The Future of Libraries

America's Libraries for the 21st Century
Subcommittee
Vivian Pisano, Chair

ALA Office for Information Technology Policy
Annual Conference 2009

McCormick Place, W194a
July 11, 2009 – 10:30 a.m. to Noon
Major Areas of Focus

- Monitor technological and societal trends
- Identify relevant data sources for these relevant trends
- Advocate for appropriate policies and practices
- Identify scenarios, models, and specific directions in technology and society
- Engage the LIS community to develop appropriate visions, strategies, positions, and messages.
- Assist the LIS community in taking a greater leadership role in shaping its future in the digital world.
Policy Briefs

• The Powerful Forces of Change: America’s Libraries for the 21st Century

• Talking About the Future of Libraries: A Synthesis of Published Literature and Expert Accounts

• The Future of Libraries: Lessons from Cutting-Edge Programs and Activities

• Visions for Tomorrow: Future Libraries That Strengthen America’s Communities

• Action Agenda for the Library Community
Today’s Session

• Big Picture Trends: Alan Inouye

• Perspectives on the Future of Libraries from the Community: Jennifer Hendrix

• Cutting-Edge Technology Practices: Christine Lind Hage

• Visions, Models and Strategies: Roger Levien

• Commentary and Response: Stacey Aldrich

• Q & A
Big Picture Trends

Alan S. Inouye
OITP Director

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Big Picture Trends: What Are These?

• Forces outside of the library community likely to have major impact on our future:
  – Demographic and societal trends
  – Institutional evolution
  – Technologically-based advances
Big Picture Trends: Why Do We Care?

• Historical importance of external forces. Examples include:
  – Immigration
  – Family
    • Single parent households
    • Women in the work force
  – Networking + Web + digital information
  – Competition for attention
Big Picture Trends:
Current Status of This Project

- In the midst of data collection
- Beginning stages of analysis
- Initial goal is to publish a policy brief in early 2010
- Still a lot more to do!
Big Picture Trends: A Warning

- “Trend analysis is the most fragile element of forecasting … disruptions, and many other contiguous forces, can easily change the trajectory of any single trend.” (Joint Operating Envt)
- Famous quotes: Five computers, 640K, no one needs a computer in the home
Demographic and Societal Trends

• Population growth
  – Overall
  – Minorities, especially Hispanic, and in a growing number of states

• Baby boomers will be retiring in large numbers
  – Expectations for “retirement”
  – Decline of financial assets for retirement
Demographic and Societal Trends (2)

- Echo boomers / young people
  - Peak of this boom hitting college now
  - Digital natives – fundamentally different orientation on information processing

- Economic recession – long-term recovery
  - Long-term funding implications for libraries
Demographic and Societal Trends (3)

- Job / career stability and expectations
- China
  - and India and other places
- Left brain to right brain?
- Future of making?
Demographic and Societal Trends – Implications

- Increased sophistication in tech abilities and demands in the future 65+ clientele
- Clash in info needs between 65+ and under-30 clientele
- Increase focus on info services oriented towards Asia, Hispanics in the Americas
- Desirability of new revenue sources / partnerships, etc.
- Need for more creative spaces
Institutional Evolution

• Demise of the newspaper industry
  – Precursor to other media (e.g., magazines, journals, ?)

• Education
  – Classes increasingly not in physical schools?

• Are the walls crumbling or just bending a bit?
  – Role of libraries as compared with… ever-fuzzier boundaries
Institutional Evolution – Implications

• Forget about traditional library boundaries
  – What are strategic assets / advantages of libraries?

• A future that’s increasingly collaborative and interdependent
  – Implications for future library professionals
Technologically-based Advances

• In general: More of what we have now
  – Faster networks, more wireless
  – Yet more mobility: Smaller computers / devices / capability
  – Computers in more places

• The “new” Internet

• Massive storesstreams of data (including sensors)
Technologically-based Advances (2)

- Cloud computing
- Promises from the past:
  - Augmented and virtual reality
  - Artificial intelligence – language interfaces
  - Semantic web
  - E-books
- General advances in computer science
  - Graphics, info retrieval, biologically-based computing
Technologically-based Advances – Implications

• More options, more complexity
  – Digital copyright becomes yet more challenging
  – Digital privacy becomes yet more challenging
  – For some (many?), hyper-connectivity induces more stress

• Yet increased need to figure out where libraries fit in best
Perspectives on the Future of Libraries from the Community

Jennifer Hendrix
OITP Consultant

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Background and Methodology

- OITP program area
- Subcommittee
- Literature Review
  - Lectures, Blogs, Interviews
- Policy Brief
Libraries in the 21st Century

• Librarians are talking about the future
• Opinions vary
• Where there is consensus:
  – Libraries are about the people in them--librarians, staff and users
  – We must determine our future
Trends in Literature - The Story

• The technology revolution is changing traditional information media
  – Networked books, print-on-demand
• Digital media change the way users find, access, and use information
  – eResearch, digital natives and the future of reading
• New information processes are changing libraries and how they operate
  – Flexible, physical spaces
  – Collaboration
Cutting-Edge Technology Practices

Christine Lind Hage
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Purpose

• To identify cutting edge library services
• To provide information to the library community on how and why these particular services are unique, well presented and relevant to quality library service
• To encourage libraries to replicate best practices of cutting edge services
Cutting Edge??

• Tested and successful implementations of **technological** advancements used in services such as:
  • Improvements in traditional services and processes by inventing/re-inventing/twisting technology
  • Introduction of new, innovative services that are flexible and responsive to community needs
  • Methods for connecting libraries to their communities
  • Funding initiatives or organizational models that ensure library information technology will remain current
Nominations

- Must involve the use of technology
- Must be a novel idea or implementation of a service
- Must be able to be documented for replication
- Must be for a library that has been involved in the development of the service or product (can’t just buy something off the shelf) or have enhanced the product for added value
Nomination Should Include

- A description of the project/service
- An explanation of how the service/procedure is cutting-edge
- Identification of the evolution of the project (identification of need, why it is novel, funding sources/options, problems, changes, how success was measured and recommendations)
Nomination Formats

• Nominations, including self-nominations, will be accepted in a variety of formats including:
  – Flickr
  – YouTube
  – Video
  – Audio
  – Written, etc.
You May Nominate Via

- OITP Website
- Via U.S. Mail
Website

• www.ala.org/oitp

Easy to fill in form that you can download

– Name of Nominee
– Name of Nominated Library
– Title of program (if applicable)
– Nominee’s contact information
– Nominator’s contact information
Categories

• Architecture and design
• Circulation (sorting, remote distribution, materials handling, delivery mechanisms)
• Collections
• Community services (to include equity, outreach, programming and assessment of services)
• E-resources management systems
• Instruction/Information literacy
• Knowledge creation
• Open source
• Pathfinders
• Patron services (to include self-services, privacy protection)
• Professional development
• Readers’ Advisory Reference services
• Staff management (use of self-scheduling, recruitment, evaluation)
• Unique missions
• User Interface
• Web services
• Other: where you will be given the opportunity to describe
Further Questions

- Description of the project/service
- Why is the service/procedure cutting edge?
- Challenges to the project/service/creative use of technology
- Description of how/why this project/service is successful
Interfaces For Additional Information

- Flickr
- YouTube
- Library website
Or Send Nominations to:
American Library Association
Office for Information Technology Policy
1615 New Hampshire Ave., NW, 1st Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009
Evaluation Process

- The Subcommittee on America’s Libraries for the 21st Century will review all nominations and conduct selected interviews or site visits to identify those libraries that are truly offering a best practice or most innovative service.
Deadline

September 1st, 2009
Visions, Scenarios, and Strategies

Roger Levien
OITP Fellow and Principal, Strategy & Innovation Consulting

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What is a Vision?

- Each describes a possible future
- Usually a “desirable” future, but not necessarily
- Can be simple or very complex
- Can be near term or distant
- Should be internally consistent / realistic
“Pure Tone” Vision

• A vision that implements one simple strategic theme
• Realistic visions generally combine several pure tones -- a “melody”
• Pure tones are building blocks
• Pure tones focus attention on the critical aspects of a strategy
Library Types

- Public libraries (> 9,000)
- School libraries (≈ 100,000)
- Academic / research libraries (≈ 3,600)
- Business / government / military libraries (≈ 10,000)
Public Library Visions

#1 Physical

#2 Virtual
Public Library Visions
Public Library Visions
Public Library Visions

1. The current physical library - evolved
1. Physical library - evolved

- Library of 2009 is a recognizable evolution of the library 50 years ago
- Suppose through adaptation and evolution the library of 2059 is also
- Heavy adoption of technology and access to widening range of media
- Provides guided access to formidable array of resources
Public Library Visions

1. The current physical library - evolved
2. The wholly virtual library
2. The Wholly Virtual Library

- Technological, social, economic transformations overwhelm libraries
- Take advantage of technology to completely alter way of doing things
- Local library is branch of nationwide network with common catalog of media
- Users order from catalog, receive media digitally or from nearest branch, which may not have physical presence
Public Library Visions

1. The current physical library - evolved
2. The wholly virtual library
3. Focus on the individual
3. Focus on the individual

- Concentrates on serving needs of local clientele, one at a time
- Librarian is guide to sources and forms
- Buildings organized for individual work - carrels, reading areas
- Only small, specialized collections available locally as well as specialized technologies (printers, readers, players)
Public Library Visions

1. The current physical library - evolved
2. The wholly virtual library
3. Focus on the individual
4. Focus on the local community
4. Focus on the local community

- Concentrates on needs of community
- Center for wide range of activities in wide range of venues -- offices, conference rooms, auditoriums
- Collects and archives diverse local materials - - government, historical, personal, group
- Range of additional local services -- coffee house, theatre, playroom, advanced technology
Public Library Visions

1. The current physical library - evolved
2. The wholly virtual library
3. Focus on the individual
4. Focus on the local community
5. Library as portal
5. Library as portal

- Point of entry and access to vast stores of information, art, entertainment in physical and virtual form
- Librarians are highly knowledgeable guides
- Library facilities distributed into malls, office buildings, shopping centers
- Librarians accessible via cellphone, e-mail, social networking sites and their successors
Public Library Visions

1. The current physical library - evolved
2. The wholly virtual library
3. Focus on the individual
4. Focus on the local community
5. Library as portal
6. Library as archive
6. Library as archive

- Community’s long-lasting storehouse of local knowledge and information
- Collects, digitizes, and catalogs the data that record local life -- government, newspaper, education, personal, historical. Connects them to Internet.
- Associated reading room, network access, meeting rooms.
- Librarians expert in local information sources and accessing other libraries’ materials
Other libraries; Other visions

- School libraries
- Academic and research libraries
- Special libraries -- business, government, military
School Library Visions

• **A**: digital and hardcopy collections, digitally cataloged and accessible, in each school, with full-time librarians

• **B**: highly digitized collections, digitally cataloged and accessible, centrally located, with librarians visiting schools

• **C**: like B, but with collection and librarians centralized at public library
Academic & Research Library Visions

• \( \alpha \): Serve broad teaching function as well as research
  – Maintain extensive physical collections adding digital catalogs and media

• \( \beta \): Tied closely to research activities of specific department
  – Vast majority of materials are digital
  – May become archive of local research products
Special Libraries Visions

I: Reduction of library role due to wider availability of information resources on the Internet and budget pressures

II: Maintenance or upgrading of library with continually up-dated technology and materials acquisition due to centrality of library to successful functioning of organization
Scenarios

• Scenarios for each type of library will be “melodies” of these 13 “pure tones”
• There may be several different scenarios for each type
• For example, different scenarios for public libraries
  – in small rural communities
  – in wealthy suburbs
  – in large cities
What is a Strategy?

• Description of a desired future for an organization and what must be done to achieve it

• Must take into account:
  – Likely changes external to the organization
  – Strengths and weaknesses of the organization
  – Desirability and achievability of alternative visions / scenarios
Strategy Process

1. Identify principal external trends and forces - View of the World
2. Identify library strengths and weaknesses -- View of the Library
3. Determine key strategic goals -- Strategic Imperatives
4. Describe and evaluate strategic alternatives
5. Publicize and assist local organizations in making and implementing choice
Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses

• Determine advantages over likely competition for various types of library:
  – Core competencies: What do those libraries do that is advantaged?
  – Strategic assets: What do those libraries possess that is advantaged?
Commentary and Response

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Question and Answer Period

Moderated by Vivian Pisano
Subcommittee Chair &
Chief of Information Technology
San Francisco Public Library

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Information

• Further information about our work: http://www.ala.org/oitp
• Vivian Pisano: vpisano@sfpl.org
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