The post-pandemic library handbook

The Covid19 pandemic has affected people and organizations all over the world. They had to find new ways to continue functioning in the circumstances of the quarantine. Restrictions were different in different countries, but most of them were directed at limiting social contact, which was detrimental to most cultural organisations, including museums, libraries, theatres and many more. However, most of those organisations have managed to develop new ways of providing their services and reaching out to their users who had to survive in isolation from other people. The experience acquired during this period was easily discarded and forgotten by some of those organizations that found new forms of activities like, for example, theatres. Thus, the handbook produced by Julie Todaro for libraries performs a significant task of registering the pandemic experience of libraries, helping to apply it in the conditions of normalized life, but also supporting the preparation for similar potential threats that may occur in the future. Julie Todaro is an experienced librarian and library consultant with expertise in emergency preparedness and provision of library services.

The handbook consists of an introduction and 12 chapters that coherently explore the elements and conditions of preparedness and lessons learned during the extreme situation that hit the libraries. Many of the identified issues and problems, pre- and post-pandemic concern the libraries of the United States, but many have a universal character and can be useful for those delivering library services in other countries. The very first chapter looks into the libraries before the period of pandemics and what was needed to be prepared for the disaster that struck American society. This chapter provides a very comprehensive content mainly encompassing all the areas of library activities that are explored in the next chapters.

The handbook comprises both sides of the library work: internal management and workflows and access and usage of library resources, services and support by the public. Each chapter in turn reveals the changes that have happened to the library spaces, collections, communication, delivery and access services during the pandemic and visualises them in different tables. The same is done to explain the problems and solutions that brought considerable changes in library management, assessment, human resources and training as well as leadership and public relations sphere. I liked most several tables that expose the measures applied in certain areas before, during and after the pandemic as they provide a concise summary of change, but many more are used in the text of the chapters sometimes summing up useful recommendations, showing snapshots of pandemic processes and solutions, or highlighting pitfalls and mistakes that should be avoided. In my opinion, chapter 5 on human resources, critical training and education could be more comprehensive. It seems that expertise of library workers is the main resource to address all the difficulties and make creative decisions. On the other hand, some of the competence issues are raised in other chapters.

The appendices of supporting content and recommended resources should also be mentioned as useful elements of the handbook helping librarians in need of additional materials to enhance their knowledge or boost creativity.

The main audience of this handbook is obviously American libraries of any kind and their staff from the leaders and managers to those serving public or managing physical and digital resources. Some of recommendations are also quite universal and do not relate to American

juridical, normative or socio-cultural context, thus they could be used for preparedness of libraries to different types of crises in other countries as well.

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