



GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the Finnish librarians meeting *How a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future*

20th September 2017



Contributors

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Introduction

On 20th September 2017, in Helsinki University Library, 20 librarians participated in a conversation about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. Together we represent 289 years of library experience.

The participants came from all different types of libraries in Finland: public, scientific, Celia library for the print disabled, polytechnic schools' libraries. We had a wide range of library professionals from library directors to librarians and assistant librarians and people working as development planners etc. The Finnish Library Association organized the event, together with the Finnish Research Library Association and Helsinki University Library.

According to the participants, the workshop had a relaxed and inspiring atmosphere. Many people that had been in contact before now met first time face to face. This was one important outcome of the meeting. Timeline for the meeting was quite short (two hours) so we really needed to go forward with the questions. We made some adjustments to the workshop outline provided by IFLA to make the most of this meeting. The participants asked if library users are involved in the Global Vision process and we encouraged everyone to market the online voting to library users.

A vision for libraries

The core values of libraries (Q4):

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1. *Openness*
 2. *Reliability of information*
 3. *Furthering and promoting equality*
 4. *Free of charge*
 5. *Shared 5. place: Learning & Art / Societal responsibility*
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Comments:

The value discussion was important and lit up the group. Values had most consensus when we voted for the most important ones. One theme discussed was that libraries cannot be neutral, instead libraries need to stand behind their values and really show them in action. One example mentioned was age limits to self-service libraries in Finland, libraries cannot have age limits if they want to be open and equal for all.

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

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1. *Customer Service*
 2. *Openness*
 3. *Approachable*
 4. *Network of libraries is comprehensive*
 5. *Management of collections*
-

Comments:

We focused the discussion to Finland. In the national surveys libraries are one of the most appreciated service by the Finns and that is one reason customer service came up as first. There also came an excellent point that Finnish librarians are good working as individuals but we need more skills to do things together as teams. A comment from one group: "We do well individually, not in teams."

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

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1. *Promoting and marketing*
 2. *Networking*
 3. *Measure impact*
 4. *Courage*
 5. *Opening collections and contents for users in different ways*
-

Comments:

The group discussed about measure impact and the value libraries produce. There was a general notion that libraries need to stand for the fact that not everything can be measured in money.

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

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1. *Duplicating*
 2. *Being locked on old competence*
 3. *Being introverted*
 4. *Complaining*
 5. *Implementing restrictions*
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Comments:

In the group discussions, there was the general view that libraries are good at collection based work. There is the lack of courage to reach out from the library field to network with other professions and institutions, companies etc.

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

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1. *Increasing inequality (social, economic)*
 2. *Falling off facts, fake news, and the lack of reliable information*
 3. *Demographic shift (Population of older people surpassing number of children)*
 4. *Climate change*
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5. *Many: Extremist thinking, falling off democratic mechanisms*

Comments:

We decided to focus on the main challenges to society instead of challenges to libraries. The societal challenges are the ones that libraries should be working with actively.

How a united library field can make a difference

How should a united library field help meet the challenges identified?

1. *Libraries hold on to joint values (equality, openness, free of charge) in their everyday work*
 2. *Provide easy access to information and content for all and active support for decision-making based on facts*
 3. *Open and safe space for everyone, for learning, working and hobbies*
 4. *Developing services for the aging population*
 5. *Working with different partners*
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Comments:

In addition to top 5 in group discussions there was a joint view of the importance of information and media literacy.

A global conversation

This report is created in an interactive process, in Helsinki on 29th September 2017. It is part of a global conversation initiated by IFLA on how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future.

Over the course of two years (2017-2018), IFLA will involve as many librarians and others as possible in this global conversation. Participants are encouraged to continue the conversation in their own networks and organization and share the results with IFLA. At the end of 2017, the first results of all the workshops and online discussions will be turned into a *Global Vision Report*, which in turn will be adapted into concrete strategies, processes and work programmes in 2018.

To learn more about the global conversation, and download supporting materials to support your own activities, visit globalvision.ifla.org.

Stay tuned for news about the IFLA Global Vision discussion following [#iflaGlobalVision](https://twitter.com/iflaGlobalVision) and make sure to cast your vote in August when the online voting platform is available on <https://globalvision.ifla.org>.