Chapter 2
Children and Youth Librarians:
Competencies Required in Technology-Based Environment

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ABSTRACT

In a high-tech environment where knowledge and information are delivered in a fast paced mode, the role of librarians serving children and young adults is being re-directed from being solely responsible for information and knowledge transfer to teaching and research. The children and young adult libraries at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina have been trying to extend their ways to deliver the services and understand the challenges in integrating various technologies. The chapter locates a series of technology competencies and skills that are currently expected of librarians working with children and young adults. In addition to their non-technical skills, librarians have to be technologically empowered and learn a variety of technical behaviors and acquire the digital skills needed to embrace the constantly changing complexities and advances in digital technology. This chapter upgrades the digital literacy skills in discipline-specific knowledge to support the integration of digital proficiencies as relevant skills for librarians to serve in their new role as teacher librarian.

INTRODUCTION

Our everyday life is changing rapidly due to the technological innovations in all fields. These new technological changes have added several new dimensions to the field of library science and information systems just like any other field. As the scale of digital libraries increases, innovative technologies present new expectations, needs, and challenges for libraries and require transformation in workforce development for the education of librarians. Librarians are encouraged to lead, innovate, assess user-created content and share in and collaborate for transformation.

Digital awareness is becoming indispensable to understand the range of accessible information and communication technologies and the realization of its role in information and knowledge management. The American Library Association defines some standards to actively participate in this ever-increasing information society: "The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information, an ability that requires both cognitive and technical skills" (American Library Association, 2013).

Digital awareness includes tool skills such as the ability to:

- Evaluate the information resource according to the fees paid, quality, appropriate, synthesize information from different sources into a user friendly format
- Modify information product to meet user's needs, customize information services to meet user's needs
- Educate the user about information literacy and internet usage, assess user's wants and gaps and keep abreast of emerging technology
- Understand the relationship between technology and lifelong learning (ALS, 2003; Visser, 2012).

The Association of College & Research Libraries Task Force on Information Literacy for Science and Technology illustrates that information technology skills support information literacy and that the effective use of technology (e.g., computers, mobile devices) and Internet-enabled services (e.g., Blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube) are the components that a digital literate person possess to bridge the digital divide (ACRL, 2000).

In general, digital literacy was considered as a set of skills, which means the ability to locate, evaluate, and use digital information. It requires certain skill sets that are interdisciplinary in nature (ECDL Foundation, 2011; Markauskaite, 2006; Educational Testing Service, 2007).

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