

LIS: Investigations

Where ALIA's Research Committee brings you news from the world of library and information services research.

Articles on the demise of libraries abound. Many articles argue that in order for libraries to stay relevant, targeted marketing, user-need surveys, and product value-adding are needed. Libraries already implement these techniques. It was interesting to read articles from practitioners, who acknowledge these aspects, but who also offer insightful and probing perspectives.

There exists a dogma by the iGeneration that libraries are replaceable by web development and digital technologies as if "...technology and mentality are one extended system". This digital connectivity, explored by Turner, cites works that discuss technology-changing neural responses, placing the brain into a constant state of stress, which can impair cognition. There is solid attention given to these digital natives. This represents some serious discussion, showing a need for further research.

Libraries have been at the forefront of technology implementation for all sorts of solutions to enhance their local community connections. The two articles presented do not shy away from the current state libraries are in, but leverage their long standing social status to advocate the value of libraries. What is offered are perspectives and reflections of the inherent strengths of library services. The article by Turner presents a US historical perspective on the library, both public and school, which also reflects our own Australian situation.

Libraries have strong cultural connections. They are places of information acquisition and access. School libraries are mentioned as a possible model for improving critical thinking skills – vital in the 21st century.

Economic and political factors have also had an impact on libraries; aspirational goals are therefore the library's hallmark. Libraries are not only information portals, but knowledge centres for connecting, intellectually and socially, creating physical, mental, and emotional spaces, and to stimulate deep thinking and contemplation. "Furthermore, although it has been somewhat diminished by cultural change, the library's 'brand' as a knowledge-center remains unparalleled in American life" (Turner).

As the web changes library structures, libraries find they are catering for many different needs, wants, and user perceptions. They have adopted various prescriptions for sustainability. Libraries work hard to dispel the voice of irrelevancy.

Truitt's editorial, *Koyaanisqatsi* (2011) – refers to a "life out of balance". With the internet, libraries are faced with their own *Koyaanisqatsi* as the web's tsunami-like advance challenges our authority and perceived custodial right to be purveyors and disseminators of knowledge. Libraries conduct their business and engage users, comfortable that this is a perception. We need to take stock and put our stamp on services we're known for. More to the point, our knowledge, expertise, and service make us ideal guides through the quagmire of information now just a mouse-click away. "The library's status as a knowledge-center remains its best opportunity not only to survive but also thrive in the future".

What can be gleaned from both articles is not a lost horizon of past glories, but an affirmation of our place in society: intelligently engaging users, actively using technology to forward knowledge.

From our collection

Turner, R. (2011) Notes from the noodle factory: 21st century librarianship in search of new paradigms. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 17(2), 71-77

Truitt, Marc. (2011) *Koyaanisqatsi* – editorial. *Information Technology and Libraries*, 87-9

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No direct business models are proposed, but engaging the "noodle factory" – connecting and engaging the mind, is the place for libraries to be relevant and remain so well into the future.

Libraries are supported by willing, digital, and physical community of library networks. We will find our balance, assure our relevance. A tsunami does not last.

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