Librarianship in the 21ˢᵗ Century: a British Library Perspective

Abstract: Jonathan Sims looks at the way the British Library has been redefining its role in light of the changing environment of society's information revolution. An overview of challenges from the information society and the institutional complex is followed by descriptions of how the Library is responding through content strategy and programmes for digitisation, digital preservation and web archiving. A brief look is also taken at the new social science strategy and a new content specialist role for law and socio-legal studies.

Keywords: British library; national libraries; librarianship

Introduction

Maintaining the vitality of libraries and collections in the 21ˢᵗ Century involves many challenges and opportunities. For the British Library, these involve the particular characteristics of the institutional complexion, as well as issues presented by digital revolutionary society. This article looks at some of the ways the Library has been responding to, and overcoming these 21ˢᵗ Century challenges. While a significant focus of the article is on subject independent initiatives, attention is also paid to plans for the library's law collections within the context of a strategy for social science. It is hoped that resonance with shared professional experience and the implicit inclusion of legal information in the collections subjected to the general initiatives discussed will underpin the article's relevance to the readership.

The two arenas (society and the British Library) are not of course mutually exclusive, and consideration of the potential effect of one on the other is born in mind in the choice of issue discussed here. In general, the approach is descriptive, often reflecting preoccupations of the corporate and programme strategy. In addition to public documentation (which can be found on the British Library website), sources drawn from include presentations aimed at cross departmental communication and re-skilling for the 21ˢᵗ Century. The direction and choice of illustration are the author's own, however, and the viewpoint reflects personal experience, both as an employee and as a former library user. All views expressed are those of the author alone and are in no way representative of the British Library's position.

What is the British Library? Institutional complexion, roles and scope

A legal deposit entitlement to most items printed in the UK has fed the library, originally via antecedent institutions and founding collections, for over 250 years. This, in principle, now extends to electronic publications and non print formats since the *Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003*, with the implication that these should be preserved for future generations of researchers. While further regulation is required to bring the Act into force for specific types of material, a process that brings three separate negotiating and advisory groups into play, a scheme for voluntary deposit has been in place since 2000. Long term preservation of the intellectual and cultural heritage entrusted to the institution is a key defining role for the Library; articulation of time horizons like "for all posterity" and "forever" has been common since the 1753 founding of the British Museum's department of printed books.

Understanding the institutional complexion and history of the library is a significant part of recognising some of the challenges faced in the 21ˢᵗ Century. A statute of 1972 opened the British Library as an administrative umbrella combining a number of national institutions, collections and services. The library departments of the British Museum contained not only founding and legal deposit collections, but also the results of an ambition to provide the best collections of foreign materials outside their country of origin. Geography, language and era have, until recently, characterised the library's

approach to much of the collection development, management, and curatorial expertise. A current challenge is, therefore, evaluating and illuminating the discrete disciplinary components of these collections. The diverse collections, each with particular catalogues, of the institutions forming panels in the 1972 umbrella, included two lending operations which combined to form the Library's Lending Division (Document Supply Centre since 1985). Within the British Museum collections, the National Library for Science and Invention contained, in turn, the Patent Office library as its nucleus. Between 1973 and the opening of the St. Pancras site in 1998, the British National Bibliography, India Office library and records and the British Institute of Recorded Sound were also brought under the BL umbrella.

The creation of the National Library for Science and Invention was informed by a very specific purpose of developing the national research network, a continuing role evident in corporate strategy. The British Library also sees itself as a living reference service in support of current research information needs. This role is very broad and encompasses not only academic research support, but also the needs of all types of researcher, prioritising business and entrepreneurial requirements and a role in contributing to economic productivity through knowledge transfer.

Details about the extent of the collections and services can be found online [www.bl.uk]. Suffice to say for now that recent figures indicate a collection of 150 million items. The Library also freely provides licensed, onsite access to huge numbers of electronic journals, single subscriptions and aggregators, abstracting and specialist databases across the Humanities, Social Sciences, Science, Technology and Business.

The environment and challenges: digital society

"Society is experiencing an unprecedented increase in the volume of information that is produced and consumed" [British Library 2006, p.2]. The volume is not exclusively digital; the space needed by the British Library to accommodate materials stored in shelving is expanding at a rate of around 12 km a year. [British Library 2008] Can this all be collected? How does the British Library continue to provide access to a global range of materials and underpin UK research?

A range of sophisticated channels, both free and commercial, present significant competition to services offered by libraries. While these are well-known in our profession, it is worth mentioning some: major search engines that offer means of search and discovery devoid of the disciplinary and conceptual pigeonholing that both vexes and provides purpose to libraries; free and quality online content through open access journal and repository initiatives; other institutional online publishing, "author pays" models and retrospective digitisation. Additionally, free, publisher independent, search tools

Figure 1: Aerial view of the British Libary

that redirect to publishers' online journal and e-book libraries for ad-hoc paid downloads reflect the synergy possible between rejuvenated publishing channels and comparatively recent entrants to the search market. What opportunities can libraries grasp to stay relevant in this environment?

The digital revolution is spurring the publishing industry to an "enormously rapid pace of change" [British Library 2006, p.7], displaying accelerating technological developments and format proliferation. New ways of creating information are appearing, whether amateur publishing and social web 2.0 type enterprise, or commercial collaborations, using for example, GIS technologies to link to local crime statistics. Furthermore, the equally rapid rate of technological obsolescence of hardware and software, data degradation, and authenticity, the sudden disappearance of web content or non-persistent resource locators present attendant challenges. How do libraries adapt their collection development, organisation, preservation and access policies accordingly?

Expectations, driven by the digital revolution, for instantly available information, processing capacity, and twenty-four hour desk top access have been forcing libraries to reconsider their services and content provision. Response, especially in the light of a multi-sector user community, requires consideration of multiple rights and licensing issues, with their attendant metadata and authentication challenges to name but two. At the same time it should be noted that despite the relentless shift to digital publishing, there is sustained demand for books and reading room space.

The flip side of these challenges for the British Library is of course a fantastic opportunity to respond to expectations in exciting new ways: democratising the accessibility of great collections, rare items and their

study through online provision and facilitating collaborative scholarship; enhancing the processing and search opportunities of content, and so on.

What these challenges mean for the British Library and how it is responding in broad strategic terms

The British Library has been digitising its collections for more than ten years, facilitating free onsite access to licensed online material, as well as devoting much attention to responding strategically to the challenges of the digital age. Change is the key word, and process re-engineering is reflected in the vocabulary of both corporate and programme strategies. The broad focus is on ensuring the continued relevance of the Library, the relevance of processes, and the rejuvenation of staff skills and mindset. In short, as stated in the 2005–2008 corporate strategy: "Our challenge is to redefine the role and purpose of the British Library in the information revolution of the 21st Century" [British Library [2005], p.1].

Although the article does not focus on strategic capacity specifically, it is noticeable that attention to efficiency savings through technological, often collaborative responses to business processes characterises the planning and achievements of individual programmes in all areas. Physical space has also been reconsidered in light of the new digital environment and agenda, made to add value and work harder. This can be seen, for example, in the response to online availability of patents, and journals. Space used to facilitate access to specifications has been repurposed to provide more responsive support for UK innovation and economic growth through a dynamic Business and Intellectual Property Centre. National rationalisation of academic journal holdings, low oxygen storage developments, and document supply capacity at the BL are also enabling storage space to work more efficiently.

The Content Strategy

A number of issues are addressed by the British Library's content strategy: the volume of publishing, the online environment, and changing information seeking behaviour and needs. Outlined, as part of a consultation exercise, in 2006, the strategy is seen as a collaborative and ongoing process, emphasising dialogue with users and stakeholders around meeting current and future information needs.

An initial focus has been on Humanities and Social Science collections where some of the rich resources can be hard to find by dsicipline or research theme, especially for those not initiated in the complexity of the library. Part of the unfolding Social Science programme sees the deployment of themed content experts in the identification, audit, and illumination of discrete collections across the traditional geographic and format based collection areas as critical to the development of tailored models for enhanced access. A key role for the content experts will be to inform these processes, and the selection of materials, by sustained dialogue with the research community, across sectors, as it identifies itself, rather than through disciplinary pigeon holing.

The Library recognises the impossibility of collecting everything, as well as the many new forms of online content that it cannot on its own ensure long-term access to. The strategy is explicit about the need to reflect the full range of scholarly resources, including pre and post prints, datasets, and non-textual material, and also specifies legal materials and official publications. Emphasis therefore is not just on collecting, but also on connecting to relevant collections held elsewhere. "Collecting" thus relates to legal deposit of print and electronic resources, and to purchase, donations and exchange of the same. "Connecting" (ensuring access to content held by others) refers to linking to freely available content, whether print (e.g. library partnerships especially for special collections) or electronic, web-based materials, and licensing access to electronic resources. There is also recognition of challenges inherent in the approach, such as issues about prioritisation and guaranteeing the quality of sources connected to, as well as those relating to partners.

We will shortly see the strategy in action within the context of Social Sciences and Law, but first let us look at some of the cross-cutting initiatives.

Digital responses to the information revolution and operational challenges

Digitisation

Responding to the strategic priority of building the digital research environment, the BL digitisation programme involves a number of objectives. These include the ability to respond to digital society's expectations for access and enhanced processing, providing the widest possible access to rare resources, and reduction of costs associated with retrieving and handling physical items.

By May 2009, including the planned output of the Microsoft Digitisation project to convert approximately 100,000 out of copyright C19th books (English language prioritised), the Library will have converted around 525 million pages of its collection.

Specific examples of digitised material include:

- Anglo-Saxon charters and other heritage items aimed at providing wider access than is possible through gallery visits, and exhibition space.

- Large scale collections that involve external funding and governance, such as the International Dunhuang project providing access to 26,000 Central Asian manuscripts.

- Conversion of the Burney and C19th century newspaper collections, and digitisation of parts of collections that involve licensing deals with commercial partners such as Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

- Additional collaborations have occurred with academic partners, including JISC funding for converting nearly 4,000 hours of audio, and collaboration on the digitisation of C18th century parliamentary publications. (Although the latter currently has commercial care taking).

A number of issues can be highlighted amongst the Library's digitisation experiences to provide some characteristics of this 21st Century work. Technical considerations include ensuring adequate hardware and networking capacity, and the need for specialised, often newly developed, software. Examples here include computer animation associated with the Turning the Pages project, systems for navigation of large scale projects such as Collect Britain, and speech recognition and search software to enable processing of audio material.

Additionally there are a number of issues concerning Optical Character Recognition, including: whether or not the fonts or print quality of original materials and digital images will respond to OCR; the loss of potential processing capacity, including visibility to search engines if this process is not possible: or the preparation needed to cope with OCR-ing varying sizes of newspaper pages in a single run.

Even where OCR is not possible, textual discovery is aided and experience-enhancing value can be added through supporting metadata and commentary from expert staff. An illustration of this can be seen in the descriptions accompanying images of legal manuscripts that are available via the Library's Collect Britain website [www.collectbritain.co.uk], such as those relating to the harmonisation of laws under Hywel ap Cael or King Stephen.

A number of process issues and operational best practice can also be highlighted. Deploying the best possible machines and software used to perform the mass conversion, and manage storage, file checking and conversion process required careful selection and collaboration with a range of technology partners. Continual development of functionality and process flow also presents economic issues. For example, the volume of works converted and ensuring continual flow that avoids machine downtime are critical to the efficiency of the project. If greater efficiency is achieved through the course of the project, a greater volume of material can be converted. This means that, where technical difficulties are encountered, with a physical aspect of an original source for example, a process needs to be in place to deal with the developments in the background without interrupting the production line.

Two associated issues should also be considered. Firstly, the preservation motive: at the British Library this has underpinned the conversion of many analogue sound recordings from virtually obsolete analogue formats. In general however, although digitisation may reduce handling ware, an argument that digital visibility may increase demand for originals needs to be considered. Secondly, that while remote access is possible, copyright laws can represent almost insurmountable barriers in some cases. A recent copyright issue has involved attempts to digitise anthropological field recordings, and the problems with knowing who the song, or its rendition belong to, whether they are alive or dead.

Painstaking preparation is one of the overriding characteristics of mass digitisation. This is true of the experience with newspaper projects which involve labour intensive work to accommodate the varied sizes of the same newspaper, as well as fragile conditions. The latter necessitates page by page conservation measures, and cataloguing the precise detail of each step. Diversely, large-scale digitisation projects have also highlighted a collection security need to maintain an audit trail so that knowledge of the precise location of materials taken from storage, and mid-project access are maintained.

Digital preservation

The scope of the challenge of digital preservation is huge. The range of existing formats held at the Library includes items from voluntary legal deposit, online publications, disks accompanying print publications, the output of digitisation projects, websites, audio, e-manuscripts, Ordnance Survey GIS, whole computers and other hardware and software needed to render the formats. The rate of technological change, proliferation of formats, rate of technological obsolescence and data degradation present enormous challenges for the storage, preservation, and long-term access of electronic resources and objects.

The obsolescence issue can be illustrated by the example of a CD-Rom which, even if it were to survive to the end of the century, would not, by the 22nd Century have the hardware and software needed to support it. The process involves recording enormous amounts of metadata relating to formats, software requirements, authenticity, and the continual conversion and migration of data. This is also a major issue for the design of the digital object management system (DOM) used to support the agenda for storing digital materials "for ever" as well as providing access to support immediate and future research needs. The challenge is addressed by a key design principle which separates the layers of the storage subsystem, the mission critical bedrock of the entire system. Maintaining the distinction between the service and the physical storage layers allows for cost savings in the future procurement of physical storage that will be necessary when migrating data from a part of the system that is itself nearing obsolescence. (The service layer controls the allocation of unique, vendor independent identifiers for objects and guarantees authenticity over time). One of many other challenges associated with the DOM development involves integration of the physical storage layer with integrated library system and OPAC. More about the DOM programme can be found at http://www.bl.uk/aboutus/stratpolprog/digi/dom/index.html

87

Jonathan Sims

In approaching these challenges the Library has assembled a team of experts who work in international collaboration at the cutting edge of technology. Skills required range from computer science and system architecture to business and systems analysis and development of metadata models.

While immediate focus is on stabilising the content of hand-held formats (CDs, DVDs etc), continuing programme streams involve technology analysis in support of the DOM programme, production of preservation plans for each particular content stream to be ingested by the DOMS, risk assessment and prioritisation of preservation activities for particular content types, and a Technology Watch project.

At the same time, international collaboration critical to the advancement of required knowledge includes projects such as the four year EU funded Planets project led by the Library aimed at developing technology for the evaluation of digital collections and the planning of their preservation life cycle to ensure longevity. Likewise, the LIFE 2, JISC funded project, concerns the methodology of mapping of lifecycle requirements including cost elements.

Read more about it at www.planets-project.eu and www.life.ac.uk

Web archiving

The purpose of the BL web archiving programme is to enable the library to become the first resort for those requiring access to a wide ranging archive of the UK web domain, to ensure permanent access, and to develop the necessary requirements for fulfilment of the Legal Deposit Libraries Act requirements. Collection development policy prioritises representative sites from across the whole scope of research knowledge and requirements, and sites representative of British cultural heritage and web innovation. Depending on methodology and technical developments, future plans are to periodically ingest views of the entire UK web domain.

So far British Library staff have contributed around half of the sites to the archive of the UK Web Archiving Consortium. This body is to continue in a consultative capacity, to be replaced by individual archiving responsibilities of the separate partners, some drawing software and technical support from the British Library web Archiving Service.

Apart from the technical challenges involved with this particular programme, others include the negotiation involved with gaining permission to download. A current twenty to twenty five percent success rate in gaining permissions is reported by one source, who mentions issues involving the presence of objects on the site that are licensed from third parties. Additionally, the eventual training of curatorial/content specialist staff in the archiving process is intended, once systems have been converted to widely accessible software. Currently subject experts select and negotiate only.

The development of the software capacity is dependent on international collaboration, and focuses on increasing productivity and efficiency of the archiving process, and enabling full text searching of the whole archive. Recent developments include the Web Curator Tool aimed at assisting the selection process and assuring quality, the Heritrix web crawler that enables the detection and only stores the changes on sites, and the Automated Content Access Protocol providing efficiency in the permission seeking process.

Transforming search and navigation

The spectrum of British Library collections, reflecting antecedent institutions, is accompanied by myriad legacy catalogues, in varying formats and employing varying standards. While migrating and integrating metadata from disparate search and discovery systems is nothing new, on the scale that the British Library has had to deal with the issues, while simultaneously responding to the expectations and opportunities of digitizing society, the challenge is very much a live issue.

These expectations include, for example, new systems for managing storage, discovery and search of digital assets; seamless integration of metadata search with content search and access; functional Web 2.0 add-ons for folksonomies, comment about sources, and communities in discrete areas, and faceted browsing through automatic generation of categories according to analysis of metadata.

Sixteen legacy systems were replaced and went live on the website as the Integrated Catalogue in 2004, pulling in the newspaper catalogue and English Short Title Catalogue in 2007 with tentative proposals for associated Web 2.0 developments. Two thousand and eight saw the deployment of SFX to allow discovery and seamless onsite access to licensed and open access journals and e-books. Additionally, many of the digital items deposited under the voluntary scheme and ingested by the digital object management system became available via the integrated catalogue in 2007, a reality that is unfolding for the output of the MS digitisation project as well.

An additional forty systems for archives and manuscripts metadata still require replacement and integration with each other before they can be integrated with the rest of collection discovery. This is a substantial project (IAMS) in itself, phasing migration of metadata, and developing the BL's Themed Collection architecture in an environment of limited market options. It will allow international metadata standards and data exchange with external systems, and integration with DOM for on screen rendering of existing and increasing numbers of digital assets.

In order to realise the vision of a 21st Century system of fully integrated resource discovery with additional enhancements mentioned above, a new OPAC is being deployed to replace the current Aleph system in piloted stages and there is an incremental approach to

88

bringing search and navigation into full integration for all catalogues. This will eventually bring IAMS into full integration with other themed collections under the federated search functionality of the new system, accommodating features that respond to user expectations, and integrating with content access as it becomes possible for different content streams.

Social Sciences Collections and research

In pursuit of the goals of the corporate and content strategies, the base of social science expertise at the Library has been strengthened with a complete team in place as of 2008. Bearing in mind the broad framework of institutional and 21st Century challenges, as well as the objectives of the corporate strategies, initiatives in the Social Sciences Collections and Research Team, including the library's first post dedicated to legal content (the author's perspective), provide something of a case study of 21st Century librarianship at the BL.

Some of the plans for the next three years emphasise new roles that reflect the library's agenda of redefinition. Ambitions to develop and run a hub of debate, networking and resources, running a broad research capacity building programme and obtaining ESRC Independent Research Organisation Status are amongst the most striking. The first of these ambitions employs an approach that facilitates the dissemination of research findings in partnership with researchers, practitioners and support organisations across sectors (academic, professional, government and non-governmental organisations, libraries and data providers) involving events and conference programmes and possibilities for the development of online research and content user communities through applications of Web 2.0 technologies.

Others reflect more traditional activities which are nevertheless a radical departure in terms of the content strategy context. Examples include negotiating the incorporation of non- print formats (such as websites and reports from non-government organisations), and enabling access to collections and content. The latter concentrates on the development of comprehensive online collection guides built on the mapping and scoping of discrete disciplinary and user-focussed information sources owned or enabled by the Library, on developing a strategy for remote access and identifying priorities for digitisation. Regarding the former, questions have been raised about catering for future researcher needs to study the impact of the web on social behaviour, leading to practical, legal and ethical concerns about archiving and enabling access to sites that promote suicide or bulimia for example.

On this digital frontier, a project focussed on persistent medium term access to web only UK government reports provides an example of some of the problems faced. The MAGIC project (Managing Access to Government Information Collaboratively) is driven by a number of digital age challenges. While national measures for archiving of government websites are planned through the National Archives' Web Continuity programme, concerns persist about accessibility for higher education researchers. This led to the development of a joint proposal with the London School of Economics and the University of Oxford Social Science Library for HEFCE funding of a feasibility study. The study will look at the financial sustainability, governance and technical implications of a collaborative project that attempts to avoid the duplication currently exhibited.

Communication is an essential part of the Social Science strategy, both externally with the research community to build and sustain relationships that inform the continual progress of the content strategy, and internally, across the collections and departments whose material we are mapping, or whose services we collaborate with. Raising awareness of information resources and opportunities that the BL offers is also essential, particularly in view of evidence that suggests many researchers are not aware of their entitlement to use the library, and a perceived need amongst professional researchers outside academia for the electronic capabilities their organisations do not have the capacity to offer. Sustaining relationships and collaborative, distributed collection development with library partners and organisations such as Research Information Network, Consortium of University Research Libraries and the members of the FLARE foreign law partnership also figures high on the agenda. A recent highlight of the collaborative approach is a newly established, strategic partnership with the ESRC, which aims to support efforts to improve information resources for social science.

Law and Socio-Legal Studies

Two thousand and eight sees an interesting turning point for law at the British Library. As with many of the research themes prioritised by the Social Science strategy, law and socio-legal studies have been provided with a dedicated content expert. While the reference service had included a law specialist for a number of years, and while legal materials have always been collected, this is the first post dedicated to collections.

One of the first tasks has been to create a working document to help define the scope of the new post, and underpin progress within the social science and content strategies. This has involved, for example, producing an overview of the legal research environment, and approaches to legal research, in order to provide a framework and vocabulary to consistently inform communications both within the library (with geographic collections curators for example) and externally. It also takes stock of both assumptions and evidence about collection strengths, including our existing commitments to maintain national distributed collections.

While there are areas of collection strength in primary legal materials, official and parliamentary publications from both states and intergovernmental organisations, and in

research literature from both traditional and external, interdisciplinary approaches to law, there is also a very significant historical dimension. In addition to exploring and signposting to relevant materials in country collections, and literature from allied disciplines, such as sociology, criminology, philosophy, psychology and so on, it will be interesting to see whether capacity and the scope of the social science remit enables the focus to extend to the rich historical and manuscript collections. In addition to long-standing legal deposit collections and manuscripts already mentioned, Library collections provide, for example, the opportunity to research censorship in action from analysis of Lord Chamberlain's Plays (both licensed and unlicensed) and associated correspondence.

Initial work will focus on the audit and illumination of legal resources within strong Eastern and Central European collections. This process will enable the provision of collection guides for themed collection pages on the Library website, enhancing visibility and access of the resources. The Library websites' collection pages will for the first time enable the researcher to gain an overview of the scope of the Library's law collections, signposting to discrete collections and points of access and discovery. Over time, the range of guides to particular jurisdictions and research themes will increase, and the possibilities for collaborative work space will be explored.

Another important and early focus of the role is on the existing relationships including work with FLARE, a co-operation project between UK libraries with substantial foreign law holdings, aimed at collaborative collection development and improved access to foreign, comparative and international law. [see http://ials.ac.uk/flare/flare.htm] While initial focus has been collaborative collection development for foreign legal gazettes, recent updating of the FLAG database [http://ials.ac.uk/flare/flare.htm] has created a map of collections in danger and of the many jurisdictions for which there is no current collecting. This work has highlighted the need to look at possible risks to the future of these resources, how such a distributed collection is managed and financed, and whether it is practical or desirable to maintain, in the UK, a comprehensive paper collection of foreign legal materials for as many jurisdictions as possible. (Clinch & Bird 2008 at page 135 of this issue).

In line with Social Science and corporate strategy, external communication to underpin the progress of collection audit and illumination, and content and service development will reach across the sectors. As the scope of the new role unfolds, an ongoing communications programme will encompass research practitioners in government and non-governmental organisations as well as in the academic community. Of course the information services supporting legal research are an essential part of the process and it is hoped that this year's Dublin conference will provide an opportunity for further discussion.

Themes and conclusions

We have seen how a number of 21st Century issues are being approached by the British Library, but what are the unifying themes? Challenge, opportunity, and redefinition, while characteristic of the British Library's responses to 21st Century digital society, do not in themselves have particularly 21st Century resonances. This is the case for a number of themes. Collaboration is a recurrent theme for the British Library, whether this is on the technical requirements of mass digitisation, digital preservation or web archiving, in the partnerships for distributed connecting, internal collaboration across traditional collection boundaries or in relationships with the research community. Efficiency measures are of course ever present, but while these underpin the strategic capacity for digital change, and benefit from technological advances, they are not in themselves particularly 21st Century. Continual technological development of software and systems architecture, whether through external collaboration or in-house expertise, is obviously critical to all stages of the processes discussed, but here too there is nothing exclusively 21st Century. Likewise, the need for project and change management skills, are nothing new.

Something particular that seems to characterise the whole endeavour is a sense of ramping up the game to a new level. There is evidence that the technology needed to deal with the challenges at this juncture in library evolution really is at the cutting edge. The collaboration required is not optional. While there seems to be a shift towards a Web 2.0 mentality, and recognition that the whole can be worth more than the sum of the individual parts, this shift in mindset and type of partnership seems to be critical to survival. There is determination to survive and it is reflected in the apocalyptic survival imagery of some of the digital projects and collaborations such as Ark, Life2, Planets. This survival is not just of the cultural heritage into the future, of the future heritage into the further future, but is about the present. It is about how extant collections and current informational output are being made to live in a dynamic way that responds to the expectations of society. Not least it is about the determination for professional survival. As one colleague put it, the role of librarianship in the 21st Century British Library is about "manning the lifeboat of the information revolution."

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Biography

Jonathan Sims was recruited to the post of content specialist for law and socio-legal studies at the British Library in January 2008. He had previously been employed as a legal reference specialist and librarian for official publications and law.

(Arthur C Clarke, We Still Need You): Trying to Predict our Future at the Bodleian Law Library

Abstract: Ruth Bird considers how the facilities and services at the Bodleian Law Library will evolve in the 21st Century given its status as a member library of the Copyright Deposit Scheme, which means that whilst other libraries are shrinking their paper collections, it is still expanding them.

Keywords: academic law libraries; academic law librarians; Legal Deposit Scheme

Introduction

What will academic law libraries look like in the next decade or two? Crystal ball gazing is not my forte - for example, I was proved quite wrong at the University of Melbourne Law School, where, a decade ago, I fought long and hard to ensure we had ethernet points throughout the new library we were building, because wireless was then an unproven technology in beta trials at only a couple of American law schools. With the success of wireless since then, there are now many redundant ethernet points in that library! Nonetheless, I shall try to outline some of the changes we anticipate and for which we are able to plan, and mention some trends that will lead us into unknown territory in the not too distant future.

I will firstly look at the physical library space in the Bodleian Law Library, and how it will need to change. Secondly, I will try to identify some of the definite trends in information in place already, and the changes they will bring, and finally I will try to identify implications for our role and the services we provide.

Ruth Bird

91