

“Libraries motors of change” and the social role of (digital) libraries for their communities

Interview with IFLA President Glòria Pérez-Salmerón

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Abstract

Purpose – Based on a comparison with different realities, analysis of the situation of libraries in line with International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) policies and directives.

Design/methodology/approach – The method used for the following paper is that of a remote interview.

Findings – The expected results will emerge from the debate that can be raised from this paper.

Research limitations/implications – The IFLA guidelines have international value but are implemented according to the context of the individual country, not always in a uniform manner.

Originality/value – The interview reveals the formality of the contents through the informality of the method.

Keywords Library, IFLA, Bibliotecario, Coffa, Digital library, Salmeron

Paper type Viewpoint

This interview was conducted (via mail; July 22, 2019) for *Digital Library Perspectives*[1].

1. I would like to start with the motto on your Facebook page[2]: “bibliotecas motores del cambio”. What does it mean to you?

“Libraries: Motors of Change” is my motto as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) President. There is a deep message in my program, which is expressed shortly in this motto.

I am absolutely aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda [United Nations (UN), 2018], and the way that libraries can be the main gates to information access for achieving a real social change. Communities, among libraries, can get connected and provide meaningful access to information to improve their own lives. We, as librarians, have an important role to develop our communities of users, and therefore our societies.

2. It was very interesting to read the document “Development and Access to Information 2019” (Garrido and Wyber, 2019). So, in the context of libraries, what are new trends and what will be the future scenarios in terms of accessibility?

Development and Access to Information (DA2I) are a series of reports, led by IFLA and in partnership with the Technology and Social Change Group, University of



Washington. These reports monitor the progress that countries are making towards fulfilling their commitments to promote meaningful access to information (A2I), as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In response to governments' commitments to promoting meaningful A2I, as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the report you mentioned provides a range of indicators that allow determining how well countries are performing. Looking at the four pillars of access (connectivity, social and cultural norms, skills and laws), it gives insights into the different dimensions of meaningful A2I.

Drawing upon IFLA's rich experience, it also includes a particular focus on libraries, by sharing evaluated case studies that promote more socially and economically inclusive societies. This means that the role of information in our societies has never been greater. Information is an enabler, a raw material, a source of innovation and creativity. To provide everyone with access to it, is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow and make better decisions for themselves and for those around them.

Regarding the 2019 report that was presented on 23 May 2019, during the IFLA President's Meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina[3], we would like to remark how libraries can make the difference in terms of providing access to everyone without any distinction, and for contributing to the progress of a meaningful A2I, which democratises access as a development paradigm.

3. How do we obtain recognition for the value of the librarianship profession in a professional and work environment?

My answer about the value of us librarians, as information professionals, is indeed well related to the offers and the answers we can provide to society's requests. In my point of view, our actions regarding people's information needs, to increase their information world or their welfare for all kinds of people, from researchers to citizens in general, will ride us to the highest position, as people will value us according to the good results we can provide.

4. Digital libraries: Are we going in the right direction? What scenarios do you foresee for the near future?

Nowadays, digital transformation is everywhere, and people are used to have smart devices in their pockets to connect with information. Libraries are doing great efforts to get digital services as well. In my opinion, heritage libraries have a continuing role to digitise and disseminate their main collections by providing access to them through the internet. Public libraries should reinforce their digital libraries services, including reading and all that citizens need to optimise their work.

My desire for all kind of libraries would be to have a good understanding of what is important for the communities they serve. Also, to become the motors of change in any context and regarding different needs. This means to work directly with people to provide them the skills they need to be empowered users. To become the best users of digital library services.

5. How and what can an institution such as IFLA do to support and incite this process of enhancing the library in a Capital (or almost) way in the world?

IFLA is the global voice of libraries, it is recognised as the main organisation that represents the library field worldwide. During these past 2 years, IFLA has tackled

an important process regarding the Global Vision of Libraries to face globalisation's challenges, for finding out new opportunities to strengthen the library field, and enhancing libraries in an inclusive and participatory way. This process has had an absolute response of more than 33,000 librarians that are tuned to this transformation of the library field and the possible changes we will need to tackle in the future of libraries. I am confident that this transformation movement and the change of librarians' mindsets are gaining an increased momentum, as they are important for understanding that we can get our future together.

**6. Giulio has just graduated in library science and wants to be a librarian:
What would you recommend?**

Some years ago, Julián Marquina[4], a Spanish colleague interviewed me to share some ideas with his past year students from a librarianship programme. I was happy to build this Decalogue for them, which I think is still useful; so, I would tell him to follow these ten steps:

- (1) Empathy: What do you think about your users' needs?
- (2) Jargon: use a language that is close to your users and in the proper context. Users' understanding.
- (3) Strategy: be strategic, always plan your services and products from a perspective of necessity.
- (4) Legal framework: attend to the legal framework, but please be practical.
- (5) Change management: go forward and change things [...] do not do them as they have always been done.
- (6) Teamwork: the sum always favours, it multiplies.
- (7) Evaluate: work with indicators and think that services always have to be profitable.
- (8) Innovation: be bold, innovative and brave. Propose things that are worthwhile and viable.
- (9) Update yourself: never stop training, always be aware of professional issues and follow the latest news.
- (10) Try to be very happy (Plate 1).



Plate 1.

Notes

1. <https://mariocoffa.wixsite.com/e-portfolio>
2. www.facebook.com/perezsg
3. www.youtube.com/watch?v=_DZa7k5USSM
4. www.julianmarquina.es/

References

- Garrido, M. and Wyber, S. (Eds). (2019), *Development and Access to Information*, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, The Hague, available at: <https://da2i.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/da2i-2019-full-report.pdf> (accessed 26 July 2019).
- United Nations (UN) (2018), “About the sustainable development goals”, available at: www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals (accessed 26 July 2019).

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