Foreword

It is my privilege to pen the foreword to this important collection on the emerging vision of digital-age libraries “in the cloud” as viable, dynamic, and integrated enhancements to current centers for library and information resources, services, and facilities. The 19 chapters provide multifaceted, expert insight for information and knowledge management scholars, professionals, research staff, and students in higher education, especially within libraries, engineering, information technology, in computer, communication, and administrative sciences, in management and in all of primary, secondary, and higher education.

While physical, brick-and-mortar-based library resources, services and facilities persist in importance for teaching, learning, and research, the relative importance of virtual, cloud-based resources, services and facilities is increasing exponentially. We experienced a sea-change in the late and middle 1990’s, when the World Wide Web opened new vistas with GUI’s and hyperlinking. Whereas about 70% of current library resources, services, and facilities are physical and about 30% are virtual, cloud-based, and the relative importance of virtual, cloud-based libraries is growing exponentially. The capacity for physical libraries is slowing and has plateaued in most of the world, while the capacity for virtual, cloud-based libraries continues in its upward, dynamic, and accelerated growth. Within a decade, the relative percentages will likely be reversed, so that virtual, cloud-based library resources, services, and facilities will have grown to constitute 70% of the total capacity, and physical library resources, services, and facilities will remain generally static and will represent only about 30% of the total capacity.

It is in this likely scenario, that the current volume of expert essays demonstrates the value and validity of its strategic vision. The “library of the future” is virtual and cloud-based, and the 19 cogent essays in this volume guide the reader’s vision into clear focus. These expert essays offer the proven effectiveness of case-study based data related to and extrapolated out into generic, adaptable frameworks and models. Many of the essays evidence theoretical and academic perspectives, where teaching, learning, research, and digital publishing are the coin-of-the-realm and innovative knowledge (applied and theoretical) is the value and product. Others stand firmly in the commercial environment, where bottom-line profit is the value and product. Some apply proprietary tools, products and networks; others demonstrate the advantages of open-source tools, products, and communities.

The contents of this volume should prove insightful, useful, and usable for an international audience, irrespective of high-technology capacity and infrastructure. Most of the issues are presented to allow for scalability – up to greater capacity, down to lesser technological infrastructures, and out to broad regional, national, and geographic environments. The target audience of this book is professionals, students, and researchers working in the fields of information and knowledge management in various disciplines, such
as library, information, and communication sciences, administrative sciences and management, education, computer science, and information technology. Moreover, the book will provide insights and support executives concerned with cloud library management and development in different types of information and work communities and environments.

The esteemed editorial team, led by Sangeeta N. Dhamdhere, has attracted a substantive group of expert writers to present complex ideas in readable, inspiring, and ultimately practical terms. The authors represent broad professional perspectives and expertise from myriad fields: technology, knowledge creation, and management, education and pedagogy, business, communication media, and library and information science and administration. The authors represent a broad range of education, training, professional application and teaching over several continents and generations. This will certainly be an integral building block to the canon of digital-age libraries and will find a home in my consortium’s collections, the Higher Education Library and Information Network / HELIN.

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