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The impact of global trends on ILDS

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Abstract

Purpose - This article surveys two recent library trend reports in order to identify key developments likely to impact how librarians, and particularly ILDS/ILL professionals, will facilitate the discovery and delivery of information in the future.

Design/methodology/approach Drawing upon the New Media Consortium's "Horizon Report: Library Edition" (2014 and the recent discussion draft of the American Library Association Policy Revolution! Initiative's "Trends Report: Snapshots of a Turbulent World" (2014), this review essay illuminates major trends that will shape the future of information and library resource sharing

Keywords Interlibrary loan, Future of Libraries, Interlending, Trends

Paper type Viewpoint

Trend Spotting: Benefits and Cautions

It is practically impossible to read, watch or listen to your content provider of choice without some "expert" pontificating about the latest trends in culture, fashion, food, media, music, medicine, or consumer electronics. Librarians, despite any lingering old-fashioned stereotypes, are not immune to this relentless assault of the new and futuristic. Library science journals emphasize educational and technological, or even political and economic trends, rather than opining about the latest in cardigan sweaters and sensible shoes. Even so, it is easy to suffer from "trend fatigue", dismissing the entire enterprise of prognostication as an epic waste of time. Yet, even while libraries remain the guardians of our historical, cultural and scholarly record, libraries and librarians do not exist in a protective bubble, isolated from broader societal processes and pressures. Therefore, we have a responsibility to practice some trend-spotting ourselves, lest we, and the communities we serve, find ourselves overtaken by waves of questionable changes that we cannot control and must endure, but can also, if we are both lucky and smart, exploit.

From the distant days of the Library of Alexandria, to Borges' Library of Babel, to the current age of Google, the metaphor of the universal library holds a powerful imaginative appeal. Of course, no library can possibly collect all the information that has, does, or ever will exist. (This is precisely why libraries share information.) Such a library would, in effect, be a mirror image of the world, and as such, no easier to navigate than that real world. Instead, every library, to the greatest extent possible, holds a mirror to the world. Every decision we make about the information we collect and preserve, the

services we provide, the technologies we utilize, and the values we uphold is shaped by what we see reflected in that mirror. No matter how the information world evolves, librarians must seriously evaluate and, many hope, maintain, our historical responsibility for evaluating, preserving and connecting people with information and content in myriad formats. In order to help us all learn from the past, serve the present, and create new knowledge for the future, however, librarians must also continually respond to the exigencies of the modern world, incorporating positive and inevitable developments, even if our response is sometimes wisely skeptical, or even oppositional.

Being trend-spotters does not require us to be either trendsetters or trend followers, although ignoring trends may come at our peril. Infamous examples of this include the executives at Decca Records who rejected the Beatles because they thought guitar bands were passé. Or, the investor who did not back Ford Motor Co. because he saw no future for the internal combustion engine. Of course, not all trends are equally telling. Something "trendy", by definition, may merely be the current style, a short-lasting fad rather than a meaningful prevailing tendency. Even when everyone jumps to embrace the latest thing, it will not necessarily be a successful or lasting improvement, or an improvement, at all. Consider Betamax technology, or all the money and space invested in music CDs now that so much music is listened to in the online cloud. (Although consider also the resurgence of vinyl and the desire for tangible personal collections of books or music.) Just when the "tipping point" happens is clear in hindsight. However, it is often not clearly predictable.

We are inevitably exposed to trends as we go about our daily lives, although we may not always take a macro view of the world. In order to do so, reading as widely and as deeply as possible is a valuable tool utilized by CEOs, keynote speakers, and librarians, alike. Although, contrary to what some believe, librarians are not able to sit around and read all day, trend reports, written about libraries or directed towards related industries, like publishing or education or technology are one useful source to consult. Libraries operate in the broader world of technology, culture and commerce and in our shared experience of our shared world, everything is related and connected, so trends in any area are likely to be relevant to all of us.

Trend reports are often presented as "top-ten" lists. While this is obviously an arbitrary number, ten is big enough to be inclusive while remaining small enough to grasp. Still, the potential for over simplification is one danger. The authority of the authors must also be considered. One should always look at more than one report to find additional or better-stated insights, and to compare findings. By identifying overlapping conclusions, a generally useful consensus can be reached. (Although reports that

simply cite each other in a closed circle work against the macro view.) Given time constraints, executive summaries can be valuable, although reading and discussing details and examples is generally more instructive and many reports include bibliographies for further reading. There is also a tendency for some reports to be overly provocative, while others are blandly, and clearly, written by committee. While the news of the day can often be dishearteningly negative, trend reports tend to take a more optimistic stance. This is needed in order to promote positive change. However, both positive and negative trends should be considered to come to realistic conclusions about how to develop positive changes in policies and practices.

Predictions about the future of libraries, interlibrary loan (ILL) and interlending and document supply (ILDS) abound. In the 1960s, photocopying and facsimile electronic transmission was becoming more popular (Schwegmann, 1964). At the end of the 20th century, librarians were aware of their interdependence and the changing ways to share information (Baker and Jackson, 1995.) More recent authors focus on the transition from print to electronic information, the management of legacy print collections, the implications of mass digitization projects, competition, copyright, (Massie, 2012) the identification of free open access information, the need to share e-books, to physically deliver print material to wherever patrons need them, as well as the purchasing or leasing of information from a variety of publishers and providers. (Oberlander, 2011). While the broader societal trends these predictions are based on are often alluded to, the ILL world is a practical one, so more they often focus on how the work we do will change, rather than why it will or exactly how these changes are connected with developments in related fields. This article will focus less on such predictions and more on considering some emerging trends that, *if* they come to full fruition, will change what librarians do to facilitate information discovery and delivery, as well as how we do it.

We will take as the point of departure for our analysis two recent trend reports: First, the 2014 New Media Consortium's "Horizon Report: Library Edition" and second, the 2014 discussion draft of the American Library Association Policy Revolution! Initiative's "Trends Report: Snapshots of a Turbulent World". There are other excellent examples, of course, such as the ACRL top annual top trends in academic libraries available at http://crln.acrl.org/content/75/6/294.full and the IFLA Trend Report available at http://trends.ifla.org/. However, taken together, these two reports provide a substantial (but by no means comprehensive) introduction to the trends that librarians must take into account as we plan for and shape the future of libraries and crucial library services, such as information discovery and delivery. Some will increase the need for ILL, others will decrease it, but there is no doubt that the

ability of libraries to deliver information will be impacted as trends in information, technology and education develop.

2014 New Media Consortium's "Horizon Report: Library Edition"

The New Media Consortium (NMC) is a 20-year-old international not-for-profit group. Their members include hundreds of universities and other educational organizations interested in advancing the development and use of innovative and effective educational technology.[i] They have published their *Horizon Report* since 2002, covering K-12 education, higher education, and museums. NMC also provides access to a Wiki at http://library.wiki.nmc.org/ where you can see who was involved in this work, as well as a detailed record of their discussions. (This effort at transparency is praiseworthy although, for the casual trend-spotter, perhaps too much of a good thing.)

Notably, this is the first year that they have put out a report that focuses specifically on academic and research libraries in a global context. For this, they collaborated with University of Applied Sciences (HTW) Chur, Technische Informationsbibliothek (TIB) Hannover, and ETH-Bibliothek Zurich. The charge to their panel of international experts from library management, education, technology, and other fields is to examine "trends, significant challenges, and emerging technologies for their potential impact on academic and research libraries worldwide." The Horizon Library Report acknowledges that "there are many local factors affecting libraries" but insists that "there are also issues that transcend regional boundaries and common questions." Understandably, those concerns that are viewed to be more common and transcendent comprise the bulk of the report.

According to the Horizon Library Report, six major trends are accelerating technology adoption in academic and research libraries. Among these, two are already upon us: increased focus on research data management for publications and the prioritization of mobile content and delivery. Developments in research data management will change the ways in which researchers discover data as well as make new forms of data that could potentially even be shared through ILL. Mobile technology has made any time, anywhere delivery of content increasingly possible and popular. Rising expectations, as well automation and electronic transmission of information, allow for decreased turnaround times. Information users increasingly expect content to be available in the format that best suits their preferred platform, including a wide variety of mobile platforms. If research if being done on mobile devices, then people also need to be able to easily request ILLs from mobile devices. Libraries also need to deliver information electronically to such devices. However, librarians understand that some

information is unavailable digitally, some library users do not have adequate access to mobile technology and some continue to prefer print. So, librarians must continue to provide access to print material, as well.

Dramatic developments in how the scholarly record is defined and published will also confront library and ILDS professionals in a somewhat longer time frame, perhaps three to five years. The scholarly record, for several generations, has been centered on printed university press books and peer reviewed journals. The advent of digitization, initially, did little to change this. A book or journal article delivered digitally is still a book or a journal article. However, the emergence of new forms of the scholarly record will impact the need for traditional, mediated, library-to-library ILL service. Publicly available open access material, blogs or wikis may require librarian assistance in discovery, but not in delivery. Interactive software, visualization of data sets, laboratory notes, etc., will pose more practical and legal challenges for sharing. Should peer-reviewed, open access publishing become the norm, then libraries could play a critical role in providing such publishing platforms, facilitating information sharing in different but equally vital ways.

Looking ahead five or more years into the future, the Horizon Library Report identifies an increase in the volume and acceptance of multidisciplinary research, anticipated by fields such as the digital humanities. Such an increase also means that traditional collegial networks will grow and those who have always shared information among themselves will need information from others outside their established networks. Perhaps, they will make such requests from libraries. However, it is more likely they will turn to social networking/media or online repositories. Even more relevant to libraries will be the evolution of the digital information infrastructure. There are a great many variables, here, including the possible emergence of hitherto unknown formats, as well as hitherto unimagined digital information providers (or at least the emergence of new alliances among existing providers, be they public, private, or not-for-profit). At the very least, growth of the digital information infrastructure, whoever may happen to administer it, is likely to change the nature of information sharing – continuing to decrease the movement of physical items and increase the demand for digital access.

Time will tell to what extent this access is open or limited by digital licenses and digital copyright laws around the world. Interoperability of platforms could present practical challenges in the future, while consortium approaches to acquisition and delivery of digital content could raise legal challenges. As content becomes more accessible online, some predict a decline in demand for ILL. However, as long

as a great deal of print material has not been (or cannot legally be) digitized and premium online content remains unavailable except behind costly publisher paywalls, library information sharing services remain needed. Likewise, as the digital information infrastructure grows larger and more complex, and new technologies are created and adopted by ILL departments, ongoing staff training will be needed (and need to be paid for) and librarians will need to learn to work with technology vendors, as well as open source software developers, to ensure the usefulness and usability of new systems. This, in turn, is likely to require ILDS professionals to become increasingly sophisticated about software design and testing, while retaining and advocating for the traditional values of libraries, such as privacy and access.

This report also identifies challenges that impede technology adoption in libraries. Some of these can be addressed by embedding librarians and libraries more closely into the curriculum and rethinking their roles and skills. Some more intractable problems – ones that the report indicates are more understand than easily solvable - include handling digital research outputs and competing information discovery agents. More complex challenges include embracing the need for radical change and managing ongoing integration, interoperability, and collaborative projects. ILL specialists regularly find teachable moments when library users request information that is available to them directly, either through library database subscriptions or open access. We need not only to deliver information resources, we can also advise our libraries to make purchases, or work with library users to find alternative sources or refine topics. While we recognize the value of library databases, we are also expert at using competing discovery services ourselves, and can help others use them more effectively to find information. Working collaboratively in a time of rapid technological change is nothing new to us, and the collaborative model of ILL can instruct all other library services.

Important technology developments, such as electronic publishing and mobile apps, bibliometrics, open content, the internet of things and semantic web and linked data are also highlighted in this report. Electronic publishing has certainly affected the ability of libraries to share information. As e-journals and e-books are licensed, rather than purchased, the laws governing libraries and copyright (such as the first sale and fair use doctrines in the US) can be supplanted by restrictive license terms. Library license negotiators should include license language that permits the sharing of articles. However, this is not always agreed to by publishers and the sharing of e-books is even more complicated by technological complications. As for ILL requests, again, if they are placed through mobile devices, then librarians must enable smooth requesting from, and delivery to, such devices.

Bibliometrics through citation analysis can be supplemented with counting online clicks, as well as ILL requests (with patron data removed, of course) that indicate information use. Open content means that libraries do not need to share as they have traditionally, but librarians can still help people discover such content. This content also still needs to be managed and preserved and since this only increases information access, it is something that librarians who want to encourage information sharing should support. The internet of things, the semantic web and linked data will all enable more information to be easier to discover and some of it may require ILL to deliver.

There are a few significant areas, where the Horizon Library Report is silent. For example, it does not mention the environment, privacy, print preservation or the economy. (Fister, 2014) Nor does it consider security, digital or international copyright legislation, all of which may have significant effects – some of them potentially chilling – on the practice of information and library resource sharing. Likewise, and by design, this report places primary emphasis on large research libraries, although smaller college libraries and public libraries are vital parts of the ILL ecosystem. As ILDS professionals reflect upon the trends and challenges highlighted by the Horizon Library Report it is necessary to extrapolate from large, relatively well-funded institutions to other types of libraries, and to reflect upon particular needs and vulnerabilities of the learners served by them. It may be that the biggest, best, and brightest new information technologies will be adopted first by the top research institutions. Whether or not these technologies will prove relevant to institutions with different missions and communities, whether or not they eventually trickle down to those institutions, and whether or not they diminish (rather than reinforce) the ongoing digital divide remains to be seen.

The American Library Association Policy Revolution! Initiative's "Trends Report: Snapshots of a Turbulent World" (discussion draft)

The Policy Revolution! Initiative is a three-year program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to inform a national policy agenda for the U.S. library community. Launched in late 2013, the American Library Association, led by their Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP), and with guidance from their Library Advisory Committee (LAC), undertook a broad-ranging scan of the horizon of emerging trends affecting U.S. communities and with a goal of setting a policy agenda and priorities for the library community to advocate for in a concerted and effective way. Although the ALA discussion draft is quite explicitly a work in progress, the authors of the have done their homework, backing up their analyses with 336 endnotes, including several references to NMC Horizon reports on Higher Education and K-12 Education, as well as numerous other trend reports focused on major library trends,

as well as forces outside of libraries.

They identify ten trends and challenges which they frame in terms of a "network revolution." This revolution encompasses (1) a variety fast moving and potentially disruptive technologies, and (2) the challenges that these technologies pose to the traditional information sectors and institutions, including publishing, media, museums, and, of course, libraries. Most of these trends will come as no surprise to most IDLS professionals and are also covered in the Horizon Report. The ALA group begins to offer more sophisticated analysis, when it turns to the third trend, which encompasses opposing factors such as an ever-changing landscape of law and regulation, the seemingly intractable digital divide, the fragmentation of the media and information market, and mounting concerns about digital overload, privacy, and security. These factors, the report's authors observe, complicate the standard narrative of new technologies, increased connectivity, the ubiquity of mobile, and the ultimate integration of the digital and physical worlds (e.g., the so-called Internet of Things, 3D printing, Google Glass, etc.).

The second part of the ALA report gives an overview of seven additional non-technological societal trend areas which have direct and indirect consequences for libraries and the communities they serve, as well as significant policy implications. These are: (4) the interconnected, global nature of the world (which is informed by technology without being subservient to technology); (5) the importance of a resilient, sustainable environment (6) changing demographics (bigger, older and more diverse populations) (7) rising income inequality (8) budget shortfalls in the public sector (9) self-directed, collaborative and lifelong learning and (10) new work skills and structures. While the NMC Horizon report certainly refers to most, if not all, of these non-technological societal trends, its focus is overwhelmingly on the technological innovations themselves that the significance of all-that-is-not technology fades deeper into the background than perhaps they should. Although the ALA report encompasses trends with broad significance to libraries of all kinds, many of the policy concerns most directly impacting ILDS services in particular are not explicitly mentioned therein, and need to be teased out and made explicit.

- There is an acute need for ILDS professionals to advocate and lobby for, and educate readers, researchers, and all content producers about fair use provisions for information sharing in copyright legislation in the digital and global worlds and to insist on e-license terms that support library information sharing.

- The privacy of digital information is another issue that IDLS professionals need to explicitly consider. Serving on the frontlines of digital information sharing, the transaction records created by IDLS services must be safeguarded against unwarranted transgressions.

- The global context of information discovery and sharing reflects the interconnected, nature of the world. However, international ILL is complicated because of copyright and license restrictions vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, while the cost of sharing physical copies, and concerns about loss or damage, often increase with distance.

- Quickly evolving, disruptive information technologies in libraries have led to the development of information technology and digital information such as online full-text databases and e-books that are replacing print, federated searching that is appealing to users accustomed to a simple and powerful Google interface, and the real possibility of open access publishing, all of which are and will continue to impact ILL.

- ILL Staff members are regularly being asked to learn new technologies and devise new services to better meet the information needs of our communities. Some of this new technology and services will work and some will not. Some will be cost-effective, while others will – for many or most institutions – be prohibitive.

- New technologies are enabling more automation of the repetitive aspects of ILL, allowing staff to concentrate on more challenging transactions and on advocating for copyright and licenses terms that facilitate information sharing or educating users on accessing information.

- We must grapple with the challenge posed by easy discovery of information, which raise the delivery expectations of library users. New ways of connecting to information include searching online for open access versions or buying directly from publishers. Given the question of how authoritative it is, many academics and librarians are wary of linking to unknown sites. However, given how costly publisher models are, and how current procedures may not enable libraries to buy directly, this may be the only alternative. Another is to contact authors, of course, and request sharing for personal and educational use.

- The importance of environmental concerns raises questions about some common IDLS practices, which have not always been cognizant of waste or redundancy. Recycling of

packing material is one way ILL shops can help, as is reducing the paper we use to copy (versus scan) or keep track of transactions (versus using ILL management software.)

- Changing demographic trends noted in the ALA report include larger populations as well as older and increasingly diverse ones. Different people have different needs and will want access to a variety of material and formats. They will also work under different time frames and have differing expectations which ILDS professionals must try to satisfy.

- The trend towards rising income inequality is a reason for librarians to support open access publishing and open source software development. However, at the same time, librarians must remain aware of the digital divide. We must be advocates for information access among those with inadequate online access or the ability to pay extravagant fees for materials that once would have been available in print but now are behind publisher pay walls. Public sector trends towards budget shortfalls mean that public library collection budgets are likely to suffer, as are those of many public universities. Cooperating, even more than usual, is one way that libraries can mitigate this. ILL, which is all about cooperating among libraries, offers a successful model of doing so. However, this has the unintended consequence of shifting the costs from collections to often underfunded ILL offices.

- Educational trends towards self-directed, collaborative and lifelong learning mean that libraries need to serve new kinds of learning and new learners. Open access information can help people who are unaffiliated with libraries. Libraries also need to reach out to non-library users, offering them relevant quick, inexpensive and valuable information services. The changing nature of work and the workplace demands new work skills and structures. The demand for greater information literacy in almost every field creates both a challenge and an opportunity for IDLS professionals to be seen and used as teachers and trainers, rather than merely providers of information delivery services.

One might have expected the ALA report, written by librarians for librarians about librarians, to have a narrower perspective than the Horizon Library Edition Report, which was prepared by an international, multi-sector group. However, the ALA discussion draft actually is much more cognizant of the universe of concerns outside of the immediate sphere of libraries that, nonetheless, are quite relevant for libraries. It certainly demonstrates greater understanding than the Horizon report of the diversity of library institutions – e.g., public, K-12, college and university, government, and so forth – and

the diversity of the communities that these institutions serve. Where Horizon Library Edition goes beyond reporting on trends to making predictions, the ALA discussion draft poses useful questions, which will surely get conversations started and possibly keep them going for years to come.

Conclusion

Every day, ILDS specialists around the globe connect people to the information they need. This is important work that requires most, if not all, of our time, attention and focus. Yet, taking the time to consider global trends and how they may impact us is precisely the sort of thing that can take the prosaic transaction-after-transaction work we do in ILL into the more poetic, but just as relevant, realm of information sharing and knowledge creation. Whatever the future of information or publishing or education may be, librarians have a responsibility to be engaged in facilitating information access and knowledge creation. And, it is ILDS specialists in particular, who must seek to ensure the continued sharing of our collective wisdom, whether librarians of the future collect print or digital information, act as brokers to specialists, lend things like equipment or data, or more likely, do all of this and more.

While some people are inherently excited by anything new and see positive possibilities in everything, others only see trouble ahead. Either way, failure cannot be avoided at all costs lest we miss valuable opportunities and lessons. Early adopters can invest resources that could have been better used elsewhere, but there are also lessons in any investment and risks worth taking. In the world of libraries, where information discovery and delivery costs money and requires time and staff, administrators may think that resources could be better employed elsewhere. However, if we want to serve current library users then we must continue to support traditional library-to-library information sharing, as well develop new ways to help people access information.

Being thoughtful about how we manage change remains essential. We need to cultivate a sense of wonder in the face of new possibilities, rather than fear. We must look at trends as well remain open to disruptions and the possibilities that unexpected ideas or events may create. The future of libraries depends on the ability of the library community to both preserve information and to deliver it quickly and cost effectively. We must preserve the print record. Yet, at the same time, if no one wants to use print, then libraries that offer mostly print will not be supported. So, we need to participate in planning for the future, predicting what may happen in order to prepare for it. We need to enter discussions of open access publishing as well as the place of print library collections in scholarly communication, digital

and print copyright and digital license terms, regional print repositories and cooperative collection development…everything and anything that ensures shared access to information is under our purview.

As for ILL, there are library non-users and even library users who do not even know it exists, or believe it is still too slow and costly to bother with. So, lest we be taken for granted in planning for the future or in funding current services, we must better promote what we can do now. We must reach out to non-ILL and non-library users, as well as to our already loyal constituents. ILL is not only a practical way to access certain locally unavailable information, it remains symbolically important as a way to at least potentially access the entire world of information. Even if open access publishing is the future, right now people need library resource sharing. We help individuals on a micro level with every transaction, and we help scholarly communication on a macro level. The point of trend spotting, however, is to remind ourselves that our way is not the only way. We must always remain open to new trends, partners, procedures, policies and services in service of our most time honored traditional library values.

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