IFLA Metropolitan
Libraries Section

E-reference and E-learning: Collaborative Services under a User – Centered Option

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Introduction

- Real-time online reference services, like e-reference and e-learning, have been around for some time now

- academic libraries picked them up first, due in large part to their flexible funding and staffing structures

- public libraries have jumped on board

- school libraries following hot on their heels

Introduction

- synonymous with distance learning, e-learning has quickly evolved to include:
  - courses which are taught primarily online and over a distance
  - traditional "brick and mortar" courses which have been enhanced with electronic elements

Introduction

- virtual learning environments
- enterprise-wide services
- new opportunities for libraries to design and to disseminate new e-learning services

- libraries will also need to highlight their expertise, abilities and irreplaceable resources
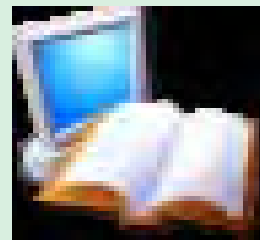
E-learning

- Pedagogy, learning methodologies and technology have become linked
- The use and reuse of learning objects, their discovery and share ability, their existence as digital entities and the context in which they can be used

- broader, inter-institutional applications of technology and learning
- use of semantically consistent, easily created metadata
- the issues surrounding learning object repositories are equal to and a part of the issues surrounding digital asset repositories

E-learning

- libraries are also interested in developing ways to integrate and expose their existing systems, resources and services
- understanding and development of service convergence
- New standards and technical solutions are required for high-quality and cost-effective teaching

E-learning

collaborative mechanisms and collective expertise of the library community

to provide both leadership and timely, cost-effective input to the development of institutional infrastructure

collaborative possibilities reside under three categories:

1. exposing library services,
2. creating and maintaining digital asset repositories and
3. creating standards for interoperability

E-reference

- real-time online reference
- students, are generally very comfortable with computers and with chat technology
- two basic forms of real-time online reference:
    1. web-based chat and
    2. instant messaging

Web-based chat reference

- requires that the library purchase server-side software
- often provide both the student and the librarian with a transcript of the chat for future reference

- students go to a specific webpage, click on a button to connect to a librarian, and then chat back and forth on the webpage
- Librarians may be able to "push" webpages

Instant Messaging Reference

- works using free downloadable instant messaging software
- option certainly attractive
- But you cannot possibly offer the service for as many hours as a cooperative web-based chat service can provide

Empowering Libraries means Empowering Librarians

- **10 Roles for Empowering Librarians - Seeing an empowered and empowering librarian as:**
    1. **A gateway to the future and to the past** *This demands from us a sense of obligation to provide this type of service as a major step towards connecting students with the information they seek*
    2. **A collaborative teacher and learner** *A librarian should actively seek out users in a variety of settings to provide instruction and inspiration*
    3. **A knowledge manager/worker** *The librarian's future is in doing what computers cannot do. Computers can collect, identify, and organize information. The librarian should therefore be an information 'lifeguard', in order to protect clients from drowning in the information overflow*

10 Roles for Empowering Librarians - Seeing an empowered and empowering librarian as:

4.   **A community partner** *Libraries need to make themselves felt in the community as a valuable resource and tool for students and the local community*

5.   **A "sifter" of information resources** *The future belongs neither to the conduit nor to the content players but to those who control the filtering, searching, and sense-making tools we will be relying on to navigate through the expanses of cyberspace*

6.   **An organizer of networked resources** *Librarians need to take the initiative in creating a better sense of organization and access to what is available on and through the school databases, investigating the feasibility of cataloging and organizing Internet resources*

10 Roles for Empowering Librarians - Seeing an empowered and empowering librarian as:

7. **A collaborator with technology resource providers**. *Librarians should be involved in the development of the databases and search tools needed for effective exploitation of digital and web technologies. Librarians should become designers, synthesizers, and navigators.*

8. **A technician**. *With the increasing use of the Internet, librarians may find it necessary to expand their skills in this area. Librarians will need to provide technical advice on workstation configuration, modem access, networks, etc.*

10 Roles for Empowering Librarians - Seeing an empowered and empowering librarian as:

9. **An advocate of information policy development**. *Librarians need to become involved in policy decisions concerning resources and services in order to ensure users rights of universal access are respected, as well as issues of intellectual property rights, censorship and privacy*

10. **An individual information consultant**. *Librarians will focus more on individual, customized services and controlled access/facilitation by remote users*

The Web is not enough

- The Web-search tools are not sufficient
- A search of the World Wide Web will turn up only the online information
- "dull" web sites with strange scopes and motives
- Really is the Internet always everything?

The Web is not enough

- It may catch the moment, the year, the decade but surely without the librarian's collaboration it can't give birth to everything
- That's why and most of e-reference projects named "Ask a Librarian".
- Information can be true and still wrong. Only after a comprehensive investigation can be objective

Social Issues

- Staff-staff collaboration:
  - librarians are not solitary types
  - complexity of interactions
  - creativity and flexibility
  - Staff-staff collaboration can be learning-oriented as well as work-oriented

Social Issues

- The key to selecting, or developing, successful collaborative systems appears to involve an understanding of what is currently done, and designing systems that not only can mesh with that way of working, but can adapt gracefully as people change their way of working over time
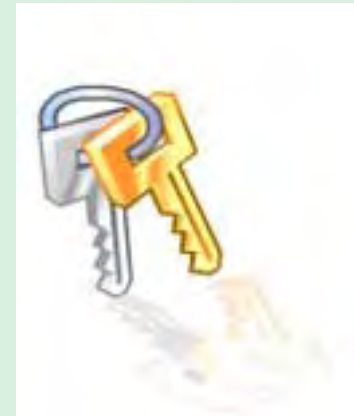
The Importance of Digital Reference in Supporting Critical Thinking in Distance Education – What skills Librarians should have

- **Knowledge Skills**
  - Have an appropriate level of literacy and numeracy skills
  - Be able to identify, access, organize and communicate knowledge in both written and oral English
  - Have good listening skills
  - Have an international awareness
  - Have the ability to use appropriate technology to further the above

What skills Librarians should have

- **Thinking Skills**
  - Be willing to challenge current knowledge and thinking
  - Have conceptual skills
  - Have problem-solving skills
  - Be creative and imaginative thinkers
  - Be able to combine theory and practice
  - Be able to reflect on and evaluate their own performance

The Importance of Digital Reference in Supporting Critical Thinking in Distance Education

- partners is e-educating students in librarianship

- become increasingly aware of the processes that are involved in information seeking

- the education and facilities that they can likely access, the suitability of the available systems, and services to which they will have access

Policy – Management

- 'Empowering Libraries' programme:
  - assure that the e-services plan meets national and also regional accreditation standards as well as professional association standards and guidelines;
  - provide and elaborate, on an ongoing basis, a suitable interactive 'interlibrary' e-services schedule, including instruction and the facilities utilized.

'Empowering Libraries' programme:

- prepare a written profile of the community's information and skills needs;

- develop a written statement of immediate and long-range goals and objectives for virtual reference, a statement which addresses the relevant needs and also outlines the methods by which progress and a timetable of results can be determined;

'Empowering Libraries' programme:

- promote the incorporation of the mission statement, goals, and objectives of remote services into those of every kind of library and of the originating institution;

- involve librarian community representatives including administrators, faculty, academics, information scientists, governmental representatives and professionals, in the formation of the objectives and the regular evaluation of their achievement;

'Empowering Libraries' programme:

- respect the special characteristics each library and each collection with regard to the development and periodic review of formal, documented, written agreements with them

- Assess the written profile of needs as well as the existing library support for distance learning nationwide, its availability, appropriateness and effectiveness - using qualitative, quantitative, and outcome measurement statistics

Examples of these measures include, but are not limited to:

- using evaluation checklists for librarian instruction to gather feedback from students, other librarians, academic staff and researchers over a period of time;

- conducting reviews of specific library and information service areas and/or operations which support electronic library services;

- taking into account e-services in the assessment strategies related to national endorsement;

- participating together with administrators, library subject specialists, and the teaching faculty, in the curriculum development process and in planning to ensure the appropriateness of library resources and services according to the profile of needs

Examples of these measures include, but are not limited to:

- promoting library support services to the community with a planned marketing strategy, monitoring and assessing both the appropriateness of their use of services and resources and the degree to which needs are being met and skills acquired;

- maintaining a continual 'survey dialogue' with school library users;

- initiating dialogue aimed at establishing cooperative agreements, possible resource sharing and/or compensation for unaffiliated libraries;

Examples of these measures include, but are not limited to:

- developing partnerships with computing services departments in order to provide the necessary automation support for the librarian community;

- practising, applying, and maintaining all the above through the establishment of a virtual environment that will not only facilitate the provision of information but also offer guidance to real knowledge;

Examples of these measures include, but are not limited to:

- organising a schema with the following characteristics:
    - being patron -centred
    - being interactive and dynamic
    - enabling group work on real time problems
    - enabling patrons, particularly students to determine their own learning pathways
    - emphasizing competencies such as information literacy to support lifelong learning.
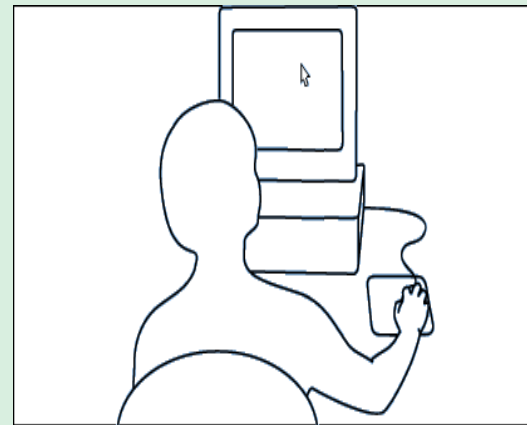
Plan for Empowering our Libraries, Empowering our Education System - Using research results to shape policies that optimize the utility of libraries

- **Key Policies and Practices for Adults and Children**
  - provide public access to the widest possible range of information services which meet the information needs of the community in order to support lifelong learning, combat social exclusion and contribute to the quality of life in the community in all its aspects - whether educational, economic, cultural or recreational - and contribute to an informed democracy

Encouraging Participation in Informal Learning

- establish close links with the Lifelong Learning Service by locating both services in an Education and Lifelong Learning Department; to ensure access to funding from the Learning and Skills Council to support improvements in library access and in the establishment of informal learning opportunities

Development and Monitoring of Reading and Learning Activities:

- to establish three main areas of activity: Children's Services, Mainstream Reader Development, and Closer Involvement in Learning Activities

Promote Learning:

- to ensure the ongoing delivery of learning activities with key partners, including the delivery of a Museum and Library Education system, the Pilot implementation of the 'Inspiring Learning for All' methodology, and the dual use of school libraries for young students and for elderly lifelong learners.

Promotion of reading opportunities and support of existing groups is a key priority:

- to facilitate the successful implementation of the People's Network infrastructure as well as a good and supportive relationship with the Council's ICT section.

Development and Evaluation of Digital Services:

- to establish a network of local and metropolitan community-based libraries; to continue to extend opening hours; to expand the Mobile Library Service to provide better coverage - currently a weekly service - with additional provision in disadvantaged wards; to establish good community links and partnerships fostered by a National Virtual Reference Desk.

Develop Libraries as a Community resource:

- to set up a *Routes to the Past* Neighborhood Learning Program, a Young Roots Cinema Project, and a Young Roots *Back Home* Project; to develop "out-of-hours" and wider community use of school library buildings; to hold surgeries, as well as advice and training sessions with partners.

Offer Services Accessible to all:

- to improve the physical environment for children with disabilities; to develop a marketing plan for online services; to encourage 'the exception of the exception'; to emphasize that all categories, despite nationality and capacities, can be parts of the school library community; to create a Virtual Reading Room as part of the Virtual Desk with reading lists, online book reviews, and more.

Our Philosophy

- that learning is life-long
- learning must occur in all areas of society enabling everyone to develop through formal and personal learning how they want to, when they want to and where they want to
- development and improvement of libraries, through the use of learning resources

- The 'difficult to reach' or even the seemingly 'impossible to reach' become 'easy and fun to reach', empowering the participant in the learning procedure
- Many services delivered and maintained along historical patterns will have to change fundamentally if they are to provide for the people which libraries serve

Conclusions

- Librarians must develop and fund expanded services to meet the demand created by the new distance learning in the Cyberspace Age

- Only once the primary library concerns of staffing and funding can be settled, can library services begin to exploit the technology available today to better serve their on- and off-campus students

Conclusions

- *"I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library."* Jorge Luis Borges had said.

- It has been underlined that "libraries are much more than repositories of books and reference material. They are, increasingly, vibrant hubs of community life."

- We can take further steps in this direction.

Thank you very much for your attention

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