Partnering For The Future
Helen Hayes

Anne Lipow's approach to life was always positive. While others might be marshalling arguments for "why not", she would be encouraging "how to" approaches to meeting organizational challenges. One of the first times I met Anne she was wearing a T-shirt with "I Crossed the Internet Threshold" emblazoned across the front. At the time this was a serious challenge to the group that she was about to enthuse into doing just that. It seems therefore appropriate that this paper should raise some challenging issues for libraries that Anne would have considered to be exciting opportunities and how libraries can address these complexities in our institutions.

All higher education institutions are undergoing significant adaptations to the increasingly global, knowledge-based economies in which they operate. Competition to attract the best students and staff on an international scale is growing, and league tables have become increasingly important for gaining and maintaining competitive edge. Vice Chancellors with business experience are entering University leadership where once only senior academics would be found. Funding over and above that provided through funded student places is increasingly important and income generated through fees, research grants and other business initiatives help to make up an ever-larger proportion of total funds, to support innovation and meet recurrent costs.

Helen Hayes recently returned to Australia having served as Vice Principal for Knowledge Management and Librarian to the University at the University of Edinburgh. Ms. Hayes held a number of key executive positions in Australia including president of the Council of Australian University Librarians from 1998 to 2002, and prior to this she was President of the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services. Ms. Hayes is currently a member of the Stanford University Library and Information Resources Advisory Council. In recognition of her work on behalf of libraries in Australia, Ms Hayes was awarded a fellowship of the Australia Information and Library Association and received national recognition by being named Australian Business Woman of the Year in the Corporate and Government sector in 1999.

This places increasing pressure on all support group services to justify the resources they use, and this is nowhere more pressing than for library and information services.

In addition, technological advances and ICT has put the 'e' into everything. Thirty years ago the online industry was in the hands of six companies and a few government agencies, whereas technology today is in the hands of virtually everyone who wants it.   Libraries have been able to move with, and even keep ahead of, this tidal wave, but it is becoming harder to maintain the pace of change while at the same time driving down overall costs. Keeping momentum for existing services and being innovative for introducing new services is a real challenge in a resource-constrained environment. At the same time library users have become increasingly proficient consumers of information and are more demanding of the services that libraries provide.   Internet time has created demand for 24x7x365 and information that is "a zero click away". Students attitudes are being influenced by changing patterns of work, as many must help to meet the costs of their own education by working part-time, and this creates an even greater demand for easy, flexible, anytime delivery.   Not only are we being challenged by our funders, and by our users, but there are additional trends that are significantly changing the fabric of our business, causing libraries to re-think and re-align their business focus.   Some of these trends are:

- The emergence of Google and Google Scholar late in 2004 which is now tapping literature that was less easy to access in the past and is proving to be a great benefit to researchers. It has replaced the library as the first port of call for enquiry.
- Mass digitization by Google of some 10 million items from the libraries of Stanford, Oxford, Harvard, Michigan and the New York Public Library is bringing enormous quantities of high quality information online.   Projects led by Amazon, Yahoo and Microsoft are beginning to create the global virtual library.
- Social software such as blogs and wikis are making available huge quantities of free information in areas of interest to many library users.   Communities of practice are forming without reference to

traditional boundaries around common themes and issues in an economy of "give and take".

- Disintermediation as a business strategy being pursued by commercial information suppliers to reduce costs and achieve speedier delivery to end users.

- 'Pay per view' and 'on-demand' publishing is increasingly breaking information down into chunks available anywhere, anytime at an affordable price.

- The falling cost of computing, and the pervasive nature of the digital environment are now the norm for the developed world and 'e' will soon disappear as a prefix from our language.

In this context, the question arises as to the value libraries will be adding for their stakeholders in five or ten years time, when these trends alongside providers that have deeper pockets, greater access to expertise and more ability to innovate, take over a greater part of the cyberspace in which libraries have been the primary players. Anne Lipow would have clearly seen this as an opportunity to improve our business in new and exciting ways.

Setting aside for the moment the positive arguments that relate to our great traditions embodied in our special and rare collections and traditional user services, libraries have a further major advantage over external suppliers of information. Libraries are in the unique position of being close to, and able to best understand, the businesses of their academy, and a library's competitive advantage is to demonstrate to users and institutional leaders that all of the services they provide clearly enhance the business of the academic enterprise. To achieve this advantage, alignment of all library services to academic strategy must be demonstrated whether re-shelving books or undertaking a complex search, and library staff need to be made aware of the contribution that their work makes to the overall academic mission of the institution. To understand academic needs, both strategically and operationally, libraries must work at several levels. Operationally, this will be closely with user groups at the coal face conducting research into user needs, guiding users to information resources, customizing resources to their teaching and research needs and helping members of the University to be

more effective and more innovative in their work. Strategically, they must understand the future directions, research priorities and areas of development that will be important to support building greater capability by aligning resources and services to high-level priorities. Libraries need to engage with the leadership thinking in academic departments, Schools and Colleges and other support groups so that choices can be made that relate clearly to key areas of planning and development. This requires not only engagement by subject specialists and systems staff, but also by trusted library leaders who are able to discuss issues around academic mission, goals, and priorities and to clearly articulate this context and how it influences library resource allocation. All too often engagement with academics has been around fair distribution of resources allocated in a collegial way that may appease many but not be supporting key institutional goals and targets.

The current model of academic engagement relies heavily on the excellent work of subject librarians and the available time of the senior managers, but given the strategic importance of building partnership with academic and student groups there is immense value to be gained by appointing senior staff who are primarily responsible for customer relationships in order to develop these relationships further. These staff would be expected to combine the skills of marketing, business analysis and service delivery, and possess outstanding personal attributes that would include for being innovative, outwardly-facing, team players with broad knowledge and the ability to influence and effect change. Senior customer relationship managers would engage with academics in planning and decision-making, while also being a key part of library planning and resource allocation, acting as the primary interface between academic leadership in colleges, and library leadership. Such individuals may be appointed from an academic area or from the library itself, recognizing that each would bring different strengths to this post. It is the ability to understand academic needs and align library services to these as they develop that is important. Nevertheless if a customer relationship manager is drawn from an academic environment, excellent induction into the full range of library services will be required.

In an increasingly digital world, human interactions are themselves increasingly important for achieving a common understanding for all

involved concerning the range and depth of services that libraries provide, and for showing how these services support and enhance the work of the institution in teaching, learning, research and knowledge transfer. Personal interactions enhance the prospect of engagement and creating greater mutual understanding, which enables librarians to work in partnership with students and staff to discover new and better avenues for enhancing their work, through the resources and services the library provides. By creating regular dialogue with academic colleagues at both the strategic and operational levels that informs library and information support, librarians are more likely to be viewed as valued peers, and as such to discover new ways of operating that are more satisfying and challenging than previously. That is, libraries are, or need to be, in "mission shift" from being providers and supporters to partners and colleagues in the academic enterprise.

By being closely integrated with the academic enterprise and by contributing clearly to the core mission and objectives of the institution, libraries are likely to receive more sympathetic consideration during institutional budget reviews. For example, a collaboration between the student body and the library at the University of Edinburgh in 2004 led to a number of library initiatives being accelerated through the university's planning and budgeting processes. This followed a joint study involving students, academic and library staff to consider student needs over a 5 year period and the recommendations received support from academic and support groups based on the highly collaborative approach which aims to improve the student experience in a range of ways. As a result hours of service were increased, new electronic resources were considerably enhanced and there is a major project to redevelop the Main Library by redesigning learning spaces for interactive and group learning, and for quiet study, with a new café where reading, texting and coffee go together.

An extract from this 2004 report provides a flavor of how students viewed the way library services should be developed.

> "Students' work patterns are changing. At the same time as
> having an instant message conversation you could be

> searching online, reading an e-journal, checking your email and writing your essay!   Understanding the way students want to work, and providing them with the ability to work the way they want is synonymous with ensuring that students are efficient and effective learners who are able to manage knowledge when and how they want it.   Different types of students require different methods to learn, support needs to be based on the principle of 'plug and play'[1].

The ability to understand the particular needs of customer groups and to engage with users of all kinds moves libraries from being provider-centric to user-centric; delivering services from the perspective of researcher, teacher and learner, while recognizing that within these groups there is limited homogeneity.   In a user-centric model we provide services to support the function that is being performed and not by creating services around existing library work group structures.   The model therefore works best where collaboration and shared working is part of the library and information culture and where communication is well developed across internal and external work boundaries.

In practice the user-centric service model when applied to particular library programs, is closely aligned to the mission and objectives of the institution and reflects the needs and aspirations of key user communities. For example, when applied to a collection strategy it will reflect the primary mission whether the focus of the institution is primarily on research, teaching or both, and how these should be addressed reflecting in the objectives a clear understanding of those areas of teaching or research that are high impact and high priority including those areas that provide competitive advantage.   For a research-intensive university, high priority areas are more likely to need deep and rich collections complemented by esoteric resources, primary sources, special collections and well developed complementary services, such as subject portals and repositories, to provide particular advantage to researchers.   In the mission-driven model no collection should be acquired or exploited in isolation from the value it provides to research or teaching, and every

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[1] Sarah Nicholson, Vice President Research, Edinburgh University Students Association

opportunity should be taken to obtain best value from that resource. For example, an international team of experts led by the University of Edinburgh has produced numerous research papers as a result of the high resolution digitization of the most important of Christine de Pizan's surviving presentation manuscripts, the British Library's Harley MSS 4431 (c.1413), exposing the lavishly illuminated manuscript to greater interpretation and analysis.

The information seeking habits of researchers vary greatly and where science, technology and medicine (STM) relies almost entirely on electronic information, in the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) a hybrid environment is still common. Not only will researchers in STM require digital print material, but also data which are important for areas such as informatics, astronomy, biology, crystallography and others. If libraries wish to become strategic partners with academics in STM they must engage in e-science, data storage and preservation as part of the services they provide. There are many sources of information beyond more generally acknowledged library resources sometimes held in departmental files or laboratories or possibly held elsewhere but may only be known to a few enthusiastic researchers. Many of these resources require better management whether they form part of the library's collections or not. Professional judgment is needed to guide appropriate identification, acquisition, management and retention of the range of information resources an institution creates as part of its normal business.

Subject and format repositories add value to collections by offering access to a wider and deeper range of materials for teaching and for research. For example, researchers and teachers alike at the University of Edinburgh have access to repositories produced by the library on the basis of its own collections which can be complemented by digitized treasures held in other collections in order to compose important virtual collections. Edinburgh currently offers the Walter Scott Digital Archive, for example, which is based on the extensive Corson Collection of Walter Scott material held in Special Collections. Other examples include the Baillie Papers, digitized from the collection of John Baillie, an early 20th century Free Church minister and leading theologian, which are an important resource for researchers in church

history.   The Charting the Nation image collection of over 3,500 high-resolution images includes a wide variety of maps, atlases and other bound books, together with important manuscript and printed texts relating to the geography and mapping of Scotland from 1550 to 1740 and beyond.

These repositories of digital material represent curated collections of value to the University community but also to scholarship more generally.

The library is also working through a program of digitization of discrete items, from its own collections, from those of the Museums and Galleries of the University, and from academic Schools, in order to provide general-purpose repositories.   The most prominent of these is our repository of images, which is currently used in the teaching of fine art, art history and architecture, but in time as the repository grows it will also support teaching in medicine and across the range of science and engineering subjects.   Its images are restricted for use within the University, and they can be exported for use by individual academics in creating their own customized collections to support courses, with image management and presentation software also provided by the library.   In the same way, 'born digital' material can also be stored in repositories now provided by the library.   Teachers can draw on re-usable digital learning objects via the LORE (Learning Objects Repository for Edinburgh University).

In addition researchers can access the public outputs of the whole University academic community, as well as deposit and retrieve their own research outputs, having confidence that these will be preserved for the longer term.   To this end, many libraries are now developing Open Access Archives. This exposes material that may not be placed in a refereed journal and also helps to mitigate the high prices demanded of libraries by some publishers for the material that their own researchers produce.   In many cases open access publication in local repositories satisfies research funding bodies who require that publicly funded research is made more widely available. The Edinburgh Research Archive fulfills a strategic need for the University as a digital repository containing the outputs of the University of Edinburgh.   It contains full text theses and dissertations, book chapters, journal pre-prints and peer reviewed pre-prints, and has value as a record of the University's intellectual outputs as well as being useful for reporting and review.

As mentioned previously library strategy needs to address the broader university information environment and include collections that are neither acquired nor held in the library, such as the extensive local cultural assets held in galleries and museums, or even in the office spaces of staff members. Librarians need to partner with archives and records staff to ensure that coordination over the range of information assets is achieved.

The greatest value from all information investments can only be achieved when relevant information that is held locally or elsewhere is exposed to the right person in the right context. Understanding the needs of each discipline and balancing collections development against institutional priorities, building areas of academic excellence while acknowledging historical strengths does not necessarily mean that a collections or services budget should be evenly spread across subject areas without differentiating and rebalancing as appropriate against institutional priorities. In addition, the most effective collection strategy does not necessarily rely on building the largest collection but recognizes that relevance and differentiation are essential for supporting institutional goals and objectives. No single library can purchase everything it wants or house everything it requires in perpetuity so collaborations that achieve broader access, more efficient resource use and better service delivery need to be explored and developed with other information providers. As researchers are expected to assume ever more administrative tasks, services such as customized alerts to newly discovered material, federated searching across multiple and appropriate datasets, being able to track and trail as needs dictate are services that can provide highly sophisticated information delivery to teachers and researchers, enabling them to be more effective in their work. Libraries are increasingly adding value not just by collecting and acquiring knowledge, but by contextualizing it thereby increasing opportunities for researchers to develop new knowledge. Understanding the needs of academics, and providing better ways of supporting their educational aims, gives strategic advantage to the university and recognition to libraries for understanding these priorities.

By moving from provider-centric to user-centric services, there are opportunities to enhance the business of the University that requires coordination and support across different service groups while working in

partnership with academic colleagues. For example, distance-learning provision requires support from IT, e-learning, library and student services staff. IPR advice is required in a range of areas including repositories, e-learning, and knowledge transfer; information skills development requires collaboration across libraries, IT, e-learning and academic groups. Research requires support from libraries working with IT colleagues, and so on. Knowledge management is a shared environment and working in this environment involves working collaboratively to achieve user requirements based on strategic institutional needs above local agendas but where many opportunities exist for the library to take a lead coordinating role. Partnerships and collaboration that embed library services into the very fabric of the institutional mission is essential for achieving successful outcomes and recognition from academics and university administrators.

Traditional university structures are breaking down and lines of command are blurring. Librarians will be greatly valued for their ability to partner and knowing when to allow others to lead recognizing when well managed "followership" is appropriate. Users used to a virtual world expect services where support groups join to provide seamless service interactions without barriers created by structures. Any failure to recognize new roles could result in marginalization or disintermediation as our users seek more effective and flexible solutions to their information needs. The challenge of being able to respond to the demands of business priorities is to become more nimble and effective in moving resources to achieve greater alignment to institutional priorities, breaking down established silos, and viewing our work from the perspective of what value we are able to add to the work of our users rather than what we do. By taking the user-centric, more strategic approach to our work across library and organizational boundaries it becomes clear where changes are needed and where re-purposing is appropriate. This approach requires that serious attention is paid to efficiency gains, including outsourcing and self help services, so that resources can be more effectively applied to high value, high profile user services that are well regarded. Understanding client needs requires excellent liaison at both the strategic leadership level and at the coalface, combined with market influence. Recognizing that library users have different requirements based on research or teaching orientation, discipline, background or previous experience;

market research is needed to ensure that services are assigned to user requirements within the broader context of departmental and institutional priorities.

Libraries are facing many challenges in an environment that is critically aware of business needs and how well they can meet and exceed expectations will depend on how effectively contribution to business success can be demonstrated.

Background Reading

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