GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the Standing Committee of National Libraries Section meeting

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

Google document online from June 12 through to June 30, 2017 with an invitation (and reminders) to all current, and incoming members of the SC, NOIR SIG and NILP SIG conveners and CDNL Chair and Vice-Chairs to provide input

Contributors

This report is created by:

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The following people were invited to the discussion:

Guy Berthiaume; Aakki Hassan; Angela Maria Monteiro Bettencourt; Camille Espy; Manganiello, Francesco; Clavel-Merrin Genevieve; Hajer Sehli; Han Yongjin; Hans Jansen; Howayda Kamel; Isabelle Nyffenegger; Ismet Ovcina; Janne Andresoo; Jaesun Lee; Kai Ekholm; Katarina Kristofova; Katarzyna Slaska; Katharina Beberweil; Kristel Veimann; Lars Ilshammar; Liisa Savolainen; Lilibitola Boshevska; Liudmila Tikhonova; Maisela E Maepa; Mark Sweeney; Matilde Gaffet; Melita Ambrozic; Munalbaeva Umutkan Daurenbekovna; Nafisah Ahmad; Nancy Machado Lorenzo; Puleng Kekana; Rachel More; Renate Gömpel; Rocky Ralebipi; Roger Jøsevold; Sook Hyeun Lee; Sookwon Shin; Elsa Barber; Winston Roberts; Stuart Hamilton

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Introduction

From June 12 to June 30, 2017, Guy Berthiaume, Chair of the National Libraries Standing Committee, invited all current, incoming, and outgoing members, plus representatives from the two SIGs NILP and NOIR, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of CDNL, to contribute to a paper on Google Docs. In all, 39 librarians were invited to share their thoughts on how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future.

The participants are all members of national libraries or closely affiliated, from all continents. Given the difficulties of bringing together so many participants virtually in such a short timeframe, an off-line format was chosen. The results of this exercise will form the basis of a mini-workshop to be held during the section's second business meeting at IFLA 2017 to enable face-to-face discussion. Participants were invited to respond to as many – or as few – questions as they wished, and several reminders were sent out to encourage replies once the questionnaire had been populated by the initial respondents. People were not required to leave their names.

While this approach was not optimal, it was the only one possible in the short time frame provided, especially given that the names of the new SC members were known only at the end of May 2017. Although the number of actual respondents was low, approximately 10 in all, the quality of the input remains valuable to the general Global Vision discussion, and as a basis for our work during WLIC.

The need to provide responses in English may have hindered participation as well. Ideally, we would have encouraged responses in all languages and translated them to ensure inclusiveness.

A vision for libraries

Libraries enable literate, informed and participative societies. When we look at the future, according to the debates within the Standing Committee of National Libraries and the two SIGS NILP and NOIR, this means that libraries offer access for all, in an inclusive safe space where information in many forms is collected, preserved and made accessible today and in the future. To make this happen, librarians need to privilege dialogue with their users (and non-users), and one another, promoting and advocating for these strongly-held values.

The core values of libraries (Q4):

1. Access for all
2. Intellectual Freedom (e.g., guaranteeing and facilitating the free exchange of information and ideas in a democratic society, and protecting intellectual freedom and respecting individuals' rights to privacy and choice)

3.	Ensuring the conservation and preservation of documentary and cultural heritage for future generations, regardless of the medium (responsibility)
4.	Inclusion
5.	Collaboration and partnerships

Comments:

There was an overwhelming agreement on the first three values: access, intellectual freedom and privacy, and preservation. Reflecting the participants' background (i.e., national library / cultural heritage), a significant emphasis was placed on the collection, safeguarding and transmission of culture:
- Protecting and ensuring access to knowledge and culture today and in the future
- Collecting and safeguarding relevant materials and information
- Storing of literary heritage in traditional and electronic form
- Promotion of cultural heritage
- Cultural and intellectual stewardship

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

1.	Preserving cultural and documentary heritage
2.	Providing a safe and neutral space
3.	Providing access to information to all
4.	Management and organization of knowledge: systematic, reliable, and trustworthy metadata creation and management (e.g., national bibliography)
5.	Developing and promoting literacy (information and digital)

Comments:

Once again, we see reflected in these answers the mission of the national library to collect, preserve and make available cultural heritage. Networking was also mentioned, though less frequently. Trust is a common theme.

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

1.	Partnerships and collaboration with other memory and cultural institutions
2.	Listen to their clients to understand users' needs – especially the younger generation, and the business community
3.	Increase the accessibility of unique content via digitization
4.	Question professional practices and be open to change

5. Be more visible: increase outreach and communication opportunities / activities with users and funding agencies

Comments:

Cooperation – with other memory institutions and communities, and improving access through digitization are the main elements underlined by respondents. Other areas mentioned include: measuring the effects of services (for special groups). Engagement at all levels should be increased.

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

1. Resisting or being slow to embrace change

2. Deciding what is good for users (i.e., not listening to them); making users adapt to the institution rather than the other way round

3. Being insular: professionally (i.e., isolated from archives, galleries, museums); just talking to ourselves

4. Perfectionism, at the expense of providing "good enough" and timely services to our users

5. Duplicating work (e.g., re-doing what has been done elsewhere)

Comments:

Again, there was a large consensus on the first three areas, expressed in different ways. Also there were respondents that stated that libraries need to stop complaining, not to expect future funding levels to remain constant, and set too many rules

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

1. Misinformation – fake news, over-reliance on dubious sources of information, and lack of critical reading / thinking

2. Radicalism and terrorism

3. Climate change

4. Migration – caused by wars, famine, and poverty

5. Growing inequality – financial and digital

Comments:

These challenges were underlined by all in different words and order. Since they were almost equally rated there is no real hierarchy in the five responses.

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

1. Relevance: in the community, through new roles and services in the digital age, service-centred attitudes and meeting users' real needs

2. The legal environment - ownership and management of intellectual property, copyright and censorship

3. Introducing / adapting / embracing new technologies to respond to society's changing needs

4. Managing collections by preserving and providing access to analogue and digital – long term digital storage and preservation

5. Funding

Comments:

Also mentioned: being part of a whole ecosystem of GLAMs (galleries, libraries, archives and museums).

The main professional challenges (Q10):

1. Cooperation: building bridges with non-traditional professions and partners / third parties; strategically aligning initiatives / activities to address common challenges facing memory and cultural institutions

2. Demonstrating relevance: to public, decision makers and funders; communicating our unique role in the information ecosystem

3. Staff development: improving education, lifelong learning, willingness to engage and transfer knowledge; improving service-oriented social skills

4. Harvesting and preserving the internet – overcoming technical and legal challenges (e.g., making visible and accessible copyrighted collections from the XXth century; capturing social media)

5. Managing legal issues – intellectual property and digital legal deposit

Comments:

The need to work within a government framework was also highlighted and underlines the unique position of national libraries. Many responses covered staff and the need to ensure continued skills development – digital, social, life-long learning, staff cooperation.

How a united library field can make a difference

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

1. Outreach, outreach, outreach

2. Dialogue: with users, with other memory institutions, with libraries, with the private sector, with decision makers and funders

3. Collaboration: with other memory institutions, libraries and private sector

4. Advocacy: promoting our shared values; being a strong and coherent voice that is informed and enriched by diverse cultural views (e.g., one team, one vision, once voice)

5. Develop information literacy - Provide media and information literacy for different user generations

Comments:

Overwhelmingly, our respondents called for outreach, dialogue, communication and collaboration.

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

1. Cooperative (i.e., with other library and memory institutions in sharing new ideas and services)

2. Inclusive

3. Trusted community builders (i.e., having a positive impact on the community)

4. Open (i.e., to new ideas, new technologies, new solutions, innovation; not being afraid of failure)

5. Evolving (i.e., continually responding to user needs)

Comments:

Again, a wide consensus on openness, inclusivity, cooperation and making an impact. Other characteristics were strong and democratic.

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

1. Advocacy (i.e., strong advocacy relating to rights management and copyright)

2. Dialogue (i.e., with users [and non-users]; with the private sector, etc.)

3. Cooperation (i.e., with different professional fields; with non-traditional partners)

4.	User-centred services and programs
5.	Developing legislative frameworks (e.g., equal access under law to high quality information)

Comments:

Other areas of consideration: truly embracing diversity inside the profession and towards users; actively involved in the evolution of relevant technologies.

A global conversation

This report was created by virtue of an interactive process, online from June 12to June 30 2017, and a summary document was created on July 5, 2017. This report 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/.