

Library and Information Studies for Arctic Social Sciences and Humanities

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The case of St. Petersburg State University

Alexander Sergunin

Introduction

In the age of the information/knowledge society, libraries and museums have historically changed their roles. From being passive repositories of books, documents, artefacts, and antiquities, they have transformed to dynamic social institutions which play a significant role in organising society, information flow, and knowledge production and transfer. According to contemporary library and information science (LIS), modern libraries and museums are not just warehouses of materials, but agents of scientific, educational, social, economic, and cultural changes in society, and their doors are now open to all who need them. Many LIS theorists (e.g., Abdulsalami, Okezie, and Agbo, 2013; Handa, 2015; Juchnevicius, 2014; Lehman, 2011; Mathesh, 2012) believe that the future of libraries and museums will be as knowledge centres with a dynamic framework, where librarians, museum curators, print and electronic materials, artefacts, and manuscripts live in an interchange of ideas in unique, integrative “spaces” where ideas can flourish, live, grow, and be protected.

Commonly, libraries’ and museums’ primary functions include the acquisition, organisation, preservation, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear. However, these institutions have not only continued to have a number of important social roles in promoting education, research, increasing cultural awareness, serving as local community centres, providing leisure and recreation, championing social advocacy, and even acting as shelter for vulnerable and at-risk social groups (Abdulsalami, Okezie, and Agbo, 2013; Buckland, 1999; England, 2009; Handa, 2015; Juchnevicius, 2014; Lehman, 2011; Given, and Buschman, 2010).

Based on the theoretical understanding of libraries and museums as dynamic institutions which not only store, systemise, preserve, and disseminate information but also produce and help generate knowledge, this chapter examines the St. Petersburg State University (SPSU) libraries’ and museums’ roles in the development of Arctic social science research. This chapter assumes that if libraries and