

УДК 027.625=111
doi: 10.19090/cit.2020.36.52-59
Прегледни рад

Message to Children in Documents and Literature on Children's Libraries and Librarians

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Abstract

Libraries for children and young adults are social, cultural, and educational organizations that provide the widest range of educational services for this delicate category of users. These services include the provision of information on the basis of which ideological and ethical principles are formed, as well as scientific and cultural knowledge from various fields, in written, electronic, and audiovisual forms. A good children's library becomes friend to children during the process of acquiring primary education and literacy skills enabling them to participate and contribute to the development of the community in the future. Based on the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child, IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development 2001, IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Children aged 0-18, documents and papers presented at IFLA congresses, and a number of sources dealing with these issues, the paper discusses the mission, vision, goals, resources, and the role of children's libraries, as well as inclusive services and the needs of children that they can meet. It also attempts to answer the question of what is expected of children's libraries and librarians who work with children. The aim of the article is to show the librarians the path and ways to traverse and change their ways of handling the library resources and services in the future.

Keywords: children's library, children's library services, mission, purpose, reading habits, sustainable development, inclusive education, library literacy

Introduction

The world is for our children. They are the future leaders of nations. Children must bear and face the consequences of today. The sustainable development is to be achieved from their perspectives in almost all areas of life. Over the years, the world has been changing significantly. Technologies in their lives are seemed as a blessing and a curse at the same time. All the changes are occurring today to create an opportunity and necessity for a transformation in the education system and in the way children are taught. From now, mindful preparedness is a must for steering the engines to reach the adventuring changes full of right information at right time. Before going into the details, we must be sure as to who can be considered as "children". According to the *National Children Policy of Bangladesh*, and by the definition of the United Nations Organization, the children are all persons under 18 years of age.¹

Library for Children

A primary mission of libraries is to provide a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities they serve. Through this mission they celebrate and preserve the ideals of a democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, outlets, programs, and

¹ UNICEF, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, accessed May 15th 2020, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention>; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, *National Children Policy of Bangladesh* (Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, 2011), accessed April 2nd 2020, <http://ecd-bangladesh.net/document/documents/National-Children-Policy-2011-English-04.12.2012.pdf>.

sources, in order to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in today's information society.²

Information is now a right to human as of social, political, economic and security aspects. A library in traditional or virtual form is very essential for providing right information to all castes of people in the world. The children or young adults are the most considerable group who need information to grow well and lead the society which is full of challenges. The children well equipped with updated information in the respective areas can meet and achieve significant goals. Only libraries in any form can help the children and young adults to do so.

In the early stages, children are guided by their senses and emotions. They are very active, mentally, emotionally and also physically. They have the desire and a natural curiosity to learn. Colorful materials and objects in the colorful world attract them as a world of colors is in their thinking and actions. As the butterflies fly from one flower to another, the children also love to fly from one dreamy world to another. For this reason, children library should be a lively, cheerful and welcoming place. Reading should be enjoyable and children should feel relaxed when browsing and using their book collections. To give children positive experiences of books and the library, there should not be too many rules and bindings for the children and young adults. This is a chance for children to explore what is available and discover the power of reading. A children's library must be of easy access to every child in a society.

Libraries for children and young adults are social, cultural, and educational organizations that provide educational services which include the provision of information on the basis of which ideological and ethical principles are formed, as well as scientific and cultural knowledge from various fields, in written, electronic, and audiovisual forms, as well as the other formats of information carriers.

The Mission of the Children's Library

The mission of the children's library is to serve as learning and cultural center that acquires and provides meaningful access to age and ability appropriate information, programs, and services, in languages relevant to the multicultural community of children, their families and caregivers. Supporting literacy, learning and reading are universally recognized as central to the achievement of this mission.³

The purpose of the children's library is to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of children of all ages and abilities for their education, information, and personal development. This includes recreation and leisure, and also supporting children's health and wellbeing. Library services for children play an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by offering the child access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas and opinions.⁴

Opportunities to develop language, literacy and reading are important. The children's library has a key partnership role in helping to develop these skills, by facilitating meaningful access to resources and services for children and their families.⁵

² American Library Association, Intellectual Freedom Committee Subcommittee on the Impact of Media Concentration on Libraries, "Fostering Media Diversity in Libraries Strategies and Actions", 2, accessed April 2nd 2020, <https://oif.ala.org/oif/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Fostering-Media-Diversity-Final-06-23-07.pdf>.

³ IFLA Library Services to Children and Young Adults Section, *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Children aged 0–18*, 2nd ed. (IFLA, June 2018), accessed April 2nd 2020, https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/libraries-for-children-and-ya/publications/ifla-guidelines-for-library-services-to-children_aged-0-18.pdf.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The Goals of the Children's Library

- To facilitate the right of every child to information, literacy, cultural development, lifelong learning and creative programs in leisure time;
- To provide children with access to a wide range of appropriate resources and media;
- To help children develop digital media information literacy skills;
- To provide cultural and recreational programs, oriented towards reading and literacy;
- To provide various activities for children, parents and caregivers;
- To address barriers for children and to advocate for their freedom and safety;
- To encourage children to become confident and competent individuals and citizens;
- To facilitate community partnerships so together we provide programs and services to all children and their families in the community, including those on the margins of the dominant group, who may be economically disadvantaged.⁶

Considerations for the Children's Library

- Spacious as possible for reading and enjoying books and informatics items;
- Comfortable staying for the children with impressive seating arrangement (chairs or mats);
- Enough natural air, light for children to read in the library place;
- Brighter, attractive and colorful library walls;
- Attractive display of new arrivals, interesting books and information;
- Availability of puppets, toys or animated things that readers can use to re-enact the stories are must;
- Reachable shelves with books easy to move and to remove items;
- Visible positioning of titles and headings;
- Books should be kept at readers' eye level;
- In-house temperature of the library room must be at tolerance level of the young readers with the changes of the natural seasons.⁷

Resources of the Children's Library

The resources of the children's library are varied in terms of types and values. These include not only serious books, but also comics, books for leisure reading, books for sheer enjoyment etc.⁸ obviously, the informative value of the books can never be underestimated. Resources are housed here which give opportunities to develop the skills of learning, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The resources must support formal, informal, and special education of the students. Through these books, the children must be able to understand other people, their behavior, cultures, environment and situations. They also ought to get the knowledge of the wider world.

⁶ IFLA Library Services to Children and Young Adults Section, *IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to Children aged 0–18*.

⁷ Razina Akhter, *Sustainability of Information Services In Children's Libraries In The Twenty First Century* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 2016).

⁸ Heidi Kay Hammond, *Comics and Multimodal Literacy: A Reader Response Study* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 2009); Leoné Tiemensma, "Visual literacy: to comics or not to comics? Promoting Literacy Using Comics", Paper presented on World Library and Information Congress: 75th IFLA General Conference and Council 23–27 August 2009, Milan, Italy, accessed May 15th, <https://www.ifla.org/past-wlic/2009/94-tiemensma-en.pdf>; J. E. Ilogho, "The role of picture books in promoting reading culture among Nigerian children", *International Journal of Academic Library and Information Science* 3 (2) (2015 Feb.): 65–71.

Inclusive Library Services

An inclusive library is a vital community resource, addressing the diverse information needs of all members in the community.⁹ Enhancing the accessibility of local public libraries helps build social capital, increasing the capacity of the community to meet the needs of all its citizens, including those with disabilities, and particularly those with developmental disabilities. Actually, inclusive idea is a dynamic concept and new models will keep evolving. Child friendly persons or teachers of today will have to be equipped with knowledge and skills to maintain an inclusive environment. Though this is challenging, it is also interesting, because dealing with diversities leads to improving handling or teaching skills. Inclusion means bringing the part to the whole. It means the process of including children with special needs into the regular services, not only physically and locally but also with support services to provide for all their special needs in the regular service where they learn with all children in the same neighborhood. The inclusive library approach means to reach, with all works and services, every child of the society, including the differently abled ones.¹⁰

Libraries in the main stream and formal line are normally unable to provide services or create opportunities and facilities for information services towards differently abled children and young adults. This library is supposed to create congenial environment and facilities to include them in the list of readers and users.

Children's Needs

Normal intellectual and emotional development moves children from the limited perspectives of infancy to an increasing awareness and understanding of others. However, like all normal development, this requires experience. While it is a true to say "all children deserve to see themselves reflected in their books", it is not enough. To develop empathy and become a responsible member of a multicultural society, a child also needs authentic, appealing portrayals of others. Access to knowledge and multicultural richness of the world, as well as lifelong learning and literacy skills have become the priority of our society. A good children's library becomes friend to children offering and enabling lifelong learning and acquisition of literacy skills enabling them to participate and contribute to the community.

On the other hand, young adults and teenagers need space which they can call their own – a space that is inviting, enriching and safe. In order for them to feel at home in and continue to use their school and public libraries, they must feel welcome and encouraged to put their stamp of ownership and belongingness.

In the age of ever fast growing technologies, teenagers are far more likely to have knowledge of a wider array of cultures. By using, exploring, and exposing themselves to the internet facilities, teens can expand their social circles far outside their immediate realm. For some teens, the library is the only technology source available to them, going from a general source of information to the ultimate social networking site. As such, the internet access is necessary in order to sustain this exploration.

Teenager's question – *Who am I?* There are two ways they define themselves: by what they read and what they create. By sharing their reading and ideas with others, they can begin to answer that question. To feel that their library is really their own, teens must see themselves

⁹ Wendy Scott, *The Accessible Canadian Library II* (Ottawa, ON: National Library of Canada, 1996), accessed April 17th 2020, <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/obj/p10/f2/eacc-can.pdf>; Canadian Library Association, *Opening the book: A strategy for a national network for equitable library service for Canadians with print disabilities* (Ottawa, 2005), accessed April 17th 2020, http://www.cla.ca/issues/nnels_final_august2005.pdf.

¹⁰ Susan D. Moisey, "The Inclusive Libraries Initiative: Enhancing the Access of Persons with Developmental Disabilities to Information and Communication Technology", *Developmental Disabilities Bulletin* v 35, n1–2 (2007): 56–71.

reflected in their literature and be encouraged to create and interact with library materials, including print, media and electronic resources.

What Do We Expect from a Children's Library

For preschoolers

Libraries offered little or nothing for children below the age of 3. But very recently, many libraries have introduced programs for infants, because this age is a crucial time in the development of language skills. The value of these events lies in giving parents or caregivers the background on how to stimulate and encourage a child's development, as well as entertain toddlers.¹¹

Few programs are designed only for new parents. They receive library information kits through hospitals, adoption centers, and parental classes. These kits generally contain information on how to stimulate a child's language development through games, songs, and other activities. They also include lists of books for baby-learners. Sometimes some libraries invite parents to bring in their children, no matter how young, for special programs, such as parent-child story hours in the evening. In this program parents can learn finger plays, songs, rhymes, and other activities they can use at home to entertain and stimulate their infants.¹²

At the age group of 3–5 years

Children of this age group usually enjoy participating in group activities. Consequently, many libraries arrange this program for this age group, and parents generally do not need to stay with their kids throughout these events. Popular activities include reading aloud, storytelling, film shows, puppet shows, arts and crafts, and reading-circles programs.¹³

For school children

Libraries can play an important role for school beginners. For elementary school children, there are variations of read-aloud and storytelling hours that often include discussions and presentations by the children themselves.¹⁴

For the students of primary schools, there may also be book talks, creative writings, seminars, wall magazines, poetry readings/recitation, read-based general knowledge competition in inter-schools and nationwide environment.

At the age group of 7–9 years

This is an especially critical time for children. These are the years when they normally make the transition from just hearing and looking at picture books to reading independently for enjoyment and for schoolwork. How well they make this transition will determine much about the quality of their lives. It is very important to provide them well written books at this stage. A story that will make them laugh or help want to know what happens next will motivate them to read even though it's difficult.¹⁵

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Beyond Books: Library Services for Children*, accessed April 17th 2020, <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/beyond-books-library-services-children>.

¹² Akhter, *Sustainability of Information Services In Children's Libraries In The Twenty First Century*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Secondary school students

One of the most important and frequent library services for this age group of students could be the reading competition program. Researches show that kids who have reading habits finish the school year with stronger reading skills than those who don't. So it is very important to encourage kids to participate in such programs, particularly if they have any difficulty with reading. There may also be book talks, creative writing, seminars, wall magazines, poetry readings / recitation.

For teenagers

This age group of children is more independent, so library will have somewhat different services when it comes to helping them use the library and encouraging them to read for recreation. Actually, there is no clear-cut category of books for teenagers or young adults, although there are many novels written especially for teenagers. Libraries can develop special programs for teens to help them as they make the transition into adulthood. For instance, at some libraries there are teenage advisory boards to ensure that programs and materials for youth actually meet their needs. Some libraries publish book reviews written by their teenage patrons or help young people in the community to publish their own newsletters or magazines. Many libraries enlist teenagers to help with programs for younger children, such as reading competition through create a reading club storytelling, and theater or children film making. In addition, libraries frequently offer part-time job opportunities for teens, both volunteer and paid, to help with such as checking in books and re-shelving materials.¹⁶

Role of a Children's Librarian

Children's librarians have prided themselves on the collecting of appropriate literature for children. They glibly speak of providing reader guidance, doing reference, giving book talks, and telling stories. Many take pride in their ability to select books that are good for children, without being concerned for those who fail to take advantage of their good offerings. Some view themselves as providing the best for the most when in actuality they offer the most to the best. Verbalizations about free access become mere rhetoric if many in the community still view the librarian as a "jailer of books." The librarian's image changes only as her or his role changes. There is little freedom where the librarian shelves the books and guards their use, screens those who enter and regulates their appetites, or executes fines for misuse and lateness. Freedom is largely based on knowledge; therefore, the community must be made aware of library services and the librarian must know the community.¹⁷

Many children's librarians have little knowledge of the community or children they serve. Courses in the sociology and psychology of childhood are seldom offered in library schools, nor are studies on issues pertinent to minority populations generally required. In establishing the changing role of the librarian, the inclusion of such courses in training programs is of prime importance. Upon employment in a given community, provisions should be made for the children's librarian to gain further knowledge of the specific locale. Such information can be gathered through meetings with school personnel, parents, community leaders, recreation directors, and social workers. Still further insight will be gained through direct participation and conversation

¹⁶ Kathryn Perkinson, *Helping Your Child Use the Library* (Michigan: University of Michigan Library, 1989), 15.

¹⁷ Binnie L. Tate, "The Role of the Children's Librarian in Serving the Disadvantaged", *Library Trends* October, 1971): 395, accessed April 17th 2020, https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/6605/librarytrendsv20i2q_opt.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

with children. With this background, the selection of materials for the library hopefully becomes a reflection of community needs. New methods of approaching the total community are indicated through seeing and hearing all of its expressed concerns. The librarian's role by necessity will then be changed.¹⁸

Conclusion

A good children library becomes friend to children with lifelong learning and literacy skills enabling them to participate and contribute to the community. The children or young adults are the most considerable group who need information to grow well and lead the society which is full of challenges. The children well equipped with updated information in the respective areas can meet and achieve this goal. Libraries can help the children and young adults to the same.

Young adults and teenagers need space which they can call their own – a space that is inviting, enriching and safe. It should be a lively, cheerful and welcoming place. Reading should be enjoyable and children should feel relaxed when browsing and using their book collections. To give children and young adults positive experiences of books and the library, there should not be too many rules and bindings. For some teens, the library is the only technology source available to them, going from a general source of information to the ultimate social networking site. As such, internet access is necessary in order to sustain this exploration. To feel that their library is really their own, teens must see them reflected in their literature and be encouraged to create and interact with library materials, including print, media and electronic resources.

Many children's librarians have little knowledge of the community or children they serve, and many in the community still view the librarian as a "jailer of books". Service manager i.e. librarian or information scientist of the children's library must have very friendly and colorful personality with highest level of professionalism as well as emotional matters. The community must be aware of library services and the librarian must know the community. The children's library must be of easy access to all children of the society.

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¹⁸ Ibid.; IFLA Public Library Section, *The Public Library Service: the IFLA/UNESCO Guidelines for Development 2001*, accessed April 17th 2020, <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/1029>.

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Порука деци у документима и литератури о дечјим библиотекама и библиотекарима

Сажетак

Библиотеке за децу и младе су друштвене, културне и образовне организације које обезбеђују најшири спектар образовних услуга за ову деликатну категорију корисника. Ове услуге подразумевају пружање информација на основу којих се формирају идеолошки и етички принципи, као и научно и културолошко знање из различитих области, у писаном, електронском и аудио-визуелном облику. Добра дечја библиотека постаје пријатељ деци током процеса стицања основног образовања и вештина писмености, омогућавајући им да у будућности учествују у развоју заједнице и активно му доприносе. На основу UNICEF Конвенције о правима детета, IFLA/UNESCO смерница за развој 2001, IFLA смерница за библиотечке услуге за децу узраста од 0–18 година, докумената и радова представљених на IFLA конгресима и низа извора који се баве овим питањима, у раду се говори о мисији, визији, циљевима, ресурсима и улози дечјих библиотека, као и инклузивним сервисима и потребама деце које они могу да задовоље. Уз то, рад покушава да одговори на питање шта се очекује од дечјих библиотека и библиотекарара који раде са децом. Циљ му је да покаже библиотекарима пут којим би требало да иду и начин како да њиме крену и како да промене приступ управљању библиотечким ресурсима и услугама у будућности.

Кључне речи: дечја библиотека, услуге дечје библиотеке, мисија, сврха, навике читања, одрживи развој, инклузивно образовање, библиотечка писменост

Примљено: 8. маја 2020.
Исправке рукописа: 25. маја 2020.
Прихваћено за објављивање: 14. јуна 2020.



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