**Reinventing the Reference Librarian: information Literacy as change agent**

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## Abstract

*With information literacy as their ticket, academic librarians have an opportunity to re-enter the teaching and learning arena in a new guise and carve out a challenging, unique role in the world of academia - that is, to reinvent themselves in a new image. As the emphasis shifts from discipline-rich teaching to one of process-oriented learning which emphasises the development of generic skills, academic librarians must accept and seize a more proactive teaching and learning role, and shoulder greater responsibility for pedagogical leadership in higher education. The change in their role will affect all those in the tertiary community as surely as it will affect the profession of librarianship itself.*

*As librarians strive to re-engage <u>as</u> educators <u>with</u> educators, the traditional beliefs, understandings, expectations and practices of all involved will be challenged. It is now critical to re-examine the issues which arise as a result of such a transformation, and the strategies which must be considered in order to overcome some of the more entrenched complexities of the task ahead.*

*This paper investigates, in greater detail, those processes, structures and procedures within library organisations and academic institutions which hinder, facilitate or create opportunities for the librarians who teach information literacy in higher education.*

## Introduction

Librarianship is a profession which strives to link people with information in ways which are efficient, equitable, timely and meaningful (Peacock 133). Along with the strong focus on access, it also boasts an extensive tradition of educating users to find, use and evaluate the information they require from a diverse palette of sources via an equally diverse range of formats, ie: to teach people how to become information literate. As the world races towards an information explosion of unprecedented magnitude, this role becomes more critical than ever before.

Academic librarians are, and always have been, an inherent part of the teaching and learning cycle in their institutions. However, as the emphasis shifts from discipline-rich teaching to one of process-oriented learning (which focuses on the development of generic capabilities), librarians now find themselves at a critical juncture - do they maintain the status quo of tried and tested academic librarianship or seize the new and somewhat ambiguous responsibility of pedagogical leadership? With information literacy as their ticket, librarians have an opportunity to enter a different teaching and learning arena and to carve out a challenging, unique role in the world of academia - in point of fact, to reinvent themselves in a new image. It is this principle which forms the premise of this paper.

Nonetheless, it would be foolhardy to suggest that such a change could or would come easily, or occur unchallenged. Resistance is an anticipated by-product of any change to the status quo, particularly if and when a condition is perceived as unchangeable, or the change deemed unnecessary. Therefore, as librarians undertake a more proactive teaching and learning role, the change will affect all those in the higher education arena as surely as it will affect the microcosm of librarianship itself. As librarians

strive for different outcomes, the traditional beliefs, understandings, expectations and practices of all involved will be challenged.

The ways in which these challenges are managed will determine the success of librarians' educational re-engagement at personal, professional and institutional levels in terms of perception, satisfaction, challenge, advancement and reputation. With the emphasis upon pedagogical integrity and cohesiveness, the development of information literate students with the capacity to become lifelong learners will be the ultimate marker of success.

If academic librarians *are* to exert a dynamic influence on the teaching and learning agenda, what are the challenges to be faced, by whom, how and to what end? This paper seeks to unpick, rather than resolve, the issues - indeed, many of these issues have no simple solutions and will no doubt be the source of much further discussion and debate for some time to come.

# What changes?

What are the actual "unchangeables" of the academic librarian's role and what do we believe to be non-negotiable functions of an academic library? What are the *true* boundaries of our role as librarians and how far can, and should, they be tested? Which values, beliefs and services are anchored in a chapter of time and experience which has passed, and which retain little relevance in the new information dimension which confronts higher education today (ibid)?

These are questions which need to be answered. As Starr asserts, the politics of success demand only that librarians possess a high level of esteem, have the courage to be idealistic and see themselves in broad conceptual terms (qtd. in Flagg 46).

## Professional changes

A transformation of the academic culture within tertiary institutions is essential. Such a transformation will necessarily need to promote academic librarians as intrinsic members of the teaching and learning process with knowledge and skills comparable to that of their academic colleagues and the capacity to make equal contribution. Broadly, this process should involve the identification of those barriers which are practical and those which are purely historical and/or philosophical. Specifically, it requires a reassessment of the ways in which labels such as 'support service' and 'general staff' affect perceptions of value and pathways to participation, and how the conferring of faculty (or academic) status opens up new opportunities to librarians (Peacock 137). It also involves a review of pay scales.

It is necessary to explore these issues afresh against the backdrop of the role of the academic librarian and information literacy. For the purpose of this discussion, the term 'faculty status' will encompass any category of employment in tertiary institutions which places librarians within an industrial bracket equivalent to, but not necessarily the same as, that conferred upon academic teaching staff.

### Accredited status

The debate regarding the industrial status of librarian's features periodically in the literature of librarianship but with little consensus of opinion. Argument ranges over conditions of employment (such as appointment, pay and tenure), alignment to standards and criteria, job satisfaction and performance, and the affect of status on the attitudes, expectations and perceptions of faculty with regard to their library peers. It also ranges over issues relating to organisational and functional

difficulties, the economic ramifications of such status and the commitment of time and effort in academic endeavours not viewed as fundamental to librarianship (ibid).

Institutional acknowledgment, of an industrial nature, that academic librarians are partners in the educational process varies considerably in form from country to country and, indeed, from institution to institution. In Australia, for example, the status of academic librarians is predominantly that of 'general staff' which aligns with the Higher Education Worker (HEW) levels in academic institutions (La Trobe University, where librarians have held academic status for many years, is the exception). However, despite the best of intentions, levels of employment for, and remuneration of, librarians across the Australian higher education sector are not standardised (Peacock 137). The same is true for the United Kingdom and the United States.

The antagonists, while quite vehement in their opposition to the idea of faculty status for academic librarians, rarely look beyond traditional arguments which have at their core somewhat erroneous logic and subjective opinion. Cronin, for example, argues that the "tenure and the paraphernalia of the academic calling have nothing whatsoever to do with the praxis of librarianship" (144), a view supported by Kehde who asserts that "history has shown that it's impossible and a waste of time and effort for librarians to compete on this field", stating that librarians "aren't scholars, intellectuals, teachers, or writers" (44).

Cronin goes even further by suggesting that the conferment of faculty status upon librarians actually invites a mockery of the academic professoriate and consumes an unacceptable amount of institutional resources in the process (Peacock 140). He contends that: "if all the time spent writing unforgettable articles for journals of often questionable quality and compiling bloated dossiers were converted into service delivery" everyone would be much better off (Cronin 146).

It is to this issue of service delivery and librarianship as a service profession that the argument consistently returns. Analysts maintain that faculty status provokes competing expectations and responsibilities and that greater demands on time make it difficult to reprioritise library-related activities and tasks which are consistent with librarian's jobs during a standard working day (Peacock 139). Time, in short, would be better spent buying, cataloguing and issuing books.

Despite objections of this nature (generally raised by staff who, themselves, possess academic status), there is little evidence or substantive data to indicate that the possession of academic or faculty status is, or would, be detrimental to the information literacy efforts of the emerging academic librarian. For every negative argument, there is an oppositional view which asserts that faculty status creates greater opportunities for developing teaching and learning partnerships and establishing collaborative relationships between librarians and academics. Furthermore, the protagonists' view contends that librarians become more active participants in the governance of teaching and learning and the educational communities in which they work, and that faculty status, owing to research and publishing expectations, creates the potential for intellectual vibrancy in academia and librarianship (Riggs 305; Peacock 138).

Riggs (305) and Oberg (145) believe that librarians with faculty status and rank are generally more likely to be perceived as peers by their academic colleagues. Oberg argues that it gives librarians "the wherewithal to relate to faculty and administrators as colleagues and peers, not as subalterns and handmaidens…" (146). He further states that "student and faculty contacts may be seriously degraded when librarians are perceived as clerks and not as experts and coequals", a view supported by Muronaga & Harada, who argue that, in these relationships, "a sense of parity is critical where each

person's contribution to an interaction is equally valued, and each person shares power in making decisions" (10).

For Schroeder, faculty status for librarians provides "entree into the educational process on an equal footing, as an invited or occasional guest. She argues that it provides a link for "working cooperatively together and for improved communication to promote the educational process", acknowledges 'membership' to the sphere of educational authority and practice at the most elementary level, and creates a climate of trust and mutual respect (qtd. in Oberg 148). Schroeder also believes that in no way does faculty status detract from, or debase the position of, academic librarians on campus (Peacock 138).

**Salary & remuneration**

Schroeder also reasons that equal remuneration is essential to the survival of the academic librarian of the future, and links status and salary to political power and institutional influence (qtd. in Oberg 148), a position which echoes the long-held belief of the UK Association of University Teachers (AUT) that the salary and grading of academic-related staff should be linked to that of academics (AUT 24). Nevertheless, while linked classifications may be desirable, the issue of individual and institutional remuneration is one which cannot be viewed in isolation of broader industrial conditions.

In Australia recent moves have indicated that a change may be forthcoming, and sooner rather than later. In December 1998, the New South Wales (NSW) Pay Equity Inquiry found that "there had been no full work value consideration of librarianship for the past 25 years [and an] historical resistance to the recognition of librarianship as a profession which meant that rates for librarians were, and had been for a long time, lower than for other public sector professionals" (Hunter 19). The Report concluded that the evidence established that librarians' work was underpaid.

After a major test case of the principle, lodged by the Public Service Association, the NSW Industrial Relations Commission ruled that librarians' responsibilities have been historically undervalued despite significant increases in their skills. In response, the Commission granted substantial pay rises of up to 26% and "formalised the professional status of librarians by placing them industrially on an equal footing with lawyers, engineers and other professional categories" (Teece).

While the response from within the profession was predictable, the backlash from outside the profession is indicative of the general misperceptions of librarians and their requisite expertise. The disagreeable but enduring stereotype of the genteel, helpful librarian was expressed clearly (albeit uninformedly) by a journalist for the Sydney Morning Herald. McGuiness described librarianship as a sedentary and comfortable occupation based on a mixture of elementary skills and "soft" science. He concluded his portrait by categorising these "easy to learn" skills as "quite trivial matters of classification and indexing, [and] simple book handling, book issuing and searching databases" (McGuiness 2 Apr).

Not surprisingly, Mr McGuiness was the worthy recipient of a barrage of censure and, although it is easy to dismiss his comments as ignorant and uninformed, it is a position which echoes a widespread view. Regrettably, it is a view such as this which nurtures a disadvantageous status quo for academic librarians by keeping them tied to conventional processes and procedures, and out of reach of new roles and responsibilities.

## Developmental changes

At Think Tank III, Dupuis and Watts re-evaluated the teaching role of academic librarians in light of the major information literacy initiatives witnessed in higher education over the past ten years. The key conclusion arising from that forum stressed that "librarians are still struggling for validation in [their]… roles as educators, both within and outside of [the] profession" (Level & Kern 751-754). This 'struggle' is destined to continue unless some significant attitudinal and organisational changes take place (Peacock 142).

As an acknowledgment of the extensive role librarians play in teaching in academic institutions, and on the strength of their key role in teaching and learning, the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT) in the UK strongly encourages the involvement and membership of librarians. Membership to the ILT requires evidence of involvement in 5 key areas:

• teaching and the support of learning;
• contribution to the design and planning of learning objectives;
• assessment and giving feedback to students;
• developing effective learning environments and students' learning support systems; and
• reflective practice and personal development (Peacock 143).

That academic librarians in the UK are eligible for membership in an association based on such criteria sends a clear signal regarding the future of teaching and learning in higher education (ibid). With a powerful and critical role to play as educational leaders, librarians must equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to proactively engage in these five areas.

### Pedagogical skills

Schroeder (qtd. in Oberg 148), predicts that universal acceptance within tertiary institutions that librarians not only "teach in the traditional sense" but also "inspire, guide, and support students and peers" as well will lead inevitably to an appreciation that reference librarians are, or should be, the most qualified people to lead in the education of information literate students (Peacock 142). The question remains: will academic librarians be ready, willing and able to pick up the mantle?

Until recently, any curriculum development has been traditionally viewed as the sole province of the teaching academic. It needs now to be presumed likewise for the academic librarian, by academia at large, library administration and by librarians themselves (ibid). However, while the concept of curriculum development is neither difficult to grasp, nor necessarily to accomplish, librarians themselves have not traditionally posed this role to themselves *in these terms* (Kohl 424). The time has come for librarians to embrace the responsibility and work to engender trust and merit in their contribution to curriculum design, delivery and evaluation. In this way, they will be able to work with faculty "to introduce information literacy education at the point of greatest relevance" (McGowan & Dow 350).

It is not enough to support the concept in principle; rather, libraries, the profession and librarians themselves must strive to transform the principle into practice. As a stronger nexus develops between the two traditionally distinct areas, librarians must be strongly positioned as key educators in the teaching and learning environment, and empowered with an educational competence and professional confidence equal to that of their academic peers (Peacock, Teaching 27; Line 72). The latter is as critical to their own well being as it is to increasing their influence in the educational arena.

The pressure is mounting on faculty teaching staff to refashion the academic curriculum in order to meet the new learning needs of students, including the embedding of process-based generic skills. As academics ask less "what *is* information literacy?" and more "how do I *teach* it?" the librarian's position as a consultant and proactive participant in the teaching and learning cycle becomes more critical than ever before (Peacock 142). Academic librarians, therefore, need to not only be conversant with pedagogy and practice - they must be *ahead* of the game. The most pressing issue still to be universally addressed is the fundamental need for training for academic librarians themselves, and for training which is proactive (rather than reactive) and responsive to specific needs of librarians.

**Information literacy research**

Design and delivery of instructional programs relating to the use of libraries and information has long been an accepted role for libraries. However, as the nature of the contribution changes, the accepted role of the academic librarian becomes increasingly ambiguous. Rather than being seen as a negative consequence, this ambiguity should be considered as a positive opportunity for librarians to recreate themselves within a unique professional framework which includes knowledge creation. As the territory expands, Bruce believes that the "directions being established will potentially make information literacy research a significant source of knowledge for information professionals and educators" (92).

The reasons generally cited as barriers to the conduct of comprehensive research by practitioners in the field relate to issues of time management, time allocation, workload, financial remuneration and recognition of the worth of the endeavour to the organisation. As the work of Boice, Scepanski and Wilson concludes, lack of time is not the essential issue; rather, they noted that "the publishing efforts of librarians… suffered less from actual lack of time than for insecurities, entrenched work habits, inefficient use of time, and unsupportive workplace cultures" (qtd. in Mitchell & Reichel 239).

Mitchell & Reichel believe that librarians who regularly undertake research are "more receptive to change and have more effective relationships with other faculty than do those who do not do research" and that research "promotes advancement and recognition for librarians" (ibid 233). While it may be difficult for librarians to match the quantitative production and delivery standards of academics, they do possess the requisite skills to conduct quality research and are in a unique position to do so if given the time, encouragement and recognition for undertaking this professional pursuit.

## Structural/Organisational changes

Akeroyd believes that it is critical for libraries to create a "leaner, meaner workforce which is well paid, occupies the high ground of knowledge transfer", and which undertakes to outsource and/or automate the mundane and routine tasks of the academic library. The challenge is how to build a "new-look information organisation which comprises of a mixture of professionals for whom information literacy dictates changing boundaries and alliances" (83).

If, as this paper contends, the driving information literacy force is the reference librarian, then it is specifically the realm of reference service that one must interrogate more closely, with a view to identifying ways to better facilitate the efforts of the teaching librarians.

While many believe that reference and information desk services will continue to be important, some people believe that the services should function simply as specialised add-ons to basic teaching in information literacy, a view supported by Kohl who maintains that the emphases on reference services and instruction should be reversed with "instruction seen as the primary means of providing intellectual access to the collection" (424). He predicts that current and future educational, economic and

technological pressures will demand that academic libraries move beyond the traditional model (427), and argues that traditional reference services, in fact, undermine information literacy goals as they encourage dependent rather than independent users, and force reference librarians to mediate a system continually disrupted by the traditional reference desk service (425).

There is a concern that organisational restructuring and more functionally defined remuneration (ie: for teaching librarians) will create variant 'classes' of staff within one library with differing working conditions and compensation. This view highlights the potential for internal organisational friction and disharmony between reference librarians and their library colleagues who, by virtue of their role in the organisation do not have similar opportunities (Peacock 139). However, while these are certainly issues with which organisations may need to struggle in the short-term, the experience of many organisations would illustrate that they are not insurmountable.

## Ways & Means

As the design and delivery of tertiary education changes, so will academic-related staff increasingly become involved alongside academic staff in making a direct contribution to the provision of higher education (Downing 12). In this capacity, the academic librarian must become a proponent of exemplary practice in the design, delivery and evaluation of effective curriculum and quality teaching and learning experiences. They must also become confident, competent practitioners and leaders in not only information literacy education but also in those areas associated with broader generic skills development (Peacock 145). This reconceptualisation of oneself as directly involved in, rather than as an ancillary supporter of, the educational process requires support, courage and, to some degree, a leap of faith. As Oberg states, to survive in an era of rapid change, librarians must become "quick-witted, creative risk-takers" (146).

It is timely for academic libraries to now review and re-evaluate their traditional roles and services in order that they may firmly establish their new place in the educational continuum (Peacock 145). These roles can be categorised in three main areas with three main keys to success (*Figure 1*):

(i) *attitudinal* - pertaining to those areas which relate to raising the status and profile of teaching librarians in higher education (key=professional development);

(ii) *behavioural* - pertaining to those areas which relate to engaging the teaching librarians in the decision-making processes within tertiary institutions (key=engagement); and

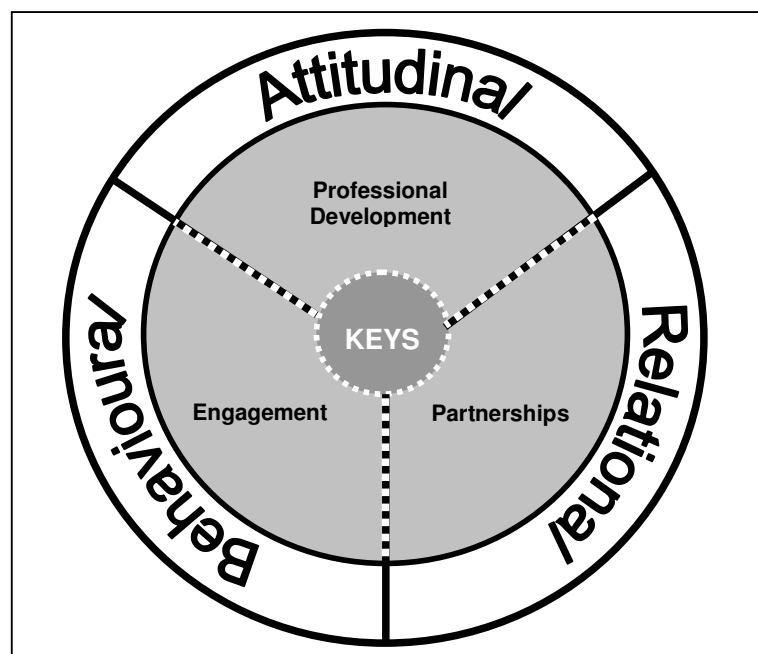(iii) *relational* - pertaining to those areas which relate to building collaborative and cooperative curricula



*Figure 1: Keys to change for teaching librarians*

partnerships with academic
staff (key=partnerships).

## Attitudinal changes

Attitudinal changes must first take place *within* the profession. Until academic librarians cease to *question* their rightful place in the educational process and begin to see themselves as educators who are integral to the educational process, it will be impossible to convince others that they have anything of value to offer (Chiste et al. 202-208).

If the academic community, and society at large, has a narrow definition of librarianship, then it might be argued that it is the profession itself which is responsible for altering this view by producing, enabling and supporting librarians who can function intellectually and creatively. It could also be argued that the change must first happen philosophically and practically at an individual level. However, as academic librarians do not work in a vacuum, Peacock sees that some responsibility must rest with parent organisations to provide adequate, appropriate and timely support for a cultural and functional shift of this nature (137) and to "open pathways to accreditation which recognise the contribution made by academic librarians to teaching and learning" (AUT 13).

This paper argues that faculty status provides a link for librarians and academics to work more effectively and cooperatively together to elevate the educational process. It acknowledges 'membership' to the sphere of educational authority and practice at the most elementary level and creates a climate of trust and mutual respect (Schroeder qtd. in Oberg 148). Oberg concludes that "tiered reference and faculty status encourage librarians to participate fully in the scholarly life and governance of our campuses [and that] faculty status accords librarians full partnership in the creative, cooperative, synergistic, collegial relationship between students, teaching faculty and campus administrators that today's volatile academic environment requires" (146).

Rice suggests that the four emerging types of scholarship which will change the nature of academic work - inquiry, integration, teaching and application - may provide a better framework within which academic librarians with faculty status can work (qtd. in ACRL Taskforce 1). However, if, as Kingma suggests, the academic model is judged *unsuitable* for librarians, then perhaps it is time to develop a new model (263) that more appropriately serves the needs of librarians, students and academics in an era where information literacy has become a critical element in the learning cycle. Regardless of the form or label given to such a status, academic librarians must be viewed as partners with academic staff in providing higher education, and equivalent pay and grading be an assumed consequence of such an outcome.

It is naive to presume that salary increases and a change in status alone will open pathways to participation in teaching and learning. The issues do, however, raise many fundamental questions regarding the impact of the academic librarian upon information literacy initiatives and learning outcomes in higher education which require closer scrutiny. To summarise:
- do academic libraries exist just to 'support' the educational missions of universities, or to actively contribute to and/or participate in them?
- is the work of a teaching librarian essentially different from that of an academic?
- does parity of status and salary necessarily ensure librarians will be viewed and treated as equal partners and contribute to their influence in curricula reform and development, or does it have a negative impact on library service levels and performance?

- would the assignation of faculty status upon one particular group of librarians create divisive and disharmonious working relationships and environments?
- can librarians be teachers, scholars and service providers without compromising either? (Mitchell & Reichel 233?)
- are the achievements of teaching librarians afforded equal prominence, significance and prestige in the academic environment, and should they be?
- will life on the academic periphery become increasingly more difficult for libraries, particularly in economic rationalist times, when funding and personnel are hard to come by? (Peacock 140)

Regardless of official contracted status - academic or otherwise - institutions of higher education must begin to recognise the changing role of the academic librarian, acknowledge the critical nature of their contributions to teaching and learning, and encourage, facilitate and reward their participation in scholarly pursuits. To this end, it may be timely to review such areas as:

- performance criteria and promotional incentives;
- pay structures and renegotiation of employment classifications;
- sustained and timely professional development opportunities;
- workload and renegotiation of duties; and
- equal access to fringe benefits such as bursaries, scholarships, release time etc.  (ibid 145)

Along with individuals and organisations, professional library associations also have a role to play in advancing the role of academic librarians in higher education. Ideally, too, academic librarians will vie for entry into broader educational associations, and participate proactively in wider educational forums and debates (ibid 143). For all groups - individuals, organisations and associations - extensive, creative and targeted marketing and promotion can serve to raise client awareness, inform or alter opinion, and open new opportunities for all teaching staff, academic or otherwise. Such action will provide the opportunity to "professionalise our practice and to advertise our role in the teaching and learning context" (Powis 11).

**Key - Professional Development**

The key to affecting attitudinal (and also behavioural) change, both internal and external to the library organisation, is professional development and rigorous self-evaluation. Librarians must embrace and undertake stringent individual and organisational self-development and self-evaluative processes and procedures which strengthen their credibility, substantiates their educational role and instils the trust of the academic community in their educational ability. Such processes may include:

- peer review of teaching;
- ongoing contribution to information literacy and teaching and learning research;
- ongoing contribution to the literature across multiple disciplines; and
- commitment to ongoing postgraduate study, such as graduate certificates and doctoral studies, in disciplines such as adult learning, and teaching and learning in higher education (Peacock 144).

Librarians require a new palette of tools, skills and conceptual understandings to move beyond the traditional model of library instruction (Peacock, Teaching 27), and an increasing variety of options are now being developed which meet the specific needs of teaching librarians. This is a view also clearly stated by Dr Alan Bundy, President of the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA), in an address to LIS students:

It is an issue for all librarians… as they assert their role as full partners in the teaching and learning process… This means that librarians need to become conversant as early as their preservice education with pedagogical concepts, issues and how people learn. They may also need to develop the capacity to teach (4).

Todd believes that, although the development of systematic and explicit teaching strategies is complex, time-consuming and challenging, it is by developing these skills that librarians will "contribute to qualitatively different learning experiences and positive learning outcomes" (11).

Professional development courses such as *EduLib*[1] (developed in the UK and later adapted by QUT Library) and *TSISL*[2] (an online course developed and delivered by the University of NSW Library) deliver curricula designed to respond to the condition of being a teacher without a cohort. Specifically, these courses address those key areas of teaching competency which require a degree of training and/or additional support, summarised by the ILT as reflective practice, professional development, variant teaching methods, the planning of teaching and learning events and assessment, and the creation of learning environments (Powis 11).

Also required is education and training in pedagogical theory, evaluative practices and effective presentation methods. Such content is often accessible to librarians via graduate certificate programs in adult learning or higher education, and library teaching staff should be encouraged to take part in professional development alongside their academic colleagues; indeed, more librarians are now availing themselves of the opportunity. Such courses will become increasingly relevant to librarians as the curriculum developers respond to changing client demographics, needs and expectations.

In some cases, these opportunities have spawned significant gain for librarians. For example, at QUT, as part of a recent human resources initiative regarding linked classifications, the University's *Graduate Certificate in Higher Education* can now be used to demonstrate attainment of a high level of knowledge in teaching and learning by those librarians who wish to achieve "soft-bar" promotion from a Level 6 to a Level 7 (ibid 143).

Provision of, and access, to sustained and specialized professional development will require: (i) considered planning; (ii) access at time of need; (iii) design, development and delivery by qualified teachers/facilitators with appropriate expertise; and, last but not least (iv) organisational support in the form of release time and funding.

The results of a national study on the effects of professional development and [school] teachers' learning found the latter to be the major challenge. The researchers' state that:

Our results suggest a clear direction… in order to provide useful and effective professional development that has a meaningful effect on teacher learning and fosters improvements in classroom practice, funds should be focused on providing high quality professional development experiences (Garet et al 937).

The same is true for professional development for teaching librarians in the academic environment. If Levy's prediction comes to fruition, and information specialists define their professional identity primarily in terms of *educational* practice (59), then a new challenge presents itself to professional developers, educators and library and university administrators to develop programs which meet their needs. They should stand on notice and rise to the challenge.

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[1] http://www.tay.ac.uk/edulib/
[2] Teaching Skills for Information Skills Librarians

## Behavioural changes

As Rader indicates, to develop information literate graduates, "librarians will have to break out of their traditional reactive mode [and] become leaders and innovators in their interaction with faculty, students and administrative leaders" (211). They do, categorically, need the time, support and capacity to "teach classes, design curricula, or sit in the seats of educational power and control" (Swigger 45).

If the teaching and learning of generic skills (and information literacy) is a core goal of the parent institution, then so, too, should it be considered for the academic library, and the priorities of the librarians will necessarily shift accordingly. Therefore, traditional organisational structures must be changed to allow librarians to focus on more specialised areas of librarianship such as teaching and learning (Rader, Faculty 219). Van Reenan supports this view when he states that libraries must not only establish and support new jobs but also reprioritise, or abandon entirely, those duties and services which become unnecessary (28).

Any alteration of the reference service status quo will demand as much of a cultural shift in attitudes as it will organisational change, particularly as librarians relinquish duties and tasks which have long been perceived to be core business. As priorities shift, it may become necessary to further consider the role to be played by other professional and para-professional library personnel in managing many routine reference tasks to ensure that reference librarians have the time to "teach, do research and practice the [skill] of information acquisition and dissemination" (McGowan & Dow 350). Perhaps, as Kohl postulates, "instruction services need to be located in their own department, reporting as highly as possible within the library organisation" (424), thereby acknowledging the importance of a library administration's support of information literacy and [its] promulgation into the traditional teaching foundations of the university.

The onus, ultimately, is on library administration to investigate and implement a range of systems and strategies which support and enhance information literacy and allow for growth and change to occur. This action might include:

- the creation of specialist teaching roles and provision of para-professional assistance,
- attention to workforce options such as personnel recruitment, selection and deployment;
- active facilitation of professional development;
- targeted strategic planning; and
- appropriate budget allocation and reallocation; and
- organizational support at all levels of the organisation.

### Key - engagement in non-traditional areas

Academic institutions should now recognise antiquated opinions, such as those expressed by Cronin who believes that "librarians… are professional employees whose role is to support, not define or negotiate, the academic mission of the university" (144), as relics of a time past, and strive to build a new paradigm for all teaching staff within the institution. As Frank et al affirms, librarians need, and must now embrace, the opportunity to actively engage scholars with innovative and effective services that stretch beyond traditional boundaries (91).

Any examination of the role of the new librarian must take into consideration the extenuating needs and responsibilities of, and demands upon, the contemporary librarian-educator, and seek, therefore,

to encourage and accommodate more complex involvement in non-traditional activities (Peacock 145). Broadly, this involvement demands that librarians be charged with the responsibility to proactively engage in discussions, debates and decision-making processes pertaining to the broad university teaching and learning agenda, non-specific inquiry relating to student learning, and specific faculty-related curriculum issues.

This engagement may take various institutionally-dependent forms but should include some, if not all, of the following options:
- active membership on university, faculty and school-based teaching and learning committees;
- participation on curriculum-related working parties, and course review and development teams;
- contribution to activities related to the establishment and implementation of academic policy and programs;
- active engagement in issues relating to online and flexibly delivered teaching and learning;
- consultative participation in all areas relating to the development of generic skills;
- contribution to, and participation in, staff development programs and seminar series within the university which relate to improving teaching and learning;
- participation in discussions relating to facilities and technology planning and infrastructure; and
- contribution to knowledge creation in the form of publication, research and representation in all educational forums across disciplines and beyond library boundaries.

## Relational changes

To transform higher education and move beyond the boundaries of information literacy as a library-only issue, librarians, educators and administrators must continue to develop tools of collaboration and communication about information literacy in the context of teaching, learning and research (Level & Kern 753). As Frank et al recognise, faculty and administrators are the primary agents in determining the library's overall impact on the campus community (92), and universities need to remove the political barriers between information literacy specialists and academics to foster an integrated educational culture (Blackall 151-152).

### Teaching & learning

The key to establishing information literacy in the curriculum, Chiste notes, requires a change in focus from the way "teaching colleagues approach collaboration with librarians, to the way librarians approach collaboration with them" (205). Any "high political overheads" (Blackall 149) potentially wrought by librarians striving to ultimately embed information literacy into the curriculum by developing new collaborative models, will eventually be rendered null and void as practice and opinion changes, either by necessity or by sheer recognition of the advantages in doing do.

Both librarians and academic teaching staff need to move beyond the concepts of teaching 'library skills', librarians providing 'additional teaching support' and academics 'relinquishing' portions of their timetable to squeeze in sessions on information skills. As they collectively move towards creating information literacy-responsive curriculum and assessment, the notion of who teaches what should be seen as fluid, negotiable and subject to a range of individual contextual factors relating to skills, confidence and expertise of the academic, subject discipline, delivery mode (eg: lecture, small group etc) and even the size of the student cohort.

This point of "role convergence" (Levy 53) will appear as valid and indisputable as those traditional practices appear today. In this new paradigm, the librarian will play a greater role in the design and evaluation of information literacy rich curricula, and the academic a greater part in the actual teaching of the information skills. For the students and their learning, this adaptation of roles can only result in improved outcomes.

**Research**

Research into information literacy and its impact on teaching and learning has the potential to reinvigorate librarianship, stimulate new growth and lay the foundation for a pedagogically reflective and responsive professional culture within academic libraries. Such research also has the potential to make a significant contribution to the broader body of educational knowledge and practice of both librarians and academics alike. Furthermore, if undertaken in collaboration with academic colleagues, information literacy research can strengthen current partnerships and forge new alliances based on a platform of mutual understanding and common goals and aspirations.

Although information literacy is an authentic paradigm, it still has a somewhat fragmentary research base (Bundy, Clever 6). Commentators, such as Todd, have highlighted the lack of academic scrutiny of its role, the need for more evidence of benefits to learners of a focus on information literacy education and the need for the strengthening of the information literacy research base (qtd. in ibid). Todd has also posed potential challenges for those involved regarding the theoretical foundations of information literacy, which include:
- increased understanding of the importance of information literacy;
- articulation of stronger theoretical roots of information literacy; and
- information on the complexities of how people engage with information and the barriers they face (ibid).

Research of this nature will allow practitioners to better understand, predict, accommodate and/or respond to (i) the processes and patterns of information behaviour, (ii) connections between the generic processes and discipline-specific contexts, (iii) the persuasiveness of modelling by academics and librarians (Candy qtd. in ibid), and (iv) the relationships between types of learning, skills taught and learning outcomes. By working together, academics and librarians can potentially solve old problems and pose new questions in these areas.

It should be expected that the institutions in which they work will recognise the critical need for teaching librarians to conduct information literacy research on an ongoing basis, and that essential practical and philosophical support will be provided in response to their need (Peacock 142). There is ample scope for ongoing information literacy research, particularly in response to the influence of ongoing developments in the educational sector such as graduate attributes, generic skills, online learning and industry demands (Bruce 102), and the future of information literacy development depends on the vision and determination of the discipline's protagonists to conduct that research.

Research into areas such as evaluation and assessment of information literacy knowledge and skills, creation of active learning environments and the development of generically-responsive curricula would also inform current and ongoing practice within academic institution across all levels of engagement. Particularly significant at this point in time would be research that focuses on the potential use of information literacy standards, such as those developed by the ALA[3] and CAUL[4] in 2000 and 2001 respectively, to guide and enhance curriculum reform.

[3] American Library Association/Assoc of College and Research Libraries: *Information Literacy Competency Standards for*

The final word on research must surely belong to Bruce who predicts that "the present character of information literacy research suggests that it will continue to be exciting and relevant, and that "it will make contributions to many fields beyond those which served as its cradle" (106). Academic librarians need only to step forward and accept the challenge (Peacock 142).

**Key - collaborative, cooperative partnerships**

There is an inherent understanding that librarianship is "characterised by cooperative practice and joint scholarship, often carried out in the context of organisations" (Hill 73). Hill no doubt echoes a wide belief that librarianship is an almost "archetypically cooperative discipline which depends on cooperative development of, and adherence to, standards" (ibid). Librarians recognise that embedding information literacy into the curriculum requires a collaborative, integrated approach to curriculum design and delivery based on close co-operation between academic, library and staff development colleagues.

Frank et al draws an important distinction between cooperation and collaboration. Rather than an atmosphere of 'cooperation' where each party has its own goals and cooperate for the purpose of achieving these goals, developing an atmosphere of 'collaboration', where each person brings his or her own goals to the partnership, enables educators together to define shared goals and work to achieve those shared goals (92).

It is certainly true that alliances are usually entered into when each partner sees that they have something to gain (Blackall 150). With new alliances imminent between academics and librarians in the emerging information literacy 'industry', Blackall curiously suggests that librarians get a better deal but recognises, perhaps rightly, that it is unlikely that academics will welcome their expanding influence into their curriculum. He questions why academics would be likely to happily share control over curriculum design with those whom they consider to be "outside" their profession and muses on what advantages are due to academics from collaborative alliances (ibid).

If the benefits are ambiguous to some, then perhaps the answer should be plainly stated. With librarians acting as partners in planning the syllabus, establishing learning objectives, implementing the curriculum and evaluating outcomes, academics benefit by acquiring guidance and support in generic skills development, an opportunity to improve their own pedagogical and information skills, and exposure to diversified teaching and assessment strategies. Collaborative curriculum design also opens them up to alternative models of teaching and learning, improves communication and builds trust and understanding between the academic and the librarian. Although academics may be used to working with a high degree of autonomy (Frank et al 92), changing expectations, increased accountability and pressing need will demand that this model changes sooner rather than later.

However, surely the true question should be to ask *what would students get out of collaborative partnerships between librarians and academics?* The answer: a more cohesive, responsive curriculum, improved student learning outcomes and students who are extremely competent in the retrieval, use and evaluation of information - in a nutshell, high quality learning experiences.

# Summary of outcomes

In May 2001, the National Information Literacy Survey, developed by ACRL and supported by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE), was issued to the vice-presidents of academic units at approximately 2 700 institutions (Sonntag 996). The results provide a snapshot of information literacy programming in higher education and, from the responses, it was clear that the small proportion of those who have programs are looking for ways in which to assess student learning and evaluate the impact of their efforts. The study concluded that institutions need, and want, guidance on how to successfully implement information literacy programs and curricula. Librarians must now undertake this new role.

Although the educational role of librarians is a broadly accepted concept the pedagogical role of librarians remains a vexed question, yet to be understood, accepted and fully realised (Johnson 752). While the ways and means to establish this new function as core business for academic librarians are simple to propose, there is no doubt that the complexities of the process will be difficult to execute.

As the academic librarian moves along the sliding scale from bibliographic instructor to teaching and learning practitioner, course supporter to curriculum co-designer, and practitioner to knowledge creator the following issues need to be addressed, and questions answered. Consider:
  i. Accredited status - will general status remain relevant, will faculty status improve opportunities or is there another, more suitable, model for academic librarians?
  ii. Salary - does the new teaching librarian warrant parity of salary for equivalent work, and, if so, whose responsibility is it to pursue?
  iii. Skills - what levels and types of professional development are available and is it sustainable?
  iv. Research - whose responsibility is it to conduct information literacy research and is the time, expertise and support available for librarians to undertake this role?
  v. Structural organisation - what actual changes are required, what will be the costs, and to whom?
  vi. Engagement in non-traditional areas (such as policy & planning and curriculum design, delivery and evaluation) - how can it be encouraged, facilitated and sustained?
  vii. Collaborative teaching and learning partnerships - how can they be enabled, fostered and supported?
  viii. Marketing and promotion - what role does it play in raising awareness, changing attitudes and behaviours, and highlighting alternative solutions?

To create a model for the new teaching librarian will require the support, action and leadership of everyone in academic institutions, with each key group responsible for taking a lead role in driving, enabling and/or facilitating the process [*Figure 2*].

The new teaching librarian will be proactive rather than reactive, pioneering rather than traditional, inventive rather than cautious, and critical, rather than peripheral, to the learning process. The rewards for all staff in this evolving equation are predictably many but perhaps still somewhat indefinable at this stage - as time and experience of 'new ways of doing' allow for academics and librarians to develop and refine original models of teaching and learning, the rewards will begin to bubble to the surface in earnest.
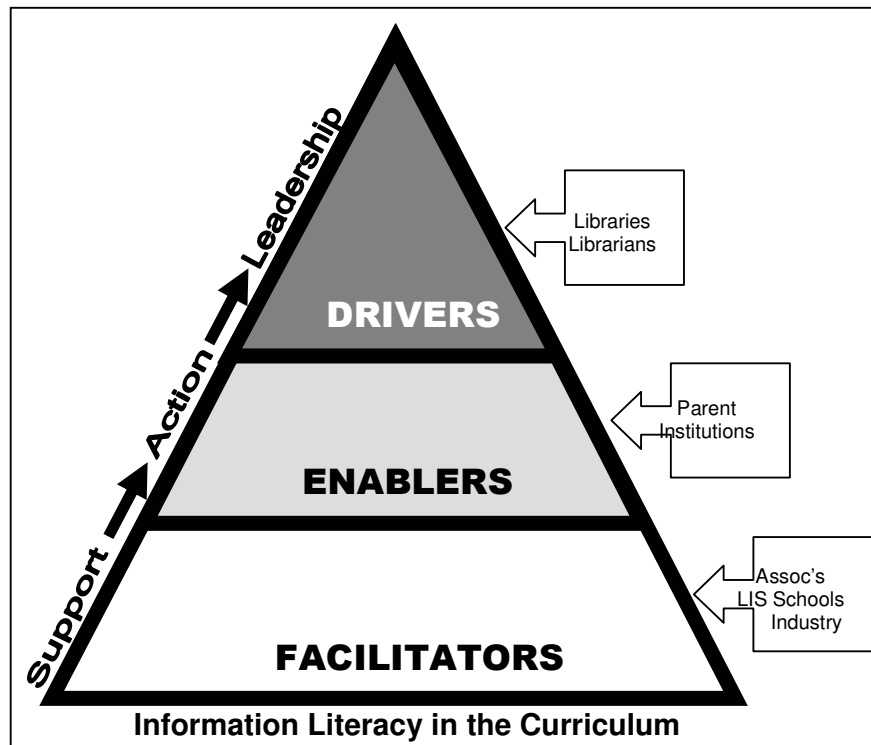
**Figure 2: Levels of responsibility**

However, the principal benefits for each group could be summarised as follows:

- Students: contextualised embedded development of information literacy; cohesive blend between discipline content and generic processes; and meaningful learning experiences;

- Academics: diversified professional support; shared and consistent pedagogical understandings; and quality teaching experiences;

- Librarians: challenging and dynamic engagement in the core business of the university; greater relevance in changing times; and quality professional experiences.

## Conclusion

The prototype of the new librarian is still in the conceptual stages, but the shape *is* taking form. This shape reveals a hybrid librarian with specialist skills in teaching and learning who affects educational change and engages in variant models of collaborative curricula partnering. The focus for this new librarian must continue to be on sound pedagogy, good practice and strong peer-to-peer collaboration; the first informs effective teaching and learning, the second confirms their role in the educational process and the third affirms the critical process required. Holistically, it is essential that the teaching librarian functions as an *educational professional*; that is, as one who can "engage in educational debate and decision-making processes, influence policy, forge strategic alliances and demonstrate diplomatic sensitivity" (Peacock, Teaching 39).

As the emphasis on generic skills increases, there will be greater opportunities for academic librarians to play a major role in the development of information and other generic skills by modelling curriculum

approaches, providing and creating teaching and learning resources and, critically, by contributing expertise, advice and guidance in the area of information literacy (SCONUL 4). Although librarians may have to continue to argue the case for information literacy and their specific involvement in these areas for some time yet, the increased focus on reprofessionalising academic librarianship will only add credibility to their assertions and strengthen their arguments.

As teaching and learning opportunities present themselves, it is essential that librarians and the organisations in which they work are receptive to, and prepared for, the change. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of individual librarians and academics, academic libraries and their administrators, institutions and their administrators, professional associations and librarianship educators "to develop a new paradigm not only for our libraries but also for our profession" (Shapiro 562) which will serve to enrich higher education for students.

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