EDITORIAL

Rethinking and Repositioning: The EvolvingTrajectory of Library and Information Science

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Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are inescapable in today's Information Society. Smart appliances, cloud computing, open data, and artificial intelligence proliferate, and access to such modern technologies is as easy as shopping for goods. In this age where data, information, and knowledge are premium commodities, standards, norms, and practices about information processes are challenged, information issues and concerns abound, and information institutions as social structures are shaken. The study and teaching of LIS have been standing at a pivotal crossroads since online technologies allowed access to information. We are compelled to reflect on the role of libraries and librarians, the philosophy, identity, and values of LIS, and the future direction of LIS theory and praxis.

Do LIS scholars (including students, teachers, and researchers) concentrate on librarianship practice, to include developing collections and enhancing library services? Or is it prudent and essential to venture into those fields that nurture the foundational functions of libraries, i.e., collecting, organizing, and providing information? How does library and information science (LIS) keep up with these changes? Will libraries as information institutions prevail amidst technological and social developments? What does it mean to be a library and information professional in this age, where information is ever-present and highly accessible?

Tracing its roots, LIS sprung up from the tradition of library science in response to the emergence of new techniques for producing and distributing information and the documentation movement, which aims to account for all types of information resources for future retrieval (Sweeney & Estabrook, 2018). Educators and scholars have resolved to use the term "library and information science" to refer to the field of study incorporating information science concepts such as bibliometrics and information retrieval into library science (Sweeney & Estabrook, 2018).

When LIS was library science, there was a clear career path for its graduates: librarianship. However, with the integration of information science in academic institutions in the 1960s (Hjorland, 2018), the move of

LIS towards information in different contexts was put at the forefront, thereby relegating the library to the sidelines. It was evident because of the trend in the change of name from library schools and library science schools to iSchools, i.e., schools of information science or information studies (Cronin, 1995; Rubin & Rubin, 2020). These changes underscore the shift of focus, breaking the boundaries of information within the four corners of the library and recognizing the value of studying information and its interdisciplinarity and persistence in all aspects of daily life. Therefore, the challenge for LIS scholars is centered on how we will treat librarianship and information. Given the role of libraries and information within schools, communities, and societies, do we need to give more attention to information than libraries, or vice versa?

Richard Rubin (2016, 2020), in several editions of his recognized textbook in LIS, has brought forth the discussion of the "library paradigm" and the "information paradigm" as a key issue of LIS education. The "library paradigm" gives high regard to libraries as significant institutions of information, learning, and culture, and amidst change, the purpose of libraries has to and must endure (Apostle & Raymond, 1997). Meanwhile, some, like Van House and Sutton (2000), argue that the library paradigm is outdated and that changing course and moving toward studying information is vital. The "information paradigm" was necessary to be adopted due to the changing ways of keeping and accessing information, and the dynamics of the academic environment. Since demand is increasing for careers related to ICTs, information, and communication, academic domains like computer science, business, and engineering have gained prominence. Today's information landscape is not driven by libraries; instead, libraries are trying to keep up and stay relevant with the availability of online information and the speed at which it can be accessed. Adding to the burden are today's challenges in the information landscape: the developments in algorithmic information systems, the impact of technologies on scholarly communication, and the trend towards digital transformation in the government and corporate contexts. The question remains: will LIS adopt the library paradigm endure in the coming years?

Our response may be motivated by our desire to improve our craft continuously. According to the Code of Ethics, Filipino librarians should embrace the motto "CANI: Constant And Never-ending Improvement of the quality and standards of professional services" (Item 2.6). Librarians have been in pursuit of offering excellent library services since the inception of the ALA, the commencement of the Library Economy program at Columbia College, and the publication of Ranganathan's Five Laws. Our response may also come from a place of struggle or deadlock; we are pushed into a corner where we do not have any choice but to cope, adapt, and evolve.

The tug-of-war between paradigms leads us to a crossroads where we have to decide where we would like to direct ourselves. LIS scholars and professionals (including librarians) seem compelled to reflect on who we are and our role in the larger scheme of things. To cope with the changes means equipping ourselves with not just the technical competencies. More than that, contemporary LIS professionals need to have their ethical and moral compasses pointed towards the values of truth, justice, and equity, something undermined yet very critical today. We should also extend care and concern towards culture and heritage, knowing that we are managing outputs of the human intellectual and creative ability. Such documents that shape the identity of a community or a nation serve as pieces of evidence that should be passed on from one generation to another. Drawing from our roots in libraries functioning for the welfare of everyone, i.e., "the greater good" (Gorman, 2015), or "a public good" (Rubin, 2016), LIS professionals should integrate the underlying principle of working for promoting human rights, sustainable development, and positive change in projects and programs that we organize.

As institutions cultivating future generations, LIS education plays a crucial role in this movement. Existing LIS programs must keep up to include more inclusive, responsive, and future-proof approaches in teaching and training. It may involve incorporating methods that apply in several different contexts. Students must also be well-versed in contexts and systems, capable of analyzing and identifying components so they may understand the synergy between elements and determine the best solution or course of action. Students should also be trained to think critically and act appropriately, given that circumstances might be different after getting their degree when they venture into their respective careers.

LIS professionals should also be open to change and willing to collaborate with other scholars and practitioners, acknowledging that LIS does not hold a monopoly over the information studies domain. In LIS research, we should also prioritize the inclusion of marginalized perspectives and be aware of critical theory and decolonization in our approach to LIS phenomena. Concurrent with reforms in LIS education, the role of libraries as institutions and librarians is also equally important. Throughout modern history, libraries have been resilient by being responsive in addressing the

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needs of communities, and such resilience is constantly being tested. Academic libraries were organized to support the instruction and research goals of the university, while mercantile and commercial libraries in business and industry, knowing that access to information and knowledge stimulates intellectual improvement in the workforce (Gates, 1978) and increases productivity and profit (Rubin & Rubin, 2020). Libraries are, by nature, progressive since they have been open to integrating new systems and technologies in library processes as early adopters (Rubin & Rubin, 2020). Gorman's (1995) third of the Five New Laws of Librarianship also reminds us to "use technology intelligently to enhance service." As tools that may be used in many ways and for various purposes, enhancing information services and "saving the time of the reader" (Ranganathan, 1931) should be the primary goal of integrating technologies.

Today's libraries should be assertive, proactive, and decisive in taking new and influential roles that impact the information environment of the communities they serve. In times when disinformation campaigns are rampant, libraries can be agents to facilitate digital, media, and information literacy skills and engage people in digital citizenship. By offering the use of facilities and devices, libraries can also bridge the digital divide to give access to those who do not have the means. With information-centered projects, programs, and advocacies, libraries can seize the opportunity to respond to needs and renew the image of the library as the information clearinghouse of the community, being an integral part of the community for its advancement.

Aside from localized initiatives, our efforts in charting the direction of LIS should transcend geographic boundaries across nations and regions. Discussions, informative exchanges, and cooperative activities in international associations could further nurture LIS and allow it to coalesce and form into a definite body of knowledge. Collaborative and socially inclusive initiatives such as promoting open access, conducting inter-institutional research projects, and organizing joint LIS degree programs can drive LIS towards innovative progress and recognition in the academe and industry.

Ultimately, the future of LIS is not a fixed destination but an ongoing process of collective reimagination, critical inquiry, and collaborative efforts. As LIS educators, scholars, and professionals, we must be good stewards of the profession and body of knowledge entrusted to us (Gorman, 2015). The information paradigm will soon inevitably saturate LIS education and practice; thus, measures to adapt should be in place: future-proofing LIS education, strengthening the identity and role of libraries, and local and international collaboration among stakeholders. All this while still adhering to our cherished values of equity of information access, democracy, justice, and intellectual freedom (Gorman, 2015; Rubin, 2016). It demands creativity, tenacity, and a commitment from all of us in the LIS community. To keep up with these changes and allow our libraries and librarianship structures to survive, LIS professionals and scholars should not merely adapt to change but actively shape it. Like a living organism, it is necessary for LIS to adapt and evolve to survive successfully and not suffer extinction. Through our efforts, LIS will endure; it will remain relevant and indispensable in the years to come.

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