

Against the Grain

Volume 25 | Issue 1

Article 10

February 2013

Spaces and Clouds: The Library as Destination and Launch Pad

Chris Banks

University of Aberdeen, c.banks@abdn.ac.uk

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>

 Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Banks, Chris (2013) "Spaces and Clouds: The Library as Destination and Launch Pad," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 25: Iss. 1, Article 10.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6411>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

identifies and extracts targeted information to semantically enrich content with domain-specific metadata. Luxid enables professional publishers to efficiently package and deliver relevant information to their audience, and helps enterprises to intelligently archive, manage, analyze, discover, and share increasing volumes of information. Founded in 2000, TEMIS operates in the United States, Canada, UK, France, and Germany, and is represented worldwide through its network of certified partners. <http://www.temis.com> 🐼

Endnotes

1. A 2011 study among scientific journals publishers by Publishing Research Consortium revealed that 46% of respondents were currently applying these technologies to their content.
2. The reader should take care that many approaches exist, and some offer only a subset of the capabilities listed here.
3. Such structured knowledge could be found in proprietary assets such as a knowledge base, or through openly available linked data repositories (The following link can be used as a starting point for more information on this topic: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linked_Data).
4. In recent years the term "mash up" (both a verb and a noun) has been used in a slightly larger sense to designate such content aggregation tactic by the technical community. Topic Pages and Microsites can be considered examples of mashups.
5. This participates in the beneficial effects of the Long Tail as popularized by Chris Anderson in his seminal *Wired* article (<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>) and subsequent book.
6. Or through profiling, for example, by statistically analyzing individual end-user's content of interest.

against the grain people profile

University Librarian and Director, Library, Special Collections & Museums, University of Aberdeen
The Sir Duncan Rice Library, University of Aberdeen
Bedford Road, Aberdeen, AB24 3AA
Phone: +44 (0) 1224 273384 • [<c.banks@abdn.ac.uk>](mailto:c.banks@abdn.ac.uk)
www.abdn.ac.uk/library

Chris Banks

BORN AND LIVED: Born in London. Lived in London, Belfast, London, Aberdeen.

EARLY LIFE: Shaped (positively) by living in Belfast and benefitting from the very supportive schooling there. My career owes everything to that.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Two music degrees. Worked at **English National Opera** and the **British Library** (20+ years) before moving to Aberdeen.

FAMILY: One very supportive husband who doesn't mind that I live and work over 550 miles from home. And one cat who likes a choice of laps (and therefore welcomes when there is more than one in London).

IN MY SPARE TIME: I enjoy singing.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Well-written ones

PET PEEVES: Procrastination; inefficiency; intolerance.

PHILOSOPHY: Life is special and to be treasured. Each day could be my last, and I want to make a positive difference.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Working with a wonderful team to achieve a wonderful new library in Aberdeen.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: That we will still be full of positive ideas as to how to make a positive difference to those studying, researching, and visiting our new library (and that we'll have won a few prizes on the way).

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: The relationship between publishers, libraries, and LMS suppliers will fundamentally change over the next five years. Our goal is to continue to ensure that the academic endeavour reaches the widest audience and makes the biggest and most relevant impact. Our role as curator/custodian will evolve to fully embrace the born digital. We will share more services and, if sense can prevail, will not be penalized for doing so. Libraries will continue to be responsive to these new environments but will remain relevant. 🐼



Spaces and Clouds: The Library as Destination and Launch Pad

by **Chris Banks** (University Librarian and Director, Library Special Collections and Museums, University of Aberdeen)
[<c.banks@abdn.ac.uk>](mailto:c.banks@abdn.ac.uk)

Abstract

This article considers both the physical and online spaces that together comprise the university library and study environment for many of today's students. It looks at some of the evidence which can be used to inform decision-making in terms of space optimization, eliminating barriers to online access, maximizing collection development budgets both in terms of targeting acquisitions and ensuring that collections are discoverable, and using process improvement techniques in order to maximise staff effectiveness.

University Investments

In the last four years the **University of Aberdeen** has invested over £57m in a new University Library, a Special Collections Centre, a Conservation Centre, and a new museum (King's Museum). Further investment has seen the introduction of a single resource discovery layer which searches all locally-held and subscribed resources in all formats. Finally, there has also been substantial evidence-based investment in online resources, including journal backfiles and eBooks. Over 80% of the current collection development budget is spent on electronic resources.

Evidence-based Investment in Online Resources and Tools

The evidence base for the targeted acquisition of journal backfiles included the publisher's own record of click-through attempts from discovered titles to full text. Using this evidence, together with an unfunded priority list of backfiles prepared by academics resulted in significant additional use of the newly-subscribed content. Furthermore, the addition of bibliographic records for the eBook content to the library's own catalogue resulted in

continued on page 26

significantly increased use of that part of the collection over and above the initial surge in increase seen at the time of acquisition.

The business case for the purchase of a resource discovery layer was also evidence driven: on identifying that the library was able to log failed searches in the library catalogue, it was discovered that in the region of 80,000 searches were failing in any one month (i.e., producing zero results). An analysis of the failed searches indicated that the library catalogue was being used to search journal articles and book chapters, and it also suggested that linguistic differences, especially those between British English and American English, were the cause of a significant proportion of the failed searches. A resource discovery layer was procured and implemented during the summer of 2011. In addition to searching the library catalogue, the product now searches a knowledge base of electronic resources (whether subscribed or not), the University's catalogues of manuscripts, archives, and museum objects, its records of subscribed resources, and the data subset which contains eBooks which can be acquired under the library's "just-in-time" patron-driven acquisitions programme. Single sign-on has minimized the barriers from discovery to delivery, and since the introduction of the integrated search and discovery tool use of all materials in all formats has increased.

Process Improvement and Automated Services as a Means of Generating Capacity

As part of the planning for the new University Library, analyses of various processes were undertaken using Lean/KaiZen methodologies. These activities resulted in the re-location and, occasionally, co-location of various staff and functions within the new design, and also led to the automation of various functions, including the move to "shelf-ready books" for as much of the modern collections as was possible, the introduction of RFID for open access stock, the introduction of modern self-issue machines across the new building including a facility to pay fines via the machines, and the introduction of an automated book returns and book sorting system. These measures have enabled staff to proactively manage an increase in visitor numbers of 70% on the equivalent period the previous year and an increase in occupancy over the same period of 105%.

Maximising the Investment in Print and Online Resources

With an in-year collection development budget of around £2.6m (2011-2012) and with around 80% of that being spent on online resources, ensuring that the funding is spent appropriately and that the resources are discoverable and available is a priority.

For the print collections, several important decisions were taken in the lead up to the move from the Queen Mother Library (QML) to the new University Library (UL). Evidence again played a key part in these decisions. Firstly,

study and research spaces were the priority for space in the new building. Analysis of collection use in QML for the period 1999 to date revealed that almost 50% of that collection had never either been borrowed or, following a three-year survey of onsite use, been consulted. Furthermore, yearly surveys had revealed that locating individual items in the QML collection presented challenges: there were up to three sequences for print books, and journals proved particularly difficult to find as these were located amongst the monograph collections rather than being co-located in a single subject sequence. In moving to the new building the decision was made to separate out and co-locate the journals (those held in print form only), and to re-integrate the sequences of monographs to a single run. Despite the fact that only 50% of the materials from QML have been moved to the new building, these measures have resulted in an increase in usage and borrowing (against a previously downward trend in both).

For online materials, the library invests considerably in training, particularly training in the use of key individual online resources (these are identified in consultation with academic staff). Annual SCONUL statistics demonstrate that the University invests considerably above the SCONUL and RLUK averages in training, and this correlates with information that we receive from some publishers: that usage of certain resources is, despite the size of our institution, amongst the highest in Europe.

Space Still Matters

There are those who still question the need for significant development in physical library spaces given the growing prevalence of online resources. This questioning is certainly in decline, much of it quashed by the evidence that new library spaces are resulting in significant increases in use. **Aberdeen's** own data is mentioned above and is mirrored by the many institutions who have invested in creating new spaces or re-furbishing existing spaces so that they are more appropriate for 21st-century students: spaces that include collaborative facilities, are technology rich, are wired for power and data and which still offer the more traditional silent book/archive-based researcher facilities that they need. Other areas of work — home working, home shopping (particularly supermarkets), remote conferencing, and online cinema — have all seen a more significant shift to online than has been the case: a shift to the online, but the social, interactive, disciplined, and focused experience offered by the physical experience still remains relevant and in demand. As with much technology, my personal view is that it will continue to offer an alternative experience but that the physical offering will remain valid for a long time yet. For students, the library is still their "office." It is a place to go to work, the place that they go to work. They will even carry their own books, and their own laptop from their dorm to the library. They will work in that hybrid world that is

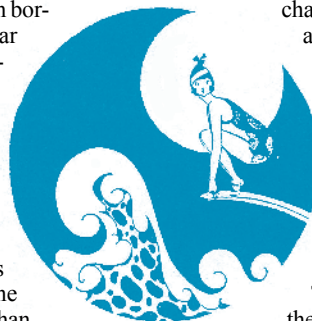
partly online, and partly physical — the **right** kind of physical. They will expect everything to be at hand: catalogue, online resources, the right kind of study space, the ability to chat (when and where they want to) and the ability to demand silence (when and where they want to). They will expect help to be instantaneous and will seize opportunities to chat online, via library-installed chat facilities or through the use of social networking tools, rather than get up to talk to a member of staff in the library. There are others who will value the onsite presence of a member of staff to assist. There is absolutely no "one size fits all" solution to provision of library services in the same way as there is not for the other consumer-based offerings that I mention above. The trick for the library is to judge and respond to the demand in their own institutions whilst at the same time ensuring that library staff remain productive and engaged.

What Next?

In contemplating (and inventing) the future of libraries, the areas that I am personally watching include the following:

- Blurred boundaries: metadata is the "currency" of the businesses of libraries, publishers, and library management systems suppliers. Currently all are jostling for space, and the opportunities for all sectors are many and varied. Librarians are coming to terms with the fact that metadata is no longer their sole domain! Publishers are realising that metadata can feed services which go beyond the library audience and which may have a market within senior university administration, and library management systems suppliers are realising the opportunities of aggregating metadata in the cloud and selling services to librarians. The food chain is both complex and exciting!
- The likelihood is that many more library services will move into "the cloud." This is already evident through the move from owned to subscribed resources, through licensed rather than locally-created services, and through linked rather than locally-hosted metadata. To this will be added the library management system in "the cloud" and to much more linked rather than locally-created metadata in the cloud.
- Ownership vs. use: libraries have, as mentioned above, seen the transition from physically owned to annually licensed access to content. For many this remains a challenge and a threat, but the emergence of significant consortial approaches to the licensing of online content is helping to ease the challenge.

continued on page 27



- Mobile delivery of content is likely to be the area of most significant growth over the next five years. The increase in Smartphone use and, in particular, the rise of the tablet device, is liberating the library in the area of eBooks in particular. The last three years have seen the reaction to the introduction of eBooks move from technology-limited frustration to utter liberation with only the limitations of online connectivity, particularly in rural areas, being a hindrance or cause of ongoing frustration. For those that are not disposed to plan ahead for their research, the technology and systems are rapidly reaching true “just-in-time” provision of library resources and services. The natural extension of this may well see a rise in the “just-in-time” or “patron-driven” purchase model.
- Libraries will continue to move in a direction where core services are shared: shared procurement in library management systems, perhaps through the cloud-based model; collaborative and consortial negotiation for online content; collaborative development of tools to enable the storage, preservation, use, and re-use of research data; further sharing of

uniquely held content — the emerging USP of research libraries.

- Service-driven and value-added physical spaces will remain important for individual institutions, especially where physical attendance as part of the student experience remains the integral element of study at university. Whilst that notion is under pressure at present in the UK through the combined factors of the current UKBA constraints and in light of the upcoming significant increase in fees for English students, those institutions which have invested in the physical as well as the online experiences will be best placed to demonstrate value and to attract students who may, very soon, be questioning just what they will be getting for their £9k tuition fees.

Author's Biography

Chris Banks, FRSA, joined the **University of Aberdeen** as University Librarian and Director, Library Special Collections and Museums, in October 2007 just as the University embarked on one of the biggest and most important cultural projects undertaken in Scotland in recent years: the creation of a new £57million Library and Special Collections Centre. The first phase of the new building opened in September 2011, and all new facilities are fully functional as of the summer of 2012. With over twenty years' experience at the **British Library**, **Chris** is Chair of the Scottish Confederation of University Research

Libraries (SCURL), a Trustee / Board Member of the Scottish Library & Information Council (SLIC), a Board member of Research Libraries UK (RLUK), and a member of the LIBER steering committee on Heritage Collections and Preservation. **Chris** is a Trustee of the Aberdeen International Youth Festival, the Britten-Pears Foundation, and the New Berlioz Edition Trust.

University Profile

The **University of Aberdeen** is the UK's fifth oldest University and was founded in 1495. Currently with 16,000, students it is a broad-based, research-driven institution, and its competitively-won research income has trebled over the last decade. It is a *Times* Higher Top 200 university. Library, Special Collections, and Museums are at the heart of teaching, learning, research, and public engagement at the University of Aberdeen. Holdings extend to over 1.2 million books, including 200,000 rare books; 4,000 archive and manuscript collections; and over 300,000 museum objects gathered over the five centuries of the University's existence. The University benefitted from legal deposit of print materials for the period 1710 to 1836. These materials are complemented with an extensive online library of electronic books, journals, databases and digital objects, and archives including over 18,000 current journal subscriptions and 500,000 eBooks. The collections and buildings are open to members of the University and to the public. See www.abdn.ac.uk/library for further details. 🌐

The Role of the Modern Intermediary and What Constitutes Value in the Library of 2012

by **Jill Emery** (Collection Management Librarian, Portland State University) <jemery@pdx.edu>

First off, let's talk about the current landscape for academic and academic research libraries in the United States of America. In regards to subscriptions, the majority of academic and academic research libraries now have 75-80% of their collections delivered electronically, and this is rapidly becoming true for monographic purchasing as well. At the same time, library budgets are best described as being fragile and not nearly as consistent as they were in previous decades. Many academic institutions in the United States have seen rapid declines in State funding support for public institutions. In many cases, the State funding support for higher education has dropped below 20%. In order to make up for this loss of funding support, public institutions have been raising tuition costs and trying to find new revenue streams through partnerships with private companies and corporations and research funding support. This has led many public institutions to adopt what is referred to as performance-based budgeting models in which departments within the institution are given funding based on credit hour generation

and research grant funding. Since academic libraries are revenue-supported departments as opposed to being a revenue-generating department, their funding has become more reliant than ever on the overall financial well-being of the institution. In this environment, academic librarians are pressed more than ever to prove their value, and the return on investment of the collections is a crucial aspect to the story line of value to the academic health of the institution. In order to capitalize on the funding we do have, librarians and libraries are collaborating more than ever. My institution, located in the upper reaches of the Pacific Northwestern part of the United States, participates in the **Orbis Cascade Alliance**, which serves 37 institutions in three states. Recently, we have been participating in a couple of electronic resource deals that span the entire nation by consortia partnering with one another. In order for this type of collaboration to work, librarians are doing

much of their work through cloud computing, shared documents, and email.

In this environment, **librarians need better support from intermediaries regarding basic subscription maintenance**. A new support role for intermediaries is to help librarians track where local faculty are publishing. As librarians start to work more closely with their research offices, being able to identify readily the interests and publication patterns occurring on their campuses is becoming very important. In order to prove value and the best return of investment of collections budget spend, librarians need help in identifying where there is



overlap of subscription packages and aggregator content. Right now, the best tool for this type of information is being provided by **JISC**, in the UK. Libraries and librarians would also benefit from intermediary platforms that are not black boxes and stand-alone tools but rather integrate

continued on page 28