

Summary



I, Robot, Can Help You, Librarian / The Max Planck Institute Luxembourg's Library as Trailblazer (Juja Chakarova)

(pp. 100 – 104)

The Max Planck Institute (MPI) Luxembourg for International, European and Regulatory Procedural Law has recently begun testing the use of a robot for taking inventory. Tory's trial runs have been very satisfactory and have inspired, moreover, numerous further ideas, which Juja Chakarova describes in her article.

The use of a robot at the MPI started at a very practical level. Its tasks are to take inventory and find books. However, in a modern library there is a considerable range of tasks which a robot could do. At present there are no robots which are designed especially for libraries. In the few cases that exist, they only carry out a specific kind of task. It is conceivable, however, that the time will come when robots will be capable of multi-tasking.

The introduction of robots in libraries will allow us to keep the library open round-the-clock, seven days a week, offer precise and current information, provide library users with better services, and even entertain them. Hence it is valid to ask whether robots will only assist librarians or actually replace them. Library staff will be relieved of certain repetitive tasks and so have more time to get to know their users better and devote themselves to service-oriented work. Activities which require analytical skills, innovative concepts, inventiveness and psychological ability will continue to be the core duties of the professional library staff, whose greatest strength is and will remain being human.

A Year With NAO / A Humanoid Robot in the City Library of Cologne (Babett Hartmann)

(pp. 110 – 112)

In September 2016 the City Library of Cologne broadened its programs for STEM and coding with a very special robot: the humanoid NAO. Only 58cm (23 inches) high, it has a child-like stature, but its human-like features are kept rather abstract. The robot is equipped with a series of components and skills. Its sensory equipment include a camera, microphones, ultrasonic sensors, magneto-hydro-dynamic sensors, acceleration sensors and touch-sensitive surfaces. It can move its arms, legs and head with a total of 25 degrees of freedom. Furthermore, it has modules for the recognition of speech, objects and faces and, in theory, has a command of the rules of pronunciation in over 20 languages. For the Cologne robot, though, only German and English have been activated.

Toward the end of 2016 a team of four staff members, who worked otherwise in the IT or the cataloging departments, were assigned to the NAO robot. In the initial phase the team completed all of the necessary programming. Since February 2017 an IT student has been responsible for implementing the IT specifications. Now NAO can introduce itself and give answers to specific questions. It recognizes the faces of its team, knows how to tell time and report the current weather conditions in Cologne; it reacts when someone holds its eyes closed, can call up information from Wikipedia, give a high five, chase after a ball, hold hands while walking, and even delight users with tai chi exercises. As a later, major improvement programmers developed a menu for the direct selection of individual programs via push buttons on the robot's head and feet. This is particularly helpful when NAO is making a presentation to a larger group and its speech recognition would be highly reduced due to loud background noise.

Hindsight – Insight – Foresight / 75 Years of Library Training in Stuttgart (Cornelia Vonhof, Ulrich Wesser)

(pp. 126 – 130)

At the beginning of December 2017 professors of the Stuttgart Media University (HdM), together with experts from the field of librarianship, presented their latest research projects in three major areas. The occasion was a conference titled »75 Years Future – Library and Information Management in Transition« in celebration of 75 years of education for librarianship in Stuttgart.

The topics of the conference addressed stimulating ideas from the workplace in widely varying dimensions, while also in turn offering inspiring ideas which can be further developed in daily practice. The goal of the conference was to couple professional input and collegial exchange across all branches of librarianship and provide an opportunity to get to learn more about current developments at HdM. Each of the topics was supplemented by presentations of select student projects.

The conference was both the high point and the conclusion of the anniversary year of the academic program of library and information management at HdM, and was organized together with various cooperation partners -- professional associations, initiatives, and experts in the field.

From its inception as the »Stuttgart Library School -- Technical School for Public Libraries and Kindred Libraries«, which began operation in October 1942, the array of study programs has been continually changing throughout its 75 years in order to respond innovatively to the constantly changing framework of underlying conditions in the areas of science, society and culture, as well as to the dynamics of the profession itself. The continual adaptation of educational programs for library and information management is itself proof that libraries and information agencies have a future -- and the coursework that provides professional qualification for these institutions has a future.

Translated by Martha Baker