

**THE LIBRARIES AND THE MODERN SOCIETY OF INFORMATION:
ADVANTAGES AND NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR THE USERS OF THE 21TH CENTURY**
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Key terms: Library Science, user, information divide, intermediation, on-line public access catalogue

The library is not only the physical place in which volumes are preserved in order and in a classified way for searching and studying requirements, but it is also a meeting place for a fecund exchange of ideas and intellectual increase. Above all it represents the memory of our cultural identity for the being and future people. The peculiar role of the library, from the antiquity to our days, is its careful and intelligent mediation between reader and document, its ability to institute a connection between user and information, without considering the place where is located or the type of its support, according to the theorem of the ONLY CONNECT. Its vocation and task still live in the modern society of information. In the last few decades, the libraries drew large advantage from the technological innovations (computer science, Internet and websites, search-engines, magnetic and optical supports, electronic publishing, instruments of communication like fax for the document delivery, e-mail, the means of transport more rapid for national and international loan), brightly managed to pursue their missions in more effective and efficient way. The users can search directly for a specific document or without a precise strategy of search (serendipity). The modality of information searching are the following: punctual search (hunting); navigation (browsing); filtering (grazing-pasture). Today the user, thanks to the advent of new technologies, has a multiplicity of services that ties tradition to innovation:

- integrated OPAC (*On-line Public Access Catalogue*), through which the user can search, save the output, reserve the volumes of his interest, save the searches, ask for an updating by mail, create and save bibliographies in his own virtual desk;
 - local consultation, inner or interlibrary loan, article supply upon request (document delivery DD);
 - full-text electronic resources and open access repositories;
 - services of alerting upon request, like the selective dissemination of the information (SDI), filtering based on his profile of interest, ToC (table of contents), A&I (abstracting and indexing).
- In spite of what could be thought at a first sight, the advent of the information-technology didn't make subordinate the role of the librarian, but, on the contrary, showed the necessity to have a smart documentary intermediation acted by specialized professionals used to manage the variety of sources available, to find correct searching strategies and to evaluate critically the obtained output. However it doesn't seem that its essential functions have changed, even if it now has powerful means of information retrieval. The task of the professionals of the information is to dominate the information overload, through the identification, ordering, classification and indexing of the documents. Operating a selection within an exterminated publishing production is not only essential to reach the kind of desired information, but also fundamental to keep under control the costs of treatment and conservation of the material: 'the filter' constitutes an added value, it is not an aid for the incapable ones. The librarian, orienting and assisting the user, helps him to express his informative explicit and implicit needs. The final objective is to guarantee to all equal conditions to access to documents in order to render homogenous the knowledge for the society, pulling down the so-called digital information divide, that consists in the separation between 'information elite' capable to use the new technologies and 'digital illiterates', that are excluded because of the lack of technical cognitions, technological or lawyers barriers, or other impediments for the weaker social strata (old, blind or handicapped people), to which the library intends to give a good and actual support in order to reduce the cultural and technological discrimination.