

Library Science vs. Information Science

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30 January 2015

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When conducting research, information seekers rely on a variety of print and digital sources in order to meet their information needs. Sorting through all of the available sources can be an arduous task and that is where librarians and information specialists can provide invaluable help to scholars. Collecting, organizing, and making information digestible and accessible are important facets within the fields of library science and information science. Whereas library scientists focus primarily on print media and the humanities, information scientists specialize in digital media and the sciences (Rubin, 2010, p. 273).

When searching for information, researchers may endure information overload (p. 280). Librarians can help scholars to quickly locate quality and useful research materials by using a card catalog system that is arranged based on the Dewey Decimal system. Librarian Melvin Dewey invented this system so that librarians and researchers could efficiently and quickly locate information based on based on subjects, such as art history (p. 271). While the original card catalog relied on long drawers with index cards, the digital age introduced electronic card catalogs that allow users to enter metadata terms and narrow down their searches further through Boolean logic (p. 283).

As more information has become available on the web, it has changed the way that people conduct research. The internet has become the first tool that many scholars utilize to find information on a topic. However, with so much content on the web and some of it of questionable integrity, how is one to know what is a valuable source? (p. 279). Information specialists, who are not location bound, help researchers to navigate the immense amount of information available on the web. Like librarians, information specialists want to help users find

relevant sources to meet their needs. This requires clarifying how researchers intend to use the material (p. 277). Unlike librarians, information specialists do not narrow information into individual specialties, such as art history; instead, they utilize larger, more encompassing categories, such as education. Additionally, information scientists more than librarians, try to understand how different disciplines utilize information so that they can provide quality research assistance (Bates, para. 13). Information specialists are not only interested in providing information to users, like librarians, they also want to visualize the finished product and help throughout the writing process (Rubin, 2010, p. 277).

In order to meet the growing research needs of twenty-first century users, librarians must adapt to this changing environment. While librarians and information specialists have separate priorities and focuses, there is no reason why the two sides cannot merge together and work out differences. Librarians are adapting by offering online reference sessions that enable users to contact them from home. Users may also find books from home and request them for pick-up at the library's circulation desk. In the near future, librarians will become more like information specialists in order to meet the needs of their patrons and the two fields will grow closer together. By merging the fields together, it will make the new librarian information specialists more knowledgeable and entice more users to utilize library services.

While merging the two fields together is a start, librarians must also transform the library environment into something more approachable and less stuffy to encourage users to utilize library services. One strategy might be to play soft music in the background and also to have the circulation and reference desks shifted away from the library entrances and to have computers in their place. Serving free or low cost coffee might also be a useful approach as twenty-first century researchers have grown accustomed to bookstores, such as Barnes and Noble, which

allow visitors to browse through books while drinking coffee. Perhaps some television and online public service announcements, sponsored by the American Library Association, could improve the library's social standing and image. Providing information services is wonderful, but the public must first be enticed to want to seek out the libraries to find the helpful librarians and information specialists that can improve the quality of their research.

References

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