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Application of Johari Window Theory to Understanding Librarian's Changing Roles as Information Providers

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Taylor (1983) explores the questions of what it means to be human, and what it means to be an individual. Humans must apply an understanding of people generally to themselves and their own situation, and to have a clear self-image and idea of their role in the immediate environment. Taylor discusses the idea of gaining wisdom is through self-examination and self-knowledge. It is useful to distinguish between self-image and role in society. Self-image is the picture that each of us has of ourselves. The self is one's recognition of his or her own existence and experience. Each individual is unique and each behaves in certain ways as a result. In contrast to our self-image, our role is the picture each of us has of what we are in relation to other people. The picture we have of ourselves is quite likely to be different from the way in which other people see us and the picture they have of our relationship with them. The way we think and act depends on the way we view the world around us and our place in the world. This may vary according to our age, culture, and experience, which all affect our ideas, attitudes and interest.

Librarians and Self-Image

A secure role is important for groups and individuals. A weak self-image weakens our confidence in ourselves and in our work, and in turn weakens people's confidence in our ability to serve them. As librarians, we must bear in mind our public relations role, in order to help users. Swanson (1978), as quoted by Popoola (2005) says that the survival of humans in society depends on information for problem solving, planning, and decision-making. Moreover, librarians' work consists largely of helping others. It is therefore especially important to understand the librarian's role, and to see oneself as a person capable of performing that role. A librarian must be like a good doctor who has confidence in his or her own knowledge and ability.

Johari Window Theory

The Johari Window is a model of communication and interaction. Its name comes from the first names of Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, who created it. The window divides communication and interaction into four areas (Luft 1969). The areas are:

- Arena (Known to me and to others)
- Façade (Known only to me)
- Blind spot (Known only to others)

- Unknown (Known neither to me nor to others)

Individuals may have more emphasis on one area than others.

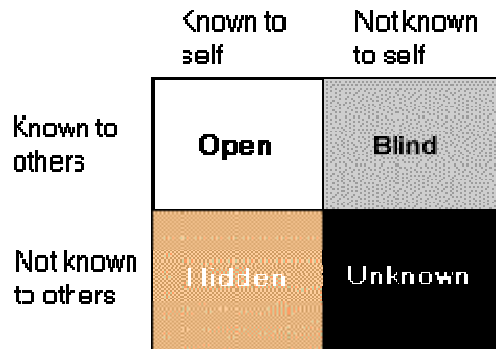


Figure 1. Illustration of Johari Window (from <http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/psy/johari.html>)

Arena

This is the part of our lives that we know about and that is known by others as well. It contains all the things that are open to us and others: name, where we live, family, personal appearance, work, shared experience, qualifications, and capabilities. As information manager, the open area must be guided wisely if our self-image must be applied positively. The area helps us to promote the image of ourselves, our institutions, and our profession. Here we show our skills and exercise our most basic freedom as individuals. The positive exercise of these abilities will encourage customers to approach us and help us to market our products and services. It will also help us in the area of strategic information management which ensures that library and information services are strategically managed in order to be in a position to deliver efficient library services. When this area is most prominent, an individual interacts and communicates freely and openly.

Façade

This is the part of our lives that we know but is hidden from others. This area contains our secret thoughts, feelings, hopes, and fears, as well as pride, dislikes, shame, or precious things that we refuse to share. As librarians, this portion may contain our academic abilities, dislike for boss, co-workers, some users, the environment, lack of satisfaction at work, and the like. The things we keep hidden can have an effect on our work. One who emphasizes the façade may try to get information from others but remain reluctant to part with information.

Blind Spot

This area represents what others know about us but which we are blind to or unaware of. It includes what others think of us, the attitudes and qualities they see in us. While we all have blind spots, when this part of the window is too prominent, it may represent a person who is not a good listener, who is unable to receive information from others. Librarians must accept constructive criticism from observers, users, and colleagues, and not be blind to the ways that others see library services and procedures.

Unknown

This part of the window represents that which is unknown both to ourselves and to others. This area may contain our deepest feelings and prejudices, the reasons why we behave and feel as we do,

our total personality perhaps our future destiny. When this area is overdeveloped, the person may be seen as an enigmatic and unpredictable figure.

The window is different for each person, depending on how that person relates to others. As knowledge management professionals who must keep the library open and inviting, we must be open and ready to share our ideas, thoughts, and feelings, to overcome our fears, and be willing to listen to criticism. Applying Johari Window theory can help us gain understanding and improve our professional relationships. Where image problems are obvious, we must not blame others; instead, we should shoulder the blame and take steps to change that image. We must embrace an open, sharing, listening, and understanding model of Johari communication and interaction.

Roles and Relationships

Information is a key resource that is used to make decisions that direct actions and control other resources. It is also used to produce goods and services to have an edge over competitors (Ward and Griffiths, 1996). People are the most valuable assets of any organization. People help organizations gain the competitive edge. A library exists to serve users. With training and experience, staff will be the library's most valued asset. Cateleyn (1981) enumerates the enhancements to librarians' roles in national development.

- Job satisfaction
- Professional attitudes
- Enhancement of qualifications
- Acquisition of skills in other fields of knowledge
- Development and maintenance of skills and abilities
- Increase in promotion prospects
- Having up-to-date knowledge
- Widening of experience and practical knowledge

Conclusion

New and emerging technologies are challenging the traditional process of teaching and learning and the way education is managed. Librarians must be positive in our outlook and proud of the fact that we are information providers. The Johari Window model of communication and interaction can help librarians in this effort. Librarians must develop the Arena: be open and receptive to trends, and user feedback. Operating in the Arena may lead us to improved human resources development which will also help us meet the challenges of today's environment.

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