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The Future Roles of Librarians and the Interdisciplinary Imperative

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The Future Roles of Librarians and the Interdisciplinary Imperative

MLA 2009

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Objective

• What are the benefits for libraries to bring individuals with medical backgrounds?
• How can librarians better work with physicians, investigators, and informaticists?
• What are the challenges involved in creating an interdisciplinary work environment?
The Book Worm, 1850
Carl Spitzweg
The Past: How Library Services were Traditionally Delivered

• Role of the librarian is as a passive consultant and custodian of the collection
• Collections contain well defined, physical, and static items (e.g., journals, books)
• Simple and predictable subscription costs
• Copyright management is simple
The Library: The present

Photo by B. Staver
The Present: How Library Services are Typically Delivered

• Role of librarians is still very passive as they act as “tour guides” and “custodians” of the “traditional” materials and collections

• Provide a larger number of new, less visible, unappreciated, and less well defined services (i.e. electronic subscription management, web programming, database programming, etc.)

• The role as educator is increasing
The Present: How Library Services are Typically Delivered

• Electronic resources are designed (mostly) to simulate more traditional forms (i.e. paper journals)

• Library as place is rapidly changing
  – Truckloads of journals are disappearing
  – Everyone wants electronic access to everything (for free)
  – Study rooms are in high demand
The Opportunity

• Many knowledge and information management tasks in the biosciences are not being addressed well
• Extremely complex and unpredictable subscription costs
• Copyright management is complex
• Investigators are mostly unaware of new publication types and venues
You see a Library

We see the future of health care

Photo by B. Staver
The Future: How Library Services *Could* be Delivered

- Role of librarian is not passive!
- Librarians are seen as more knowledge management experts
- Much of the work librarians do is as active participants in multi-disciplinary research and education teams
The Future: How Library Services *Could* be Delivered

- Journals are mostly electronic but in a variety of new non-paper-like formats
- Subscription costs are less of a factor as most new knowledge is freely available on the internet because of the wide use of open access publishing
- Copyright management is simplified
The Future: How Library Services Could be Delivered

• The kinds of “collections” librarians manage are virtually unlimited in form and are dynamically defined at the state of the art of the art of science

• New roles for librarians have emerged:
  – Scholarly communication specialist
  – Knowledge management technology specialist (i.e., “Informationist”)
  – Educational technology specialist
  – Researcher in all of the above
What are the benefits for libraries to bring individuals with medical backgrounds?

• Help physicians/users of library services:
  – Understand the critical role librarians have to play in research, education, and patient care
  – Appreciate the value of libraries and librarians

• Help librarians/knowledge management professionals:
  – See new information and knowledge management opportunities (i.e., more than just journals!)
  – Better understand what folks with medical backgrounds really need in the 21st century
How can librarians better work with physicians, investigators, and informaticists?

- Pay attention to language, terminology and jargon
- Example: “Scholarly Communication” versus “Findability”
- Example: “Survey” versus “Instrument” versus “questionnaire”
What are the challenges involved in creating an interdisciplinary work environment?
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Summary

• Bringing physicians, informaticians, and other professions into the library organization itself will start the process of cultural awareness

• Help resolve difficulty terminology, language, and cultural differences

• The struggle to resolve the differences is the important thing!

• This is where true creativity, innovation, and serendipity happen
Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

Albert Einstein
(1879 - 1955)
We immediately become more effective when we
decide to change ourselves rather than asking
things to change for us.

Steven Covey
(1932- )
Shameless Plug

• March 11-12
• Albuquerque, NM
• Targeting Audience:
  Knowledge management professionals from CTSA-minded institutions
• Purpose:
  Exchange evidence-based strategies for promoting increased use of open-access publication venues

http://hsc.unm.edu/library/ebscconference
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