

Librarians' commitment to community engagement and empowerment

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Academics mainly focus on teaching, learning, and research activities. There is a criticism that academic work tends to be self-focused and not connected to the broader community and its needs. As university librarians belong to the same academic category, they also engage in these three primary activities, in addition to the technical works of a professional librarian such as organizing knowledge, and dissemination of information. Community Engagement (CE) is a campus–community partnership built on reciprocity. It is understood in various ways, but beyond teaching and research, CE is increasingly recognized as an integral component that both drives and results from intellectual achievement. The newly formed Ministry of Digital Economy in Sri Lanka envisions "a smart, prosperous nation empowered by modern technologies." In line with this vision, academic librarians should commit to developing digital literacy, AI literacy, climate literacy, and health literacy among diverse communities to create tech-savvy citizens. They must also contribute to developing policies and strategies, and to designing and conducting programmes as key stakeholders in this national effort. Ultimately, these efforts can support the growth of digital citizenship and smart cities. Hence, academic librarians as scholars should follow a standard model or framework to engage with diverse communities. There are a few models and frameworks for academics to follow. Boyer's model of scholarship provides four domains, namely the scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching. He emphasized that the four domains are jointly essential for community engagement. This paper recommends Boyer's Model of Scholarship (1990, 1996) and its extension, which has a domain of community engagement or community-engaged scholarship. These domains of scholarship will be beneficial in helping librarians to contextualize and build a coherent method for their activities. Furthermore, this framework demonstrates how scholarly activities in higher education institutions can be effectively applied to community development and empowerment.

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Digital Literacy, Community Empowerment