GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the IFLA New Professionals Special Interest Group (NPSIG) meeting
How a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future

30-06-2017 TO 04-07-2017

Contributors

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34 participants in the survey

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Introduction

From June 30 to July 4 of 2017, **34** librarians that belong to the new professionals network participated in an online meeting via questionnaire about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. Together we represent **295** years of library experience.

The results of this survey were obtained through a platform of Google forms that the NPSIG elaborated to collaborate with the proposal of #IflaGlobalVision. Enthusiastic librarians from around the world have made their contribution to this initiative. There was no other contact with them beyond the online survey.

We added two questions to the requested ones in the form, as they seemed as good and valuable icebreakers. These two questions will be placed at the end of the report, so as not to alter the original report template.

A vision for libraries

Libraries allow literate, informed and participative societies. When we look at the future, according to the answers obtained in the survey , this means that libraries are spaces of connection, growth and social formation, interested in the main problems that concern the world.

Most of the visions of the future have to do with improvements in existing policies, services or products.

It is highlighted as a need to improve the recognition of our task, to demonstrate our usefulness to society and to be able to visualize it.

Many opinions refer to the continuity of the task that is being done, but it is pointed out that one of the main obstacles is the socio-economic inequality between the different countries. All the ways of the immense opportunity with the optimism of the future, positioning as main tool to the technology and the connection.

The core values of libraries (Q4):

1. *Access to information*
2. *Community engagement*
3. *Literacy (Information / Digital)*
4. *Equity*
5. *Diversity*
6. *Freedom*
7. *Knowledge creation*

Comments:

144 responses were received. All very varied, the majority have to do with positioning libraries in relation to society and its environment. The core values of libraries, as well as the will to change, arise from themselves. There were interesting concepts such as "Dynamism", "Excitement of knowledge", "Intellectual Freedom", "Improving life quality" and "Poetry".

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

1. *Supporting education*
2. *Providing information, services, places*
3. *Informing*
4. *Connecting people to information*
5. *Preserving*
6. *Inclusion*
7. *Organizing information*

Comments:

The great majority of the questions received in this question (127) mention the capacity of libraries as information managers. Other interesting concepts have to do with inclusion, connection, protection, teaching, and standing out ("Being the hub of the community ").

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

1. *Advocacy*
2. *Collaboration*
3. *Self-promotion*
4. *Interacting with their community*
5. *Be the guarantors of access to information*

Comments:

The answers in this item were the most diversified in the survey. By far the most repeated response (on eight occasions!) was "Advocacy". Also proposed were topics such as self-recognition of our task, de-stigmatization of the image of the librarian and visualization. Most of the topics are focused on the relationship with users, although libraries are also seen as a valid partner in society: "Liaising social actors & policy makers;". Other interesting concepts was: "Go out of the libraries", "Rethink" and "We are stronger together!"

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

1. *Focusing in the collection*
2. *Be afraid*
3. *Be indifferent*
4. *Complaining*
5. *Not innovate*
6. *Self-exclusion*

Comments:

In this question, librarians have demonstrated a critical view of our profession. The opinions were very varied. There were 87 responses divided between criticism of individual action and criticism of the environment. Within the individual critique were the answers that speak of fear (to changes) or indifference, with all its variants. Within the critique related to the environment, isolation and self-exclusion are what prevails.

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

1. *Economic inequality*
2. *Education, education access, and literacy*
3. *Digital divide*
4. *Migration*
5. *Tolerance and inclusion (cultural and religious)*
6. *Climate change*
7. *Threats to democracy, e.g. nationalism*

Comments:

The total of 137 responses have been received. The majority of answers pointed to economic and sociocultural challenges in the globalized world. Economic disparity and its consequences, such as equitable access to education and healthcare as well as the widening digital divide are primary concerns. Almost the same number of respondents listed human rights, peace, diversity, tolerance, and inclusion, with migration as the core issue. Finally, environmental concerns related to global warming and pollution were followed by those pertaining to political stability and preserving democracy.

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

1. *Meeting the needs of diverse user groups through improved access and accommodation*

2. *Staying relevant by acquiring new skills, training, improved resources, innovation, and up to date technology*

3. *Social inclusion and openness*

4. *Image, internal and external perception of libraries and librarians, self-awareness, and visibility*

5. *Financial and budgetary considerations in the context of political climate and government support*

6. *Legal and administrative barriers*

7. *Competition*

Comments:

The answers were widely varied. Staying current and meeting the changing needs of users in the face of new technologies and an increasingly diverse society seems to be the leading thread (44 out of 106 answers). Financial and budgetary concerns came as a second major consideration, with just a few more answers than internal and external perception of libraries and librarianship. Legal and administrative barriers, such as copyright and censorship, as well as competition constituted about 10% of the answers.

The main professional challenges (Q10):

1. *Making LIS education more in tune with what is demanded of us*

2. *Professional development*

3. *Integrate the professional community*

4. *Poor performance of library associations worldwide in projecting image of the profession*

5. *Working closer together with organizations/parts of society*

6. *Job security [insecurity]*

Comments:

There are two major considerations that connect majority of the 107 answers to this question. 1) Education in various manifestations: from the need for education in order to adapt (e.g. keep up with new technologies), institutionally or personally, to lack of opportunities or funds for professional education, to the need for and high cost of continuous professional development.

2) Collaboration, communication, and integration: from personal challenges in a workplace, such as difficulty with collaboration and internal culture issues (generation gap, communication, etc.), to the need for and difficulties with collaboration between associations, organizations, and institutions locally and globally.

Finally, there is a range of answers that focus on job concerns, such as job security, financial instability, job demands, opportunities, and career planning.

How a united library field can make a difference

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

1. Networking

2. Generate Awareness

3. Support for professional development

4. Collaborations

5. Sharing the problems and solutions

Comments:

The answers can be equally divided between those that point to institutional change and those that aspire to personal change.

The vast majority of the results (more than 10% of the total) pointed to the use of the networks as the main tool for the growth of a unified librarian field. Also highlighted were concepts related to greater communication, such as collaboration and "sharing the problems and solutions".

With regard to personal change, concepts related to the growth and improvement of our professional skills are highlighted, as well as other very interesting ones that point to the challenge of changing the perception of our profession: "Leaving your comfort space", "louder voice" and "not be afraid to move away from the status quo".

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

1. Networks

2. Communication

3. Inclusive

4. Advocacy

5. Technological

Comments:

Although statistically this was one of the questions with the least amount of answers (84), this number allows us to make a general evaluation. In this question several concepts of Q11 were repeated, highlighting again the communication and the use of networks as main characteristics that must have a united librarian field. However other concepts became stronger, highlighting socio-cultural inclusion: "To provide equitable representation around the world".

Other characteristics to emphasize that one wants of a united librarian field is that it is "strong", "progressive", "provocative" and "sensitivity".

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

1. *Advocacy*
2. *Partnerships*
3. *Sharing/Collaboration*
4. *Networking*
5. *Innovation*
6. *Education*

Comments:

Of the 86 responses received, 40% point to the need for collaborative work, either through institutions, associations or networks. Some responses emphasize the need to establish a productive connection with those who make decision: "networking with political and business decision makers", "lobbying".

In the same sense, the word Advocacy was one of the most repeated among the answers, as a need to create an internationally backed unity force: "Show in a clear and public way what kind of common challenges we face and how we want to meet them".

Among the answers obtained, other terms to emphasize were: "Solve", "Hear" and "grass-root work"

A global conversation

This report is created in an interactive process, in the NPSIG web space from June 30th to July 4th. 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/.