

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

9 May 2014

Ms Sinikka Sipilä
President
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
PO Box 95312
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Dear President Sipilä

The 22nd meeting of the Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNL-AO) was held at the National Library of Australia on 26 and 27 February 2014. Under CDNL-AO rules the chief executive of the host nation of each meeting serves as the Chair of CDNL-AO and I am writing to you in that capacity.

The meeting was attended by 24 delegates from 18 countries/regions and it was a most successful occasion.

One of the items on the agenda at the meeting was a discussion of the IFLA Trend Report. Delegates at the meeting held a wide-ranging discussion of the impacts on libraries of the issues raised in the Trend Report. Delegates agreed that a summary of the discussion around the five trends in the Trend Report would be presented to IFLA for information and it gives me great pleasure to enclose a summary of the discussion.

I hope that the summary advances the collective consideration of the complex issues facing libraries around the world and I would be happy to provide you with further information on the outcomes of the CDNL-AO meeting.

Yours sincerely



Anne-Marie Schwirtlich

22nd Meeting of the Conference of Directors of National Libraries in Asia and Oceania (CDNL-AO)

Report on the discussion of the Insights from the IFLA Trend Report: *Riding the Waves or Caught in the Tide?*

Background

In August 2013, at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress in Singapore, President Ingrid Parent launched the IFLA Trend Report. She encouraged the profession to use and to contribute to the Trend Report. In response to this invitation, CDNL-AO used the Insights from the IFLA Trend Report to stimulate reflection and discussion in the course of its February 2014 meeting in Canberra, Australia.

CDNL-AO participants reported several initiatives to circulate the Trend Report and to promote discussion about it in their communities. For example, the National Library of Malaysia sponsored the translation into Malay of the Trend Report.

At CDNL-AO, Trends 1 and 2 stimulated the most engaged and robust discussion. Participants commented on the extraordinary differences in scale between libraries, particularly national libraries, in affluent countries with strong library traditions, such as Japan, Malaysia and Singapore, compared with those in remote and small countries, such as Kiribas and Samoa. The implication of this diversity is that the Trend Report can be difficult to use either as a catalyst for professional discussion or as a way of anticipating trends. One participant commented that the aspiration of all national libraries is to move from being 'nice' to being 'necessary' and that the Trend Report is patchy in assisting libraries to position themselves as 'necessary'.

Introduction

Participants agreed that the duty of national libraries around the world is to provide leadership to libraries in their country and serve the diverse information needs of their citizens.

International collaboration between national libraries, and between national libraries and other partners, to respond to the strategic issues raised in the IFLA Trend Report is now more important than ever.

Outside of libraries themselves, there appears to be little appreciation of, and discussion about, libraries' role in the evolving information landscape. Libraries around the world need to ensure their central role in sharing information is known more broadly. One participant expressed a hope that librarians and libraries will not be complacent and read the data and commentary in the Trend Report as affirming their important role rather than as challenging fundamental assumptions.

Trend 1 – New technologies will both expand and limit who has access to information

New information technologies compound disadvantage. Literacy levels vary around the world and in some countries general literacy is less than 50 per cent of the population and 'information literacy' rates are even lower. Libraries need to ensure their services are able to be accessed by all citizens.



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There is a clear role for librarians in teaching searching skills to connect citizens with information. The role of librarians is now more important than ever and their skills need to be maintained and developed in order to provide the best possible assistance to library users.

The rapidity with which mobile technology – beginning with mobile phones – has expanded access to information and to services in countries with poor infrastructure was noted. So were initiatives, such as the one reported at the end of 2011 by India's Education Ministry, to produce a basic, Internet-ready tablet device, for around \$50 for distribution to students.

Colleagues from India cited the Indian Ministry of Culture's National Mission on Libraries which has four elements. Namely, to create the National Virtual Library of India (NVLI); to establish Model Libraries; to conduct quantitative and qualitative surveys of libraries and to build capacity in the profession.

It was agreed that such strategies have enormous capacity to expand access exponentially. People expect and deserve free and easy access to information where possible. Many library users imagine that providing access to e-resources in the current information age is free and without impediment. However, libraries need to manage complex and often expensive license arrangements for e-resources and this is a rapidly changing and significant task.

Leaders in libraries need to harness skills of non-librarians to ensure that the library profession and libraries are porous and stay ahead of the new literacy.

Young people are fearless in their use of new technology. They explore and welcome it. They can express their creativity using technology and have a high degree of technology confidence and capability. Evidence shows that they are still developing their ability to assess all the information on offer and are yet to become competent judges of the quality of data and opinions. Libraries can therefore provide a valuable role to young users in assessing and providing access to the best information services.

Trend 2 – Online education will democratise and disrupt global learning

Trends in online education stand to have profound impacts on employment, culture and communication around the world. Free online education is widely available and participants corroborated both its availability and popularity in Asia and noted a growth in availability in Oceania.

Many universities are providing free online courses. Libraries have legitimate and changing roles in education and the transfer of digital knowledge. An example of how libraries are securing a role in this new education landscape is the Los Angeles Public Library which, in partnership with Gale/Cengage, offers adults the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma and career certificate online through Smart Horizons Career Online Education's Career Online High School. The library's pilot program provides a limited number of free grants to qualified adult learners who are looking to advance their careers, prepare for workforce entry or continue their education.

In Australia, university libraries are supporting the development of massive open online courses by their universities by managing all the necessary copyright and intellectual property rights clearances for the resources used in the online course. One university, Deakin University identifies digital literacy as one of eight Graduate Learning Outcomes and defines digital literacy as the

ability to use technologies to find, use and disseminate information. Deakin University Library plays a central role in assisting students to understand and develop digital literacy.

The shift in the education landscape is a significant opportunity for libraries. Citizens can be better educated through online opportunities with assistance from libraries and therefore those citizens will be more aware of and receptive to national libraries in the future. This could allow the reach of national libraries to increase rapidly.

Close relationships between libraries, online education providers and schools will remain as critical strategic partnerships for libraries.

Trend 3 – The boundaries of privacy and data protection will be redefined

Libraries need to take care of their users' privacy and need to tell them what is being done with data collected in the course of their interactions. Libraries should consider how services can be better targeted and tailored to individual users' needs through analysing data in collection use. There is a debate around the world about what can be done and what should be done with personal information and libraries should be part of this debate.

Libraries will need to closely examine the implications of e-lending as well as mobile and wearable technology in libraries on privacy and the protection of the users' data.

Trend 4 – Hyper-connected societies will listen to and empower new voices and groups

Libraries have a responsibility to all citizens and not just traditional researchers or direct users of their resources.

While technology is changing rapidly, there is a sense that culture and society is changing at a slower rate.

Libraries will continue to advocate for free and equitable access to all information including online resources. Libraries support open government initiatives and access to public sector data.

Trend 5 – The global information economy will be transformed by new technologies

The evolution of new technologies is the connector between all other information trends and underpins all future discussions on the future of libraries.

The traditional sense of community is changing through the growth of mobile technology and the operations of industries are adapting quickly to those changes. High profile examples of quickly adapting industries are finance and banking.

Libraries need to continue to be at the forefront of adapting to new technologies and harnessing opportunities that are created for improving the education, literacy and access to information for all citizens.