Potential Synergies and Future Prospects of Library Models

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Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6WwGfuJF_E&t=16s

Thoughts on the Library Models Presented

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the presentations in Nicosia on the future of the library. First, it is clear that no 'one-size-fits-all'. Libraries serve their users in different settings. As a result services and facilities need to reflect local user needs. In times of change the traditional model, where the collection lies at the centre of provision, is being stood on its head. The customer is king, and it is this realisation which has dictated the shape and nature of the new Student Centre at University College London [UCL], which will provide 1000 digitally enabled learning spaces, open 24/7, with no additional paper provision.

Second, whatever new model for library provision is chosen, it needs to be flexible to allow for change and growth. This is underlined by the emerging Open Science agenda. Open Science represents a new set of issues which institutions need to embrace – for example, openness, research data management, new metrics and new forms of evaluation. Libraries are not immune from these trends and need to offer services which support their institutional missions.

Third, in terms of finance, what impact do cutbacks have on service provision? Is one of the effects to make libraries compete against each other for resources rather than to pool resources through collaboration? Under such pressures, do libraries turn inwards and concentrate on local, short-term goals rather than thinking of the wider good?

Existing Collaboration between Libraries

Libraries are natural partners in collaborating over the provision of resources, facilities and services. The Conference in Nicosia has revealed a number of important examples. OpenAire has demonstrated impressive levels of cooperation, with over 760 validated data sources. Finland has a well-established record in collaboration. Finland's National Library provides services to the whole nation, underpinned by collaboration among Finnish libraries. The concept of sharing / joint working buttresses a very significant number of collaborative activities for libraries across Europe.

Expected and Potential Synergies among Different Library Models

All challenges are really opportunities, and the meeting in Nicosia identified a number of these. First, innovation or the possibility of innovation is a great driver for collaboration. The projected European

Open Science Cloud is a good example of the benefits that will accrue to research and to industry across national borders. The sharing which the Cloud will facilitate will encourage innovation, minimise duplication and foster a change in how research is recorded and disseminated – no longer via publications alone but also through the supporting research data.

Second, funding or the lack of it is a common theme in many of the papers that were presented in Nicosia. There is much to be learned from the Best Practice being shared amongst libraries. Libraries need to develop strategies for attracting philanthropic benefactions and actively to engage with potential funders. The partnership between the family of Stelios Ioannou and the new University of Cyprus Library is a shining example of how such collaboration can work. Another model presented in Nicosia, from which other libraries could learn, is MoMA's Library Council. This is a model which has been replicated in a number of research libraries in the UK.

Fundamental to all library models presented in Nicosia is the need for them to be supported by new skills and competencies, many of which are often not seen as library skills – for example, fundraising, change management and research data management. The development of such skills will encourage change and so facilitate the delivery of the library model which any particular institution / organisation wishes to adopt.

Suggestions for the Improvement of Library Management and Functions

There are a number of improvements which have been suggested in Nicosia. In terms of collection management and development, it is important to be culturally sensitive. Collections should not be dominated by white, male, Western and European perspectives. In this respect, MoMA's C-MAP represents that body's research and exchange initiative devoted to art in a global context. The change in the strap line used in the Copenhagen Public Libraries is most revealing in terms of collection management. The slogan has changed from 'Everything imaginable' to 'We get smarter together'. The change in culture in collecting which the new wording represents is very significant. It shows how a library service can change to match available resources to current need.

There are also changed roles for libraries, presenting new opportunities. Copenhagen Public Libraries are putting more emphasis on the strategy of supporting children and school libraries. At UCL, Open Access publishing activity has transformed the mission of the Library. UCL Library Services is no longer simply a collector, cataloguer and curator of knowledge. Through UCL Press, the UK's first fully Open Access university press, the Library has become a creator of knowledge.

A theme which has run through the meeting in Nicosia is that many libraries are undergoing culture change. This is manifested in a number of ways. For example, the user no longer feels they have to come to the library. Rather, the library needs to go to the user. This is often done digitally with services being made available 24/7 and/or with the creation of new types of learning space. Also, the collection is no longer necessarily the centre of attention, now that the citizen is king. Copenhagen provides a fine example of how to manage that change. Their strategy identifies where they add value, allocating resources and identifying mechanisms for delivering that value accordingly.

Conclusion

Libraries and cultural institutions are important in a digital age, but they will only remain so if they adapt to the changing academic and cultural settings in which they are rooted. Ongoing change is a theme of the presentations made in Nicosia on the Library of the Future. Perhaps the last word can be given to the University of London, which was established in Gower Street in 1826: 'The Council trust that they

are about to lay the foundation of an institution well adapted to communicate liberal instruction to successive generations of those who are now excluded from it […] with the advantage that accrues to all from the outward aids and instruments of libraries, museums, apparatus […].'[1] The Council laid down a charge which is as relevant to us all in 2017 as it was in the 19th century. Libraries are important, but what is needed in the 21st century is change in order to deliver that vision.

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1. From *Statement by the Council of the University of London Explanatory of the Nature and Objects of the Institution*, London 1827.