

The Librarian of the Future



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Who do you think “Librarians of the Future” are? How would they behave and what would they look like? In my imagination they are like a space hero, a Flash Gordon-like figure with almost magical cyber librarian skills nobody ever has heard of. But hold on – many of us practice such skills already. Every time I listen to some of my colleagues from abroad I’m deeply astonished about the diversity of tasks they perform, the services they have invented, and the kind of non genuine library task they manage. (Maybe that’s the reason why every year I’m more content to be a librarian, and I cannot imagine a more powerful and amazing work.) Let me demonstrate some of the tasks and skills that I have come across:

- **Authority for tablet computers**, e-book readers, and respective apps (medical as well as productive). Handles mass sync and restore of hundreds devices as well as volume purchases of apps with casualness;
- **Budgetary expert** and fund raiser. The library budget is not set in stone; if you want to develop interesting projects, you have to look for money, write proposals, and know how to take money out of the pockets of your boss;
- **Embedded librarian**. Show up at the point of care, support doctors and nurses, looking for clinical outreach, being liaisons, and acting at roadshows;
- **Impact firefighter**. Performing scientometric analyses on the spot. An expert in every kind and database of measuring impact. Know your h-index in your sleep;
- **Lawyer** with a profound knowledge in copyright, plagiarism, and detection tools. Negotiates publication rights with publishers;
- **Lecturer** for group and personal training to create a positive climate that encourages team building and openness for change;
- **Lobbyist** and networker at task forces, Faculty Boards, Deans, committees, advisory boards, both inside and outside the organization;
- **Marketing manager** for user needs assessment, performing SWOT analyses, doing surveys, interviews, focus groups, public and customer relation, stakeholder reporting, and exploring the return of each euro invested in the library for the organization;
- **Master of Medical Education**, multimedia, and e-learning. Web sites, magazines and leaflets are an important part of library marketing, so librarians could be journalists, editors, designers. They could be lectures, presenters, and motivators as well. For example, the Cushing Library at Yale has an instructional design librarian employed, who helps faculty with their video lectures;

- **Program manager of Open Access**, technical manager of Open Access repositories, press person for publishing on demand, expert in megajournals and APCs; (1)
- **Teaching librarian**. Deeply embedded into the curriculum he teaches each customer on every occasion. He masters lecturing and is the gate keeper for Information literacy at his organization;
- **The Visionary** develops enthusiastically strategies for the library of the future and experiments (2).

The demand for such sophisticated tasks is extremely high and many faculty members regard librarians as skilful experts for many of them, as the computer scientist Daniel Lemire noticed:



Fig. 3. Instructional design librarian
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So I think that librarians should move on to more difficult tasks. For example, we badly need help with what I would call “meta-science”. We need help tracking data sets, their transformation and so on. In effect, I would push librarians into data science. That’s the next frontier. In science, we badly need help from people whose main goal is not to contribute new quanta, but rather keep track of what is happening. Students are awful at managing documents, citing them, finding relevant work, and so on. I think that a lot of librarians already help, but we might need what I would call “teaching librarians”. I have yet to see a librarian on a Ph.D. committee in science, but I think it could be a good idea. (3)

It is my sincere hope that librarians will always be open for such honorable expectations and never fail.

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