

LibraryCrunch

Bringing You A "Library 2.0" Perspective, by Michael Casey

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We Shape Our Own Future

[And he questioned the call to spend so much on an entity whose future he sees as limited.](#)

This quote comes from an article about the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library and a controversy they are embroiled in concerning a \$60,000 expenditure for marketing. Though the system has seen a 13% increase in circulation, they face criticism for building expansion cost overruns and have sought the \$60K in an effort to swing public opinion. Without getting into the expansion project issue, I think it's worth looking at some of the language being used in the debate.

The editorial writer, Ruth Holladay, obviously questions the spending when she says, *"Consider the word spread, at a fraction of the cost. Also consider the door open for another debate on the library's past, present and future...This institution is in flux. Public libraries nationally are cutting staff, feeling the Internet heat and facing competition from bookstores and film rental outlets."*

Curt Coonrod, a former local politician, appears to be leading the attack against the library with quotes like this: *"He questioned the call to spend so much on an entity whose future he sees as limited...Looking ahead to the information age, this is just not the way people get their information...That's true even today, let alone 20 years from now, when the bonds are still outstanding."*

And, *"Libraries remain as popular as mother and apple pie to the public. We were all brought up to think that libraries are good things -- and they are...But they are changing, and nobody has a crystal ball into the library's future."*

Library system CEO Linda Mielke is quoted as saying, *"Google is replacing the professional librarian...Libraries must stock best-selling books and DVDs to keep pace."*

Looking at what's going on, the language being used, and the opinions being quickly formed, spending \$60K on public relations (spin control) may be the best money ever spent.

The language being tossed around is self-defeating. No library, or library board, should be looking into the proverbial crystal ball for the future of the library. The library and its leadership need to be shaping that future today. Perhaps easier said than done, but the power is in the library's hands to shape themselves and grow to meet user needs. The tools to do just that are being discussed right now, at conferences and on blogs and throughout the library world. We shape our own future, but we cannot do that if we sit back and simply watch.

Posted by Michael on October 27, 2005 08:03 AM | [Permalink](#)

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Of course, notice that most of the people saying such things are the politicians who lack vision as well as are already wealthy, meaning they probably could care less about providing equal access to people not able to afford it otherwise. Clearly it is just abandoning the notion of things for the public good in favor of good for the few and forsake the rest (I could actually use a less polite term, but I will refrain). That the library CEO said what she said really leaves a lot to be desired. If our own cannot stand up for libraries, why should we expect communities and politicians to do so?

Posted by: [Angel](#) | [October 31, 2005 06:40 PM](#)

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