



Library

Ana Folque Gouveia is Director of the John Paul II University Library

Bruno Marçal is Deputy Director of the John Paul II University Library

Libraries for Community

University libraries are living organisms shaped over the years by the needs and expectations of their respective academic communities. This complex mutation and constant dynamism have revealed a strong capacity for adaptation among their professionals, in a permanent effort to acquire and confer skills in information and digital literacy, as well as to provide value-added resources and services for their users. Their work translates into a continuous flow focused on opportunities and challenges to promote greater quality and equity in knowledge creation and knowledge-sharing systems, while considering the heterogeneity of their agents and the dangers posed by global-scale misinformation.

The role of libraries is even more challenging in times of greater uncertainty, when trust in the political, economic, and social order is constantly being questioned and renegotiated. In this sense, libraries take on a role that clearly transcends the transactional context of information and scientific knowledge, asserting themselves as promoters of inclusive contexts and the development of resilient structures in which users, each in their own way, will anchor themselves. To achieve these goals, the physical and digital spaces managed by libraries are regularly adapted, enabling new dynamics and activities, and welcoming an increasingly diverse range of profiles, cultures, methodologies, and collaborative practices in a context of growing interdisciplinarity. Ultimately, a truly universal space where communities and subcommunities with very different dimensions and characteristics converge.

More recently, in a phenomenon that cuts across virtually all contexts, libraries have realized the importance of keeping pace with the implementation of Artificial Intelligence, supporting their users in

the adoption of new tools and structures for creating knowledge, while ensuring high ethical standards, respect for privacy and uniqueness, and the conscious use of data and information resources present in these models. Although the new paradigm imposed by Artificial Intelligence is particularly disruptive, it is yet another example of how libraries accept technological challenges, implementing platforms, exploring new tools, and driving global ecosystems based on interoperable standards, promoting the creation of communities at various levels and reliable knowledge structures on an unprecedented scale.

Another example that illustrates the versatility of higher education libraries and the critical role they continue to play in their communities, both in a narrow and broad sense, is their involvement in the primary goals of Open Science, namely Open Access, through the management of institutional repositories and other scientific information and publication management platforms, or even support and awareness-raising among researchers to ensure compliance with institutional policies and guidelines of funding bodies. It is also increasingly evident that libraries are actively involved in national and international communities and working groups covering other topics such as research data management, the promotion of citizen science, or the creation and sharing of open educational resources, among others, as part of a transformative movement stimulated by practical communities that promote greater democratization in the creation and sharing of scientific knowledge.

We can also see that higher education libraries recognize the importance of actively engaging in global movements to create more sustainable and socially responsible contexts. Libraries have been firmly committed to promoting and aligning themselves with the Sustainable Development Goals, both individually and in partnership with other services, and within and outside institutions. Some concrete actions aim at adopting environmental protection measures, rational and more efficient management of information resources, or raising awareness among their respective communities of the need to exercise more active and conscious citizenship.

The mission of establishing and supporting communities that share more or less specific motivations, which has gradually become structural for higher education libraries, is also reflected in the type of activities developed, with particular emphasis on cultural dynamics, encompassing not only scientific events, but also those that stimulate

a sense of belonging, inclusion, breaking isolation, combating uncertainty and anxiety, through the creation of networks that ensure functional structures and communities, even in particularly adverse circumstances, such as the pandemic or the escalation of armed conflicts that motivate, in particular, strong migratory flows. For this reason, there is a growing reflection on the spaces managed by libraries, enabling them to accommodate a different, more inclusive, and flexible reality and thus respond to current and future challenges.

In light of the above, it is clear that libraries play a strategic role in their communities, not only in a more historical dimension associated with teaching, but also in the fields of research, social responsibility, and the defence and preservation of the way of life that characterizes our societies, while still adapting to global contexts, where geography is less relevant. The sense of belonging materializes in multiple forms, through various channels, with different purposes. This will undoubtedly remain a central challenge for libraries: developing a strategy that accommodates a multiplicity of increasingly complex realities in a context of great unpredictability and constant transformation across multiple dimensions. To be part of an alliance such as *Transform4Europe*, particularly through a working group dedicated primarily to stimulating coordination between the libraries of various universities, is a unique opportunity to provide each member of this large extended community with an unprecedented set of resources and services, accompanied by a reflective process and the creation of a joint vision that anticipates individual and collective needs, which unequivocally contributes to the training of individuals with a critical sense and a sense of urgency in the face of the contextual and global challenges we face, keeping higher education libraries, as they always have been, at the centre of their communities' activities.