Smart Libraries and Information Management in Digital Environment. Eds. Neena Singh & Sewa Singh, B R Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2022, ISBN 9789391123581

"It is always good to look out of the box"

Smart Libraries and Information Management in Digital Environment is a two-volume anthology with 36 essays that deal with various aspects of theory, equipment and perspectives as well as the technical, social and political significance of the smart library from an expert point of view.

Both volumes provide a comprehensive overview of concepts and practical applications in a "Smart Library". Some things still seem visionary, other essays point to concrete practical tools, already used in many libraries.

The anthology has been edited and compiled by Dr. Neena Singh, Heading the University Library of G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology and by Dr. Sewa Singh, a retired professor and expert in library science. It is published by B R Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 2022, ISBN 9789391123581

More than 50 academics and librarian experts have contributed to this anthology. They mainly are from India, but also librarians and academics from Nigeria, Russia, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Canada, Uganda, Nepal, Estonia and Kenya have also contributed.

The first volume deals with the definition of a "smart" managed and well-stocked library from different perspectives. What tasks need to be considered in a technical and an economic sense and although in relation to a country's educational cooperation?

What makes a library smart? Who is involved and how does it affect users and staff? What technical requirements and what software and hardware are necessary to cover the spectrum of a smart library?

The authors describe which technical offers the market makes, e.g. how QR codes are used. How savings can be achieved despite the extension of opening hours, e.g. via a kiosk solution using RFID technology, what advantages students and scientists have via remote access to their library, and the more or less visionary idea of delivering books by drone in regions that are difficult to reach in terms of transport.

There is a wide range of ideas, which are here presented and discussed.

Several essays deal intensively with the technical requirements for setting up a "smart library", examine the use by pupils, students and scientific staff, point out the economic advantages of a technically well-equipped library, both from the point of view of management and staff as well as also from the point of view of the user. Being a "smart library" means establishing new services and new internal work processes, adapting the distributions of resources and finding new way to introduce and support them, for example, within the framework of certified quality management.

Especially in the first volume, it becomes clear that a user-friendly, technically well-equipped and networked library serves society and that smartly designed academic libraries are also important for universities.

The second volume deals primarily with specific applications, with the effects on employees and users, with the organization and changes in work processes in a smart library.

What advantages does a virtual information desk offer, for example? How does the inclusion of social media in public relations work? What does the support of the scientific staff through open access and publication platforms mean for the media offer?

What tools and apps are there that users can use to get access to their libraries at any time?

Using the example of a school library network in Nigeria shows the possibilities offered by cloud use and networking with other libraries.

Thinking outside the box is important.

It is necessary in order to give libraries all over the world an impression of the prospects opened up by technical developments.

The changes caused by the pandemic, war and climate events, higher energy prices or inflation have an impact on the economic situation of the library operators and that means on the entire library system and its users.

As a professional one has to think forward, let oneself be inspired.

Both volumes should find their place in library educational institutions, should be accessible to students, educators and scholars involved in library development.

This anthology shows decision-makers in politics and education the potential that Smart Libraries offer for a free and worldwide access to information, for the educational opportunities of students and for the economic operation of a university.

--- Brigitte Krompholz-Roehl (retired Head of the Public Liberary Göttingen), Germany