

The future has already arrived. It's just not evenly distributed yet.

-William Gibson

Our Job in 10 Years: The Future of Academic Libraries

John Dupuis, York University
Janice Mutz, Lakehead University

OLA Super Conference, February 25, 2010



On predicting the future:

Predicting the future may be difficult...We have to be able to look at the evidence provided by the past and the present, and then do what hurricane forecasters do: figure out a range of likely future scenarios and prepare for them as best we can.

-Rick Anderson

"Future-Proofing Libraries: Strategies for Acquisitions, Cataloging and Collection Development"
The Serials Librarian Vol. 55 (4) 2008

The Research Library in the 21st Century: An Invitational Symposium

September 11 - 12, 2006
Austin, TX

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Overview

This is the site for the British Library/JISC/RIN/RLUK/SCONUL Libraries of the Future study (September 2009 - April 2011), being conducted by [Curtis+Cartwright Consulting Ltd.](#)

The site provides details of the [project](#), the [sponsors](#), the [project team](#) and will host published outputs as they become available. It also provides information restricted to [participants](#) in the project including workshop information, input materials and speaker biographies.

We welcome any comments or questions about the project - please see the [contact page](#) for details.



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And Now for Something Completely Different: Our Future from Outside the Box

an ALCTS Symposium at ALA Midwinter 2010

Friday, January 15, 2010, 8:30 am–5: pm
Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, Rooms 252 A/B

Several cutting-edge thinkers will prepare short opinion pieces on future trends/issues/developments that are likely to impact research, instruction, and scholarly communication. These essays will serve as the foundation for discussions between some of these thinkers, selected responses on emerging roles for libraries and librarians, particularly collection services librarians. This symposium will build upon the themes of the ALCTS Symposium, "Living Digital."

Session # 602

3:45 PM

The Future of Libraries is Now: The Deans Panel

Dr. Kenneth-Roy Bonin, Professor and Director, School of Information Studies, University of Ottawa; Dr Seamus Ross, Dean and Professor, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto; Thomas Carmichael, Dean, Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario; Moderator: Dr. Ken Haycock, Professor and Director, San Jose School of Library and Information Science

Hundreds of students are enrolled in Ontario's post graduate library studies programs. These students will drive the future of library and information science. What are the trends, perspectives, and learning opportunities available to students, and what do we as employers need to be ready for as we welcome the future into our organizations?

[Add to My Super Conference](#)

**No Brief Candle
Reconceiving Research
Libraries for the 21st Century**

August 2008

This is not a presentation

Think of it as the unconference portion
of OLA 2010

This session belongs to all of us

It's a conversation about the
future of our shared profession.

We're just the ringleaders
and facilitators

Provocative, Being

Be a library provocateur by making bold statements like:

- Library instruction doesn't work.
- Library catalogs are obsolete.
- Reference is dead.
- Librarianship is not a science.
- Google wins.

Be careful not to be *too* provocative, lest you run the risk of talking yourself out of your cushy job.

-A Librarian's Guide to Etiquette

<http://libetiquette.blogspot.com/2007/10/provocative-being.html>

Assumptions

- All of our institutions are different
- There is no single future, only a multitude
- Our first loyalty is to our patrons
- Our focus is educational mission of our institutions
- Libraries and librarians have something useful to offer
- The genie is out of the bottle, there's no going back
- Baby, bath water
- No one else is going to stick up for us

Three Key Questions

- What is our relationship to stuff?
- What value does our physical space add to the educational experience?
- What is our area of expertise on a campus full of experts?

A reality check

- Who owns a cellphone?
- A smart phone?
- An ebook reader?

- Who's tried accessing their library's eresources on one of those devices?

- Facebook?
- Twitter?
- Blog?
- IM/Texting?

- Pew Millennials quiz?

Laptops, WiFi and online catalogues make the traditional library obsolete.

-Henry Petroski
ASEE Prism Magazine

My challenge is serious. In 10 or 20 years, we won't need buildings to house books. No library. Who is going to need librarians?

-Daniel Lemire

<http://twitter.com/lemire/statuses/6348788631>

Burn down the library. C'mon, all the books in the world are already digitized. Burn the thing down...Stop air conditioning the books. Enough already.

-Adrian Sannier

via <http://acrlog.org/2008/08/19/library-as-place-for-air-conditioning-books/>

No offense or disrespect intended but is the traditional librarian/library role going to go the way of print media?

-Deepak Singh

<http://twitter.com/mndoci/statuses/8264399362>

But, overall, I think libraries are headed in the same direction as bookstores and in obedience to the same logic—falling in tandem with the rise of ebooks.

-Tim Spalding

<http://www.librarything.com/thingology/2010/02/why-are-you-for-killing-libraries.php>

I love the smell of desperate librarian in the morning.

- Principal Snyder

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, "Gingerbread"

Could academic libraries start
to disappear from the landscape
in the 10-20 year timeframe?

Yes.

Let's talk about how we can
keep that from happening.

Some thoughts

Attention is the first currency of the digital realm...

Reputation is the second currency of the digital realm...

To me this means that in the digital realm, you have to stop thinking that you're in the XYZ business...and start thinking that you're in the attention and reputation business.

-Richard Akerman

http://scilib.typepad.com/science_library_pad/2008/01/the-currencies.html

One of the great strengths of Friendfeed is that it has promoted conversations across boundaries that are traditionally very hard to bridge. The ongoing collision between the library and scientific communities on Friendfeed may rank one day as its most important achievement, at least in the research space.

-Cameron Neylon

<http://cameronneylon.net/blog/friendfeed-for-research-first-impressions-of-sciencefeed/>

We always tell our students that not everything is available for free on the internet...

What happens when the free stuff truly becomes "good enough?"

Should we work for or against that possibility?

What if Google buys Elsevier?

Thomson?

SirsiDynix?

Can you imagine a day when we buy all or nearly all of our books from Google?

How about other content too?

Will we move from collecting the whole world
for our patrons to collecting
our patrons for the whole world?

(paraphrased from Dorothea Salo)

When you see a great big room full of books,
do you see it as something alive
or as something
dead?

How will the movement to Open Access
for scholarly content affect our
collections budget?

What happens to the money
that is saved?

What's the media business model in a world where the marginal cost of each copy is zero?

This is why I've always found the publishing disdain for "user generated content" to be so perplexing. The fundamental job of publishing is curation -- finding good stuff and bringing it to an audience that might not otherwise encounter it.

-Tim O'Reilly

http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2008/01/wikipedia_community_publishing.html

Second Life, Joining

Librarians should think twice before joining Second Life in an attempt to connect with patrons. Your patrons don't want to be friends with you in real life, so it's not likely that they'll be interested in hanging out with your avatar.

-A Librarian's Guide to Ettiquette

<http://libetiquette.blogspot.com/2007/02/second-life-joining.html>

Library 2.0 proponents have a lot to say about what we should do differently, but far less to say about why we should do it. At times, when someone's vision of a not-too-far-in-the-future library service begins to sound like an iTunes store for the e-book reader, committed librarians begin to wonder, "What would be the point?"

-Rory Litwin

<http://libraryjuicepress.com/blog/?p=353>

Did you become a librarian to serve coffee to teenagers?

To play video games with them?

Is a bookless library just a glorified
study hall or student centre?

But I leave u with this to ponder: are your librarians your rockstars in your community? Should they be? If so, how do u get there?

-David Lee King

<http://twitter.com/davidleeking/status/5021416848>

How and where we interface with our users is where the rubber meets the road and should merit a little more thought than simply thrusting a MySpace page in their face or building a new library in Second Life -- a service our users overwhelmingly do not use and, which seems to me, like a creepy post-apocalyptic wasteland.

-John Blyberg

<http://www.blyberg.net/2008/01/17/library-20-debased/>

I have always wished for my computer to be as easy to use as my telephone; my wish has come true because I can no longer figure out how to use my telephone.

-Bjarne Stroustrup

http://www.research.att.com/%7Ebs/bs_faq.html#really-say-that

Accept the new search paradigm. Accept the short-term risk to avoid long-term disintermediation, give up our rules and make complexity simple."

-Jane Burke (VP Serials Solutions)

from "Discover vs. Disintermediation" Presentation at Charleston Conference, Nov. 2009

Are ebook readers a disruptive technology for libraries?

Or just a passing trend?

Which device wins?

Desktop, laptop, netbook, ebook reader,
cellphone, smart phone, tablet.

Or is it combination of devices?

An exercise

- Think of all the most disruptive forces and trends we've been discussing
- Apply them to two areas of our current situation
- One related to stuff and one to services

- Think of the best thing that could happen in the next 10 years and the worst

- Divide your sheet into four quadrants

The future of...Pick one from each column!

1. Books
2. Scholarly monographs
3. magazines
4. Journals
5. Aggregators
6. A&I databases
7. Digital content collections
8. Archives
9. Special collections
10. Newspapers
11. Data
12. Images
13. Film
14. Music

1. Reference
2. Computer labs
3. Social media/networks
4. Curriculum integration
5. Information literacy
6. Learning commons
7. Cafes
8. Library website
9. Faculty Liaison
10. Digitization projects
11. Institutional repositories
12. Online tutorials
13. Virtual worlds
14. Journal hosting

The way forward

We have to:

- Be at the forefront of changes in scholarly communications
- Be the social learning space on campus
- Engage our campus communities
- Have a role in the institution's educational mission
- Provide virtual spaces that are invisible, social, scalable...
- Decide what's worth paying for
- Focus on content not container
- Avoid vision drift

Preparing for the future

We need to practice our own lifelong learning preaching.

- Web 2.0, learning about and learning in
- Read books
- Trend watching
- Blogs are a wonderful source
- And not just library blogs...
- Conferences
- And not just library conferences...
- The scholarly literature
- And not just the LIS scholarly literature...
- Experiment with new technologies, programs and processes, without being afraid to fail

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