FUTURE OF LIBRARIES - AN ARCHITECT’S PERSPECTIVE

A view on libraries from outside the library sector

FUTURE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES
John Shank gives us an international view of academic libraries

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION
Better results at same cost or same results at lower cost?

MODERNISATION REVIEW OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES
A look at the recent DCMS public library review
Stop looking …

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Welcome to the spring issue of Panlibus. With libraries approaching, if not already in economic straits, we look forward and think about how to get through these difficult times. We have a review of the Department for Media, Culture and Sport’s Modernisation Review for Public Libraries (p. 4), which was commissioned to guide public libraries in England. Following on from the article by JISC in the last issue, we get a view of academic libraries, and their future, from the US perspective with John Shank, Pennsylvania State University (p. 6-7). “To remain relevant and vibrant organisations, libraries cannot afford to eliminate or fail to pursue the right blend of services and resources”.

Perhaps technology will be instrumental in surviving these uncertain times. “If library management are to avoid the likely affects of tighter budgets, then technology will hold the key” Mark Sussex of TALKINGTech (p.5) certainly thinks so. The Richard Wallis column (p.26) assesses how the Semantic Web will impact libraries, and the practices currently in place. If Library 2.0 is really going to take off, libraries will need to overcome initial barriers to entry. Phil Bradley looks at how to achieve this (p. 14-15).

In recent issues of Panlibus we have explored the benefits of a well designed library. In this issue, we take a look at libraries from an architect’s perspective (p. 10-11). “It is not by chance that many of the best spaces in the world are libraries” says Clare Wright, Architect at Wright & Wright, who has designed many buildings, including libraries, in the UK.

It has always been the case that libraries need strong leaders who are willing to take decisive actions. This is as true now as it ever was. John Hardy argues that, whether we like it or not, management information plays a vital role in decision making in libraries (p. 8-9).

This issue we feature Lorraine Arnold, Head of Cumbria Libraries as our ‘One to watch’ (p.18). Lorraine crossed sector, as well as the Pennines, when moving from Teesside University Library to take up her current role. We also feature a comment piece from Jill Lambert, CILIP trustee (p. 16-17), who rounds up some recent happening in public libraries. We will feature an in depth report on the recent DCMS review in issue 17. As always, I welcome you to send your comments for future issues.

Mark Travis
Editor, Panlibus Magazine
mark.travis@talis.com
Towards the end of March the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) finally released its Modernisation Review of Public Libraries in England. After two years of deliberating, there was no lack of anticipation surrounding this document. It was hoped that it would drive the reshaping of the public library service and provide some real and actionable policies. The review has been widely criticised for lacking any real depth and foresight, but it has focussed the mind on the public library mission.

At the heart of the review lies a ‘core offer’ that all English public libraries should put in place, although there is no legislation to make it a statutory obligation, only the promise of a review in two years time (when there may well be another government, and most likely a new minister at least). Within the core library offer lie some encouraging ideas. Free Internet access for all will open up the world of information to socially excluded citizens and the backing of the national book collection stands to make borrowing easier. However there remain questions around funding of both these instances. Local level add-ons to the core offer are suggested, but it is left to the individual library authority to formulate a plan for the future. Is this an abdication of responsibility by Government? Does it boil down to question of what a library is? Is it a local community space more than somewhere to get books?

A strategic body for the library sector will also be set up as a result of the report. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), the Advisory Council on Libraries and the Registrar of Public Lending Right will together ‘provide a stronger national voice for libraries and improve leadership and development of the sector’. Roy Clare, Chief Executive of the MLA, on the new strategic body commented “we will develop further our support for local authorities facing really tough decisions in the forthcoming period of restraint on public spending. We look forward to extending our work with libraries and to becoming the fully fledged Development Agency with the new mandate that the review proposes.” Let’s hope this is real step forward and provides the leadership and vision required in the public library sector. It does not, however, resolve the problem of public library policy on the one hand, and funding on the other coming from separate bodies that are not accountable to each other.

Tim Coates, public library advocate and consultant, shares this concern, saying that “If there are to be changes to public libraries, and changes are needed, they need to be at local authority level. There needed to be consensus between the Minister and local government about a way forward. It appears that they haven’t talked to councils, let alone the public.”

He added that the review was “terribly limp and weak; given the number of reports commissioned and the length of time taken, it was very disappointing.”

Perhaps the most authoritative part of the report is the statutory ban on libraries charging for e-books. Coates fears, though, that this will have no impact on the majority of library users, as he explains “Reasons for attending libraries vary greatly but all are equally important. A closer look at these may have helped to understand what needs to be done to address them differently. E-books are only relevant to a small minority of visitors. What about the rest?”

Fiona Williams, President of the Society of Chief Librarians, was less critical but was far from overwhelmed. “There is much that is welcome in the review, such as the clarification of the government’s position on the statutory duty and the acknowledgement of the contribution libraries make across government departments. It was also good to see so many examples of thriving library services. The aspiration for free access to the Internet supports the role of libraries in the digital participation agenda - however questions remain over how this will be made possible for those authorities who currently charge for this service. There were also omissions. The role of libraries in lifelong learning is at the heart of their core offer but this was not reflected in the review.”

“Also, in a time of increasing budget pressures on local authorities we feel the review did not go far enough in defining exactly how government will support libraries. Further clarification is needed along with implementation timescales.”

CLIP’s Glyn Daines, Director of Policy & Advocacy, welcomes the proposals put forward in the review but emphasises that political leadership is required to lead public libraries through these difficult times. “Although libraries cannot expect to be immune from expenditure reductions or significant change, the affirmation of the statutory nature of the public library service in the DCMS proposals is welcome. However it will also need to be accompanied by the political will to intervene when necessary.”

The real outcomes of the consultation have yet to be seen. Can it reverse the declining usage of public libraries? What do we know is that it will require a concerted effort from all involved - from government officials to library staff - to bring about the positive changes we all want from our public library service.

View the full report: www.dcms.gov.uk/reference_library/consultations/6752.aspx
In response to the country’s budget deficit, government spending will need to be reduced resulting in budget cuts across the public sector. A 4% funding increase from central to local government next year will be offset by a reduction in council revenues from other sources. In real terms, councils face an overall reduction in income which will drive a search for new efficiency gains.

A recent Local Government Chronicle report says that 27% of council heads believed they would only be able to maintain library services at “absolute minimum service levels” during the next five years. Library visits are up by as much as 10 - 15% as demand for services continues to rise. Library management are being challenged to do more with less - something’s got to give. The most likely casualties will be customer satisfaction and staff morale.

If library management are to avoid the likely affects of tighter budgets, then technology may hold the key. Many libraries have been benefiting from has been a quiet efficiency drive in the important area of communications. Every day thousands of library notices are printed and posted for overdue and reserved items. However, by automating their outbound notifications using voice and SMS messages, many libraries have achieved significant operating expenditure savings which have been ploughed back into frontline services. By successfully replacing manual phone calls and expensive printed notices, library services have increased the speed of notice delivery. What’s more, by utilising methods with a more potent call to action than paper, circulation is improved.

Libraries using automated messaging technologies have also minimised the impact of recent postal strikes. There’s also the benefit of reducing paper usage and improving your green credentials.

“There’s been a big drop in the number of printed letters generated: we’re now down to single figures on most days.” Bolton Libraries

Implementing these services will ensure staff spend more time helping users better utilise services rather than making phone calls or filling envelopes. Typically, services can be in place within eight weeks and one installation supports an entire library service with no staff or user application requiring roll out or training. Automated voice calls in particular tap into a wealth of data, which libraries have been collecting for years – landline telephone numbers. This ensures the investment required is usually paid back in less than 18 months or rental options can be financed using the operating expenditure saved from day one.

“Cost savings have been substantial... notices are now being received within a day rather than two to three days it took via post.” Lancashire County Library & Information Service

As operating costs continue to rise, it becomes increasingly more difficult to meet demand without reducing services. Leveraging technology to reduce printed notifications will reduce operating expenditure, protect services and save frontline staff from back office functions. Ultimately, it could help your library service do more with less.
A Blended Librarian’s perspective on choosing the path academic libraries should take in uncertain economic times

John D. Shank, Associate Instructional Design Librarian and member of EDUCAUSE.

Profound social paradigm swings influenced by disruptive technologies, shifting expectations (of students, faculty, and administrators), and the global economic downturn place the academic library at a crossroad. Global competition for student recruitment between profit and not-for-profit, private and public institutions is intensifying. Increasingly, higher education institutions are being asked to justify the costs of students’ tuition and rein in expenses (e.g. rising healthcare/employee benefits, aging infrastructure/buildings, and adopting new technologies) that drive up the cost of obtaining degrees. All these economic trends are being exacerbated and accelerated by the global economic downturn. Academic libraries are making difficult decisions about cutting hours, staffing, collections, and not updating or renovating facilities in order to deal with shrinking (or flat) budgets and increasing costs of collections (e.g. periodicals and databases). However, to remain relevant and vibrant organisations, libraries cannot afford to eliminate or fail to pursue the right blend of services and resources that allow them to be more engaged and connected with the educational process and, as such, the library will experience a renaissance where it becomes the central space for learning (physical and virtual) on campus.

How do libraries arrive at becoming the central space for learning on campus? They must focus on enhancing our users’ experience through better design in three critical areas which are the three D’s – designing learning spaces, interfaces, and digital technology places. To each of these domains, libraries must apply the ‘design thinking’ process which involves three basic steps: first, obtain and assess the students’ views, needs and/or wants; second, respond by imagining and prototyping possible solutions to address this; third, conduct formative and summative evaluations to determine if the solution works. (Bell and Shank, 2007)

What does a library look like if it has well-designed learning spaces that allow it to become the central educational commons? It would look very much like the Boscov-Lakin Information Commons at the Thun Library located at the Berks campus of the Pennsylvania State University. This library (along with other libraries that have created information, knowledge, or learning ‘commons’) experienced a remarkable transformation in the past decade that illustrates how well designed learning spaces can transform the time-honoured academic library focused on housing its collections and providing quiet study spaces to one that acts as the centralised, dynamic hub for computing, social, and educational activities.

The key elements of this redesigned library have kept the students’ needs and wants as its central focus. Students increasingly want a ‘super store’ or one-stop shop approach. This means combining spaces that meet the social and the educational, the digital, and the physical needs and wants of students. The Thun Library has many of these spaces such as: a cyber café (for food, internet surfing, and socialising), large group study rooms, individual study rooms, computing resources (i.e. techpods – computers with software needed for school work), multimedia computer lab/classrooms, an information technology support desk, a centralised library service desk, large group study tables, and small individual study carrels in quiet corners of the library. Additionally, a wireless network with laptop computers that circulate, as well as a digital commons which resides in the library with circulating equipment that students can check out to make videos or podcasts. The proof that the library is meeting students’ need and wants is best revealed in the high gate count (12000 per week for a campus of approximately 2800 students, faculty, and administrators will see the library as decidedly the path that will lead to the marginalisation of students, faculty, and administrators will be less willing to put resources (i.e. money) towards it. However, if academic librarians purposefully apply ‘design thinking’ (i.e. an iterative process for creating conditions that facilitate innovation) to enhance our patrons’ ‘user experience,’ then they will be in a better position to take a different path. This path places the library as the central educational commons where students and faculty alike find spaces, places, and resources that allow them to be more engaged and connected with the educational process and, as such, the library will experience a renaissance where it becomes the central space for learning (physical and virtual) on campus.
students) and satisfaction surveys showing extremely satisfied patrons.

What would an academic library look like if it had well designed interfaces that students intuitively knew how to use and search? Unfortunately, some of the best examples of this are outside the academic library. Internet search engines (e.g. Google) of this century have thrown open the doors of access to information. This profoundly impacts the expectations of our students. They desire a quick and easy, comprehensive search box that provides them with reasonable enough information to match their perceived need. Too long have academic librarians reveled in their desire to have more advanced and precise search tools that are designed for our search needs and wants and not our most common users – students. The future generations of online library catalogs and databases must meet the students’ want of ease of use, but still allow for more advanced functions researchers desire. This can more likely occur by applying ‘design thinking’ and forming partnerships with vendors, technology companies, and open source organisations to transform the legacy systems of the past to the future search discovery tools of tomorrow.

Lastly, what would a library look like if it leveraged well designed digital technology places? It would tap into web 2.0 social technologies, new media, learning objects, learning/course management systems, and mobile technologies that are almost ubiquitous to students today. Hybrid/Blended learning is a trend occurring in higher education in response to the above disruptive technology innovations and student expectations. Instructors are moving content, instructional activities, and communication to an online synchronous and asynchronous web-based environment in these courses.

Faculty are increasingly using web 2.0 technologies such as blogs and wikis to extend classroom discussions, as well as, making greater use of web videos, podcasts, online games, simulations, animations, and tutorials. Where is the academic library in all this? The library’s mission is to provide access to information and the fast growing arena is online digital media and digital learning materials (Shank, 2005). No other profession is in a position to better aid patrons in locating and accessing these new resources.

With the proliferation of digital information, the library no longer serves as the de facto place users go to access information and, therefore, are not immune to disruptive technologies, shifting expectations, and the global economic recession that threaten to marginalise academic libraries. Libraries need to more fully assert their role as a critical partner with faculty in helping to educate students so that they are information literate. Blended librarians believe that it is at the intersection of technology, learning, and information access (www.blendedlibrarian.org) that libraries can begin to transform their long-established organisations into the new educational commons that colleges and universities need to provide their students.

By applying ‘design thinking’ and intentionally designing learning spaces, interfaces, and digital technology places, blended librarians have a critical tool to develop the best possible ‘user experience,’ as well as help guide the library in discovering the right blend of services and resources that higher educational institutions will value and fund in tough financial times. This reinvention will transform the library into the central place (physical or virtual) for the digital information age, where a vibrant community of students, faculty and staff can participate together in a community of learning, information sharing, and educational and social conversations that facilitate and cultivate both society’s and the individual’s intellectual development.

Related Citations & Resources


Blended Librarians Online Learning Community @ www.blendedlibrarian.org
Designing Better Libraries Blog @ http://dbl.lishost.org

Contact: jds30@psu.edu
Over the course of human history in most fields of human endeavour, management by the numbers has outperformed management by instinct and experience, and (like it or not) has gradually taken over in many fields from seafaring to banking.

Books like “Competing on Analytics” make the point forcefully that good organisational performance is strongly correlated with a culture that instinctively uses numbers to support decision making. Jim Collin’s highly-rated book “Good to Great” makes the point that a key feature of successful organisations is a willingness to “face the brutal facts”. To face them, you have to know what they are, whether the subject matter is egg sales or e-resource usage.

There is some evidence that this principle applies to libraries too. In the local authority arena, the Audit Commission’s “In the Know” report (2008) documented a very strong correlation between good use of information and high CPA star rating (70% of four-star rated authorities made good use of information, versus just 10% for one and two star ratings). In an academic environment, Susan Beck (Head of Public Services, the State University of New Jersey) interviewed 59 staff in nine academic libraries and discovered among other things that: “Library service hours in all libraries visited changed as a result of data on use of services.” Accountability pressures from the parent institution are also a significant factor for these institutions and the use of assessment data provides the library with an opportunity to highlight its accomplishments with credibility and integrity.

Good management information (and an organisational culture that uses it effectively) has at least three benefits:

   You can take the benefit as providing a better service at the same cost, or alternatively a similar level of service at lower cost.

2. Stronger justification to external agencies.
   Changes to organisation, working practices, budget etc. must often be justified to others: for example to wider university authorities or to local politicians. Good information can provide powerful support to proposals of this kind.

3. More efficient management processes
   Focussed action based on hard data makes better use of management time than roomfuls of steering committees and working groups where everyone has different opinions based on the narrow slice of experience that has come their way.

Take the sad case of Middletown University library; they had some money in the budget for a feasibility study on a website refresh. They had a whole series of expensive meetings. They took advice from external consultants (more money) and at the end produced a glossy report which contained the accumulated wisdom of a host of internal and external experts. The university authorities however refused funding because they could not see any solid evidence as to the benefits.

Meanwhile Hightown University was going through a similar exercise, but users started by looking in detail at how the existing site was used: which pages were popular, what people searched for, the length of time that they stayed on particular pages and even the screen resolution and working languages of the users’ PCs. They then conducted some experiments – changing parts of the existing site and monitoring what happened as a result. Some things worked, some didn’t. They found for example that simply moving the link to the catalogue to a more prominent position substantially increased the number of virtual visits.

When Hightown presented their findings to the university authorities they had some defensible estimates of the cost and the benefits of the website refresh. The Hightown university authorities were pleased to have data rather than opinions and approved the work.

Take the example of self-service terminals. These devices and their associated infrastructure are expensive. Well used, they save money. Underused, the cost per transaction is poor. If there are queues building up to use them then maybe you need more of them.

Here are a few typical management actions that could be taken in relation to self-service terminals:

1. Moving underutilised terminals to a different location
2. Training staff to encourage customer use
3. Getting staff to hover around terminals to help new users (as is done at self-service check-outs in supermarkets)
4. Organising mailshots targeted at subgroups of borrowers whose use of terminals is below average
5. Experimenting with signage, instructional videos on YouTube etc, and monitoring effect on utilisation
6. Making a financial case for more terminals and/or rollout to additional site(s)

Other reports in a whole suite might provide part of the answer. From a chart of terminal usage by hour of day, you might for example find that at Site B one of the terminals was chronically underused (maybe indicating a poor choice of location and/or that some of the other terminals were reaching maximum capacity at peak hours.

Such examples could be multiplied endlessly. Trying to run a complex modern organisation without good management information is like covering up the instrument panel in an airliner and asking the pilot to fly as the old barnstormers did – by instinct and experience. The accident rate was a lot higher in those days.
Deciding what actions to take, and where to take it, relies on management information. Here for example is a chart produced by Talis Decisions that might form part of a suite of reports on self-service terminal usage:

Looking at this report we might conclude that

- Site A has a healthy pattern, self-service transactions forming about 90% of the total. Site A would probably be well down the list of sites that needed action. The only slight curiosity is that staff transactions are 50-50 split between conventional and staff pad (a staff pad uses the same technology as a self-service terminal, but is designed for use behind the counter by library staff). Does this indicate that staff see no particular benefit in using the staff pads, or are there insufficient numbers of them?

- At Site B transactions are 50-50 split between conventional and self-service. Is this an issue related to staff training, user profile, or terminal numbers and location?

- If Site B has any staff pads they are not being used. This would be an issue requiring investigation

- At Site C there are again clearly issues to be addressed. Self-service terminal usage is around 5%. Is this because the terminals are poorly located? Do staff not encourage their use?

Contact: john.hardy@talis.com
Visit: www.talis.com/decisions

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For further details on dates and costs, and to book, please visit talis.com/training
Looking forward to the library of the future

Sarah Gentleman
Communications Officer
Research Information Network

“The library of the future” seems to be a buzz-phrase of the moment, and in the context of challenging economic times for academic libraries, most senior library staff in higher education are now focusing their efforts on ensuring their library and information services continue to serve users’ needs whilst achieving a high level of economic efficiency. Added to this is the ever-increasing momentum of technological change that continues to affect how libraries deliver services, causing much food for thought about what their future strategic priorities should be.

Researchers are demanding more online services than ever before, and they expect to get immediate access to the resources needed for their research, regardless of where they are physically. A repeated theme emerging from the Research Information Network’s work is the issue of researchers’ appetites for more and instant access, most recently highlighted in the report, Overcoming barriers: access to research information (December 2009). In a similar vein, the British Library and JISC-funded Researchers of Tomorrow project is focusing on the information-seeking behaviour of doctoral students, with a view to ensuring the library and information services of the future match up to researchers’ expectations.

To date, strategic and business planning for academic libraries has tended to be focused on three to five year periods. Looking beyond this horizon (over ten to 20 years, or more) is less common, and more challenging. However, we need a reliable evidence base for planning future services to improve decision making and ensure we plan effectively for the future, considering the longer term, with some ‘future gazing’. The RIN, in partnership with the British Library, JISC, Research Libraries UK and SCONUL have joined together to implement a new ground-breaking project focusing on the ‘Academic libraries of the future’, being led by Curtis+Cartwright Consulting Ltd.

The project will explore future scenarios for academic libraries and information services, particularly in the context of a rapidly changing environment. It will enable higher education institutions and organisations to look at the challenges faced with a fresh focus and help with the formulation of strategies to ensure the sector continues to be a leading global force. A key focus is libraries fundamental, but changing, role in learning, teaching and research and this issue will be raised by some provocative questioning: for example, how will UK higher education be funded and operated in the long term? What will be the information needs of users? What are the implications for library and information services roles and how will they change? Also, how will the global economic crisis transform the landscape? Using this framework, the project aims to provide strategic guidance for library and information services on the direction needed for long-term planning.

A series of fact-finding workshops are planned with engagement from influential stakeholders, including institutional senior managers, librarians, funders, students, researchers, suppliers, technologists, legal specialists and others, to help inform the key global drivers essential for ensuring effective services are planned for the future. The first events are taking place in February and March 2010 and will scope out the broad global environment, to consider possible futures for higher education and the information needs of users within these scenarios. These will be followed by smaller focused workshops during the summer of 2010 to gain a focused, in-depth analysis and consider the strategic areas to be taken forward for further investigation.

FIND OUT MORE
Visit: www.futurelibraries.info
Visit: www.rin.ac.uk
Looking forward to the library future

Talis Open day: Your library on the web

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• Look at existing live sites and the benefits they have brought

shared innovation™
Phil Bradley, Internet Consultant

For those of us lucky enough to work for enlightened employers, or indeed even to be self-employed, whether to use Web 2.0 resources is simply not an issue. We find an application that we like, we load it up in our browsers or sometimes download and install it, and we make use of it. We are more productive and effective and we can actually enjoy what we do slightly more, without the constraints of limited functionality. Unfortunately however, this situation is all too rare. Educational establishments regularly block or filter a wide variety of resources, not just the inevitable Facebook and YouTube. Employers refuse to allow employees access to file sharing resources, and information professionals are blocked from using sites that would make their job of finding content much easier. There are always a variety of reasons for blocking access to tools, often to the dismay and puzzlement of employees. I spend a lot of time training people on the use of Web 2.0 resources, and this is five of my favourite (or perhaps worst) reasons for blocking access to these tools.

“It’s just a flash in the pan”

It’s worth casting your mind back a decade or so ago; I can clearly remember when people said the exact same thing about the Internet itself. ‘Full of Americans and pornography, it’s just a toy, it’ll never last’. Going back even further, I can remember that CD-ROM was derided as a pointless technology that wouldn’t catch on. More recently, the iPhone was widely criticised for a variety of reasons. The truth is that we’re living in a period of revolution, and it’s very hard to say what is going to stick around, and become integral to what we use, and what isn’t.

I’d be inclined to ask people exactly what makes them think that it’s a flash in the pan. Ask them to point to resources that no longer work. It’s also worth pointing out that the tool/resource itself is less important than the activity. However, the real crux of this argument is based on a fallacy, which is that Web 2.0 is in some way an ‘it’. You cannot buy Web 2.0; it’s not available in a box, you can’t install it onto a computer. Web 2.0 is simply a generic term for a change – not only in the way that we use the internet now, but in the tools that are available to people. I would ask people what the ‘it’ is that they’re talking about. Are they talking about social networking? In which case I’d say that Facebook has 350,000,000 users; how is that a flash in the pan? Once you start to drag people into specifics you’ll often find two things – firstly that they really don’t have any kind of clear idea as to what ‘Web 2.0’ is, and secondly, that if they do try and define it, it’s going to be in terms of social networking.

“We can’t measure how effective this is”

I understand that people want to quantify their return on investment, particularly in the current financial climate. It’s worth asking how effective a webpage is. Can the effectiveness be simply measured in terms of the actual number of visitors? Yes, but only in the crudest possible way. I would be inclined to use a two pronged argument. Decide on the tool, such as Twitter – work out a reasonable measurement, both in terms of the number of followers, but also slightly more tangential things such as increased page views. Also make the point that some things simply cannot be measured, and then start to use the resource for a reasonable period of time. This is the Trojan horse effect, because once a resource is used, and used well, it becomes second nature and the benefits will become clear.

“We have to get it right first time”

I fully understand this. What however is the ‘it’ that is being referred to? In all probability it’s the results of a particular activity. I would contend that it doesn’t actually matter that much how the result is obtained. If it’s necessary to move a large file from one email account to another, if this can’t be done traditionally, it’s time to use a file storage/delivery resource. It doesn’t matter that much which one you use – I’ll use a variety of them, depending on my mood and exactly what I want to achieve. If I want to create a training resource there are again dozens of different applications that I can use. The fact is that there’s never just one way of doing something now – there are dozens of ways. Get the activity right, but accept that there’s many ways of doing this.

“What if the application goes down?”

What happens if your pencil breaks, your pen runs out of ink or there’s a power cut? If you allow the possibility of failure to be your overriding concern never do anything. You can’t rely on any product or resource. All that you can do is have backups. I’ll commonly use two different resources to save presentations to, just in case one is down on the day I want to use it. It doesn’t take anything more than a couple of seconds to start two uploads instead of one. Cut and paste the details across from one to the other. If something is so important that it simply must work you can only do the best you
can, and have a backup plan in place. In fact, Web 2.0 resources are an advantage here, because it’s very easy to put backup plans into operation as there are multiple tools that all work in the same way.

“We can’t have a blog because someone might write nasty things in the comments”

I love this one, but it’s worrying how often I hear it. If they want to write nasty things, they can do so on Twitter, Facebook, their blog or anywhere else they choose. You have no control or input into that. If someone writes something that you don’t like in your blog you have the choice of publishing it or not. If you do publish, you can explain why they’re wrong, or you can admit that they’re right and promise to do something about it. Whichever way you come across as a listening, caring organisation. Not having a blog means that you come across as an organisation that’s too scared to interact with users, or worse, doesn’t care.

Summary

If your favourite isn’t on this list, I have another 20 listed on my website. Two final quick points – you’re not alone, either in a resource being blocked or in your frustration. Also, just because something is blocked in your organisation, that doesn’t mean it’s blocked everywhere else. Talk to friends and colleagues in different organisations and see if they’ve been able to overcome a block, and how they did it.

FIND OUT MORE

Visit: www.philb.com/articles/barriertoweb2.htm

ALT-C 2010

“Into something rich and strange” – making sense of the sea-change

The 17th international conference of the Association for Learning Technology will be held at the University of Nottingham, UK, 7-9 September 2010

Welcoming keynote:
Saul Tendler, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, and Professor of Biophysical Chemistry, University of Nottingham

Keynote speakers:
Barbara Wasson, Professor of Pedagogical Information Science at the Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen, Norway

Sugata Mitra, Professor of Educational Technology at Newcastle University
Donald Clark, Board member of Ufi, and former CEO of Epic Group plc

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Key dates
Bookings will open in early May.
“Earlybird” booking deadline: 5 July 2010.
Bookings close: 13 August 2010.

*But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange.* Ariel sings in Act III of The Tempest, by William Shakespeare
Speculating on the future of libraries, I reflected on my past to try to elicit what the magic ingredients are that make libraries so special. I have always loved libraries. As a small child I not only revelled in being able to borrow any number of books, I also liked the desks and gates and stamps that were part of the ceremony of taking possession and returning books at the public library.

Later, when I was studying architecture, I was lucky enough to use the library in the Glasgow School of Art, one of the greatest architectural spaces in the world. I first went there because it was where the bound architectural magazines were kept, which I wanted to plunder for inspiration, but soon I was back because I so much enjoyed being there. It has the most extraordinary ambience, created with high and low spaces, light and darkness, glowing coloured lights, beautiful tactile surfaces. I would bask in the evening sun, nestling in a hidden corner in Mackintosh’s exquisite joinery. It was a perfect retreat for introspection and reflection.

Sadly for students today that place is thought too precious for study and can only be seen for short viewings by appointment.

As an architect I have been extraordinarily lucky as my practice has been commissioned to design a number of libraries. Each of these has had different requirements, being for various academic institutions, Special Collections, a secondary school and the outlines of ideas for a local community library. We have developed our own philosophy and approach learning from this. Times are changing and so are libraries, but perhaps some things should stay the same.

I read this week that the British Library is fast putting all its original manuscripts online. When the e-age began I didn’t imagine that this kind of extraordinary thing would happen so quickly, but now with many people having information at the touch of a button in their pocket and access to thousands of books held in a chip that’s smaller than a fingernail, storage and the lending of books in most libraries will alter quite soon.

A concurrent change we have seen is a move to break down barriers to learning for a wider audience and a move to more informal learning in different ways and in settings many find more relaxing. One librarian had the idea of combining the town’s theatre and museum with the library, with no clearly defined physical boundary between them. So, those coming to see Peter Pan at the theatre might hear Tinkerbell and Nanny in an audio recording in the public foyer, with images of the pirates and displays of the library books and DVDs that could all be borrowed. Even in academic libraries there has been a move to provide more informal areas, where people may drink coffee, snack and chat.

Perhaps the most interesting and unknown aspect of future development is what may become available in media other than books, if libraries maintain their role of making information that is too expensive for most individuals to own, readily available. It was only about ten years ago that many libraries developed large open plan areas, that were chock-a-block with people...
glued to rows of computers, on huge desks designed to hold those first hefty machines. I imagine those relatively new ICT halls will soon be redundant.

Of all building types, the future of libraries is probably the most unpredictable. Understandably, the response when brief writing is to ask for a building that is “as flexible as possible”. Of course this makes sense but getting the best results isn’t that simple. Complete flexibility is likely to be a very expensive option. There are considerable costs, say, to having wiring designed so that plugs may be put anywhere or having structure with enough steel in it to carry heavy loads everywhere, and it is unlikely that much of this will ever be used.

It is also likely to lead to a very bland, boring anonymous sort of space. An analogy would be to design a one size fits all dress - it would be a bit of a tent. What reason would there be to alter the profile of the space by having a higher or lower ceiling? The structure could comprise identical columns equally spaced as this would allow for any configuration that may ever be required, rather like a car park. Ironically by trying to meet all the needs that may ever arise, none may be met properly. It is likely that in quite large floor plates, readers might be expected to sit anywhere, whereas if one was designing specifically for readers one might think of how their desks would be lit and placed them next to windows. It is important to work carefully in defining what should be flexible and what one should commit to now.

The Mackintosh library was finished 100 years ago and it is still a perfect place to study, with or without your laptop.

It is not by chance that many of the best spaces in the world are libraries. It is a building type that reflects the highest cultural and civic aspirations and that is an aspect that our society should keep. We should strive to create contemporary libraries that touch the human spirit, through skillful handling of space, light, materials, detailing and the careful consideration of function and flexibility.

We have attempted to do this ourselves in the conversion of the NatWest bank in Cambridge into a library for Corpus Christi College. We thought of how the building will be used, and kept noisier areas away from serious readers’ seats, which are organised around the perimeter where readers can enjoy natural light, fresh air and views. There are a wide variety of seats: in groups, individual bays and nooks and crannies. The building is designed with drama but it is also flexible. All the bookcases could be removed and reader’s seats reorganised but we assume that this would be a serious move and minor items, like light fittings would be altered.

With wider public and political consciousness of the consequences of global warming, all buildings are going to be designed to reduce energy, water consumption and CO2 emissions as we did at Corpus Christi. It had serious implications on the layout and design, to maximise the use of natural light and ventilation. It affected our choice of materials (which are heavyweight to store heat in winter and cool in summer). The materials had low embodied energy (the total energy expended in their manufacture and transportation) and were all from sustainable sources.

Whatever the means or mode, libraries will always provide a place for learning. We know that people use our libraries as a place to go to work that is distinct from where they live. For others they provide an opportunity for social interaction, which I think will always be a crucial aspect of library life too.

FIND OUT MORE

Web: www.wrightandwright.co.uk
No matter what sector you work in, it has been hard to avoid the ongoing debate about public libraries. Over the last few years, there has been the:

- Unison report on the public library service
- Swindon library service report
- Wirral public libraries inquiry
- All-Party Parliamentary Report on libraries, literacy and information management
- Unison’s People’s inquiry into the public library service

CILIP – the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals – has also contributed to the debate, with “What makes a good library service?”, a set of guidelines for English public libraries. The guidelines were developed by a small group led by Ayub Khan from Warwickshire County Council; a big effort was made to involve the Society of Chief Librarians, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the MLA (Museums, Libraries and Archives), with their representatives attending the meetings. The guidelines, which are aimed at portfolio holders [Cabinet members in local Councils with fund holding responsibilities], include the following questions:

Does your library service:

- Have a library strategy which meets the needs of the local community?
- Add value for local people and local communities?
- Reach out to the “hard to reach” members of your community who are unable or unwilling to visit the library?
- Provide what local people expect in terms of location, accessibility, materials, resources, staffing and activities?

- Contribute to the key policy objectives of your local Council, the Local Area Agreement and the aspirations of your local community?
- Make best use of the resources it receives?
- Comply with library and other relevant legislation?
- Provide professional advice and guidance on library matters to your local Council?
- Have a clear service development plan?
- Monitor, benchmark and assess its performance, and publish the results?

Following the Wirral inquiry, the DCMS launched a consultation review on the modernisation of public libraries, recently publishing the outcome in a policy statement. The DCMS see the statement as a “blueprint for England’s public library service”, with 6 aims:

- To drive the quality of all library services up to the level of the best
- To reverse the current trend of decline in library usage and grow the numbers using the library service.
- That the library service is able to respond to limited public resource and economic pressures
- To ensure that all libraries respond to a 24/7 culture and to changing expectations of people who want immediate access to information
- That all libraries grasp the opportunities presented by digitisation
- To demonstrate to citizens, commentators and politicians that libraries are still relevant and vital.

There are 54 detailed proposals – too many to comment on here – but several have been signalled out by CILIP as important. One is the commitment to free internet access, another is the guidance and best practice on consulting with local communities. The third is a “national” offer for core services, including library membership from birth, to be provided by all library authorities. As one of CILIP’s recommendations to the DCMS consultation was the development of a set of public library entitlements for citizens in England, it is gratifying to see a reflection of this in the statement.

However this plethora of initiatives must seem very confusing to observers. It can leave the impression, as Nicola Franklin wrote in Panlibus in Autumn 2009 of “endless petitions, inquiries, and reports with very little concrete action”. It is a fair comment, given the long list of references cited below. However as a member of the group which developed the “What makes a good library service?” guidelines, I would say please bear with all the initiatives, however frustrating they all seem. What is actually happening here is “advocacy”, directed at changing attitudes, policies and practices. It is never going to be easy, especially in the gloomy economic climate, but is vital if the public library service is to prosper in the 21st century. Advocacy can take many different routes, and the profession needs the support of everyone who cares about public libraries speaking up in every forum that matters.

This article does not represent the views of CILIP, but is purely personal.
Resources mentioned in this article:

The public library debate
delivering enhanced self-service transactions

Want to give your users a more convenient service?
Want to liberate staff time to use on more pro-active activities?
Want to be able to ensure borrowers can still take out books when your system is offline?
Want to take advantage of our relationships with RFID/self-service providers?

Today’s library users want convenient, discrete and efficient methods of borrowing and returning items - especially if there are payments to be made. Talis Bridge lets your customers service their own simple transactions 24/7, freeing library staff to concentrate on other frontline services.

Visit www.talis.com/bridge for more information and to register for a webinar.
The one to watch

In this issue we welcome Lorraine Arnold, County Manager - Library Services, Cumbria County Council (CCC). Lorraine recently moved from academic to public libraries when she moved across the Pennines, from Teesside University to Cumbria County Council. Panlibus Magazine was fortunate to catch up with Lorraine about her move and all it entails.

Panlibus Magazine: Hi Lorraine, first of all, what made you move from an academic to a public library?

Lorraine Arnold: From having worked in one large university library for so many years to being responsible for 48 libraries, 9 mobiles, 5 Library Links and 350 staff, is a huge change. Having developed services mainly for an academic community and although Teesside University has a strong sense of its local community in the Tees Valley and has great success with the widening participation agenda, the public library service is allowing me to have a more direct connection with local communities. Also, I think the line ‘….this isn’t a job for the faint hearted’ in the advert for the post in the CILIP Gazette was a challenge I could not ignore.

PM: How do you envisage libraries coping with public spending cuts?

LA: We are all aware that public library services need to become clearer and more focused about their purpose, the role they play in sustaining healthy communities as well as delivering their statutory duty. The DCMS is asking if/how the public library service needs to be modernised. However, any modernisation needs investment for new initiatives and advancement in technologies, such as e-books, flexible/comfortable spaces for social interactions/informal learning and investment in staff to develop the skills to create information fluent communities, which is not going to be forthcoming in the current economic climate. Therefore, like many other public services, library services need to do more with less, which will require critical analysis of what we do and why, consultation with communities to assess need and a reshaping to deliver a quality service that is fit for purpose.

PM: What other challenges have you found within the public library service?

LA: The challenges in public libraries are mainly about delivering a service to accommodate the needs from a wider variety of users with limited resources for stock, ICT and spaces, that is agreed by elected members. Another challenge is the ‘traditional’ image of a library that is still perceived sometimes and it feels that the only way to change that view is to visit a public library at different times of the week, to see the variety of activities and interactions that are taking place.

PM: Have there been any nice surprises?

LA: I have been impressed by the creativity, goodwill and the variety of delivery methods across Cumbria Library Services, but I should not be surprised, as I feel that we all enter the library profession to make a difference to society whether that is to support students in their learning in order that they achieve their career goals or to support communities to become better citizens and to respond to the needs of communities at specific times. The floods in Cumbria in November last year are an example of how public libraries connect and respond to the needs of communities. The libraries in Keswick and Ambleside, along with the mobile libraries, acted as flood support centres providing a lifeline to those communities devastated by the floods. Cockermouth Library itself was flooded and the temporary library that has been setup in the Christ Church is still providing support and a continued service to allow the local community to have some sense of normality.

PM: And finally, now you have your feet under the table, are you glad you made the switch?

LA: Of course. I regularly travel across beautiful countryside, passing by remote villages whilst I contemplate the difficult times that lie ahead for local authorities. The people of Cumbria are full of character and resilience and I am ready for the challenges that lie ahead, working with them to ensure communities such as these continue to have access to a library service, one that meets their needs and which is both effective and efficient.

PM: Lorraine, many thanks for your time and all the best for the future.
Working in close partnership with our customers, Talis has been instrumental in driving the library world forward for 40 years.

We have contributed significantly to the development of innovation in libraries and want to continue in that way. The people we work with are talented, innovative and dynamic, but above all – they believe passionately in everything they do.

We are looking for people who demonstrate a strong desire to learn, flourish in a challenging environment and are comfortable being accountable for the role they undertake. Change is an inherent part of Talis, so if you think you possess the skills, aptitude and expertise to contribute to that change, get in touch – because we’re hiring.

**Job of the month:**
**Solutions Consultant**

To find out more about the above roles, and to view a list of all our current vacancies, please visit talis.com/careers
Electronic Payments

Supporting the cashless library at the University of Plymouth

Like most libraries today, the library at University of Plymouth needs to make its back office processes as lean as possible whilst safeguarding – and enhancing - the user experience. So why did the library choose to develop an electronic payment system to achieve this?

The payment problem

The lack of payment options for library fines and charges were sharply at odds with student expectations. Library fines and charges could only be paid for at the library counter (where cash, cheques and credit cards were accepted) or by telephone (for credit card payments; the only alternative for distance learners). Both options were restricted to the library’s opening hours.

Meanwhile, considerable staff time was being wasted through inefficient workflows that had evolved to administer those payments. The library sent reports to Finance of individual transactions from Ex Libris Voyager, the University of Plymouth’s library management system, which finance staff then had to rekey into Agresso, the university’s finance system. On top of this was a huge amount of cash handling every day, hours of banking, and the manual reconciliation of spreadsheets between the library and Finance.

If an electronic payment solution could smooth out these workflow issues, then the efficiency gains could be significant. For the University Plymouth, however, the key consideration was improving the student experience, especially for distance learners and placement students. The library also has a specific and longstanding commitment to self-service, and electronic payments seemed a logical progression.

Towards a solution: the success of the View My Account Module

Committed to developing alternate payment options, staff learnt about the powerful capabilities of Talis Keystone in integrating ordering and processing operations between library and finance systems. Accordingly, Talis and the University of Plymouth agreed to a two-step project, beginning with the Talis Keystone View My Account module, making library account information available to users in the campus portal. The Talis Keystone ePayment module would then build on that foundation.

The View My Account Module was launched successfully into the SharePoint campus portal at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year, so the project was ready to move to the second phase: the Talis Keystone ePayments Module. This would involve library and finance staff agreeing a solution with the Talis consultant.

Overcoming ePayments barriers

Projects involving change in more than one function will rarely be problem-free. Finance is a business-critical function and is highly sensitive to change. The library was nevertheless anxious to simplify workflows and streamline back-office processes.

“Every time we thought we had the specification,” recalls Fiona Greig, Content and Development Manager at the University of Plymouth, “I was told to go to Finance, and they made it more complicated again. I felt that we were getting nowhere, and the start of term was getting ever closer. So I decided that we must initially focus on non-invoiced library fines and charges, although we did some testing to ensure that Talis Keystone would eventually be able to handle both invoiced and non-invoiced payments. Finance was reassured by this.”

This phased approach would prove to be a pragmatic and ultimately successful way of developing trust across the departments. Change management issues within the library itself also had to be overcome. “Among
library counter staff, there was fear and concern about the automatic update of Voyager with payment information. So for the first two months we decided to run with twice-daily manual updates to Voyager records” explains Fiona, “providing reassurance, whilst supporting our cashless library approach, which has been in place since September 2009.”

Implementing the ePayments Module

The barriers were gradually overcome, and the library was ready to launch its new payment services at the start of 2010. Fiona admits that implementing the View My Account module was smoother than ePayments, but attests that “The installation of Talis Keystone in the first place was very good from both a technical and project management perspective. The guys at Talis have been amazing. I’ve been really happy to work with everyone. We’re so happy with Keystone that we’ve now taken three modules of it, within 18 months – it’s our starting point for working smarter.”

Once logged into the SharePoint campus portal, users can see any outstanding fines and charges. Clicking the ‘Pay Now’ button directs them to the website of WPM, the university’s payment service provider. At the end of the payment transaction, they are redirected to SharePoint. Talis Keystone logs the payment locally, and with Ex-Libris Voyager unable to provide real-time access to its database, sends a file of aggregated payment records to Voyager four times a day, updating the borrower record. Users can even charge the purchase of products and services (such as printing) from the media shop to their library account and pay - all within SharePoint.

Promoting ePayments across the university

Explaining the communications plan conceived by Angela Blackman, Library Services Manager at the University of Plymouth, Fiona adds that “by using reports from Voyager we’ll identify those patrons with more than £5 of non-invoiced fees and suggest they might want to start the year by clearing their debts. But other than that, it’s just a matter of persistent messaging to the student because it’s a service that meets a particular need at a specific time. There’s no point telling them about it during induction week when they have no intention of getting a fine. Overdue notices will explain how to pay, and there are plans to add information on self-service receipts. This information will be integrated into the library induction process from next year.”

Next steps

The library’s next priority is identity management, and they have committed to a Talis Keystone solution, which will rationalise information from various campus systems, as well as align the library with the Data Protection Act. “If we are as successful in what we’re doing with electronic payments,” adds Fiona, “the intention will be to amalgamate two student services that are currently separate – crediting the campus card (on the WPM site) and paying library fines and charges (now on SharePoint).”

FIND OUT MORE

Visit: www.talis.com/integration

Talis Integration Open Days

29 April 2010, 11 May 2010

One of the challenges facing libraries in the current climate is delivering a quality library service at reduced costs. To meet expectations libraries need to streamline workflows by integrating with the other institutional systems in order to improve both user experience and create efficiencies.

This free event will explore ways in which our integration solution, Talis Keystone, can bring about savings and service enhancements by linking with the following systems:

- Finance systems
- CRM systems
- ePayment systems
- Identity management
- Portal or website

Talis Keystone isn’t dependent on the type of system you wish to integrate with, nor does it depend on your LMS provider.

Register at www.talis.com/integration/events
Engaging with the community by streamlining library procedures

During its 15 years as a Talis Library Management System (LMS) customer, Leicestershire Library Services - which provides library services for 650,000 residents across Leicestershire and Rutland - has changed dramatically. With over 4 million items issued to more than 200,000 borrowers across 58 sites, the decision in 2004 to restructure the service to improve community engagement was not taken lightly. This involved creating several new community-based posts and streamlining back-office processes.

Over the years, configuring the system had become complex and time-consuming, providing less time for staff to engage with customers. In addition, out of date borrower and item types caused confusion for staff, which in turn led to some inaccuracies in management information.

Therefore, when Leicestershire re-selected Talis to provide their LMS in 2008, it provided an ideal opportunity to review existing configurations and processes.

Removing complexity through process maps

Since many legacy procedures were still in place, consultants from Talis introduced the concept of process maps to key Leicestershire Library Services' staff. Process maps provide a pictorial high-level overview of the various stages in processes. These provided an opportunity for Leicestershire staff to re-examine why they were completing tasks in a certain way, and encouraged them to question if there was a more efficient way of doing things.

Illuminating insights

Since the team had never worked with process maps before, Talis consultants provided an overview of the methodology, helped to create initial drafts and reviewed the completed maps. The process maps were used to deconstruct long-established processes, such as the current practice of lending books for three weeks. The team found that by simply asking questions such as 'Why do we lend books out for three weeks? Is this still suitable?' they were rewarded with some illuminating insights which helped inform new policies.

The process maps covered a number of areas including frontline and circulation procedures as well as system configuration. “The whole process was extremely useful” explained Lisa Watson, LMS Project Development Officer at Leicestershire Library Services. “We couldn’t believe how complicated some of our processes were. Initially we were a bit daunted by the prospect of having to create process maps. However, the Talis team reassured us that we didn’t have to go into minute detail, and that ‘broad brush strokes’ in many cases would suffice.”

One such process review identified that if borrowers didn’t specify a collection site when placing item requests via the web, then the item would be sent to the library headquarters. This meant the borrower had to wait for the item to be routed to their home site – which involved more work for library staff. Following the process map review, the default site was set to the borrower’s home site so the item arrives quicker and library staff save time.

Simpler, more efficient services

When completed, the Talis Consulting team reviewed the process maps and made a number of recommendations including bespoke training, creation of custom scripts, local configuration enhancements as well as advice about best practice.

Commenting on the ambitious scope of the project - over 20 process maps were created over a month - Watson said: “The process has tidied up our procedures. I’d recommend examining a couple of processes, working these through, making changes to your procedures, and then moving onto the next set. It doesn’t matter if takes some time to work through the processes as by the time you’ve finished the exercise, you will want to review your original processes as all libraries are constantly changing.”

Contact: training@talis.com
Increasing numbers of public and academic library users are enjoying the advantages of Talis Prism 3 to find and access library resources.

With a single search box it’s familiar and easy to use. Results are ranked by relevance to the query, often giving immediate success, or they can be re-sorted by newest first, title or author. More search options are available for those who want to compose complex, targeted searches. Faceted navigation allows the user to home in on what they are looking for. The facets provide a map of the results, enabling the user to refine their search by library-defined criteria such as format, subject, author, date, library location, collection and more, with a single click. Rich descriptive information allows the user to evaluate and select. There are clear options for obtaining discovered items including reservations and links to electronic resources, and users can manage their accounts including renewals and PIN changes.

Talis Prism 3 is highly customisable. Corporate branding and links into the library and corporate sites give an integrated experience. The catalogue can be made more distinctive and appealing by customising the home page. For public libraries this could be with stock promotions, local news feeds via RSS and a map of branch locations. For academic libraries the search box can be embedded in other places where the users are, such as the student portal, the Virtual Learning Environment and the library home page. Some libraries such as Leicestershire have done their own design and styling, whilst others, such as the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, have used the services of Talis. Many have received positive feedback from their users on the ease of use and attractiveness of the new catalogue.

As of early February 2010, eighteen libraries are offering Talis Prism 3 to their users, with more than two million searches per month. For up-to-date information on libraries who have implemented Talis Prism 3, please visit the Talis Prism blog.

Delivered as Software as a Service (SaaS), Talis Prism 3 substantially reduces the burden and cost of deploying and maintaining software locally and reduces local hardware and bandwidth needs, whilst the library automatically benefits from frequent new releases. A connection to the local library system provides data updates as well as transaction services and real-time availability information.

Talis Prism 3 is a continually evolving application with an exciting development roadmap. One of the key developments is a Semantic Data Model, which will enable Talis Prism 3 to be much more browseable, with pages for authors, subjects and other entities, as well as connecting the data in the catalogue with data elsewhere on the Web, further enhancing the discovery experience for users.

Libraries are kept up to date with developments through the published roadmap, regular webinars and User Days. These allow libraries who have implemented, or are in the process of implementing, Talis Prism 3 to share their experiences and discuss the development plans. To register for the next event, please visit the Talis Prism 3 website.
Talis products ensure that over 100 academic and public libraries deliver best value to their citizens and students. Our suite of flexible applications help institutions to transfer resources from back-office workflows to customer-centric activities, freeing library staff from laborious processes. Libraries are more efficient, more effective, and more able to focus on improving the user experience, especially when the LMS is integrated with systems to provide joined-up solutions across the wider institution.

Driving back-office efficiencies
Talis Alto, the UK’s market leading LMS, combines powerful circulation, acquisitions, cataloguing and interloans functionality with cash handling and mobile library capabilities. The integrated offline module forms part of a rich suite of back-office functionality that includes Talis Gateway, an EDI supply chain solution that automates and streamlines procurements. Talis Base provides access to almost 30 million high quality bibliographic records from the UK’s leading databases - minimising the need for local record creation - whilst Talis Decisions enables libraries to uncover the performance of the library service and present this in flexible and meaningful ways.

Improving the user experience
Our powerful discovery tool, Talis Prism, delivers effective searching of library resources within an attractive web experience that today’s users have come to expect. Talis Engage empowers citizens to manage their own community information, whilst Talis Aspire brings reading lists, e-journals and e-books to life. Talis Message, our telephony and SMS solution, ensures users can access the library services they need, 24/7.

Integration with corporate systems
No library can exist in isolation. Talis Keystone provides a range of integration modules that connect the LMS with multiple services across the wider institution, including finance systems, campus portals and payment systems. This removes the reliance on repetitive, manual data re-entry, ensures information integrity and promotes library services across multiple channels. Furthermore, libraries can use Talis Bridge to integrate LMS data with standard or RFID-enabled self-return units to provide payments, issues, returns and renewals at customers’ convenience.

Talis products ensure that over 100 academic and public libraries deliver best value to their citizens and students. Our suite of flexible applications help institutions to transfer resources from back-office workflows to customer-centric activities, freeing library staff from laborious processes. Libraries are more efficient, more effective, and more able to focus on improving the user experience, especially when the LMS is integrated with systems to provide joined-up solutions across the wider institution.

**Table: Back Office Efficiencies**

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<td>Enhancing implementation</td>
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<td>New developments are driven by customer demand</td>
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### User Experience

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<td><strong>Admin Console</strong></td>
<td>Choice of jacket image supplier</td>
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<td><strong>Search</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Service</strong></td>
<td>Improvements in record update scalability</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performance</strong></td>
<td>Continual review and improvement</td>
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### Talis Aspire
- Next generation resource list management
- Continually releasing new features

### Talis Engage
- Empowering communities, through joined-up services and community engagement
- Continually releasing new features

### Talis Base
- The largest UK bibliographic data source
- Investigating Non ISBN material

### Talis Source
- Free access to the bibliographic and holdings information
- Continually releasing new features

### Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April - June</td>
<td>July - September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talis Keystone</strong></td>
<td>A robust integration solution that seamlessly connects library services into institution-wide systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inter Library Loan Module</strong></td>
<td>Beta</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Joining Forms Module</strong></td>
<td>Beta</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Notifications Module</strong></td>
<td>General Release</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continually releasing new modules based on customer demand</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Talis Bridge Pro</strong></td>
<td>Delivering enhanced self-service transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continually releasing new features based on partner innovations and customer demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talis Gateway</strong></td>
<td>Streamlining procurements using the Electronic Supply Chain</td>
</tr>
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<td>Accrediting new suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talis Connect</strong></td>
<td>Integrating the data from the Library Management System to 3rd party solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working to implement new partners’ solutions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Will the semantic web change what libraries do?

Richard Wallis
Technology Evangelist, Talis

Since their inception libraries have always been at the forefront of technology. From the printed book and the printed catalogue card, through to computing, technology has been adopted to improve what libraries do thus helping them provide a better service. From tags hanging off the end of scrolls in scroll libraries, to today’s MARC records stored in library management systems, much of this technology has been targeted at the supporting metadata used to describe what a library holds or licenses.

Initially this metadata helped librarians identify items, so that they could locate them for library users. In more recent decades, it has been used to power direct access for those users. The introduction of the OPAC delivered a massive boost to library accessibility; moving to an online self-service method of item discovery, libraries became capable of supporting far more users than polished wooden drawers full of cards could, and far more than face to face interactions ever could.

Describing items has always been a skilled and time consuming task. The introduction of the card catalogue made item indexing simpler, the introduction of pre-printed cards by the Library of Congress in 1901 started to introduce some efficiencies in to the process. The arrival of computing technology enabled libraries to start to share efficiencies in the description process with organisations such as OCLC and BLCMP (the organisation Talis grew from) emerging as cataloguing cooperatives. Both services are still used by individual library cataloguing departments to keep their local catalogue current.

Technology has had significant influence on how libraries operate, but has not really changed one particular core process. Libraries acquire an item, then create locally held metadata by describing (essentially cataloguing) it. This is still in effect the same process that librarians attaching tags to scrolls were engaged in. However, there is an emerging technology, and accompanying paradigm shift in thinking - that has the potential to change this centuries old process.

The Semantic Web, in the form of a web-based data publishing principle championed by Sir Tim Berners-Lee called Linked Data, has the potential to create such disruption. In a Linked Data world, every data element, such as author, subject, media format, publisher, user defined tag, etc., becomes a primary data element. In such an environment, what today we would call a catalogue record containing all the attributes of a single item, simply becomes just a set of links; a link to a description of an author, a link to a description of a publisher, etc.

Because the Semantic Web is built upon the World Wide Web, the actual descriptions can reside on systems distributed across the globe. It is this globally distributed nature of the Semantic Web that has the potential for what libraries do.

When descriptions of items in an individual library start to be constructed from links into a global web of data, the need to hold and maintain that data in every library soon disappears. With it the need for local cataloguing expertise also disappears. Of course there will always be the need for skilled cataloguers, but that role may well be restricted to a small number of
Talis Events

Talis Integration Open Days – Solving the integration conundrum
These days will explore ways in which our integration solution can deliver savings and service enhancements by linking with finance, CRM and identity management systems. Dates available:
• 29 April 2010 – Talis, Birmingham, for academic libraries
• 11 May 2010 – Talis, Birmingham, for public libraries
For further details and to register your free place visit www.talis.com/integration/events

Talis Open Day: Your library on the Web
The next in our successful series of Talis Open Days focuses on how to optimise your library’s presence on the web. Join us at the Talis offices for these free events to discover how Talis products can promote your library among your users, and across the wider authority. Dates available:
• 12 May 2010 – Talis, Birmingham
Register your free place at www.talis.com/yourlibraryontheweb

Join us at one of our other upcoming open days:
• 20 April 2010 – Talis Decisions Open Day
• 1 June 2010 – Talis Bridge Open Day
• 6 July 2010 – Talis Gateway Open Day
Find out more about these days at www.talis.com/events

The Semantic Web is built upon the World Wide Web, the actual descriptions can reside on systems distributed across the globe. It is this globally distributed nature of the Semantic Web that has the potential to change for what libraries do.

centres on the planet, perhaps only in national libraries. Could this happen overnight? Probably not. We may not see much change over the next few years, but perhaps by the time we reach the onset of the next decade, we may be hearing a member of the crew of the Starship Enterprise say “It’s cataloguing Jim, but not as we know it”.

Training Calendar

<table>
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<tr>
<th>May 2010</th>
<th>June 2010</th>
<th>July 2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 – An introduction to UNIX&lt;br&gt; - Part 1 (training webinar)</td>
<td>2 – An introduction to UNIX&lt;br&gt; - Part 1 (training webinar)</td>
<td>5 – An introduction to UNIX&lt;br&gt; - Part 1 (training webinar)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – An introduction to UNIX&lt;br&gt; - Part 2 (training webinar)</td>
<td>3 – An introduction to UNIX&lt;br&gt; - Part 2 (training webinar)</td>
<td>7 – An introduction to UNIX&lt;br&gt; - Part 2 (training webinar)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-7 – Talis System Management: Beginner (classroom)</td>
<td>10 – Financial Year Rollover (training webinar)</td>
<td>8 – Financial Year Rollover (training webinar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 – Introduction to the Talis Database and SQL (classroom)</td>
<td>17 – Using Talis Decisions. A refresher on reporting basics (training webinar)</td>
<td>20 – Exploring the Talis Decisions Universes (training webinar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – Talis Decisions - InfoView and Web Intelligence (classroom)</td>
<td>21 – Exploring the Talis Decisions Universes (training webinar)</td>
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For more information, or to register your place at an upcoming session, please visit www.talis.com/training.