GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the Library Services to Multicultural Populations meeting

How a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future

June 14, 2017 – Zoom Meeting

June 14 – 25, 2017 – Email responses

Contributors

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Introduction

From 14th to 25th of June 2017, through a Zoom meeting and email responses, 12 librarians participated in a conversation about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. Together we represent 266 years of library experience in public, academic, and governmental libraries from all over the world.

A vision for libraries

Libraries enable literate, informed and participative societies. When we look at the future, according to the debates among the members of the multicultural library services, this means that libraries continue to be a critical hub for equitable and diverse access to information, knowledge and public services

The core values of libraries (Q4):

Service, Access, Freedom, Knowledge, Communication

1. *Information and other services including sense of social responsibility*
2. *Free and equal access to information and spaces, open and inclusive spaces*
3. *Intellectual Freedom, including privacy protections and ability to access multiple viewpoints*
4. *Knowledge and Learning including instruction and information literacy*
5. *Communication including the collection and organization of knowledge*

Comments:

While the values of the library have not necessarily changed, libraries are facing new challenges in upholding those values through increasing diversity, new information formats, etc.

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

Public Spaces, Neutrality, Accessing Resources

1. *Providing public, non-commercialized spaces that promote socialization and are open to all*
2. *Providing politically neutral spaces*
3. *Open and free spaces that are free of judgement and discrimination*
4. *Collecting and sharing information*
5. *Service and Outreach*

Comments:

Libraries can be a place where everyone is welcome and are at the forefront of diversification through service and outreach provision.

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

Collaboration, Development, Information Technology

1. *Collaborate and partner with organizations and business to provide services and programs*
2. *Engage with the community, including listening to their needs*
3. *Advocacy and strategic planning*
4. *Service innovations to reach more of the local population*
5. *Preserving information and research*

Comments:

This question had a lower level of consensus than 4 and 5, but strong emphasis was placed on collaboration and partnership.

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

Physical Collections, Impediments to Access of Services

1. *Don't worry about whether people regularly go to the library or only come to access wi-fi*
2. *Reduce convoluted rules and regulations*
3. *Worry less about the collection and lending of physical books*
4. *Worry less about social service provision that others are better suited to offer*

Comments:

Again, this is an area where there were many ideas, but limited consensus. The strongest area of consensus was the need to be less concerned about physical collections and lending.

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

Social Division, Fake News, Attitudes Towards Immigrants, Climate Change, and Inequality

1. *Social division including racism, religion, lack of trust*
2. *Rise of fake news and the corresponding decrease in critical thought*
3. *Immigration without corresponding measures for integration*
4. *Climate change/global warming*
5. *Unequal division of resources including food, water, overpopulation, wealth*

Comments:

There was a high degree of consensus in this area, particularly in regards to aspects of social division and inequality.

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

Technological Change, Lack of Advocacy, Lack of Resources, Changing Patrons

1. *Libraries do not advocate effectively enough for themselves*

2. *Limited resources including budgets and staffing*

3. *Technological change, which creates problems of relevance*

4. *Too many forms of media, which makes collection of information challenging*

5. *Broad spectrum of users whose needs may change rapidly*

Comments:

This was an area in which there was significant agreement around these issues, particularly for the challenges of technological change, limited resources, and difficulties that libraries face in telling the story of what they do – politicians making decisions need to understand the value of libraries and their work.

The main professional challenges (Q10):

Information, Career Progression, Changing Formats, Computer Science, Budgets

1. *Inconsistent budgets can make long-term planning difficult*

2. *Lack of training/guidance for librarians and a need to access more information on best practices*

3. *Managing electronic resources*

4. *Increasing need for computer science knowledge for issues of patron privacy, open source software*

5. *Building service awareness and promoting multicultural services*

Comments:

How a united library field can make a difference

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

Sharing Information, Better Training, Action

1. *Updating school curriculum and ensuring qualified librarians are hired*

2. *Sharing information, strategies, best practices*

3. *Empowering librarians and libraries to act*

4. *Engagement between IFLA, national associations, regional associations, and the local level*

5. *Continuing education for librarians*

Comments:

At least one participant, however, argued that there will never be a unified library field as public and academic libraries have different purposes.

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

Common Vision, Collaborative, Organized, Open

1. Common vision, including shared understanding of core values

2. Network of professionals willing to work together

3. Organization, including a collective agenda and planning capabilities

4. Sharing of resources

5. Open and free access to information

Comments:

At least one participant questioned whether there could be a united library field given the different types of libraries, different types of patrons, and different needs.

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

Outreach, Access to Resources

1. Free, equal, and global access to resources

2. Outreach services, particularly for refugees

3. Long term strategy and planning

Comments:

There was some uncertainty about this question and doubts as to whether a single focus was appropriate to the field.