

US library body CEO all praise for city librarians

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Pune: People's perception about their usefulness in the information technology age is the major challenge faced by librarians today, Janice Lachance, chief executive officer of the Washington DC-based Special Libraries' Association (SLA), said on Monday.

Lachance, who is currently on an India tour, placed librarians from the city at par with colleagues around the world. The remarks came during a workshop on embedded libraries held on Monday.

The event, titled 'The future of the information profession: Embedded librarians and beyond', was organised by the SLA jointly with the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE) and the Pune University Library and Information Science Alumni Association (PULISAA). GIPE librarian Nanaji Shewale co-ordinated the workshop, organised at the institute campus.

Speaking to TOI on the sidelines of this workshop, Lachance said, "People still feel that libraries are no longer needed in today's world of information technology. However, this is not true — many don't realise that libraries can come to the rescue when there's information overload."

Lachance, who has over 20 years of experience in the field, elaborated, "Today, if I type in a query in a search engine, I will get thousands of hits. In such a case, I will not know which one has the right information and will also waste time looking for it; and that is why we need librarians. Thus, people's perception is a challenge for us today."

As regards librarians in India and Pune in particular, Lachance remarked, "I feel the professionals here are at par with their international colleagues. They have a thirst for knowledge and hence, India is a priority for the SLA. This field is changing drastically and people need a place to turn to; and I'm sure the libraries will serve them well."

On what librarians need to do to change people's opinion, Lachance stated, "Libraries and librarians must find their own ways to inform people about their usefulness and values. They must understand the role of their organisation and accordingly be proactive to its needs." The SLA is a non-profit organisation that works for the interests of innovative information professionals (librarians) and their strategic partners.



Janice Lachance