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### **Unveiling the Librarian of Tomorrow: Why Librarians Are Needed Now More Than Ever**

Essraa Nawar

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# Unveiling the Librarian of Tomorrow: Why Librarians Are Needed Now More Than Ever

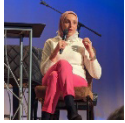
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# Unveiling the Librarian of Tomorrow: Why Librarians Are Needed Now More Than Ever



**Essraa Nawar, MBA, MA, MLIS**

**Assistant Dean - Library DEI Initiatives and Development, Academic Librarian Top 40 Women of Egypt, O.C.'s List of 125 Most Influential People, Women of Influence in O.C. Top 30 Egyptian Women Abroad, Marquis Who's Who**

Published Apr 11, 2024

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## **A Love Affair with Libraries: From Ancient to Modern**

I fell in love with Libraries the moment I set foot in the [Bibliotheca Alexandrina](#) in Alexandria, Egypt, where I had the privilege of working for five enriching years. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina stands as a modern reincarnation of the legendary ancient library, a beacon of learning and exchange. Reflecting on its revival, I marvel at the timeless significance of libraries throughout history. From the fabled repositories of knowledge in Alexandria, Athens, and Constantinople to their contemporary counterparts, libraries have endured as bastions of enlightenment and progress. The spirit of international collaboration that birthed the Bibliotheca Alexandrina underscores the global significance of libraries, while their technical prowess ensures their continued relevance in the digital age.

During my tenure at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, I witnessed firsthand the transformative power of libraries to connect individuals, foster intellectual curiosity, and bridge cultural divides. Collaborating with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, I was inspired by the unwavering dedication to serving the community and preserving the spirit of inquiry that defines the essence of librarianship. It was a privilege to contribute to an institution that embodies the enduring legacy of libraries as catalysts for social change and knowledge dissemination.

## **The Evolving Role of Librarians**

In a period defined by the relentless advancement of technological progress, where the flood of information pushes us to question and contemplate the evolving nature and indispensable role of the librarians and libraries amidst the digital disruption in shaping the intellectual landscape of our global societies.

## **Navigators of the Digital Realm**

Librarians, once regarded as the custodians of printed knowledge, have metamorphosed into guardians of the digital realm. No longer confined to the brick-and-mortar building and spaces, they now navigate the boundless expanse of cyberspace. In a world inundated with misinformation and disinformation, the librarian of tomorrow stands against the rising tide of falsehoods, guiding patrons through the labyrinth of the digital age with knowledge and expertise.

## **Embracing Technological Advancements: AI and the Human Touch**

As we look into the future, questions inevitably arise about the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the role of librarians. While AI, including ChatGPT, undoubtedly offers powerful tools for information retrieval and analysis, it can never replicate the nuanced expertise and empathy of human librarians. The essence of librarianship lies not just in providing access to information, but in cultivating meaningful connections, understanding individual needs, and fostering a sense of belonging within communities. As such, librarians remain indispensable stewards of knowledge, complementing AI with their uniquely human touch.

## **Harnessing the Power of Big Data and Information Literacy**

In an era dominated by big data and information overload, the role of librarians as guides and educators takes on added significance. Librarians are at the forefront of promoting information literacy, empowering individuals to navigate the vast seas of data with confidence and discernment. Beyond traditional research services, librarians champion data literacy and AI literacy, equipping patrons with the skills to critically evaluate information, harness the power of technology, and make informed decisions. In this way, libraries serve as guardians of knowledge and enlightenment, enriching lives and shaping the future of our digital society.

## **Champions of Digital Literacy**

At the heart of the librarian's mission lies the imperative of digital literacy—an essential skill in an era where truth and falsehood are often indistinguishable. Through innovative programming and educational initiatives, librarians equip individuals with the tools necessary to navigate the internet, fostering a culture of [critically evaluating information](#) and discerning fact from fiction.

## **Curators of Inclusive Communities**

Moreover, librarians have transcended the confines of traditional library spaces to become architects of inclusive communities. Far from being mere repositories of books, libraries have evolved into vibrant hubs of cultural exchange and intellectual discourse. Librarians, attuned to the unique needs of their communities, curate collections that reflect the rich tapestry of human experience, ensuring that every voice is heard and every perspective valued.

## **Community Engagers and Collaborators**

The librarian of tomorrow is not merely a curator of knowledge, but a community engager and collaborator extraordinaire. They forge partnerships with local organizations, schools, and businesses, leveraging the collective wisdom and resources of the community to enrich library programs and services. Through collaborative initiatives, they harness the power of collective action to address pressing social issues and effect positive change.

## **Advocates for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

In addition, librarians are tireless advocates for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), leveraging their platforms to dismantle barriers and foster a culture of belonging. Whether through inclusive programming, diverse collections, or anti-bias training, librarians champion DEI initiatives that promote equity and justice within their communities. Their commitment to fostering an environment of openness, acceptance, and respect serves as a beacon of hope in an often turbulent world.

## **Shaping a Brighter Future**

In an era dominated by rapid technological advancements and the proliferation of digital information, the role of the librarian has undergone a profound transformation. Once perceived as guardians of tomes in dimly lit stacks, librarians now emerge as vibrant stewards of knowledge, curators of information, and facilitators of community engagement. As society hurtles towards an uncertain future, the need for these custodians of intellect has never been more pronounced.

The traditional image of a librarian, ensconced behind a desk, cataloging books with meticulous precision, is giving way to a dynamic archetype—one that seamlessly integrates technology, embraces diversity, and champions intellectual freedom. The librarian of tomorrow is a beacon of light in the digital labyrinth, guiding patrons through the vast expanse of information with discernment and expertise.

At the heart of the librarian's evolving role lies the imperative of digital literacy. In an age where misinformation proliferates with alarming ease, librarians serve as bulwarks against the tide of falsehoods, equipping patrons with the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape. Through tailored programs and workshops, they empower individuals to discern fact from fiction, fostering a populace adept at distinguishing credible sources from dubious ones.

Moreover, librarians have transcended the confines of physical spaces to become architects of inclusive communities. Far from being mere repositories of books, libraries have emerged as vibrant hubs of cultural exchange, where individuals from all walks of life converge to share ideas, explore new horizons, and celebrate diversity. Librarians, attuned to the unique needs of their communities, curate collections that reflect the rich tapestry of human experience, ensuring that every voice is heard and every perspective valued.

*The librarian of tomorrow is also a trailblazer in the realm of technology, harnessing digital tools to expand access to information and enhance the patron experience. From digitizing archival materials to providing virtual programming, librarians leverage technology to bridge the digital divide and democratize knowledge. By embracing emerging technologies with enthusiasm and adaptability, they ensure that libraries remain relevant and indispensable in an increasingly interconnected world.*

Furthermore, librarians are tireless advocates for social justice and equity, leveraging their platforms to champion causes that promote equality and inclusivity. Whether advocating for intellectual freedom, safeguarding privacy rights, or amplifying marginalized voices, librarians are at the forefront of the fight for a more just and equitable society. Their commitment to fostering an environment of openness, acceptance, and respect serves as a beacon of hope in an often turbulent world.

In conclusion, the librarian of tomorrow embodies the ethos of adaptability, innovation, and compassion. As society grapples with unprecedented challenges and opportunities, librarians stand as stalwart defenders of knowledge, guardians of truth, and champions of community. Their multifaceted roles—as educators, technologists, advocates, and cultural ambassadors—underscore their enduring relevance in an ever-changing world. Now, more than ever, we must recognize the invaluable contributions of librarians and ensure that they have the support and resources necessary to continue shaping a brighter, more enlightened future for us all.

## **Library 2035: Imagining the Next Generation of Libraries Hardcover – April 15, 2024**

[Sandra Hirsh](#), PhD, an esteemed leader in the field of library and information science, has been a driving force in shaping the future of libraries. As associate dean for academics in the College of Professional and Global Education at [San Jose State University](#) (SJSU), and previously as professor and director of the SJSU School of Information, her contributions have been instrumental in advancing the profession. With an extensive background in academia and international associations, including past presidencies of the Association for Library and Information Science Education (ALISE) and the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T), Sandra Hirsh is at the forefront of library innovation. Her upcoming book [Library 2035: Imagining the Next Generation of Libraries](#) is anticipated to be a landmark publication in the field, promises to offer fresh insights into the evolving landscape of libraries and their role in the digital age. As an active leader in the American Library Association and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), Sandra Hirsh's expertise and vision continue to shape the future of libraries on a global scale.

### ***Resources:***

#### **Center for the Future of Libraries**

The Center for the Future of Libraries works to:

- Identify emerging trends relevant to libraries and the communities they serve. For information about the Center's trend work, check out the Center's [newsletters](#) or [trend collection](#)
- Promote futuring and innovation techniques to help librarians and library professionals shape their future.
- Build connections with experts and innovative thinkers to help libraries address emerging issues.

The Center for the Future of Libraries works with ALA Neal-Schuman on a Library Futures series that brings together library experts and innovators to explore the profession's many futures by focusing on emerging trends. [Learn more at the ALA Store.](#)

The [Center for the Future of Libraries](#) is initially modeled on the successful [American Alliance of Museums' Center for the Future of Museums](#). We appreciate the support and guidance provided by AAM and the Center for the Future of Museums. The establishment of the Center for the Future of Libraries was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services [RE-00-13-0096-13]. The Center was [announced in October 2013](#) and formally [launched in May 2014](#).

*\* Disclaimer: During the preparation of this article, some assistance from ChatGPT 3.5 was received in order to brainstorm some ideas. After using this tool, the content was reviewed and edited as needed.*