

Librarians, IT, and Who Is Authorized in the E-Library Age

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Librarians must have the confidence to respond “of course we can” to patron requests for information. In an age where information often comes in units much different than monographs or serials, librarians must be able to understand these units and manipulate them for our patrons. This means that certain principles – fearlessness when interacting with new tools and technologies, independence from specific software, automation, conversance with computing terms – are also principles of librarianship, and tools through which we can satisfy the librarian’s most basic purpose of connecting patrons to appropriate information.

On the other hand, while information technology professionals do work that is very similar to librarianship and often work in libraries, it is imperative for the future of libraries that they approach their work with the same set of “library values” that librarians have about their resources, their philosophy of service and their interactions with the community. We would argue that maintaining a server in a library is qualitatively different than maintaining a server elsewhere. In short, it is not enough to be a librarian without an IT education, and not enough to do technical work in a library without a library education.