New Technologies, New Services, New Directions for Librarianship?

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BEING DIGITAL
LIBRARIES:  
A TIME TO CHANGE

A time to rethink:

- what libraries can be in the future
- who libraries will be serving
- what library roles need redefining
- what new library roles can be established
THINK DIFFERENT:

*Three Tasks for the Future*

- Management of Things: *Building Coherence.*
- Management of Relationships: *Building Trust.*
- Management of Perceptions: *Being Relevant.*
A PROBLEM...

It sometimes seems as though Gertrude Stein’s observation that ‘everyone has so much information that they have lost their common sense’ has become literally true.

*Future Libraries: Dreams, Madness & Reality.* Crawford, Walt and Gorman, Michael
The future belongs to neither the conduit or content players, but to those who control filtering, searching, and sense-making tools we will rely on to navigate through the Expanses of Cyberspace.

Paul Saffo, Institute for the Future. “It’s the Context, Stupid.”
THE MANAGEMENT OF THINGS

- Metadata (traditional cataloguing, Dublin Core)
- Unique identifiers (URNs, PURLs, DOIs)
- Authority services (traditional authorities but also for security and privacy)
- Gateways, directories and pathfinders
- Classification services.
- Collaborative indexing.
- Community “caches.”
THE MANAGEMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS

- Information anxiety.
  - volume and noise
  - increasing fragmentation
  - de-contextualization
  - transience
  - loss of materiality
- Need for predictability and control.
- Librarian as Info-Therapist.
BUILDING TRUST

- Being information exemplars.
- Developing quality info services:
  - Providing benchmarks.
  - Developing standards: technical and performance.
  - Providing ratings, labels, reviews.
  - Usability testing and evaluation.
  - Licensing and rights management.
  - Privacy and information ethics.
THE MANAGEMENT OF PERCEPTION

- Communicate / collaborate.
- Building communities.
  - Story-telling for the electronic era.
  - Electronic party lines.
- Building community services.
  - Training and education.
  - SME support.
  - Mailing lists, bulletin boards, forums.
A CONSIDERATION...

Most of the information in organizations - and most of the information people really care about - isn’t in computers.

FOUR PROPOSITIONS

- Information is not easily stored on computers (and is not “data”)
- The more complex an information model, the less useful it will be
- Information can take on many meanings.
- Technology is only one component of the information environment and often no the right way to create change.
INFORMATION ECOLOGY

- Values and beliefs about information (culture)
- How people actually use information and what they do with it (behavior and work processes)
- The challenges of information sharing (politics)
- The information systems in place (technology)
A sustainable information ecology must strive to meet the information needs of the present, with the appropriate use of technology and sense-making agents, and without compromising the ability to meet information needs of the future.

Key concepts: “needs” and “limitations”.
THE REAL PROBLEM: INFORMATION OVERLOAD

What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it.

Herbert Simon, Nobel Laureate economist
RETHINKING DIGITAL LIFE

- Context is the key.
- Knowledge creation, not data retrieval.
- Time to invest in people, not only technology.
- If you don’t want to be replaced by a machine, don’t act like one.
- Computer ownership does not guarantee computer literacy.
- Machines only manipulate numbers; people connect them to meaning.
THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIANSHIP

To be out of place is not necessarily to be out of power.

Dr. Samuel Johnson
Books are for use.

Books are for all; or Every reader his book.

Every book its reader.

Save the time of the reader.

A library is a growing organism.
RANGANATHAN’S FIVE “NEW” LAWS

- Resources are for use.
- Resources are for all; or Every researcher his resource.
- Every resource its researcher.
- Save the time of the researcher.
- A library is a growing organism.
NINE PROPOSITIONS FOR BEING RELEVANT

- Build Better Digital Librarians.
- Context is Key.
- Less & Best: Select, Evaluate, Describe.

- Focus on Knowledge Creation not Data Retrieval.
- Be Responsible Consumers & Producers of Information.
- Mediation not Disintermediation.

- Think Local, Act Local.
- Storytelling for a Digital Era.
- Collaborate and Communicate for Success.
COLLECTIVE ACTION!

- For political action.
- For knowledge transfer.
- For cost- and resource-sharing.
- For revenue-generation.
- For interoperability of systems.
ON LIBRARIANS

WELL, LET'S START IN MY AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY. I'M THE LIBRARIAN, YOU KNOW.

MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT LIBRARIANS ARE.

I RAN ACROSS A BOOK RECENTLY WHICH SUGGESTED THAT THE PEACE AND PROSPERITY OF A CULTURE WAS SOLELY RELATED TO HOW MANY LIBRARIANS IT CONTAINED.

POSSIBLY A SLIGHT OVERSTATEMENT, BUT A CULTURE THAT DOESN'T VALUE ITS LIBRARIANS DOESN'T VALUE IDEAS AND WITHOUT IDEAS, WELL, WHERE ARE WE?
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