

## Chapter 9

# International Scholarship and the Role of American Research Libraries

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Research libraries play an enormous role in supporting and promoting international scholarship and collaboration. This chapter explores methodologies employed by research libraries in the United States to advance an international focus for internal and external audiences. There are several reasons for a more intense library focus to encompass planet earth. 21<sup>st</sup> century universities are more globally oriented. Scholars are more connected than ever to their overseas colleagues. The 21<sup>st</sup> century research library environment is more collaborative, proactive, and outwardly connected.*

### **THE NEW INTERNATIONALLY INVESTED UNIVERSITY**

Universities in the United States are ramping up efforts to promote international education, scholarship, and student/faculty engagement. One example is the University of Tennessee's Ready for the World initiative (n.d.). Initially the Provost began the initiative with themed semesters. The Africa Semester was an example and included

performances, lectures, book discussions, a major African Art exhibit, and specialized curriculum about Africa. The Ready for the World initiative built on this concept and became a comprehensive University-wide program to infuse the international experience into every aspect of the Tennessee educational experience.

The Pennsylvania State University has developed a sharp international focus with Global Penn State (Pennsylvania State University. Global Penn State, n.d.) based on the principles of global citizenship and global leadership. It involves educating the next generation of global citizens and

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leaders by providing students with diverse opportunities to experience world cultures and helping students develop a global perspective. Becoming a global citizen requires a strong understanding of the major challenges that all citizens of the world share. Penn State is also committed to partnering with institutions around the world to help find answers to major global challenges including poverty, environmental sustainability, food security, health, climate change, energy security, and social justice. The partnership aspect recognizes the mutual benefits of strong international ties between institutions. Many other colleges and universities are pursuing similar programs on a long term basis. Research libraries contribute a great deal to these comprehensive efforts through traditional and newly emerging roles.

## **THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SCHOLAR**

Who are 21<sup>st</sup> century scholars, scientists, and professionals? And what does it mean to be an educated person on planet Earth as we move into the second decade of the new millennium? The new global scholar is competitive, visible, attuned to excellence and quality, collaborative, high tech, and embraces new modes of communication and commentary. The new global scholar must now work in a time of tremendous political, social, personal, and global transitions. Although transition periods are often characterized as disruptive, chaotic, and fraught with uncertainty we should be comforted by the fact that people have naturally made cycle of life passages over eons of time. Those who navigate various life transitions successfully naturally internalize change oriented philosophies focused on the characteristics of the journey. Humankind must be prepared to pass through life's transitions on a global scale.

## **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS**

American research libraries are experiencing an awakening about what constitutes powerful leadership for today's world. This new kind of leadership is based on several core values and traits that epitomize the ability to work across and respect all cultures. Here are some words and their opposites that describe the characteristics of new leadership:

- Selfless and User Centered (as opposed to selfish and ego-centric)
- Mutual Respect (as opposed to disrespect)
- Collaboration (as opposed to working in silos)
- Flexibility (as opposed to rigidity)
- Outwardly focused (as opposed to inwardly focused)
- Proactive (as opposed to reactive)

Essentially, new leadership is based on the theme of connecting externally rather than focusing internally. Academic librarians throughout the world have a unique view of higher education because we work with everyone regardless of discipline, location, or status. Libraries and librarians will continue to lead the way to advance global scholarship and understanding.

## **KNOWLEDGE CREATION IS GLOBAL**

21<sup>st</sup> century scholars, students, and librarians are fundamental partners for the creation of new knowledge. Knowledge creation is a global phenomenon and is increasingly produced, accessed, and preserved in the virtual, digital environment. Decision-making to improve our collective ability

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