

UCL library systems staff

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UCL system librarians - history

- System librarians (4 FTE) based in Library Services – expert application knowledge, responsibility for configuration in the app and on the server.
- Technical support based in Information Services Division – operating systems, ancillary software, and servers.
- Suite of systems including library management system and resource discovery; digital asset management system; archive management system; library tools (enquiry management; library guides; study space bookings); reading lists.
- Institutional repository / research publications / research profiles – diverged to be managed by a separate team.

UCL system librarians - history

- High degree of local control in the library.
- Strong historic partnership with IT, with mutual understanding of business need.
- Strong dependency on IT support with variable priority/reliability.
- Increasing recruitment/retention issues in IT – less so in library.
- Changes in IT department in 2018 led to the decision to move library systems team staff to IT.

UCL system librarians - current

- Agile product team for library systems, based across Library, IT and Change & Improvement.
- In Library: Product Ownership team, Functional Leads.
- In IT: Analyst/developers, Agile Delivery Manager, Service Owner.
- Access to: Business Analysts, Solution Architects, Change Managers, etc.
- Museum and other cultural systems now incorporated in an expanded department.

Functional Leads

- 24 subject matter experts for library systems.
- Mostly role-based; occasionally nominated from a pool of eligible roles.
- Role added to job descriptions.
- First point of contact for library staff to report issues/queries.
- Liaison and escalation point with IT.
- Propose and test changes and developments.

UCL system librarians - current

- Application configuration now sits primarily in IT.
- Subject matter experts in Library (Functional Leads) are empowered to work directly with IT, initiating and testing developments.
- Library Product Owners have a key role in setting strategy and priorities.
- Agile methodology is employed to some degree; work tracking significantly improved.
- Easier access to other product teams in IT – essential for holistic functioning of services, integrations, etc.
- Recruitment/retention/reassignment remains a problem in IT.

Opportunities and challenges

- Upskilling library practitioners, not just systems team.
- Roadmapping library priorities within institution (AI, open data, preservation, digital experience).
- General recruitment challenges in university IT.
- Adopting Agile practices, rapid but sustainable innovation.
- Increased access to institutional IT resource and strategy brings significant benefit, but also inevitable challenges.