A SKILLS AGENDA FOR THE TREND REPORT

Waleed Al Badi, Paria Aria, Esther Bravo Govea, Anaïs Cayzac, Nilay Cevher, Brad Chugg, Roana Marie Flores-Solemos, Lyric Danee' Grimes, Jonathan Hernandez Perez, Mahmoud Khalifa, Donna Labangon-Gonzaga, Eric Njabulo Mdunge, Damilare Oyedele, Katie Scott, Madiareni Sulaiman, Elīna Veļa, Sandun Weerasinghe, with the support of Basheerhamad Shadrach and IFLA

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

SIGL

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Introduction

Welcome to the Skills Agenda for the Trend Report! This publication complements the IFLA Trend Report, sharing a set of areas where, in the view of the team of emerging leaders who have prepared it, we should be focusing in order to ensure maximum readiness for whatever the future may bring.

Following a summary of the methodology used, it clusters the chosen skills into three groups – more practical/technical skills, partnership and collaboration skills, and personal development. In each, there is a short profile, giving a definition, an explanation of why it's important, where things stand today, and next steps.

As with the Trend Report, this paper is intended to start conversations, not close them down. We hope that it can be a basis for discussion and reflection on the specific priorities and needs that exist in your library or library field!

Methodology

This report is based upon the work carried out at a workshop on 4 October 2024 bringing together the different emerging leaders supported to attend the IFLA Information Futures Summit. This participation was made possible by the financial support of Stichting IFLA Global Libraries, which administers the grant awarded by the Gates Foundation to support the work of IFLA.

A group of the leaders were tasked, throughout the Summit, with gathering together reflections on the implications of the trends identified in the Trend Report, as well as of other issues raised and discussed over the days of the Summit, on future skills needs.

Their conclusions were then presented and discussed in the wider group, and through collective discussion, ideas about priority trends and areas of knowledge identified. In order to test ideas, we also looked at the importance of each skill area, and where the library field stands today.

The leaders engaged in the workshop, and who have subsequently contributed to this publication are below. Those who have led on particular sections are also named in each of these.

Waleed Al Badi, Director, Majlis Oman Library, Oman (LinkedIn)
Paria Aria, Assistant Professor, Texas Woman's University, USA
Esther Bravo Govea, PhD Student, Library and Information Science, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico (ResearchGate)
Anaïs Cayzac, School Librarian, Glasgow Life, Glasgow, UK (LinkedIn)
Nilay Cevher, Assistant Professor, İzmir Katip Çelebi University, Türkiye (LinkedIn)

Brad Chugg, Application Support Administrator, Royal Australian Mint, Australia ([LinkedIn](#))

Roana Marie Flores-Solemos, American Corner Librarian, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines ([LinkedIn](#))

Lyric Danee' Grimes, Librarian and PhD Student, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA ([LinkedIn](#))

Jonathan Hernandez Perez, University Professor and Researcher, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico ([LinkedIn](#))

Mahmoud Khalifa, Managing Editor, DOAJ and PhD Candidate, Humboldt University, Germany ([LinkedIn](#))

Eric Njabulo Mdunge, Reference Librarian, City of Johannesburg and Marker, University of South Africa, South Africa ([LinkedIn](#))

Donna Labangon-Gonzaga, Learning and Research Engagement Coordinator, De La Salle University, Philippines (LinkedIn)

Damilare Oyedele, Co-Founder and CEO, Library Aid Africa, Rwanda ([LinkedIn](#))

Katie Scott, Youth Librarian, Faulkner County Library, Conway, AR, USA

Madiareni Sulaiman, Research Data Librarian, National Research and Innovation Agency of the Republic of Indonesia, Indonesia, PhD Candidate UCL, London, UK ([LinkedIn](#))

Elīna Veļa, Chief Librarian at the Library of Riga Stradiņš University, Latvia ([LinkedIn](#))

Sandun Weerasinghe, Library Executive, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology, Sri Lanka ([LinkedIn](#))

We are grateful for the support of Basheerhamad Shadrach, Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, New Delhi, India ([LinkedIn](#)).

A PRACTICAL SKILLS

The first cluster of skills identified focuses on practical/applied skills that will help the librarian of the future carry out specific tasks that are likely to be an increasingly important part of their work. They reflect aspects of the future set out in the Trend Report and wider discussions at the Information Futures Summit that will place new or stronger demands on library and information workers. A set of the proposed skills are general and applicable for all librarians, while some other skills are more relevant for specific specialties.

A1: Basic Programming

What it means: basic programming skills cover a knowledge of the fundamentals of coding and the possibilities that it can offer, without necessarily being able to carry out a wide variety of tasks. It could, for example, include the ability to work with a Raspberry Pi or know basic Python or R – tools that make it possible to train a programme to carry out useful tasks.

Why it matters: A basic knowledge will be helpful for all librarians in order to understand better how computers work, as well as to help others to do the same. Given the likely demand for digital skills in future, this will both allow them to support users more effectively and create new career possibilities. This is certainly an area where having access to specialists within library networks or fields will complement individual knowledge, both in terms of libraries' education offer and ability to use programmes to carry out useful tasks.

Where we are today: Many library and information workers are enthusiastic coders in their free-time, experimenting with this as another dimension of the information space. Libraries are also often venues for code-camps, organised either alone or in partnership with other organisetions[1]. However, despite library and computer science schools being combined in many countries, the opportunity for overlap is perhaps not always being exploited.

Next steps: access to basic programming classes for librarians could provide a way for the most enthusiastic to develop initial skills. We should also continue to look to form partnerships with coding camps who can bring the same skills to users in libraries of all types. In the longer term, we need to look at how to make an introduction to programming part of both initial and continuing education for librarians.

[1] For example, see MacDonald, Gus (2015), *How to run a code club in your library*, https://www.cilip.org.uk/news/482800/How-to-run-a-Code-Club-in-your-library.htm

A2: AI Literacy – Sandun Weerasinghe

What it means: AI literacy can be defined as the ability to understand and effectively use AI technology for relevant day-to-day tasks. An AI literate individual must be able to identify the best-suited AI tools for their tasks out of various available tools. As suggested by Long and Magerko[1], there are 17 competencies that individuals may develop to critically evaluate AI technologies which includes a foundational understanding of how AI works, its potential applications, and its limitations etc. AI literate individuals must have basic knowledge of AI related concepts like machine learning, natural language processing, data ethics, and basic tools or platforms such as ChatGPT or Google AI.

Why it matters: Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most important and transformative technologies today having multiple applications in various sectors, including healthcare, finance, manufacturing, and transportation[2]. AI has increasingly become part of the education and library fields as well. Therefore, AI literacy is essential for library and information professionals. Many students believe that it will become the new normal[3]. Therefore, to cater such user groups with enhanced services, librarians and information professionals must be AI literate, for instance to incorporate AI for improved information retrieval. AI technology can be used for individually tailored search results and resource recommendations for students and researchers[4]. It is essential not to be isolated in the advanced technological environment.

In addition, there are possible applications that can enhance service. For example, librarians are not available around 24 hours to answer user queries. So, in this regard libraries can develop virtual assistants and chatbots to answer frequently asked questions, assist with research queries, and guide users through library services and resources. These virtual assistants offer support anytime, improving the overall user experience and ensuring that students and researchers receive prompt assistance[5]. AI can facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among library users. AI tools can help people who are interested in similar research topics find each other making it easier for different fields to cohere and to work together and create one community in the academic world[6].

Where we are today: AI technology is already being used in libraries around the world. According to the study of Huang et al. (2023) some academic libraries in China have adopted real AI products, such as the smart talking robot Xiaotu developed by Tsinghua University Library and the book inventory robots developed by Nanjing University Library[7]. According to Ali, Naeem & Bhatti, Artificial Intelligence is also entering libraries through robotics, chatbot, Natural Language Processing, Big Data, and Text Data Mining. Artificial Intelligence impacts both technical and library user services in libraries alike[8]. There is also an increasing tendency to use AI-powered tools

for research activities by students in the higher education sector as AI helps locate relevant information in academic publications instantly and suggests and prompts what passages to be read in more detail.

Next steps: Although there have been applications of AI in the library sector since as early as 1985, it has drawn unprecedented attention during the last five years. As with the introduction of any innovation some professionals have expressed concern that robots and intelligent agents might take over their roles and make them redundant. In practice however, absorption of AI applications into the library sector seems to have been relatively slow. According to the study of Hussain, AI can be used in library services, but factors like insufficient funds, unsupportive attitudes of librarians, and inadequate technical skills are a few obstacles that set back its incorporation into library operations[9].

One prominent concern is the difficulty in safeguarding user privacy and data security, as AI systems rely on large amounts of user data, which raises concerns about privacy and data security. In the wrong hands this data can be used for nefarious purposes, such as theft or cyberbullying[10]. Libraries need to establish robust data protection measures to safeguard user information while strictly ensuring the ethical use of AI if they are to be introduced to libraries[11]. Oladokun et al found that some librarians fear that as AI systems take over routine tasks, there would be a decrease in the demand for traditional librarian roles[12].

[1] Long, Duri, and Brian Magerko (2020), *What is AI literacy? Competencies and design considerations*. Proceedings of the 2020 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems. 2020

[2] World Economic Forum (2023), *Everything you need to know about AI in 2023*, LINK (consulted January 2025)

[3] Welding, L. (2023, March 17). Half of College Students Say Using AI Is Cheating | BestColleges. BestColleges.com. https://www.bestcolleges.com/research/college-students-ai-tools-survey/

[4] Ex Libris (2019), *How AI can enhance the value of research libraries*, Library Journal, 19 April 2019, LINK

[5] Herrlich, H. (2023, May 23). The Future of Libraries: AI and Machine Learning – Fordham Library News. Retrieved November 29, 2023, from LINK

[6] Idem

[7] Huang, Yingshen, Cox, Andrew M., Cox, John (2023), *Artificial Intelligence in academic library strategy in the United Kingdom and the Mainland of China*, The Journal of Academic Librarianship Volume 49, Issue 6, November 2023.

[8] Ali, Muhammad Yousuf, Naeem, Salman Bin, Bhatti, Rubina (2020), *Artificial intelligence tools and perspectives of university librarians: An overview*, September 2020, Business Information Review 37(3):116-124

[9] Hussain, A. (2023). Use of artificial intelligence in the library services: prospects and challenges. Library Hi Tech News, 40(2), 15–17. https://doi.org/10.1108/lhtn-11-2022-0125

[10] Van Rijmenam Csp, M. (2023, April 7). Privacy in the age of AI: Risks, challenges and solutions. Dr Mark Van Rijmenam, CSP | Strategic Futurist Speaker. LINK

[11] Enakrire, R. T., & Oladokun, B. D. (2023), *Artificial intelligence as enabler of future library services: how prepared are librarians in African university libraries*, Library Hi Tech News. https://doi.org/10.1108/lhtn-09-2023-0173

[12] Idem

A3: Privacy Literacy

What it means: the convenience that digital services offer has brought with it an unprecedented amount of sharing of data about individuals and their behaviour. While this can help in developing services that are better tailored to our needs, saving time and effort, it also raises important questions about our right to choose, and even our wider autonomy as people, as well as about who else is doing what with our data.

Privacy literacy therefore refers to the ability to navigate a world where everyday activities can involve taking some far-reaching decisions about how much privacy we want or need. It involves an awareness of the ways in which personal data can be collected and used, the options open to individuals to protect their data, and the knowledge to engage in advocacy around this, including for example to influence the actions of library vendors and governments.

Why it matters: there is no reason to think that the hunger of technology for personal data is likely to decline any time soon. Artificial intelligence technologies open up new possibilities to use this information in order to drive decision-making, and in particular to make predictions which will continue to improve in accuracy. Yet given that these predictions are based on past behaviours, they are at risk of locking us into these, and limiting the opportunity to change.

In particular, both as individual consumers, and as those responsible for signing agreements with third-party vendors which have implications for library users' data[1], we are likely to be presented with some ostensibly difficult decisions. Options that make more intensive use of data are likely to be sold as being better and cheaper, and the downsides downplayed. Meanwhile, the privacy-respecting option may appear worse and more expensive.

We need to be in a position not only where we can make these choices with a full awareness of the facts – both on behalf of ourselves and our users – but also to be ready to question and challenge. It should not be the case that there is a simple trade-off between sacrificing privacy and the possibility to enjoy high quality services. This challenge also needs to take place at the level of policy, ensuring that there are safeguards in law that ensure that librarians and library users enjoy basic protections.

Where we are today: historically, libraries have been able to keep users' data inside the premises, meaning that the main application of privacy literacy would be around our own record-keeping and other practices. Increasingly, however, libraries work with third-party vendors in order to fulfil their mission, meaning that they rely on the practices of others, and the laws that shape these[2].

There is already a growing body of legislation that looks both to put in place safeguards around use of personal data, as well as to give rights to individuals in this respect. Nonetheless, such laws do not exist everywhere, and even where they do, there are questions both about their enforcement, and the degree to which individuals are able to make use of the rights that they

have. There is a risk that only those people with more time or skills can do this.

With the Trend Report underlining that we are likely to see both wider and deeper (more intensive) use of the internet and digital technologies, the need for awareness, agency and action is only likely to grow.

Next steps: in the short term, there will be value in making sure that anyone involved in negotiating contracts with third-party vendors is aware of the ways in which contracts may raise questions about privacy. Simple checklists could offer a way forwards here, although ultimately as technologies develop, ongoing learning about personal data issues will be necessary. The same of course applies to how libraries work internally[3].

In addition to developing privacy literacy in order to ensure that we are protecting our users when they access third-party services via the library, we can also look to combine this knowledge with teaching in order to help users be more conscious in their wider lives[4]. This would be consistent with libraries' broader work to help people navigate the information environment confidently and competently.

Finally, a knowledge of privacy can be combined with advocacy skills in order to ensure that libraries can join with others in promoting both behaviour change in data-using companies, as well as laws that provide adequate protection.

[1] See, for example, the Licensing Privacy project run by the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign LINK

[2] PressReader (2023), *Data privacy: why librarians need to prioritize safeguarding patron information*, PressReader blog, 17 July 2023, LINK

[3] For example, the resources created by the Library Freedom Project are a great start: LINK

[4] Hartman-Caverly, Sarah and Chisholm, Alexandria (2020), *Privacy literacy instruction practices in academic libraries: Past, present and future*, IFLA Journal 46(3), DOI:10.1177/0340035220956804

A4: Scholarly Communications Literacy

What it means: Key to any critical understanding of the information environment is a readiness to explore – and challenge – the structures and business models that determine what gets shared, how, and with whom. Scholarly communications, covering the way in which research is published and becomes part of the wider record, is both particularly important and relevant for libraries, but also an interesting case study in the politics and economics of information.

Scholarly communications literacy refers to the ability to understand how the scholarly communications system works, and to be able to use this consciously and effectively, notably in order to support the achievement of libraries' mission to support access to information, knowledge and research. It includes the ability to make use of possibilities to publish open access effectively, as well as to engage in wider discussions about how to advance open access[1].

Why it matters: the scholarly communications infrastructure has a very significant impact on the way that research is carried out, and so how scientific progress takes place. With this progress offering a key way of overcoming, or at least mitigating, many of the challenges that lie ahead, societies as a whole have a major interest in making sure that research is inclusive and efficient. However, this is a sector where a major role is played by commercial players, building on a proprietary business model championed by the notorious Anglo-Czech businessman

Robert Maxwell[2]. It is not a surprise that it is in this sector that we have seen perhaps the most comprehensive rejection of a model of copyright based on ownership and restrictions on access and use – open access.

With the awareness that the full benefits of openness require action on a wider range of points than the final publication of articles and books, open science and scholarship have emerged as more comprehensive approaches. These bring questions around data, methodologies and how we evaluate research into play, alongside other issues.

Yet to realise the goal of openness as a driver of progress and equity, there needs to be collective effort, which in turn requires a change in attitude and the development of skills. Librarians have a particular role here, given both their own decision-making power, but also the influence they can have on others.

Where we are today: there has already been significant progress in advancing the open access agenda around the world, with wide support from librarians and researchers, and (seemingly) acceptance from publishers. However, uptake is uneven, with some disciplines advancing faster than others, as well as questions about how to ensure that open access is fair, inclusive and respectful. There are suspect operators who take advantage of the model of article processing charges that traditional publishers have promoted, and also questions around how to respect the interests of indigenous peoples[3].

Open science is also rapidly gaining in profile and take up, with many initiatives aimed at addressing the processes and practices that serve to keep research locked away. Some such processes may open up some very significant questions, such as around researcher assessment. As such, there is arguably still a need to build understanding of open science and its merits (when it is forced on people, they may resist), as well as to continue monitoring for fairness, and develop the advocacy and negotiation skills to enable faster change.

Next steps: in order to build these skills, a first step will be to ensure that librarians themselves can update their knowledge about key concepts within open science and open access, as well as why they matter. There may also be a value in ensuring that national consortia or alliances have access to the right skills to aid universities and research centres in turn, giving them confidence[4].

Combined with advocacy skills, well prepared librarians can also become a stronger part of the wider movement to ensure that there are legislative protections and backstops for openness. Given the central role of scientific communications for research, there should arguably be a greater focus on this, and not just on funding questions.

Finally, as a trusted voice for many users, notably students, libraries should learn how to share their scholarly communications literacy. Learning how to teach this will be an interesting challenge that we will need to overcome.

[1] See, for example, ACRL: Scholarly communication: from understanding to engagement, https://www.ala.org/acrl/conferences/roadshows/scholarlycommunication

[2] Gray, Eve (2016), *A neo-colonial enterprise, Robert Maxwell and the rise of the 20th century scholarly journal*, OCSDnet, reprinted from Eve Gray's blog, *https://ocsdnet.org/a-neo-colonial-enterprise-robert-maxwell-and-the-rise-of-the-20th-century-scholarly-journal/*

[3] Many of these issues are highlighted in IFLA's updated Open Access Statement of 2023: https://www.ifla.org/news/10-years-of-the-ifla-open-access-statement-a-call-to-action/

[4] See already for example the materials offered by the Center for Open Science: https://www.cos.io/services/training

A5: Project Management – Paria Aria

What it means: Project management skills are those that allow us successfully to initiate, plan, manage, and complete a project. These steps serve as a guideline to help projects achieve their goals and objectives while planning for any possible roadblocks and barriers that may arise during the course of the project. Some of the common components of a project plan include goals, objectives, outcomes, alignment with the mission and vision of the institutions, needs assessment, work breakdown structure, Gantt charts, and a financial plan.

Why it matters: libraries build communities through the services they offer. The arrival of new technology and socio-economic changes in communities, the need of users evolve. In response to these changes, libraries adapt by offering and developing new services. Designing new services requires an understanding of planning an effective roadmap for managing the establishment of services from start to finish. Project management offers such roadmaps to libraries.

Where we are today: libraries employ design firms to assist them with space planning in libraries. These projects are often large projects that require expert knowledge of interior design and buildings, with specialised project managers. However, planning new library services are carried out and supervised by library directors and team leads, who may not have received training in this area. In particular, meeting the needs of users or keeping up with trends are often the driving force of these new services, and can be achieved through assessments of needs and regular consultation with staff. This not only requires particular skills, but should be incorporated into overall project management processes.

Next steps: a better understanding of project management in libraries across the globe would further help us in planning for addressing this need in the libraries. To start with, we can create handouts and a toolkit that introduces library professionals to the steps of project management. Such easy-to-read handouts can provide libraries with guidance on starting their plan for new services and successfully delivering it to their users while evaluating the newly implemented services to make improvements.

A6: Media and Information Literacy

What it means: The concept of information literacy is certainly already a familiar one in the library field, dating back as far as the 1970s[1]. It represents an effort to articulate the collection of the skills – and arguably attitudes – necessary in order to understand the way in which information (and in particular media information) reaches us, to assess and understand the forces that might explain it. The subject has been well discussed and explored within the library field, with plenty of resources available on the topic.

Nonetheless, it is worth underlining the difference between the 'media' and 'information' literacy elements of this, given that the former often receives the greatest attention. Media literacy has tended to refer to the skills required to understand the perspective that different media sources may take, and how this may influence both the choice of story presented and the way in which this happens. Information literacy is arguably wider, looking at what it takes for people to interact effectively with the information environment around them.

Why it matters: with widely shared concerns about how people are at risk of being manipulated or misled by the information that they encounter on the internet, explaining why media and information literacy matters is perhaps easier now than at any time since the idea was created. Media and information literacy is now recognised at the highest levels, notably with the UN's Global Principles on Information Integrity and the recognition of Media and Information Literacy Week as a global observance[2].

In more depth, however, media and information literacy is a key element for the wider population in developing the ability to navigate the world competently and confidently. Making sure that everyone can benefit from these skills matters, as those who do not have them are not only less able to seize opportunities, but may also be less vulnerable to manipulation. As underlined in the Trend Report, higher levels of such literacy may be a factor for more inclusion and meaningful engagement.

For librarians, strong levels of media and information literacy are essential, not only in our own lives, but also in order to be able to model behaviours and provide training for users.

Where we are today: As highlighted, we are arguably already in a type of golden age of media and information literacy. It is far less difficult than before to explain the concept or why it is important, although it is not always that case that recognition of its role translates into adequate funding. There is also still work to do to ensure not just that it is incorporated into curricula in schools, and that there are the resources necessary for programmes focused on adults.

It is also the case that with the information environment evolving so rapidly, we need to recognise that the knowledge and skills required to be media and information literate are also changing. AI literacy (as already covered elsewhere in this Agenda)

is arguably one such example of an information literacy skill that might not have been imagined a few years ago.

Next steps: An immediate step is to make the most of the emphasis on information literacy as part of wider information integrity agendas in order to invest in training capacity. This goes from stronger recognition of the work of school librarians within the school environment (who have an essential role here) to ensuring that libraries of all types are incorporated into relevant national strategies.

Connected to this will be securing the resources to ensure that library and information workers themselves are in a position to build capability and confidence. This includes investment in building skills within our own sector, both media and information literacy itself, as well as the skills to teach others. Securing this support will in turn take advocacy and political engagement.

[1] University of Wisconsin, Whitewater (n.d.), *Information Literacy at Whitewater*, https://libguides.uww.edu/c.php?g=548084&p=3760838. Meanwhile the first major international declaration on media education appears to be the UNESCO Grunwald Declaration of 1982: https://milunesco.unaoc.org/mil-resources/grunwald-declaration-on-media-education/
[2] Global Media and Information Literacy Week, United Nations: https://www.un.org/en/observances/media-information-literacy-week

A7: Information Stewardship – Madiareni Sulaiman

What it means: For library and information professionals, information stewardship involves the ethical and sustainable management of information resources across their entire lifecycle. This involves maintaining the integrity of data, ensuring equitable access, and safeguarding privacy. Librarians serve as guardians of both digital and physical collections, managing curation, accessibility, and adherence to intellectual property and ethical standards. The Information Governance Framework at the University of Queensland[1] emphasises the significance of clearly defining roles, including Information Stewards, to maintain data quality, security, and ethical usage within institutional settings.

Why it matters: In today's information age, libraries play a crucial role in fighting misinformation, improving digital literacy, and facilitating informed decision-making. Stewardship ensures that resources remain credible, inclusive, and accessible, all while upholding privacy and adhering to legal frameworks. The IFLA Trend Report 2024 highlights this role, highlighting that libraries need to address intricate challenges such as AI-driven misinformation, open data initiatives, and changing user needs. Effective stewardship directly enhances societal resilience and strengthens the library profession's advocacy for equitable access to information.

Where we are today: Libraries around the globe are adopting digital transformation, encountering challenges like resource limitations, regulatory requirements, and technological disruption. Numerous organisations have embraced frameworks similar to that of University of Queensland, establishing clear stewardship roles to guarantee the ethical management of data assets. Libraries are implementing open access policies and digitisation projects to expand the accessibility of their collections. Nonetheless, gaps in infrastructure and expertise continue to exist, especially in areas with limited resources.

Next steps: To strengthen information stewardship, libraries should focus on professional development by empowering staff with training in data ethics, digital preservation, and the application of emerging technologies such as AI. Working together with academic institutions, policymakers, and technology companies is crucial for addressing challenges such as misinformation and data equity. Employing sophisticated tools for resource management and predictive preservation can improve accessibility and reliability. Furthermore, promoting international standards and sustainable funding models will guarantee ethical practices and equitable access to information. Collaborating with local communities to create inclusive stewardship initiatives will also enhance the alignment of library services with user needs and societal objectives.

[1] University of Queensland (n.d.), Information Governance and Management Framework, LINK

B PARTNERSHIP SKILLS

This category of skills focuses specifically on the things we need to know, and be able to do, in order to create, maintain, and make the most of connections with others. As was highlighted at the Information Futures Summit, the Trends identified in the Trend Report affect not only libraries, but also the communities, governments, funders and partners with which libraries work, and so are likely to see these relationships evolve. We need to be ready to ensure that these connections remain as effective, equitable, and strategic as possible.

Photo by Alexis Brown on Unsplash

B1: Advocacy, outreach, marketing and communication - Anaïs Cayzac, Damilare Oyedele

What it means: Advocacy, outreach, marketing, and communication in libraries encompass the efforts to promote the value of libraries, connect with diverse communities, and build awareness of library resources and services.

These activities include, firstly, advocacy, which serves to highlight the essential role of libraries in education, literacy, cultural preservation, and access to information, often directed towards stakeholders like policymakers, funders, and the public, with a view to changing perceptions.

Furthermore, it covers outreach, or engagement with underserved or underrepresented populations to ensure equitable access to library resources and services. It also includes marketing (the promotion of library programmes, resources, and events to boost usage and participation), and communication (maintaining transparent and effective interaction with the library's community, stakeholders, and staff to foster trust and alignment with library goals). Effective marketing helps to ensure that the community is aware of the valuable services and resources that libraries offer.

Why it matters:
First of all, demonstrating impact matters where libraries are facing budget cuts and funding challenges. Advocacy demonstrates libraries' societal value to decision-makers. Next there is equity of access – outreach ensures that vulnerable or marginalised groups, such as non-native speakers, low-income families, and rural communities, benefit from library services.

Work here also helps to boost engagement, with marketing and communication increasing awareness and usage of library resources, particularly in the digital age where competition for attention is high. It can also help build partnerships, as clear communication and effective advocacy foster collaborations with schools, nonprofits, and other organisations, amplifying libraries' reach and impact. Finally, a well-communicated vision secures long-term support and relevance in an evolving societal landscape, therefore driving sustainability.

Where we are today: Faced with the digital shift, many libraries have adopted digital tools for outreach and marketing, such as social media platforms, websites, and e-newsletters, though the extent varies by region and funding. There are great examples of awareness-raising, with campaigns such as ALA's "Libraries Transform"[1] or CILIP UK's "Libraries change lives"[2] and local initiatives to highlight libraries' relevance. Nonetheless, public misconceptions and stereotypes about library roles persist.

There are clearly challenges – funding cuts, staff shortages, imposter syndrome among staff, and limited technical expertise hinder libraries' ability to advocate, market, and communicate effectively. Also, outreach to underserved populations is improving but remains inconsistent,

with gaps in resources for non-English speakers or those with limited digital literacy.

Next steps: The first step is to develop strategic plans. Libraries should create advocacy and marketing plans that align with their mission and community needs, including measurable goals, notably as concerns funding. We should also expand digital efforts, using emerging technologies like AI, targeted ads, and analytics to reach broader audiences effectively. In doing outreach, we should design culturally relevant programs and materials to connect with specific demographics, ensuring inclusivity. It is also important to assess the effectiveness of advocacy, marketing, and outreach initiatives regularly and refine strategies based on feedback and data.

Another priority should be to invest in staff training, providing them with skills in advocacy, marketing, and digital communication to modernise efforts. Yet we do not need to limit this. We can also open up the spectrum and contact influencers (such as local social media actors), as well as working with local schools, cultural institutions, media and other organisations. We should also be ready to work with private sector players in communication, such as advertising agencies. They can both provide training, and take on some of the responsibility here. There are also useful existing tools, such as the "Library Advocacy: A Beginner's Guide" by Libraries Connected[3], which offers practical advice for library leaders to enhance their advocacy efforts.

This strategic focus will ensure libraries remain essential, visible, and accessible to all members of society[4].

[1] American Library Association: LINK
[2] CILIP: LINK
[3] Libraries Connected (date?), Library Advocacy: a Beginner's Guide, LINK
[4] Other good sources are: IFLA (2024), *Return of the zombie library myths*, LINK; Libraries and Imposter syndrome LINK; Mayorkin, Orlando (2024), *Mychal Threets wants everyone to experience "Library joy"*, New York Times, 1 January 2024, LINK; Phil Bradley, *Social Media for Creative Libraries*, 2015

B2: Negotiation and interpersonal skills – Lyric Grimes

What it means: In the article, Interpersonal Skills: What They Are, How to Improve Them, and How to Apply Them, Charles R. McConnell defines interpersonal skills as "essential skills involved in dealing with and relating to other people largely on a one-on-one basis"[1] (2004, p.177). This definition is further extrapolated in 2011 The Sage Handbook of Interpersonal Communication, where interpersonal relationships are defined as "vital to well-being" and "vital to the development of human relationships"[2].

Meanwhile, negotiation skills are often considered a subset of interpersonal skills. Negotiation is a process through which two or more parties interact to create potential agreements intended to guide and regulate their future behavior[3]. Negotiation is a "ubiquitous social activity" that occurs "anytime people cannot achieve their goals without the cooperation of others"[4].

Why it matters: In 2022, Shubhangi M. Vedak outlined the importance of interpersonal skills, sometimes called "soft skills" in libraries[5]. In a review of the literature, Vedak mentions interpersonal skills "enable library professionals to adapt to new and changing demands in society." Additionally, since librarianship is often considered a service-oriented profession, interpersonal skills, and soft skills help the library and librarians "to provide effective and efficient services and [serve] as the bridge between the information resources and human resources, librarians must possess adequate interpersonal skills or skills that can manage information and human resources efficiently and build good relationships.

Shri. Tanawade further expounds upon the importance of interpersonal skills, precisely negotiation skills, by saying, "Successful negotiators are active listeners, who acknowledge what the other person says"[6]. The library professional must possess the ability to make effective contact with relevant people in order to share information, resources and experiences". Merikangas & Harvey also explain that because of the precarious positionality of many libraries, librarians can no longer afford to lose arguments. They further clarify that someone "who can negotiate the library into an improved situation of any kind has made a major contribution [to the library]"[7].

Where we are today: Merikangas & Harvey again explain that although negotiation and interpersonal skills are gaining broader acceptance in the LIS field, librarians' negotiation skills need some improvement[8]. A 2011 survey of professional librarians has shown "a high need for the skills for professional competencies, management, networking and teamwork"[9]. More recently, "interpersonal skills are becoming increasingly important for library and information professionals to enable them to adapt to the new and changing demands of society"[10].

Next steps: Research on library and information science (LIS) professionals highlights the need to improve education and training in interpersonal and soft skills within

LIS programs and the workforce. These skills are essential for advancing the goals and objectives of libraries as both organisations and a field. To achieve this, we must prioritise integrating comprehensive interpersonal and soft skills training into LIS curricula and professional development programs.

This includes fostering communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and adaptability, which are critical for effectively engaging with diverse communities, collaborating with colleagues, and navigating the dynamic challenges of the information landscape. Additionally, partnerships with industry experts, ongoing mentorship opportunities, and experiential learning initiatives can ensure LIS professionals are equipped to meet libraries' and patrons' evolving needs.

[1] McConnell, Charles E R (2004), *Interpersonal skills. What they are, how to improve them, and how to apply them*, Health Care Manag (Frederick) 2004 Apr-Jun;23(2):177-87. doi: 10.1097/00126450-200404000-00012.

[2] Spitzberg, Brian H., and William R. Cupach. *"Interpersonal skills." The Sage handbook of interpersonal communication* 4 (2011): 481527, p484. See also Martin-Raugh, M. P., Kyllonen, P. C., Hao, J., Bacall, A., Becker, D., Kurzum, C., ... & Barnwell, P. (2020). Negotiation as an interpersonal skill: Generalbility of negotiation outcomes and tactics across contexts at the individual and collective levels. Computers in Human Behavior, 104, 105966

[3] Sawyer, J. (1965). *Bargaining and Negotiation in International Relations. International behavior: A social-psychological Analysis*/Holt, Rinehart and Winston

[4] Thompson, L. L., Wang, J., & Gunia, B. C. (2010). Negotiation. *Annual Review of Psychology, 61,* 491–515. LINK, p492

[5] Vedak, S. M. (2022). Interpersonal Skills for Library and Information Professionals. *Emerging Role of Academic Libraries*, 47, p49

[6] Tanawade, M. S. (2011). Effective interpersonal skills for library management. *Indian Streams Research Journal*, *1*(1), 184-186, p186

[7] Merikangas, R. J., & Harvey, J. F. (1984). 6. Negotiation Skills Improvement. *Austerity Management in Academic Libraries*, 135, p135

[8] Idem

[9] Tanawade (2011), p185

[10] Vedak (2022), p49

B3: Community building, collaboration and networking – Esther Bravo Govea, Roana Flores-Solemos

What it means: In general, the concept of "community" is multifaceted and varies across different academic disciplines. In classical anthropology and sociology, the formation of communities is often viewed as an inherent aspect of human nature. This perspective aligns the notion of community closely with that of "society," where both terms can refer to a social unit comprising individuals who share a common social system or structure. These groups typically exhibit a range of shared characteristics, including cultural traits, identity, values, and ideologies.

In this section, the concept of community is defined as a dynamic process involving individuals or members who interact, collaborate, and network—both online and offline—while sharing practices, values and/or ideas.[1] Furthermore, the notion of community is versatile and can be applied across various contexts, situations, or environments, they come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes (i.e. Wikimedia community, research community, local community, international community, traditional community, Facebook community, online community, librarian community, etc.).

Community building, collaboration, and networking involve engaging with a diverse range of individuals. In the library setup, community building involves creating and maintaining a supportive network of internal and external communities. Internal community involves the library itself and the people behind it such as the library staff, while the external community covers engaging users, organisations, and stakeholders. In a library it is essential to understand the values, interests, and needs of the community to foster an environment conducive to socialisation. This approach not only enhances the value for each member but also enriches the library's services, collections, and the broader community. Social capital is built through these relationships, partnerships, and community engagement, which in the long run, further enhances collaboration, resource sharing, and innovation[2].

One of the key driving forces behind community building is collaboration. Bryson et al. highlighted the dynamics of collaboration, emphasizing three interconnected components: *principled engagement*, which fosters shared *motivation*, and builds the *capacity for joint action*[3]. They noted that these dynamics not only create opportunities for action but can also reinforce and influence the broader system or external context, creating a cyclical effect that strengthens collaboration over time. In the LIS field, collaboration involves working across disciplines, institutions, and sectors to achieve shared goals. It encompasses resource sharing, joint projects, and the development of innovative programs, such as interlibrary loans, co-hosted events, and collaborative initiatives.

Networking, in the different vein, focuses on building and maintaining professional relationships that facilitate the exchange of

knowledge, resources, and opportunities. In the LIS field, networking connects professionals with peers, mentors, and collaborators, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. It provides avenues for staying updated on emerging trends, sharing best practices, and accessing support systems. In an article, Dantowski emphasised that networking is not merely about expanding one's circle; rather, it is a process of give and take that involves planning for the future[4]. Through conferences, online forums, and professional associations, networking empowers LIS professionals to expand their reach, explore collaborative possibilities, and strengthen their roles as knowledge facilitators. By nurturing these connections, networking contributes to the growth and resilience of both individuals and institutions in the field.

Why it matters: First of all, communities are powerful collective forces that can self-organise and actively organise and advocate for themselves. For example, they stand up against challenges such as censorship, book bans, and the fight for intellectual freedom, making their voices heard in defence of these vital rights.

Communities also collaborate and contribute, engaging in various ways, including cooperativism, volunteering, crowdfunding, and donations. A great example is Wikipedia, which thrives on the contributions of its users, or the IFLA World Library and Information Congress, which welcomes volunteers from different parts of the world to assist and support the event.

Next, communities build connections. Through partnerships and collaborations, communities establish networks of support, enhancing the reach and impact of library initiatives. These connections create a stronger, more interconnected library ecosystem.

Finally, they add value by offering diverse perspectives. By bringing together individuals from different backgrounds, communities enrich the library field with varied viewpoints, creativity and facilitate the development of innovative solutions. This diversity fosters inclusivity, broadens understanding, and strengthens the foundation of libraries as spaces for all voices.

Where we are today: Building collaboration and networking have already been recognised as essential aspects of the library profession through several publications and initiatives given that libraries, according to Yadav, have always been in the front line of building a community[5].

ALA President Barbara Stripling launched an advocacy and awareness campaign, *The Declaration for the Right to Libraries*, which recognises that *Libraries Build Communities*. It states, "Libraries bring people together, both in person and online, to have conversations and to learn from and help each other. Libraries provide support for seniors, immigrants, and others with special needs"[6].

Moreover, in 2020, IFLA published the document *Community Networks: A Briefing for Libraries*, outlining ways libraries can engage

in community network projects, such as: raising awareness and helping community network projects connect with potential members; offering support and ICT skills training to new community network and internet users; and supporting community network projects in their interactions with external actors, such as municipalities, internet service providers, donors, and others"[7].

Recently, the theme of *International Open Access Week* for 2024 was focused on *Community over Commercialization*. "This theme contributed to a growing recognition of the need to prioritise approaches to open scholarship that serve the best interests of the public and the academic community. Taking the unprecedented step to build on this theme for a second year highlights the importance of this conversation and presents the opportunity to turn more of these deliberations into collective action"[8].

While diverse initiative efforts have been continuously seen across different library sectors, challenges still remain. These include the equity gap, where not all individuals have equal access to networking opportunities or resources, and the presence of silos as many LIS professionals still work in isolation due to a lack of collaboration frameworks.

Next steps: A first step is to acknowledge the active role and power of communities, and actively seek to build partnerships with diverse communities. In this – and across our action – we should emphasise versatility in communication, as interacting with different communities requires

tailored approaches, considering factors like communication styles and cultural differences. For example, connecting with online communities or disability communities may require different strategies from LIS professionals.

[1] This understanding highlights the constructivist approach, contrasting it with other analytical frameworks, such as structuralism.
[2] Wojciechowska, M. D. (2021). The role of public libraries in the development of social capital in local communities–a theoretical study. *Library management*, *42*(3), 184-196. LINK
[3] Bryson, J. M., Crosby, B. C., & Stone, M. M. (2015). Designing and implementing cross-sector collaborations: Needed and challenging. *Public administration review*, *75*(5), 647-663. LINK
[4] Dankowski, T. (2018). 11 Tips for meaningful networking. *American Libraries*, 49(11/12), 42-43. LINK
[5] Yadav, A. K. (2022). The essential skills and competencies of LIS professionals in the digital age: Alumni perspectives survey. Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication, 71(8/9), 837-856. LINK
[6] American Library Association. (2013). The Declaration for the Right to Libraries. LINK
[7] International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2020). Community networks: A briefing for libraries, LINK, p4
[1] Open Access Week. (n.d.). Theme LINK

B4: Change management – Nilay Cevher

What it means: Change management is the planned execution of the process of transitioning from the current state to a better state[1]. According to another perspective, it refers to managing the process of transitioning from an existing state to a more ideal state[2]. According to Kaur, change management involves systematic, planned, and innovative strategies developed to cope with diverse and sudden changes. In summary, it can be defined as controlling the ongoing transformation process with a sustainable change strategy and facilitating the adaptation of elements affected by the process[3]. This approach has mostly been used by other disciplines like business. However, libraries have started to borrow it from those disciplines and use it to cope with the current challenges.

Why it matters: Libraries like any other organisation have been going through radical changes. As technology continues to advance, libraries are expected not only to keep pace with these developments but also to proactively prepare for future challenges and opportunities. Especially after the pandemic, it has become more important for individuals and organisations to adapt to the changes more quickly. However, both users and staff may resist changes, and effective change management plays a critical role in mitigating this resistance, ensuring a smoother transition for all stakeholders involved.

Where we are today: Libraries appear to recognise the need for change and

are making an effort to adjust. The majority of libraries worldwide, however, are unsure of where to begin or are unable to identify the needs of their employees, particularly users. Change management should be more methodical and systematic.

Next steps: It seems managing change will become even more important in the near future. Still unanswered questions include, for example, whether libraries still matter, library services and collections should be exclusively digital, library spaces are necessary, or robots or artificial intelligence will replace librarians. It is always better to be prepared for any possible future by strengthening the ability to adapt.

Libraries, like any institution, will stay relevant only if they adapt to the rapidly changing environment. As the internet, machines, and robots continue to accelerate processes, the type of services libraries can offer to users becomes a critical consideration. In this era of widespread misinformation, libraries should prioritise their role as reliable sources of trustworthy information. Libraries should also focus on expanding their roles in areas such as leadership, advocacy, promoting open access, supporting democracy, and advancing sustainability, among others[4].

[1] Galli, B. J. (2018). Change management models: A comparative analysis and concerns. *IEEE Engineering Management Review, 46*(3), 124-132, p124
[2] Shan, S. and Shaheen, M. A. (2013). *Change management in the information age: Approaches of academic library administrators in Pakistani universities'* 144

libraries. Library Philosophy and Practice. (e-journal). Paper 1037. [LINK](#)

[3] Kaur, R. (2018). Change management: A big solution to cope up with IT based culture in 21st century libraries. *Library Progress (International), 38*(1), 140-148

[4] Other suggested reading includes Appiah, A. B., Adams, M. ve Adu, I. N. (2016). Change management in library environments: A comparative study of private and public university libraries in Ghana. *An International Journal of Information and Communication Technology, 13*(1), 25-38, Aslam, M. (2021). Adapting to change in academic libraries. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication, 71*(8/9), 672-685, Aslam, M. (2022). Changing behavior of academic libraries and role of library professionals. *Information Discovery and Delivery, 50*(1), 54-63.

B5: Pedagogy and teaching – Katie Scott

What it means: Pedagogy and teaching are closely related concepts but there are a few key differences that necessitate understanding the principles of both. Teaching is a relatively self-explanatory concept where information is instructed upon a learner. Pedagogy looks at teaching in a broader societal discourse. Dr. Rajendra Kumar Shah, citing Robin Alexander, states, "…Teaching is an act while pedagogy is both act and discourse. Pedagogy is not therefore simply describing the activity of teaching, but reflects the production of broader social and cultural values within the learning relationship. Concepts of pedagogy reflect societal values and beliefs about learning"[1].

Teaching, the act, includes the ability up front to assess needs and define objectives, to be able to explore – empathetically – what approach will best enable students to learn, and then to develop training in a way that gets everyone to their respective objectives. In particular, and in line with libraries' overall commitment to supporting individual empowerment, pedagogy needs to be enabling as well, avoiding the simple acquisition of facts, and rather building the ability to operate autonomously. Library and Information Studies (LIS) pedagogy must also aim to impart and uphold principles and core values expected of library professionals.

Why it matters: The importance of the ability to teach others is especially important, given the potential of librarians to help users develop their own knowledge and skills in key areas that help them, in turn, exercise their rights and participate in society. Given their role in supporting users to develop key literacies, such as media and information literacy to scholarly communications literacy, library and information workers are more effective when they are better able to teach others.

Developing such skills will be particularly valuable when it comes to users who may not be able to access self-led learning in the same way. Not everyone thinks or learns in the same way, and we need to avoid leaving behind those whose learning style is not suited to more traditional methods. The alternative is that those who already have a stronger skills base are able to move faster, while those who struggle are left behind. As such, teaching and learning can also become an equity issue. Understanding the overall aims and objectives of LIS instruction should inform the pedagogy behind learning objectives being taught.

Where we are today: While many library and information workers' focus on understanding the needs of the individuals and communities that they serve means that they are already better placed than many to share skills, this does not mean that it is the case everywhere, or that improvement is not possible. One immediate way of boosting teaching capacity is through partnering with others, bringing dedicated trainers into the library (who in turn may then be able to reach more people than they would have otherwise).

It appears also, increasingly, that library initiatives on a variety of issues are built, also, around developing methods for building skills that go beyond simply making information available. Nonetheless, the value of pedagogical skills is also only likely to grow as the need for a network of capable trainers in these wide information skills increases. Of course, an example may be found in the model of teacher-librarians in schools in some countries, who are trained to be able to build library and information skills across the school community.

Next steps: An immediate step, in particular in those areas where libraries are well placed – through their place in the community and the knowledge of their staff – will be to raise the overall level of pedagogical skill. This not only promises more effective support for users, but can also be a way of recognising and elevating library and information workers themselves. In parallel with efforts to enhance basic pedagogical skill levels, greater possibilities to work with others will also help.

In the longer term, it will be valuable to continue to record and share information and data, systematically, about what works best in pedagogy in libraries, in order to share particular skills, and reach particular audiences. This not only supports reflective practice, but should also enable faster innovation and evolution. Increased awareness and participation of partnerships between LIS academic programs, library institutions, associations, and other entities will also benefit the field's overall teaching and pedagogy.

[1] Shah, R.K., (2021). Conceptualizing and Defining Pedagogy. IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME), 11(1), PP 06-29. LINK, p7

B6: Cultural awareness – Paria Aria

What it means: an understanding of other cultures, while respecting differences in cultural views. Cultural awareness provides us with the skills to communicate effectively with people from other cultures, understand their cultural identity and accept that others may be different from us. Through this acceptance, we acknowledge and respect that others may think, work, live, or hold beliefs different from our own.

Why it matters: our world has changed in the past decades. We live in an internationalised world where people from different cultures are living and working in the same communities. At the same time, technology has simplified communication, enabling people from different countries to connect more easily. Cultural awareness is no longer an optional skill reserved for those interacting with people from different cultures. To succeed in today's world, an understanding of different cultures is a required skill.

Where we are today: IFLA as an organisation that brings together various voices from different countries, offers a significant venue for cultural exchange and understanding. In addition, many library conferences attract an international group of participants and create the chance for mutual cultural understanding during conversations. However, as also seen during WLIC, participants from certain regions of the world have difficulties attending these conferences due to visa restrictions and financial hardship. Yet even where there are opportunities to meet, we also need to learn to be more comfortable with difference, and rather than judging, rather seize the opportunity to learn and understand.

Next steps: cultural awareness begins with us. It can start from a curiosity toward other cultures or the need to adapt to a multicultural community. In either case, it is up to individuals to be willing to accept and respect others. As an individual, we can model this behaviour. Library associations and organisations can play a role in facilitating cultural exchange by offering programs and training that promote cultural awareness. Reaching out to under-represented groups of library associations and encouraging them to join the association is another step that can diversify the members and create a culture of understanding and acceptance.

B7: Storytelling skills

What it means: storytelling is far from being a modern skill, arguably having its roots far ago in human development. In cultures of all types, the ability to tell a story effectively and engagingly is recognised as a skill, and those who have it are valued.

The functions of the stories being told can be very different. They can run from the fairy tales told to children in Medieval Europe intended to caution them – girls in particular – against dangerous situations, to creation stories which help give sense and logic to community life. They are also clearly there to entertain and stimulate the imagination. Across this thought runs the ability to trigger something in the human mind that makes connections and achieves engagement.

In a more applied sense, storytelling refers to how we can turn data points and other information or knowledge into a compelling narrative that can change minds and attitudes.

Why it matters: humans are strongly attached to narratives as a way of understanding the world around them. We can never hope to understand everything, and so creating stories that help make sense of the unknown and unpredictable provides both useful short-cuts, as well as reassurance. They can also build a sense of acceptance and buy-in, as well as building support.

This matters both in terms of the relationship of libraries to communities, and to funders. We need members of our communities to integrate libraries into their understanding of the world around them, and so into their lives and lifestyles. They need to be imaginative about how they approach us and our services. Meanwhile, funders need to understand how essential we and our services are, and to conceive of our work as an investment in the future. In both cases, there may be old stereotypes – or stories – that need to be disrupted.

In short, without building a strong narrative around libraries, we risk a lack of support – and indeed care – for libraries, and so a weakening of our ability to meet needs and seek support. Storytelling is a powerful way to do this, and indeed, can help us explain to ourselves why our work matters.

Where we are today: to some extent, libraries already have a natural affiliation with storytelling, at least the public and school libraries that integrate this into their programming. While this may seem some distance away from the storytelling required for advocacy or community outreach, it does provide a basis for further work.

At the same time, it is still an effort for many to be able to turn data into a compelling narrative; this can run against the instinct to be comprehensive. Other sectors arguably have been better at challenging stereotypes and changing how they are perceived by the public and potential funders alike. At the same time, there are many excellent examples at the community level of libraries telling great stories, with positive results.

Next steps: we should see storytelling as one of the tools we have available in order to engage with communities and funders alike, and work to build it throughout our careers. While those with a particular responsibility for advocacy or outreach may benefit in particular from training, it is worth everyone being able to tell a great narrative about their work and their profession[1].

It is also – helpfully – a skill which we can also train by paying attention to the stories other people tell us, and reflecting. Nonetheless, there are master storytellers out there who can share their experience and offer coaching in turning our ideas and arguments into narratives. It is also worth exploring how we can persuade others to tell their library stories, making them into champions for libraries at all levels.

[1] See for example IFLA's Storytelling Manual on Libraries and the Sustainable Development Goals (2019): https://www.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/sdg-storytelling-manual.pdf

C PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

This final cluster looks more at the package of skills that enable individual library and information workers to be resilient and innovative, and face the future with courage and optimism. Compared to cluster A skills, these are more general, giving those who have them the possibility to adapt to change and develop their own learning pathways, as well as bring other people with them.

Photo by Riccardo Annandale on Unsplash

C1: Imagination, intuition and creativity

What it means: imagination, intuition and creativity refer to ways of thinking and approaching problems or challenges that step out of a strict adherence to logic or experience. They are most typically associated with the arts, and indeed, efforts to encourage reflection on 'STEAM' rather than just 'STEM' (i.e. adding arts to science, technology, engineering and maths) are seen as looking to boost creativity[1]. However, these three skills arguably have a place in almost every field, helping us to take on different perspectives, overcome assumptions, and innovate.

Why it matters: Unless we are able to imagine a different future, we are all too often condemned to repeat the past. Building our ability to imagine and create can be an enabler of innovation and improvement in our practice, as well as allowing us to broaden our perspective of what tomorrow may hold. In turn, this reduces the risk of being surprised, and so helps us to become more resilient. Indeed, in the section of the Trend Report focused on futures thinking, the role of imagination is highlighted.

Creativity has long been seen in libraries, from innovative programming to outside-the-box ways of thinking about a library's mission and goals and how to best serve communities. Libraries, especially academic and public institutions, strive to prepare patrons to be future ready and adaptive to rapidly changing landscapes and this at times requires creative thinking not only from those working within and around libraries, but about the purposes of the institutions themselves. If a principal goal of libraries is to help in enabling communities to be future-ready, then library professionals must strive to build creativity among their patrons.

Furthermore, imagination and creativity very much complement other skills referenced in this Agenda, not least around advocacy and storytelling. They are also powerful drivers of wellbeing and broader human agency – the feeling of being able to take action to change your life and the lives of people around you. There are similar positive effects on communities, both for individuals and the connections between them.

Where we are today: The library field already benefits from a strong contingent of creative thinkers, some drawn to it by their love of books and fiction in particular in the first place, others because of the opportunities that it can offer to apply imagination while supporting others in doing so, as well. Within the overall mission of enabling people to turn access to information into development, there is a lot of space for new ideas to emerge, responding to circumstances and taking advantage of opportunities.

At the same time, we are still a field marked by a relatively strong adherence to certain ways of doing things, as well as – often – a sense of passivity in the face of change. As already highlighted in the Global Vision in 2018, we do need to be able to challenge structures and habits, applying innovation and creativity. There is also scope to

embrace our role in supporting creativity – both among individuals and communities – more strongly. There are already initiatives, such as EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme[2] – which look to recognise those who have used their imagination, which point the way.

Next steps: In the short term, we can do more to make explicit that imagination, intuition and creativity are valued within our field, both through providing spaces for them, and recognising them when they are applied. We can also do more to align libraries with wider initiatives focused on public sector innovation, ensuring both that others recognise what libraries are capable of, and that we can draw on the lessons of others. Increasing awareness of initiatives that inspire and recognise innovation amongst all library workers, including future professionals in LIS academic programs, would also emphasise the necessity of creativity and innovation at all levels and in all types of libraries.

Finally, we may want to look further at how we can enhance our ability to stimulate imagination and creativity in our communities. School libraries have much to share here, but all library types, arguably, have a role to play in encouraging people to think differently, and more actively, in order to make the most of access to information.

[1] See, for example, STEAM Education on Wikipedia, LINK
[1] EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme, LINK

C2: Lifelong learning

What it means: sometimes, one skill makes it possible to gain other skills. This is often the argument made around literacy – once someone is able to read, a huge range of materials can become available to them in order to learn about other things.

This is certainly the case for lifelong learning, which can be defined here as referring to the ability to identify needs across life, find appropriate materials and tools, and to carry out learning in a way that both fits with an individual's lifestyle today, and can have a lasting positive effect. Alongside these elements, clearly attitudes also count – it is important to be open to learning and ready to put yourself in the situation of being a beginner once again.

Why it matters: It has long been recognised that learning cannot stop when formal education ends. Not only do humans have the capacity to continue to develop knowledge and skills throughout life, but they also need to at a time of rapid change. This is as true for library and information workers as for the communities they seize. Painted negatively, it is the difference between facing insecurity as some jobs disappear and others emerge, and being able to keep up. More positively, lifelong learning is essential if we are to be able to seize the opportunities created by technology or positive trends.

Where we are today: libraries already identify themselves closely with lifelong learning, with public libraries in particular active in contributing to wider adult learning goals[1]. At least in many parts of the world, there are successful examples of designing programming that matches the needs and learning styles of users, helping them to become effective lifelong learners. There is certainly an interest in spreading this practice.

At the same time, within our field there is plenty still to do. Not all librarians benefit from access to an active association or agency which can help develop skills throughout life. Those who are ready to engage in lifelong learning may well still find the materials they need to do so – for example through other associations or institutions[2] – but others risk ending up taking a more static approach, learning little and continuing to do things as before.

Next steps: There is already a lot of strong work around how libraries can support lifelong learning in their communities, with both more formal guidelines, opportunities for sharing experience, and good practice examples. This should certainly continue, with a focus on how we can build stronger partnerships with other institutions active in the space. In addition to supporting stronger impact, this should also help us learn to become better learning enablers.

Within the field itself, the work of associations to promote and support lifelong learning should certainly continue. We may also want to explore how to develop these skills amongst graduates from library programmes, and then create the right mix of incentives and encouragement to reinforce positive attitudes around lifelong learning. Further help could come

from the availability of career coaches who can help colleagues develop their ability to learn throughout life.

[1] See, for example, the initiative of IFLA's Public Libraries Section in 2000 on the role of public libraries in lifelong learning: https://www.ifla.org/g/public-libraries/the-role-of-public-libraries-in-lifelong-learning-a-project-under-the-section-of-public-libraries-ifla/
[1] Not least IFLA's own Section on Continued Professional Development and Workplace Learning, https://www.ifla.org/units/cpdwl/

C3: Futures thinking – Paria Aria

What it means: looking to the future while keeping our past in mind. We can learn from our history and how we have reached the present to make decisions and reach a desirable future. In this type of thinking, we are not predicting the future but rather creating an awareness of the trends around us, critically assessing our growing needs based on these trends, and developing a pathway that helps us reach a future in which we have incorporated the trends. We are also learning to work with the uncertainty that we inevitably face.

Why it matters: the world is rapidly changing. To stay relevant, we need to change and adapt. Falling behind the trends will lead to becoming obsolete. At the same time, we should ensure that we keep our core beliefs when we change and adapt. Futures thinking allows us to create a future for ourselves in which our beliefs are intact, yet we have embraced the changes and built them in a manner that preserves our fundamental values. It also has a role to play in building a sense of agency and wellbeing, helping library and information workers and patrons alike to feel a greater sense of control over their future.

Where we are today: libraries do an excellent job of staying up to date with the trends. Many libraries have embraced AI, created new services to address this new need of our users, or have modified previous services to include AI. Although when thinking of the future, technology is the first that comes to mind, we should remind ourselves that the future encompasses much more. It includes other aspects such as the diversity of our users or the use of space in libraries, covering all of the trends included in the Trend Report and more.

Most important of all, by futures thinking we should plan for the unexpected. This means being ready to step away from focusing only on the future that seems most likely to us today, and imagine different possibilities. These in turn can serve to test out whether our plans and strategies today are fit for purpose.

Next steps: Strategic plans of libraries and library associations are the first step toward futures thinking. Conferences and workshops can help librarians think about their evolving roles and take a proactive approach toward the future. Library schools can implement activities in the curriculum that sparks innovation and creative thinking in library students. After all, these students are the future of libraries[1].

[1] See also the chapter on Futures Thinking in the Trend Report 2024

C5: Data-driven decision-making – Madiareni Sulaiman

What it means: Making decisions based on data refers to the analysis and use of data to make evidence-based decisions. For library and information professionals, this means using data to tailor services, enhance resources, and address the changing needs of the communities they support. It connects institutional goals with societal effects, ensuring that decisions are based on measurable outcomes.

Why it matters: Library professionals serve as the essential intermediaries between information and the public, significantly contributing to the enhancement of societal knowledge and equity. Through the use of data, they are able to gain deeper insights into user behaviours, prioritise essential services, and showcase accountability[1]. This approach effectively tackles challenges such as misinformation, digital divides, and resource limitations, thereby strengthening libraries as vital societal institutions.

Where we are today: The IFLA Trend Report 2024 highlights the growing use of data analytics in libraries, while also pointing out challenges, including a lack of data skills and ethical issues related to privacy. It also notes the growing volume of data available in order to inform decision-making. Numerous libraries are exploring cutting-edge technologies and frameworks to use data efficiently, yet finding a balance between innovation and inclusivity continues to pose a challenge.

Next steps: Library and information professionals should strengthen their roles as data advocates by incorporating data-driven strategies into internal operations and community services. This involves investing in training for data literacy, promoting collaborations to ensure equitable access to data tools, and integrating ethical data practices into decision-making processes. By engaging in these initiatives, libraries can enhance their influence on individual growth while also tackling wider societal issues.

[1] Bryant, Rebecca (2024), *Libraries support data-driven decision making*, OCLC Research Blog, 21 February 2024, LINK

C6: Risk literacy – Donna Gonzaga-Labangon

What it means: Risk literacy encompasses the knowledge, skills, and understanding necessary to effectively assess, manage, and communicate risks[1]. It involves the ability to accurately interpret and act on information about potential threats and uncertainties, enabling informed decision-making in various contexts[2].

A significant area for risk literacy research is investigating how individuals perceive, assess, and respond to risks in different settings. This research should explore how diverse populations interpret and act upon risk information in various contexts, considering cultural background, socio-economic status, and individual cognitive biases.

Why it matters: Risk is an inherent part of everyday life, encompassing various domains such as health, transportation, security, finance, and environmental sustainability. While public health[3] has been a significant focus of risk literacy research, the concept transcends specific disciplines. The literature demonstrates various applications, including financial decision-making[4], transportation safety, and ecological risk assessment[6]. This is also another domain that librarians can tap into to better manage and future-proof our service operations.

Where we are today: libraries are sometimes perceived as risk-averse. This may be due (where this is the case) of being part of the public sector, which also has a reputation for wanting to avoid looking like it has made a mistake or a bad call. In reality, much will depend on the environment that library leadership - and host or parent institutions - allow libraries. A supportive and forward thinking environment can empower libraries to be more innovative and take calculated risks. Clearly, the ideal approach to risk will also sit somewhere between complete aversion, and

recklessness. This could involve carefully assessing potential outcomes, weighing the potential rewards against the possible downsides, and developing strategies to mitigate negative impacts.

Next steps: While libraries are ideally positioned to disseminate risk literacy information, this might require carefully consideration of programme development and staff training in risk literacy concepts. Simply having resources available is insufficient; librarians need the expertise to guide users, tailor programs to community needs, and help translate complex scientific concepts into accessible and actionable information.

To advance our understanding of how individuals perceive and interpret risk, we can start with a foundation in risk science, ensuring clear definitions and a comprehensive understanding of relevant concepts and their interconnections. Success in this endeavor necessitates close collaboration among people who delve into risk literacy, risk communication, and risk science fundamentals[7]. This interdisciplinary approach will facilitate the development of a shared understanding of risk and enable the design of effective strategies to improve public risk perception and decision-making. Similarly, we also need to apply these lessons to ourselves, exploring how to create the mindset to tolerate (some) risk, but also the skills to ensure that our decisions are reasonable.

[1] Risk Literacy (2023) Riskliteracy.org. LINK

[2] Nikiforidou, Z., Pange, J., & Chadjipadelis, T. (2012). Risk literacy in early childhood education under a lifelong perspective. *Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 4830–4833,

[3] Aven, T. (2024). Risk literacy: Foundational issues and its connection to risk science. *Risk Analysis*, *44*(5), 1011-1020, LINK. Garcia-Retamero, R., & Cokely, E. T. (2017). Designing Visual Aids That Promote Risk Literacy: A Systematic Review of Health Research and Evidence-Based Design Heuristics. *Human Factors*, 59(4), 582-627 LINK, Operskalski, J. T., & Barbey, A. K. (2016). Risk literacy in medical decision-making. *Science*, 352(6284), 413–414, LINK.

[4] Lusardi, A. (2015). Risk literacy. *Italian Economic Journal*, 1, 5–23

[5] Volgemute, K., Vazne, Z., & Useche, S. A. (2024). Exploring Cyclists' Behavior, Traffic Safety Literacy, and Crash Occurrence in Latvia. *Safety*, 10(4), 97. LINK

[6] Carmi, N., & Alkaher, I. (2019). Risk Literacy and Environmental Education: Does Exposure to Academic Environmental Education Make a Difference in How Students Perceive Ecological Risks and Evaluate Their Risk Severity? *Sustainability*, 11(22), 6350, LINK

[7] Aven (2024), ibid

C7: Professional awareness

What it means: IFLA talks a lot about the concept of a library field, covering professionals working in a wide variety of roles and institutions, as well as other staff and partners. However, for many, professional identities are often more tied up with a particular library sector, with a school librarian often feeling a long way away from someone at a major parliamentary or national library[1].

Professional awareness relates to the sense of actually being part of a wider field, and actively looking at what is held in common between different library types and roles, to see the "whole picture". While some of this may come from following a similar library school education, this will not always be the case where people have come to librarianship later in life. A stronger basis will come from the shared emphasis on supporting development and the enjoyment of rights through access to information, the commitment to serving everyone fairly and equally, and a sense of solidarity between librarians at the local, national and global levels.

Why it matters: a sense of professional identity can be a major factor in supporting engagement, wellbeing and resilience at work[2]. It can allow us to relate what we are doing to a wider mission and set of values, as well as building a sense of being part of a wider community. Through this, the sense of being part of a professional network offers a reference point that can also help us find solutions to problems, as well as the practical benefits of cooperation with colleagues from different library types and services.

At a higher level, it also underpins efforts to carry out advocacy more generally for libraries and their values. Without professional awareness, we are far less ready and able to stand up and ask for what we need, drawing on the power that comes from having motivated people across a geography.

Furthermore, stronger professional awareness, as suggested already, also opens up possibilities for collaborations, allowing us more flexibility in finding solutions to the challenges we face, combining the respective strengths of our library types and institutions.

Where we are today: while library associations in many countries do still bring together all types of library and information workers, in others there is still a strong focus on specific library types. Yet even in cross-cutting associations and organisations, it can still be easy to gravitate towards those colleagues who appear to have the most similar experiences and frameworks for thinking.

There are practical efforts, nonetheless, to build a sense of broader professional awareness. For example, efforts to develop general codes of ethics or to address cross-cutting themes, such as copyright, serve to build a sense of a shared mission and set of interests.

Next steps: more can certainly be done in general not just to define what the library profession and field are, but also to reflect on how we make professional awareness part of both initial and ongoing learning. It will also be powerful to find and celebrate examples of professional awareness and identity at work, for example through collaborations or other shared initiatives.

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[1] This has been the focus of a recent report, for example: Chowcat, Ian, Baker, David, Ellis, Lucy (2025), *Understanding Library Field Structures,* LINK
[2] For example, Psychology Writing - Counselling: *Developing personal and professional self-awareness*, LINK

C8: Growth mindset – Lyric Grimes

What it means: The term growth mindset was coined in 2008 by American psychologist Carol Dweck[1]. The theory, as described by Dweck, differentiates between a fixed mindset (the assumption that talents and abilities do not change over time) versus a growth mindset (the assumption that talents and abilities can be changed through practice, effort, and study). In organisations, growth mindsets often refer to embracing cultural change and responding to challenges and setbacks[2]. This is especially important for libraries as they must react steadily to mounting pressures relating to space and budget and frequently changing user's needs and perceptions[3].

Why it matters: Organisations that adopt a "growth mindset culture are better at adapting to change in their workforce by fomenting the belief of continuous learning and development in an environment where mistakes are part of the learning process. Allevato also mentions that "the cultural growth mindset, the concept of resilience composed of perseverance and passion for long-term goals is also important"[4]. Growth mindsets are fundamental as they enable several concepts to manifest, mainly flexibility, active learning and engagement, and mindfulness, amongst many others.

Where we are today: Current literature surrounding growth mindsets and libraries are often focused on "revealing the process behind accomplishments, such as sharing early work from famous authors, and evidence of revision and iteration"[5]. Additionally, "…growth mindset increasingly appear[s] in academic library conference presentations and the professional literature..."[6]. While this is important, it neglects to focus on the people behind the processes – librarians, staff, and users. How can we better identify deficit thinking and utilise growth mindset principles and approaches as a field?

Next steps: "Growth mind-set has been put forward as an intervention to address the achievement gap among students as well as an approach that universities should adopt institution-wide"[7]. Connected to this, we "need to recognise deficit thinking when we see it"[8]. Still, we also need to move beyond a deficit model that assumes users lack understanding of library resources and have little to contribute; we should also consider alternative sources of information beyond the library, including insights from friends and family, personal and work experiences, and resources found through online search engines and social media[9]. We need to apply the same approach to ourselves, addressing feelings of powerlessness and building a sense of agency and ability to learn and progress[10].

[1] Dweck, Carol S (2008), *Transforming students' motivation to learn*
[1] Allevato, E. (2020). Organizational Culture Change: Growth Mindset, Positive Psychology, and Empowerment. In: Marques, J., Dhiman, S. (eds) Social Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility. Management for Professionals. Springer, Cham, LINK, p12
[1] Vedantham, A. (2020). Student-Centered Libraries: Changing both expectations and results. The Routledge International Handbook of Student-Centered Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (pp. 456-472). Routledge. LINK
[1] Allevato (2020), p12
[1] Vedantham, A. (2020), p458
[1] Tewell, E. (2020). The problem with grit: Dismantling deficit thinking in library instruction. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, *20*(1), 137-159, p138
[1] Idem, p141
[1] Idem, p155
[1] Tewell (2020)
[1] For further reading, see also: Yeager, D., Walton, G., & Cohen, G. L. (2013). Addressing achievement gaps with psychological interventions. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *94*(5), 62-65.

The way forward – A collective approach

This report has identified 22 different skills that, in the view of the emerging leaders who gathered in Brisbane, will ensure that libraries and library professionals are better able to seize the opportunities and respond to the challenges identified in the Trend Report. This applies as much to each of us in our own lives and careers as to our field as a whole.

As highlighted in the introduction, there is a mixture of skills, including more technical skills that are very useful to have in our own professional toolboxes, allowing us to effectively complete tasks. There are also interpersonal skills – ones that make it possible for us to build connections and partnerships that ask us to collaborate together in order to go further and achieve more. And there are personal development skills – those that enable us to independently take on new tasks, further explore critical concepts, and have a transformative impact on our collective organisations for the betterment of the field as a whole.

This is of course a busy agenda, and to try and develop all of these skills at once would be impossible. However, it may be valuable to use this report as a benchmark, and to reflect how far – as an individual, institution, or member of the wider library field – you have access to these abilities. Where something is missing, think about how important it is to fill the gap and how one might strengthen knowledge and skills in each particular area.

When doing this, it is worth remembering that not all of these skills are best developed through formal learning. Frequently, taking on a new task that stretches you and allows you to develop an ability can help. So too can spending time with someone you know who already has this skill, such as in a mentorship capacity. This sort of learning can still be organised, representing a valuable role for associations and institution leadership.

Finally, we of course welcome comparisons between this agenda and the skills frameworks identified by leading library associations and institutions. These provide a more comprehensive focus on what library and information workers need to know and be able to do today, as well as aiming to increase the future-readiness of library professionals.