultural preservation
- Seek out innovation

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

- Providing and promoting information literacy
- Facilitating equity of access
- Collaboration and networking
- Selecting and collecting (information, objects etc)
- Recognizing and meeting community needs and/or linking to other resources
- Engagement with communities
- Being empathetic to the needs of others

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

- Outreach and marketing
- Grant writing
- Provide value added services
- Friends of the library
- Advocacy/telling our story
- Fundraising, charging for some services
- Be more present in research
- Support open access publishing
- Promote our expertise in searching and expand on this to build tools that enhance knowledge
- Communicating and collaborating with libraries inside and outside our own countries
- Selling or promoting our capabilities/story to Hollywood because they have an enormous impact in the collective conscious and can shape others' vision of libraries and librarians

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

- Resistance to change to continue to do things the way we have always done them
- Working in isolation
- Trying to compete with google

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

- Climate change
- Poverty
- Misinformation, disinformation, propaganda and censorship
- A lack of critical thinking about information
- Close the human development gap "to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature." (UN, 2030 Agenda).

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

- Funding -- limits our ability to scale up our good work
- Responsive services to clients
- Propaganda and or fake news
- Professional development (having enough funds for this)
- Ensuring that funders know we are more than books and silence

The main professional challenges (Q10):

- Academic / tenure for academic librarians
- Professional status -- being respected as academic equals on campus
- Leadership
- Being able to go beyond pilot projects
- Being comfortable and able to afford to experiment and perhaps fail and try again
- Recruiting new competencies

How a united library field can make a difference

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

- Proactive and innovative -- forcing ourselves into global conversations/activities
- Removing silos between different libraries
- Advocacy and more stakeholder engagement (in all libraries)
- Librarians should work with/across many different professional groups
- Promoting that libraries are a country's competitive advantage

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

- Active national library association
- High profile of libraries at national for (political and socio economic influence)
- Think globally and act locally
- Continue and enhance collaboration
- Be innovative
- Improve our communication
- Use other well respected stakeholders to tell our story and promote our impact

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

- A unified voice and message
- Strong working relations with other professions, especially Information Technology
- Hub of networks and collaboration
- Increased communication and promotion of what we do

A global conversation

This report is created in an interactive process via an online meeting on Zoom on June 22nd. 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/.