Public libraries, museums and physical convergence. Context, issues, opportunities: a literature review. Part 2.

Abstract

There has recently been a growth in physical convergence in cultural heritage domains. The second of a two-part article that considers this trend with particular regard to public libraries and museums provides an overview of factors to be considered by those planning or developing physically converged services. This has been achieved through thematic analysis of a review of international literature from both domains. It begins with consideration of obstacles to convergence, ethical challenges, organisational and strategic complexity, organisational culture and resistance. It moves on to discuss factors, general and physical, that can lead to success in convergence: vision, strategy and planning, communication and trust, for example, and, how these can be led and managed. It also considers the role of professional education and training, the benefits of convergence, for example, improved cultural offer and visibility, financial savings, with viewpoints from around the world. Part 2 ends with a critical note on the 'convergence narrative', and a conclusion that focuses on physical convergence which draws on both Parts.

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Keywords

Libraries. Museums. Archives. Convergence. Collaboration. Physical convergence. Co-location. LAMs.

Introduction

Part 2 considers obstacles to convergence, perceived and real, that are evident from the international literature review. It moves on to discuss factors that can lead to success in convergence and how these can be led and managed. It also considers the role of professional education and training and development. The benefits of convergence are outlined with viewpoints from around the world. It ends with a critical note on the 'convergence narrative', including physical convergence, the impact of digital developments, and a conclusion which draws on both Parts.

Convergence: Barriers and Risks

While convergence can be viewed as a strategy for institutions to overcome shared economic, political, cultural and technological challenges, the literature also identifies a range of organisational, cultural and practical barriers that have the potential to thwart successful library and museum convergence.

> Discussions around collaboration often start with the question: "What can we do together?" This question usually leads to concrete suggestions, which quickly get tempered by the spectre of perceived or real obstacles in making the idea a reality. (Zorich et al., 2008: p.21)

The following section provides a consideration of the perceived, real, and ethical obstacles that recur as key points of discussion throughout the literature.

Institutional Differences

The differences between library and museums are often described as originating from the existence of institutional and professional silos (Duff et al., 2013; Martin, 2007; Yarrow et al., 2008; Zorich et al., 2008) and practical barriers including funding, governance and implementation of procedures can cause problems (Gibson et al., 2007). The complexities of this have been

addressed in Part 1 (see Libraries and museums – governance, funding and management; and, International perspective).

Yet, whilst there are differences there are also similarities and many common goals. Thus activities may be shared, jointly beneficial opportunities seized, and collective lessons learned. It is helpful to identify challenges that will need to be addressed to achieve successful convergence activities.

Despite being referred to as 'memory institutions', the differences between library and museum collections can act as a barrier, raising questions around access, preservation and user engagement with collections. In their study of converged institutions in Canada and New Zealand, Duff et al. found that barriers to collaboration are likely to originate from differing professional values and identities, often resulting in conflicting approaches to users, collections and cultural mandates (2013). Their research acknowledged the need to break down this "silo mentality" but argued that expertise must be respected in order to avoid causing staff to feel de-valued - "a person's expertise is what gives him or her a sense of value. It is seen as a failure if people do not respect one's expertise and one's ability to accomplish the precise mission for which one was trained" (Duff et al., 2013).

Duff et al. argue that language and ways of thinking are barriers originating from each profession's development of semantic processes and "converging the thinking is more difficult than adopting similar practices" (2013). Bishoff also identifies a lack of a shared language and meaning as a key challenge when collaborating (2004) and variance in language also extends to the differences in descriptive standards used by libraries and museums to record their collections. Several authors call for the development of shared standards, particularly in the context of digital collaborations - "standards are the key to preservation, documentation and making cultural and scientific material accessible" (Hindal and Wyller, 2004: p.211).

Libraries are characterised as listing and describing every item in their collection (Allen and Bishoff, 2001) unlike museums that have "traditionally eschewed universal naming standards, making it problematic to identify common holdings across institutions." (Robinson, 2014: p.216). Wythe observes that a lack of universal standards in museums results in limited public access to collections - "witness the difference between museum Web sites and library or archives Web sites: what is front and center? Not museum collection catalogs, at least not yet. But why not?" (2007: p.53). Different interpretations of what constitutes public

access by libraries and museums are widely attributed to the dynamics between access and preservation, for example, libraries are characterised by some as supporting freedom of information by providing unsupervised access to unbiased collections via a common catalogue format, while museums are identified as placing a high value on security, preservation, education and intellectual property rights due to the unique objects held in their collections (Bishoff, 2004; Gibson et al., 2007).

The nature of public engagement with library and museum collections also differs in terms of interpretation and identification. Lo, But and Trio make the point that 'knowledge artefacts' identify themselves but 'cultural objects' call for further interpretation (2013). Contrasting methods of communicating information to users are identified as a key source of conflict in the context of convergence: "museums will present their collections with value added interpretative information, while libraries generally identify the item and allow the user to interpret" (Allen and Bishoff, 2001: p.67).

This fundamental difference is also apparent in user expectations, as libraries are commonly viewed as an individualised research resource while museums are more likely to be considered as entertainment to be enjoyed in a social

context (Dupont, 2007; Marcum, 2014; Wythe, 2007). This is reflected by Whiteman who notes the distinction between learning and leisure in libraries and museums: "the quotient of pedagogy versus pleasure varies enormously with the types of objects at issue" (2007: p.29). Collaboration is also at risk from the varying expectations libraries and museums have of their users (Marcum, 2014) as each institution defines their public differently:

> We call our users by a wide variety of names: audiences, visitors, readers, researchers, patrons, clients, customers. These greatly varying names imply to me greatly varying notions of the relationship between institutions and their publics. (Martin, 2007: p.86)

Beasley (2007) and VanderBerg (2012) both argue that by converging, institutions risk losing their unique qualities and individual appeal, particularly in the case of physical convergence:

> By combining libraries, archives and museums under one roof, some facility related and administrative efficiencies may be achieved, but, for the most part, each organisation struggles to maintain the aspects that

makes it unique and continues to operate in isolation from the others.

(VanderBerg, 2012: p.144)

Brown and Pollack suggest that user preconceptions can be a barrier: "the public's perception of libraries and museums as traditional, staid institutions can be difficult to change" (2000). However, Beasley suggests that convergence is nothing more than a marketing exercise that "may not always be convergence as much as rebranding" (2007: p.20). VanderBerg agrees and argues that although convergence has been a popular approach amongst cultural institutions, efforts are still hindered by organisational differences - "they are initiatives that attempt to work around the inherent distinctions between libraries, archives and museums, and they are actually unable to realise convergence in a true, deep sense that affects the entirety of the organisations" (2012: p.144).

Ethical Challenges

Cannon argues that there is an ethical case against convergence: "convergence as it has been instituted to date represents an apparent and

tangible threat to the principles of libraries, archives and museums" (2013: p.85)

and calls for professionals to oppose convergence. Cannon suggests that

convergence represents a corporatisation of the cultural sphere and identifies

convergence as part of a "wider shift across society" (2013: p.78) as free market

economics encroach on public, not for profit sectors: "the language and mindset

of business administration has become more and more prevalent and nowhere

is this more apparent than in the thrust toward convergence" (2013: p.77).

Cannon goes on to define this corporatision as originating from the common

belief that the public sector should be likened to the private sector and employ

corporate business strategies including making "necessary cuts" to become

"more lean and efficient" (2013: p.80).

Cannon sees the top-down management models associated with business

culture as a threat to professional principles and questions the corporate

assumption that the customer is always right: "how do we reconcile that attitude

with our responsibilities to intellectual freedom and access to information?"

(2013: p.83). Cannon urges professions to protect principles including

intellectual freedom, access to information and democratic processes despite

the "direction of the political and all too fickle wind" (2013: p.86), warning that

"the citizenry stands to lose an invaluable public resource in the face of

encroaching corporatization and mismanagement due to concentration of power" (2013: p.86).

Robinson, too, calls for "discussion between scholars, cultural policy-makers and collection practitioners toward the development of clearer, more conceptually solid foundations for the restructuring of collection environments around the convergence model" (2014: p.210) and argues that if conceptual issues around convergence are not addressed there is a risk of "impoverishing knowledge around collections as a consequence of both digital and physical convergence" (2014: p.211).

It is interesting to note the recent announcement of a new research study that addresses another ethical aspect, professional ethics in collaborative cultural work. Instrumental values (Wilson, 2017) "will examine ethical dimensions of collaborative practice between museum and library sectors and partner agencies …" (p.1). "The research has been designed to explore the transitional efficacy of museum and library sectors' ethical codes of practice when working in collaborative public policy contexts" (Wilson, 2017: p.1).

Operational and Strategic Complexity

The operational and strategic practicalities of convergence are demanding and require organisations to have the necessary capacity and resources to achieve complex transformations. In line with Waibel and Erway's *Collaboration Quadrant* (2009), Marcum warns that organisations may lack capacity to meet expectations and must be certain that the rewards of collaboration are worth the necessary risk and investment before pursuing a partnership:

> Enthralled with collaboration, we may find ourselves joining collaborative enterprises without doing the hard work of evaluating whether potential returns are worth it. Collaboration is a potentially effective strategy, not a feel-good panacea. (Marcum, 2014: p.79)

Several studies have identified a number of keys risks based on the experiences of collaborating institutions. In their survey of library and museum collaboration in the UK and USA, Gibson et al. found that management, staffing and operational issues such as IT provision and even car parking provided challenges for staff (Gibson et al., 2007) while a lack of sufficient training was also a serious issue for one participant:

When the museum tried to staff the library with volunteers, books were missing, computers broken, and the area was in disarray. Training museum staff to run the circulation desk ran into difficulties regarding privacy in circulation records. (Gibson et al., 2007: p.63)

Walker and Manjarrez warn that organisations threaten their reputation, resources, support and values if a partnership fails and identified four key types of risks to consider when collaborating: capacity risk, strategy risk, commitment risk and compatibility risk (2003).

They argue that collaborative success depends on "willingness to break from traditional practice and to innovate; the ability to pool resources to accomplish complex tasks; and the degree to which organisations are already embedded in a set of exchange relationships, and are thus interdependent" (Walker and Manjarrez, 2003: pp.48-49). The relationship status between partners is deemed a crucial factor throughout the literature (Brown and Pollack 2000) and Marsden suggested libraries were often the dominating partner in many collaborations (Marsden, 2001).

Robinson's 2016 case study of five converged institutions highlighted several operational and strategic challenges, particularly in relation to staffing structures and workloads - "converged institutions have often been established without adequate consideration of the ways in which declared goals of integration can be realised through organisational structure, the design of role descriptions and recruitment of staff with the necessary skill sets" (2016: p.155). Several of Robinson's participants reported that ill-conceived converged job descriptions had caused "confusion and stress" and that staff reductions in response to financial savings had left them feeling "overburdened" (p.149). Some participants believed that their new roles within converged organisations were not sustainable (2016: p.155) and had witnessed roles being assigned to staff who were not qualified to carry out their new job description with insufficient provision of professional development or training. Robinson found that convergence had a negative impact on morale and job satisfaction and that many participants communicated a range of undesirable emotions in relation to their work in converged organisations, including frustration, stress, cynicism and despondency (2016: p.154).

Robinson links the negative effects of poor structures and role descriptions to the local authority context of the institutions studied, arguing that some councils

carried out convergence "without a thorough understanding of how the new institutions could function effectively, especially in regard to the redesign of management structures and individual staff responsibilities" (2016: p.149).

Organisational Culture and Resistance

The differences between libraries and museums identified throughout the literature can be considered as contributing towards each institution's organisational culture, defined simply as "how things are done around here" (Drennan, 1992: p.1) and the "core set of assumptions, understandings, and implicit rules that govern day to day behaviour in the workplace" (Deal and Kennedy, 1983: p.501). Several authors highlight cultural differences as a serious barrier to successful cross-sector partnerships as convergence challenges accepted professional behaviours "it requires that we, as individuals and as institutions, behave in ways that are not "normal", that feel unnatural" (Martin, 2007: p.85). Marsden argues that although co-operation should be encouraged there remains "a long history of professionals who are too isolationist, antagonistic or acquisitive to co-operate with their neighbours" (2001: p.18). Martin believes that although differences in organisational culture

between libraries and museums are profound, if unique distinctions are actively recognised then collaboration can succeed:

> Over time, I believe they can evolve into sources of synergy rather than contention. One goal of successful collaboration is the assurance that the integrity of each institution is sustained by the partnership. (Martin, 2007: p.86)

Bishoff urges collaborating partners working across "disparate cultures" to recognise their fundamental differences "while the players may share common goals, respect that each institution has a different mission, culture and funding structure" (2004: p.35). Doucet warns that professional staff may become divided if differences are ignored "if you throw librarians and archivists and museums professionals in a room and tell them to get along and play nicely, they will not" (2007: p.66). Mitchell emphasises the importance of acknowledging cultural differences between LAM organisations when leading change: "planning for change without the cultural lens can lead to unanticipated and likely unproductive outcomes" (2016: p.47). Whiteman also highlights the importance of understanding culture but concludes that cultural differences are "not insurmountable" (Whiteman, 2007: p.32) while Marcum identifies resistance

as a key barrier to collaboration, noting that "projects can be upset by both external and internal resistance and a project's results may turn out to be unacceptable to those for whom they are intended" (2014: p.79).

Factors for Successful Convergence

A wide range of factors are identified as having an impact on the success of library and museum convergence. It is argued that while there is no definitive guidance, certain factors should be considered if convergence is to be successful: "there are no hard and fast rules for ensuring success in LAM collaborations. However there are circumstances that make it more likely, or unlikely, for collaborations to flourish" (Zorich et al., 2008: p.21).

Vision, Strategy and Planning

The development of a clear, collaborative vision is deemed integral to successful convergence - "for a collaborative idea to succeed it has to be embedded in an overarching vision all participants share which makes it worth the effort to overcome the inevitable obstacles" (Zorich et al., 2008: p.21).

Several authors agree that successful integration can only be judged on a case-by-case basis and is dependent on the original rationale of the union, for instance is the aim to improve services or merely to cut costs (Jones, 1997; Marsden, 2001). Goals set should be shared by all partners and be realistic (Gibson et al., 2007: p.57), while organisations must understand each other's missions, values and priorities (Allen and Bishoff, 2001). Doucet argues that clear communication of the new vision can help staff to identify how they can positively contribute to the realisation of the project (2007) and it is recommended that a trusted change agent is utilised that "keeps the effort alive, injects it with a dose of resources (ideas, technology, staff) at the right time and keeps participants focused on the overall vision they are aiming to bring to life" (Zorich et al., 2008: p.24).

In their formative report, Zorich et al. provide guidance on LAM convergence, and advocate the use of mandates to build on an initial vision and encourage staff by providing strategic plans (Zorich et al., 2008). They also urge cultural institutions to put their audience needs at the core of their visioning and strategy - "successful LAM efforts clearly define their audience and create collaborations that serve their distinctive needs" (Zorich et al., 2008: p.28). In their influential report, Yarrow et al. emphasise the importance of pre-planning, planning,

implementation and evaluation (2008). In the earliest stages partners must all

agree on the shared goals, benefits and funding of the initiative, this is echoed

by Tanackovic and Bandurina who highlight the benefits of "adequate technical,

financial and strategic support" (2009: p.318), while Zorich et al. note

"collaborations cannot function on "collaborative will" alone. They need tangible

resources such as infrastructure, funding, human labour and expertise in order

to succeed" (Zorich et al., 2008: p.26). The planning stage, as described by

Yarrow et al., includes the formulation of a policy document that establishes

responsibilities and timescale, meanwhile the project should be marketed to all

those involved to achieve buy-in (Yarrow et al., 2008). Implementation must

then involve regular meetings and open communication, sufficient allocation of

staff time and participation from stakeholders whilst also remaining flexible as

the project progresses, a final evaluation is also recommended in order to

gauge the effectiveness of the collaboration (Yarrow et al., 2008).

Communication and Trust

Communication is a recurring motif throughout the convergence literature and is

recognised as a key factor in building trust between partners - "ensure all

partners are committed to open, honest and positive communication" (Yarrow et

al., 2008: p.32). Allen and Bishoff call for facilitation of a wide range of dialogue in order to strengthen channels of communication:

> Communication throughout a project is critical and should include all
> levels of the organization… Project participants must be able to express
> needs in the area of communication, so that patterns of communication
> can change throughout the project. (Allen and Bishoff, 2001: p.66)

Mansfield et al. suggested that the cultural sector should learn from recent innovations in academic communication in order to develop "the ability to sensitively and effectively communicate across the potential divides (2014: p.30) while Allen and Bishoff argued that trust is reliant on effective contribution from all partners (Allen and Bishoff, 2001).

Robinson's 2016 empirical research into five Australian GLAM convergence case studies found that cross-disciplinary meetings and informal communication played a valuable role in the effectiveness of converged teams which in one case had encouraged a "culture of mutual respect, teamwork and sense of joint purpose" (p.147). However Robinson found that several professional staff working in converged services reported the negative effects of "onerous

communication structures on innovative programmes and staff workloads"
(2016: p.147) including an increase in the number of meetings required when
working in a converged structure which challenged staff's ability to work
efficiently. Robinson's findings suggest that while effective communication is
important within converged teams there is a balance to be struck in order to
avoid excessive communication.

Leadership and Management of Convergence

Strong management and leadership are deemed crucial to convergence
throughout the literature. Allen and Bishoff call on managers from all
partnerships to be committed:

> Commitment by senior management from the outset of the project is
> critical. Agreement on project mission and goals, as well as modification
> to the basic premise of the project should involve senior management.
> Changes in senior management may affect the ability to complete the
> project as defined. (Allen and Bishoff, 2001: p.67)

Appointing a project manager was deemed an integral part of a collaborative initiative, Gibson et al. found that without this role projects may run into difficulty "prior to the appointment of a Project Manager it was very difficult to agree roles and complete the paperwork" (2007: p.63). Striking the right balance of management is also highlighted as potentially problematic, Duff et al. (2013) found that blending top down and bottom up management styles can be challenging when working collaboratively.

Providing incentives for staff is identified as a valuable part of project management in order to recognise good collaborative working (Zorich et al., 2008), however it is noted that reward structures are often not in place and instead staff from collaborating institutions are forced to compete for recognition as "existing incentive structures often position LAMS so they compete with one another in ways that discourage collaboration" (Zorich et al., 2008: p.23). Doucet shares experience gained during the formation of Library and Archives Canada to argue that management teams should all see eye to eye, carefully manage the pace of change and aim to create the right conditions for change:

Which means getting the fundamentals right: good human resources, good finances, good performance measurement…. if that part is done well, then your professionals will gain the courage they need to accept the new vision and to move forward with creating an institution that is truly relevant in this brave new world. (Doucet, 2007: p.66)

Convergence does pose leadership risks, as separate management teams must work together within a joint service. Jones describes the dynamics between senior staff and their bias for their own service areas as a potential problem:

The obvious risk is that a head of service may be tempted to further the cause of his or her own professional interests. Newly-appointed joint managers may perceive that their own service has been undervalued in comparison to other services within their charge (1997: p.29).

Robinson echoes this in her findings from five convergence case studies, noting that staff's bias for their original specialism "continued to pose a barrier to the development of cross-disciplinary expertise" (2016: p.153).

A lack of effective leadership within cultural heritage organisations is also highlighted as an issue. Mitchell argues that although LAMs have recognised there is a need for change and innovation in their sectors, more could be done to actively encourage change leadership in order to make a significant impact (2016: p.50). Howard et al.'s findings on the current and future skills requirements of GLAM professionals include one participant who highlighted a rising need for leadership, describing "a real lack of both leadership and vision at the senior management levels'. (2016: p.15). Australian research found that there is need for wider dialogue amongst senior leaders of cultural institutions at a national level in order to create "national leadership for the whole sector – a cross-sector conversation at a senior level" (Mansfield et al., 2014: p.19). Although effective leadership is identified as integral to successful convergence there is a lack of research exploring leadership and management strategies in the context of convergence, suggesting a need for further research in order to establish best practice.

Professionalism and Divergence

The issue of library, archive and museum education is a keenly discussed topic within the convergence literature and many authors criticise the segregated nature of library and museum education and argue that professional education must change in order to prepare graduates to work across different cultural domains. Many highlight the limitations of educating professionals exclusively in single LAM curricula such as library and information science (LIS) or museum studies: "the current practice of compartmentalising is inefficient, not only slowing progress in each field's advancements, but in keeping the potential of valuable knowledge-sharing at bay" (Latham, 2015: p.139). Trant argues that these segregated courses "emphasise the differences rather than their emerging similarities" (2009: p.376) and calls for a cross-disciplinary curriculum in order to provide institutions with "professionals better equipped to deal with the challenges they face in the networked information environment" (2009: p.378). The rise of digital technology is seen as an opportunity to unite professional education through the teaching of new subject areas.

Several authors allude to the need for a new breed of professional able to work across traditional LAM disciplines in converged environments and question the education needed to produce such a workforce (Duff et al., 2013; Given and McTavish, 2010; Marty and Twidale, 2011; Marty, 2014; Ray, 2009; Robinson,

2016; Latham, 2015; Howard et al., 2016). Marty calls for "information professionals who can transcend the traditional boundaries between libraries, archives, and museums in the information age" (2014: p.624) while navigating the challenges associated with digital convergence.

Latham (2015) references Marcia Bates's (2012) meta-discipline theory as an effective educational framework for bringing together LAM courses, arguing that the information disciplines, including Library Science, Archival Science and Museum Studies, are part of a meta-field which all look through the same lens. Latham (2015) goes on to use the paleontology terms 'lumpers' and splitters' to argue that rather than splitting information disciplines into segregated forms of study, LIS and museum studies should be lumped together in order to achieve a higher quality of memory institution.

Latham refers to Kent State University in the United States which introduced a museum studies specialisation within the LIS masters degree program in 2011, yet concedes that little has been done in practice to bring LAM education closer together "in the five years since Trant (2009) made her case for such a move, we have taken some steps in the right direction, but only baby steps" (Latham, 2015: p.139). Kim (2012) also observes that little progress has been made to

bring library and museum education closer together, a view which is echoed by Klimaszewski: "few LAM insiders seem particularly ready to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater in order to begin anew as one unified profession" (2015: p.355).

Training and staff development are also acknowledged as integral to the on-going success of convergence, however despite the important role training plays in convergence, little of the literature explores best practice for staff training and continual professional development in the context of library and museum convergence. Tanackovic and Bandurina make a strong case for training that provides staff with information to develop their collaborative skills.

Brown and Pollack (2000) recognise that as more institutions merge the need for specific staff training will increase; research, however, suggests that such training is limited: "in the majority of case studies there had been no training for collaboration" (Gibson et al., 2007: p.62). Robinson's 2016 case study finds a similar situation, highlighting the lack of "constructive professional development and training" to support staff working in converged structures (2016: p.154). She goes on to conclude that although new courses designed to prepare library, museum and archive staff to work in converged heritage organisations

would be beneficial, there is a risk of diluting "the specialist knowledge and skills that this research confirms are still necessary in each field" (Robinson, 2016: p.156). One of Robinson's participants expressed their concerns about the unrealistic expectations put upon staff to carry out roles that straddle multiple specialisms: "I don't think you're going to find the two-headed beast who's good at both" (Robinson, 2016: p.152). The literature makes little distinction between professional, paraprofessional and non-professional staff when discussing training and education in the context of convergence. The relative lack of best practice guidance on the training and ongoing professional development of staff working across all levels of converged cultural institutions highlights a need for greater research in this area.

Benefits of Convergence

It is widely agreed that convergence can bring significant benefits to libraries and museums and several authors list a wide range of advantages gained by collaborating institutions (Brown and Pollack, 2000; Diamant-Cohen and Sherman, 2003; Gibson et al., 2007; Marcum, 2014). Gibson et al. found "hard evidence from practice in both England and the USA validates the theory… the

'wave of the future' has become a reality, with a considerable amount of embedded potential" (Gibson et al., 2007: p.63).

Improved Cultural Offer and Visibility

A key benefit of library and museum convergence stated repeatedly throughout the literature is an improved offer for users, allowing for the delivery of joint services that could not have been achieved independently (Gibson et al., 2007; Marcum, 2014). Convergence has the potential to create a vibrant cultural experience, producing a "broad information context" and a "dynamic interdisciplinary environment" (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2003; cited in Marcum, 2014: p.86). Duff et al. validate the findings of previous research suggesting that the key aim to improve services for users is often achieved (2013); this enhanced offer also has the potential to increase footfall and strengthen collaborating institutions: "collaboration makes all partners and their missions stronger" (Tanackovic and Bandurina, 2009: p.318). A study carried out by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) found that "partnership goals frequently focus on reaching out to the community and bringing in underserved audience segments" and that museums often specifically collaborate with libraries to "broaden their appeal to a wider audience" (Institute of Museum and

Library Services, 2000: p.6). Findings from the Albury LibraryMuseum in New South Wales showed that attendance figures had doubled since the two organisations merged in 2007 (VanderBerg, 2012), confirming that convergence can have a significant impact on users and visibility.

This heightened visibility is seen as another key benefit as convergence has the potential to change preconceptions and widen audience reach by "improving public perceptions of museums and libraries as traditional staid institutions" (Gibson et al., 2007: p.58), challenging the assumption that libraries and museums are "traditional, elitist, or closed to most people" (Marcum, 2014: p.80). Enhanced visibility can be achieved through joint marketing initiatives (Diamant-Cohen and Sherman, 2003), which may bolster each institution's position in the community and "have more impact on legislative and decision-making processes in state and local agencies" (Tanackovic & Badurina, 2009: p.229). Michalko makes the argument that collecting institutions need to create impact by working together for the sake of cultural preservation and dissemination:

We cannot do it alone because we cannot achieve visibility by ourselves.
We have to collaborate. We have to create scale to create awareness.
(Michalko, 2007: p.78)

In addition to increased awareness, collections can also benefit, particularly
from physical convergence, providing opportunities for renovated displays,
exhibitions, acquisition of new collections (Dilevko and Gottlieb, 2004; Gibson et
al., 2007), and improved access supported by "concerted monitoring and
protection of an ever larger body of information and heritage" (Tanackovic &
Badurina, 2009: p.229).

Several authors see the rise of digital technology as providing an opportunity for
libraries and museums to capitalise on the unique, physical cultural experiences
they provide, "particularly with museums in the mix, they can extend
experiences - experiences of the beautiful, the rare, the poignant, the
extraordinary, the amazing, the stimulating, the provocative" (Marcum, 2014:
p.79). Robinson cites the observation of Chung et al. (2008) that digital
technology is causing an information overload that museums can remedy using
professional knowledge and collections to create an "oases of the real in an

increasingly virtual world" (Chung et al. 2008: p.19; cited in Robinson, 2012: p.422). Yarrow et al. provide a summary of this persuasive argument, stating "the focus is now on the experience, both real and virtual, of the institution itself, as well as the institution's collections" (Yarrow et al., 2008: p.5) that many believe can be achieved through convergence.

Financial Savings

Financial and efficiency savings are cited as a potential benefit of convergence, allowing the sharing of resources and costs relating to administration, utilities, security, ICT facilities and staffing (Diamant-Cohen and Sherman, 2003; Gibson et al., 2007; Jones 1997; Tanackovic and Badurina, 2009). Collaboration also avoids duplication of effort allowing staff to save time by combining their workloads: "integration has reduced the duplication of effort - education services, marketing, publicity, exhibitions and other outreach activities are now undertaken jointly" (Jones, 1997: p.33). Although some argue that convergence may lead to competition for external funding (Brown and Pollack, 2000), Gibson et al. found that "collaboration was beneficial in securing financial aid as funding agencies liked to see non-profit organisations working together to share resources" (Gibson et al., 2007: p.61).

Convergence of public services is discussed in the context of local government savings and the need to provide public value using limited resources:

> If public enterprises do not create value for the public, then why should they be formed or continue to exist? The problem, of course, is how to define and measure public value. (Martin, 2007: pp.86-87)

Jones argued that convergence should not be pursued with the sole aim of making efficiency savings: "integration with a related service should be avoided if the primary aim is to save money" (Jones, 1997: p.34). Although financial savings are alluded to throughout the literature as a likely benefit of convergence, there is little evidence to prove that integrated organisations have successfully achieved savings, for example Doucet refers to "dwindling resources" as a main motivation for the creation of LAC, however it is unclear whether or not savings were an outcome (Doucet, 2007: p.61). This suggests that establishing the true benefits of financial savings via convergence is difficult to assess, to the authors' knowledge there have been no empirical studies into the relationship between financial savings and physical convergence, which suggests the potential for further research.

Cross Domain Learning

The opportunity convergence provides for staff to work across professional divides is seen to enhance cross-sector learning, resulting in "cross-fertilization of knowledge and ideas", "sharing of expertise", "fresh ideas and perspectives" and "professional development of staff" (Tanackovic & Badurina, 2009: p.229). Through collaboration libraries and museums are able to share expertise and viewpoints - "the resulting joint solution is always stronger than what one library or museum could achieve alone" (Bishoff, 2004: p.34). Staff are able to learn from each other through collaboration (Diamant-Cohen and Sherman, 2003), allowing for each institution to gain from one another's strengths as elaborated on by Wythe:

> Libraries and archives may have the technology and standards, but museums have the presentation skills. By drawing from both domains, we can move closer to a common goal of helping people to explore the world in exciting new ways. (Wythe, 2007: p.55)

As UK museums have seen a steady rise in visitor numbers over recent years (Culturehive, 2010) and the USA has witnessed a surge in museum building (Bell, 2003), libraries have seen visitor numbers fall by 40 million over the last four years (Morris, 2015). Some argue that libraries could learn and benefit from museums, "perhaps some public or independent libraries or archives do need to piggyback onto the civic pride that has inspired such a strong burst of museum-building across America in the last decade" (Beasley, 2007: p.20). Likewise, when working collaboratively museums have been found to benefit from library's community expertise, particularly in terms of working with children and families (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2000). This type of collaborative learning helps to encourage best practice: "collaboration and convergence projects provided opportunities for library, archive and museum professionals to develop a better understanding of each individual profession's traditions, perspectives, and approaches" (Duff et al., 2013). However, Robinson's empirical research of five converged organisations found that a lack of institutional commitment and professional development frameworks plus time limitations were all barriers to cross-disciplinary training (2016: p.155) and several participants from across the five case studies were sceptical about the potential for cross-disciplinary expertise (2016: p.155). This led her to conclude

that the benefits of "cross-fertilisation and the acquisition of cross-disciplinary expertise" were not convincingly proven.

The Convergence Narrative

Several authors throughout the literature are critical of library, archive and museum convergence, raising concerns about institutional differences (Beasley, 2007; VanderBerg, 2012) and the ethical challenges posed by merging cultural heritage organisations (Cannon, 2013; Robinson, 2014). However in recent years a critical dialogue around the convergence narrative and agenda has started to develop, arguably diverging from previous criticisms based on the practicality and suitability of convergence.

Klimaszewski's 2015 publication *Lumping (and Splitting) LAMs: The Story of Grouping Libraries, Archives and Museum*, explores the LAM convergence narrative as told through the literature, describing the differing views on convergence as a "gulf between LAM insiders and outsiders, which is exacerbated by policy makers" (2015: p.356). Klimaszewski suggests that a positive convergence narrative has been developed by 'outsiders', including funding bodies, policy makers and researchers, and uses the 'lumping' and

'splitting' analogy, (also used by Latham, 2015) to contrast the views of LAM 'insiders' and 'outsiders':

> Often, this trend toward lumping is influenced by outsiders, such as policy makers, grant funders, and information science researchers, who seem to have their own ideas about how and why LAMs should come together… splitting LAMs seems to be most prevalent in the minds of LAM professionals, though this has not impeded collaborative activities. (Klimaszewski, 2015: p.364)

Klimaszewski notes that convergence narratives "change based on who is telling the story", and describes the convergence story as "multi-faceted" (2015: p.351). In the context of digital convergence Klimaszewski argues that differing LAM practices are often seen as a "minor hurdle" (2015: p.358) by 'outsiders', while 'insiders' are more likely to view overcoming these differences as a challenge. While Klimaszewski supports the view that LAM professionals need to adapt to a changing society, she questions who should be leading the convergence narrative: "the question seems to be not only how much practices should change but also who should be leading these conversations" (2015:

p.356), and argues that the 'outsider' perspective on convergence is idealistic and lacking evidence:

> Arguably most relevant to this story is the rhetorical influence of policy makers and funders as they strive to achieve the idealistic goal of universal access for all. While the current story of LAMs is of a convergence driven by idealism, it often lacks a critical assessment of the role of technology and assumes user needs as opposed to relying on evidence-based impact studies. (Klimaszewski, 2015: p.364)

Klimaszewski cites Zorich, Waibel and Erway's OCLC report *Silos of the LAMs* (2008) as an example of an 'outsider' perspective, arguing the report supports OCLC's organisational mission by spreading "a sort of gospel of collaboration by example" (2015: p.353). Klimaszewski describes *Silos of the LAMs* (2008) as idealistic and attacks its "championing tone" (2015: p.353) while also citing Dempsey (2000), and Dupont (2007) as sharing the same idealistic quality. Klimaszewski goes further by describing *Silos of the LAMs* (2008) as a document that pushes its own agenda in order to serve "its own organisational ends" (2015: p.353), thereby contributing to a funding environment that rewards collaborative projects: "the proliferation of rhetoric-filled literature suggests that

transformational policy goals have become internalised and naturalised by grant-making institutions" (2015: p.359). Klimaszewski views this as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (2015: p.359) whereby LAMs strive to meet collaborative funding requirements in order to secure resources, the sustainability of which is also questioned by Klimaszewski: "what will happen as funders move on to 'the next big thing'?" (2015: p.362).

Klimaszewski's doubts concerning the lack of empirical research into LAM convergence are shared by Cannon, who also criticises *Silos of the LAMs* (2008):

> The study is based on tainted results based on the overwhelming input of management who were specifically selected before the workshop for their support of convergence and instructed to maintain a positive and supporting tone. The level of tampering with the study participants is phenomenal; it is frankly shocking that this study was even published by OCLC. (Cannon, 2013: pp.76-77)

Cannon also criticises the "indeterminate language and general notions" (2013: p.72) found throughout the convergence literature and challenges the validity of pro-convergence opinions that are not supported by evidence:

> Stating that digital and Internet technologies are making LAM convergence necessary does not make it true… the pro-convergence arguments are so poorly supported from a debate perspective *because* they are not the actual, *a priori* motivators behind the movement but rather the result of retrospective determinism. (Cannon, 2013: p.73)

Cannon's argues that LAM convergence has been led by executive management who have also benefitted the most from convergence and that the corporatisation of the cultural sphere has led to "business-influenced jargon that is as meaningless as it is unrelated to the actual causes of convergence" (2013: p.85). Unlike the majority of the literature which calls for effective convergence management and leadership, Cannon attacks the common top-down, executive approach to managing convergence and questions the accepted narrative used to justify convergence: "change is necessary based on an undefined vision of the future" (2013: p.75).

Cannon also cites the unpublished findings of a 2011 survey conducted by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC), which aimed to gain an insight into the viewpoints of archivists working at LAC after the convergence of the library and archive. Findings include: fifty percent of respondents "do not agree with the modernisation process and do not understand its necessity"; sixty-five percent believe that the changes will have a "negative impact on the quality of the collection" and eighty-one percent think that the modernization will have a "negative impact on the public's perception of LAC" (Cannon, 2013: p.85). Cannon describes the findings as portraying a "state of near-total discontentment and exceedingly low morale" (2013: p.85) at an institution that is often heralded as a leading cultural heritage institution for the future. Parallels can be drawn between the unpublished LAC findings and Robinson's 2016 case study findings of five converged institutions, which identified a range of adverse effects directly influenced by convergence resulting in low staff morale and job satisfaction. The unfavorable results of real-life LAM convergence have until recently gone largely unexplored, with much of the literature arguably giving greater emphasis to the positive outcomes of convergence.

The strong arguments put forward in recent years by Klimaszewski (2015) and Cannon (2013) alongside Robinson's informative case study findings (2016), suggest that the convergence narrative may be shifting focus as the idealistic and non-empirical nature of the majority of literature to date is starting to be challenged.

Conclusion

> For now, the effects and outcomes of the current trend toward lumping LAMs remains to be seen (Klimaszewski, 2015: p.364)

Particular circumstances in different countries, including political, technological, cultural and economic factors, will determine attitudes to convergence of libraries and museums, and the level of that convergence, and whilst this must be acknowledged, there do appear to be many common issues and experiences irrespective of location. Attitudes towards convergence throughout the literature are largely positive but not without criticism, particularly as the widely accepted convergence narrative has been questioned in recent years (Klimaszewski, 2015; Cannon, 2013). A multi-faceted range of benefits are

discussed throughout the literature, summarised effectively by Diamant-Cohen and Sherman who argue, "the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts" (2003: p.102). Many call for more work to be done to enable closer relationships between libraries and museums, most notably by adapting professional training (Given and McTavish 2010; Trant 2009; Latham, 2015), yet concerns are raised that convergence is problematized and merely a marketing trend that will struggle to overcome institutional differences (Beasley, 2007; VanderBerg, 2012) and a wide range of potential barriers and risks are identified throughout the literature.

In spite of a growing literature on library, archive and museum convergence, there still appears to be a need for more mutual understanding on the part of those who work in the three domains and their stakeholders including policy makers and administrators on what each does and aspires to do. Others (for example: Dornseif, 2001; Waibel and Erway, 2009; Wellington 2013; Yarrow, 2008; Zorich et al., 2008) have commented on the need for typologies of convergence, and created them; they have urged consistent use of clear terminology – of which all stakeholders need to be aware. If they are not, how easy is it for those with whom library and museum managers work, including decision makers, local councillors and local community members, to understand

the factors that make up the divergent and convergent factors of each domain, and how they might influence challenges and opportunities leading to integration and synergy. Latham (2015: p.131) illustrates the complexity of terminology in this field in introducing the scope of her study of integrating library museum programmes in education, noting that it can be 'tricky' and cause 'tension'.

Some urge for research into various aspects of convergence, as they note a lack of robust research into the reality of it (Cannon, 2013; Duff et al., 2013; Klimasweski, 2015; Robinson, 2016). Tanackovic and Badurina have noted: 'On the one hand, a literature survey shows a relatively large number of works describing specific, individual collaborative experiences and projects involving LAMs on both a local and national level … but on the other, relatively limited attention is given to original research and deeper analysis of inter-relationships and collaborative experiences in the cultural heritage sector' (2009, p301). Wellington has commented (2013, p.2): 'While discussion centres on collaborative or convergent practice in a digital milieu, there is minimal critical analysis of integrative models of operation in our physical GLAM environments. The increasing development of buildings designed to house collectively our galleries, libraries, archives and museums creates challenges and opportunities

for the participating entities. Resource rationalisation, tourism ventures, community engagement and technological determinism are often the embedded drivers for the expansion of these new institutional forms. While the development of these institutions increases, there is a dearth of research considering the implications of these models on the participating entities. Only a limited amount of research investigates library, archive and museum physical convergence and collaboration (Gibson et al., 2007; Yarrow et al., 2008; Tanackovic and Badurina 2009; Duff et al., 2013; Robinson, 2016).

Most recently Robinson concluded from her study (arguably the most substantial research into convergence including physical convergence to date) that "the ideals of convergence, centred on seamless access to a variety of collection resources and the emergence of cross-disciplinary skills among staff, are only partially realised in practice" (2016: p.154). Robinson summarised that convergence was often carried out without "adequate consideration" (2016: p.155) as evidenced by one of her research participants who compares library, archive and museum convergence to the creation of a Frankenstein's monster:

> So much sorrow and pain for that monster who gets created, almost
> through a flawed concept… We've given birth to this monster, now how

do we control it, how do we get it to do what we want it to do, how do we

stop it from hurting people? (Robinson, 2016: p.156)

Is convergence a knee jerk reaction to the need to make financial savings, and

what can be done to ensure that convergence and what comes with it is

successful? As Martin asks, is the motivation for such collaboration based on

"a fundamental convergence of mission" or merely "the result of governmental

tinkering to reduce staff and encourage efficiency through reorganisation"

(Martin, 2007: p.83).

Co-location on its own does not equate with convergence. And, physical

convergence on its own will not bring fully converged services. The authors

echo the views of those above who urge for more research based on actual

practice, particularly with regard to physical convergence. To what extent are

library and museum services located in the same building, sharing infrastructure

and facilities there, truly integrated? Are they just operating on separate floors

in the same building, or has physical proximity helped developed new

partnerships among staff and collaborative services to users? Was that the

original intention of the co-location? Has convergence developed since such 'comings together', or has the experience resulted in divergence? Are staff sufficiently motivated and trained to exploit physical convergence? How have users benefited? How are they consulted and involved in in physical library and museum service physical convergence? What impact have digital technologies had on this – do they facilitate or negate the need for physical convergence, or do they offer novel types and levels of convergence, do they bring together and blur physical and virtual space? Levarrato (2014, p.267), in a discussion of 'library and museum hybridisation', has commented that availability of texts and images on the Internet 'tends to blur the boundaries that distinguish museums, libraries and archives in the digital arena'. Likewise, to what extent, have digital technologies impacted on Divlenko and Gottlieb's library-museum hybrid proposal where the floor plans 'could be almost anything, limited only by the inventiveness and imagination of library-museum hybrid planners and architects' (2004, p.192)? Such research should also investigate how current practice relates to the models (and their stages), we have discussed earlier (for example, Zorech et al; Weibel and Erway). It should also investigate how and if such models are appropriate for public libraries and museums and their physical convergence; how, for example, do current cases relate to these models; are they still relevant and can they be applied or adapted in public libraries and

museums in what is very much a changing local government environment in the UK? (And, from our reading, the governance and funding of public libraries and museums in many countries seems to be subject to change.) Whilst taking into account local circumstances, these factors also need to be considered alongside the findings of recent research such as that by Wellington (2013 and Robinson (2012; 2104; 2016). Existing instances of physical convergence need to be researched to determine, for example, the ongoing impact of digital technologies (and the growth of 'competing' media sources), the complex local authority context, with its dynamic political and financial uncertainties.

Thus we would suggest that the only certainty in the field of library and museum physical convergence is that more empirical research, especially in the UK, is needed if we are to understand fully how this type of collaboration works in practice and whether it is worth the necessary risk and investment required, particularly in terms of physical co-location and integration with positive outcomes for all stakeholders. And, physical convergence developments continue. Here in England, Doncaster Council's cabinet has recently approved plans for a £14 million combined museum, library and archive building' (Kessen, 2017a). Articles in the press about this development echo many of the issues raised in this paper, for example, 'The plan could see four existing buildings

(Doncaster Central Library, Doncaster Archives in Balby, Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery and the Library Services for Schools at Top Road, Barnby Dun) consolidated into one dynamic central hub that will inspire creativity, informal learning and innovation', and 'The four existing buildings in question are older buildings and some of them are in need of significant repair. Money would need to be spent on making these improvements and even then, they could not offer the types of modern services we want to provide for residents.' And 'The new space will help support the local and creative economy, by providing opportunities for young people, entrepreneurs, businesses and residents to develop skills that help build a successful career. The striking building will also have the space and facilities to display exhibits which have been locked away from public view for years …' (Kessen 2017b). What lessons can they learn from those who have been down this road and what lessons will they, in turn, offer?

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