



GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the IFLA LGBTQ Users Special
Interest Group meeting

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

20 May 2017

Virtual meeting (via Zoom video conferencing)

Contributors

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Introduction

On 20 May 2017, in Sydney, Australia; California, United States; Lyon, France and Budapest, Hungary four librarians participated in a conversation about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. Together we represent 94 years of library experience.

Participants represented research, academic and special libraries in Europe, the United States and Australia.

Observations about the workshop were initially that the question about “library superpowers” was confusing and unnecessary. However, participants were grateful for the opportunity to talk about their hopes and aspirations for libraries in the future. One participant commented that all involved in the discussion shared a social justice view of libraries that they should be places for *everyone* regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality, housing status or other socio-economic factors.

A vision for libraries

Libraries enable literate, informed and participative societies. When we look at the future, according to the debates in Athens, this means that:

“The objectives libraries should strive for are access to information and intellectual freedom, inclusivity and equality, impact in the community.”

The core values of libraries (Q4):

1. *Libraries are for everyone*

2. *Community*

3. *Privacy*

4. *Politically neutral*

5. *Respect*

6. *Democracy*

Comments:

“Respect for the lived experiences of their library users and respect for the library users.”

“To help people to build one's own identity.”

“Anybody who is willing to can join and use it [the library].”

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

1. *Connecting people to resources and information*

2. *Providing safe spaces*

3. *Preserving culture and history of communities*

4. *Creating community connections*

Comments:

“Providing sanctuaries away from the elements and the public eye.”
“Creating bridges, between communities, past and present, cultures, innovations and things that last...”

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

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1. *Training staff to work with all community members*
 2. *Advocacy*
 3. *Programs for minority groups*
 4. *Partnering with community organisations and national agencies*
 5. *Providing safe spaces*
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Comments:

“Open safe places, advocate for themselves and for their core values, fight.”
“Making libraries attractive and useful for all (handicapped, disadvantaged, illiterate).”

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

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1. *Creating barriers by enforcing unnecessary rules*
 2. *Looking to the past not the future*
 3. *Filtering*
 4. *Excluding community members*
 5. *Not providing equity of access*
-

Comments:

“Unequal provision of resources and programs that are skewed toward stably housed and well-behaved community members.”
“...live in the past.”
“Making rules. Building walls.”

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

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1. *Inequality*
 2. *Gender inequities*
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3. *Poverty (eg. lack of clean water)*

4. *Fear*

5. *Populism/political polarisation*

Comments:

“Inequities in housing, employment, education, health.”

“Lack of communication and conversation.”

“Populism, fear against communities. Poverty.”

“Clear water is the main challenge in many societies; reducing salient gender differences in others.”

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

1. *To be responsive to global and social changes*

2. *Lack of funding*

3. *Stereotypes*

4. *Being too insular*

5. *Navigating the virtual world*

Comments:

“Fight for democracy, freedom and knowledge for ALL.”

“Local libraries, global challenges.”

“To be aware of societies changes, to understand its own patrons”

“Stereotype of libraries prevents partnerships and work outside their sphere”

“Library-focused rather than community-focused”

“To find their place in the next generations’ ever changing society between the virtual and real world.”

The main professional challenges (Q10):

1. *Stereotypes of librarians*

2. *Stereotypes of libraries and their role*

3. *Improving access to information for LGBT people*

4. *To be innovative and creative*

5. *Funding*

Comments:

“Stereotype of libraries interferes with the message of partnering that I advocate for.”
“Lack of understanding of what libraries can do and already do.”
“Lack of funds to further my mission.”
“To spread the ‘seeds’ of dealing with LGBT people in many fields, for example, in medical universities, public and medical libraries, school libraries, at the paediatrician, family organizations, registered nurses forums, scientific conferences, sexual education programs, websites for teenagers, etc.”

How a united library field can make a difference

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

1. *Serve community needs*
2. *Address the needs of society*
3. *Work with external organisations to help communities*
4. *Be proactive*
5. *Embrace the virtual world and use it to represent social groups like LGBT and Indigenous peoples*

Comments:

“Concentrate on the needs of communities and society, rather than the needs of libraries.”
“Reach out to organizations/agencies outside the library field and offer to work together for the community.”
“A united library field is able to mirror the compound of societal strata in the library collection and the virtual world, and can intervene between them...”

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

1. *Addressing the issues of local, regional, national and international communities*
2. *Listening*
3. *Sharing success stories*
4. *Working together*
5. *Representing the whole community*

Comments:

“Actively engaged in being an integral part of addressing the issues in local communities, as well as regional, national and international.”

“A united library field can reach anybody in any existence field.”

“Focused on the entire community, however that’s defined, rather than one particular section of it.”

“Listening to each other.”

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

1. *Listening and learning*

2. *Making use of expertise*

3. *Focusing on the disadvantaged*

4. *Bridging the digital divide*

5. *Working together*

Comments:

“Listening and learning from each other across interest groups.”

“I suggest to focus on the most needy in societies...”

“The digital divide is real. A united library field should focus on increasing digital inclusion and building digital skills around the world.”

A global conversation

This report is created in an interactive process, in Sydney, Australia 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](https://twitter.com/iflaGlobalVision) and make sure to cast your vote in August when the online voting platform is available on <https://globalvision.ifla.org/>.