Weekly Discussion & Final Summary

The study of Information Professions, while daunting in the course’s intensive structure, has been an increasingly enjoyable, immersive and important one of focus for any of the students involved. It is understandable that this course has become an instrumental part of the curriculum, being held as a prerequisite, as it prepares students who are future information professionals for a variety of issues and topics within the profession. Of utmost importance, it has forced students to conduct the research on a self-motivated basis, providing required assignments that give students the fluidity to research material that is relevant and provide a window to independent learning. As such, I have found that Information Professions has made me understand that being an information professional involves several key focuses.

Probably most obvious based on the course title is the need to understand the roles of the information professional. While a Masters in Library and Information Sciences sparks the typical thought of a librarian working in a library, the role of information professional is truly what the degree program is preparing. Librarians have evolved along with the evolution of technology and user needs. Because of this, the skills and responsibilities that usually fall unto a librarian are applicable into other roles. Fraser-Arnott discusses this issue, demonstrating that her interviewees, while possessing roles that do not have the term "librarian", found that these professionals indicated that library school was near essential to their preparation for their positions, but admitted they wished for more practical studies to help them further (2015). It has also been found that while information professionals can stay within “librarian” roles, they can explore outside of them by acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses and utilizing networking to find other positions in which their skills prepare them best (Roy, 2015). If information professionals can appreciate that their degree can go beyond just being a librarian, it can
expand upon their promising futures, increase their ability to impact information communities and increase their ability to impact the perception of information professionals as a whole.

Understanding how one’s skill set can translate to a variety of roles is also accented by the need to understand the needs of the user that one would be assisting. Of course, information professionals can be as skilled as possible, demonstrating an extensive knowledge of resources, policy and communication skills. But the ultimate way that a professional can assist its respective consumer is via knowing their necessities. Personally, I have found that my experience has demonstrated that point more than any other in research. School librarianship has shown me how specific a need can be for an age group, reflecting on commonly asked questions about graphic novels and book recommendations. Public libraries also displayed to me the need to understand a particular community’s need further, such as Spanish-speaking users. Obviously, a knowledge of Spanish is a must, but understanding culture and the need of immigrants can assist a professional in helping this particular group depending on the circumstances. Studies show that to appeal to those needs further, information professionals should develop a trust as well, tailoring programming to certain groups in order to foster a belief from the community (Vårheim, 2014). By knowing what users need, information professionals can prepare to help the best way possible.

To appease those needs along with skill, libraries and other information professional space physically should be prepared to handle the overall user base’s needs and should have the adequate resources in these spaces for any created programming. The public libraries of the local area possess generous meeting spaces for public use and programming, and professional development rooms are now being outfitted to help users with common job search needs such as copying, faxing and printing. The inclusion of the makerspace has begun to be a growing trend that provides for user creativity to be expanded upon. Doing this can emphasize the efforts of cultural activities that programming attempts to develop, by providing more resources for use that will be tailored toward the people (Boyle, 2016). Implementing surveys to garner interest and opinion of the user is essential here (Houston, 2015). Overall, though, information professionals should be weary of being too open to retrofitting their spaces,
being more focused on the goals of the organization, rather than constantly approving the ideas of the consumer. Focusing on the goal avoids unnecessary space and time use.

Complementing the idea of makerspaces and other provided resources, information professionals should have a general understanding of current and growing technologies and trends. By instituting 3-D printers, much as local libraries have done, organizations can show their willingness to include a plethora of resources outside the norm, which can enhance learning and programming, along with making the space look more appealing. In addition, newer technologies like social media, can develop the space of a "hyperlinked library", allowing users to constantly connect and utilize common tech like Twitter or Facebook, to keep up with outreach endeavors and programs (Stephens, 2007). Information professionals, on the flip side, can use these means not only for outreach, but to have a more interactive means to understanding the needs and desires of the user, using ideas like blogs for opinions or to answer commonly asked questions. While there are a host of issues, including privacy of the user and a lack of specific policy for these resources, this interaction can appeal to younger audiences, demonstrate a perception of advancing into the future by the organization and it can help professionals understand increasing trends to better themselves for future changes (Abdullah, 2015).

Last, but not least, Information Professions has demonstrated that the skills of varying information professional roles, the spaces and the resources should all be addressed, understood and prepared for by the organizational structure that employs these professionals. Informational professionals face a challenging endeavor in their flexibility as skilled workers because of the greatly varying organizations and people they will encounter. Restricting it into libraries alone can demonstrate this. Librarians face issues regarding privacy, copyright, disruptive patrons and complaints of adequate resources on a daily basis and that list is a brief summary of issues (Luo, 2016). It is from this standpoint that organizations, from leadership on down, must prepare themselves. By being familiar with policy, preparing policy and seeking guidance about handling issues, leaders can filter their findings downward to their employees to create a unified, cohesive mentality that prepares for anything (Luo, 2016). Demonstrating professionalism and unity in opinion are crucial for emphasizing the strengths of the staff.
Information Professions has been, one of it not, the best courses that I have taken at this point. It has convinced me and motivated me to critically evaluate my profession as a current library assistant and leave my mind open for any opportunity that can harness my skills. It has adequately, I believe, prepared a foundation for readiness in any information professional capacity.

References


