Corporate Library

Corporate libraries such as those found within Research & Development (R&D) Centers and Law Departments, serve the community of corporation itself, and, before computers and the Internet, they were stand-alone physical places housing important books, other print-based resources, and archival rolls of film. There still are vestiges of a physical facility like that in some corporations, because printed archives are still valued, but, as you can certainly imagine, at-desk on-line resourcing has increasingly become the modern way, maybe the only way for the youngest professionals and newest companies.

My own long-time experience is in a corporate R&D Center; I have lived the transition as it relates to stand-alone corporate libraries and widely shared, working-on-line libraries, so let me say something about the latter, expanding from my previous article.

Just as in any general community of library users, such as in Murrysville's public library, researchers in an R&D environment want access to both publications and programs, with the strict proviso however that they must be informed publications and programs, not just anything that happens to be easily obtained on the wild west of the Internet.

Besides the American Chemical Society, about which I spoke previously, Informed contributors include many professional organizations whose names you may already know, such as the American Medical Association, the American Astronomical Society, the American Psychological Association, and the American Bar Association. This is only a sampling; there are many more.

The professionals who use these on-line resources and services are using a select body of works and offerings that they have learned to trust. In the aggregate, those resources and services are part of a huge, informed "Library Multiverse."

Those professionals have learned, even from their earliest years, perhaps from children's programming at the local library or taking out books at a circulation desk, the way to a lifetime of scholarly learning. That learning began in many cases with a public library and/or a school library, maybe a bricks-and-mortar library, maybe a mobile branch library, maybe Reading is Fundamental, but almost always a "library."

That is the importance of a library towards developing critical thinking, towards a serious society in all of its adult enterprises, in its more academic endeavors, in its corporate enterprises, and maybe even, although it is hard to tell sometimes, in its politics.

The corporate R&D Center is where the future growth of the company is nurtured, survival itself assured, or not, depending on how well the R&D effort is attuned to the marketplaces of the present and the future, and how well the patent attorneys in the Law Department conceive protection of rights to intellectual property. Whether there is success or not depends greatly on information skills, first and foremost, and how those skills get integrated with a lot of other factors in product and process development. That

corporate library of the informed Internet is vital. The library skills developed as a child, a young adult, and an adult are critical also, and development of them with the help of a public library, as I said last week too, is as vital as any scholastic book-learning that is complement to them.

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