Roles and Responsibilities of Information Professionals in the 21st century

Jollette Russell - G.C. Foster College of P.E. & Sport
Traditional Role of the Information Professional

Custodian
- Manages, selects, organizes, and provides access to information that guides policies, standards, and academic programmes.

Media Guide
- Tour guide in the digital information environment

Public Relations Officer
- Maintains good relationship with management, clients, other libraries, and vendors
Major Transitions in the Information Field!

1. From a Library-centered to an information-centered entity

2. From a paper-based, digitized environment to a predominantly electronic knowledge-based interface

3. From Library as an institution to the Library as an information provider/IT skilled specialists functioning in an automated environment
Major Transitions in the Information Field!

1. From local Library networking to regional/ international collaboration
2. From acquisitions to access
3. From lack of concern for intellectual property to ethical use of copyrighted materials
Profile of Information Users

- **information Seekers**
  - Born 1994 – onward
  - Like Convenience, speed and Control

- **Surrounded by computer/Electronic Media**
  - Like Interactivity
  - Have High Expectations/Confidence

- **Nomadic**
  - Expect Services/Resources when and where needed

- **Format Agnostic**
  - Do not care about format, but prefer electronic resources
The New Information Unit Vision is Universal

- The library makes information available wherever and whenever the user requires it.

- Realizing this vision requires change across a wide range of systems, processes and attitudes.

PLAI STRLC (2012)
Principles Governing 21st Century Information Unit (IU)

- The IU is EVERYWHERE
- The IU has NO BARRIERS
- The IU invites PARTICIPATION
- The IU utilizes systems that CONNECTS US to our users
So where should we be?

Librarians’ ability to link our stakeholders with the reliable information is a measure of our continued relevance.
21st Century Roles

Information Broker

- Identifies, retrieves, organizes, re-packages, provides electronic OR physical access to digital information

Change Agent / Application Leader

- Collaborates with IT Services to design and evaluate systems that facilitate e-access

Facilitator

- Makes access easier e.g. network access
21st Century Roles

**Educator**
Trains clients to be 21st century information users. Use of web-based instruction and online tutorials

**Policy Maker**
Develops/participates in information policy for an organization, ensuring total or selective access

**Image Maker**
Adds value to the organization/ project a positive image to the outside world
21st Century Roles

Collaborator

Expanded area of collaboration, not just with fellow librarians but with IT people, the community, etc.

Image Maker

Adds value to the organization/ project a positive image to the outside world.
INNOVATIONS IN THE DIRECTION OF USERS
Trained Staff

- Computers
- Integrated Library Systems
- RFID Technology
- Electronic/Print Resources

Findings Contd.
Delivering 21st Century Services
Librarians are utilizing project management skills (training, marketing, and ensuring sustainability).

Libraries wait until new technologies are popular enough to be interesting, then buy them from vendors.
Findings Contd.
Barriers to 21st Century Innovation

Libraries are resource dependent/ Cater to those providing the funding.

Libraries wait until new technologies are popular enough to be interesting, then buy them from vendors.
Discussion

Do administrators really understand today’s technology environment?

If not, how can they affect organizational and process change to foster innovation?

If so, what are Information units doing to create new organizations and processes?
Recommendations

1. Partner with other organizational IT groups / position sharing

2. Join the information systems paradigm
3. "You must appeal to the public you have. People who pay taxes want what they are paying for."

Carrie Young “Bestsellers at Center of Controversy” Gwinnett Daily Post. June 11, 2006
Recommendations

4. Information professionals need to think outside the box for solutions, not for solutions that come out of a box.
So Where are We Now?

Information Professionals are in demand more than ever in the 21st century.