The “Service Turn” and the Future of the Academic Library

Scott Walter
OCLC Distinguished Seminar Series
June 16, 2011
The past several decades have witnessed a postmodern turn in theory, the arts, and the sciences, one that is part of a major paradigm shift and, some would argue, an epochal transformation from a modern to a postmodern world . . . . The postmodern turn involves a shift from modern to postmodern theory in a great variety of fields and the move toward a new paradigm through which the world is viewed and interpreted.

The most recent, significant shift in this field has been what could be called the “digital turn” - that is, the increased attention to new literacy practices in digital environments across a variety of social contexts, such as workplaces and educational, economic, and recreational sites.


University of Queensland – The UQ Day of Digital Humanities
"[In] an era when everything we know about how content is created, acquired, accessed, evaluated, disseminated, employed, and preserved for the future is in flux, the research library must be distinguished by the scope and quality of its service programs in the same way it has long been by the breadth and depth of its locally-held collections."

Why Make a Service Turn?

• Evolving user perceptions of place of libraries in the academic enterprise
• Reconsider library “value statement” in light of changes in access to scholarly content
• Pursue collaborative initiatives based on shared service goals
• Re-envision what “excellence” in academic librarianship means
• Promote greater interaction and collaboration across library types
• Facilitate strategic planning and resource allocations
Context for Consideration (1): Change Begets Change

“Academic libraries are changing faster than at any time in their history.”

“[One] of the most striking aspects of the ERIAL study was the near-invisibility of librarians within the academic worldview of students . . .”

“Basic scholarly information use practices have shifted rapidly in recent years, and . . . the academic library is increasingly being disintermediated from the discovery process . . .”

Context for Consideration (1): Change Begets Change

“The transformation of research libraries mirrors, to a large degree, the ongoing evolution of research institutions and the practices of research and scholarship.”

“Today’s academic libraries face unprecedented challenges. The relentless pace of change combined with increasing levels of complexity and ambiguity are creating chaotic and turbulent work environments. Even the largest and wealthiest of libraries are straining to meet escalating demands for new technologies, new skills, and new services in the midst of static or declining budgets.”

“At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, we believe that . . . . Fundamental changes in the information and academic environments . . . demand new approaches to defining, designing, and delivering library services. An approach to library service designed for the twentieth century retains limited value if it cannot adapt to the demands of a new era in teaching, learning, and scholarship. To meet the challenge of designing a library for the next generation, we must embrace changes to our organization and to traditional ways of conducting our work.”

Context for Consideration (3): New Service Models

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Scholarly Commons
http://www.library.illinois.edu/sc/
Context for Consideration (4): Distinctive Signifiers of Excellence

“ARL libraries want to be known for their distinctive collections, not by some characteristic shared with every other library.”


“ARL libraries are increasingly exploring and adopting a range of new roles in serving research institutions, researchers, scholars, and students, making the time ripe for ARL to organize a new report cluster focusing on key new roles. The series will identify and delineate emerging roles and present research on early experiences among member libraries in developing the roles and delivering services.”

The Big Questions

• What are the “core services” for a research library in the 21st century?
• What makes a library service “distinctive”?
• What can a focus on identifying “distinctive services” mean for planning, budgeting, staffing, etc., during a period of constrained resources?
• What do discussions of the “collective collection” mean for discussions of “shared service”?
A Taxonomy of Library Services

• Traditional
  – Access
  – Collection Development and Management
  – Information and Assistance

• Contemporary
  – Teaching and Learning
  – Outreach and Engagement

• Emergent
  – Student services
  – Scholar services

McMaster University Libraries – Mills Learning Commons
http://library.mcmaster.ca/
“As we look back on a decade of extraordinary change in academic libraries . . . [we find] nothing so important to the future of the library and its continued place at the heart of the academic enterprise than its people and the expertise they bring to the design, development, and delivery of library services.”

Professional Expertise and Library Staffing

- Instructional Design Librarian
- Data Services Librarian
- Metadata Librarian
- Digital Publishing Librarian
- Digital Humanities Librarian
- Assessment Librarian
- First-Year-Experience Librarian
- User Experience Librarian
- Multicultural Outreach Librarian
“Maturity” and Service-Centered Expertise

• Is the area of expertise represented in the LIS curriculum?
• Are connections made between LIS curriculum and complementary curricula?
• Do professional networks exist within the LIS field that focus on the area of expertise?
• Are connections made between the LIS networks and complementary networks?
• Are libraries recruiting for specialists in the area of expertise; are they doing so in a way that recognizes and promotes the expertise?
Teaching and Learning: A “Mature” Service Program in Academic Libraries
Interlude 1: Learning from Public Libraries

Tom Green County (TX) Public Library – Teen Services

Washington Centerville (OH) Public Library – Senior Services
http://www.wclibrary.info/links/seniors.asp
A Spectrum of Library Services

• Universal
  – Access Services
• More Common
  – Information Services
  – Instructional Services
• Less Common
  – Digital Publishing
  – Copyright Consulting
• Distinctive

Harvard University
Harvard Library Lab
http://osc.hul.harvard.edu/liblab
The Service Spectrum and the Library Brand

“The event will offer an interactive forum for library patrons to ask questions, tour the building and see demonstrations about services provided, including electronic resources, personal librarians and free digital images. Information also will be provided on the many items available for checkout . . . . The fair will feature breakout workshops on EndNote Web, . . . and on Mining Uncle Sam’s Data, featuring Geographic Information Systems, maps and patents.”

“Welcome to the Center for Digital Scholarship. This exciting new concept is brought to you by KU Libraries, whose mission is to serve “as dynamic partners and campus leaders in advancing inquiry and learning for KU, for the state of Kansas, and for an ever-expanding community of world scholars.”
The Service Spectrum and the Library Brand

“The library brand is books.”

“Books, in fact it’s the only thing I think of when thinking about a library.”

The Service Spectrum and the Library Brand

“We connect people with scholarship. This is the core mission of the research library in the 21st century. It is an inherently active mission and strikingly different than in previous decades . . . . It is simply not possible to connect people with scholarship without collaboration, partnerships, and dynamic interaction.”

The Service Spectrum and the Library Brand

• Instructional Initiatives
  – First-Year Experience
  – Undergraduate Research

• Student Services
  – Writing Centers
  – Health Services

• Faculty Development
  – Centers for Teaching & Learning
  – E-Scholarship

• Information Technology
  – IT Training

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Ethnography of the University Initiative
http://www.eui.illinois.edu/

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
The Savvy Researcher
http://www.library.illinois.edu/sc/services/savvy_researcher.html
Interlude 2: Learning from Collections

Bowling Green State University Libraries
Browne Popular Culture Collection
http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/pcl/
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

• Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

University of Michigan
Scholarly Publishing Office (MPublishing)
http://www.lib.umich.edu/spo/
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

- Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?
- Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?
- Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

Earlham College Libraries
http://legacy.earlham.edu/~libr/
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

• Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?
• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?
• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

University of Southern California
Leavey Library
Information Commons
http://www.usc.edu/libraries/locations/leavey/ic/
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

• Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Slavic Reference Service
http://www.library.illinois.edu/spx/srs.htm
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

• Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?
• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?
• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

Kent State University Libraries
High School Outreach Program
http://www.library.kent.edu/page/10973
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

- Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?
- Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?
- Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

Grinnell College Libraries
Peer Mentoring
http://www.grinnell.edu/library
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

• Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?
• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?
• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

Pierce College
Lakewood Computer Clubhouse and Robotics Center
http://lakewoodclubhouse.us/blog/
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

• Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?

Hostos Community College
Escriba! / Write!
http://www.hostos.cuny.edu/library/escriba/
The Service Spectrum and the Distinctive Service

• Does it represent a new approach to, or a new area of, library service that has served as a “lighthouse,” i.e., an innovation that has been broadly taken up by other libraries?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive area of strength in the library’s collections or the campus academic program?

• Does it represent a unique or unusual library service closely tied to a distinctive aspect of the campus mission, identity, or history?
Services Programs or Service Clusters?

“Research is a primary mission of the University, and therefore Harvard’s library collections must be funded and supported accordingly. Harvard’s libraries have an obligation to scholarship that transcends any particular time or contingent circumstances. The collection is paramount to the research university’s library in a way that it is not in the library of a liberal arts college where teaching and curriculum are the overriding concerns.”

A Service Cluster for Liberal Arts Colleges

Undergraduate Research
http://thesis.haverford.edu/

Teaching and Learning
http://library.wartburg.edu/infolit/

Peer Leadership
http://www.grinnell.edu/library

Community Engagement
https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/cce
Sustaining Distinctive Service Programs

- Clear mission
- Compelling vision
- Identified constituents and partners
- Flexibility in application to promote broad relevance
- Commitment to sustainable service infrastructure
- Research base

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
http://www.clpgh.org/librariesforlife/
Planning and Distinctive Services

- Building on strength
- Considering campus connections
- Acknowledging role in library landscape
- Identifying collaborative projects and programs
- Allocating resources
- Planned abandonment
- Shared services

“Large-scale electronic publishing and the retrospective digitization of millions of print books and journals have produced new centers of gravity around which users congregate with little attention to institutional provenance or ownership. In this environment, the once distinctive value of locally held print collections has rapidly diminished . . .”

Distinctive Services and Shared Services

“The intention of this program is to leverage the expertise resident at one or another of the CIC libraries to provide support for staff, faculty and students on other campuses... In the long run, it enhances communication and coordination across our campuses, such that a greater breadth of resources can be proximate to scholars in the Midwest.”

http://info.cic.net/eNews/CLI/Article.aspx?List=e2b6f931-966b-48a1-a375-36f2c6a5860d&ID=48
Distinctive Services and Shared Services

Upcoming at ALA (June 25, 2011):

*Envisioning our Future: Restructuring the Academic Library through Radical Collaboration*

- Collaboration Is the New Competition: 2CUL and the Imperative to Partner.
- A Strategic Agenda For a Multi-Institutional Library in the Northwest.

[2CUL](http://2cul.org/)
Role for OCLC Research

“As the network shifts the pattern of transaction costs, the composition of the internalized “library service bundle” will change. Some services that the academic library has traditionally undertaken will be externalized to others. But it is important to emphasize that the shifting boundaries of the library are not the result of a one-way downsizing process. Even as some activities are shed, new ones will be taken on.”

Questions
Contact

Scott Walter, MLS, PhD
Associate University Librarian for Services, and
Associate Dean of Libraries
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
swalter@illinois.edu