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| The Mission, Issues, and Trends in Today’s Library |
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Throughout this semester, we have learned valuable information about the responsibilities of a librarian in all types of libraries, the importance of diversity and ethical service from librarians, and how libraries change and evolve with new trends and advances. We have learned about the mission of each library; school, public, academic and special. We also focused on the future of libraries and where they are headed in our technology dependent world.

Mission of the Library

Libraries of all types serve a critical function in our society. Even though the expectations and roles of librarians have changed over time, their mission remains the same. Librarians strive to meet the needs of their patrons by providing quality resources and services to promote creativity, and to encourage lifelong learning. It’s important for libraries to adapt to the changes in our society to meet the needs of their patrons. Libraries are meant to be a place to seek new information along with connecting with people in the community. Johnson (2012) quoted, “Many library mission statements include phrases such as “building strong communities,” or “contributing to the wellbeing of communities,” among their major goals.” In every observation that I completed this semester, I saw study groups gathering, book clubs meeting, art activities for all ages, informational workshops offered, etc. I witnessed librarians providing hands on experiences with their patrons to help them locate the information they needed. All of these activities help encourage a sense of community in the library.

Ethics and Values

As a future librarian, I understand that librarians have a professional responsibility far beyond just helping a student find a book to read or materials that help with their research project. Librarians know and understand that there are obligations that follow certain ethics and values when it comes to certain principles in the profession. Principles such as promoting inclusion for everyone in the library, upholding intellectual freedoms and diverse perspectives, respecting the privacy and confidentiality of patrons, promoting free access to information and ideas, and making sure there is equal availability of materials and resources. The ethical codes have been rewritten, restated, expanded, etc. by many but, in a nut shell, they all promote ethical behavior. For example, Froehlich (1992) came up with five basic principles that simply state those ethical codes: “minimize harm, respect the autonomy of others, act justly and fairly, seek social harmony, and comport with organizational, professional, and public trust.”

Libraries of the Future

In thinking about the future of libraries, many have questioned if libraries are necessary now that people have access to information via the internet and other digital sources. We as a society are definitely becoming more digital! We rely on technology and digital information throughout our day for varying reasons including accessing information. However, even the most technology dependent person benefits from services provided in a library. So, google and ebooks are not going to kill our libraries. Hopefully this digital movement will help libraries be acknowledged for how central they are to communities. Rubin (2016) states “the role of LIS professionals is increasingly user-centered rather than organization centered and that there is greater need to understand how individuals seek and use information.” So, librarians focus will no longer be on shelving books or organizing materials but will be more focused on their patrons and their library needs. Increasing technology dependence is not a threat to libraries. An actual threat to all libraries is limited hours. Due to budget cuts for libraries, they are forced to offer limited hours which in turn drastically reduces their ability to serve their patrons. This will definitely put a hinderance on the mission of all librarians. Libraries will only be irrelevant when they become inaccessible.

Closing

Libraries are not just for searching for information anymore. They are vital in building our communities. I am very appreciative for the knowledge I have gained in taking this course. This course is one of the first courses on the track to getting my master’s and I think it is crucial. As a school librarian, I will strive to meet the informational needs of my students and fellow teachers. To encourage my students to become lifelong learners by helping them establish strong information literacy skills and to help them build a literacy and technology foundation that will strengthen as they continue through their educational careers and beyond. Much like a strong foundation is vital to constructing a building, this course has given me a solid foundation in becoming a strong, diverse, patient, knowledgeable librarian and for that, I am grateful.

Bibliography

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