



GLOBAL VISION DISCUSSION

Report of the Russian regional self-organised meeting *How a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future*

Date: July 14th, 2017

Venue: M.I. Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature, Moscow,
Russian Federation



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List of Participants of the Russian regional self-organised meeting:

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2. **Alexander Antopolsky**, Chief Scientist, the Informatics Problems Studying Center , Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
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5. **Anastasia Gacheva**, Excursion Department, Moscow City Library № 124, winner of the All-Russia professional contest “Librarian of the Year, 2014”
6. **Irina Gayshun**, Deputy Head, Foreign LIS and International Relations Department, Russian State Library, IFLA Russian Language Centre Coordinator
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10. **Irina Dzhunzhurova**, Representative of the Department of Libraries, Science and Education Office, Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation
11. **Galina Elfimova**, Head, Editorial Department, Russian State Library for the Blind
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15. **Elena Lindeman**, Deputy General Director, Russian National Public Library for Science and Technology, Executive Director of the National Library Association «Libraries of the Future» (NALF)
16. **Andrei Lisitsky**, Director, F.M. Dostoyevskiy Moscow City Library №19
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Introduction

On July 14th 2017, in the M.I. Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature, Moscow, Russia, 32 librarians participated in a conversation about how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future. Together we represent 589 years of library experience.

Russian regional meeting was organized by the M.I. Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature with the support of the Russian State Library and held under the aegis of two national library associations -- the Russian Library Association (RLA) and the National Library Association "Libraries of the Future" (NALF). Among 32 participants there were two winners of the All-Russia professional contest "Librarian of the Year" (2013, 2014), leaders and librarians from Moscow, Saint-Petersburg, Vladimir region, Krasnodar and Irkutsk, representatives of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, leading professional and public institutions, publishing industry and journalists. Thus, the delegates represented the interests of libraries of different types: public (national, federal, regional, municipal and rural), university, research and academic, special etc.

A vision for libraries

Libraries enable literate, informed and participative societies. When we look at the future, according to the debates in M.I. Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature, Moscow, Russia, this means that the rapid changes in the information environment and development of information technologies have dramatically changed the role and functions of the libraries.

From mono-dimensional hierarchy model, where the Book was on the top, as the sacral symbol of the Collection, and where all the operations were internally organised and book-centric, the Libraries shift to open, pluralistic models, where readers, users, communities and the society in general are the active participants of their development. Libraries become modern information centers, providing open (and free) access to the variety of reliable sources of information (both in digital and traditional formats), centers of multicultural communications and intellectual development fostering knowledge, creativity, dialogue, educational institutions, life-long partners in personal development.

Libraries build close ties between themselves and other related communities for effective exchange of resources, workflows, solutions, ideas and experience, developing integrated systems and working environments for effective and efficient operations.

Libraries are essential to nations, societies and communities.

The core values of libraries (Q4):

1. Provision of reliable information, legal access to content – **27 votes**
2. Equal and unhampered access to information (library services free of charge), openness, neutrality - **22 votes**
3. High level of competence of working with information - **20 votes**
4. Focusing on meeting user needs – **20 votes**
5. Comfortable conditions (facilities, equipment, physical accessibility, comfort, Internet etc) – **18 votes**

Comments:

Participants identified some unique core values of libraries such as accessibility, free services and neutrality. Also, several features of modern libraries: social reputational benefits (respect and trust of users), user-oriented approach were noted.

Libraries are exceptionally good at (Q5):

1. Vast offline network of libraries – **28 votes**
2. Unique resources and collections – **25 votes**
3. Accessible multifunctional environment, communication centre, “third place” - **22 votes**
4. Variety of high level events - **19 votes**
5. Unique competencies of library staff – **17 votes**

Comments:

The group highlighted a special feature of the library system in Russia, which is a vast library network (around 100 thousand libraries of different organizational affiliation), including public (around 40 thou.), school (over 30 thou.), university, research and academic, and special libraries. All these institutions have unique resources and collections, strive for wide implementation of ICTs, possess skilled staff and serve a wide range of users. Today's libraries evolve its traditional role of information facilitators and become multifunctional centers of social communications.

Libraries should do more of (Q6):

1. Improving skills, professional and personal development of staff – **30 votes**
2. Interacting with communities and users – **29 votes**
3. Monitoring and meeting user needs as much as possible – **29 votes**
4. Rapidly adapting to the changes in the society and ecosystem – **29 votes**
5. Interacting with authorities and policy makers – **26 votes**

Comments:

The experts recognized the need for strengthening library advocacy at all levels of government and public administration, interaction with other cultural, research and educational institutions, development of user feedback system, quality of customer services and marketing of services.

Libraries should do less of (Q7):

1. Doing monkey business, wasting efforts on arranging events only for events – **28 votes**
2. Playing the blame game, being frustrated - **24 votes**
3. Turning on each other – **22 votes**
4. Being snobs in profession, having belief in its own exceptionality – **20 votes**
5. Doing excessive reports -**19 votes**

Comments:

The participants placed a strong focus on specific features and “pressure points” of the Russian library system such as uneven provision of library services, poor intersectional coordination, commitment to outdated methods and approaches, unwillingness and fear of changes, bureaucracy, lack of initiatives and departmental disunity.

Challenges and solutions

The main challenges to society (Q8):

1. E-economy and digital technologies – **29 votes**
2. Globalization, global informational and educational environment – **28 votes**
3. Reduction of educational attainment and cultural level - **25 votes**
4. Automated production, reduction in employment – **22 votes**
5. Digital divide – **19 votes**

Comments:

The participants considered the explosive growth of digital technologies, essentially changing the role of libraries in the information environment, as a key driver of changes. Also, the experts noted that there was an urgent need for revision of library success criteria in this new world considering new requirements of society.

The main challenges to libraries (Q9):

1. Intense competition in the information space – **29 votes**
2. Labor shortage, problem of attracting young promising employees – **26 votes**
3. Lack of social services procurement from the state and society – **22 votes**
4. Declining popularity of traditional printed materials – **22 votes**
5. Explosive growth of ICTs and mobile technologies – **17 votes**

Comments:

The experts pointed out the priority role of libraries as vital cultural and cultural heritage institutions, intellectual, research and educational centers. There's the risk of transforming the libraries into some leisure centers that will lead to degradation of a high level of libraries. Need for dialogue within the community for understanding and exchange also was noted.

The main professional challenges (Q10):

1. Urgent need for development of the system of professional education and flexible system of staff development - **30 votes**
2. Declining attractiveness of librarianship as a profession – **27 votes**
3. Mismatch between professional standards, modern working conditions and technologies development – **26 votes**
4. Lack of new competencies and skills, vital for e-economy – **25 votes**
5. Ageing of staff: high average age of staff, “pre-digital” mentality - **24 votes**

Comments:

The experts highlighted the need for flexible meeting the changing society needs, creation of continuing professional development system, collecting best practices. The problem of lacking new library “stars” and “icons”, leaders able to build and implement the change agenda in professional education and development also figured high.

How a united library field can make a difference

How should a united library field help meet the challenges identified (Q11)?

1. We need to embrace and use new technologies in everyday working life – **28 votes**
2. System of professional staff training must be reformed – **28 votes**
3. We need to be engaged in a dialogue with authorities and policy makers, to develop our professional advocacy skills - **27 votes**
4. We should be actively involved in the legislation and regulative activities and to ensure the harmonization of the laws in different countries and jurisdiction – **25 votes**
5. To encourage users and volunteers to participate in the library activity – **25 votes**

Comments:

According to the participants, the library community needs to elaborate a common development strategy and tactics, based on the laws (trends) of development of the global information environment, widely share information with each other, overcome institutional, linguistic, national and other forms of segregation — to become full members of the global library community, to learn new technologies and be ready for their widespread implementation.

The characteristics of a united library field (Q12):

1. Common goals and vision of development – **29 votes**
2. Sustainable relations with the related communities - **29 votes**
3. Common professional values – **27 votes**
4. Coordination of efforts – **26 votes**
5. Integration of the national professional community into the united world community – **25 votes**

Comments:

The main characteristics of a united library field are: commitment to common professional values, ability to respond to the challenges of the time, professional solidarity and team building, development of sustainable relationships with related communities (archives, museums, publishing industries, scientific, educational and IT communities etc.), strong and high-tech network of communications and partnerships.

The focus of a united library field (Q13):

1. To develop a “Modern Library” concept – **27 votes**
2. Defining and understanding the future global information environment and the role of libraries in it – **25 votes**
3. Developing library strategy in the new information environment – **22 votes**
4. To support development of a united digital knowledge space - **21 votes**
5. Library advocacy, protection of librarians’ and users’ rights – **16 votes**

Comments:

According to experts, the library community needs to focus on development of a holistic, global vision of the role of libraries in the 21st century, strategies, programs and plans for their development, taking into account the laws of development of the global information environment for a constructive dialogue with society and government, identifying user needs and ways to meet those needs, develop an effective system for the evaluation of digital services, coordination and interaction of national and international library associations.

A global conversation

This report is created in an interactive process, in M.I. Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature, Moscow, Russia on July 19th, 2017. It is part of a global conversation initiated by IFLA on how a united library field can tackle the challenges of the future.