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MEETING

Hello.

I'm the **Smarter** Library.



The Library as the Conscience of the Institution

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Toxic Effects

- The research world is dysfunctional and broken
- More true in some countries than others
- OA and work to overturn/reverse/modify publishers' journal pricing policies testify to this
- Problem caused by the competitive drivers that operate within the academy: the academic thirst for glory
- This has created the 'toxic university' (Smyth, 2017)

Distinctiveness of the Library

- Libraries have long had a role as champions of integrity in certain areas of university business
 - The privacy of borrowers
 - The laws of copyright
 - The ‘blindness’ of our circulation systems and e-access mechanisms (the new undergraduate has the same rights as the Vice-Chancellor)
 - Managers of a finite resource; need for strictness

Scale effects

- Values of fairness and equality apply at systemic levels
 - ILL systems
 - Consortial action; group loyalty
- Can come under pressure, but rare. Examples:
 - The Library that drops out of a negotiation with a publisher
 - The Library that refuses to join a reciprocal access scheme

Libraries' commitment to learning

- Disciplinary boundaries are irrelevant
 - This is why we struggle with 'inside out' services
- We do not limit or prioritise the resources of a particular School to just *its* students

Negative stereotypes about the Library

- The 'Compliance Police'
- Sanctimonious kill-joys (personification)
- Po-faced worthiness



Image from Lady Pen Land

University of Poppleton Newsletter

LIBRARIAN RETIRES

Mr K.E. Bradley retires this Friday after 40 years service on the Reference Desk of the University Library. His academic colleagues would like to wish “Old Stonewall” all the very best for the future.

Digital World Challenges

- Profit-maximisation by digital publishers (Big Deals)
 - Open Access originally a response to this
- Scale effects being used against us/against our learners
 - Aggregation to drive profits
 - Print-age response would have been subsidisation of poorer libraries by wealthier, and systemic sharing
 - Not possible due to restrictive provision capabilities in the hands of digital publishers

Perfect Storm

- Digital power and academic system toxicity
- The misfortune of our generation(s) of librarians
- Thirst for reputational glory
 - Has reached its apogee in the UK's REF
 - Designed to improve the country's economic performance
 - Subtracts power from the academy and transfers it to profit-maximising publishers
 - Fake power; league tables; false proxies for worth
- Where are the better models?

The Maxwell-Pergamon Discovery

- How to convert the thirst for academic glory into improper private profit
- One of the greatest discoveries of the 20th Century

Buranyi, Stephen. 'Is the staggeringly profitable business of scientific publishing bad for science?'
The Guardian Long Read, 27 June 2017



Living with the Unconscionable

- Profit-maximising publishers will only push as far as they can
- The sums we are required to pay for the content we need are unconscionable
- This hurts the sanctimonious, worthy library
- Exposing the grotesque irony that operates in our world has not been sufficient to remove it
- Indignation, even multiplied across national and international collectives, has not been enough

Change in the Balance of Power

- German libraries' current stand-off with Elsevier embodies the fight-back of the library as integrity champion
- Whereas in the UK, 'librarians' is being used pejoratively by publishers to rubbish our attempts (UK-SCL) to VCs
- Remains to be seen whether the publishers will continue to hold all the cards
- Or whether the 'house of cards' will finally tumble

What Should We Do?

- Transcend our sanctimoniousness
- Collaborate around our value system
- Call out the bad actors
- Call attention to what is unconscionable
- Collaborate in communication/PR/marketing
- Develop one voice, and make it heard
 - By learned societies
 - By national academies

Challenge the Perniciousness of REF

- Restore sanity to the academic process
 - Researchers should research, and publish when they are ready
 - They should be trusted to work honestly and honourably
 - They should compete only on science and scholarship, not on star-ratings and impact evidence
 - They should be given space to work
- We will be greeted by hollow laughter
- We should transcend it

Thank you

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