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Changing needs, evolving roles: Academic libraries today

Peter E Sidorko

20 July 2011
Outline

• “In the flow” and “the power of pull”
• Some trends
  – Environment
  – Content
• Different needs, different responses
  – Students
  – Faculty
  – Administrators
• Academic library futures?
“In the flow” and the “power of pull”
“In the flow” and “the power of pull”

Before:
Expect workflows to be built around our service.

Now:
Build our services around workflows.

From Lorcan Dempsey: HKUL Leadership Institute, 2011
The Power of pull

**Access**: the ability to find people and resources when they are needed. Increasingly at the network level.

**Attract**: valuable and relevant people and resources to you: Social networking, conferences, and the ability to be open to and develop relationships through serendipitous encounter.

From Lorcan Dempsey: HKUL Leadership Institute, 2011
Some trends
Environment trends

- Abundance of resources and relationships challenges the role of educators.
- Work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want.
- Collaborative work.
- Cloud based.

Content trends

Mobility
- Devices
- Content

Discoverability
- Integrated content
- People
HKU Library Holdings June 2010

- 62,568 electronic journals
- 2,427,681 ebooks
- 2,796,651 print volumes
- 710 databases
- 97,762 Institutional repository items
- 52,041 computer files
“….. mere availability is meaningless ….. “*

The Internet makes everything available, but mere availability is meaningless if the products remain unknown to potential buyers. "

* This Psychologist Might Outsmart the Math Brains Competing for the Netflix Prize
http://www.wired.com/techbiz/media/magazine/16-03/mf_netflix?currentPage=1

From Lorcan Dempsey: HKUL Leadership Institute, 2011
Discoverability Trends

• Users discovering resources outside traditional library systems
• Discovery and delivery to coincide
• Usage of portable devices
• Discovery increasingly through recommending
• Users increasingly rely on emerging non traditional information objects

Discoverability Principles

• **Discovery should be organized around users rather than collections or systems.** This organization should be based on realistic, evidence-based models of our users and their research tasks.

• **Making collections discoverable** requires optimizing for access by **local and non-local user populations.**
What they do: an example

http://www.serialssolutions.com/discovery/summon/
Discovery

• Not just collections: the full range of what the library has to offer ....

  – Collections
  – Website
  – Repositories
  – People
  – Expertise
  – Services, etc
In the flow

- **Build around workflow tools:**
  - Student portal
  - Learning management system
  - Reading list
  - Endnote, ...

- **Build around network level:**
  - Mendeley
  - Google
  - Amazon
  - Flickr
  - iTunes
  - Wikipedia
  - Twitter
  - Facebook
  - Etc.
Different needs, different responses
Students
Students

• Are using library digital resources more and more
• Library website is the number 1 technology used
• Are (mostly) confident with their information search skills

Students' Use of Library Website

2004: 83.6%
2010: 94.2%
Most Used Technologies

- Learning management system: 90.3%
- Social networking websites: 90.4%
- Text message: 92.3%
- Presentation software (PowerPoint, etc.): 92.9%
- Library website: 94.2%
## Information Literacy Skills – Self Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Students Using the Technology</th>
<th>Mean*</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the Internet to effectively and efficiently search for information</td>
<td>36,716</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>0.791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the <strong>reliability and credibility</strong> of online sources of information</td>
<td>36,691</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the <strong>ethical/legal issues</strong> surrounding the access and use of digital information</td>
<td>36,773</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>1.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scale: 1 = not at all skilled, 5 = expert*
Teaching reform and library spaces

- Learner-centred approaches
- Problem based learning (PBL)
- Outcomes based student learning (OBSL)
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Multimedia
- Interactivity
- Generic skills
- etc...
For students, libraries need to (among other things) ...
Provide innovative spaces

• Reconfigure physical spaces that support organizational teaching and learning agendas
  – Flexible and varied – collaborative, individual
  – Robust technology infrastructure
  – Services that meet needs in the new environment
Provide support

• Assist students with information access and discovery skills
• Provide such assistance contextually and at point of need
Be “in the flow”

• Build around workflow tools:
  – Student portal
  – Learning management system
  – Reading list
  – Endnote, ...

• Build around network level:
  – Mendeley
  – Google
  – Amazon
  – Flickr
  – iTunes
  – Wikipedia
  – Twitter
  – Facebook
  – Etc.
Faculty
A Slice of Research Life: Information Support for Research in the United States

June 2010

Susan Kroll and Rick Forsman

- Grant Opportunities
- Managing Intellectual Property and Exploiting Commercial Value
- Finding Collaborators and Increasing Visibility
- Management and Storage of Documents and Data Sets
- Analysis of Large Text and Data Files

A Slice of Research Life: Information Support for Research in the United States

June 2010

Susan Kroll
and
Rick Forsman

• Improving Information Retrieval and Management Skills
• Managing Citations
• Choosing Where to Publish or Alternative Forms of Dissemination
• Support for Promotion and Tenure
• Managing Pre-prints, Publications, and Post-prints

For faculty, libraries need to (among other things) ...
Help them to ...

• Find collaboration partners and opportunities
• Manage their research data
• To identify and apply for grants
• With bibliometrics for promotion, tenure etc

To do much of this librarians need to step outside the building and their comfort zones. They need to be “in the flow”!
Meet them In the flow

• Build around workflow tools:
  – Student portal
  – Learning management system
  – Reading list
  – Endnote, ...

• Build around network level:
  – Mendeley
  – Google
  – Amazon
  – Flickr
  – iTunes
  – Wikipedia
  – Twitter
  – Facebook
  – Etc.
Administrators
See the library …

• As a huge expense
• No longer as the “heart” of the institution
• Does not demonstrate the value it brings
• As a place they do not visit
For administrators, libraries need to (among other things) ...
Demonstrate that they

• Provide “value” to the organisation
• Can market and promote the “value” of the library and the librarians
• Promote the organisation’s reputation
• Increase faculty and student productivity
• Manage “information” in its broadest possible definition.
Library Futures?
The university library of the future will be sparsely staffed, highly decentralized, and have a physical plant consisting of little more than special collections and study areas...
Ithaka *Library* Survey 2010

- Priority for teaching and research support but less for acquisition
- Growth in information literacy and support for classroom instruction
- Want to invest more in discovery tools

Ithaka Library Survey 2010

- 5 years to e-journals only transition
- In 5 years 50% of books purchased are e-books
- Offsite print journals will be the norm but less so for books.

Ideally, how would you prioritize your staff resources in the following areas? Please rank the items by order of importance.

- Supporting faculty instruction and student learning
- Providing reference services
- Purchasing/licensing digital resources
- Building or maintaining local discovery resources...
- Supporting the research projects of faculty members
- Developing and maintaining special collections

[Bar chart showing percentage ranking for each activity, with blue bars indicating most important and red bars indicating second most important.]
Comparison of Faculty Members to Library Directors: How important to you is it that your college or university library provide each of the functions below?

- Teaching Facilitator
- Research Supporter
- Buyer
- Archive
- Gateway

Percentage answering 5 or 6 on a scale of 1 to 6, where 6 represents "very important" and 1 represents "not important at all."
And ...

- Less manual work(ers)
- Evolving and flexible physical spaces
- Special collections to set us apart
- Open access may yet be accepted by faculty
- Current discovery tools will disappear
- Data curation and e-science
- Embedded (in the flow) librarians
- ...
The future academic librarian?

**Skills**
- Interpersonal
- Communication (listening, writing, presenting)
- Financial management
- Spatial design
- Team working
- Team building
- Negotiating
- Customer orientation
- Cultural awareness
- Political awareness, etc.

**Characteristics**
- Initiative
- Empathy
- Adaptability
- Persuasive
- Personable
- Creative
- Entrepreneurial
- Passionate
- Trustworthy
- Intelligent (on multiple levels), etc.
THANK YOU!