Analysis of Core Values and Academic Libraries

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Abstract

The scope of this essay is to clearly identify and define three core values determined integral to the author. The core values are Communication, Adaptability, and Diligence. After identification, the core values are then explained as they relate to topics present in the information profession. Three subject areas are explored linked data, information literacy, and reference service. The second part of the essay takes the values illustrated in the first section and applies them to the particular career goals of the author. The chosen field that the author aspires to work in is that of an academic library. The essay then explores how the three values of the author interconnect with the chosen career field as well as explain how they will be beneficial to the author's future in the field.

It is nearly impossible in today's society to escape a code of values, ethos, or mission statement. Whether it is written down or expressed verbally, every person exhibits qualities that they use to define their lives and their character. Sometimes, these values or beliefs are hollow. Like Patrick Lencioni (2002) explains in his article "*Make Your Values Mean Something*," a set of values are meaningless unless they are put into practice on a daily basis instead of when it is convenient. These beliefs or values do not have to be generic, or as Lencioni says "…it doesn't [need to] sound like it belongs on a Hallmark card (2002, para. 20)." They just need to embody the idea or spirit behind your beliefs. Three values that I believe in, are communication, adaptivity, and diligence. On the surface, they might seem like generic terms, but to me they form the basis of how I try to conduct my life. As I further progress into my chosen career path, I wonder how my values are reflected in the information profession?

Part 1: Culture of the Information Professions

The following sections will examine the three core values of communication, adaptivity, and diligence by examining their incorporation in three topics relevant to information professionals. It will be explored as to how these three values are conveyed in discussions of the three topics by information professionals. The topics are linked data, information literacy, and reference services. These topics were chosen to explore as they are not only highly interesting subject matter, but also may serve as a factor in choosing a particular career path.

Communication

Communication is a broad term that holds many different connotations. Information is conveyed in multiple ways to coworkers and users on a frequent basis. Open lines of communication are a necessity in the information profession as it is a core function of how the

profession operates. As Leigh Estabrook states, "LIS [Library and Information Science] represents the intersection of library science, information science, and communication (2010, p. 327)." The incorporation of communication alongside both library and information sciences shows how important this value is when discussing the profession. She also states that "the field of LIS can be characterized as "user-focused (Estabrook, 2010, p. 327).'" This characterization further explains how communication is paramount to information professionals as it is the only way information can be conveyed to the user.

One example of how communication is integral is by observing the reference interview model. The successfulness of the reference interview hinges on how well the information professional is able to communicate with users to help them or guide them to the information they were looking for. Anne Houston states in her article, "Our work [reference] requires heightened interpersonal skills and an ability to communicate across an increasingly diverse population (2016, p.188)."

In discussing the topic of linked data, it is interesting, however, that for all of their skills and daily use of communication that a published form of linked data has not yet emerged for public use. Kenning Arlitsch (2014) suggests in his article, "*Being Irrelevant: How Library Data Interchange Standards Have Kept us off the Internet*," that a reason for this stems from an inability of information professionals to agree to a definitive set of standards. This hinders progress as well as creates inaccuracies in the databases. Now while replacing the Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) system has had other difficulties, communication between information professionals should not be one of them.

Adaptivity

The second core value of adaptability is a trait that has enabled libraries & information professionals to remain relevant from their creation in the early to mid-19th century (Pawley, 2018). Adaptability means changing practices, theories, techniques, and/or processes to maintain efficiency, successfulness, and relevancy. It means to be able to learn new technologies, new methods, and new responsibilities in an ever-changing landscape. "The history of the information profession is characterized by the need to adapt to change (Abram, 2018, p. 27)." The need for adaptation occurred in the 1960s when the MARC format was developed by Henriette Avram (Saracevic, 2010) to replace paper catalogues. It occurred in the late 1990s when the World Wide Web Consortia (W3C) met and developed ideas relating to linked data in order to find a suitable replacement for the outdated MARC system (McCallum, 2017).

Technological changes have radically changed the information profession and how service is rendered to users. The concept of Information literacy functions alongside digital literacy, where information professionals find themselves assisting users (Cordell, 2013). Reference interviews now revolve around electronic resources, e-books, and search engines. These resources have radically changed reference service. Gone are the days of ready-reference volumes and stationary desk service. The reference desk is quickly becoming obsolete as technology enables users to navigate electronic resources easier, and tablets enable roving reference to assist users throughout the library.

Diligence

Diligence is not often cited as a core value, but like Lencioni (2002) stated, values should not be cookie cutter copies; they should be tailored to each person/organization. Diligence is an important trait for an information professional as it directly relates to an information professional's main goal or mission. The most recognized organization of librarians, the

American Library Association (ALA) states their mission as "…to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all (*Mission & Priorities*, 2018)." While Michael Buckland denotes that "enabling people to become better informed (learning, becoming more knowledgeable) is, or should be, the central concern of information studies… (2012, p. 5)."

Diligence is defined as "steady, earnest, & energetic effort: preserving application. (Merriam-Webster, 2018)." This value is incorporated into the reference interview as one of its key components. Helping a user's inquiry all the way to the end is not the only occurrence of diligence in the culture of the information professional; it also shows itself in the concept of information literacy. Librarians instruct users gaining the ability to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2000, p. 2).'" While information literacy and instruction might be performed in a reference interview one-on-one, it's practice can also be more efficiently performed in a classroom setting (Stevens, 2013). Diligence, in this example, can apply to maintaining the same standard of instruction whether it is the first class taught or the hundredth.

In the concept of Linked Data, applying diligence comes in handy as the bibliographic record is updated or modified to fit the new system that eventually replaces MARC. Especially because changing over to linked data is "changing the foundation of library metadata…(Byrne, 2010, para. 16)" itself which is no easy task. It is one that is definitely time consuming and requires diligence to ensure is completed correctly.

I believe that my three core values of communication, adaptability, and diligence are essential for the information professional. Within the three concepts that the information professional experiences on a regular basis, the incorporation of those three values create a successful user-friendly environment. I believe these values will be essential to my future successful career.

Part 2: Personal Directions

The adoption of my values will only help aid me in my future at an academic library. Without these core values, I will not be able to lead a successful career or be able to provide the level of user service that I aspire to. Academic libraries provide an opportunity to perform in-depth research as well as provide reference and instruction to users pursuing a higher education. It is a much different environment than a public library as the users share more than just a common goal of seeking knowledge. Undergraduates are learning how to navigate the databases, sources, and the physical layout of the library. Graduate students are discerning complex data and ideas to form specialized knowledge in their chosen subject in order to compile a final dissertations or portfolio. Faculty and coworkers are searching for materials not only for the instruction of their classes, but also for analysis to publish their own works.

Communication

The value of communication in such an environment is invaluable. Not only do I need to be able to communicate with multiple different groups located within the academic sphere, but I also need to master multiple mediums where communication in today's society takes place. Possessing more than proficient communication skills will also aid me in working within the extended community of academic librarians. Opening lines of communication to other

universities will hopefully limit the indecisiveness and inaccuracies that Arlitsch mentioned in his article.

Adaptability

Along with communication, the value of adaptability is also paramount for any career no matter the designation. One area that will benefit academic librarians, in particular, is the ability to adapt to changes in reference methodology as well as technology. Changes in technology seem to occur on a daily basis. As technology advances, electronic resources will also shift and change. I will need to adapt to new technologies and incorporate them into my work. I will also need to be flexible in how I conduct research and reference interviews. Flexibility will be integral to change my methodology and practices as new theories emerge. One area, in particular, that seems to be shifting is the iconic reference desk. Christy Stevens (2013) explores "whether the reference desk is an effective place to actually do real reference work." Different models are being tested in academic libraries across the country. Some still have a physical desk, while some have tried a roving model. Others have done away with the desk entirely, and provide appointments for consultations. Even if there is no significant change to the current standard of practice, there is still the possibility of finding myself in a library that uses a different model than the one I have experience in. I will need to be flexible enough to be able to adapt quickly to a different standard of service.

Diligence

Complacency is the death of individual and professional growth. In order to have a successful career that increases not only my knowledge and skill set, but also my pay scale and responsibilities, I will need to incorporate diligence into every facet of my career. As stated in

the ALA's "*Code of Ethics*" (2018), every user that inquires for assistance should be treated equally and receive the same standard of help. The future of libraries depends upon the communities' need as well as the belief that libraries are necessary. If the only association they have with libraries and librarians are negative, then the institution will cease to exist. Furthermore, if people need assistance, but are hesitant to ask because of the service I provide, then I have failed.

The value of diligence can also aid in job security. If I approach every task, performing it to the best of my ability in a timely manner then it is reasonable to assume that I will keep my job in that position. A dedicated and hard-working individual who completes tasks is rarely the first to be let go if there is someone who does not meet the same standards. At the end of the day, no matter my professional goals, I still have a family to feed. The incorporation of diligence will help with that.

Academic libraries provide a unique setting for a librarian. There are several different aspects that information professionals are expected to deal with on a daily basis. The three core values that I practice will not only aid me in accomplishing my designated tasks, but will also aid me in growing as an information professional.

Conclusion

The core values that I consider to be especially important, communication, adaptability, and diligence are integral to the information profession, and academic libraries. The continued effort to incorporate them into my work and career will only aid my career goals. Becoming proficient in communication will not only aid my relationships with my coworkers, but also the users that I aspire to help. Adaptability and willingness to embrace change is key to having a

long successful career. Diligence is what will continue to drive my customer service skills as

well as work ethic. Seeing how these three core values are intertwined with the information

profession causes me to question how other values I define myself by measure up?

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