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Global Nomadism Shapes the Information Profession

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Global Nomadism Shapes the Information Professional

Globalization influences individuals throughout the world by changing the dynamics in the social, economic, political and cultural aspects of their lives. Technology is a critical element in globalization, allowing people to transform local information into global knowledge through dissemination. This technology is the channel by which information professionals supply the world with knowledge, and technology additionally enables global nomads to enjoy a sense of connectivity with their spatial unit. D'Andrea (2007) defines global nomads as expressing "global mobility" or having "relinquished all idea, desire or nostalgia for fixity" (p. 149). Due to the common component of technology, global nomads shape the information professional by altering the processes of information dissemination to allow for the distinctive needs of multi-cultural and nomadic patrons.

Prior to televisions, computers, and other current technology, the processes through which people accessed information depended on where they inhabited. Information was delivered by word of mouth, by letters, and eventually through local newspapers. However, these methods of information delivery seem archaic in today's world of technology. Information is now delivered through various forms, although the World Wide Web (www) appears to be the most common approach of information dissemination. The internet consists of many methods of information sharing, including (but not limited to) email, blogs, databases, wiki pages, social networking sites, and news websites. Individuals can obtain knowledge regarding virtually any subject matter. The spread of information no longer applies only within local towns or villages, but rather on a global scale, allowing individuals to travel freely around the world while still being connected to events from their home; likewise, they are able to stay within their own home, and still obtain information regarding all other parts of the World.

To keep up with this spread of data, information professionals must think similarly to global nomads by providing information to the global community. As D'Andrea (2007) states, "new forms of subjectivity and identity are being developed in a dialectic interplay with major global processes" (p. 139). This statement affirms the need for information professionals to become involved with supporting technology in libraries. Technology is the tool which will supply information to more than just local individuals, even if this means creating tension between the conflicting ideas of libraries as a physical place as opposed to a digital representation.

Global nomads have also shaped the information professional by using technology to take control of their own information needs. With the introduction of the World Wide Web, information seekers have utilized this technology to discover knowledge rather than going to the library. The internet is not limited to libraries only, but can be accessed from many different locations. This allows for individuals to find information from their homes, in restaurants, and other numerous places of convenience. Wikipedia, although not considered reliable, is a website consisting of information on a variety of subjects that are prepared by ordinary citizens around the world and available in many languages. This website is one example of how global nomads have changed the information profession by using the internet for information.

Librarians, as information professionals, must realize they no longer control and maintain access to information. Information professionals have an obligation to their patrons to stay abreast of current technology to facilitate usage of libraries. As Buckland (2008) hypothesizes, an "emphasis on empowering library users, renewed attention to bibliographic access, and a more holistic view are needed" (p. 81). A user-centered library is one direction a library can shift to ensure patrons return in preference of finding information on the internet. Holistic views such

as virtual reference, game console competitions, and database maintenance should be analyzed to appeal to the global nomad information seeker.

Global nomads are also changing the information profession by creating a need for immediate access to news and information. Current technologies now enable hospitals to input information about individuals into systems, which allow nomads to access their medical history from anywhere in the world. Other examples of access needs are flight information, weather conditions, news stories, and city details including housing options and employment. Maps complete with route recommendations and mileage totals can now be accessed from the internet. As technology becomes increasingly available, the nomadic lifestyle will become effortless to maintain, because individuals will not be required to have a fixed location. While these access needs were once met by information contained in libraries, they can now be access from any part of the world.

Information professionals must devise unconventional ideas to incorporate immediate access demands with information dissemination. Numerous libraries across the United States have initiated creating digital copies of information stored within the physical walls, creating library websites containing links to information. One example of a digital library is www.ipl.org. While digital libraries are still in the early stages of design and usage, they will assist global nomads by supplying immediate information access to diverse content. As Borgman (2003) describes, "the concept of a global digital library provides an opportunity for exploring aspects of digital libraries, access to information, information related behavior, information infrastructure, international developments, and the transformation of information institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums" (p. 49).

Digital technologies influence social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of our lives. This technology is central to the globalizing tendencies that will continue to be analyzed and utilized by nomads. Information professionals must respond to the needs of global patrons and provide access to all forms of information. The necessity of staying current in today's digital environment is vital for libraries to appeal to the citizens of the world, and respond to their cultural needs.

References

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