LEVERAGING THE LIAISON MODEL

FROM DEFINING 21ST CENTURY RESEARCH LIBRARIES TO IMPLEMENTING 21ST CENTURY RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

ANNE R. KENNEY
CARL A. KROCH UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Ithaka S+R

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IINTRODUCTION

Last October, Ann Wolpert, the director of MIT Libraries, died on her 70th birthday. A visionary in many ways, Ann is most directly linked with open access to peer-reviewed scholarly journals and the development of DSpace, repository software designed to enable the preservation and dissemination of that scholarship. DSpace is now used by more than 1,000 institutions worldwide. Ann's memorial service provided clear testimony to her leadership at MIT and the wider research library community. MIT's president, Rafael Reif best summed up her contributions: "Ann taught us how much we should expect of our libraries." This sentiment serves as the primary theme of R. David Lankes' inspirational slim volume, *Expect More,*[1] and sets the bar for all of us for the next decade and beyond in research libraries. In an age where some members of the academic community question the value and expense of a library or maintain antiquated notions of what a library does, it is our challenge to make them expect more and to deliver the expertise, services, and resources that will be differentiators in their academic lives. We should seek less to answer the question of how to build 21st century research libraries and direct more of our energies towards thinking about what kind of universities will succeed in the 21st century. It is in the spirit of this trajectory that I position the discussion of the liaison model moving forward.

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BUILDING UPON THE LIAISON MODEL

The past decade has witnessed the development and evolution of the library liaison model as full time collection development and reference positions gave way to combined and expanded portfolios characterized by greater outreach to faculty and students. The August 2009 *Research Library Issues* presented several case studies on these new roles, and in her introduction Karla Hahn noted that the "New forms of relationship building, particularly with faculty are central to effective liaison functions."[2] The University of Minnesota was an early leader in this transformation, with Karen Williams articulating a forceful sea change from a collections-centric to an engagement-centered model for librarianship that was tied specifically to position descriptions. Minnesota's position description framework has evolved over time in its identification of key areas that expand liaison responsibility to include scholarly communication, online learning and digital tools, outreach, fundraising, and the like. The framework offers examples of activities that could be undertaken to support these new roles.[3] Others have added new dimensions as new needs among faculty and students arose, including data curation, researcher profiles, digital scholarship and research workflows, new forms of scholarly publishing and creative expression, public advocacy, data driven scholarship, impact measures, semantic web development, federal funding mandates, global engagement, and contextualizing research. The University of Washington built

1 R. David Lankes, Expect More: Demanding Better Libraries for Today's Complex World (2012), http://quartz.syr.edu/blog/?page_id=4598).

2 Karla Hahn, "Introduction: Positioning Liaison Librarians for the 21st Century," Research Library Issues: A Bi-monthly Report from ARL, CNI, and SPARC, no. 265 (August 2009): 1-2, http://publications.arl.org/rli265/2.

3 See Librarian Position Description Framework (University of Minnesota) http://wiki.lib.umn.edu/wupl/AP.HomePage/Librarian_Position_Description_Framework.doc

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upon Minnesota's work, further refining expectations, delineating suggested practices, and providing supporting "how to" documentation. For the past several years the library has also produced a blog "Dangerous Liaison," which offers information and inspiration to UW liaisons. Cornell, Duke, Penn State, Stanford and Virginia Tech are among those that have followed suit in articulating the roles and responsibilities of liaison programs. [4]

An emerging theme in the development of the liaison model is to shift the focus away from the work of librarians to that of scholars and to develop engagement strategies based on their needs and success indicators. "An engaged liaison," write authors Jaguszewski and Williams of a recent publication on transforming liaison roles, "seeks to enhance scholar productivity, to empower learners, and to participate in the entire lifecycle of the research, teaching, and learning process."[5] At the 2013 ARL fall forum on Mobilizing the Research Enterprise, Karla Hahn presented on Ohio State's efforts to support the research lifecycle that included the development of an extensive "Stakeholder Map." At that same forum, Laine Farley's presentation on mobilizing the research enterprise at the University of California began with stakeholder assessment and moved on from there to consider ways and means to facilitate faculty participation in the open access movement.[6]

Perhaps no other library has embraced this shift more fully than the National Science Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Its executive director, Zhang Xiaolin, has banked his library's future on developing a robust research environment centered on the Academy's scientists and research centers. He and his colleagues are developing an integrative knowledge infrastructure that includes problem solving, community building, R&D informatics, research profiling, translation services, creating an IR grid, and competitive intelligence gathering on an international scale. He describes this transformation: "a knowledge analysis and experiment laboratory is to rise from the clouds of digital content to support tracking, detecting, analyzing, and discovering trends, structures, and abnormities in science, technology, and innovation, so to help and stimulate R&D decision-making and research road-exploration. The library and librarians will no longer be bounded by resources and systems but diffusing into users' knowledge processes in a digital, network, and computational way."[7]

4 See Cornell University Library Liaisons@Cornell, https://confluence.cornell.edu/display/culliais/Home; Duke University Library, Engaging with Library Users, http://library.duke.edu/about/planning/2010-2012/subject-librarian-report-2011.pdf; Penn State University Libraries, http://library.duke.edu/sites/default/files/dul/about/subject-librarian-report-2011.pdf; Stanford University Library Concierge Program, http://lib.stanford.edu/sulair-news/concierge-project-training; VirginiaTech's "college librarians": http://www.lib.vt.edu/instruct/clprg.html; University of Washington's Subject Librarian's Portal, http://staffweb.lib.washington.edu/units/cms/sl-portal.

5 Janice m. Jaguszewski and Karen Williams, New Roles for New Times: Transforming Liaison Roles in Research Libraries (Washington DC: Association of Research Libraries, 2013) p. 1, http://www.arl.org/publications-resources/2893-new-roles-for-new-times-transforming-liaison-roles-in-research-libraries#.UyHfCUrD-74.

6 Karla Strieb, "Preparing When You Can't Plan," presented at the ARL Fall Forum, Arlington, VA, October 11, 2013,. http://www.arl.org/focus-areas/public-access-policies/shared-access-research-ecosystem-share/2985-fall-forum-2013-preparing-when-you-cant-plan#.UyxWcUrD99A; Laine Farley, "OA x 3: Engaging Campus Interests at the University of California," presented at the ARL Fall Forum, Arlington, VA, October 11, 2013.

7 Xiaolin Zhang, "The Concepts and Practices of Transformative Development of Special Libraries," Plenary Session at VALA2012 Conference, Melbourne, Australia, February 7, 2012, units.sla.org/chapter/cas/10Feb%20IS-1%20Zhang.doc.

A second theme in the continuing refinement of liaison roles is the recognition that the current liaison model is inadequate to the new demands and expectations. While noting a few exceptions, Cornell concluded in its environmental scan that most liaison programs in polled institutions are informal, fluid, with no dedicated funding, no formal training, no assessment tools, and no measures of performance. As demands and expectations rise, it is clear that no one liaison can do it all and research libraries have begun to pair disciplinary experts with functional specialists (such as those familiar with intellectual property issues) and are teaming up with others on campus, including information technologists and instructional designers. In doing so, Cornell has developed general expectations for liaisons who are not experts and suggested best practices for liaisons who are experts in a particular area. An emerging issue with this model is the need to transcend vestiges of turf protection and work towards a collaborative model of scholarly support that acknowledges myriad expertise in addressing the changing nature of research and teaching. Greater emphasis is also being placed on initial and ongoing training programs and the development of information packets that characterize a library's ability to offer support in key areas, such as scholarly communication, publishing, copyright protection, and academic computing.

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A third theme in liaison program development is the growing emphasis on promoting tools and templates to facilitate faculty and student engagement. Research libraries began by making digital affordances available, such as institutional repositories and citation management software and more recently by providing systems to help researchers create data management plans, such as the DMPTool.[8] Lately, the focus has been on pulling the pieces together, in particular automating feeds and transactions (e.g., harvesting from various university and publisher databases with tools like Symplectic Elements); leveraging processes and workflows across platforms (e.g., deposit in both institutional and disciplinary repositories or submitting annual reports and populating faculty profiling systems); embedding tools/templates in the users' space to ensure greater take up (e.g., foregrounding the SPARC Author Addendum or providing a template cover letter stipulating deposit in NIH's PubMed Central as part of a manuscript submittal or uploading course Libguides via the course management system); and enriching the research ecosystem through linked data, persistent digital identifiers, and semantic web development.

8 See Data Management Plan Tool, https://dmp.cdlib.org/.

MOVING FORWARD: WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

As we bank on a future centered on active engagement with faculty and students and continue to raise the bar about what we expect from liaisons, many are left feeling insufficiently equipped, wondering how to do it all, what to give up, and how best to achieve results. What seems most lacking is a sense of how to measure progress, how to use available time to the best advantage, how to develop priorities, and how to know we are on the right track.

Literature on liaison work has offered general guidance for setting expectations and providing suggested actions and practices. These tend to be generic in nature and describe how to do the job but not how to measure progress, acknowledge dependencies, build iteratively, or define what constitutes success. At the same time, liaisons may feel threatened by expectations that they justify their efforts by the numbers. Shifting focus from what liaisons do to how their efforts impact faculty, students, and others will be critical to the future development of this model. Several suggestions come to mind:

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LOOK AT THE INDICATORS THAT ARE MOTIVATING YOUR UNIVERSITY, NOT YOUR LIBRARY.

Increasingly universities are under pressure to justify expenses and articulate the value of the education and research they provide. We've seen the rise of productivity and impact measurements, such as the h-index, and industry growth in companies such as Academic Analytics that are designed to enable universities to benchmark against their peers, identify strengths and weaknesses, monitor performance, and allocate resources. Close to 400 universities in the United States and elsewhere subscribe to the Academic Analytics database that measures research productivity by the numbers: publications, citations, research funding, and awards. We've seen the rise of university dashboards that offer analysis on such things as recruitment, admission and graduation rates, time to degree, academic performance, financial support, student to faculty ratios, and the like. As imperfect as these measures might be they reflect an increasing reliance on business intelligence techniques. What are those academic indicators suggesting about library involvement?

PARTNER WITH THOSE ON CAMPUS WHO COLLECT AND ASSESS SUCH DATA.

Some research libraries are developing strong ties with their universities' offices of assessment and research, sponsored programs, and VP for research. These connections can assist the library in understanding key trends, administrative structures, policies, and compliance requirements from a university viewpoint. For instance, at Cornell a principal investigator must interact with six separate offices on campus in the life span of a federally-funded project. How can the library partner with those entities to identify obstacles within these workflows and create opportunities to ease the researcher's process and promote success?

DEVELOP LIBRARY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AT POINTS OF PAIN AND NEED.

Knowing when to do something is as important as knowing what to do. We've learned that broadcast efforts are less useful than targeted ones. We've seen

this in introductory reference sessions where student take-up is less effective than when they actually get into writing their first paper. Informing a faculty member about citation management software after she's spent two years researching a book project is less effective than providing that information at the start of her work. Targeted support requires close connections with constituents but also an ability to consider the lifecycle of an effort, what comes first, second and so on and where potential bottlenecks might arise. Targeted support at those points will provide bigger payoffs. So it makes sense at the front of a proposal submission to NIH to assist with a data management plan or background research, and it makes sense later on to reconnect about NIH deposit requirements for published findings.

Another example would be to act at the time of a major threat or change in policy. For instance, late last year Elsevier launched a takedown notice campaign on various university campuses asserting that the posting of various Elsevier journal articles infringed the publisher's copyright. The Office of Scholarly Communication at the University of California took the initiative to inform faculty of this, offering advice but also seeing this as one of those "teachable moments," noting that "if you published with an Elsevier journal, you probably signed a copyright agreement. If you did, Elsevier is exercising the legal right you gave them to control access to your article."[9]

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SCALE LABOR INTENSIVE EFFORTS

Much liaison work can be labor intensive and viewed as an add-on to an already full plate. And most liaisons are responsible for supporting many faculty and students, precluding a lot of individual attention. The goal should be to move from one-offs to impacts at the department or disciplinary level. Developing (or borrowing from others) online tools and templates that can be pushed out to individuals has been used to good effect, particularly when timed appropriately. More can be done, however, in mining readily available data. Consider again the case of the Elsevier take down notices. Cornell liaisons in engineering, math, and physical sciences used this event to assess the risk to Cornell authors. Since Elsevier journals are indexed in Web of Science with an abstract and that abstract includes an Elsevier copyright statement, the liaisons conducted a keyword search as a proxy for searching by publisher. Casting a very wide net, they located nearly 300 articles with Cornell authors from the previous year. They then drilled down to pinpoint specific journals and authors. They found a high degree of compliance with copyright on the part of engineers and physicists (i.e., no posted articles on websites) and that no mathematicians had published in Elsevier journals last year. This research can help liaisons develop a strategy of informing Cornell scientists of ways to exercise their intellectual property rights. Compliance is good from a legal sense but it also reveals that access to the scholarship of Cornell scientists remains behind publisher walls. In the case of Cornell mathematicians, further research could be conducted to

9 Elsevier Takedown Notices for Faculty Articles on UC Sites, Office of Scholarly Communication, http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/2013/12/elsevier-takedown-notices/.

determine to what extent the department is boycotting Elsevier.[10] Using such data mining can help liaisons target specific actions and narrow the number of individual approaches that are needed.

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QUANTIFY GOALS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS SUCCESS, WHERE POSSIBLE

In order to track liaison interactions with their constituencies, the Cornell Library is using Count-it, one of the tools that helps to characterize the process by which liaisons build long-standing relationships with departments. Originally developed to record instruction and reference transactions, Cornell modified Count-it to record other liaison activities that represent interactions with academic departments (attendance at department meetings, involvement in faculty searches, etc.) First implemented in the fall of 2013, it now reveals that in a semester liaisons reported more than 1,000 interactions with faculty, graduate students, and other researchers. Cornell sees this quantification as a base on which to grow the liaison program and to look at ways to improve outreach efforts.[11] As with most ARL data, however, such efforts to quantify liaison activity are library-centric and focus on what the liaison is doing rather than what effect those activities have had. It is important not to confuse inputs with outputs or the means with the ends. Because the profession lacks formal assessment tools and metrics to measure progress or success, it is time to refocus the lens.

An example of such an approach is monitoring university compliance for submitting publications to PubMed Central that result from National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding. Offices of institutional research or sponsored programs track compliance rates because subsequent funding may depend on it. NIH also provides a Public Access Compliance Monitoring System, which helps an institution track its current compliance status for articles that fall under the public access policy requirements.[12] A Library can gain access to this database to assess university behavior and to find and work with those who are not in compliance. A library can also set a target for increasing this rate through direct intervention and tracking of success. Wisconsin, which is extremely successful in (and dependent on) winning federally-sponsored research awards, has been particularly vigilant in this area, with one of the highest PMC compliance rates in the country. The health science librarians there are closely involved with NIH researchers. They track who are awarded grants, work with them on compliance requirements, check to confirm submission and follow up with those who are having difficulties for whatever reason. Similar efforts occur in tracking NSF funding requirements. Ed Van Gemert reports that the Schools and Colleges appreciate this work and recognize its impact on compliance and grant renewals. Weill Cornell Medical School uses its VIVO system to track and analyze compliance with the NIH mandate. Figure 1 is a screen shot from

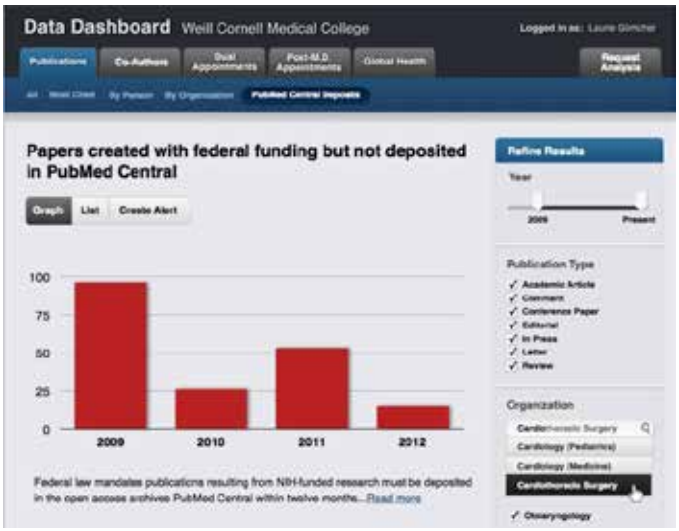
10 Five senior Cornell mathematicians have signed the Elsevier boycott pledge, see http://thecostofknowledge.com/.

11 The Johnson Business School Library is investigating using Salesforce Customer Management System to track user interaction.

12 See http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/utils/pacm/.

their VIVO dashboard. They specifically check that journal-published articles have actually been deposited in PubMed Central.

Figure 1.



Screenshot courtesy of Paul Albert, Project Manager, VIVO, Weill Cornell Medical Library

BUILD ITERATIVELY

Focusing on outputs rather than inputs takes time and presumes a clear understanding of academic goals and the means with which to measure progress. Obviously such an approach would have to be adapted to particular circumstances and institutional priorities and be built upon enabling prerequisites. For instance, one has to have an institutional repository before one can encourage faculty submissions. The hosted repository and publishing services company bepress has banked on increasing sales by moving aggressively in showcasing the impact of use—supporting author reporting tools and presenting webinars focusing on faculty engagement. Can liaison programs begin by recasting goals in terms of advancing current and future faculty needs? Consider, for instance, the building of liaison relationships with academic departments. An enabling prerequisite will be to ensure that one or more liaisons are assigned to each academic (and administrative) department that affects research, teaching, and learning goals. Success can be measured by determining the extent to which the department members know who their liaison is, whether they include the liaison's contact information on departmental websites, and if they routinely involve liaisons in academic activities. The liaison might then turn to measuring engagement by reporting on such things as participating on faculty search committees, assessing collection strengths to support new hires, securing additional funds when needed, and serving as a member of their on-boarding team. It's important to build momentum, of course, but ultimately we need to shift from measuring how many departmental meetings one attends to how well integrated the liaison is in the life of the department. The aforementioned Zhang Xiaolin of the National Science Library of the Chinese Academy of Sciences now

has the scientists assess library staff performance based on how well the staff has served their needs.

Other examples could be developed in such areas as advancing new forms of scholarship and creative expression, integrating research at the undergraduate level, enhancing student performance through curriculum overhaul and redesigning the classroom experience, and improving retention and performance rates for minority and foreign students. The following chart offers some examples of how to move in that direction.

Chart 1. Aligning liaison activities with academic goals and success measures

GOAL	BASE LEVEL	GOOD	BETTER	MEASURES OF SUCCESS
IR preserves and makes accessible faculty output	Publicize IR; Identify benefits; Automate ingest	Support faculty in deposit; Work with departments to agree on full departmental participation	Focus on demonstrating value to faculty who submit to IR	Upward trend in • Number and percentage deposit by faculty • Use figures by faculty and others • Faculty referrals
Open Access publishing expands faculty visibility and reduces barriers to knowledge	Raise awareness about constraints of current publishing model	Provide license templates and funds for author fees	Identify high quality OA journals in particular disciplines; Mine data on use and impact factors; Support OA publishing on campus	Upward trend in • Number of faculty using CC license addendum • Number of faculty shifting to OA journals Faculty OA resolution passed
Global engagement expands	Ensure access to library's collections while abroad	Arrange access to collections and services at foreign libraries for visiting faculty	Create network of shared experts without borders	Upward trend in • Faculty consulting with library in planning stages of trip • Formal institutional partnerships include library issues • Students rely on research support services in study abroad programs
Research funding competitiveness increases	Identify grant opportunities; Characterize previous published research online and in print	Assist in data management planning; Compile literature review section; Ensure deposit compliance	Serve as co-PIs or members of research team; Connect faculty across disciplinary and departmental lines	Upward trend in • Number of grants submitted • Success rate • Funds received
Access to scholarly content improves research and teaching	Build collections to support faculty needs; Enable robust borrowing programs	Respond quickly to faculty requests and development of new programs; Negotiate broad use rights in licensed material	Harvest and preserve web based resources; Support digitization of personal collections; Extend access to recent alumni	Faculty recruitment enhanced by library collections; New forms of scholarship and teaching enabled

We must be prepared to answer two key questions: what does the library do that promotes academic productivity and is it the most effective and efficient way to achieve that end?

CONCLUSION

Quantifying goals and progress towards success is easier said than achieved. But it will become increasingly important to do so as research libraries come under greater scrutiny. We must be prepared to answer two key questions: what does the library do that promotes academic productivity and is it the most effective and efficient way to achieve that end? The things we measure today do not provide convincing answers to budget-minded administrators. As we move from a collections-centric to an engagement-centered model for librarianship, it behooves us to consider the means for measuring how such engagement improves the lives of faculty, students, and others. Leveraging the liaison model will be critical to illustrating that the library is more than a purveyor of content and that its expertise is an essential component of the academic knowledge infrastructure on and off campus. Liaisons will succeed to the extent that their constituents and their institutions succeed. This shift will take us away from defining 21st century research libraries to implementing 21st century research universities.