

## Chapter 70

# Globalization and Library and Information Science: Ethical Challenges

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### ABSTRACT

*Globalization is a complex set of partly contradictory forces. Driven by technological and transportation and, as in the case of libraries, high and fast transfer of information, globalization has accelerated tremendously. There are those who think globalization affects the nation, especially the developing world. They feel that their culture is fragmented as Western values and ways of life are becoming dominant, and others think that globalization creates new opportunities for those who are left out of economically, culturally, and in trade. For the development of libraries, political stability and economic growth are essential resources. At the same time, we understand that libraries are part of cultural institutions. If as some think, globalization takes away certain powers from nation-states, are libraries able to develop and preserve the nation's heritage in such environments? This chapter examines the ethical implication of globalization in the development of library and information science.*

### INTRODUCTION

Globalization broadly refers to the expansion of global linkages, the organization of social life on a global scale, and the growth of global consciousness, hence to the consolidation of world society. (The globalization website) on the one side is that globalization is a “process by which social institutions become adopted on a global scale” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999). Another definition of globalization is that it is a “process by which a business or company becomes

international” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999). Typically, when the word is used it is referring to the trade, which is the latter definition. However, it seems that the establishment of multinational corporations or even of import-export ventures would change the culture of the society in one way or another.

The word, globalization, spurs many diverse emotional reactions among people. The International Monetary Fund writes that the term “has acquired considerable emotive force” Proponents believe it is a “key to future world economic de-

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velopment” (IMF Staff, 2000). Opponents believe it is the key to destruction and increases the gap between countries. Opponents also believe that globalization can negatively impact social progress (IMF Staff, 2000).

At the same time, says Giddens, globalization creates new possibilities and motivations for local cultural autonomy and identities. This “push down effect” of globalization is the reason for revival of local nationalism and local forms of cultural identity in all parts of the world. It may seem strange but the more we globalize, the more we localize. (Giddens, 1999)

## **GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

One claim that has been made repeatedly over the last twenty years is that globalization creates a homogeneous world in which cultures are lost: “It is often said that the success of economic globalization tends towards social and cultural homogeneity” (González, 2003, p. 23). These allegations have been related mostly in discussions of multinational corporations. The premise of a homogeneous world has also been called the Americanization of the world.

It should be pointed out that globalization is not a new event or process. Many have commented “the world economy was just as globalized 100 years ago as it is today” (IMF Staff, 2000). In fact, it could be argued that globalization began centuries ago but the difference is that commerce is far more integrated in the world economy today than ever before and it is this greater integration that some argue is destroying cultures. (IMF Staff 2000).

The definition of Globalization encompasses a host of interwoven complex processes that includes amongst other things: increasing transnational movement of capital, goods, and people; closer ties via new communications technologies; a more complex international division of labor as a result of the dispersal of the production of goods

and services to a number of different locations; a rapid turnover of ideas, of images, and of patterns and objects of consumption; a growing awareness of risks and dangers that threaten the world as a whole; a quantitative increase in, and growth in importance of, transnational institutions and globally interlinked political movements. What is involved is thus the interpenetration of these processes both horizontally and vertically, and at national, sub national, and transnational levels (Randeria 1998)

What are some of the impacts globalization has created in human life? Gorman (2000) reminds us the impact created by the following:

- The globalization of trade
- The creation of an independent world economy
- The advent of global news companies, such as CNN
- A parallel increase in famine and deprivation in the developing and underdeveloped worlds
- The rise of fundamentalism across the world
- The change from industrialization to service economies in the developed world
- The conflict in all societies between “globalization” and “social atavism”
- The rise in global terrorism

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARIES**

What kind of implications does all this have on libraries? First and foremost libraries are a part of cultural institutions. For libraries to grow and serve, they require economic growth and political stability. Globalization can hardly provide these two areas especially when we are talking about developing countries. Froehlich (1992) provides the following elements in professional ethics. (1) The organization is the institution that is also a moral agent that acts in an autonomous manner

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