

Exploring Reference and Information Service in a Global Information Context

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ABSTRACT

Reference and information service (RIS) is a global phenomenon. Some studies have taken a global perspective on the work (e.g., Sanders et al., 2013). However, in-depth study of RIS tends to have an ethnocentric focus. This work-in-progress examines conceptualizations of RIS by 70 experienced librarians in Slovenia, South Africa, and the United States using Q methodology. Following Q methodology procedures (Stephenson 1935; Watts & Stenner 2005), data for this study are collected using a card sort and brief interview. The cards consist of 35 statements that reflect the breadth of conceptualizations of RIS represented in the literature. Data are analyzed using a web app designed specifically for Q methodology to identify clusters of similar conceptualizations. Interview data are analyzed qualitatively to interpretation of the profiles generated by the web app. Participants from South Africa and the United States were distributed fairly evenly among the factors. The preliminary results reveal that conceptualizations of RIS cross boundaries of culture, indicating the potential usefulness of a more global approach to professional education and professional development.

TOPICS

information services; libraries in the developing world

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