Functions of the University Library

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Perceptions of the University Library

- Traditional – the library as a storage room (Stage 1)
- Library goes online (Stage 2)
- Library as meeting- and working place (Stage 3a)
- Alternative picture of stage 3 – The mobile librarian (Stage 3b)
- The librarian as a collaborator (Stage 4)

Stage 1 - library as a storage room

- Library helps in acquiring relevant documents for researchers and students
- Emphasis on library as repository of books and journals
- Emerging system of distance lending

Stage 2 – library goes online

- Physical repositories still important
- Efficient online services more important
- Development and curation of digital collections
- Evolution of distance lending: coordination of national repositories, delivering books "just in time" according to ideals of lean production

Stage 3a – Library as meeting- and working place

- Repositories still important
- Online services increasingly crucial
- More emphasis on face-to-face services to students (rather than researchers)
- Increased emphasis on teaching (rather than informing), making students information literate
- New model designed in the architecture of new library buildings in Sweden, UK, France, Germany and the US around 1992-2002
- In the US 1992-2001 on average 38 library projects completed each year

Stage 3b – The mobile librarian

- The library building less important
- Roving librarian
- Embedded librarian

Stage 4 – The librarian as a collaborator

- Traditional repositories, online repositories, information literacy for students, meeting and working place still important
- Increased emphasis on supporting research groups and individual scholars to be successful in international networking, publishing, mobility and visibility
- Enabling researchers' advanced information literacy

The changing context of university libraries

- Specialized disciplines (traditional academic expertise, exellence)
- Industry (commercial innovations, commodification of academic research)
- State (control and insurance of public good)

Scholarly communication

- **(1)** the process of conducting research, developing ideas and communicating informally with other scholars and scientists; **(2)** the process of preparing, shaping and communicating to a group of colleagues what will become formal research results; and **(3)** the ultimate formal product that is distributed to libraries and others in print or electronically (Thorin, 2006, p. 221).
- "[t]he cycle of scholarly activities is blending into a continuous, looping flow, as people discuss, write, share, and seek information" (Borgman & Furner, 2002, p. 4).

The librarians' professional role

- The library staff can be regarded as the most important resource in a high quality university library!
- The importance of presenting oneself and the professional collective of librarians as capable and knowledgeable
- The importance of being able to describe oneself as an inevitable resource in research work, as a collaborator in research and education

The librarian as collaborator in research and education

- Needs to know about:
  - The scholarly publication process (how do researchers work?; peer-review system, journal rankings, publication strategies, bibliometrics)
  - Ways of how information is disseminated (where do researchers publish?)
  - Possibilities for researchers and students to be updated
- Researchers work from bottom up, whereas librarians have a top-down perspective

Labels

- Special librarian
- Subject librarian
- Liaison librarian
- Clinical librarian
- …

Librarians' work areas

- Selecting material
- Describing material
- Classifying material
- Enable access to material
- Responding to queries
- Educate for information literacy

Selecting material

- Analyze user groups
- Overview what is published/produced – both fee-based and open access
- Assess and evaluate material with reference to user group-analysis
- Make decisions regarding what to obtain
  - Informed by:
    - Budget frames (freely available – fee-based)
    - Acquisition policy (balance: digital-printed)
    - Infrastructure for storage and archive

Describing material

- With the user(s) in mind:
    - Set up and maintain catalog(s)
    - Make use of existing bibliographic information
    - Make use of meta-data
    - Write annotations

Classifying material

- Arrange collections in accordance with classes that suit the potential users
- The use of classification systems, thesauri, and ontologies

Enable **access** to material

- System quality
- Information quality
- Service quality
  (See Chua & Goh, 2010)

Responding to queries

- At the reference desk
- Through digitized means
- Handle "clients"/users/patrons
- Active – pro-active
- The need for creating credibility – users must assume that the librarian can respond to their queries

Educate for information literacy

- Individual users
- Groups of users
- Different disciplines and subjects – different literacies
- Pedagogy
- Didactics

Further reading:

- Nolin, J.M. (2013). The special librarian and personalized meta-services: Strategies for reconnecting librarians and researchers. *Library Review*, 62(8-9), pp. 508-524.