International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
Fédération Internationale des Associations de Bibliothécaires et des Bibliothèques
Internationaler Verband der bibliothekarischen Vereine und Institutionen
Международная Федерация Библиотечных Ассоциаций и Учреждений
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About IFLA **www.ifla.org**

IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. It is the global voice of the library and information profession.

IFLA provides information specialists throughout the world with a forum for exchanging ideas and promoting international cooperation, research and development in all fields of library activity and information service. IFLA is one of the means through which libraries, information centres, and information professionals worldwide can formulate their goals, exert their influence as a group, protect their interests and find solutions to global problems.

IFLA's aims, objectives, and professional programme can only be fulfilled with the cooperation and active involvement of its members and affiliates. Currently, approximately 1,600 associations, institutions and individuals, from widely divergent cultural back-grounds, are working together to further the goals of the Federation and to promote librarianship on a global level. Through its formal membership, IFLA directly or indirectly represents some 500,000 library and information professionals worldwide.

IFLA pursues its aims through a variety of channels, including the publication of a major journal, as well as guidelines, reports and monographs on a wide range of topics. IFLA organizes workshops and seminars around the world to enhance professional practice and increase awareness of the growing importance of libraries in the digital age. All this is done in collaboration with a number of other non-governmental organizations, funding bodies and international agencies such as UNESCO and WIPO. IFLANET, the Federation's website, is a prime source of information about IFLA, its policies and activities: www.ifla.org

Library and information professionals gather annually at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress, held in August each year in cities around the world.

IFLA was founded in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1927 at an international conference of national library directors. IFLA was registered in the Netherlands in 1971. The Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library), the national library of the Netherlands, in The Hague, generously provides the facilities for our headquarters. Regional offices are located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Pretoria, South Africa; and Singapore.

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The Road to Information Literacy

Librarians as Facilitators of Learning

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Effective Continuing Professional Development

Librarians – Moving from Being 'The Elephant in the Room' to Becoming Central to the Learning Process

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of interviews with students in one U.S. school district's elementary, middle, and high schools, and explores two ways: Book to Cloud and Knowledge Building Centres which place librarians "On the Road to Information Literacy." It acknowledges librarians in all types of libraries as people who, in real time, are facilitating learning and knowledge building. They are essential elements in the learning space. The paper will present the concept of the librarian at the centre of learning, address the perceptions students have of librarians in their learning lives, demonstrate strategies that put the librarian at the centre of learning and immerse and embed the librarian into the learning experience. Most librarians would agree that they have seemed to be elephants in the room. They have been considered outside the sphere of learning for much too long. Patrons at all levels are using Google in their attempts to locate information lacking any awareness of the quality of what they find or how to find even better information. They bypass the librarian in their attempts at learning and knowledge building. This paper shows librarians how to use tools familiar to patrons to emerge from being the silent and often ignored yet essential elephant in the room.

Introduction

For centuries before the emergence of the Internet, the library with its collection of manuscripts or books was the major source of information in a school, community, or campus. No one could be knowledgeable in the learned sense

by ignoring the collection of the library. It was the jewel of a university such as Harvard; the centre of intellectual and cultural life in a city as in the New York Public Library or for a nation with the British Museum and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France. Scholars throughout the world would seek out a treasured collection in which to do research. How well prepared scholars were to answer their research questions often depended upon receiving instruction from the librarian, although librarians were not always acknowledged as part of the process. They might be described as the "elephant in the room," someone who is there, but not really visible.

The advent of the Internet has democratized information which is now accessible from a connected device anywhere and at any time. Suddenly there is a perception that the Internet is the library of the world and Wikipedia the encyclopedia of choice, library users bypass their library preferring Google. In comparison, faced with financial difficulties, libraries have lost staff and other resources. In the face of these challenges, many librarians are now proposing a total re-envisioning of the mission of the library. R. David Lankes (2011) has proposed that the new role of the librarian is the creation of knowledge as opposed to the storage and retrieval of information.

One response within education has been to look at the physical library space and to align technology and reference services in a Learning Commons, for example Loertscher, Koechlin and Zwaan (2011) proposed the replacement of the school library and computer lab with a Learning Commons. This vision, called the iCentre in Australia (Hough, 2011), was defined by Hay (2010) as "... the central facility within the school where information, technology, learning, and teaching needs are supported by qualified information and technology specialists".

The Learning Commons concept has become quite common in academic libraries in Canada and the U.S. and is gaining momentum in other countries as well. In the U.S. this is perceived as an information commons which combines open computing resources into the library space with added comfortable seating to encourage collaborative work. Integrating access to other institutional services as well means the library becomes as much a service commons as an information commons, but not necessarily a *learning* commons.

Where this has been mirrored in public libraries, patrons of all ages appreciate access to the Internet, access to connective devices, a place where they can connect their own devices, and all types of advice in troubleshooting problems with all of the various technologies. Those lacking access or devices at home depend on these services and expect that they will be present for walk-in access.

How will these changes in the mission of the library change the position and impact librarians have in this very different information world? While laudable and useful, providing basic services, whether in the area of technology or reference, are not central to either informal or formal learning. Knowledge creation requires more than a supportive role; it pushes the librarian into

the role of teacher, mentor, coach, in ways that emphasize outcomes rather than inputs. No matter the type of library, the Learning Commons we advocate is both a physical and a virtual environment. It is a commons because it is "owned" in a participatory environment by the patrons and is the centre of both teaching and learning for the school or any other type of community. It plays a role in the new arena discussed by David Weinberger in his book *Too Big To Know* (2011), where the smartest person in the room is the room.

Finding out what students want

Much has been said about a new generation of young people who have grown up with constant access to the Internet. They are said to behave quite differently in this information and technology rich world than the generation before them. The authors of this paper alongside sixty other school library scholars and practitioners assembled in Minneapolis, Minnesota in September of 2011 asking themselves about the information and technology habits of young people and its impact on the concept of the library. This location was chosen because the school district technology and library staff had been making major progress in incorporating technology and information skills with students throughout all grade levels.

The research group was privileged to be able to interviews students at all levels. Gaining access to interview students is no longer easy in the U.S. The number of tests required by governmental units takes a great deal of time away from classroom, and any additional non-required testing is simply not allowed.

Administrators in this suburban school district cautioned the group that they were not allowed to ask direct questions; district employees had to do that; but, the researchers could be present, smile, and record the answers to the interview questions and make clarifications. Researchers worked in pairs, some in elementary schools, others in a middle school and others in designated classrooms in the high school in which the meeting was being held. The researchers conducted a total of 22 interviews of individual students. The researchers could not draw a random sample of students across the district, so they made no claim that the conclusions were representative of all students, only of those who were available and willing to be interviewed in the schools at the time of the research.

During the interviews, the researchers asked two questions:

- Describe your use of technology both at home and at school and how technology helps you.
- Describe a favorite project you have done at school telling about those who helped you, and what you learned.

The researchers recorded answers using a Google Form on a computer so all results appeared on the results spreadsheet immediately and could be seen instantly on a Google Spreadsheet back at headquarters[1]

With this technology, the group of scholars could analyze responses immediately. Dr. Ross Todd of Rutgers University led the original synthesis activity at the close of the conference. Both authors reviewed the findings in preparation for writing this paper and they are discussed below in terms of technology, assistance, and learning.

Technology

Throughout the grade levels, students have access to a variety of devices both at school and at home, including computers of all types, cell phones, iPads, iPods, xbox, flip cams, smart boards, document cameras, e-readers, Gameboy and MP3 among others. It is apparent that they have wide access to the Internet. No one complained about filtering (limiting access to Internet sites considered harmful to youth), which is a requirement at some schools. They feel comfortable in using technology and want more and better devices to boost their efficiency. All know that technology is an essential part of their learning and realize that the culture that surrounds technology is very collaborative. The students understand that technology is a means to learn and build their knowledge and expertise. Gender did not seem to be a factor in the use of technology devices or tools.

Assistance

Across the grade levels, students recognize the help they receive from peers, family, teachers, and various information sources they can access. Their librarians seemed to be invisible to these students even though the researchers knew that the teacher librarians in all the schools were exemplary and had facilitated technology access, use of information, and the creation of multimedia products.

Learning

The students have most enthusiasm when describing an authentic learning task. They show a level of detail when they talk about the project, including product and process, that indicates a level of recall specific to authentic learning tasks. They realized that they were creating their own knowledge through active participation in a project. They seemed to be more metacognitive and talked about their learning process when engaged in authentic learning tasks.

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1 See:https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AnflIXlSMo2_dDlFQXJlQjJZaVRJRVMxOHlab3NNRFE#gid=0

Students who participate in well-constructed projects are likely to remember their chances to learn from a time they were in third grade right through to experiences in high school. Finally, they realize a sense of competition and wish to do well in collaborative projects.

After listening to the analysis and synthesis of the findings, other observations were made by both the director of technology and the district library supervisor who both recognized the progress that had been made in the past few years through the infusion of technology and access to that technology throughout the district. While proud of their achievements in boosting learning through technology, both recognized that they are, as professionals, in a perpetual beta state and that they must constantly make progress by listening to the students and the best ideas from the faculty to continue their progress. All conference participants were impressed by the district leaders who really understand and promote the effective use of information and technology in learning. The entire group discussed the invisibility of the librarian to the students in the study. Why? The researchers knew that all students recognized the improvements in technology and its role in learning but did not sense the contribution of those who had made this possible.

What skills do librarians need?

Promotional skills

If the patrons of your library are like the students in this study, they are appreciative and recognize the influence that access to technology has in their learning experiences. However, they may not know from whence that advantage has come. For example, we all may appreciate our access to electricity but its provision is assumed and the installers belong to a category of "they" or just "it." Who is that helpful person behind the reference desk? Is "help" a central part of learning or just a means to the real mental effort and accomplishment? Why would a teacher be recognized but a librarian not? The researchers could only speculate but recognized that the implications of invisibility are dangerous in times of financial exigency experienced by many organizations across the globe.

Teaching skills

The concept of a *learning* commons rather than a *service* commons may be a key element where librarians are able to go beyond the provision of information or tools or equipment and actually engage alongside teachers in the use of that information to develop such things as better decisions, deep understanding and the recognition of quality information. The building of technical skills can bring efficiency into the learning process and, most importantly, the actual en-

gagement in the conversation, thinking, creating, sharing and reflection on what has been learned alongside the skills required to boost that learning.

Technology skills

Assistance with using new devices to find information may also be a key element. The expansion of technologies allows librarians to help their clientele use both the technology tools and gain the skills necessary to choose from the ever expanding range of resources they find. The next step is to get that patron to tell others about the help given and to encourage their going to the library.

In a large part of the world access to mobile and other technological devices has made Internet access common and improving all the time. Every group of patrons or potential patrons is routinely embracing new tools and devices as ways of connecting, collaborating, creating, and learning. They are no longer content to be passive consumers of information or resources collected and distributed by libraries. This generation of students attending basic education schools and moving into colleges and universities gravitates instantly to any convenient resource they feel helps them accomplish their task. Thus, they will bypass the library if it does not respond to their needs. Librarians of all types need to adapt quickly to a perpetual beta world if they are to remain players in the lives of their patrons and command the investment from their sponsoring institutions.

How do librarians gain these skills?

What do librarians need to do to "adapt quickly?" A first step here is to determine if librarians themselves are digital natives or digital immigrants. Sweeny (2005) considers academic library students are "digital natives" because they have grown up with technology, while most librarians are "digital immigrants" or adults who learned technologies much later. This knowledge requires action in order to carve out an indispensable role at the centre of teaching and learning. Librarians must experiment more and refine their thinking to accomplish this. There have been some responses to this skills gap.

Academic Librarian Response

As reported by Quinney, Quinn and Galbraith (2010), academic librarians at the Harold B. Lee Library of Brigham Young Library, recognized that "undergraduates, as members of the Millennial Generation, are proficient in Web 2.0 technology, and expect to apply these technologies in their coursework – including scholarly research" (p. 205). However, to do this, they had to make sure their librarians could overcome the gap in their technology knowledge.

This was delivered through a program titled "Technology Challenge," a self-directed training program where staff spent at least fifteen minutes each day learning the new technology skills essential to their work. Their training was then evaluated through before and after surveys. These academic librarians realized that students need Librarians 2.0, librarians who are able to help those students familiar with Web 2.0.

Public Librarian Response

The public library in its beginning years in the U.S. was called the "people's college", as it provided lifelong learning and education for those who could not attend institutions of higher learning. The role of the librarian was as an intermediary to help adults find information in card catalogues (and then later online public access catalogues) and to answer reference questions by accessing databases rather than teaching the patron to conduct the search. This has changed as we enter an era where anyone, anywhere, and at any time can learn what they want or need to learn, often for free, and without requiring a stamp of approval from any organization.

Blowers (2007) reported the development of a core competency program by the technology staff in the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County of North Carolina that "keeps workers afloat by providing them with the technology skills they need to support the change that has already occurred" (p.11). They then created "Learning 2.0", a "discovery learning program" where librarians could learn these new technologies on their own. "Through the learning and knowledge-exchanging process, self-proclaimed technology novices became experienced Learning 2.0 tutors to fellow staff" (p.15). Gerding (2011) tells us that, while not the people's college, "Libraries are community centers...being the only place with free public computers and Internet access and, moreover, free technology training" (p.43). She describes in detail how to connect people and knowledge through guidelines for technology training that will be helpful to any librarian with this goal.

New tools place librarians at the centre

In order to open our collections and resources to patrons on a 24/7 basis librarians need to use existing tools in a new way, in particular social networking tools can be used to promote services and to get participation from patrons:

Virtual Learning Commons

Librarians of all types can create their own Virtual Learning Commons, a digital space where both librarians and patrons are building and creating a learning

community. An example of this is being built by school library management students at San Jose State University who are creating a sample school Virtual Learning Commons with five portals:

- an Information Commons where access to all types of resources predominates
- a Knowledge Building Centre which features learning experiences from all over the school
- the Reading Culture portal with literacy initiatives from across the school
- Social Culture, which is a living school yearbook created by many groups and individuals such as clubs, sports, events, performances, awards. This can also easily be broadcast to parents
- an Experimental Learning Centre where all school improvement resides.

These students are using Google Sites to create their Virtual Learning Commons because it allows them to authorize "authors" in each of the portals and can be viewed widely or privately as the group decides. Google Apps for Education can be used by any educational institution throughout the world for free and in a safe environment and includes collaborative tools where learners anywhere can build, write, create, present or store products and information.

Knowledge Building Centres

Using a Google Site, the librarian and teacher/professor construct a virtual room housing a topical exploration. The class may be studying persons, places, issues, or trying to solve a problem or a challenge together. In this environment, everyone concerned with the learning experience can participate. By the very nature of the tool, instructors, librarians, consulting experts, or other mentors are in the room alongside the teacher and collaborating with the learners. The instructors/mentors plan, teach, and assess the entire experience as partners because the structure of the room encourages that kind of collaboration. This presence is a major role change for librarians who previously may have assisted in a learning experience only once or briefly. It transforms librarians into co-teachers alongside the class instructor. Examples of such collaborative experiences created by students at San Jose State University[2]

In the academic library setting, subject librarians could start this process with the instructors who have been most active in having the librarian participate in the teaching/learning process in the past. Students at this level could become far more interested in the content if they were involved in this process as has been shown by the students at San Jose. While they are creating a vir-

2 See https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AkkdWYq2f0WvdENEZmpJa0NyTHF0MzJndktIejV3dkE&hl=en#gid=0

tual library, they are adding their expertise to the process which helps them build new learning into the experience. An engineering class building a bridge could use this to identify potential problems in a group's proposed design. Students in journalism could plan a month's journal content including the amount of space allocated to advertising. Art history students could plan an exhibition and select paintings from museums all over the world to place on view. The process might encourage collaboration from professors who would learn more about the library's resources in creating the assignment. If the actual "assignment" became the property of the students, even more learning would occur. While these examples apply directly to institutions charged with teaching students, it also fits activities within the public library, for example, a book discussion group would be available without the need for weekly meetings as each participant could add their knowledge of the background for the book, the other writings of the author, what was happening at the time the book covered. It would provide a simple move to Book2Cloud.

Book2Cloud

A second example of using Google to transform learning is the use of Book2Cloud for learning experiences that concentrate on the mastery of complex texts. The instructor may have selected a poem, speech, short story, play, or novel as the centrepiece of a learning experience and wants students to develop deep understanding of that text and use it to build, think, and create some new product. If you search for Book2Cloud on Google, you will find a website that explains the construction of, and gives examples of text-based learning environments. One U.S. example is the Gettysburg Address by President Abraham Lincoln during the U.S. Civil War. Using the features of a Google Site, the speech is divided up into phrases around which individuals or groups can curate or collect information or multimedia from the Internet to assist in the understanding of the phase at hand.

After curating around each phrase, the group pieces together their personal understanding in order to build a much deeper and collaborative understanding of the text far beyond a simple reading or explanation could produce. The responsibility of the teacher and librarian in the room of the Book2Cloud is to mentor the construction of that understanding in a constructivist environment rather than in a behaviorist directive environment. Such a construction can happen for both non-copyrighted and copyrighted texts. When copyright free, the actual text can be posted on the Book2Cloud website. When copyrighted, the website refers to a book in hand or a digital text purchased for use by the class. Either way, everyone is building, constructing, thinking, and learning how to learn better with the encouragement of a collaborative environment that makes both personal expertise and collaborative intelligence a natural way of constructing meaning.

An expanded role for the librarian

In the examples given, the librarian steps beyond being a supplier of information to the position of co-teacher alongside the classroom instructor. Together, the content expert and the "learning how to learn" expert use their skills to promote deep understating. For all librarians, traditional information literacy skills and reference skills are not enough. Intervening occasionally in a learning experience is not enough. Teaching the finding of information is not enough; it is the use of that information in what the learner knows and is able to do that is paramount. Such a shift, we propose, brings the library or Learning Commons as we envision it to the indispensable centre of teaching and learning in all types of libraries, the place where librarians should have been for centuries.

What's next?

For the immediate future, the authors invite readers to join them in the creation and fostering of the Learning Commons concept described in this paper. The authors have set up a website which details much more information[3] about the Learning Commons concept. A community has been set up[4] that focuses on children and teen learning experiences, but librarians of all kinds can get ideas to adapt to their situations. You may also wish to search for the Learning Commons Facebook page where scholars and practitioners are discussing ideas and giving tips on constructing the Learning Commons environment, or contact the authors for additional information.

Finally, whether a Learning Commons approach is taken, using cloud computing or establishing a knowledge building centre, we challenge all librarians to experiment and share the best ideas that work in the various cultures and countries on the Internet. Technologies will change, but with a learning community, we can take advantage of emerging tools that promote, develop, and provide opportunities for our profession to turn myth into reality. In this proactive role, providing opportunities for learning, the elephant steps out onto the stage in full view of everyone.

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