

INCONECSS Community Meeting on November 13th 2023

see <https://www.inconecss.eu/community/>

Topic: „New skills /New job profiles / Staff development“

Studying computer science for libraries means: „You can't teach old dogs new tricks“ was yesterday – a proof

Summary

The systematic training of career changer and activities in the area of human resources development are increasingly guaranteeing that libraries keep up with the times in terms of their technological development. Lifelong learning is in vogue and proven, as reflected in the quote in the title and the underlying article.¹

About Frank Seeliger

Briefly about my background: I have been head of the university library of a technical university in Brandenburg since 2006 and had previously trained as an electrician, studied electrical engineering and cultural anthropology, and later library science. I want to express the fact that learning something new, getting involved in something new, is very important for myself. I think I live this conviction too, that's how I work here. I like to tell my family that if I could choose between working and training, I would rather learn something new ;-)

The beginnings of library work

When I started working in libraries many years ago, I noticed that modern technologies were not being used properly and that there was often little understanding of how they worked. Smattering use was very common. The librarians'skills and their work have deeply changed compared to their handwork-like procedures before.

We asked students in Brandenburg last Friday during a conference² what they would like to see in the context of digital transformation. If they could submit an application, what could it achieve? Their answer was that they didn't want a new 'toy' as a tool or feature, but instead wanted teachers to provide better digital teaching. They should be more familiar with the new possibilities of online teaching. By analogy, we should have a good understanding of how our systems work and what answers they provide!

In this respect, in the context of libraries, we here in Wildau always tried to pass on specialist knowledge, especially to colleagues who already work in libraries. For this reason, we have been offering two-day workshops for colleagues for many years, which teach the basics of computer science or knowledge about the use of modern technologies such as robots and RFID.

In this context, I would like to remind you of Prof Tochtermann's 10 theses. In the year 2013 he pronounced the ten theses on the future profile of scientific information infrastructure

¹ see Stern, Elsbeth (2006): Was Hänchen nicht lernt, lernt Hans hinterher. and source: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/bfp-2019-2057/html?lang=de>

² see <https://zdt-brandenburg.de/events/jahrestagung-2023-digitale-hochschule-brandenburg/>

facilities of supraregional importance.³ The last thesis states that libraries have high computer science skills and competence. Looking critically at ourselves, we have to realise that there is still a lot of room for improvement.

Roads taken

Obviously we have to accept for the coming years and in a time of increasing technologization that we will have to compensate for and manage a shortage of skilled workers for various reasons. Our target group is therefore career changers and colleagues who want to develop their technological skills.

They should not become programmers or study higher maths. Our approach is to enable colleagues with professional experience to immerse themselves in the world of computer science. They should act as a hinge and link between IT service providers and libraries. To this goal, we launched the part-time Master's degree programme in Library Computer Sciences in 2015 with ten modules such as Java programming, databases, search engines, IT security, etc.⁴ The results, as can be seen on the open access repository for the published theses, are impressive.⁵

We were also able in cooperation with the network of Information and Library Science Training and Study Programmes (KIBA) to launch and to establish a German-language education fair in the library sector for one Friday afternoon in January. Colleagues from Switzerland, Austria and Germany take part in this event. All further education and training programmes in the library sector are thus available at a glance for German-speaking countries.⁶

Pitfalls for investments in education

However, experience to date has shown that colleagues find it difficult to invest in such programmes. There are two reasons for this.

- a) lack of support by employer*
- b) lack of promotion opportunities*

It is difficult for such technical degree programmes to attract a sufficient number of students each year. This meant that many an attractive offer could not be realised, such as a certificate course for librarians in the field of artificial intelligence technologies.⁷ There was not sufficient demand.

Libraries in general must become more attractive in the competitive open labor market!! Everyone must work together on this task, whether HR departments, library managers or colleagues who are facing up to the new competences!

³ see

<https://voeb-b.at/zbw-klaus-tochtermann-10-thesen-zum-zukuenftigen-profil-von-wissenschaftlichen-informations-infrastruktureinrichtungen-mit-ueberregionaler-bedeutung/>

⁴ see <https://www.wit-wildau.de/studienprogramme/bibliotheksinformatik/>

⁵ see

<https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-th-wildau/solrsearch/index/search/searchtype/collection/id/16264/start/0/rows/20>

⁶ see for the next <https://www.wit-wildau.de/19-01-2024-zentrale-weiterbildungsmesse/>

⁷ like <https://www.wit-wildau.de/zertifikatsprogramme/kuenstliche-intelligenz-an-bibliotheken/>