

Scenarios for beyond 2020:



Beehive

The issue facing academic and research libraries today is what should their role be in the changing academic and technological landscape. Scenario planning is a way of addressing such challenges. It is a way of systematically dealing with uncertainty to inform long-term strategic decisions.

The Academic Libraries of the Future project has developed three scenarios which describe possible futures for teaching and research libraries in the UK. They take the economic, social and other pressures faced by the world today and create futures in which Higher Education (HE) and libraries have evolved in different directions. They describe a world some distance away in the future, beyond 2020. The scenarios will help HE institutions and other organisations look at the challenges faced from a fresh focus and help them formulate strategies to ensure the sector continues to be a leading global force. The scenarios are based on the contributions from a wide range of stakeholders at workshops during 2010 and 2011 – librarians, institutional managers, funders, service providers, publishers and government. This flyer describes the 'library' services and organisation elements of one particular scenario. The full scenarios¹ provide additional material including common assumptions across all scenarios, the global environment and UK HE context. It is not intended to be a 'preferred' scenario; it just describes one possible future world.

This flyer is for information only and should not be used to replace the full scenario as a basis for strategic planning.

The Beehive World

The Beehive scenario is a world in which the state is the primary funder and controller of HE. Its overriding aim is the production of a skilled workforce, and to this end it has created a largely homogenous HE system for the masses while allowing the elite to attend the few traditional universities. A limited market is used to provide competition within the HE system to drive up quality. The traditional university experience is

still available at a select few universities, but the majority of young people enter a system where courses are so tightly focused on employability that they are near-vocational.

HE institutions operate on a subject by subject basis either as a centre of excellence (a hub) typically supported by a research base or as a client (a spoke). Where feasible, they seek to be a hub and franchise out the courses and support. Otherwise they buy-in courses and support from hubs. This system means that the concept of a library has undergone radical change.

Teaching and learning

The move to digital resources has allowed the separation of knowledge, information and learning support services from the provision of space for teaching and learning. The provision of knowledge, information and learning support services is largely aligned with the HEI hub and spoke model in the UK. Library knowledge, information and learning support services are packaged within the learning modules with standard support offers and additional chargeable elements. For example, Oxford provides the UK-wide hub for classical studies and mathematics, and University College London provides that for biochemistry. Integration of such services across Europe is also well developed. For example, the Sorbonne acts as the lead for French language and literature studies across Europe.

Economies of scale have been achieved by either the library or the estate function taking over the delivery of all teaching and learning spaces.

HEIs offering arts and humanities courses tend to be closely integrated with museums, galleries and archives to create a richness of material to support the learner. The arts and humanities library is typically part of a local cluster of HEIs rather than necessarily a part of the HEI itself.

Special collections, particularly those related to arts and humanities subjects, are now largely the preserve of the elite HEIs and a few remaining specialist local museums and archives around the country.



Library services at both hubs and spokes include the management of course and learning support materials and repositories. Specialist hub librarians at hubs are closely involved in the team creating course and learning support materials. These specialist librarians are experts in a subject and also in the presentation, production, licensing of course and learning support materials. Librarians at hubs provide support to students and staff on finding knowledge and information, and access and use of course and learning support materials. Hub librarians also provide similar support through a help desk to librarians and learning support staff at spokes. Librarians at both hubs and spokes provide information literacy skills and guidance for students. This covers especially the use of search and access tools and advice on resources.

With hubs, the library service is closely aligned with, and sometimes integrated with the development of teaching and learning resources such as lectures and support materials.

Research

Library services at a research hub include the management by subject librarians of research information and knowledge at both the hub and related spokes. A subject librarian typically works closely with one or more research groups, depending on the work involved.

Authors are largely in, or affiliated with, academic teaching or research hubs, or centres of excellence. Authorship is more of a collaborative than an individual activity. Authors create blogs, papers, books, journal articles and learning objects. Leading authors are often supported by a personal librarian. These are packaged together and published directly by the HEI or by a partnering publisher. The early ideas of self-publishing of research have faltered and the model now used is open publishing as the institution process has proved necessary for ensuring quality

Librarians and librarianship

A divide has evolved within librarianship depending on the kind of institution a librarian works at. There are specialist subject librarians described above working at hubs and 'GP' librarians who work for both hubs and spokes. These GP librarians provide support (eg information and knowledge management, information literacy) to learners, teachers and researchers (where these work in teaching spokes). Many of these GP librarians work through an online help desk and are often freelance or part-time. Movement between the specialist and GP strands of the profession, while not uncommon, can be difficult to achieve.

There is a wide variety of specialist disciplines within librarianship. These include being an important part of the team developing course and learning support materials at a teaching hub; being a subject librarian providing information and knowledge management services at a research hub; carrying out research into further developing, for example, resource discovery; and being an IP expert etc. Many of these specialisms are employed in industry and R&D institutions with collaborative links largely to hubs. Importantly, the library manager manages a team with varied skills, many part-time or outsourced to support the learning journey. Normally, the library manager at a hub is also responsible for IT services at the institution though these are typically provided as shared services.

Traditional librarian skills are still needed for the special collections but the merger of these holdings and the continuing economic pressures means that there are very few of these.

The marked change in library careers has led to changes in both the membership bodies and librarian training. Those intending to become hub librarians often have an IT or information and knowledge management background, while GP librarians have a more traditional background.

Further information

Further information on LotF, or help on using the scenarios can be found at www.futurelibraries.info

1 www.futurelibraries.info