

The Changing Role of the Subject Librarian

Dinosaur or Dynamo?

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**“Change is inevitable. In a progressive country change is constant”
(Disraeli)**

**“Change – that is the only thing in the universe which is unchanging”
(Wilhelm)**

**“The preservation of favourable variations ... I call natural selection or the survival of the fittest”
(Darwin)**



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Traditional Skills

- **Liaison with users**
- **User education/ guides**
- **Book selection/ cat & class**
- **Print journal management**
- **Reference work/bibliographies**
- **Current awareness (APIS Bulletin)**



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Drivers for changes

- **Increased numbers & diversity**
- **Funding – do more with less**
- **Centralized services/integration**
- **Digital revolution**
- **Physical to virtual library**



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Drivers for Changes (cont...)

- **Multidisciplinary approach**
- **Higher expectations – 24/7, instant access to everything**
- **Google generation**
- **Dependent to independent learning**
- **Collection focused to user focused/ service rich**



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Subject specialists – an outdated model?

- **In the electronic library subject expertise is seen as less important than IT skills (Law)**
- **Academic liaison**



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New (evolving)Role

- **Selection and evaluation of multiplicity of e-resources, negotiating licences, access arrangements, packages**
- **Embracing new technologies to engage with users – twitter, instant messaging, library blogs.**



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New (evolving) Role (cont...)

- **Communication often virtual (email, FAQs)**
- **Info skills – generic information skills, databases more intuitive**
- **Increasing multidisciplinary approach**
- **Team and project working (PADDI)**
- **Website management – devolved editing, subject-based learning support pages.**



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New (evolving) Role (cont...)

- **Roving librarians – user-focused**
- **Advocacy – raise profile of library; feed back into library developments**
- **Advice (eg institutional repositories)**
- **Networking – internal (committees), external (ARCLIB)**



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Skills Required

- **Marketing –physical v virtual library**
- **Financial management**
- **Managing expectations**
- **Communication & presentation skills**
- **Technical knowledge**
- **Consultancy – publishing, plagiarism, copyright**



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Conclusion: Evolution not Revolution

- **Scholar librarian – information specialist/consultant**
- **Single subject – interdisciplinary work & resources**
- **Dependent – independent learning/teaching (online/web resources & guides)**



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Conclusion: Evolution not Revolution cont...

- **Managing print – managing e-resources**
 - **Book selection – e-book deals**
 - **Journal reviews – licences, managing inflexible packages**
- **Subject knowledge/training in specific databases – information literacy, general literature searching techniques, bibliographic management**



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**The Librarian was of course
very much in favour of
reading in general but not
readers in particular**
(Terry Pratchett)



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