Information Ninja: A Metaphor for Adding Value to Library and Information Science Professionals for Competitive Advantage

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ABSTRACT

Taking a broader perspective of the purpose of librarianship and beyond, this presentation examines librarians' new job designation and profile. The paper observes that in the light of new developments occasioned by increased use of technology it generates changes in the context of librarians work, designation and job profile and this ultimately necessitates changes in professional identity. Such changes to librarians' job designations in the midst of other competing information service providers add value to the profession and give it a competitive advantage. As librarians' we are Information Ninjas and our training prepares us not only for Boolean search but more importantly we are experts in information gathering, intelligence and counterintelligence and that gives us a competitive edge. The purpose of this paper therefore is not to offer predictions, solutions or answers but rather to initiate and provoke the reflection and discussion that must take place amongst us in order for our profession to be proactive to the challenges of our competitive world. Libraries provide access to information and protect patrons' right to explore new ideas, no matter how controversial or subversive. For us protecting unfettered access to information is important. Now it has become common knowledge that security operatives are mining the mass of information people publish about themselves overseas, tracking everything from common public opinion to revolutions. Governments and corporations are tracking our digital lives, and that surveillance means our right to freely research information is in jeopardy. So what do we do? As information ninjas we are responsible for providing new online privacy-protection services that shield patrons from unwanted spying of their library activity. The paper concludes that librarians are the secret masters of the world. They control information.

Keywords: *Information Ninjas, Metaphor, Adding Value, Librarians, Job Profile, Competitive Advantage.*

INTRODUCTION

Librarians wield unfathomable power, bring order to chaos, wisdom and culture to the masses, preserve every aspect of human knowledge and rule the information universe (Becky, 2004).

When the issue of who a librarian is or simply how to become a librarian is raised within the comity of the library and more especially among those who use the library it sounds so straightforward but the more one thinks about it the less straightforward it is. Generally, we all think we know who a librarian is and perhaps what he does but there are at least three complications. First, our concept of what a librarian is and does is changing, as the workplace changes, and as people who have become (what we call) librarians enter related fields of employment such as web management and knowledge management. Second, in this era of ICT, the reasons of becoming a librarian have also shifted

(Line, 1996). In the last decade the explosion of technology into libraries has impacted not only library work processes but more importantly imported also new strategic options. New terminologies found their ways into the library environment and became adjectives that qualify what goes on in the information service industry. That, on its part, generated metaphors that provide new ways of describing things in the libraries. A metaphor is a literary device used to describe the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. It embellishes, exaggerates, or emphasizes key salient features *(Ratzan, 2005)*. If information ninja is a metaphor, then how does it relate to libraries and librarians? Third, Library and Information Science [LIS] is one of the academic disciplines that exist in an increasingly dynamic and competitive environment. As a result, it has become imperative for the profession to wriggle out of its traditional stereotypes and embrace the vicissitudes of change

in order to gain competitive advantage among the many competing professions. Gaining competitive advantage has become crucial in our world that is driven by technology.

Competitive advantage involves communicating a greater perceived value to a target market than its competitors can provide. This is a business concept that describes the attribute of allowing an organization to outperform its competitors. Competitive advantage, therefore, can be described as the strategic advantage one business entity has over its rival entities within its competitive industry. It is obtained when an organisation develops or acquires a set of attributes (or executes actions) that allows it to outperform its competitors (Wang, 2014).This can be achieved through many avenues including offering a better-quality product or service, lowering prices and increasing marketing efforts; packaging and rebranding job designations and profiles. As Taylor (1986) points out, the unique principle underlying information services is the provision of added value to information. *The Oxford English Dictionary* quotes the definition provided in the *Terminology of management and financial accounting* (1974) for added value as "the increase in market value resulting from an alteration in the form, location, or availability of a product or service, excluding the cost of bought-out materials or services or personnel Fattahi, & Afshar, (2006)."
In the information service industry this value is added as a result of the various functions performed by information professionals: the acquisition, selection, organization, storage and dissemination of documents in whatever form they might take. Employees in any organization need high quality, up-to-date, relevant and accurate information for performing their daily tasks, for decision making, considering new initiatives, undertaking key projects, and doing tactical and strategic planning. The information settings, or libraries, from which our profession arises, are today places in flux, change and uncertainty. At this point, an attempt to define the fundamental object of the LIS profession — information— is called for. Just as doctors practice medicine and lawyers practice the law, librarians dispense information and knowledge and not books. Since the business of practitioners in this profession focus on information is it wrong to have information as a prefix or suffix to what they are called? Does a change in nomenclature add value to librarians' job profile? How do libraries and information units in these organizations develop their information resources, services and facilities to meet these information needs?

GETTING OUT OF THE PRECIPICE

Librarians today, as Gordon (2017) opines have been swimming in the old Chinese curse: *"May you live in interesting times"*. Our times are really interesting and inherently unsettling – but also inherently full of potentials. Being on the brink requires openness to possibility, leading to a celebration of in-between spaces. Being on the brink requires that we give up absolutes and commit to the exploration of possibilities. Right from its emergence up onto this day, librarianship as a profession suffers under the stereotypical image of *"Marian the Librarian"*. Desperate to slough off the old limiting stereotypes of the stern bespectacled cardigan-clad shushing controller of books, Hillenbrand (2005) argues that librarians are clamoring to convince themselves, each other and the wider community that there is far more to the humble librarian than meets the casual eye. Librarianship as Ivy, (1985) opines has been stereotyped as a *"feminized profession" charac- terized by semi-professional field which is female dominated in numbers but male dominated in organizational control."* Unfortunately, this image of a librarian as a demure, shy, reticent individual, not only influences how the general public views librarians, it also may influence how librarians view themselves and their colleagues. However, this perception is about as inaccurate as believing that the Central Bank Governor is nothing more than a glorified bank teller. Those in the library profession, as Gross (2012) indicates, have the power to permanently dispel all misperceptions about libraries, and be fully valued for what they do. How? By simply adopting a new approach that applies carefully selected words to enhance their perceived value, and to position libraries as the provider of what the world values most: education. Numerous websites are devoted to extolling the glories and cementing the collective pride of the disaffected 'new' librarian of the 21st century — the 'Hybrid Librarian', 'New Breed Librarian', 'Anarchist Librarian', 'The Shifted Librarian', 'Progressive Librarian', 'Underground Librarian', 'Street Librarian', 'Belly Dancing Librarian', Lipstick Librarian, Nollywood Librarian, not to mention the 'Naked Librarian' and the 'Modified Librarian' boasting body piercings and tattoos(Hillenbrand 2005).Those in the library profession, as Gross (2012) posits, have the power to permanently dispel all misconceptions and misperceptions about libraries and librarians and be fully valued for what they do. How? Perhaps Shelley Howells sums up this striving towards a redefined identity best in her article, *'The secret*

life of tattooed and belly-dancing librarians': *'Librarians rock. That reputation they have involving buns, sensible shoes and shushing people is merely a cunning ruse, developed over centuries, to conceal their real lives as radicals, subversives and providers of extreme helpfulness' (*Howells, 2003). This preoccupation with challenging traditional stereotypes and images, while at the same time seeking reassurance and justification for why and how librarians do what they do, according to Hillenbrand (2005)is merely one of a number of symptoms of a deeper malaise or 'condition of discomfort' underlying the library profession. Other symptoms, the author further observes can be found in the profession's difficulty in naming itself — there is much debate about whether to call oneself a librarian, information scientist, information manager or knowledge worker. Is the object, purpose or product of our work library, data, information or knowledge? By simply adopting a new approach that applies carefully selected words to enhance their perceived value and to position libraries as the provider of what the world values most: education. This paper thus, describes a groundbreaking concept that enables libraries—and librarians—to become indispensable by following a "Three Pillars" educational approach (quality education is based on three equally important pillars: quality teaching, quality tools and quality environments for teaching and learning), and by replacing traditional typical library terms and phrases with bold, value-enhanced terminology that commands value—language that people outside of the field in our world today can immediately understand. While there is no question that what librarians and library professionals do is critically important, the ways in which these roles and responsibilities are described can mean the difference between being valued as essential to the community or considered optional. Something as simple as a choice of words can determine what is valued—and consequently what gets funded, and what gets canceled (Gross, 2012).

Achieving sustainable competitive advantage in the library profession therefore means to maintain a favourable position over the long term, which can help boost the librarian's image and profile in the information service world, its valuation and its future earning potential. The basic key to maintaining competitiveness lies in the ability to change and improve what we do and how we do it. Changes in librarians' professional identity as a result of increased use of new technology in the performance of our routine chores seem, however,

inevitable. Such use generates changes in the context of their work and ultimately necessitates changes in professional identity. These changes have come about both in information sources and new tools for managing our records. Following from this development, new technical terms and buzzwords are emerging to reflect the changing scenario. Just as it is in all other professions and subject fields, this must be seen as an enrichment of the language reflecting a dynamic state of development.

One of the great changes in this sector over the years has been our own nomenclature. Nomenclature change reflects not only a change in what librarians are called and known as but more importantly what our profession which is now driven by technology has assumed (Nwosu and Nwokocha, 2015). As it is in many professions there is curiosity among librarians who spend a fair bit of time contemplating their identity, roles and professional future. We used to be described simply as librarians, be it reference, acquisitions, reader services, serials, cataloguers, or, eventually – if we were lucky – managers or whichever niche applied. Librarian's new job titles in our world today in particular are especially fascinating. These new job titles all reflect new roles and content of work. Not many other professions are there where employees perform almost identical roles as those of librarians whose job designation/profile is completely different, or conversely employees who share similar job designation but whose actual job bears no resemblance to theirs?

So, some information professional portfolios are now designated as "information ninjas", "ninja of information spaces,""ninja librarian", 'information managers' or 'information scientists', 'generic information resource managers', etc. Being an 'information ninja' means upholding the principles of intellectual freedom and protecting the user's right to privacy. The reason for this is quite simple and understandable. Information is the active ingredient in the business of librarianship and this is about what we do as information providers. Like it is in other professions namely… law for lawyers, accountancy for accountants, engineering for engineers, medicine for medical doctors, architecture for architects, surveying for surveyors and many others like that. The common denominator here is on what each profession is all about and not the place where they practice the profession. In the information/knowledge age, there is an urge for libraries to adopt a business or retail model and to strive to add value to customer

services in an economy where information is the new commodity (Mercer & Smith, 1996). Curriculum review exercises in LIS have also led to the infusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and entrepreneurial courses into the LIS curriculum. There is the equally important issue of adapting job titles to suit the needs and expectations of an economy driven by the private sector. The emerging practice in several private organisations is to create resource centres, technical information centres, database and information units, knowledge management units, among others as their information/library services departments. Thus, employees with the title 'librarian' are increasingly ignored during job advertisement, interview and recruitment exercises. The reason for this is not farfetched. The label seems palpably old fashioned and of course delimits their quest for high profile jobs to no other place than the library despite their increasingly interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach to knowledge acquisition at the library school. Moreover, the term 'library' as in the course(s) 'types of library' or even 'use of library' or 'history of libraries' is only but a two unit course. Notwithstanding, the centre piece of their course of study gravitate around information despite its antecedents of having come from the library background. It must be noted however, that the traditional library-related positions are rapidly giving way for information related job profiles like information ninjas, information resource managers, information scientists, knowledge officers as well as the ICT coloured labels etc with greater job outlay as they are properly trained with requisite knowledge and competencies, relevant to the needs of the times.

This, as it were, is an exciting time to be information professional, where jobs now span a wide range of environments, both physical and digital. As Tennant (2001) points out *only library-ans enjoy looking for information. Everyone else just wants to be able to use the information and would really prefer that it was just handed to them.* Information professionals tend to love their work and consider librarianship a great and noble career. Our job is to help people find good, valuable information, and to teach them that they have to sift through the maze of information available on the net – as most are not all good sources. Value reflects on the innate quality of information, whether that information is derived from a physical source or from an electronic format. In this digital age, with information increasingly becoming available online, the role of the librarian is undergoing profound transformation. Some people are predicting the demise of the profession altogether or there is a propensity to say that libraries and librarians may become redundant as publications go digital and information goes online. Their thinking like Abram, (2013) suggests is, *"Who needs a librarian when you have Google?"* This is not the case. In fact, libraries and librarians are needed now more than hitherto. According to Alex-Nmecha and Wagwu (2020) the library is like a star bearing branches that speaks to different locations that its arms are stretched out to and so it is important to have the library built, and furnished to reach out to the users to take advantage of the treasures in the library through the librarians. Information available online is often of dubious origin and there is still a wealth of information behind pay walls that can only be accessed by those who have paid. Even in Vaidhyanathan's, (2011) world of *Googlisation of Everything, "Google",* according to Gaiman, (2015) *"can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one."* We have helped many library users who have only been using search engines for their research and come to the library perplexed because they cannot find the information they want. If anything, the Internet has added to the range of services libraries provide – hybrid library services- and in turn this has also increased the variety of roles available to librarians and libraries. The profession may be in the throes of change, but to paraphrase the famous quote; those death reports are greatly exaggerated! The need for library science skills is greater than ever. Librarian responsibilities are evolving with new roles being added as we move to the age of 'Library as a Service'. A library career must be anchored in solid guiding principles: integrity, ethics, maturity, social responsibility, literacy, public service, equal access, diversity, community involvement, etc.

- Provide the highest levels of service
- Uphold principles of intellectual freedom
- Protect the user's right to privacy
- Recognise and respect intellectual property rights
- Treat colleagues with respect and advocate for good employment conditions
- Do not advance private interests over those of the user
- Distinguish between personal convictions and professional duties
- Strive for excellence in the profession by encouraging professional development, in

ourselves and our co-workers (Ethical Principles of ALA, 2008).

Modern library and information science requires exactly what the information community needs right now--superb reading and indexing skills, an aptitude for technology, and the ability to analyze key words and respond quickly. Librarians exercise their searching capabilities and analytical skills on a daily basis and as a result are being hired by intelligence outfits to upgrade the intelligence information network. Librarians who are hired to do this are called information ninjas. The author therefore offers this novel idea that information ninja may serve as a powerful metaphor for the library community and intends to reveal that the librarian is a form of information martial artist imbued with veritable skills and competence to savour the reveries of the information super-highway. But who exactly are the ninjas?

INFORMATION NINJA

The name "Ninja" is well known all over the world and associated with individuals who deploy stealth in their activities. Those black suits! Those weapons! Martial arts! The image of the ninja is rooted more in fiction than fact. Everything you think you know is probably "wrong" than "right". In the time past, when Japan had been separated in many countries, the professional spies, who sneakily obtained information secrets of enemies' locations and whereabouts, were Ninjas. A true ninja (shinobi, in Japanese) is not just someone who wears black, drops down from the ceiling and slices everything into pieces. Ninjas have been around since at least the 14th century, when guerrilla warfare in feudal Japan called for subterfuge and assassination - activities which samurai would not perform because they were forbidden by Bushido, the samurai code. Ninja were employed as master spies, assassins, and specialist warriors. While some aspects of the ninja way may be outdated, the principles and techniques remain valuable for anyone who is interested in information, espionage and deception. Ninja most certainly did exist in Japan, but they were more about information—and disinformation—than they were about assassination. Ninja were at the cutting edge of information gathering of their day, experimenting with stealth and disguise and intelligence information including anything that gave them an edge. But what happened to the ninja? The real ninja! Were they phased out by legislation or did they just disappear? They did not disappear or go anywhere. *When the era of the true Ninja was over however, the Ninjas, like old generals, now faded into the administrative spy and other information professions.* It is important to note that every special information collector, every information agent, every intelligence agent and even every modern day librarian is performing the exact same role a ninja did back in their days. Today they are called Information Ninjas - experts in information/intelligence and counterintelligence /disinformation (Wikipedia).

HOW THE METAPHOR RELATES TO LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANS

For more than 100 years, Giesecke, (2011) states, libraries have used metaphors to seek connections that will help people see libraries as something other than warehouses for books. Librarians have been using metaphors to describe libraries and librarians since the modern library movement began in the late 19th century. The beginning of the 20th century saw libraries align themselves with business metaphors, emphasizing efficiency and incorporating business principles into the organization. By the end of the 20th century, the library field had incorporated numerous terms from the computer industry to describe librarians. Librarians were now information engineers, information professionals, information scientists and information specialists or information navigators on the information highway. In the 21st century, new metaphors have emerged to describe the changes experienced and needed in the workforce and workplace so that libraries can take on new roles. If Information ninja is a metaphor, then how does it relate to libraries and librarians?

Information ninja as an information collector is a master in the ways of gathering information. And does so in a way in which is secret and sly without anyone knowing that he is gathering the pieces to the puzzle. Information ninja is a very old information collector and master in the ways of gathering information. Its core philosophies and associated style of information collection serve as symbolic metaphors for the modern librarian. Librarianship can be viewed in terms of this genre Ratzan, & Lee,(2005).They identify, synthesize, and analyze trends, threats, and opportunities in an industry or organization. They go beyond what others know and gather information to dissect an unfamiliar situation into parts to determine how they relate to one another or to an overall problem. *Some are today's librarians of yore.* They bring their library skills and knowledge of the broader realm of the organization and management of information to their jobs by stealth – many clients do not know they have a huge realm of

knowledge acquired from library school which is often great background for the type of work they do. During World War II, librarians and archivists as Information ninjas were eagerly recruited not only to gather intelligence from enemy media but also to collect and catalogue manuals and documents while embedded with units on the front lines. Writing on the surprising, secret role of librarians in World War II and why the United States sent librarians undercover to gather intelligence during World War II Peiss, (2020) observes that no one had a well-defined plan to send microfilm specialists [librarians] to war when President Franklin Roosevelt agreed to establish an agency called the Interdepartmental Committee for the Acquisition of Foreign Publications (IDC). The agency made up of librarians initially struggled to gain traction. However, over the course of the war, the IDC developed an extensive operation to provide printed sources for intelligence purposes. Librarians as bookmen and women became intelligence agents, the ordinary activities of librarianship—acquisition, cataloguing, and reproduction—became fraught with mystery, uncertainty, and even danger. Even the clandestine Secret Intelligence Branch, which sought human informants, found that "intelligence material from the foreign newspapers is of great value." War agencies in Washington also considered these materials useful. But there was more to this perception than the simple act of reading texts. The librarians of the IDC were information ninjas who transformed the familiar forms of books and serials into the genre of intelligence. Writing in an engaging style, Peiss synthesizes an array of historical details, intriguing personalities and byzantine bureaucratic divisions into a coherent narrative. She explains how heroic librarians [Information ninja]not only aided the war effort—delivering intelligence about fascist technology, propaganda and infrastructure—but also altered the practice of librarianship, ushering in an era of mass foreign acquisitions and widespread microfilm use, as well as giving urgent focus to the rapid extraction of vital information rather than the simple storage of data. The history of librarianship is not as quiet as some of us might believe.

Information ninja also provides metaphor for career movement. Our performances in life and on the job are what we bring to and take from our actions. The great challenge of this "digital age" that librarians find themselves in will be ensuring they do what they do (the collection, preservation and management of information) in a way that ensures it is accessible in the future. We are beginning to see that information is no longer intrinsically tied to one format. It is viscous, able to change shape as required. No matter its format or content, we are really all about the information at the end of the day – and what is it worth if we cannot access it? This is a challenge librarians are well poised to meet. *"He is wise who knows the sources of knowledge -- where it is written and where it is to be found."* So says Hodge, (n. d).

Librarians and other information professionals have the skills and knowledge to become the digital curators we need. As Barnett, (n. d.) emphatically states, *"every librarian is a highly trained agent, an expert in intelligence, counter-intelligence, Boolean searching and hand-to-hand combat".* The legendary skill of the ninja is more memorable and important to us than the fact that they were assassins. Calling a librarian an "information ninja" as Rothman, (2007) observes is more of a compliment like "Rock star librarian" or "Superhero librarian," or "Hollywood librarian" or "Lipstick librarian" and has nothing to do with assassinating people. So what are the biggest foundational pieces of what will be required of our new role as Information Ninja? Information Ninjas are expected to:

- Figure out the best way to manage and access resources, wherever they are located and in whatever system and format they are stored.

- Move away from traditional records file and library classification systems and make innovative use of more consumable methods of classification such as metadata and social tagging.

- Focus on establishing common classification and management practices, applicable to any information resource, across systems and formats.

- Recognize and build the necessary skills: become tech savvy; build knowledge of search; understand structured and unstructured content; learn about retention and preservation requirements, just to name a few.

- Responsible for providing new online privacy-protection services that shield patrons from unwanted spying of their library activity (Systemscope, 2011).

In support of these other provisions that hold sway include:

- *Libraries should uphold ideals of free expression and free access to ideas; ALA, (1996)*
- *Librarians should "protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired, or transmitted"; ALA, (1995) and,*
- *Library employees should resist providing library records to "any agency of state, federal, or local government" until "a proper showing of good cause has been made" ALA, (1986).*

The foundation of the profession is about making information available to users. It involves balancing freedom of information with the principles of intellectual property. It is about appreciation of all the ethical considerations outlined above while ensuring that people get the information they require, to the best of their ability. It is being respectful and non-judgmental in relation to people's information needs. It is about understanding libraries (various types) and their patrons, and their patron's needs. And finally, something which we must feel very strongly about is that we have the understanding that libraries need advocates and who better to advocate for the library than the librarian. Hirsh, (2011) opines that *"our understanding of how to organize and make information accessible to meet user needs is unparalleled," I love our profession. We have so much to offer, and I'm excited about the possibilities. I truly believe that we are only limited by our own creativity and vision."* Writing on an advertisement The CIA is hiring... a $100,000 librarian Long (2016) states that "in addition to the cachet of working at the CIA, "librarians also have opportunities to serve as embedded, or forward deployed, information experts in CIA offices and select Intelligence Community agencies."

INFORMATION NINJAS SHIELD PATRONS FROM UNWANTED SPYING

Librarians have been in the vanguard of raising public awareness in conferences, seminars and workshops on how freedom of speech and the right to privacy are compromised by the surveillance of online and digital communications -- and what new privacy-protecting services they can offer patrons to shield them from unwanted spying of their library activity Macrina and Glaser (2014). Being technology savvy, librarians as information ninjas in most western societies are working to give their patrons a chance to opt-out of pervasive surveillance. It is no secret that libraries are among

our most democratic institutions. Libraries provide access to information and protect patrons' right to explore new ideas, no matter how controversial or subversive. Libraries are where all should be free to satisfy any information need, be it for tax and legal documents, health information, how-to guides, historical documents, children's books, or poetry. And protecting unfettered access to information is important whether that research is done using physical books or online search engines. But now it has become common knowledge that governments and corporations are tracking our digital lives, and that surveillance means our right to freely research information is in jeopardy. When we know that people are recording what we are doing online or if we know that the State Security Services and the Directorate of Military Intelligence or for that matter any security outfit could access our libraries or digital history, chances are that we are not going to say or research what we might otherwise. Self-censorship ensues because surveillance chills speech Macrina and Glaser (2014).

Conducting research online often means leaving a trail of information about oneself, including ones location, what websites one visited and for how long, with whom one chatted or emailed, and what information or file one downloaded and printed. All of these details are all easy to associate with a particular computer user when insufficient privacy protections are in place. This information is often thoughtlessly collected and stored, allowing government or law enforcement agencies to make requests for library computer records. Some organizations may already have these records and use them to manipulate ones search results and refine their contextual advertising. Worse a government may assert that users have "no reasonable expectation of privacy" when we "hand over" information to information organisations like Google and Twitter, and thus no constitutional protection against a government's searching of these records. But libraries need not fully participate in this surveillance; libraries can strive to give their users the chance to opt-out Macrina and Glaser (2014).

Librarians, the authors' further note, know that patrons visit libraries for all kinds of online research needs, and therefore have a unique responsibility in helping keep that information safe. It is not just researchers who suffer; our collective memory, culture, and future are harmed when writers and researchers stop short of pursuing intellectual inquiry. In addition to installing a number of privacy-protecting tools

on public PCs in our libraries, the need has arisen now more than before to teach patron computer classes about online privacy and organize a series of workshops for librarians to get up to speed on the ins and outs of digital surveillance. Although many librarians may be understandably new to the topic of online surveillance, information professionals are not new to defending intellectual freedom and the right to read and voice dissenting opinions, as well as the rights of historically marginalized people who continue to be under the most surveillance. Librarians are known for refusing requests from local law enforcement soliciting details on user browsing and borrowing records. The NLA like the ALA has counted privacy among its core values, recognizing it as essential to free speech and intellectual freedom. Similarly, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions is a signatory to the Thirteen International Principles on the Application of Human Rights to Communications Surveillance. As Crock ford quoted in Macrina and Glaser (2014) puts it, *"Perhaps more than anyone in our society, librarians represent the values that make a democracy strong, intellectual freedom foremost among them."*

CONCLUSION

New technologies, such as robotics and information technology in the hands of information ninjas, can also provide competitive advantage, whether as a part of the product/service itself, as an advantage to the making of the product/service, or as a competitive aid in the information process (for example, better identification and understanding of customers or providing new online privacy-protection services). As data gets bigger, information piles up, and everyone has more tools for creating and sharing their own stories, surely the competitive world could use more user-oriented people with Library and Information Sciences skills. Hirsh, (2011) illustrates this thus:

Our understanding of how to organize and make information accessible to meet user needs is unparalleled. We love our profession. We have so much to offer, and we are excited about the possibilities. We truly believe that we are only limited by our own creativity and vision.

Librarians as information ninjas are increasingly skillful as they offer more quality information to demonstrate their value. They do this by presenting information in a way that provides an additional layer of caveats and implications. By understanding the needs of intelligence information-users better, information ninjas can provide context-specific

information and ensure that users do not waste time on content that is not relevant. In today's world of search engines and myriad web pages some have questioned the future of libraries and librarians. Gaiman, (2010) whimsically provides an alibi thus:

We used to live in a world in which there wasn't enough information. Information was currency. Now we're in a world in which there's too much information. There's information absolutely everywhere. So instead of sending a librarian out into the desert to come back with the one rock that you need from the desert, it's now a matter of sending a librarian into a jungle to come back with the one tree, the one leaf, in the jungle that you probably wouldn't be able to get.

Those librarians who possess the requisite training to do exactly that are known as Information Ninjas. As Robinson (2017) observes *"librarians are the secret masters of the world. They control information. Don't ever piss one off. "* It is a good time to have an LIS degree and as Hirsh (2011) opines *it's a good day to be a librarian.*'

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