IFLA Knowledge Cafe

The Knowledge Economy: How Continuous Learning can prepare Information Professionals for the future

The Knowledge Café at the 2017 IFLA World Conference was an interactive discussion focused on the changing and challenging role of librarians in the ever-evolving information world. During the one-hour session, participants had the opportunity to attend two of twelve different table topics. This report summarizes eleven of the tables. Discussion leaders kicked off the conversations that rapidly turned into insightful and very practical ideas that participants could take home. About 170 attendees gained insights on the importance of continuous learning as information professionals affect change in our communities. Rapporteurs captured the highlights shared below.

Table topics:

1. *New Skills for New Roles: Integrating a Wider Range of Public and Commercial Services in Libraries*
2. *Stimulating Collaboration and Social Interaction: Best Uses of Library Spaces*
3. *Librarians as Mentors and Coaches: Supporting Education, Research and Well-informed Decision-making*
4. *Staff Continuous Learning Practices and Techniques*
5. *Change Management Techniques: Communication and Leadership*
6. *What to Expect From New Grads*
7. *Developing an Innovative Library Culture in the Workplace*
8. *Keeping Up with Our Changing World: Intelligence Gathering Strategies*
9. *Building Leadership Skills for Individuals and Teams*
10. *Focusing on the Critical, not the Urgent: Practices and Tips*
11. *Crowdsourcing for Library Decision Making: How to Encourage Diverse Thoughts and Ideas*

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1. New Skills for New Roles: Integrating a Wider Range of Public and Commercial Services in Libraries
   Discussion Leader: Loida Garcia Febo (Information New Wave, USA)
   Summary submitted by Steve Wise (House of Commons Library, U.K.)

It can be frustrating for newly qualified librarians to find jobs in libraries. But it is worth thinking a little out of the box about what the alternatives might be. It might be outside the traditional library building. It may be looking for a job that involves 'managing information' rather than one that says 'librarian'. Some examples of this include providing indexing for the search function of a major retail site, working as an

information specialist in IT programmes, helping analyse data / data management for business start-ups/entrepreneurs, managing information for TV news or NASA. We need to encourage students to look more broadly and imaginatively about using their skills.

So what should libraries provide in terms of professional development and what skills do today's information professionals need?

- Self-directed / life-long learning with open minds and the ability to adapt to change as libraries and information needs are in transition. Encouragement (and the confidence) to reinvent ourselves and look for ways to supplement our skill set and then publicise those new skills. Entrepreneurial, consciously thinking about how we can use our skills to deliver value – to ourselves as well as our customers. This all applies equally to other professions as well.

- Is it better to start with a background in another line of business and then teach students library/IM skills or vice versa? We discussed examples where each model had been used successfully. One idea suggested was to use more experienced staff to mentor newer staff.

- We need to be much more knowledgeable about technological developments and also about the needs of our communities.

- Another skill is the ability to develop relationships and partnerships with other professionals, both within and outside of libraries.

- Some of the skills and potential roles discussed for librarians include data analyst, coder, data miner, CIA analyst, working with social networks, digital content, and design thinking. Metadata was seen as increasingly important in the digital world of big data and the Internet of Things.

- How can library schools transform themselves, changing their own methods and equipping students with the new skills they will need? One thought was that the perception of the term 'library' can be old fashioned. Schools can change their name to drop the 'library' tag. We are still librarians but with a broader range of skills. Does calling ourselves 'information specialists' broaden our job prospects? In Sweden, the word Librarian has been reloaded, refreshing perceptions to match what we actually do now, eliminating the problem.

- When people start in their careers, we should focus on soft skills, behavioural interviewing, psychometric testing – not so much the technical skills (since new starters either have them or we can teach them) but more about emotional intelligence.

- Realistically, should we try to be everything to everyone? (There is the risk of being 'jack of all trades and master of none'.)   But we can develop skills profiles and competencies, suitable for different types of roles or jobs, evolving and enriching skill sets over our careers. Which takes us back to life-long learning and adapting to future, as well as present, needs.

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2. Stimulating Collaboration and Social Interaction: Best Uses of Library Spaces
   Discussion Leader: Vivian Lewis (McMaster University, Canada)
   Summary submitted by Eva Semertzaki (Bank of Greece, Greece)

Two sessions of about twenty minutes took place. Participants represented seventeen countries: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Greece, Japan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and USA.

There was not enough time for all participants to express their thoughts but the highlights of the discussions were:

- Team activities in libraries without money help to build social collaboration
- Libraries build strategies of bringing staff together, such as:
    - Relationships via Communities of Practice make people feel comfortable

- Using business intelligence sessions and diligent tools (e.g. Zoom) in project management help people share their expertise and solve problems of communication
- In face-to-face meetings, people learn about what others are doing.
- Some libraries are inventing creative ways to get people involved such as using dice in red and blue for negative and positive evaluation of projects
- Geographical dispersion in local or country level creates different ways of interaction between staff members
- Switching roles in libraries is a way of stimulating communication but people need to acquire different kinds of skills
- The generation gap is evident in libraries: two to three generations may work together in the same library but in many cases, young people may resist change while people who have been in the profession longer, may not be as technologically savvy. All generations are needed to amalgamate experiences. In other cases, the generation gap acts energetically in libraries to accomplish tasks that fit the skills of different ages
- There are thematic standing groups in countries, e.g. information literacy, cataloging standards where librarians meet in intervals and inform other librarians about new developments
- The library administrators should stimulate to collaboration with metrics to encourage teams to work together

Conclusion: Libraries and librarians worldwide have many things and concerns in common. Conversations like the Knowledge Café have great insights and IFLA gets a global vision of libraries around the world.

3. Librarians as Mentors and Coaches: Supporting Education, Research and Well-informed Decision-making
Discussion Leader: Ulrike Lang (State and University Library, Hamburg, Germany)
Summary submitted by Eduardo Goldstein (Chilean Congress Library, Chile)

The table had two rounds of discussion, with a wide diversity of participants (different countries and library types, which include libraries from Germany, Spain, Uganda, USA, Japan, Australia, Sweden, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Thailand, Philippines, Botswana and Chile

Ulrike opened the discussion with an invitation to identify the differences between a mentor and coach. The following differences in characteristics, among others were identified:

- Mentor: Gives supervision and advice for career development and personal development of the mentees. Mentees may be new librarians or professionals who want to move into a different sector or role. Mentoring could be for the long term and with a broader focus than coaching. Mentoring could also focus on giving advice for librarians who want to grow in their careers, such as becoming a Director.
- Coach: In general a coach is more focused on a specific development area or skill and is frequently for the short term. Instead of advice, a coach poses key questions for the mentee to answer her/himself.

Some participants commented that it is not always easy to tell the difference between mentoring and coaching. Based on the experiences of participants, the table focused more on the discussion of the characteristics and challenges of mentoring than of coaching interventions. Participants shared experiences of programs they had been involved with or supported in their organizations

It is possible to identify different schemes or mentoring programs, with a broad variety of items and duration (such as periods of six, twelve or eighteen months). In the experiences shared, the users were mostly librarians, but some programs included other worker).

There were references to experiences of different geographical combinations and ways of interacting (face-to-face or using social media platforms like WhatsApp, Skype, wiki-spaces, etc.) Some information is available concerning guidelines, like ALIA Mentoring Scheme Guidelines 2017, or the web sites of the respective associations.

Some topics that could be the main objective of mentoring include the following examples: how to deal with your boss, make a resume, find work, develop different skills, etc.

With respect to the different characteristics of participants in mentoring, big issues for different programs were taken into account for the match between mentor and mentees. Concerns about key preliminary information of each one, and criteria for selection was discussed. A survey prior to selection of expectations and interests is very useful for finding a match. In some programs, mentees could chose a mentor considering their resume and particular skills.

To match people from the same or different locations has advantages and disadvantages. From the experience of some participants, it does not seem advisable to match people from the same city or institution so that they do not know each other, and for separating personal and work problems. There are concerns of preserving confidentiality in the cases when mentor and mentees live in the same area, especially in the small towns.

In some places the programs are incentives for professionals but at the same time there are instances where there is much more availability of mentors than mentees. There are cases of programs that have been suspended for these reasons.

Other programs maintain close relations with student associations, and in universities, it is common for advanced students to be mentors or advisers of new students.

How to evaluate and improve different kinds of services was also taken into account with the contribution of the experiences of the participants.

4. Staff Continuous Learning: Practices and Tips
Discussion Leader: Gillian Hallam, (Queensland University of Technology, Australia)
Summary submitted by Juanita Jara de Sumar (McGill University [retired], Canada)

The first group considered that continuing education for librarians has to be done in areas that allow connection of current events with professional development. Strategies to be used should be based on identifying needs by using new technologies for managing change.

There should be an office that manages in-house training through seminars and workshops. However, there can be a lack of commitment and different types of libraries sometimes get different treatment. For example, in Sweden University, librarians receive training, but public librarians do not. The Library association is working with the unions to address this problem.

In Swaziland, staff is not qualified because there are no library schools. A solution would be to have stronger library associations. In Zambia, the Library Association together with the library school offer continuing professional development courses.

It was also mentioned that there is a problem with geographic dispersion which would require distance-learning programmes. In addition, it is usually Human Resources who manages continuing professional development.

The second group discussed the need to know the career path one wants to follow in order to determine training. It is important to find out what you want to do.

There is a need to keep track of one's career development. Digital portfolios were suggested. There was a perception that more experienced librarians feel challenged by their juniors. Also there can be a gap between school and practice. It was suggested that if more information professionals work in

teams, instead of hierarchical organization, this could help. Another suggestion was that newer librarians should be mentoring the senior staff, because technology moves too fast.

An example was given of senior staff who are paid for lecturing outside the organization donating that money into staff training.

Also discussed was the fact that organizations sometimes support training only if it is related to the job and not for advancement.

5. Change Management Techniques: Communication and Leadership
Discussion Leader: Karin Finer (European Parliamentary Research Service, Belgium)
Summary submitted by Ellie Valentine, Rapporteur (Freelance Librarian, USA)

Karin Finer from the Library Services European Parliamentary Research Service led off the discussion with a framework for change management including Kotter's eight steps for change that are often used by libraries:

- Create a sense of urgency
- Build a guiding coalition
- Form a strategic vision & initiatives
- Enlist a volunteer army
- Enable action by removing barriers
- Generate short-term wins
- Sustain acceleration
- Institute change

Kotter's 8 Steps for Change

There are many different techniques for change management. It is a process – not an event – it has steps. It is the process itself that must be managed. Anyone who has managed change knows that there are many aspects to be managed. Communication is a central issue. There is often resistance to creating a new system. The team leader and the team need many skills, so calling on those skills within the team is a critical element for success.

External change is more difficult (and meets with more resistance) than internal change that you or the team initiates. Therefore, finding points of "ownership" or "buy-in" can be important elements for successful change management. Gaining acceptances helps to find a way forward. Good practice includes: base change on analysis; have a strong vision; involve people; if change is forced – explain why; look at alternative options; accentuate positive benefits; be prepared to modify ideal solution; define the new organisation; train staff; discuss changes; involve external change agents if needed.

With rational change, one knows why it is needed. But there is often an emotional side of change that is very difficult. So part of managing change is managing fears and helping people let go or to take off in a new direction.

Change often takes more time than you have. It is helpful to set milestones and to "celebrate the milestones."

It is important to communicate the change goals and visualize the consequences of the change. Change can be very chaotic, but there is also room for enormous creativity and suddenly people from whom you do not necessarily expect it become very active and supportive of the change process. If there

is development blockage, you can often find those people who are supportive to bring others along. As one participant said: "I will never again make a prediction about what will be easy – or hard."

Sometimes exercises help to get the team prepared. Edward de Bono's "Six Thinking Hats" is one way that a team can be given voice to question the plan or amend it. For example, it can be helpful to have an external stimulus to the process through an outside facilitator or consultant. One librarian described a process of an outside consultant who led a process to interview the staff and once they got their results from the one-on-one interviews they were assembled into small discussion tables with the goal to develop a product box, and they had to say everything they wanted in terms of operability, marketing, user friendliness, etc. The whole event was captured by video and the product boxes are still on display for everyone to see so that the work they have done to shape the process is not forgotten.

Participants included librarians and consultants from Botswana, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, the UK, the US. We discussed change from a personnel management perspective (new staff, more staff, less staff) as well as a project perspective (collection consolidation, new LMS, moving facilities, introducing a new strategic plan).

6. What to Expect from New Grads
Discussion Leader: Sandy Hirsh (San Jose State University, USA)
Summary submitted by Mary Ellen Davis (Assoc. of College and Research Libraries, USA)

 "What to Expect from New Grads" had a range of participants from different library sectors and from different countries (including USA, Slovenia, Sweden, Poland, Belgium, Germany, Canada, Australia, Thailand, and France). In both table discussions, we had a different student from St. Catherine's library school (in Minnesota) participate. Here are some of the points that emerged from our very active and engaged discussions:

- Employers are looking for new grads to fill specific skill gaps in their libraries. This can vary over time. For example, several people emphasized the importance of language skills (not just English), especially to support immigrant communities; several mentioned that we all live in a global world. Other skills mentioned included tech skills, big data, management, social media skills, knowledge of digital technologies, data management, etc.
- Employers are looking for new grads who have strong soft skills and interpersonal skills such as flexibility, collaboration, team player, communication (both verbal and non-verbal), passion for the job, etc. Some are focusing increasingly on the "fit" of the employee in their organization. Some said that in fact it is more important to them to hire new grads who have strong management skills, rather than tech competencies. Others said that in fact tech skills WERE important to them. So there were some differing perspectives.
- Employers are looking for new grads who have a "spirit of service;" they want people who know how to teach technologies to users, people who will do great outreach to the community and who will serve as "ambassadors", people who are curious and creative, and people who are committed to lifelong learning.
- Employers emphasized that libraries have changed and they are not interested in new grads who talk about choosing this profession because they "love books" or because they want to work in a "safe environment." They need new grads to bring imagination and new thinking to their libraries. They want new grads to be "agents of change." They want new grads who have a passion and who bring their personality to the position. They want new grads who are not afraid to say "I don't know" and who will ask for help when they need it.
- There were some concerns about who is choosing to go to library school in the first place, and whether library schools are attracting the right people to the profession. For example, in public

libraries, some of the participants emphasized that the work is changing and they need new grads who want to work with people, not just with books.

- There were some other topics that came up. Some feel they have to provide too much training to new grads to fill in gaps in their knowledge, such as an understanding of specific academic library issues (e.g., funding models, open access). As a result, participants mentioned a number of different approaches. One person said that she now often hires non-LIS professionals in scientific areas (e.g., mathematics, chemistry, etc) and teaches these scientists to have careers in the library as catalogers in these specialized areas. Some mentioned the importance of assigning new grads to mentors in the workplace to assist the new grads in learning their new work environment. Another mentioned that he found that offering internships was a fruitful way for them to find good new grads and to train them as well. Another mentioned the importance of employer support of new grads and that employers need to help new grads get more skills.

7. Developing an Innovative Library Culture in the Workplace
Discussion Leader: Ewa Stenberg (Malmo University, Sweden)
Summary submitted by Sylvia Piggott, Rapporteur (Global Information Solutions,Canada)

- Innovations come out of different climates
- Must have the will to change things, curiosity, testing pilots, absorb errors
- Everyone must feel they are trusted, not top down, have time for developing ideas
- 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast' - you can have a wonderful strategy but must have culture in which to thrive
- Recruit to fit into culture - a problem to overcome
- Fear of new technology
- Move staff out if necessary
- Find coalition of the willing
- Develop teamwork
- Training is a must
- Manager creates the culture
- Create space to innovate
- Innovation grant to empower staff to innovate
- Idea workshop - choose the best
- Fail competition - allow you to try new things
- Innovate is not extra work
- Visit innovative places
- Read outside of the field
- Courage from management

8. Keeping Up with Our Changing World: Intelligence Gathering Strategies
Discussion Leader: Elizabeth Turner (TPG Global, USA)
Summary submitted by Mary Augusta Thomas (Smithsonian Libraries, USA)

Two interesting group discussions brought two different aspects of intelligence gathering. Social media was important to most participants in keeping themselves professionally informed. Members chose carefully who they would follow on Twitter and often tied their selections to writers and lecturers of note.

In many places, the institutional account serves as the means to get the word out about programs. Professional information sources were gathered on private accounts.

In the first group, social media use was seen more as personal professional development; the second group used it for intelligence gathering for reporting up. Twitter was preferred as more international than Facebook. Librarians who were responsible for gathering information and re-packaging recommended Storify and similar tools.

Blog content was for longer reading times. The participants encouraged their staff to learn from younger staff and there was an excellent suggestion of reverse mentoring to raise the overall use of social media. New staff are assigned to more established staff to help them learn new media.

There was a mix of suggestions on more formal business analysis tools and methods. Some used library school webinars, some held scenario meetings. In the second session, many librarians used clipping services and news aggregators to keep informed.

Radio, podcasts, and newspapers still provide timely information particularly for those dealing with political figures. Email is the means of sharing most of the information with staff; intranets are not as actively used. Information is taken as more reliable if the sender is known.

9. Building Leadership Skills for Individuals and Teams
Discussion Leader: Lillian Gassie (Library of Congress, USA)
Summary submitted by Catharina Isberg (Helsingborgs Library, Sweden)

What is leadership? Leaders provide the vision and the big picture and bring people together to make the job. Leaders inspire people to move in a certain direction

Leadership is a key factor in making a difference. The result depends very much on the leadership role.

Building leadership skills through:

- Formal leadership training (it is important that this is added in LIS education)
- CPD (Continuing Professional Development)
- Daily work – practice is every day

Need to begin the leadership path earlier. Expertise is also important.

Leadership training – the will must come from the inside; you need to be interested and believe in it, be motivated. It is a long process.

You need a lot of confidence to take on the leadership role. You need to build this up.

Empowerment – in modern working life everyone is a leader at different points, everyone needs to take leadership of their daily work. Leadership skills on different levels are needed. The same program that is offered to managers/leaders needs to be given to all employees.

Build a knowledge culture which motivates people to share and to experiment. Make a culture where people are not afraid of failure, where failure is ok and accepted. You learn from failure. You are also more respected as a leader when you are honest and show that you can make mistakes – you get more human. Failure is culture and situation specific.

The person who does not do anything does not make any mistakes.

Many leadership programs are done within the institution or organization where you work. Some organizations also have mentoring programs.

Great to do some in-house training. Cheaper to do it in-house and bring all staff together. Also a good learning opportunity to get the same knowledge at the same time.

10. Focusing on the Critical, Not the Urgent: Practices and Tips
Discussion Leader: Jane Dysart (Dysart & Jones Associates, USA)
Summary submitted by Ida Kelemen (Hungarian National Assembly, Hungary)

During the two rounds of discussion, sixteen colleagues participated from a wide variety of countries and institutions: parliamentary, university and public libraries, from a museum, cultural centre and a library association.

Jane Dysart, the discussion leader, introduced the difference between the urgent and critical. As she described, we are usually busy with urgent things: phone calls, emails, and colleagues coming and asking information. We tend to concentrate on such things and they demand attention because the consequences of not dealing with them are immediate. However, if we look closely at them, we can recognize that they are usually associated with achieving someone else's goals and distract our time and energy from things important for us.

The critical activities have an outcome that helps us achieve our goals. They are typically centered on strengthening relationships, finding funding and supporters and planning for the future.

There are many common issues at different types of libraries and countries. They meet similar challenges. The critical issues listed by the table attendees included:

– Improving the services (e.g. access to databases, e-books, balance between the printed and electronic collection)
– Educating the library users (e.g. how to use the databases)
– Making sure decision-makers understand the work and the needs of the library
– Raising awareness about the importance of the library during organizational changes (usually the library is the last priority)
– Keeping the awareness of the library on the forefront
– Being visible, promoting the library
– Building relationships

Relationship building is one of the critical issues that is important in achieving institutional goals and finding funding and support. The most important relations mentioned by the participants were:

– Keeping contacts with Management
– Relationship with other organizations
– Building relationships in official or unofficial ways (e.g. having lunch or coffee together)
– Meeting with other specialists to learn from them
– Finding people, such as heavy users of the library, to be advocates
– Having a good reputation outside can help to find supporters

How do we find time for dealing with the critical things? We should take a step back from everyday routine ("give me one hour to think about this") and take time to think (e.g. on Friday afternoon or lunchtime). Meeting with the staff (e.g. once a year) and speaking about the things critical for the service is also helpful.

Further reading: Dan Pontefract [2016]: The Purpose Effect

11. Crowdsourcing for Library Decision Making: How to Encourage Diverse Thoughts and Ideas
Discussion Leader: K. Jane Burpee (McGill University, Canada)
Summary submitted by Julien Sempéré (Universite Paris Saclay, France)

Participants shared many innovative ideas about how they have used crowdsourcing for their libraries.

- One participant shared that they are using crowdsourcing to develop a website for internal and external users of the library. They conducted a survey of librarians, patrons and researchers. The survey asked for feedback on a number of areas including asking for specific feedback on the colors used on their website
- A participant from the Federal institute of Technology, ETH Zurich uses crowdsourcing to gather information about how people find information. https://blogs.ethz.ch/crowdsourcing/ (available in German)
- Another participant shared information about HistoryPin. This is a place for people to share photos and stories, telling the histories of their local communities. They develop and maintain storytelling methods used by 3000+ cultural organisations to expand their communities and bring their resources to life.
- McGill University is using mobile apps like Twitter to help determine what services library patrons use
- At the University of Fribourg, they use crowdsourcing to survey users about how to change and prioritize opening hours.
- One participant mentioned that Information literacy training is important when teaching people about crowdsourcing and how to use it. In Serbia, they send out a survey after each training to get information about people's reaction to the training program.
- In Lyon, they use crowdsourcing to assess which books patrons want to buy
- In Switzerland, they used crowdsourcing with professors to help them weed their collection.
- A participant from Australia shared that they used crowdsourcing to conduct a survey to help them choose the next library exhibition.
- The Helsinki Public Library used crowdsourcing as they made plans in order to organise spaces for a new central library.
- One participant shared that they used crowdsourcing to facilitate participatory budgeting.
- In California, one library used crowdsourcing to help make decisions about new library furniture. This was also done in Finland.

To conclude, crowdsourcing is a good way to involve the public in areas such as collection development or library services. A watch-out when using crowdsourcing is to understand that this could raise expectations that everything suggested will be implemented. Expectations need to be managed. It needs to be clear about what will happen with the results from crowdsourcing. And it is important to keep in mind that not all users are represented in gathering information by crowdsourcing. In addition, information about the results should be communicated back to the people who participated.