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Academic Liaison Librarianship: Curatorial Pedagogy or Pedagogical Curation?

[Allan Parsons](#) presents a strategic view of the need to develop the academic liaison librarianship role.

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Introduction

When reflecting on a methodological approach and set of research practices with which he was closely associated, Bruno Latour suggested that, "there are four things that do not work with actor-network theory; the word actor, the word network, the word theory and the hyphen!" [1]. In a similar vein, it could be suggested that, "there are three things that do not work with academic liaison librarianship: the word academic, the word liaison and the word librarianship". Why so?

Whatley [2] defines academic liaison in the 1990s and early 2000s as being built around three roles: reference services (emanating from the reference desk), instructional services (e.g. library, bibliographic and database instruction) and collection development (print and, increasingly, electronic). Garnes and Smith [3] provide a similar description of the liaison role, with the liaison librarian being responsible for understanding an academic department's needs for collections, information services and instruction. These three roles characterise the liaison model. Thull and Hansen [4], in discussing the Reference and User Services Association definition of liaison work, point out the centrality of the collection to liaison, since both reference and instructional services orient the reader/library user to the collection, as conventionally understood, i.e. print with an emerging subscription-based electronic dimension.

However, these explicit functional roles mask a further implicit interpersonal, communicational or phatic role, harnessing a capability that, in the near future, may be of greater importance, relationship building: "Building relationships is becoming the essence of what it is to be a liaison librarian...". [2] Relationship building, it is argued here, will play a crucial role in the re-articulation of academic liaison librarianship, as it moves from the liaison model, with its collection-centred approach, towards what Williams [5] calls an engagement-centred model.

Among the ways in which this shift towards engagement has been expressed, at the University of Westminster and elsewhere, is to suggest that academic liaison is like teaching, on the one hand, and is like curation, on the other hand. For example, Helen Conroy asserts that, "There is a clear need for librarians to develop teaching skills" [6]; Neal, Parsonage and Shaw [7] argue that, "although subject knowledge and familiarity with a range of relevant information resources continue to be important, there is now a much greater emphasis on proactivity and the need for excellent interpersonal, negotiation, project management and, increasingly, pedagogic skills"; while Lorcan Dempsey [8] notes that the term curation is being used increasingly in the context of

libraries and points to the importance of the Digital Curation Centre [9]; David Lewis suggests that academic libraries should, "Migrate the focus of collections from purchasing materials to curating content" [10]; and Heidi Cool [11] devotes a blog entry to the increasing significance of digital curation in academic and other settings.

The first (teaching) metaphor proposes a greater engagement with the learner and the learning experience, becoming a partner in the delivery of the learning process rather than simply an occasional support for others who genuinely teach. The second (curation) metaphor proposes a greater engagement with the collection, the direction of its development and its active pedagogical role. Rather than simply being a guide to readers, library users and learners, pointing to where information is located or can be accessed, engaged professionals actively shape the collection towards particular pedagogical ends and learning experiences. They actively select and interpret the collection, not just presenting it as a classified sequence or an alphabetical list. In short, they make the collection and the library part of the learning experience by integrating them more explicitly into an engaging learning environment, rather than a store with tables, which may or may not be pleasurable to sit at.

Both teaching and curation are valid forms of engagement, but what is being argued here that they would benefit from informing one another dialectically around the concepts of the learner, the learning experience, the learning environment, learning practices (or styles), pedagogical practices (or styles) and research practices (styles and methods). Moreover, it is argued that through this process of mutual engagement the librarianship dimension of academic liaison transforms into what might be called curatorial pedagogy or pedagogical curation; or, possibly more simply, learning advisers.

While these forms of engagement are promising, focusing on them solely might miss a vitally important point: such potential developments will depend on greater engagement with the organisational form of the (specific) university and the (cultural-national) institution of Higher Education. In other words, what is at stake is not just a change of roles. Changing those roles implies organisational change and institutional change. The dynamic of change will be bottom-up and top-down, as well as peer-to-peer. It is here, in this maelstrom of change, that relationship building comes into its own.

In the process of this gradually deepening engagement, through relationship building, the practices denoted currently by the label academic liaison librarianship will move away from being conceived as liaison, from being focused solely on academic learning, and from being librarianship in any easily recognisable form.

So, to answer the question posed in the first paragraph: not liaison but engagement; not (solely) academic (learning) but learning practices (more generally); and not librarianship but learning advice.

Academic Engagement

The liaison model is closely tied to the academic library's traditional role as gateway, i.e. starting point for locating information for research, a role which Schonfeld and Housewright [12] indicate is in decline in the USA, as the academic library transforms from "an institution focused on acquiring, maintaining and providing services centred on a local print collection into a more electronic hub offering a variety of services to support campus needs for research, teaching and learning" [12]. In the UK, the decline in the academic library's gateway role is confirmed by a report commissioned by the Research Information Network (RIN) and the Consortium of Research Libraries (CURL), whose data show that researchers' visits to academic libraries declined markedly in 2001-2006, a trend that is set to continue in 2006-2011 [13].

In passing, Schonfeld and Housewright indicate that over 2003-2009 the library's buyer role (paying for resources such as books, journals, and databases), which was always important, has become by far the most important to academic staff, with the archive role (a repository of resources which are preserved and made accessible) remaining stable, and, as noted, the gateway role in decline. They also note that, when asked about two additional roles for the library, i.e. teaching support (supporting and facilitating academics' teaching activities) and research support (active support to increase the productivity of research and scholarship), academic staff indicated that they do not yet value the teaching and research support roles nearly as highly as they do the academic library's infrastructural roles (as buyer and as archive).

As this last point should make clear, transforming the academic library and the academic liaison role to promote greater engagement will not be a simple matter of putting forward proposals and arguing rationally for their necessity. While those currently practising academic liaison might seek to develop their roles in various new ways, they are part of a larger organisational and institutional context. Their proposals will be met with resistance, some on the basis of sound reasoning, some on the basis of vested interests, some on the basis of (explicit or implicit) ideological stances.

This highlights an important part of an engagement model: academic liaison librarians, in order to develop into what it is that they seek to become, their strategic goal, will need to engage with the educational institutions within which they act and the organisational forms that those institutions take. They will have to address, and to counter where necessary, the perceptions and expectations of other parts of the educational institution concerning what their role is and should be. For example, the RIN CURL report mentioned above [13] finds that academic researchers see the future of librarians as custodians (of print-based and digitised archives and special collections), managers (of institutional repositories of digital information), administrators (dealing with the purchase and delivery of information services), subject-based information expert, teacher (of information literacy and related skills), manager (of datasets generated by e-research and grid-based projects) and technology specialist (facilitating electronic access to information resources) [13]. They do not see them, perhaps because it was not one of the options presented to them in the survey or perhaps because they do not (yet) see that it is in their interest to do so, as partners engaged in a common pursuit, for example, that of delivering an academic education.

Organisational and Institutional Engagement

The engagement model, then, suggests that relationship building, not the collection and its development, provides a cornerstone in the development of liaison practices. Furthermore, that relationship building will not only be with academic departments and their students, but with the organisation as a whole. Broadly, then, that engagement will be of two kinds: with the educational practices of learning, teaching and research, on the one hand; and with the broader organisational practices and institutional goals of the university, on the other. In other words, that relationship building will not only underlie learning as traditionally understood, i.e. as an individual process within an academic horizon, but also learning as a collective process, or organisational learning, and learning as a social process, or institutional and cultural learning. Such relationships as established will anchor resources development, i.e. no longer a collection 'held' in the traditional sense, and will guide the realisation of the learning goals of those in the relationship, i.e. professional development on the part of the library professional and learning or research objectives on the part of the client, the organisation and the institution.

As Williams [5] acknowledges, an engagement-centred approach to developing library roles calls for some kind of systems thinking, thinking that involves multiple contexts, flows and feedback loops, as well as a concern for how (strategic) purpose plays out in such systems. Systemic thinking, as Lewis et al. [14] reminds us, is the conceptual cornerstone, *The Fifth Discipline*, of Peter Senge's [15] approach to understanding organisational learning. Furthermore, for Senge, it is teams, not individuals, who are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations.

If this is the case, and, as the literature readily affirms [16][17][18][19][14][20], universities are far from being learning organisations in any simple or immediate sense, the key to the development of the engagement role would be to form part of the appropriate teams for specific kinds of learning, organised around the achievement of the institution's goals. Dahl [21] conceives such organisational and institutional engagement as an adaptation and expansion of the liaison role as applied to academic units, which can facilitate a more systematic approach to building relationships with non-academic units, an approach which offers many advantages: "By extending the liaison model to include non-academic units [i.e. by engaging with non-academic units at the level of the team - author] the library gains both partners and an increased presence on the campus" [21]. In short, this is not just a case of marketing services, but of being engaged actively, as participants, in the practices whereby organisational and institutional learning are generated, sustained and recalled.

In the context of academic engagement, such participation calls for a true partnership between those involved in the delivery of learning experiences, a position taken by Dahl and affirmed by Games and Smith, one which would require an institutional change to the existing hierarchies. By way of acknowledging this insight, Thull and Hansen argue that, turning that initial meeting with

the students into a long-term educational relationship is the ultimate goal of library induction and instruction sessions, and that "successful working relationships with faculty allow librarians to be recognised as partners in the pursuit of teaching and learning, the central mission of the university." [22] In other words, the goal is to build relationships that can sustain learning communities of practice, to use a phrase that anticipates what follows.

In the context of organisational and institutional engagement, such participation calls for, as Franklin [23] argues, an alignment of library strategy and structure with the university's strategic objectives, both educational and societal, whether in terms of community, environment and public service or in terms of economics, finance and employment; and engagement with non-academic organisational communities, as Dahl suggests.

Value: From Functional to Systemic

The central issue at stake here is the value of academic liaison librarianship, not so much the question of how do you measure its value but, more fundamentally, how do you establish that it is valuable. This is because, as Jakubs [24] writes, "libraries must continue to prove their value to the university". What is being argued here is that relationship building, the central act in developing those practices known currently as academic liaison librarianship, creates and sustains value, and that that value is systemic in character.

Discussion of the academic library, and, by default, academic liaison, is dominated by financial and technological concepts ordered by a managerialist discourse, i.e. an operational, instrumental or functional framework. It is proposed here that these academic library-related issues would be better expressed, and therefore better addressed, by being discussed using an economic, purposive or systemic discourse, with a consequent change of vocabulary to one that enables a more fluid and dynamic conceptualisation of practices and organisations, i.e. a strategic framework.

The purpose of this shift, which is both rhetorical and pragmatic, is to establish a common language, a technique allowing communication and translation to take place, in which the values of the practices referred to under the label of academic liaison librarianship, first, can be recognised and, second, once recognised, their educational, organisational and institutional potential can be developed.

Those practices already provide value-for-money because they are of significant educational value. With better organisation, and possibly with better technologies, they could be made to realise more fully both their (under-used) educational value and their (under-developed) organisational and institutional value, and hence provide better value-for-money, although that is not the primary goal of developing them. Conversely, the issue may be expressed as follows: many existing technologies and management structures provide little educational, organisational or institutional value, they block the recognition of the value of the resources already available, particularly human resources. They also prevent the emergence of new resources and organisational and institutional forms, and may therefore be considered not only poor value for money, but also destructive of value *per se*.

Thus, finance, technology and management are not being ignored here, they are being re-contextualised. Without that re-contextualisation, one will be unable to respond to the questions raised by the reconfiguration of the academic library and the university, questions which require strategic responses.

Those questions are: what are the appropriate financial, business or economic models, given the context of the several economies, as discussed below, in play in higher education?; what are the appropriate sets of (interlinked) technologies, given the educational and organisational objectives of the university and the academic library?; and what are the appropriate managerial models, given the context of changing and emerging organisational forms, some exhibiting self-organisation?

Discussion of the strategic educational, organisational and institutional, i.e. systemic, values of academic liaison librarianship, it is suggested, provides a lens for discussing the questions those three quests raise, questions that might otherwise be resolved without ever having been explicitly posed.

Development of the practices currently covered by the name academic liaison librarianship is vital for the development of higher education in the 21st century, through creating, sustaining and enabling the recall of the quality of higher education institutions' academic, organisational and institutional knowledge bases and through their contribution to their operation both as learning organisations (in as far as they qualify as such) and organisations for learning, all of which relies crucially on relationship building.

Those practices can only be developed, however, when it is recognised that, first, learning lies at the intersection of education (traditionally, individual learning, scholarship and expertise), organisation (collective, group or team learning) and institution (societal and cultural learning); and, second, that not all learning is academic (formal learning), indeed, most learning is not academic. What is central to relationship building, in turn, is learning practices and their relationship to knowledge (what has been learnt and is remembered), on the one hand, and to purpose or intent (why that learning, as memory and as capacity for further learning, is important, its value), on the other.

In addition to relationship building (orientation to a client and/or partner), then, learning practices, and the knowledge to which they give rise (orientation to knowledge), and purpose (teleonomic orientation) are crucial for the development of the academic liaison librarianship role.

The Dialectic of Curation and Pedagogy

In the Introduction, it was noted that two metaphors have been used as a way of trying to express the necessary transformation of the academic liaison role, a curatorial metaphor and a pedagogic metaphor. In this section, an outline of the dialectical engagement of curation and teaching is presented.

The value of the curatorial metaphor raised in the introduction would seem to be this: in recent decades, museum practice and museology have moved away from a primary emphasis on collections management and curatorial expertise towards a greater emphasis on museum design, exhibition design, visitor experience and the museum's educational role. Similarly, libraries and librarianship would benefit from moving away from a primary concern with collections management and library classification towards a greater emphasis on the design of the library as a complex physical, digital and mixed virtual-physical learning environment and on the learning experience (and the learner's experience). The new museology is now old, itself a product of the 1980s [25], but thinking about museums' design, purpose and operation in relation to the visitor experience continues, as can be witnessed in, for example, Din and Hecht [26], Hein [27], Knell [28], Message [29], Parry [30], and Witcomb [31].

The value of the pedagogical metaphor seems to be this: teaching has moved from a teacher-centred transmission model of education and learning to a student-centred model of engagement or participation in learning, with teachers becoming facilitators (guides, liberators) rather than pedagogues (leaders, controllers). Similarly, libraries and librarianship would benefit from moving from a text/book-centred, knowledge-transmission, rationalist model of learning towards engagement with design of 'the library' as a complex physical-virtual learning environment, development of learning technologies and a focus on the learning experience, with a far more sophisticated grasp of learning theories applied to information literacy, as begun, for example, by Johnson [32].

One lesson that may be taken from this discussion is that academic liaison librarianship as a field of practices is like curation, teaching, archiving, research and publishing in as far as they are all experiencing a similar displacement and need to redefine strategically and organisationally. The most valuable lessons passing among curation, teaching and librarianship, then, would be at the level of how they are responding to similar challenges.

For example, in the context of curation, these relate to selection and acquisition of material and digital artefacts, to documentation or recording of material and digital artefacts, to the provision of metadata to accompany the catalogue records, editing and content curation, conducting research, curating exhibitions, writing publications, subject specialisation or subject expertise and the interpretation of artefacts. In the context of pedagogy, the relevant issues concern subject specialisation, disciplinarity, inter- and trans-disciplinarity, the curriculum and curriculum development, pedagogical styles, techniques and methods, learning theories, learning styles and philosophy of education.

Synthesising these agendas, the emerging field of practice, whatever it comes to be called, combines concern for what different disciplinary and professional practices count as valid learning processes; how those learning processes are realised in specific learning experiences in specific learning environments using specific learning resources; how those processes are considered to lead to knowledge; how that knowledge is sustained and recalled individually, organisationally, institutionally and societally; what material, media and intellectual forms that knowledge takes; how those knowledge forms operate in society by being interwoven with the dominant narratives through which organisational, institutional and societal power is enacted (e.g. gender, political and religious ideologies); how that knowledge can be questioned legitimately, i.e. within the bounds of what the discipline itself considers valid reasoning, and therefore how the discipline thereby extends, grows or develops itself; and how inter-, cross- and trans-disciplinarity extends such disciplinary knowledge through critique and synergy.

In other words, development of the practices currently covered by the term academic liaison librarianship forms an emergent field of educational practice, within organisational, institutional, societal and cultural horizons, that relates to librarianship, curation, archiving, teaching, researching and publishing, yet, as a specific field of educational practice, it differs significantly from all. The opportunity exists for practitioners of that set of practices to overcome the limitations of being perceived as a minor profession, as part of librarianship, or as a para-profession, subordinate to other, more senior, professions.

Organisational Economies

The re-organisation of universities, like that of public services more generally, has become an unending process. The most recent phase can be discerned in discussions of the future of the academic profession from the 1980s onwards, as the university adapts to the demands of globalisation, the 'knowledge society', 'knowledge economy', 'information society', 'learning society' or perhaps even 'lifelong learning society'. Such discussions can be found in, for example, Jurgen Enders [33], Michael Peters [34], Phil Cohen [35] and Peter Scott [36]. Will Hutton describes the task facing those who govern universities, as well as their government paymasters, as a balancing act: "Too much emphasis on knowledge and learning for their own sake and the university becomes an ivory tower; too much emphasis on economic benefits and the idea-generator implodes." [37] The Browne Report [38] perpetuates re-organisation, perhaps towards imbalance.

In this context, at least six sets of inter-related changes have been underway since the 1980s that are of relevance to the academic library and academic liaison librarianship: in the role of the teacher; in the role of the librarian; in the character of the student body; in the university as learning environment; in the relationship between the university, industry and government; and in the character of learning and knowledge resources. One of the central difficulties in this context is to find an organisational model that represents the university, and the academic library within it, sufficiently well that one could use it in practice to characterise the changes underway and to reorganise service provision.

In discussing museums and libraries specifically, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) characterises organisational culture in the 21st century as being multi-directional, for example top-down, bottom-up and side-to-side [39]. A caveat is necessary here. While this multi-dimensionality may indeed be the case, there remains a strong top-down power axis within it, inherent in an inherited and persistent managerialism. For example, White and Weathersby [19], admittedly discussing a US context, but one which has resonance in the UK, note that, "The culture of institutions of higher education is full of examples of competitive ratings and rankings, acceptances and rejections, and authoritarian and hierarchical structures." In this context, they continue, "Rather than operating as a community of scholars, most universities operate as bureaucracies where social learning is an espoused ideal rather than actual practice."

Furthermore, as Henkel [40] notes, citing Dill [41], "universities have long been regarded as centres of knowledge creation and application for the larger society, but not as learning organisations developing and transferring knowledge for the improvement of their own basic processes". The idea of the university as corporate enterprise, as explicitly advocated by the 1985 Jarratt Report [42], seems to have had a greater influence. That idea assumes that the major problem confronting universities is long-term scarcity of resources, the solution to which lies in managerialism.

Other models of the university have been proposed. For example, Askling and Kristensen [18] discuss Middlehurst's [43] three organisational types of universities: communities of professionals; political bureaucracies; and systems perspectives (cybernetic or electronic).

The aim here is not to argue that the learning organisation is the ideal towards which universities should be moving, but that, in fact, universities are mixed organisations undergoing continuous change. Three directions are developed from this assumption. First, from the perspective of developing academic liaison librarianship, it is useful to treat the university as constituted by communities of professionals, each with their own learning practices. Second, that while not seeking to establish the learning organisation as an ideal, in conditions of change, learning is an essential component of organisation, as established by Schön [44]: learning to respond; learning to adapt; learning to manage environmental change. Third, in order to grasp the complexity of education, as an element in a field of professional learning economies, it is useful to frame education as, at one and the same time:

- a commodity in a financial economy (in other words, qualifications have a cost, or are priced in a market; these qualifications can be used in a market-based, money-oriented job market to gain higher wages or financial rewards; and universities are businesses which have to balance their accounts, although the concept of 'profit' and 'loss' is problematic here);
- a public good in a welfare or a political economy (society benefits from having qualified people with specialised skill sets; providing these services brings rewards of status and power to those skilled professionals; and universities are public institutions which are part of the institutional fabric of a society as well as producing professionals for other social institutions); and
- a gift in a moral or reputational economy (good educators address the moral as well as the technical capabilities of their students; those educated students add to the moral quality, the reciprocity and mutual respect of the give-and-take of everyday interaction in society; and universities are places where people partake in a generous exchange of ideas and affects as well as freely exchanging the artefacts in which knowledge about such ways of being, doing and knowing are embodied).

Thus, academic liaison as a professional, educational practice can be said to be conducted across three major economies: the (private) financial economy of buying and selling (fixed cycles of private-professional learning); the (public) welfare economy or political economy of inheriting and investing in public goods (iterated cycles of civic-professional learning); and the (inter-personal, networked, moral or reputational) gift economy of giving and taking (open-ended cyclicity of life-long learning).

In short, as implied by the above, learning practices are not uniform, in terms of their duration, in terms of their purpose and in terms of their cyclicity or cumulativeness, their 'practical economy': lifelong learning differs from civic-professional learning differs from private-professional learning.

As noted at the end of the "Value: From Functional to Systemic" section, in each of these economies, like the other professional practices that make up the university as a set of communities of professionals, curatorial pedagogy/pedagogical curation, as the transformed academic liaison librarianship might be called, can be said to have three major axes or orientations: towards the client/partner (relationship dimension), towards knowledge (learning-resources/learning practices dimension) and towards the goals of the client, or the purposes to be achieved by the professional and the client working together in partnership, on the one hand, and the purposes to be achieved by the professional in the course of his/her professional development, on the other (teleonomic dimension).

Taxonomy of Professional Practices

By way of developing a relatively simple systemic model of the fields of practice covered by the engaged practitioner, curatorial pedagogue/pedagogical curator/learning adviser, using what has been said in the foregoing as a preliminary ontology, in both the computing sense (a model or system of concepts for describing the world, consisting of a set of types, properties, and relationship types) and the philosophical sense (what exists within or for a particular world, but from the perspective of being-in-the-world, of 'what matters' in that world, that for which one

'cares'), one might begin to define a taxonomy of what, in practice, such engaged professionals are (already) doing and should be doing (in the near future).

In this way, nine domains of practice and areas of development emerge from the combination of three orientations (client, knowledge, purpose) and three economies (commodity, public good and gift).

Three caveats should be heeded at this point. First, although this is presented as a table here, it would be more appropriate to represent it dynamically as a series of flows that enter and exit one another, altering one another. For the sake of simplicity, in what is already a complex landscape, a table is presented. Second, no single practitioner would be expected to cover the whole field. The limited aim of this tabulation is to suggest the terrain within which any single practitioner might orient or position him- or herself. More accurately, it might be said that the aim is to make explicit the dispositions that already exist within the field of practice of academic liaison, so that individual practitioners might make more conscious choices about their orientation, 'economic' effectiveness and direction of development. Third, the model may be useful to define team roles, how they might be combined to cover the whole field of practice, and how those teams would be integrated with other teams within the organisational whole of the university.

The danger is that the emerging practitioners, having such a broad palette, from curation, teaching, researching, and editing to collecting and exhibiting, across a wide spectrum of media, will do a bit of everything but will do it all badly. The first task is to delimit the field of practice, not as a single unified whole, but as a lattice or net of overlapping fields of engagement, as outlined in Table 1, and then establish the organisational or relational means to achieve the relevant goals within the differing fields of service offered.

Each of the specific practical-topical processes and operations derived from librarianship, curation, archiving, publishing and learning-teaching, will be re-shaped within one or more of these nine directions or orientations, to achieve goals set within them or to push boundaries within and across them. Again, in practice, the boundaries among these fields are blurred, but the suggestion offered here is that it is useful to render them distinguishable analytically, so that one may be able to reconfigure one's actions and develop one's professional practice.

	Financial Economy	Political Economy	Moral Economy
Relationship dimension: relationship building: enhancing competitive, cooperative, and collaborative relationships, where appropriate	Market-based, financial economic relationship building: charging for services, private services: Commercial relationships	Societal-based, political economic relationship building: services provided as public goods, public services: public service relationships	Inter-personal, moral economic relationship building: services provided for free, inter-personal interaction: Reputational relationships
Knowledge/Learning dimension: knowledge/learning-resources development: enhancing learning resources and learning environments,	Fee-based or subscription-based resource development providing market intelligence (for professional practice)	Resource development for academic and professional practice (not simply market intelligence), funded by public finance, using	Resource development for network-based knowledge sharing, e.g. using Web 2.0 technologies

focusing on learning experiences		the university's infrastructure	
Teleonomic dimension: educational achievement: enhancing the learning-teaching and research experience; learning to learn; learning to live; lifelong learning, getting more out of life	Professional-client collaboration to achieve academic and professional qualifications and to achieve gainful employment	Professional-client collaboration to achieve higher professional standing, academic achievement and/or power/influence	Professional-client collaboration to achieve network standing as expert, contact person for particular topics or advice

Table 1: A taxonomy of professional practices

Practical Implications

With a focus on learning practices, on the one hand, and service provision, on the other, it is argued that the top priorities for academic liaison within the University of Westminster, which may have relevance elsewhere, are:

1. To create, restore, manage and develop key relationships in key forums in order to forge learning communities of practice with, amongst others:

- permanent teaching staff,
- visiting lecturers,
- researchers,
- library and information technology managers,
- university managers,
- students (undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil and PhD),
- professional groups within particular domains, inside and outside the University

This is crucial for organisation, for community and for learning, such communities of practice being the very ground of learning, because, as Manasse puts it succinctly, "relationships have begun to replace organizations as the primary organizing principle". [\[45\]](#)

This requires creating or restoring and developing the appropriate communication channels, on the one hand, and (physical and online) forums, on the other, whereby these relationships can be consolidated, to form professional communities of learning practice.

It will also require definition of the service boundaries and the transformative passages among the three economies which affect the character of the above-mentioned relationships, i.e. those commercial relationships for which charging is appropriate, those which are provided as institutional, public services and those which are given *pro bono*, as a professional gratuity.

A final requirement in this context is the establishment of an ethics of relating, i.e. knowing how and when to compete, to co-operate and to collaborate and also how and when to shift back and forth among competition/commerce, co-operation/public service and collaboration/reciprocity, without becoming a moral relativist, immoral or amoral.

2. To acquire, create, restore, manage and develop key learning resources and learning environments which serve performatively to sustain the academic, organisational and institutional memory for the respective learning communities of practice.

This includes virtual and physical learning environments. This requires addressing collections as learning resources for professional and academic practice, including the historical and archival

dimensions, supplementing constative metadata and providing performative metadata.

Again, this will require a definition of the boundaries among the three economies which affect the character of such learning resources, i.e. those for which charging is necessary, those made available as part of a public service and those given freely, both in a physical environment and via the Web.

3. To define the goals to be achieved in respect of learning and education for the respective learning communities of practice, and specifically for the curatorial pedagogue/learning adviser group.

This will require the development of a strong, non-foundational, educational agenda and curriculum, articulating 21st century skills, competences and knowledge, set within a global awareness.

Serious thought will need to be given to establishing which educational goals and values are to be achieved within each of the three economies; for example, those qualifications and skills that relate to competition and markets, those which relate to the common good and welfare and those which relate to mutual respect and reciprocity.

Conclusion

The value of developing the practices currently covered by the term academic liaison librarianship is as much an issue of concern for teachers, researchers, curators and library and university managers as it is librarians.

That development becomes even more significant in a situation in which, first, permanent academic staff are under pressure to manage, administer, budget, teach, fund-raise and research simultaneously, leading to a position where, "One of the commonest refrains amongst academics is that we can never get any 'work' done when we go into work. In other words we are so busy and stressed out by our ever increasing teaching and admin loads that we literally have no time or place to think - let alone to do anything approximating sustained research." [35].

Second, there are pressures on visiting teaching staff's hours; and they are often required to focus on industry, market and employability skills, which are not strictly academic or necessarily academic at all, but do involve learning and not simply training.

Third, there is grave concern about a loss of curatorial expertise in museums, a trend that may be exacerbated by the anticipated budget cuts in the early 2010s that will make the position of curators even more perilous. For example, in an interview in the *Museums Journal* Stephen Deuchar, director of the Art Fund, reasons that, "If the expertise falls away, the grant applications fall away, the frequency with which objects are collected by museums diminishes and...the central function of the museum as a place where objects are brought to life slips away as well." [46] The point is reiterated month after month in the *Museums Journal*. For example, Rebecca Atkinson, states that, "Hefty budget reductions are likely to hasten the demise of specialist curators, especially at a regional level, putting more pressure on remaining subject specialists and leaving collections at risk of neglect." [47] Although, as should now be apparent, it is not the collection *per se* that is the issue, but the potential relationship building, learning practice and purposive action that it may create and sustain that is at risk.

In this environment, the need to establish and strengthen the role of sustaining the academic, organisational and institutional knowledge bases and learning capabilities, a key element in realising organisational and institutional goals, under whatever guise this role takes, academic liaison librarianship or otherwise, is becoming acute.

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