CLSIG JOURNAL

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In This Issue

Editorial

Welcome to *CLSIG Journal No. 9!*

Our theme for this issue is 'Demonstrating Value' and thanks to Jennifer Summers, Sarah Fahy and our regular 'Agony Aunt' Ulla de Stricker we are able to offer three different but all equally practical views on this ever present issue for information professionals.

As well as continuing to deliver and demonstrate value it is essential that we strive to innovate in the services that we deliver to our clients; Penny Bailey's review of *The top ten technologies every librarian needs to know* is invaluable in this regard.

Our visit report – on a tour of The Bishopsgate Institute Library reminds us that even the most long established and traditional of libraries can continue to thrive.

Would you be prepared to write a contribution for the Journal or suggest future topics for articles? Could you review a book for us? Do you face challenging issues at work which you'd like to share with our Agony Aunt? Please contact the Editorial team below.

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'As a profession […] we're uniquely trained to think strategically about information.'

Demonstrating Value by Solving Novel Problems

Jennifer Summers

To demonstrate value, first ensure you are genuinely delivering value - and then make sure others notice!

An effective way to do this is to seek out novel problems which need solving in your organisation. All organisations have information challenges. These problems may not be immediately identified as the result of poor information management, and your colleagues may be so used to working around them they don't see it as something that can be changed, but information management problems have a wide reaching impact on the effectiveness of your organisation.

We're well placed to solve these problems, and we'll be helping our organisations - and ourselves - if we do. Solving novel problems is a great way to demonstrate your value. The more critical a problem you solve, the higher your value. And the more novel a problem and unexpected the solution, the more others will notice your value.

What sort of problems could I solve?
As a profession we can help with any problem involving information. We're uniquely trained to think strategically about information: to appreciate the value of information; to understand what information is needed by different people; to know how to handle sensitive information; how to economically source information. When we think about our skills generically, we can see how they can be applied throughout the organisation, not just in the traditional information service.

When I work with clients, I start by mapping out the information everyone needs to do their job, what they use it for, and how it flows through the organisation (an information audit of sorts.) This usually reveals places where information is needed, or where a process could be radically simplified if we made information from elsewhere more readily available.

Why should I bother?

If you think your information service will never be under threat of cuts, redundancies or closure, than you can stop reading here. But for the rest of us, proactively seeking out new and higher profile ways to prove the value of our skills will stand us in good stead to survive the next inevitable round of cuts.

Personally, it can help us to move into new roles, deepen our skills, and extend our professional network within the organisation. The benefits we deliver do not need to be restricted to the information unit. A pro-active problem-solving Information Professional can make a significant impact throughout an organisation.

Should I wait to be asked?

You may be waiting a long time! The problems you can solve may not be recognised as those requiring the attention of an Information Professional.

It may seem excessive to look for extra projects on top of your undoubtedly busy day-to-day work, but there are a lot of advantages if you do. It may take less time than you expect to solve a critical problem. I've found organisations often have rudimentary approaches to information management, and with your professional skills and knowledge you may be able to solve a significant problem surprisingly quickly.

Agile approach

Tackling novel problems, by their nature, requires an exploratory approach. You won't be able to anticipate everything, so adopt a flexible 'test and refine' approach. When I work with organisations to solve novel information management problems, I find it helpful to do so within an 'Agile' framework[1]. Agile originated in software development and is increasingly

used in wider project management. At its simplest, the Agile[2] methodology values:

- Individuals and interactions, rather than processes and tools
- Collaboration, rather than adversarial negotiation
- Responding to change, rather than following a fixed long term plan.

Taking an agile approach is a great way to demonstrate and deliver value. It can:

- Raise your profile, by working very closely and collaboratively with end users: if you want others to value your contribution, what better way than for them to see close-up how your professional skills and knowledge are helping solve their problems!
- You'll be delivering the solution one piece at a time, in short cycles: a great way to build momentum and interest;
- You're more likely to develop an effective solution as you'll have tested and refined your ideas as you've progressed.

Proposing an agile approach can help you get approval for the project by minimising risk. You're not asking for commitment to a long term project where you only know if it worked after months of effort. You're just asking to try a small experiment and see how it goes.

Proving value

So you've identified a novel problem, devised a brilliant solution and delivered it to everyone's delight. Do you need to *prove* the value you've created?

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[1] "Using an Agile-based Approach to Develop a Library Mobile Website" includes a useful description of an agile approach to a library technology project:
http://journal.code4lib.org/articles/4642
[2] http://agilemanifesto.org

If it's easy to put together a great headline statistic, then do it. But I think we can tie ourselves in knots trying to create statistics to prove our value.

Statistics tend to be gathered when a service is under scrutiny. When launching a new solution, your effort may be better spent generating a 'buzz' about the initiative. People have learnt to distrust statistics but everyone loves a story. Sharing positive anecdotes - especially from the 'influencers' within an organisation, go a long way to legitimising the new way of doing things.

Proactively collect and share positive comments your users say about you and your work. A good way of collecting evidence is to ask users to compare the "before and after" when reviewing the project. This doesn't need to be a formal exercise; people often share more when they're talking informally.

It may be difficult to elicit praise for a service you've run for years, but it's easy to ask people what they think of the latest innovation. It's newsworthy, exciting, and they'll still remember the pain of how things were before.

As a profession, we often talk about the undervalued need for our professional skills, and the information problems we could solve.

Let's get out there and fix them.

CASE STUDY
When working with a University last year, I learnt about the problem of managing information about PhD students.

I was shocked to discover most Universities use a spreadsheet to record details of their PhD students because student record systems aren't sufficiently flexible to accommodate PhDs.

Poor information management was causing stress and hassle to everyone involved. This was a problem I could solve!

I worked with the Graduate School at the University of Westminster to identify what information needed to be recorded, who should have access to it, and what workflow could help streamline the administrative process. We used an agile approach: deploying the solution in stages and repeatedly refining our designs in response to feedback from users.

The resulting system has proven to be such a success at the University of Westminster that we're now rolling it out to other Universities.

www.phd-manager.co.uk

Jennifer Summers
Founder of ONEIS
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Demonstrating Value: Tips for Success

Sarah Fahy

The library sector continues to face challenges fuelled by the continuing need for businesses to contain costs. Diminishing resources and budgets and ever more complex demands from users has become the new norm. This environment requires the Library Manager to present his/her service in a commercial way, developing methods to justify and promote the value of the service.

This article considers two key approaches to demonstrate value – the user audit and the management of the information budget.

The importance of culture

The language and approach taken must be aligned to the cultural values of the organisation.   A 2013 study highlighted the importance of culture[1] revealing that 84% of CEOs consider firm culture to be critical to business success. A surprising 60% claimed firm culture was more critical to firm success than strategy or the adopted operating model. Firm culture, or "the way we do things around here," can be evidenced by key working practices such as the pace of work, the working hours expected, and the focus on short compared to long term goals. Very often the Library will not mirror all these traits – after all a successful information team requires collaboration and team work, so mapping the Library message to the values of the host organisation may require a conscious refashioning of priorities and values. To be heard the Library must present itself in the language of its host organisation.

'To be heard the Library must present itself in the language of its host organisation.'

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[1] Culture and the Chief Executive. Jon Katzenbach and DeAnn Aguirre. Strategy + Business, 28 May 2013

The user audit: Remaining relevant

A common tool in Libraries, the user audit is an effective method of assessing the value and relevancy of the services offered. It allows the Library to adjust its offering, identify new services and inform users of the full range of services. The audit need not be comprehensive – it can focus on a specific offering or product to inform the evolution of the service.

In an audit one is measuring value. The user perceives value when he/she receives more from a transaction than he/she has contributed. The audit gives the opportunity to place this value in context with the whole service offered. In preparing for the audit, it is important to place a value on both the highly visible and popular activities undertaken and the invisible but essential activities that underpin the service. Identifying a cost for each activity, based on resource and time, helps frame the core question of the audit - does the value of a particular service justify the cost? Furthermore presenting a menu of services with attached costs helps the user see the competing demands on the limited resources and engages them in prioritising activities.

An audit should sample a representative cross section of users, both in seniority and frequency of use. The decision makers within each team of users - those who typically do not personally use the Library service but do consume the outputs through others – should be consulted to review the outcome and respond to recommendations for change.

Engaging with users in this manner gives the Library the opportunity to stop the under-valued services and identify new services. The audit offers a device to ensure Library services evolve with the needs of the users, and the insight it

affords into changing work practices and strategic focus allows the Library to align itself to the aims of the organisation.

Recommendations, derived from the findings of an audit, should be communicated to the senior representatives of each group the Library supports. Offering a list of all activities rated according to the value assigned to each by users involves them in moulding the service and ensures there is a high level of support for the outcome.

Resource management: Establishing credibility

Library services are traditionally seen as a cost by their organisations. The overall budget tends to be large, inflated by the cost of expensive information products and tools necessary to support the organisation. Confidence in the ability of the Library to manage these budgets gives credibility to the service as a whole, and this offers a very tangible and visible way of demonstrating value.

Organisational culture, particularly where and how information fits into the organisation, should inform the approach. Where an organisation is knowledge based and information quality is core to the reputation of the firm there is likely to be a need for a myriad of sources; in a more transactional culture information is likely to be one small component of the whole business process, and value lies in easy access to a small, core group of products.

Another indication as to how one might approach budget management lies in how the organisation bills its clients. Is information charged through to the client? Does the client receive information support as part of the overall offering? Appreciating these points, one can gain

insight into the most effective way of articulating Library costs to management.

The Library budget comprises the cost of staff and the cost of information products. Staff costs can gain justification through the user audit and by presenting staff time according its focus on client and non-client work. It is important to regularly review the activities of staff and ensure skills match the needs of their evolving roles. Highlighting how roles have changed demonstrates the growing contribution and value of the team.

Ongoing analysis of work undertaken is also valuable. The knowledge that the average enquiry took staff 20 minutes in year one compared to 40 minutes in year two may suggest an increased level of complexity, for example. Regular analysis of the breakdown of work between the simple and the complex allows the Library to offer and value alternative approaches. Considering the resource saving against the cost of adopting a desktop solution offers management real choice as to how it funds its needs.

Exploring the possibility for Library staff to become fee earners can also be instructive. Research skills are unique and competent researchers use expensive resources more efficiently than lawyers or bankers. Thus if a researcher can produce better results in half the time a non-researcher can, one can demonstrate a tangible value to using the Library service.

Management of information product costs has become increasingly challenging. Product costs have increased; products have multiplied and terms of use have become more restrictive. Combined with flat or shrinking library budgets and the enormity of the challenge is clear. Expenditure on products is also a very visible and tangible cost to an organisation and attracts

scrutiny. Gaining confidence from management that this cost is being effectively managed requires transparent processes that can be easily explained and referred to.

A first step is to establish a standardised process for the renewal and purchase of products. The use of consistent language and approach allows users to engage in the procurement process and have confidence in the outcome. The expertise of the Library in testing the functionality and suitability of a source compared to the alternatives, and in making recommendations, should be part of this process. Users should also be involved in assessing the value of a product, and contribute to the decision making process.

Communicating a cost for each individual who would benefit from a product based on the quoted price makes the question of value very real. Users should be asked whether the product adds sufficient value to their work to justify this cost. In this context, and compared with the costs for alternatives, users partner with the Library in the decision making process. Recording the views and values identified during this process informs the future renewal of a service. Asking whether the product contributed the value expected can quickly identify where costs might be saved.

At purchase, vendors tend to dictate the metrics by which the product should be priced, be it number of users or volume of usage. As understanding develops, these blunt measures need to be tempered by an appreciation of the value of the content to the specific organisation. Effective analysis of usage data provides this. Metrics to consider might include the cost per search, or the discount achieved against retail price. Understanding how the regular user uses the product and the

value it brings – be it convenience or unique information – informs how one negotiates with the vendor in the future. In turn the use of the organisations' own metrics helps the Library manager articulate the value of the product at budget review.

The negotiation process offers an additional opportunity to demonstrate value. Keeping a note of the first price offered and the final achieved price demonstrates the effectiveness of negotiations. Reviewing all purchases over a budget year it is possible to identify trends in the market and supports internal budget negotiations.

Summary

Good practices help build credibility when communicated effectively. It is important to present the Library in the language of the host organisation to encourage understanding. Using the user audit to assess the value of services offered and develop consensus for future development ensures the Library service remains relevant. Establishing transparent processes and partnering with users in the decision making process ensures budgets are justified. The use of metrics, that speaks to the values of the organisation and can be shared on an on-going basis with users and senior management, ensures the profile of the Library remains high.

Sarah Fahy
Head of Global Library Services
Allen & Overy LLP

Visit Report - The Bishopsgate Institute Library

Marie Grace Cannon

On November 1st, 2014, I went on a fascinating tour of the Bishopsgate Institute Library, London, kindly organised by CLSIG.

To be honest, I hadn't heard of the Bishopsgate Institute before, but it is basically an education centre that provides courses and lectures, along with being a venue for debates and concerts and other events. The Chief Librarian, who very kindly provided the tour, described it as originally a Victorian self-help centre for adults, which has now grown in to a home for independent thought, and provides a library and archive on London history, labour and socialist history, free-thought and humanism, co-operation, and protest and campaigning. It has a public library which has journeyed through open access to closed access and back again, and has over 25,000 visitors a year with 120 per month visiting the special collections.

On entering the building I was struck by the inspirational quotes from famous figures dotting the walls, which I think introduces the revolutionary and open minded-theme of the library collection really well.

The library itself has been largely untouched since it was built in the late 19th century, and is a beautiful traditional looking library with carved wooden bookcases and a glass dome. The library has over 80,000 books on London; particularly covering the working classes and the history of the East end, as well as many, many maps of London through the ages. It turns out that the first Bishopsgate librarian was a fanatical book collector on London (not the best hobby to have for a librarian with limited space and on some sort of budget!), and so now the library has become a unique collection shaped around the first librarian's interests.

Not only does the collection include books and pamphlets as you may expect, but also any paraphernalia associated with the themes of the collection such as the fishing tackle, glasses and wallet of Charles Bradlaugh, a 19th century political activist and atheist, African objects and possessions of Bernie Grant, a black Labour MP, the wetsuit worn by Trenton Oldfield when disrupting the Oxford-Cambridge boat race, and even the clothing he wore in prison (as modeled by the Chief Librarian below!)

The library has a special collection and plays a role in preserving what may be valuable information about London for the future, such as over 150,000 photos of London, synagogue records, as well as London restaurant and take-away menus that may be of interest to generations yet to come. Much of the collection is still to be catalogued, and apparently letters of Charles Dickens have been discovered tucked away inside some of the books, so I can only imagine the hidden treasures still waiting to be discovered!

The library operates with about 28 volunteers (mostly students and part time) with a paid team of 8, which again consist mostly of part time staff. I am certainly going to suggest to UCL, my old Library school, that it would be worth offering the Bishopsgate Institute Library as a destination for student placements or as a volunteering opportunity for anyone interested in special collections.

It is an absolutely fascinating library with an incredible collection and in a beautiful library setting – I would very much recommend visiting it if you can, and I would like to thank CLSIG for the opportunity to learn about this hidden gem in the middle of the City of London.

Marie Grace Cannon
Information Officer
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Book Review: The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: a LITA Guide

Kenneth J. Varnum, Editor
Price: £49.95, but to CILIP members £39.96
ISBN: 9781783300334

Reviewed by Penny Bailey

This is a slim book of 126 pages with nine chapters from different experts on a range of emerging technologies which have potential for adoption by libraries. The editor asked the contributors to stick to a near-term future of 3-5 years away: "close enough to be in the realm of the predictable."[1] So, like me you may find that you are aware of such new technologies as Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality but may be unsure how they would be applied to the advantage of library users. This practical collection succeeds in introducing new technologies, explaining their application in a library setting and how to assess what's involved in their implementation. The remit doesn't reach to an implementation manual or case studies but aims to be helpful in drawing to the reader's attention the factors to consider in positioning a library for new technology. In other words you get a glimpse of the horizon so you can better inform your strategic planning.

Here is a summary and mini review of each contribution:

Chapter 1. Impetus to Innovate: Convergence and Library Trends by A.J. Million and Heather Lea Moulaison

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1 Kenneth J. Varnum (editor), The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: a LITA Guide (London: Facet Publishing, 2014) p.vii

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
One to One shopping	Like Amazon: the user learns one interface to find content in different mediums and collections. A discovery tool across several platforms.
FRBR model (my words)	Again, like Amazon, the user searches for a title and is offered it in all available mediums: paperback, hardback, e-book, video, DVD, MP3, etc
Convergence of analog and digital	Libraries will offer access to content across multiple platforms including creative and open solutions
User-driven acquisition	Users can suggest new content for inclusion in the collection
Mash-ups and Makerspaces	Libraries will enable users to create their own content

Million and Moulaison examine the concept of technological convergence and its importance for libraries. The key message in this chapter is that libraries will need to respond to users' continually evolving information seeking behaviour. A useful introduction to the future landscape and a wake-up call if you are not focused on the user experience in your web OPAC.

Chapter 2. Hands-Free Augmented Reality: Impacting the Library Future by Brigitte Bell and Terry Cottrell

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Hands free augmented reality (AR)	Provides a table of AR integration in different sized libraries
ShelvAR	Mobile phone app to help library staff with shelf checking
Tagwhat	Mobile phone app with location-based stories, e.g. historical walking tours
WolfWalk	Mobile phone app providing a historical walking tour of a location, e.g. a campus
The Scarlet Project	*The Special Collections using Augmented Reality to Enhance learning and Teaching Project* aims to expose students to digitised primary source materials such as rare editions. It also additional related content like text, images and audio.

In my opinion Bell and Cottrell forgot to explain what Augmented Reality is soon enough in the chapter, instead they launch straight away into how it can be integrated. The chapter is redeemed by a useful list of successful implementations. The authors conclude that: "There are Indications within the library community suggesting that AT technology is a force to be reckoned with in the coming years."[2]

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2 Kenneth J. Varnum (editor), The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: a LITA Guide (London: Facet Publishing, 2014, p. 24

Chapter 3. Libraries and Archives Augmenting the World by William Denton

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Augmented Reality (AR)	As quoted by the contributors: "AR allows users to see the real world, with virtual objects superimposed upon or composited with the real world. Therefore, AR supplements reality, rather than completing replacing it."[3]
Geolocation	Mobile app which uses your location to provide extra informatin about your surroundings.
Markers like Layer, Junaio and Wikitude	Allow you to aument an image or print with more text, more images, 3-D images, hyperlinks, video, audio and live HTML.
AR Glasses	Glasses with small cameras which recognise objects and calculate the augmentations to be added to the display.
Leap Motion	A device that can detect the position of your hands and fingers to control computer functions like a keyboard.

This chapter is my favourite contribution in this collection because Denton starts with a little story called "Lunch with Zoia" which, as a bit of fun science fiction, helps the reader readily understand augmented reality. However is not such far out science fiction; it's very achievable now and thus Denton provides, for me, the most apt quote in the whole book: "The future is already here – it's just not very evenly distributed" by William Gibson.[4]

Chapter 4. The Future of Cloud-Based Library Systems by Steven K. Bowers and Elliot J. Polak

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Cloud-based library systems	Library systems that have a hosted technological infrastructure, i.e. not locally installed on the library organisation's own servers.
Shared technological infrastructure	Multi-tenant architecture software will enable sharing of meta-data, e.g. bibliographic data can be shared for use and enhancement, reducing duplicate work.
Open Systems and Linked Data	Service-oriented architecture (SOA) will facilitate information exchange from one implementation to another, enable data to be interconnected and allow access to the Sematic Web.
New Bibliographic Framework	Greater use of data formats that are not library specific. So instead of MARC we

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[3] Ronald T. Azuma, "Survey of Augmented Reality," Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments 7, no. 4 (August, 1997): 2, www.ronaldazuma.com/papers/ARpresence.pdf

[4] Kenneth J. Varnum (editor), The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: a LITA Guide (London: Facet Publishing, 2014, P.27

	will see greater use of formats like Dublin Core and ONIX (the publishers' bibliographic tool). The contributors also introduce BIBFRAME which is based on XML technology.
Electronic Resource Management (ERM)	Better integration of ERM with the rest of the modules in integrated library management systems, which means the control of access to resources will be more integrated and analytics will encompass both print and electronic resources.
Focus on fulfilment and access	Library users will expect to access information beyond the boundaries of the collections for their local library – they will expect instantaneous fulfilment from across the web.

Perhaps because I work in this field I found none of the content of this chapter much of a revelation. I was pleased to read about a future where MARC records may not be so prevalent and that data exchange and re-presentation may increasingly turn to other data formats. After all I never saw a library user give a dam about MARC cataloguing as long as they received meaningful results. Think about it: Amazon successfully delivers bibliographic content from among millions of records without a MARC record anywhere in sight.

Chapter 5. Library Discovery: From Ponds to Streams by Kenneth J. Varnum

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Web-scale discovery services	Different from federated searching, which searches each collection in turn and then collates the results, discovery service builds an index like Google so it is faster. It creates a Google-like experience so users have a single entry point to everything.

Varnum introduces web-scale discovery tools as the future but they are already available and implemented by some. For more information about web-scale discovery services see this article first published 2012 which lists several implementations.[5] Nevertheless Varnum explains how discovery services differ from federated searching. The disappointment for me is that discovery services need to harvest meta-data to build its index. The index makes for faster searching but it seems a bit backward to me to have to export data to a service. At the moment at least one discovery service I know of requires a MARC export if you want to include the library catalogue in your discovery service. Surely the future is making the exchange of data much easier via web services which leads us quite nicely into the next chapter.

Chapter 6. Exit as Strategy: Web Services as the New Websites for Many Libraries by Anson Parker, V. P. Nagraj, and David Moody

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[5] http://www.infotoday.com/cilmag/apr12/Hoeppner-Web-Scale-Discovery-Services.shtml

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Web Services	A family of tools used to transmit data stripped of its formatting and layout. The tools are listed below. Most are open source. These tools allow web site content to be embedded in other systems. For example Amazon web services allows bibliographic data to be downloaded into your library catalogue.
Apache Soir	A search engine which provides faceted searching of a website.
Drupal	A popular content management system.
JavaScript Object Novation (JSON)	A data format used for passing many types of structured content.

This is the most technical chapter in the book and contains some very practical information for developers and library technologists. Even if you are not technical, the key message is that with proper web services libraries can make their data available to be used in other applications. As the authors quite rightly say: "By increasing the access points for library data, we increase the access points for library services."[6] So whilst users may not be aware they are using the library - they are using the library and not going elsewhere.

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[6] Kenneth J. Varnum (editor), The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: a LITA Guide (London: Facet Publishing, 2014, p. 83

Chapter 7. Reading and Non-Reading: Text Mining in Critical Practice by Devin Higgins

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Text mining	Machine-aided analysis of text useful for examining large volumes of texts. Useful for researchers and scholars. Librarians can use text mining to generate high-quality descriptive meta-data.

Diggins explores the potential of text mining in academic libraries, particularly in digital humanities but recognises that its utility goes beyond these contexts. This left me wondering how text mining could be used for legal, medical and scientific information in commercial environments. What is clear is that text mining has potential to help us makes sense of the vast amounts of information available – to help us cope with information overload. That can't be a bad thing to explore further.

Chapter 8. Bigger, Better, Together: Building the Digital Library of the Future by Jeremy York

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Making data available	Making data available for processing, recombination and reuse using linked data, APIs, data feeds, web services and other methods
Use and understand data	Rather than just getting results users can 'do things' with the data including

	analyse, annotate, create citations, compare, create graphs, tabulate, discuss, etc.
Personalisation and recommendation	Ability for the user to personalise dashboards, save personal collections and set resource preferences. Trends towards great collaboration and social connections when using library data.

York brings alive the future of the user experience and consolidates for me how converging technologies can be practically applied. A clear and well written chapter.

Chapter 9. The Case for Open Hardware in Libraries by Jason Griffey

Technologies / trends introduced	What is it?
Open hardware	Open hardware is like open software and the two can be used together. For example library technologists could create their own gate counter using a cheap sensor-driven microprocessor and open source code.

It is fitting that this chapter is the last in the book because Griffey does have a stab at the true future, he says: "That moving into the next ten years of library operations, it will become increasingly important for libraries to embrace the variety of maker technologies in order to extend their services and assessment of services." He explains that we are heading to technological era of customisable and bespoke hardware created by ourselves and that we have the ability to "make for ourselves' electronics that can 'report things about the world in new ways"'[7] Practical implementations that he suggests include heat sensors to adjust the heating levels in the library, water sensors to report flooding, monitors that report overcrowding and more. Griffey points out that with hardware and electronics pricing falling, the price of failure falls too which allows innovation to thrive. Sounds exciting.

Summing up

In all, this slim volume packs a punch. Although I have outlined the technologies introduced in each chapter this review is no substitute for the full introduction by the expert authors themselves. Each chapter has an extensive list of references if you want to read more and this book certainly left me wanting to know more. I will be interesting to re-visit it in 5 and 10 years' time. I should also point out the contributors, with exception of Denton from the UK, are all from North American universities. The book was first published in the USA by the American Library Association, 2014.

Penny Bailey
Managing Director of Bailey Solutions Ltd

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[7] Kenneth J. Varnum (editor), The Top Technologies Every Librarian Needs to Know: a LITA Guide (London: Facet Publishing, 2014, p.114 & 116
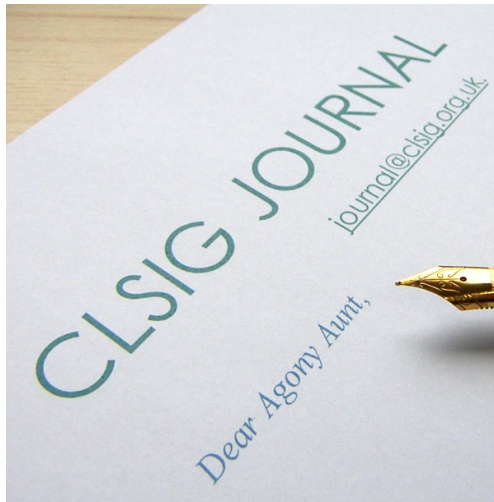
Agony Aunt

Agony Aunt has received the following question:

"Dear Agony Aunt,

I'm trying to business case a new role into my team [of corporate information professionals]. As well as justifying the role itself (on the basis of increased workload), I'm being challenged to demonstrate the value of the research and current awareness services the team and this role supports as we don't directly generate fee-income for the business. Can you advise me how I might go about doing this please?"

Agony Aunt suggests the following:

You are in good company as it is a frequent request from senior management that proposals for investments (in content or human resources, be those staff or consultants) carry plausible indicators of return. Where financial returns are impossible to "prove", it is then necessary to focus on less tangible though no less valuable benefits.

Depending on the culture in your organization, your approach could be (a) to describe the current situation and explain why it's untenable and then propose the remedy; or (b) to state the desired approval up front and then explain the reasons.   Some cultures prefer the step by step approach of (a); other cultures prefer the directness of (b).

Either way, you want to make these points, using the **voices of the beneficiaries to make your argument for you** (yes, you may need to call in some favours here) in your proposal memo:

- Users are telling us how much they value the services provided by the research team. Key benefits include risk reduction, increased competitiveness, time savings, and a firmer footing for decision making:

    Peter Jermac in business unit A: "Without the services from the research team, my group would be much less productive, and it would be much more difficult for us to get our work done. The quality of our deliverables is very much a result of the information support we are getting."

    Alice Harris in business unit B: "On several occasions, the research team saved our bacon by alerting us to relevant new information so that we were ahead of the curve. The sharp eyes and minds in the research team are vital to our excellence."

    [Etc]

- Users estimate that without the information support they are now getting - or in circumstances of reduced service - from the research team, they would soon become more expensive for the firm in that they would have to fend for themselves looking for information. The time they would spend doing so would not generate business value, and they are concerned about their ability to even find what the research team can find. They point out the risk attached to being "amateur researchers":

    Mona Reddon in business unit C: "A recent matter demonstrated how costly and risky it is for subject matter experts to attempt doing the work we get from the research team. It took two people an entire weekend to find and assemble the information we needed … and then, on Monday morning, in one hour the research team had found additional, essential information that materially altered our thinking."

    [Etc]

- At the moment, the research team is at capacity when it comes to serving the business groups. We barely manage the volume of requests we get, and all indications are that our work load will continue to grow. Users are understandably concerned about the turnaround time they can expect:

    Frank Lisbec in business unit D: "We have always relied on the fact that the research team could respond very fast to our requests for service. Lately, it has become clear that the team is run off its feet, and we understand turnaround times are at risk. That would be unfortunate and untoward for my group."

    [Etc]

- I therefore propose the addition of one information specialist to the research team, with specific responsibility for EFG functions. The investment (in the range of ₤[salary plus benefits]) per year will amount to approximately ₤ XXX per year per business group, or ₤YYY per year per person in the firm.

- Such an addition will ensure the continuation of high quality service from the research team over the foreseeable future of steadily increasing activity in the firm.

- Several excellent information specialists are available at the moment as a result of corporate reorganizations and downsizing. They come with industry and legal knowledge such that any one of them would be productive from the first day.

  [Here, it is again a matter of the culture whether you want to pose alternatives (e.g. part time, contract) and describe the pros and cons for each. You may wonder whether there is an instinctual preference for the cheapest option; it could be to your advantage to stick to what you want and let senior managers come back with alternative suggestions.]

At your convenience, I would be glad to meet with you to present the details of the role the research team has played in a number of successful outcomes for the business groups and the activity trends indicating that we are running out of capacity to meet the demand. [If a meeting is arranged, you will invite your most ardent fans to attend as well.]

Remember, the key to your request is that it is not coming from you. It is coming from the business groups. If necessary, meet with key users and explain to them the potential negative impact it will have on their groups if your team is not granted the extra position - help them understand that in fact, your request is their request.

It would of course be - I think you'd call it brilliant - if you could have your memo co-

signed by a bakers' dozen of the influential people in the firm!

Very best of luck,

Agony Aunt

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Notes for Contributors

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