

The role of the librarian in a modern information service

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Abstract

The value of the information that is being provided today can be doubted by anyone, as we live in a society where knowledge is replaced by new knowledge in a very short period of time. What is changing nowadays with the advent of technology in modern libraries is the application of new and pioneering technologies in the process of collecting, classifying, and promoting knowledge so that it can be accessed more quickly and easily by all people. Knowledge management issues and the rapid technological developments underpinning it require an extroversion and redefinition of the concept of reading space to attract new readers with increased, up-to-date requirements. As a result, the librarian, since it is traditionally the body managing the recorded knowledge, is called upon to play a leading role in this field, where new technologies, new organizational structures, new services will be put to better use and allocating the resources of a library.

Keywords

Evolution of traditional-conventional libraries, new technologies, value of the information, digitization, promoting knowledge, new readers, librarians as administrators of information, qualifications of the modern librarian, professional information skills, generic skills.

1. The evolution of the Librarian from a guardian of information to a specialist in research and information seeking. A first approach.

In the history of human civilization the role of the librarian has been identified with that of the scientist who, within the conventional operating environment of the library that existed for almost four decades, from the mid-1950s to the widespread use of the Internet, computer and telecommunications technologies as integral components of a library's organization, it managed some basic functions, by which it identified, processed, and accessed the material for the reading of the public. What is changing nowadays with the advent of technology in modern libraries is the application of new and pioneering technologies in the process of collecting, classifying, and promoting knowledge so that it can be accessed more quickly and easily by all people. Knowledge management issues and the rapid technological developments underpinning it require an extension and redefinition of the concept of reading space to attract new readers with increased, up-to-date requirements. As a result, the librarian, since it is traditionally the body managing the recorded knowledge, is called upon to play a leading role in this field, where new technologies, new organizational structures, new services will be put to better use and allocating the resources of a library.

The value of the information that is being provided today can be doubted by anyone, as we live in a society where knowledge is replaced by new knowledge in a very short period of time. New technologies play a key role in accessing information, and librarians, as administrators, have to adapt to an ever-changing environment that is constantly creating new demands. Therefore, the increasing role of technology in libraries has a major impact on the role that librarians themselves play. It reinforces, we would say, the social dimension of their role, as they not only have to exploit the technologies offered by the library, but primarily to follow and follow the general developments and try to identify and

exploit any form and nature of technological evolution in order to serve the needs of the users, even if they have not been asked to do so.

2. Qualifications and skills of the modern librarian

In the information environment as well as the social environment in general, the role of the librarian, important and, at the same time, more complex than ever, is of particular importance as it is outlined by a mix of competences and qualifications coming from the traditional library field and emerging at the same time through the digital environment, evolving and constantly adapting to current developments, that is, to equip him and prepare him, to effectively manage his professional future¹.

The transition to the digital environment, especially during the first period of technological innovation in libraries, has given librarians the feeling that they are being threatened by new technologies, a feeling that is still being transmitted today in many of the everyday practice of the profession. Prior to the advent of the Web, librarians were almost exclusively administrators and controllers of information. Today, in an environment where technical training and knowledge can provide important solutions, they must work towards acquiring and integrating technical qualifications, at least to the extent that their daily experience in a non-tech workplace would not be affected environment². In addition, they also have to deal with users' beliefs that the library is not necessary³ for them, as they increasingly believe that the Internet and various

¹ For the usefulness of libraries and librarians see: Will Sherman, Are Librarians Totally Obsolete? 33 Reasons Why Libraries and Librarians are Still Extremely Important, 2007. Source: <http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/27485716/are-librarians-totally-obsolete-33-reasons-why-libraries-librarians-are-still-extremely-important>. SOURCE: *Teacher Librarian*; Oct 2007, Vol. 35 Issue 1, p21. Last accessed 29/01/2015

² Analysis of the issue, see: John Kupersmith, Library Terms That Users Understand, available at: <http://www.jkup.net/terms.html>

³ An OCLC (2007) survey on the 'digital' dimension of the role of a modern library has seen an increase in the use of all Internet and World Wide Web services in relation to the same organization in 2005, *Perceptions on Libraries and Information Resources*,

search engines can meet all their needs. However, in this new reality, the profession of librarian has some comparative advantages. Even after the development of new occupations that have emerged and been incorporated relatively recently in the information chain, the role of the librarian continues to be focused on providing services to users but primarily on understanding and satisfying their information needs. In an information environment where the information chain is dominated by satisfying the needs of the users, providing well-structured services whose organization is clearly user-oriented will always be a demand and librarians are well aware how to meet this requirement.

One of the dominant elements of the Internet and the World Wide Web is their unregulated structure and the almost non-existent organization of the sources they contain. Thus, the ability of information professionals to evaluate and organize printed and electronic information sources is a particularly valuable asset as it offers them another advantage over other information professionals⁴. Librarians understand the needs of users and can meet their information requirements better than any other professional. In the new digital reality, although the media and formats have been greatly diversified, they transfer from the conventional environment a sufficient number of qualifications that help users to discover, interpret and, ultimately, largely meet their requirements. At the same time, by guiding people who have little or no contact with the means

source: <http://www.oclc.org/reports/2005perceptions.htm>

According to the results, the use of e-mail and search engines increased, while the use of library websites decreased. Significant increase in the use of blogs is also noteworthy. (Sharing, Privacy and Trust in our Networked World, 2007, Source: <http://www.oclc.org/reports/sharing/default.htm>

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⁴ Many recognize that the Internet can improve the role of librarians in the Information Society and in the libraries they work with. See related: (Roland, Wittwer, *Special Libraries — How to Survive in the Twenty-First Century*, *The Electronic Library*, 19, 4 (2001), 221-225).

and methods of document retrieval and retrieval, the experience they gain from managing customer relationships turns into a more active and immediate educational role⁵. Finally, with the general finding that in a world where information is increasingly becoming an economic asset, librarians, who for decades have secured democratic access to knowledge and information, can contribute to the creation of value "environment", where the criteria for the availability of information will not be determined by economic operators.

2.1. Librarian Skills Development: The Professional Check for Information Services

At a time critical for its future, the ability of Librarians to provide different people with results that require high quality information and knowledge seems to be at the core of professional intelligence for information services. Elements representing this dynamic and changing environment necessitate the emergence of a new breed of information intermediaries capable of responding to organizational goals as well as to the goals and requirements of users for the development of new centers of learning, information integration, training and technology support. Investments in the proper and timely development of Library staff can mean a return on the organization. A key prerequisite is the creation of opportunities to acquire a full range of skills that, according to specialists, are combined with training, human resources management and information organization as well as personal skills of staff, which will enable him to handle effectively the difficulties encountered.

⁵ For the training of users by librarians see: (Abram, Stephen, (1999), Are You Building Your Library with the Right Stuff?, *Computers in Libraries*, 19, 76-80). --- For the need to redefine the librarian's relationship with the user see: Mary-ellen Mort, "Who Do We Think We Are?", *Searcher*, 8, 1 (2000) Source: <http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/jan00/mort.htm>. --- For the evolution of the role of the librarian in a broader educational role with greater involvement in the educational process see: Debbie Anderson [and] Janet Gesin, *The Evolving Roles of Information Professionals in the Digital Age*. Source: <https://www.educause.edu/ir/library/html/cnc9754/cnc9754.html>
Last accessed 13/04/2022

So, according to Bidy Fisher⁶, the librarian's qualifications fall into two major categories: professional and general.

Summary of skills for the 21St Century⁷

Source: Bidy Fisher

P r o f e s s i o n a l I n f o r m a t i o n s k i l l s	G e n e r i c s k i l l s
Knowledge Management Information architecture ICT skills Technical (traditional) professional skills	Project management **Planning and evaluation People management Research skills Bids and proposals
Subject expertise Collection management Collection description Technical (traditional) professional skills	Critical skills Thinking **Planning and evaluation Analysis Problem solving Research
Information technology Design Application Systems User support (problem solving)	Leadership General management Communication skills Strategic management People skills Financial skills

⁶Fisher, B., «Workforce Skills Development: The Professional Imperative for Information Services in the United Kingdom», *Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Biennial Conference, 21-24 September 2004*, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

Πηγή:

http://www.academia.edu/1109999/Workforce_skills_development_the_professional_imperative_for_information_services_in_the_United_Kingdom

Last accessed 13/04/2022

⁷Table represents a summary of the skills of the 21st century; it defines the work related skills that LIPs need to acquire and although is not exhaustive, is based upon the analysis of job descriptions, interviews, report analysis and professional reading that constituted the research work (Bidy Fisher).

Service Development User information Surveys Service impact analysis Planning and evaluation** Promotion and marketing*	*Promotion and marketing Design appreciation Presentation skills Multi-professional appreciation
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Professional⁸ means all those qualifications and skills that are directly related to the practices, processing and management of human resources, information material, resources and services resulting from the daily friction with the profession, inside and outside the workplace. This category includes traditional library practice practices, new trends in digital and electronic document management, technological form and content qualifications applied to the Information and Telecommunications Sciences and, finally, various categories of general administrative and educational character.

The category of general qualifications⁹ encompasses all those competences whose development depends almost exclusively on the outside itself, without the actual intervention of external factors. It is the result of a continuous daily process of evaluating and utilizing what is happening, enabling the librarian to develop skills that will enable him or her to better handle the difficulties he or she encounters in fulfilling his / her duties and responsibilities has working groups and research formats. Here, too, are those abilities that allow his social interaction with users to project and enhance the library's social profile, and ultimately to utilize the experience he has gained, in order to continually improve his working conditions.

Particular emphasis is placed on the skills and abilities of the modern librarian to manage important areas of digital information systems such as imaging technologies, visual character recognition, markup languages, cataloging,

⁸ For example: 1). Conventional Material Processing and Management. --- 2). Digital material processing and management. --- 3). Technologies, practices and standards (ICT) management skills. --- 4). Management and organizational skills. --- 5). Education.

⁹ For example: 1). Personal abilities. --- 2). Interpersonal communication and handling skills. --- 3). Experience. --- 4). Lifelong learning-education.

metadata, user interface design, multimedia user interface, web technologies etc. Respond effectively to the challenges of his professional future, which include his ability to remain adaptable in a constantly changing work environment¹⁰. So we can rather talk about the appropriate attitudes that need to be developed, developed and adapted to the working practice¹¹ itself. Therefore, librarians must maintain those important skills that have given them respect and recognition in the traditional information management environment and, at the same time, continue to be open to new ideas and interested in the needs of users¹². Instead, for a predetermined set of specifications, which attempt to determine the necessary qualifications, it is important to capture and formulate the basic, those, qualifications¹³ and abilities that will make it possible to adapt them to new developments but, and they will enable him to actively influence these developments¹⁴.

In conclusion, libraries today face the challenge of leveraging new advanced technologies in their services. The introduction of technology and the rapid development of the Internet, the birth of digitization and hence the evolution of traditional-conventional libraries, necessitate a change in the traditional role of

¹⁰ For the need to specialize in the profession, see Syed Salim Agha, "Professional Development: Specialization or Hybridization", *Library Review*, 50, 7/8 (2001), 400-402.

¹¹ Linda Ashcroft, «Developing Competencies, Critical Analysis and Personal Transferable Skills in Future Information Professionals», *Library Review*, 53, 2 (2004), 82-88. --- Sharp, K., «Internet Librarianship: Traditional Roles in a New Environment», *IFLA Journal*, 27, 2 (2001).

¹² Richard Biddiscombe, «The Development of Information Professionals' Needs for Internet and IT Skills: Experiences at the University Of Birmingham», *Program: Electronic Library and Information Systems*, 35, 2 (2001), 157-166.

¹³ Bidy Fisher, «Workforce Skills Development: The Professional Imperative for Information Services in the United Kingdom», *Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) Biennial Conference, 21-24 September 2004, Gold Coast , Queensland , Australia*

Source:

http://www.academia.edu/1109999/Workforce_skills_development_the_professional_imperative_for_information_services_in_the_United_Kingdom

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¹⁴ Ute Krauss-Leichert, «The Multimedia Sector: New Fields of Activity for Information Specialists», *IFLA Journal*, 27, 3 (2001), 163-170.

the librarian and require skills and specialized knowledge to leverage diverse and extensive information search applications through access to various Databases. The development of these advanced information services that can be accessed in large libraries, both foreign and Greek, and extract the information needed, study articles in periodicals or hardcover publications, access international thematic bibliography and with keywords is a conquest that removes the insurmountable difficulties that readers, students and scholars have faced for hundreds of years, due to the skills of librarians who, along with these developments, are undergoing a continuous improvement dynamic to meet the ever-increasing demands of meeting their information needs.

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