Chapter 1
Influence and Leadership:
Where Will Our Profession Be in 25 Years?

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ABSTRACT

Innumerable conversations have been held over the decades, with increasing frequency, about the future of the library, information, and knowledge profession. The profession of librarianship was once well defined by describing library and information professionals as custodians of and guides to content; that description is no longer adequate, and the profession is perceived to be fragmenting. Furthermore, the rapid extension of the domains in which professionals with library and information credentials are active—information architecture, knowledge and collaboration management, social media—has led to the suggestion that the library profession is losing its identity in society. The chapter considers the profession's status and asks whether a focus on leadership and influence may have a role in securing a productive occupational future for its members: What single umbrella term could bind library and information professionals together, give them a cohesive identity, and tell the world why they are worth their pay?

INTRODUCTION: A PROFESSION IN FLUX

A great deal of soul searching is taking place in our ranks with respect to our profession's future. Several questions stand out: What and who will determine the way things will look 20-30 years from now at the programs producing information professionals and within the LIK profession as a whole, if it is still around as a recognizable entity? Does the graduate academic model still make sense in a world where information related competence is a requirement in every other profession - or would subject themed undergraduate information programs make more sense as preparation for graduate study in law, medicine, accounting, engineering, and so on? Now that public libraries in many cases are effectively community centers, led by visionary CEOs, offering services going far beyond what was imagined some years ago and regarded as 'way cool' by those making use of those services, should community organization, local resident engagement, democracy education, and social dynamics be core content in the curriculum along with the technical subjects? Some might argue for sociology and educational psychology for the same reason. Given the challenges of accessing organizational memory and managing intellectual capital, should organizational psychology likewise be a central subject? What are the implications of demographic change for those in charge of designing the curriculum for future library and information professionals?

One obvious indicator of the flux in which the profession finds itself is the difficulty library and information professionals have in naming it. Nowadays, only a portion of graduates from programs in Library and Information Studies or iSchools would describe themselves as librarians or archivists. Surrounding a core of professionals working in academic, public, school, and special libraries are adjacent populations of professionals working in areas so wide ranging these library and information knowledge management professionals don't have a convenient collective label other than the vague and easily misunderstood title of information professional. For example, professionals may be active in business and competitive intelligence or knowledge management (however defined, but corporate memory, taxonomies, and enterprise search are common illustrations) or in technical functions such as records or digital asset management, web architecture, search engine optimization, user experience design, and social media operations. A quick perusal of the professional titles in the Chandos Publishing offerings provided an illustration of some of the ways in which professional subspecialties have been grouped. Chandos divided the library and information knowledge management publications into the following groupings: Library Leadership and General Management; Quality Management, Marketing and Design; Public and Other Non-Academic Libraries; e-Learning and Resesarch; Publishing; Electronic and Information Resources; Internet and Web Issues for Librarians; Digital and Digital Rights Management; Archives, Cataloging, and Classification; and Information Architecture and Knowledge Management (2012). Some professionals are independent service provid-

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