

# Chapter 1

## Introduction:

### Motivations and a Brief Historical Review of “Information Technology” Leading Up to the Information Age

#### ABSTRACT

*The liberation of learning is a prelude to the expansion of the personal conscience—this expansion is the first of two of the only natural freedoms given to the individual, the other being the employment of one’s physical, mental, and emotional abilities in accord with that conscience—and becomes the foundation of all other rights and corruptions that both bless and plague every society ever created by mankind. This is fundamental and explains why universal learning is necessary for any kind of progress in the way we see, think about, and treat one another and the World around us. For every book somebody wants you to read, there is a book they do not want you to read—both can be found at the library. Let that sink into your thoughts for a moment, its meaning. That is the “library,” its very concept, and this is what it has come to represent in the minds of millions of patrons. It is a fine heritage matched by no other institution, and one that all its workers should be proud to be a part of and hopefully protect and perpetuate. This introductory chapter covers a few brief insights into why I wrote this book—subjective motivates and goals guiding its completion. The chapter is concluded with a light historical review of the pivotal technologies establishing the foundation of information technology leading into the Information Age and paving the way to changes in the library user environment.*

#### WHY?

Why? In every pursuit you engage in, the question of ‘why’ ought to be both the first and last thought on your journey. The transition and preparation

into your next journey. We judge progress not by whether we can stop asking why, but in the manner in which the context of the question changes; asking why is the core proof of sapience and remains our best yardstick of true intelligence. This one principle I used as a guiding candle in the process of composing this book—learning is a

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process that never ends and the more you know, the more you come to understand this.

The library of today is a community and cultural center, information center, and social space physical and virtual all wrapped up into one. Though the core mandate of the library remains the same—servicing the freedom and diversity of information access to all who walk through its doors—that access is fostered in the cooperation of all of these purposes coming together under one proverbial roof, again both physical and virtual. This is what our patrons’ demand of us in the field, and any library that falters in this mission will quickly discover its irrelevancy and the subsequent lack of funding that follows. Stagnation is often times the culprit that leads to our mission’s failure, as our for-profit bookstore cousins have already discovered in the last couple of decades. After they ran out of business their local corner and small-town forefathers, the large chain bookstores such as Barnes and Nobles and Borders—which is no longer in business—in turn saw the closure of many of their own brick and mortar locations. This was in the wake of their failure to capitalize on digitalization and the e-book mutiny against traditional and restrictive ink-printed content by the mostly antiquated publishing industry. As the Digital Age redefined the mediums of information and consumption, the intelligent leveraging of information technology, both current and future developments, will prove the crucial factor in the library’s success or failure. Developing, deploying, and supporting technologies that deal with information collection, organization, and dissemination is a skill set that must be directly intergraded into the library professional’s repertoire and comfort zone. Adapting, not replacing, traditional library services to these new technical skills will be the future of all information institutions. It is both of these areas together that will mold and guide the future of the library user environment.

What the library patron of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands is an egalitarian and secular place to access and exchange information, ideas, research

topics, entertainment, and to engage in formal and informal learning—a true classroom of critical thinking that no university program in the fields of art, science, and technology or place of worship can ever come close to replicating. Always in the library one can find the seed of the ‘Tree of Knowledge’ planted in the fertile soil of the spirit of understanding unbound by the biases, intolerances, and increasingly narrow specializations and ideologies inherent in all other fields of inquiry or the trendy thought-systems that weave the chaotic fabric of the society around our lives. If the patron has the will and is given the needed tools to sow these seeds in an alluvial environment of privacy and tolerance, they will indeed reap a harvest of critical thought and take this fruitful bounty beyond the walls of the library into their own lives—planting forests of knowledge in the families, communities, and nations where they make their homes, spreading the wealth and love of learning critical to the progress of humanity as a whole.

The liberation of learning is a prelude to the expansion of the personal conscience—this expansion is the first of two of the only natural freedoms given to the individual, the other being the employing of your physical, mental, and emotional abilities in accord with that conscience; and becomes the foundation of all other rights and corruptions that have both blessed and plagued every society ever created by mankind. This is fundamental and explains why universal learning is necessary for any kind of progress in the way we see, think about, and treat one another as well as the World around us. Learning is not to be confused with ‘education:’ education is a defined ideology for a specific purpose and with a corpus dictated to you by others—it is the learning of others, packaged. Education can only teach a vocation and refine a talent; techniques and a set of skills for a narrowly achieved goal. Learning, by its very definition, is unstructured and mostly unguided, and is always life-long. It is a mentality. It cannot be taught to you in any classroom, and no degree or certificate,

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