From Tradition to Fast Pacing 4IR and Society 5.0, to Embracing Community Librarianship: An Evolutionary Approach on How to Prepare Students

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Abstract

The value of community libraries (in various forms and contexts) is well recognized. They align with traditional values of libraries to offer information access and supportive services on all levels of society, while subject to the challenges of the contemporary digital transformation of society and the economy, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), Society 5.0, and artificial intelligence (AI). They need to address various needs in specific contexts (from poverty-stricken to sophisticated technology-driven). This paper shares a vision for preparing students for community librarianship that attends to both the traditional values reported in the literature as well as exciting opportunities that technological development is offering to leapfrog and progress at a quicker and more effective pace. We reflect on the conceptualization and value of community libraries and librarianship, the challenges faced in contemporary society and examples of initiatives from different continents. Against this background, suggestions are offered for an evolutionary model that can be used by educators to prepare students for changing librarianship environments and that can inform context-appropriate curricular development for community librarianship. The latter would, amongst other things, cover the combined use of andragogic (suitable for adult learners) and pedagogic teaching approaches, incorporation of cultural values and diversity, technological developments, and preparation for participatory collaboration and research with communities.

Keywords

analytic autoethnography, community libraries, community librarianship, curricula, curriculum development, Fourth Industrial Revolution, participatory approaches, Society 5.0, third spaces

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Introduction

Education in community librarianship is guided by a curriculum, an understanding of the concepts of community libraries and community librarianship, and the contexts in which community libraries need to be introduced. Apart from acknowledging the history, development, and traditional focus of community librarianship education, it should also be inspired by innovative and creative thinking of how such curricula can evolve to meet the needs of contemporary society. It must be noted that community libraries align very closely with what traditionally is associated with public libraries and some literature uses the concepts interchangeably. For us, there is a difference. At a rudimentary level, community libraries are libraries developed in contexts where needed (e.g., marginalized communities) for the people, by the people, with the input of librarians and other stakeholders to serve the community's (often idiosyncratic) needs as inspired by typical services offered by libraries but with the liberty to adapt according to contextual and participant needs. At a rudimentary level, community librarianship is the profession and field of study concerned with the design and development of spaces and services, collections of resources, and provision of access to information and related services that align with the needs of communities (i.e., participants) and as directed by them according to their contexts to ensure social justice in terms of information access and use. This paper shares our vision for community librarianship and curriculum development that builds on traditional values reported in the literature in combination with the exciting opportunities that technological development is offering.

Background Considerations

The term "curriculum," although widely used in educational literature, does not have an agreed-upon interpretation (Ornstein and Hunkins 2016; Zais 1976). According to Zais (1976, 3–4), it can refer to a plan of education for learners or a field of study. As a field of study, it is defined by the subject matter with which it is concerned and the procedures of practice and inquiry that it follows. It can include the program of study, course content, planned learning experiences, and written plans of action. It can be a blueprint to guide education in different contexts in a global society. The nature of such society/societies need to be acknowledged as a point of departure—that is, in addition to assumptions on the philosophy and nature of knowledge, society and culture, the individual and learning theories (Zais 1976, 1986). Curriculum development considers what is written on the field of study and the topics to include, an assessment of needs in the contexts and the learners. It should also consider the future.

Marginalization versus Fast-Paced Development in Contemporary Society

Community libraries have been established to address very challenging circumstances of often marginalized (e.g., transgender populations), ethnic,

and minority communities (Dhanya and Thanuskodi 2021). Such challenges cannot be separated from developments in contemporary society. The fast pace defining the societies in which libraries of all types need to operate is undeniable. Librarians and library services are required to keep track of the developments and challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), Society 5.0, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, new types of digital sources, and many more (Amoah and Minishi-Majanja 2023, 51). The continuous integration of digital technology, AI, the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, and other cutting-edge technologies is referred to as the 4IR, which is transforming traditional industries. The merging of biological, digital, and physical systems is what defines this revolution and has profound implications for how people connect, live, and work (Schwab 2017). In order to address societal issues and improve the general well-being of its residents, Society 5.0 aims to create a human-centric society that incorporates cutting-edge technologies, such as AI (Saikia 2023; Tavares, Azevedo, and Marques 2022). Within this framework, AI is a transformational force that propels efficiency and creativity. By offering intelligent conversational interfaces that improve human-machine interaction, technologies such as ChatGPT help to realize Society 5.0 (Pan et al. 2023; Riccioli 2023). The key is to use AI's capabilities to empower people, enhance the decision-making process, and build a society that is more sustainable and inclusive. In addition to the traditional foci of services offered by community libraries, students should be prepared to facilitate the use of such developments in the communities they might serve. When developing curricula for community librarianship, it is worth remembering that community libraries can be offered in physical buildings or as virtual or electronic community libraries (Larsen and Qvortrup 1988). The technological developments sketched here are of particular importance for the latter and open new opportunities to reach communities.

Considering the urgency to keep up with AI, 4IR, and Society 5.0, we will argue for a leapfrog approach in our suggestions for curricular planning for community librarianship. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, leapfrog means to improve your position by going past other people quickly or by missing out on some stages. Leapfrog/leap-frog has been used in connection to literacy, in connection to the role of libraries in contemporary African society, and with regard to developing countries that need to catch up on the use of technologies and supporting infrastructures (Bailey et al. 2018; Howard 2007; Kay Heng Heok and Luyt 2010; Mchombu and Beukes-Amiss 2015). For purposes of this paper, it means that traditional values and approaches for community libraries and community librarianship should be supported in addition to enabling the people for whom community libraries are developed to fast track on the benefits offered by technological developments, to catch up with 4IR and AI, and to fit with Society 5.0.

If libraries fail to adapt and innovate their services, and if LIS profes-

sionals do not actively update their skills to embrace emerging technologies like AI, 4IR, and the principles of Society 5.0, they risk becoming obsolete and facing disintermediation concerns as noted by Fourie (1999b) and Mohideen et al. (2022). Community librarians of tomorrow must not only be proficient in traditional library practices but also possess a diverse range of metacognitive and soft skills. In preparing for their roles within Society 5.0, a concept still relatively unexplored in library and information science literature, they must grapple with ethical considerations surrounding AI, utilizing it not just as a tool for text generation but also as a source of inspiration and guidance. Furthermore, they need to explore avenues for transferring their existing skill sets to adapt to the latest technological advancements seamlessly. Crucially, amidst this technological evolution, they must ensure that human needs and contexts remain central to their decision-making processes (Hanson 2023).

Traditional Values as Point of Departure

In this fast-paced world, libraries must, however, still be true to their core values and purpose. Over centuries libraries have aligned to the calls of Ranganathan (1931; "every book its reader"), and Michael Gorman's argument in his book *The Enduring Library: Technology, Tradition, and the Quest for Balance* (2003) and the ideals in his article titled "The Wrong Path and the Right Path: The Role of Libraries in Access to, and Preservation of, Cultural Heritage" (2007), where he posits for libraries to serve humanity, to honor all forms of knowledge, to respect the past, and to create the future. Early work reported by Devine and Woods (1996) shows some evidence of linking technological developments (i.e., the Internet) to the strategies for community libraries. In contemporary society, there might be many more to explore. Zhang (2019), for example, reports on the construction of a community library intelligent service system from the perspective of a smart city.

Communities to Be Served

The communities served by libraries, regardless of whether these are academic communities or public citizens of all ages, are not dependent only on their abilities to stay on track with developments, digitization, embracing lifelong learning, continuing education, and embracing AI, 4IR, and Society 5.0. They also face numerous problems related to financial, social, health, political, and many other challenges in what Savolainen refers to as mastery-of-life in his well-known model of everyday life information behavior (Savolainen 1995). More recently he elaborated on everyday life as an evolving context of information behavior (Savolainen 2023). There are numerous daily serious and mundane things where people require information to cope and to make decisions. Such challenges must be noted. A basic requirement is for communities to be able to read and then to

use basic technology (assuming that access can be provided)—a role that libraries can support very well (Goulding 2002).

People in particular in marginalized communities require support from libraries (Dent, Goodman, and Kevane 2014; Dhanya and Thanuskodi 2021). Libraries operate at the heart of communities serving the public, children, young people, senior citizens, homeless and marginalized people, academics, researchers, and businesses. If libraries do not care about their communities and if they do not work with communities (i.e., take on the responsibility to participate with a community as a stakeholder) to establish structures of support, there is a serious gap and a danger of increasing digital divides. Establishing community libraries should not be confused with the building of communities for or associated with libraries, for example, as discussed by Edwards, Robinson, and Unger (2013). Dwyer (1986, 26), reporting on initiatives in Australia, states, "The elements of success were thorough preparation, involvement of all parties in discussions, local and central government commitment, clear but flexible guidelines, local control and storing central support." The importance of the involvement of the community is echoed by McNicol (2006, 519): "Gaining the support and active involvement of the local community is crucial; only then can the true benefits of joint use libraries, as locations for intergenerational activity and lifelong learning, be realized."

Time for a New Vision for Community Libraries and Librarianship

The community library serving contemporary communities and those of the foreseeable future needs to embrace the cognitive and technical challenges of digitization, digital divides, and other technologies noted here, but they must above all also embrace the challenges typically associated with the reasons for establishing community libraries—challenges faced by humanity (Hart 2010, 2012; Maack 1996) and as set out in the *IFLA Guidelines for Professional Library and Information Science (LIS) Education Programmes* (Chu et al. 2022): "LIS, which engages all aspects of information, needs to integrate multiple ways of knowing in its education to prepare professionals to provide effective, equitable, inclusive, and accessible services appropriate to a diverse community and relevant to its local contexts in a globalized economy."

Stranger-Johannessen (2014) notes that earlier literature on community libraries, spanning thirty years, moved from conceptual to empirical reports. Earlier publications stressed that community libraries should be by and for the community, support development, actively reach out, and provide relevant materials. In contemporary society (AI, 4IR, and Society 5.0) it might be timely to return to conceptualizations first and to move beyond obvious needs that can be articulated by community members. Challenges with the recognition and articulation of information needs have been very widely acknowledged in the literature on information needs, informa-

tion behavior, and user studies (e.g., Cole 2012, 2018; Dorner, Gorman, and Calvert 2017; Taylor 1968). Terms other than "community libraries" that feature in the literature are "ethnic community libraries" (Apedaile 1993), "iBunko/I," "the home and community library" (Cheunwattana 2008), "library-cum-resource centres (LRC)" (Dhanya and Thanuskodi 2021), and "social libraries" (Crawford 2007).

Conceptualization: Community Libraries and Community Librarianship

Based on an analysis of the use of "community library" and "community librarianship" in the subject literature, we propose two operational definitions that can serve as basis for curricula supporting community librarianship.

Community libraries. A contemporary community library is a space that can be physical, virtual, or hybrid, developed for contexts where and as needed (e.g., marginalized communities), offering information and related services developed and co-designed for the people of a community (young and old), by the people, with the input of librarians and other stakeholders to serve the community's (often idiosyncratic) needs, to ensure social justice and equality in access to information and the use thereof to support their well-being and daily mastery of life through information interactions (e.g., through literacy, reading, information literacy programs). Ensuring social inclusivity, countering marginalization, acknowledging affect and emotion and cultural intelligence, and offering services according to the contextualized needs of a community are core to community libraries. Community libraries have the liberty to adapt according to contextual and participant needs with less structure typically associated with public libraries. A community library can be an informal/loosely structured library cum resource center cum learning center cum neighborhood information center fulfilling a variety of services related to the needs of a community (Asim, Khan, and Arshad 2022; Dent and Yannotta 2005). Community libraries in IT-driven contemporary society should address baseline/primary information needs as well as adaptation to 4IR, AI, and Society 5.0. (The explanation of the concept "community libraries" also builds on the work of Black and Muddiman 2017; Dent, Goodman, and Kevane 2014; Howard 1978; Kaufman 1967; McNicol 2006; Mostert 1998; Mostert and Vermeulen 1998; Stranger-Johannessen 2014; Stranger-Johannessen, Asselin, and Doiron 2015.) Community libraries often supplement or replace the services offered by other types of libraries (mostly public libraries and school libraries, and occasionally also national libraries [Amey 1994; Apedaile 1993]). Although some authors use the terms "public libraries" and "community libraries" interchangeably, Stilwell (1997) emphasizes that public libraries plus a change of name don't equal community libraries. They do not fully serve the purpose of community libraries.

Community librarianship. Contemporary community librarianship is the profession and field of study concerned with serving the information-related needs of communities in their context, according to their needs through the design and development of spaces and services (physical, virtual, hybrid), a collection of information and knowledge resources in all relevant forms, access to information and related services, enablement of communities to use and benefit from information and knowledge in all forms, and for positioning community libraries as central to the needs and contexts of any variety of people forming a community and that in doing so embrace social justice, informed citizenship, human capacity building, community empowerment, adult and lifelong learning, ethical information practices, affect and emotion, cultural intelligence, and relevant metacognitive skills. It builds on library and information science and can evolve to draw on other disciplines to support communities in IT-driven societies that are expected to adapt to 4IR, AI, and Society 5.0 principles. Such disciplines include (and are not limited to) participatory design, intervention research, learning sciences, and human-computer interaction. (This definition is developed from work by Gericke 1998, Stranger-Johannessen 2014, and sources cited for the definition of contemporary community librarianship.) The services offered by community libraries are often not fully offered by mainstream libraries such as public, school, and national libraries.

Need for Community Librarianship Curricula for Evolving Contemporary IT-Driven Societies

To create a curriculum that can prepare students to take on community librarianship and to keep track of the challenges of rapidly changing societies in terms of technological developments–information communication for development (ICT4D) and AI, 4IR, and Society 5.0, as well as in terms of the deterioration of well-being and quality of life in many societies—aspects of humanity—curriculum development should be approached from different angles and through various theoretical lenses. It should be both pragmatic (focused on immediate, urgent needs) and idealistic (preparing for a digitalized future). Students who can initiate and maintain community libraries must be trained appropriately in terms of content and skills (Amey 1994; Black and Muddiman 2017; Chu et al. 2022; Fourie 1999a, 1999b), but also softer skills such as emotional and cultural intelligence, reflection, self-awareness, and other knowledge to be argued for in this paper. LIS students must also understand how to monitor their environment for changes and trends and to apply creativity (Fourie 2006), for example, in adopting AI and advocacy for Society 5.0. Combining such diverse perspectives and planning appropriate training of LIS professionals in community librarianship, accordingly, is not an easy task. In the sections that follow we acknowledge excellent examples of

programs that have been developed for community librarianship. These programs mostly focus on foundational librarianship skills and competencies such as reference and access services, engagement and outreach, and reading and information literacy instruction that are typically included in library science degrees. The question that we asked was, "What should a curriculum for contemporary community librarianship in technology-driven societies entail?"

Methods Applied in Developing This Paper

This paper evolved from applying several processes and by means of insightful reasoning: (1) a literature search in LIS databases (Library and Information Science Abstracts; Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts) and Web of Science with the phrase "community librar*" appearing in titles (the focus was on full-text available in English); (2) a brief review of existing reports on the content of community librarianship curricula; (3) drawing on our awareness of the literature on 4IR, AI, Society 5.0, third space, and participatory design; (4) drawing on our qualifications and educational background, namely, tertiary education, library science, and information science; (5) drawing on our experience with adult (andragogic) virtual learning and curriculum design for librarians and information scientists in developing countries (specifically in Africa). Insights were analyzed to present the core issues we highlight for consideration in teaching community librarianship and the components of the model we propose. We also drew on our prior work on alerting services and information monitoring and the other topics mentioned here.

In the remainder of this paper, we will briefly address the following: background and review of prior work and traditional content of community librarianship programs, our views on curricula and curriculum development, recommendations for content and a "leapfrog" approach acknowledging core values of libraries and needs of marginalized communities in contemporary IT-driven societies, and a proposed model for curriculum development for community librarianship.

Review of Earlier Research

The background and development of community libraries need to be briefly noted before arguing for curricular considerations that can align community needs with living in a society marked by rapid digitization. Excellent examples of community libraries that work are offered by Maddigan and Bloos (2013).

Practices of Community Libraries: Geography and Focus of Their Work

Practices of community libraries have developed over several decades and on a very wide geographic scale. Already in 1979, a special edition of *Library Trends* focused on emerging trends in community library services

(Estabrook 1979). At the time Estabrook (1979, 151) emphasized the impact that occupational and organizational factors have on shaping the direction of library services: "Whilst development of techniques to extend services to the disadvantaged may have been consistent with the philosophical goals of the library profession, they were inimical to the instrumental goals of the profession itself." Kaufman (1972) takes the existence of community libraries as far back as the eighteenth century.

Geographic Diversity

Many countries across continents have introduced community libraries in different forms, for different purposes, and with different philosophies. Initiatives in Africa (Alemna 2001; Stranger-Johannessen 2014; Stranger-Johannessen, Asselin, and Doiron 2015) include work in Ghana (Agyemang 2017), Kenya (Atuti 2001), Namibia (Nengomasha and Shuumbili 2022), South Africa (Aitchison 2006; Ajuwon et al. 2017; Bopape et al. 2021; Dent 2006; Dube 1998; Hart 2010, 2012; Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu 2015; Mostert 1998; Mostert and Vermeulen 1998; Schoombee, Cloete, and Jacobs 2008; Stilwell 1989, 1997); Tanzania (Lauwo 2018); Uganda (Dent 2006, 2007; Jones 2009; Twinoburyo 2019), and Zimbabwe (Atherton 1993). Initiatives in African countries sometimes attempt to use community libraries to counter colonization (Atherton 1993). Reports for Australia include Amey's (1994) article titled "Seventeen Years Down the Track: South Australia's School Community Libraries" and Apedaile (1993), Dwyer (1986), Edgar (1999), and Hillenbrand's (2005) report on social capital. There have also been initiatives in Asia, for example, in China (Tang 2018; Zhang 2020), Pakistan (Asim, Khan, and Arshad 2022), India (Pyati and Kamal 2012), Indonesia (Håklev 2010a, 2010b), and Japan (Cheunwattana 2008), in South America, such as in Brasilia (Bastos, de Almeida, and Sousa Romão 2011; Camillo, Silva, and Almeida 2022), and in the United Kingdom (Crawford 2007). Our purpose is not to report in detail on the initiatives or differences between countries, but merely to show the geographic scale and variety of initiatives. The examples are very diverse, ranging from tourism attractions (Zhang 2020) to HIV/AIDS awareness, to the preservation of endangered indigenous knowledge (Twinoburyo 2019). These communities are mostly marginalized and poor, such as slum areas as reported by Pyati and Kamal (2012) or rural (Dent and Yannotta 2005) with the community library's input focusing on literacy, promotion of a reading culture, free access to information, books, and other media that have always been at the heart of public libraries (i.e., community libraries taking on a similar role to public libraries but directly linked to a community that can be demarcated, e.g., marginalized ethnic groups), and access to e-government services, empowerment (specifically gender empowerment), social engagement, and building social capital (Hillenbrand 2005; Jones 2009; Lauwo 2018; Nengomasha and Shuumbili

2022; Liu 2017). Pahl and Allan (2011) report feedback from a participant in their study who said, "I don't know what literacy is." They applied ecological and participatory research methodologies with children to uncover hidden literacies in a community library. This focus is also noted in work in Australia reported by Edgar (1999). Although it is possible to align with other library types, initiatives have mostly been driven by public and school libraries to establish additional initiatives (i.e., community libraries that are specifically focused on the needs of a targeted community with needs that justify such an initiative) (Dwyer 1986); Dwyer reports on work in Australia. Public libraries, on the other hand, serve the public in general (affluent, poorer, urban and rural), and school libraries serve the learners and teachers attending a specific school. Some initiatives for community libraries in Australia have been labeled as a combination between ethnic community libraries and public libraries (Apedaile 1993).

Focus of Work in Community Libraries

Publications on community libraries focus strongly on communalities with other types of libraries and the responsibility of libraries in general to serve the needs of humanity, to honor all forms of knowledge, to ensure information access for all, to give recognition to how knowledge systems evolve, and to serve with absolute absence of discrimination, exclusion, inequalities, and marginalization (Gorman 2003; Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu 2015; Stranger-Johannessen 2014; Stranger-Johannessen, Asselin, and Doiron 2015). With community libraries, the emphasis just seems to be stronger to focus on what the community needs—even if that goes beyond typical content and services offered by libraries.

In community libraries, there is a very strong focus on the people that should be reached and served—most often marginalized communities in terms of ethnicity, gender identity, and languages (Aitchison 2006). The people involved in outreach activities might, however, also include managers, educators, reading mediators, and others who may offer support. The responsibilities and commitments of community libraries relate to the principles of information ethics (Burgess and Knox 2019) and the ethical obligations of LIS professionals as explained by Koehler et al. (2000).

From a scoping review and content analysis of the literature, we noticed several issues of importance that should be addressed in community librarianship. We also noted issues that are either missing or only implied. These are unpacked in the next paragraphs.

Information and knowledge can come in different forms and all forms should be acknowledged and respected. Libraries have a responsibility to improve their communities and in particular, they have a role of social responsibility to counter all forms of exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization and to advocate against these. Community libraries are developed for specific groups of people. These are usually people who are

in dire need of libraries with deep roots in the circumstances and needs of a community, social justice, and that involve them in the full process of development. There is thus a "freedom" to make choices according to a community's needs—as expressed by the community. According to Dent (2007), community libraries can bring hope to people and improve their economic standing. Nengomasha and Shuumbili (2022) report on access to e-government services by citizens through community libraries in Namibia that can support attempts to bridge the digital divide. "Community libraries are internationally recognized as social institutions that can effect social and economic transformation in society" (Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu 2015, 40, writing about post-apartheid South Africa). In the context of South Australia, Hillenbrand (2005, 41) sees the value of community libraries as "a place for all" where "social capital" can be found in the community library. Such libraries can be places where people can communicate and alleviate their feelings of isolation.

The core values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) are essential in community librarianship. Community librarians need to understand and build on the traditional values of librarianship and work from the findings of empirical research on related projects—such as those captured in evidence-based librarianship (the latter is not mentioned in the literature, but we want to explicitly add this). The development of collections that serve the needs of the community, for example, in foreign languages and preserving indigenous collections and knowledge (Apedaile 1993), is an essential service of community librarianship. Mehra and Robinson (2009) argue for a community engagement model in library and information science education that can address appropriate collection development and management of collections in community libraries.

Community libraries often rely on the support of volunteers who need to be trained. Cheunwattana (2008) comments on the benefits of voluntary work, for example, enjoying the bunko activities (a house-based reading/book initiative in Japan), the opportunity to form new friendships, and experiencing fulfilment from participation and contribution as a volunteer.

Community librarians need to understand the history behind the development of community libraries, the purposes (what community library services could and should stand for), and how to relate that to a specific context in which they are working. They need to learn from the past, but we would like to argue (as shown later) that there is also a need to look forward and note developments in the society, for example, as mentioned in the introduction. A very important part of community librarianship is to ensure active participation of the community in the planning, determination of needs, and delivery of services. This must meet with the local context of the community (i.e., the population, their needs, and their challenges). Although context is frequently mentioned in the literature on community

libraries, it is never with the same rigor of understanding as in the literature on information behavior research, for example, as by Agarwal (2018) who analyzed the work of leading researchers such as Dervin, Courtright, and Sonnenwald. The work by Savolainen (2006a, 2006b, 2012, 2023) is worth consideration when considering context. He elaborates on information needs in contexts, temporal (i.e., time) and spatial (i.e., space) contexts. Further attention to context as seen from an information lens might deepen the insight of community librarians regarding the context for which they plan services. An article by Stranger-Johannessen, Asselin, and Doiron (2015) also holds value regarding the contexts in which community libraries operate. It presents an ecological framework for library development with many elements, for example, the context/environment, equity/social justice, partnerships/interactions, and action/research. As part of a context, community librarians should have a critical perspective of the larger social and political structures that limit and shape the development of community libraries. There might also be other important influencing structures.

One of community libraries' core focus areas is on reading and the development of reading cultures. A good example is the bunko initiatives in Japan that are located in a house or any place where quality books can be made conveniently accessible to children. Services offered through the bunko initiative include free voluntary reading, book loans, storytelling, singing, reciting nursery rhymes, paper folding, and making toys and handicrafts (Cheunwattana 2008). Community libraries should be able to facilitate learning to all family members, for example, reading programs, instruction in literacy and even health literacy, the use of technology, encouraging the use of information sources freely available on the Internet such as CancerNet, Kidshealth.org, and MedlinePlus, and training in the use of social media for information sharing (Ajuwon et al. 2017; Atherton 1993; Liu 2017).

People from different sectors other than libraries and the government are often involved in the establishment of community libraries. In Ghana, examples are noted of community libraries being established by nongovernmental agencies, district assemblies, affluent or well-to-do individuals, and individuals with higher educational credentials hailing from the rural areas where the libraries were established and served as their memorial (Agyemang 2017). In Peru, for example, community libraries are approached as beneficiaries of the relationship between universities, businesses, and societies (Rivera Guillen and Pomahuacre Najarro 2022), with libraries seen as an intermediary between knowledge and culture.

Community libraries should also contribute technology such as computers and arrange for spaces such as buildings and even scenic spots (Asim, Khan, and Arshad 2022; Zhang 2020). There may be old existing buildings, but often adapting buildings for specific needs might be chal-

lenging: "Adapted library buildings hinder rather than aid the optimum organization and use of the library and information services, a situation which often puts librarians in difficulties by their reacting to problems, rather than anticipating them" (Atuti 2001, 231). Håklev (2010a, 2010b) reports on reading gardens in Indonesia and truly grassroots community libraries.

The need for community librarians to have critical leadership skills, to plan strategically, and the ability to advocate for support for community libraries to achieve financial autonomy and partners, for example, from industry, government, or educational institutions, are mentioned by a few, including Camillo, Silva, and Almeida (2022) and Hart (2010). Such leadership extends to securing funding, an issue raised by Alemna (2001) and Amey (1994). Camillo, Silva, and Almeida (2022) report on the value of Brazilian crowdfunding campaigns for community libraries. The funding was for supporting and preserving community libraries, but was also aimed at social and local development, increasing library infrastructures, people's access to cultural goods, and educational activities, and the maintenance of social projects of broad impact in Southeast Brazil. Leadership in community librarianship can extend to advocating for public policies for community libraries and recognizing the importance of the government (Camillo, Silva, and Almeida 2022; Tang 2018).

Topics in Community Librarianship Degree Programs

Many of the issues noted in the preceding section feature in the curricula of existing programs in librarianship in general, and specifically in community librarianship. There is, however, also very wide diversity. We did not attempt an in-depth analysis of existing curricula in community librarianship degree programs or library programs paying attention to community libraries since the purpose of our paper is only to highlight selected issues we noted to be absent from the literature and existing programs. Community librarianship curricula should build on guidelines from professional organizations and national bodies. Although there is only limited availability of guidelines, students should be made aware of these as sources of information and ideas. Examples include the IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022 and the American Library Association's (ALA, n.d.-a) sources on community libraries, in particular those from the Public Library Association division (ALA, n.d.-b). U.S. universities that offer programs in community librarianship include Syracuse University, the University of Denver, and St. John's University. Internationally there are many programs that include components of community libraries in their curricula and many are also offered online.

Core content widely acknowledged and that are essential in community librarianship degrees/curricula/diplomas/certificates, include reference and access services, engagement in community outreach and information

literacy instruction, cultural awareness, and addressing social justice. Some programs are very technical and include data analytics, visualization, design thinking, digital community service, information practices, research methods, storytelling, creation of artefacts, use of technology and social media, fake news and misinformation, collection development and reflective portfolios, critical theories, to name but a few. The Erasmus funding body is currently encouraging work on community libraries (Erasmus+ 2024) through the NEWCOMER project.

Our preceding discussion of existing curricula is in very general terms intentionally, since we chose to rather focus on new suggestions we think should be considered.

Our Suggestions on Curricula and Curriculum Development for Community Librarianship

Based on the literature review and what we noted in content being offered and our experience (as explained under "Methods Applied in Developing This Paper"), we want to offer some suggestions on issues we consider important. More than in the case of other types of libraries, it is about the meaning attached to information, reading, and information practices. It is about the opportunities for people to inform themselves. Interferences and interactions must be contextually, culturally, and ideologically appropriate. Following an overview of such issues, we will discuss the following in more detail for further consideration by community library training program facilitators: pedagogic and andragogic teaching approaches; context-awareness, environmental scanning, and information monitoring; community libraries, collaboration, and third space; methodologies for participation, action research, and the value of analytic autoethnography; respect for indigenous knowledge; conceptual understanding of values and purpose aligned to the Ubuntu principle; and agility. There are many other issues that might be considered, for example, critical theories, affect and emotions, cultural intelligence, metacognitive skills, and in particular, reflection.

Pedagogic and Andragogic Teaching Approaches

The instruction role of community libraries is well covered in the subject literature with many references to reading, information literacy, and digital literacy. Discussions on how pedagogy, andragogy, and learning theories should be incorporated are, however, scant (e.g., Lauwo 2018) to absent. We would like to call for a stronger focus on the teaching pedagogies applied to community librarianship, namely appropriate pedagogic and in particular andragogic (learning of older adults) practices and opportunities for students to collaborate with communities. In spite of some earlier attempts to introduce andragogy and the principles of adult learning to librarians (Sheridan 1986), interest has only been picking up over

the last six years in the LIS literature (with no reference to community libraries) (Gaikwad and Bharathi 2018; Stanney, Skinner, and Hughes 2023; Watts 2018). Andragogy concerns adult learners and the principles to consider in teaching adults, for example, adults' need to know, the learner's self-concept, the role of the learner's experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learn, and motivation. Knowles (1990) provides extensive guidelines of value to programs in community librarianship. More detail on the application of andragogy when teaching adults and working toward change can be found in Brown and Shaked (2018), Henschke (2020), Knowles et al. (2020), Lackey and Leier (2020), and Peltz and Clemons (2018). These books clearly illustrate the value adult learning theories and appropriate approaches to involve adults in learning hold for contemporary society.

Context Awareness, Environmental Scanning, and Information Monitoring

Community librarianship curricula should be deeply mindful and sensitive to trends and challenges in society and globalized economies that necessitate changes in community librarianship, as well as the daily realities and challenges experienced in communities (i.e., the programs should be context-aware). Crawford (2007) notes the need to consider contemporary religious and political issues and controversies prominent in a community. Edgar (1999) aligns community libraries to changes in government, government structure, changes in society and employment structure, for example, less job security, more work from home and the role of the library in social life, demands for lifelong learning, and learning resources. To fulfil this responsibility, students need to understand the use and value of alerting services, environmental scanning, and information monitoring (Bahmani, Farhadpoor, and Hamidi 2017; Castiglione 2008; Choo and Auster 1992; Fourie 2006). Interest in environmental scanning has dwindled since a review by Choo and Auster. Du Toit (1993, 2016), with a background in library and information science and expertise in knowledge management and competitive intelligence, however, realized the importance of environmental scanning. In combination with skills in the use of alerting services and information monitoring (Fourie 2006, 2011) these might prepare community librarians well to proactively position their services.

Conceptual Understanding of Values and Purposes Aligned to the Ubuntu Principle

A deeper conceptual exploration of the meaning, value, and purpose of community librarianship seems to be needed. Unfortunately, publications on this that could be traced are not in English, for example, Machado and Vergueiro (2010) on the where, why, and how of community libraries (abstract in English). Bastos, de Almeida, and Sousa Romão (2011) report-

ing on "community libraries: concept mapping and analyzing discourse" argue for deeper conceptualization that might enable students (and thus community librarians) to appreciate the contribution community libraries might make to the development of a country and the "improvement of living conditions and quality of life of different communities" (Bastos, de Almeida, and Sousa Romão 2011, 87 [from English abstract]). When reading that abstract, the concept of Ubuntu came to mind; the need to understand and embrace transformative roles and align with the principle that "information and knowledge is power" and that libraries can make a great contribution (Bangani and Dube 2023; Van Norren 2023). Ubuntu describes a set of closely related African-origin value systems that are sometimes also used in a philosophical way to refer to the universal importance of sharing that should connect all people—humanity. Ubuntu emphasizes humanity toward others (Chigangaidze 2023; Chigangaidze and Chinyenze 2022). Other continents/countries might have similar philosophies/principles that might influence community librarianship. Mangaroo-Pillay and Coetzee (2022), for example, report on a systematic literature review comparing Japanese Lean philosophy and the South African Ubuntu philosophy.

Respect for Indigenous Knowledge

Globally, indigenous knowledge is becoming more important in defining the shape of modern community librarianship, especially in technologically advanced nations. A thorough examination of how indigenous knowledge influences the character and operation of community libraries is required in order to answer the main research question, "What should a curriculum for contemporary community librarianship in technology-driven societies entail?" Fostering cultural sensitivity and tolerance requires community libraries to incorporate indigenous knowledge (Smith 2021). By integrating indigenous knowledge, community librarians may ensure that their services are inclusive of the different cultural backgrounds of the community people they serve, even as they manage the obstacles presented by a technology-driven society. In New Zealand, the incorporation of customary Māori knowledge into library procedures are emphasized (Hayes 2012). In order to enhance the library experience, this method aggressively integrates indigenous perspectives while also respecting cultural variety. Community libraries are making significant strides in promoting biculturalism while also examining the sector's upcoming evolutionary and transformative problems as it works to reach an epistemic and cultural balance (Hayes 2012: Twinoburyo 2019), and by extension, therefore, also multiculturalism.

Empowerment and community involvement are yet another important area where indigenous knowledge has an impact. Indigenous cultures frequently place a strong emphasis on shared experiences, community-centric

values, and collective wisdom. These ideas can be used by community librarians who use indigenous knowledge to interact with local communities more successfully. The Vancouver Public Library's Indigenous Services Librarian in Canada works closely with indigenous communities (Reid and Howard 2016).

When thinking about the place of indigenous knowledge in community libraries, protecting cultural heritage becomes essential. Community librarians should be trained in curating and promoting materials that honor the distinctive customs, languages, and practices of indigenous people as part of their community librarianship curriculum (Mhlongo 2018). A real-world example is the Australian State Library of Queensland's Indigenous Knowledge Centre, which actively promotes and preserves indigenous knowledge via a variety of tools and services (Mamtora, Ovaska, and Mathiesen 2021). A program for contemporary community librarianship should also provide an extensive comprehension of societal issues ingrained in indigenous knowledge that frequently provide thorough understandings of sustainability, connectivity, and the interaction between people and the environment. Such understanding can further assist community librarians in understanding societal challenges like social exclusion, poverty, and digitization through a more nuanced and culturally sensitive lens.

Societal Challenges That Necessitate the Need for Community Librarianship to Be Contextualized

As explained in the introduction, community libraries are essential to deal with today's societal issues, especially in the 4IR with a focus on digitization and increased concern for digital divides. The dynamic global society, characterized by the introduction of Society 5.0 and technological breakthroughs, requires that community librarianship might need to broaden its purview to more than the immediate challenges community librarians face, such as poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion. They must also bridge the digital divide and customize their services to fit the needs of specific groups (Mohideen et al. 2022). AI and other technologies are becoming more and more integrated into Society 5.0, which highlights the need for community librarians to empower people to navigate the challenges of the digital world and promote digital literacy (Yoon, Andrews, and Ward 2022). This entails introducing suitable teaching strategies into the curriculum to provide future librarians with the abilities required for community involvement (Mader and Gibson 2019).

Methodologies for Participation and Action Research and the Value of Analytic Autoethnography in Particular

The methodologies used to determine the needs of a community need to be appropriate for the population. Pahl and Allan (2011) describe the

use of ecological and participatory research methodologies with children. These included community walk arounds; Flip video cameras to record literacy practices; an audit of leaflets and literacy materials in local shops, libraries, and other places; a visual log using photographs of the library and its surroundings; and fieldnotes, including observations of parent groups and craft groups, which were written up after each visit by two researchers. According to Pahl and Allan (2011, 190), "We argue that an understanding of space and place is critical to recognize the way in which children inhabit and use the spaces of literacy practices." Narrative methods such as storytelling by community members and librarians and in particular autoethnographic methods can enrich insight in the needs of communities. These can provide insightful information on the real-world experiences of community people and can guide cooperative research projects that aim to advance social change (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011; Fourie 2021). Analytic autoethnography in particular can be useful since it combines literature reviews, evocative or collaborative autoethnography, and action research to understand the challenges experienced by a community. It can also capture the experiences of those involved in community libraries and their attempts to make improvements. Analytic autoethnography can be effectively combined with methods of participatory design and action research (Fourie 2021; Hansen, Fourie, and Meyer 2021). Methods to secure community involvement in all facets of community librarianship are very important and need in-depth consideration. The book by Hansen, Fourie, and Meyer (2021), titled *Third Space, Information Sharing and Participatory Design*, might shed some light. For the establishment of community libraries, the complexities of determining and articulating information needs, as discussed by Cole (2012) and others, are particularly important. The assessment of user needs and the challenges to expect, participatory design, discussion spaces where librarians and communities can learn from each other (third spaces), and narrative research methods such as autoethnography that can collect data on deeply personal experiences should be included in curricula for community librarianship.

Community Libraries, Collaboration, and Third Space

Community libraries have long relied on community engagement, involvement, and collaboration to customize information resources and services to serve local needs and interests (Goulding 2009). In assessing where, why, and how community libraries in Brazil are created, Machado and Vergueiro (2010, 145) found differences between enterprises created by individual and collective agents, both internal and external to a community. They consider those libraries as spaces for negotiation, appropriation, and identity recuperation by the communities: "The reading, and not information organization and processing, is the activity which permeates all the processes." This can align with the need for collaboration, partnerships

and the cultivation of third spaces—a concept we suggest to be introduced into a curriculum for community librarianship.

Third space is a concept that has been used in the LIS literature by Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari (2015) and Maniotes (2005) with regard to information literacy practices. The concept as well as the theory behind "third space" is especially important in contexts of collaboration, information sharing, and participatory design. Third space has been described as multidimensional, including physical, virtual, cognitive, and conceptual realms. In such space, individuals can negotiate, reflect, and form new knowledge and worldviews by merging diverse perspectives from different disciplines to construct innovative, practical, and relevant solutions to address the needs of their organizations, products, and services (Hansen, Fourie, and Meyer 2021; Muller 2007). Third spaces can facilitate collaborative activities such as participatory design, which allows for the co-creation of community-centric services and promotes a feeling of ownership and belonging among community members (Hansen, Fourie, and Meyer 2021; Muller and Druin 2012). Applying the principles of third space, a community library, in collaboration with community members and other stakeholders, can evolve into dynamic spaces where people can participate in educational, social, and cultural activities (Elmborg 2011). An introduction to the concepts and theory of third space can assist students of community librarianship programs to improve their outreach, participation, and collaboration with the communities they serve. The concept of third space has been explored in various disciplines, including discourse and literacy learning (MacDonald 2019), search as learning (Meyer, Hansen, and Fourie 2018), and information literacy practices (Kuhlthau, Maniotes, and Caspari 2015; Maniotes 2005). The facilitation of third spaces in community libraries should also cater to children needing space to work, play, and reflect on things that matter.

In the transition to Society 5.0 as sketched in the Introduction, third spaces can play a crucial role in facilitating the understanding of new, complex concepts and fostering a culture of lifelong learning and adaptability. These spaces can empower communities through participatory design and mutual learning activities, enabling them to effectively navigate and participate in the dynamic digital and societal changes associated with Society 5.0 (Carayannis and Morawska-Jancelewicz 2022). By integrating the third space concept into the curriculum, we can facilitate students' shift from conventional modes of education to the more interactive and adaptable ones required in Society 5.0 and Industry 5.0 (Carayannis and Morawska-Jancelewicz 2022). Educators can encourage inclusive and adaptive pedagogical approaches by emphasizing participatory design and community engagement, thus equipping students to thrive in the digital and social contexts of Society 5.0.

Lauwo (2018) reports on attempts to use community libraries in Tan-

zania to address complex and powerful discourse about language education by creating a trans-language space which celebrates and expands children's diverse linguistic resources in the light of 130+ languages. The focus is on Maa (Maasai language), Kiswahili, and English. Community librarianship can benefit from inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives, such as drawing on architecture expertise for the design of buildings and spaces for community outreach extending, for example, architecture on buildings (e.g., involving architecture students and learning from the literature on library buildings), intervention research or from health or social work (Crawford, Maxey, and Dacosta 2002; Fraser et al. 2009; Osofsky 2004; Wakeling et al. 2022). These also fit well with a third space approach.

Agility

The COVID-19 pandemic raised awareness of the need for libraries to be able to adapt rapidly. Although agility and agile methods are noted in earlier library and information science literature, these are limited (Giroux, Hotte, and Dao 2000; Haricombe and Lusher 1999). More recently there are more, but still limited, discussions, for example, Stoddard, Gills, and Cohn (2019), Werr (2022), and Duvivier and Gupta (2023). Introducing agility explicitly into community librarianship programs might allow community libraries to be better prepared to create collaborative, resilient, and responsive organizations and deal with digital challenges; these might be extended to community libraries who intend to be proactive.

Model for Curriculum Development for Community Librarianship in IT-Driven Societies

The importance of context, people, needs (in particular information-based needs), conceptualizations of terminology, position(ing) in fast-paced IT-driven societies, responsibility for social justice, traditional library values, participatory approaches, and need for contextualized research inspiration is either explicitly stated or implied in the preceding discussion. Community libraries can clearly take many shapes and serve many purposes and involve a diversity of participants. Community librarianship curricula guide the training of librarians (or other stakeholders) to spearhead the context-based establishment of community libraries. Considering the diversity of contexts reported in the literature and multitude of potentially diverse contexts in a single environment of, for example, a city, town, or region and complexity of human reactions to changes in contexts, we propose a generalized, evolutionary model for the development of community librarianship curricula that acknowledges the need for contextualization, traditional values, practices and procedures, social responsibility, acknowledgement of human vulnerability (affect, emotion), metacognitive skills, ongoing participatory-based research and (undeniable)

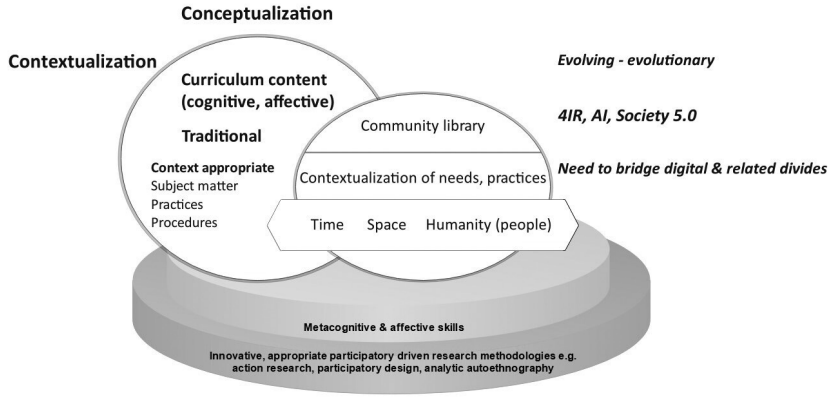

Figure 1. Model for curriculum development for community librarianship: An evolutionary approach.

positioning in a fast-paced, IT-driven society (4IR, AI, Society 5.0). The proposed model is shown in figure 1.

The model is deliberately generalized to be suitable for the development of a community librarianship curriculum in any context in any country. Only core components are mentioned with the intention that details in terms of subjects, practices, and procedures should be added, based on an assessment of the context for which a curriculum is developed. Based on ongoing participatory research, a curriculum can evolve (gradually change). There are five issues of cardinal importance:

- Conceptualization of community libraries and community librarianship (i.e., how these concepts are interpreted; conceptualization can also indicate the purpose)
- Context and contextualization (as portrayed in information behavior) literature. This applies to the context (e.g., country, region, town, or community) for which a curriculum is proposed, as well as the ability of graduates to explore and assess community contexts and act accordingly. The following are important: temporality and time of context (e.g., during a pandemic, war, or as influenced by IT developments), spatial contexts (e.g., geographic region, city vs. urban), human context (i.e., user, community members, citizens in general).
- Metacognitive skills such as self-awareness, reflection
- Affect and emotional awareness (e.g., acknowledging the importance of explicitly addressing humanity)
- Participatory design and research (informing the evolvement of the curricular choices), guided by critical theories, literature reviews, action research, and autoethnographic and other research methods

The content and principles we highlighted in the discussion of the background and foci of community libraries, consideration of existing curricula, and our own suggestions on issues to consider can be plotted to the model to provide details for a specific curriculum.

Conclusion

Writing this paper made us realize how much there is to consider and from how many different angles community libraries and the curricula for community librarianship can be approached. We could barely scratch the surface. Although the development of community libraries is guided by traditional values and functions of libraries, the liberty of full-scale involvement of communities and adapting according to their contexts and idiosyncratic needs, and acknowledgement of the vulnerability of all who are involved (i.e., community members, librarians, and other stakeholders) should guide decisions for curricular content and further research. That would support an evolutionary (gradual development), evolving, contextualized approach to community librarianship curricula. We need to learn from communities in need how they experience contemporary (IT-driven) societies, what they need and how they experience involvement in the establishment of community libraries, and then adapt curricula accordingly. Participatory design, action research, systematic literature reviews, and autoethnography (in particular, analytic autoethnography), and third spaces to facilitate discussion, can pave the way. Regardless of the dire circumstances of any community, for example, in terms of poverty, discrimination, and marginalization, the challenges, but above all, also the opportunities offered by Society 5.0 to create a human-centric society that incorporates cutting-edge technologies, such as AI and 4IR technologies and where community libraries can apply leapfrog approaches to assist communities to catch up, should not be ignored.

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