

Title: Librarians as Agents of Transformation

Abstract: For too long librarians have seen their role as being unbiased agents standing ready to serve. Librarians must be agents of transformative social engagement - actively working to better their communities. This talk examines the value of librarians dedicated to improving communities - not simply informing them - and taking a new place at the center of our communities' aspirations and learning - not storing and consuming.

Major Points:

Libraries in the United States are undergoing a transformation from institutions focused on collections, standards, and efficiency, to institutions of change centered on local communities, expertise, and aspirations.

This transformation is happening across all library types and has been accelerated by the economic downturn of recent years.

However, this local focus on community over collection is part of a far larger shift back to the fundamentals of librarianship focused on learning and our new understanding of learning as active and participatory.

So what are the implications of the shift of libraries described in the US context to Belgium and international librarianship?

1. You are not alone – we need to pool and use the capital libraries have accrued internationally. Libraries are internationally recognized and have a powerful “brand” in the minds of publics. Let us use this to control the narrative around libraries. Here are Jamie LaRue’s library messages:
 - a. We’re here for you when times are tough
 - b. We think ahead
 - c. We are co-creators
 - d. We make things better
 - e. We build community
 - f. You can trust us
 - g. We will endure
2. There is Strength in Diversity – The role of librarians is not to implement standards or kits, but to take best practices and adapt them to local communities.
3. We need to act internationally – Librarians need to go beyond joint statements and standards to build projects and infrastructure:
 - a. Cross-border mentoring
 - b. International training efforts
 - c. Software platforms

The future of libraries and librarianship is bright. Times of hardship, or great change, of great needs in our communities are why we have libraries. We are a profession that fights ignorance with knowledge, alienation with inclusion, censorship with access. As migrants

and refugees seek safe haven, as citizens seek to shore up a fraying safety net in times of economic crisis, as our universities seek to find the delicate balance between education and job preparation we need librarians. Now is the time for us to come together and show the world that we are a corps of knowledge workers with a 4 millennia history ready to help. Not standing ready – no one ever changed the world standing ready – but actively engaging our communities to improve society.