

April 2006
Working Paper Publication



Seminar on the Future of Libraries: Progress Report

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Introduction

During the 1999-2000 academic year the Teachers College Seminar on the Future of Libraries engaged in a number of activities designed to inform the Seminar members and the broader Teachers College community about the possibilities for libraries in the years ahead. To take stock of our progress thus far members of the seminar were asked to prepare summary comments. This report consolidates those comments and summarizes the work of the seminar.

The report begins by describing three roles for libraries in the future. Each of these roles will be important for research libraries in general and each has implications for the future of Milbank Library at Teachers College. Our description of these roles is not meant to suggest that they are the only roles libraries will play in the future or that these roles will displace the current roles of libraries. Rather, we present these roles to highlight the new work that is currently being done and will be done in libraries and by librarians.

Following the description of the emerging roles for libraries, we present an initial set of recommendations regarding Milbank Library. The list of recommendations is necessarily incomplete, but the members of the Seminar feel confident that the recommendations we do present are sound.

Finally, the appendix to the report contains the list of members of the Seminar and the highlights of the Seminar Sessions held over the spring semester. Tapes of the Seminar presentations are available for those interested in further details of any presentation.

The Library as a Center of Technology to Support Scholarship

Any consideration of the future of libraries must include the new possibilities and the new challenges provided by rapid developments in technology to support scholarship. Members of the seminar learned that new technologies will lead to dramatically enhanced services to library patrons, but these new technologies will require additional resources, including specialized personnel and physical facilities.

Elaine Sloan and her colleagues at the Columbia University Library shared the details of their comprehensive efforts to incorporate technology into the library for both students and faculty. James Neal of the Johns Hopkins University Libraries described a range of technology-based initiatives to provide library services to on-campus and off-campus users. Allen Renear of the Scholarly Technology Group at Brown University argued that the strong service orientation of libraries makes them ideal units to locate the growing technology support groups that will work with faculty and students in the years ahead.

Although the greater use of digital materials and off-site storage of less frequently used materials may release some of the new space required, a decrease in the total space devoted to library operations is not on the horizon. Indeed, many of those we consulted reported greater demands on the physical facilities of libraries as the new technologies require new personnel and new work spaces.

The Library as an Intellectual Social Center for the College

With the greater availability of books, journals, and other resources online there is a temptation to imagine a diminished role for the physical library in the years ahead. The experience of those we

consulted has been just the opposite. Indeed, those libraries that have led the way in developing online resources have experienced the greatest new demands on their physical space by users who increasingly view the physical library as a social center for intellectual work.

Elaine Sloan and her colleagues explained how the reconfigured physical facilities of the Columbia library system, including the addition of technology-based work stations in readings rooms and the addition of a coffee bar, resulted in significantly heavier use from members of the campus community. Students who have increasingly comprehensive library resources available online in their rooms still find it useful and meaningful to work in the physical library. James Neal reported that refurbished libraries at Hopkins have seen a dramatic increase in the number of visitors. Richard Dempsey from the IBM Digital Libraries Group reported that the development of highly visible digital collections serves to bring increased interest and increased traffic in the physical libraries that sponsor the collections.

As the physical library becomes less important as a storage facility, it is likely to become more important as a venue for instruction as scholars and their students come to require more and more expertise in locating what they need amidst larger and more complicated content collections. Learning how to identify and retrieve materials will assume greater importance and will require both deliberate instruction from skilled librarians and the opportunity to work closely with colleagues engaged in similar pursuits. The physical library is the obvious location for both activities. In addition, it is this more intensive and more extensive interaction between librarians and library visitors that will prepare librarians to work productively with distant patrons.

The Library as a Source for Content and Services for Audiences Beyond the Campus

As libraries and librarians develop greater expertise in the preparation of materials for use online, they become logical candidates to assume leadership roles in research support and content development and dissemination efforts that extend beyond the campus. Because of their formal preparation and prior experience librarians are often well versed in the techniques of working on issues of content preparation and exchange with agencies and institutions outside of their home campus. Librarians also tend to have relevant expertise in the technical requirements for the delivery of content to distant audiences.

A number of our guests discussed efforts underway in their institutions to provide services beyond the campus. Steve Rollins and Barbara Rosen described how the existing entrepreneurial culture and prior experience providing library services to several national laboratories at the University of New Mexico Library positioned them to seek and win the contract to provide library services to Western Governors University. Virginia Kruse explained how the Cooperative Children's Book Center maintained a contractual relationship with the State Department of Education to provide services to school libraries statewide and how this work regularly involved Center staff in distance educational programs. Richard Dempsey noted the dramatic increase in the use of rare library collections after the collections were made available online. James Neal discussed a number of initiatives at the Johns Hopkins Libraries to meet the needs of distant users, including a project to provide library services for Regents College and another to provide library services and research services to corporate clients.

A common thread throughout the experiences of those libraries that had engaged in providing services beyond the campus is the positive effects such projects have had on the basic library services on campus, particularly the positive effects in terms of recruiting and motivating library staff. The involvement of libraries and librarians in efforts to provide content development and research services to off-campus clients appears to strengthen the capacity of the library to serve the needs of campus-based patrons.

Working Conclusions and Recommendations Related to Milbank Library

The Seminar on the Future of Libraries was not organized to deal specifically with Milbank Library. Instead, our charge was to consider the future of libraries more broadly to open up questions beyond our most immediate institution-based concerns. However, as we have explored the issues that all research libraries will confront in the years ahead, we have come back time and time again to the practical issues surrounding our own library and its future.

As we have considered the three emerging roles for libraries as centers for scholarly technology, as centers for intellectual community, and as centers for the development and dissemination of content and services beyond the campus, we have come to believe that Milbank Library can be positioned to assume each of these new roles at Teachers College. Developing each of these roles for Milbank Library will require new investments in technology, in staff resources, and in improvements in the physical library. Understanding the appropriate scope and the appropriate sequence for such investments will require careful planning. To that end, it is the recommendation of the Library Seminar that the College engage the services of a consultant with expertise in library planning to assist with the development of a concrete plan to enable Milbank Library to move forward.

During its deliberations Seminar members became aware of tentative plans to reduce the size of the current physical library. Indeed, some members of the Seminar may have started with the assumption that new technologies would permit a reduction in the physical library. It is now clear that it will very challenging to house the activities of the current library and those envisioned in the three new roles described earlier within the current physical library. It is our expectation that the Milbank Library of the future will continue to occupy Russell Hall and that the physical facility will need to be reconfigured to handle the anticipated increase in use experienced by the other libraries we have investigated.

The Seminar on the Future of Libraries did not discover that new technologies would lead to dramatic reductions in the resources required to sustain libraries and provide high quality service to faculty, staff, and students. Those anticipating efficiencies of this sort may be disappointed. However, we did discover that new investments in libraries would lead to dramatic improvements in the nature of the services provided. The members of the Seminar recognize that such changes also represent efficiencies and wise investments.

Appendix A – Members of the Library Seminar

Joseph Brosnan
Isobel Contento
Jane Franck
Ruth Gottesman
Antonia Grumbach
Barbara Kiefer
Hope Leichter
Gary Natriello, Chair

Appendix B – Highlights of Consultations

During the spring semester the Library Seminar consulted with the following experts. The typical visit included a working lunch with members of the Seminar followed by a public session on a topic relevant to the future of libraries. Key issues are summarized for each consultation.

Visit With Columbia University Library Staff

Elaine Sloan – Vice President of Information Services and University Librarian

Digital Issues

- Systematically increasing the money devoted to digital information
- Electronic information is more expensive
- Funding sources for new digital library projects have included NEH, Mellon, NSF, and private sources; have not allocated significant internal sources

Facilities

- Library buildings have to change their functions
- Physical Space – increased network connections to bring digital and print collections together in reading rooms where the collections can be exposed
- Use of Butler has increased as a gathering space and a place for collaboration
- Investment in off-site storage
- The move to digital collections does not ease the pressure on facilities since supporting the digital collections requires new functions, new staff, and new space

Library of the Future: Will There Be One?

James G. Neal
Dean of University Libraries
Johns Hopkins University

Entrepreneurial Activities

- Have started providing electronic library services to distance learning universities
- At Hopkins 47% of the budget is spent on information and 20% of the collection budget is spent on electronic materials
- Established a "Personal Librarian" service working with internet portal companies to offer research services – an auxiliary research staff works on packaging materials and sends it via overnight mail to users at \$69.95 per request
- They are leveraging the Hopkins name in health information
- In yet another effort they are providing corporate library services in the form of customized information services for businesses
- Such auxiliary enterprises make the library more effective in recruiting people
- A new Digital Knowledge Center will include research and development capacity in electronic scholarship, electronic instruction, emerging technology, usability testing, and knowledge management

Facilities

- Strategy has been to leverage the library's assets, including physical space (They rent the Peabody out for wedding receptions!)
- Installing a coffee bar has increased visitors from 500,000 to 1.2 million, and the library receives part of the profits from the concession
- A 5 million dollar library renovation focuses on services and user areas with 65% spent on system infrastructure and 35% on furniture, etc.
- The effort has been to make the library a more hospital space.
- The library is becoming intellectual social space
- Established a remote facility and offer free photo copies delivered to the desk of the user
- At Hopkins the library has 5 staff members devoted to development
- The Library is focusing on scholarly publishing and aggregation, electronic pedagogy, intelligent gateways, knowledge management, life long learning, research and development and entrepreneurial activity

Trends in Digital Libraries

Richard Dempsey
Project Manager, IBM Content Management Services
IBM

Need for Library Services with Move to Digital

- Library is key to digital initiatives on most campuses since IS is not well perceived
- There is a greater need for reference librarian to provide help in navigating digital collections and 24 hour access
- Library work is becoming more labor intensive and will require more technologists
- Librarians are now involved in “taming the web” as they assist with organizing materials and assessing the credibility of materials online
- There is now a vast “hidden web” in the various special collections each institution has established for its own students
- There is need for more automated tools to organize collection – web crawlers, knowledge management, knowledge mining
- The library must now provide distance education on how to use the library to remote patrons
- Student acceptance of digital materials is phenomenal
- Consortium arrangements will allow for sharing special collections and sharing cost of digital development
- Things are heading toward information portals, single points of access across various types of data bases

Physical Space

- New libraries will require more space, not less
- Print will not go away; there will be even more

What Text Really Is – And What that Mean for the Design of Digital Libraries

Allen Renear
Director, Brown University Scholarly Technology Group
President, Association for Computers and the Humanities

Scholarly Technology Group

- Devoted to working with faculty to develop electronic teaching and learning projects
- Group is organized on a consulting model with services provided and accounted for via “billable hours”
- STG is housed under the computing center, but it would be better if housed in the library since the library offers a more “mature” organizational culture in terms of user service
- STG works with faculty at their initiative and also brings ideas to faculty
- STG has encouraged staff to develop academic scholarly interests while operating on a professional services model

Supporting Instruction with Special Collections of Children’s Literature

Virginia Moore Kruse

Director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center
School of Education, University of Wisconsin, Madison

Outreach

- Cooperative Children's Book Center provides services for teachers and librarian under contract to the state education department
- The School of Education at Wisconsin is interested in outreach and the CCBC contributes to this outreach effort
- CCBC contributes to the visibility of the School of Education throughout the state
- The CCBC maintains a Friends Group of over 700 members
- CCBC has provided an important intellectual freedom information service for teachers dealing with a censorship issue or a book complaint

Technology

- The CCBC web site is growing in importance and has 1400 members in its book discussion group
- Web casting on-site events has been received enthusiastically
- They have participated in satellite TV courses and web-based interactive events to regional sites

Developing a Library for a Virtual University

Steve Rollins
Dean of the Consortium Library, University of Alaska

Barbara Rosen
Electronic Information Services Librarian
Western Governors University

- The University of New Mexico bid on the contract for the digital library for Western Governors University as just another opportunity; they also bid on the contract for Regents College but lost to Johns Hopkins
- University of New Mexico won the contract for the library for WGU probably because their proposed pricing scheme was scalable
- Library services include reference, interlibrary loan, document delivery, e-mail, phone, fax, internet service provider is students need one
- One big advantage was that the contract with WGU allowed UNM to experiment with someone else's money
- They are trying to incorporate instruction into the library process; they put up a guide to the library site to let students know how to use the site
- They try to do as much full text as possible; students want full text
- U of New Mexico had a culture of getting contract work from doing interlibrary loan work for the National Labs – Scandia and Los Alamos