

Skills for the future academic library

Wednesday, 28 November 2018



Skills for the Future Academic Library

Welcome



Questions for Discussion

1. How does what has been discussed apply to you and your context? What are the priorities for your organisation?
2. What key skills are required for addressing the challenges considered today? Where are the skills gaps?
3. How do we move forward? What do individual institutions need to do? What does the community need to do? Thinking very practically, who should do what?

Questioning Mantras and Building New Paradigms

Stephen Pinfield, Andrew Cox &
Sophie Rutter

Implications for library roles of
*Mapping the Future of Academic
Libraries* (2017)

#mappingacademiclibraries

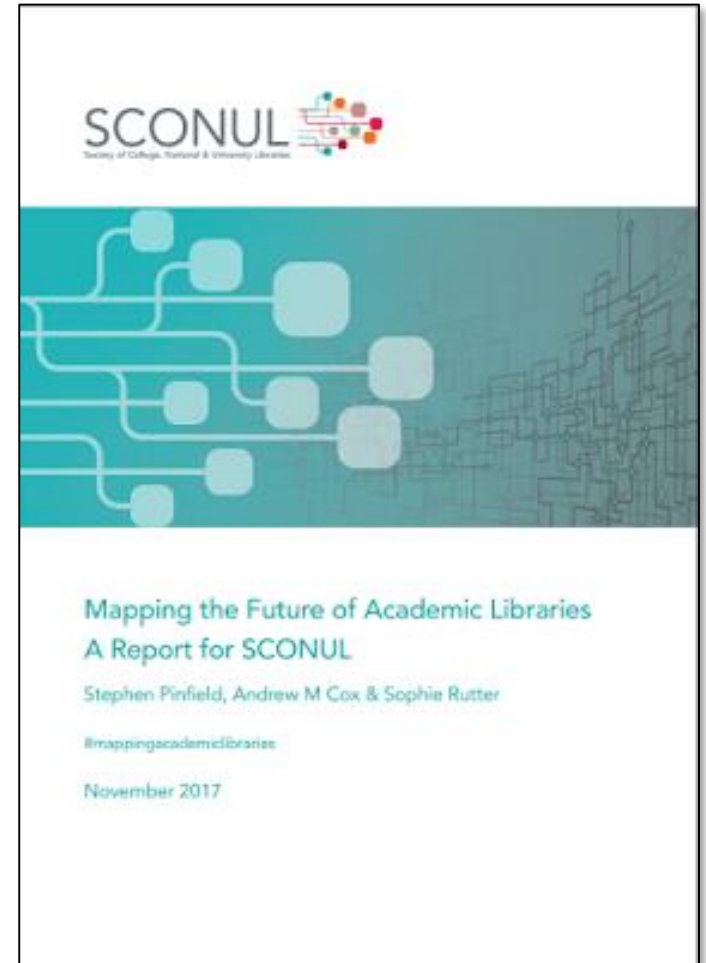
<https://www.sconul.ac.uk/news/mapping-the-future-of-academic-libraries>



Report

Structure:

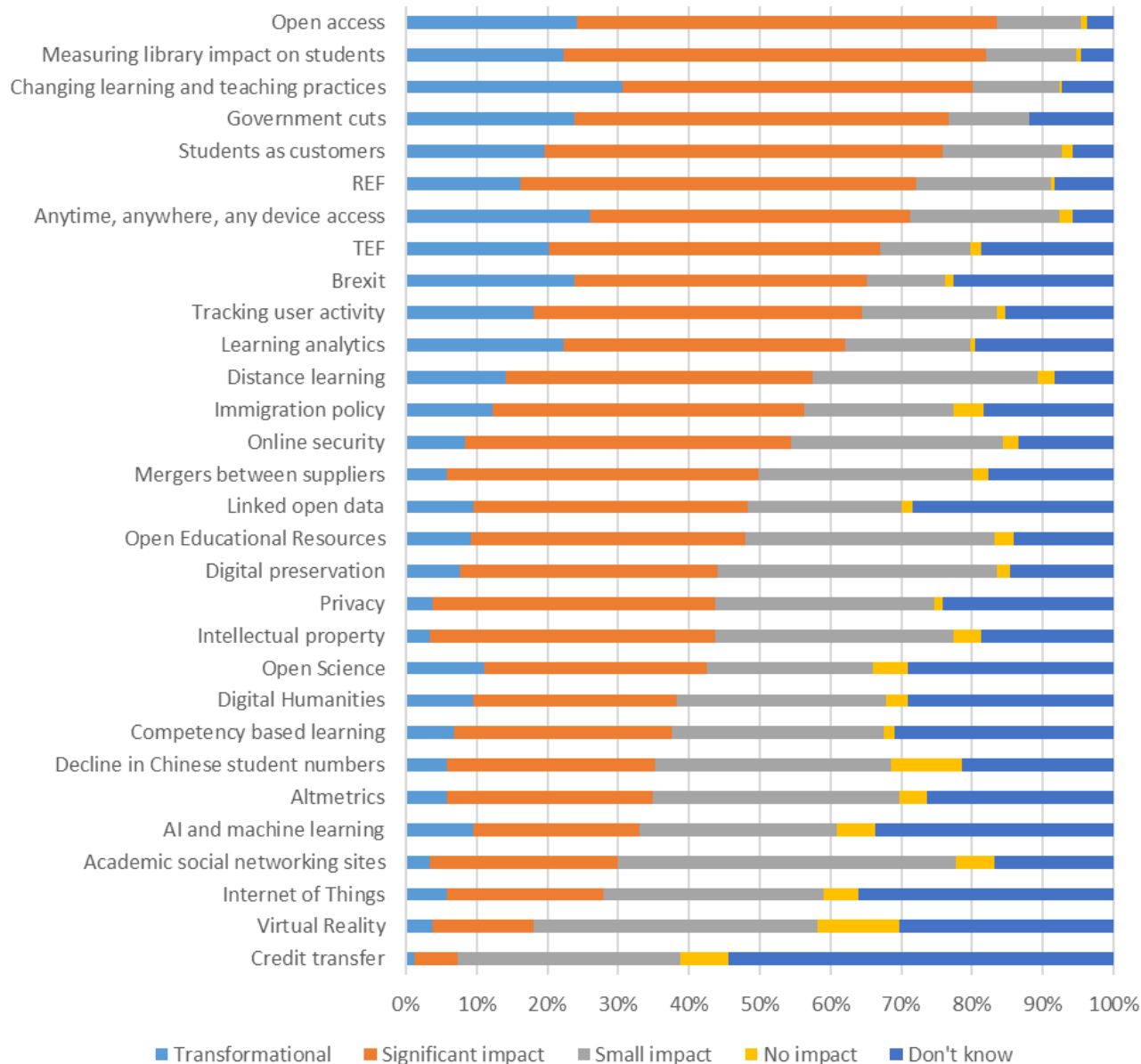
- Identifying the Trends
- Recognising the Challenges and Opportunities
- Positioning the Library
- Communicating and Changing
- Questioning Old 'Mantras', Building New Paradigms
- Developing the Role of SCONUL
- Conclusions and Recommendations



Key Trends and Their Potential Impact

- Some agreement on key trends e.g. OA, changing L&T practices, political environment
- However, many trends considered significant and so no clear consensus on what is important
- Nearly all trends considered by some to be transformational but only for a minority in every case

Key trends: What impact, if any, will the following have on your institution's library in the next 10 years?



Nexus of Change

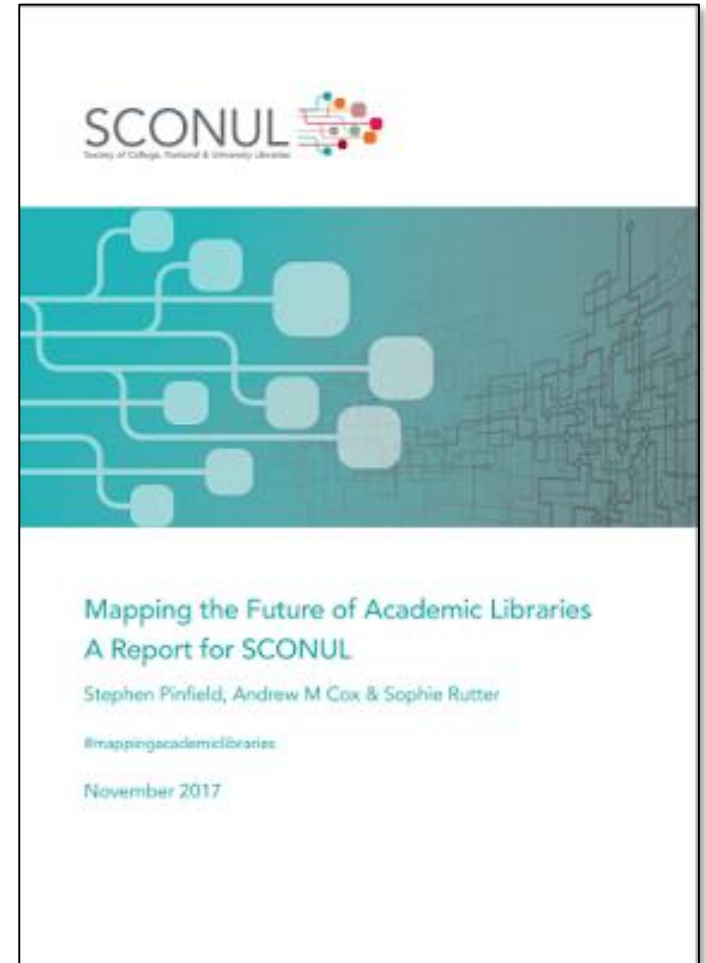
Significant change often driven by nexuses of interrelated trends:

- **Nexus 1: ‘Datafied’ scholarship**
 - Research increasingly underpinned by large datasets and digital artefacts, involving open, networked, algorithmically-driven systems
- **Nexus 2: Connected learning**
 - New pedagogies supported by technology-enabled flexible learning
- **Nexus 3: Service-oriented libraries**
 - Libraries shifting their strategic emphasis from collections to services
- **Nexus 4: Blurred identities**
 - Boundaries between professional groups and services being broken down with more collaboration and new skills development
- **Nexus 5: Intensified contextual pressures**
 - A myriad of political, economic and other pressures creating demands on higher education and libraries

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Challenges and Opportunities

- Digital shift:
 - Libraries could usefully work towards greater clarity about the print-electronic shift and how it is being strategised and managed
- Virtual places:
 - Libraries are yet to create successful virtual ‘places’ to mirror the physical
- From collections to services:
 - There is a need for libraries to shift from emphasising collections to services (or collections as one service)
- Inside-out libraries:
 - The ‘inside-out’ role of libraries needs to be increasingly important
- Discovery:
 - Library’s role in discovery in a networked world needs greater clarification and focus
- Preservation:
 - Pressing need to address digital preservation challenges

Skills etc

- Important not to think of 'skills' too narrowly
- Skills/competencies/capabilities required consist of:
 - Hard skills
 - Profession-specific
 - e.g. Metadata, collection management
 - Generic
 - e.g. Project management, strategic planning
 - Soft skills
 - e.g. communication, collaboration, critical thinking
 - Mindsets
 - e.g. flexibility, adaptability
 - Ethics and values
 - e.g. inclusion, customer service
 - Contextual knowledge
 - e.g. policy environment, organisational priorities





Challenges and Opportunities

- Digital shift:
 - Libraries could usefully embrace the electronic shift and become digital libraries
- Virtual places:
 - Libraries are yet to fully embrace the virtual physical
- From collections to services:
 - There is a need for libraries to provide services (or collections) to support learning and teaching
- Inside-out libraries:
 - The 'inside-out' role of libraries in supporting learning and teaching
- Discovery:
 - Library's role in discovery, information clarification and focus
- Preservation:
 - Pressing need to add value to collections

Skills Development: Examples

- Hard skills
 - Strategic planning
 - Techniques/approaches
 - Vision
 - Technical skills
 - Service design/development
 - Preservation
 - Others: change management, project management etc
- Soft skills
 - Communication and collaboration
- Ethics and values
 - Library roles around curation
 - Enduring values in new contexts
- Mindset
 - Adaptability
 - Change ready
- Contextual knowledge
 - Strong understanding of the HE context
 - Awareness of developments on the horizon and their potential

Gaps, Isolation, Innovation, Long-Term Thinking

- Gaps:
 - There are apparent gaps in libraries in awareness and knowledge – particularly AI, including TDM, and Academic SNS
- Isolation:
 - Libraries are seen as “isolated” from other professional groups
- Change:
 - Often focus on incremental rather than disruptive change
- Strategy:
 - Long-term thinking and planning is an important part of recognising current challenges and determining actions



Gaps, Isolation, Innovation, Long-

- **Gaps:**

- There are an knowledge

- **Isolation:**

- Libraries are s

- **Change:**

- Often focus on

- **Strategy:**

- Long-term think
recognising cur

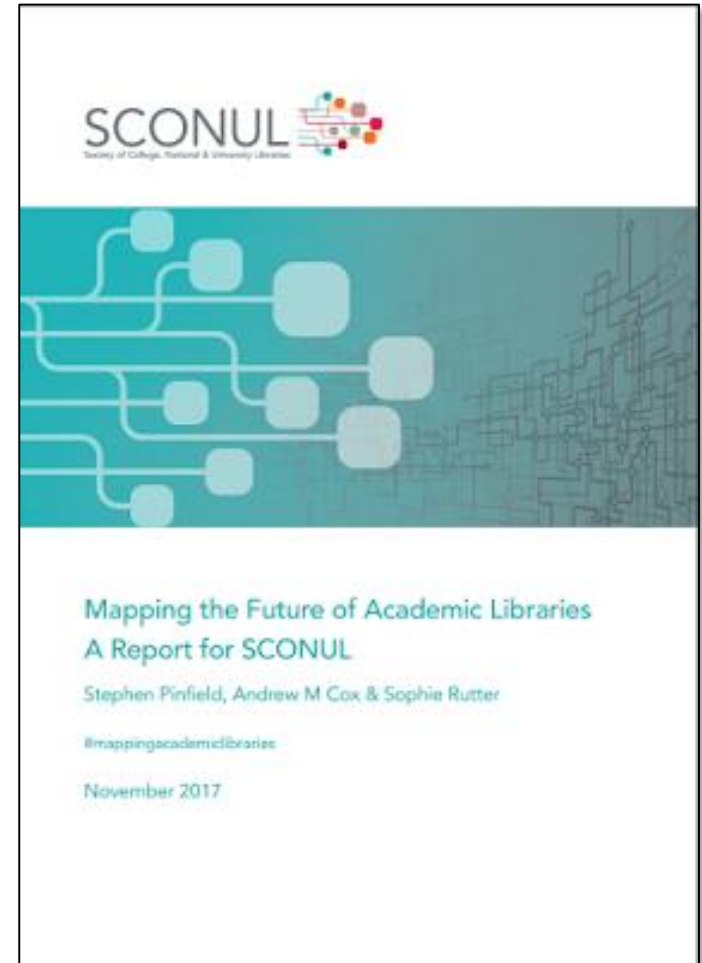
Skills Development: Examples

- **Hard skills**
 - Technical skills
 - Service design/development e.g. AI, TDM
 - Strategic planning
 - Techniques/approaches
 - Vision
 - Change management, project management etc
- **Soft skills**
 - Communication and collaboration
- **Ethics and values**
 - Enduring values in new contexts
- **Mindset**
 - Long-term thinking
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The Need for Alignment

- There was widespread agreement that libraries need to align closely with their institution
- This might lead to different libraries having different approaches (although major differences in priorities between institution types did not emerge in the data)
- Libraries should not be merely reactive – they have the ability to provide leadership in key areas in their institutions

Styles of Alignment

Libraries need to position themselves in different styles of alignment in different contexts:

- 1. Service-provider:** delivering key services and support activities required by users in line with institutional requirements, often at scale
- 2. Partner:** working alongside users and other professional services organisations, often through projects or embedded working
- 3. Leader:** innovating in new areas, persuading key stakeholders of the way forward and contributing to overall institutional strategy, creating and communicating a compelling vision

Styles of Alignment

Libraries need to align their activities with the following styles of alignment:

1. **Service-provider:** providing activities and services to meet the requirements of the community.
2. **Partner:** working with other professional services to deliver projects or embed services.
3. **Leader:** innovating and influencing stakeholders or leading the overall institutional change and communicating this.

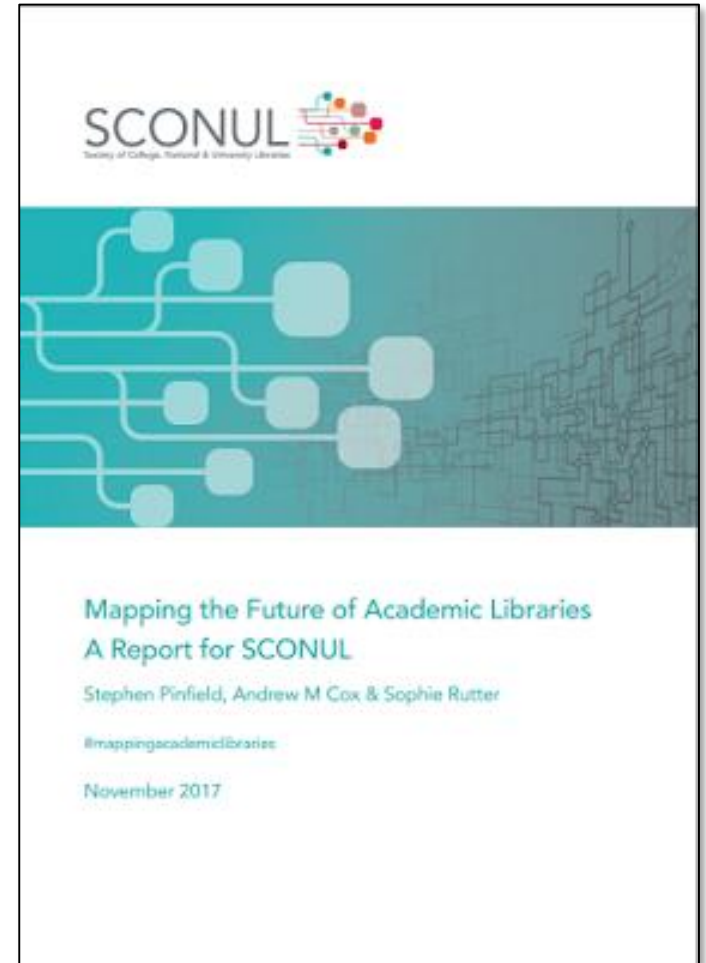
Skills Development: Examples

- Hard skills
 - Strategic planning
 - Techniques/approaches
 - Vision
- Soft skills
 - Communication and collaboration
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- Mindset
 - Professional confidence
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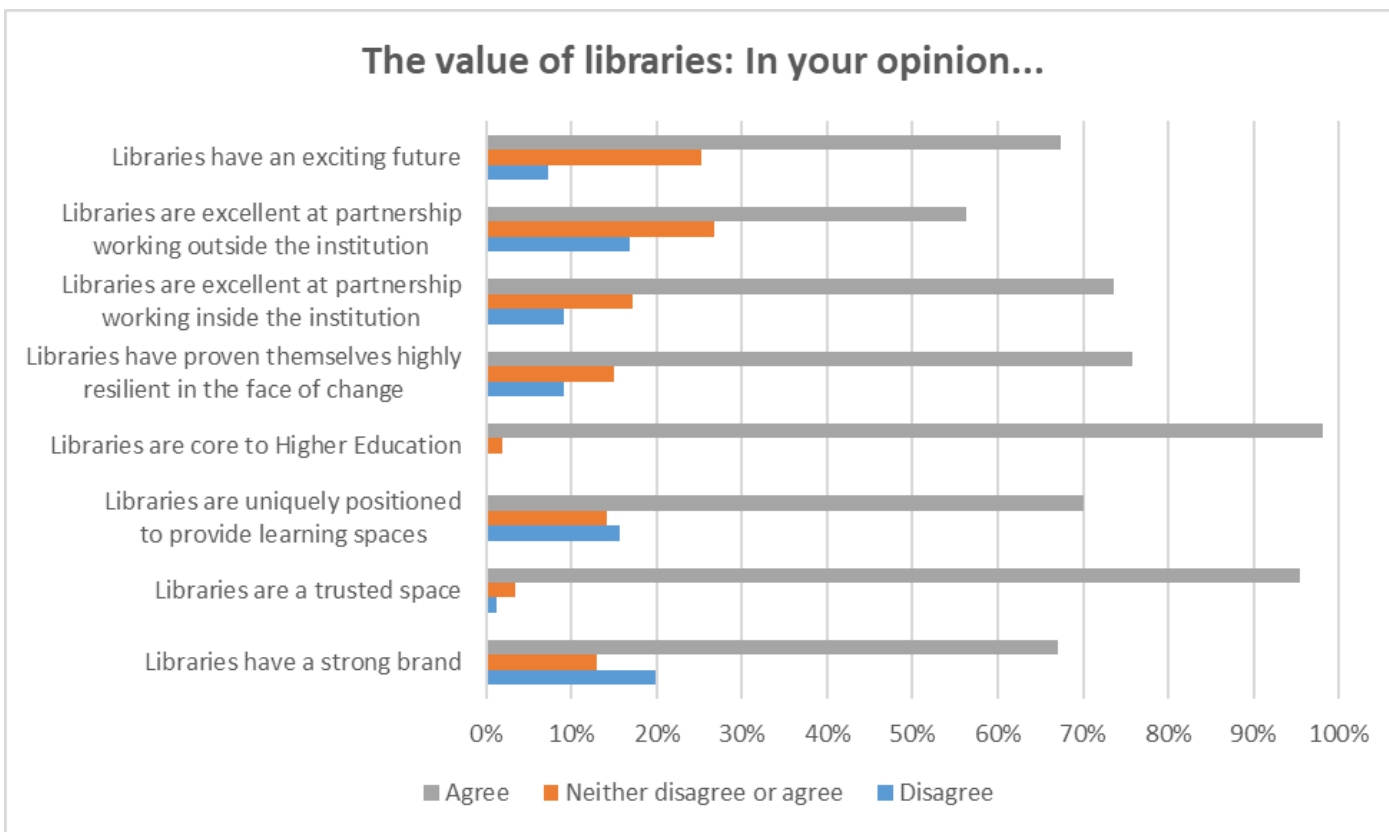
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The Value of Libraries

- Library professionals were positive about future and about the value of their skills



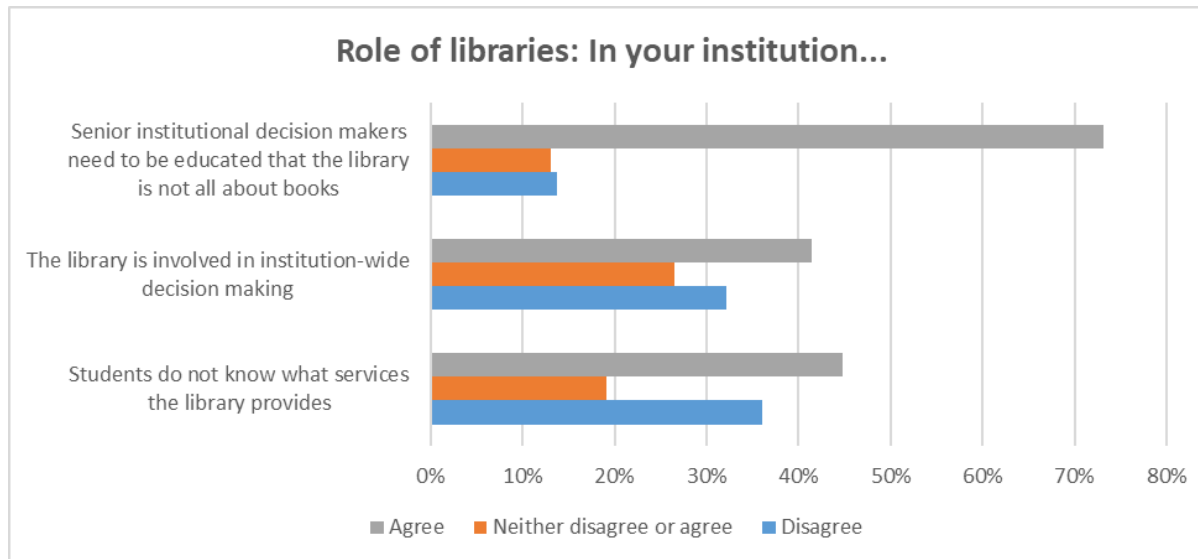
Fewer Jobs and Changing Roles

- Despite the optimism, there is a belief that there may be fewer library jobs in future, and the skills required will change
- Survey participants saw continuity and change in skills and roles



Lack of Understanding of Libraries from Outside

- There was disagreement about this amongst participants
- Some non-library-participants saw ‘the library’ in very traditional terms – “old fashioned”
- Some library-based participants believed that others in their institution did not fully understand what the library does and/or could do in the future



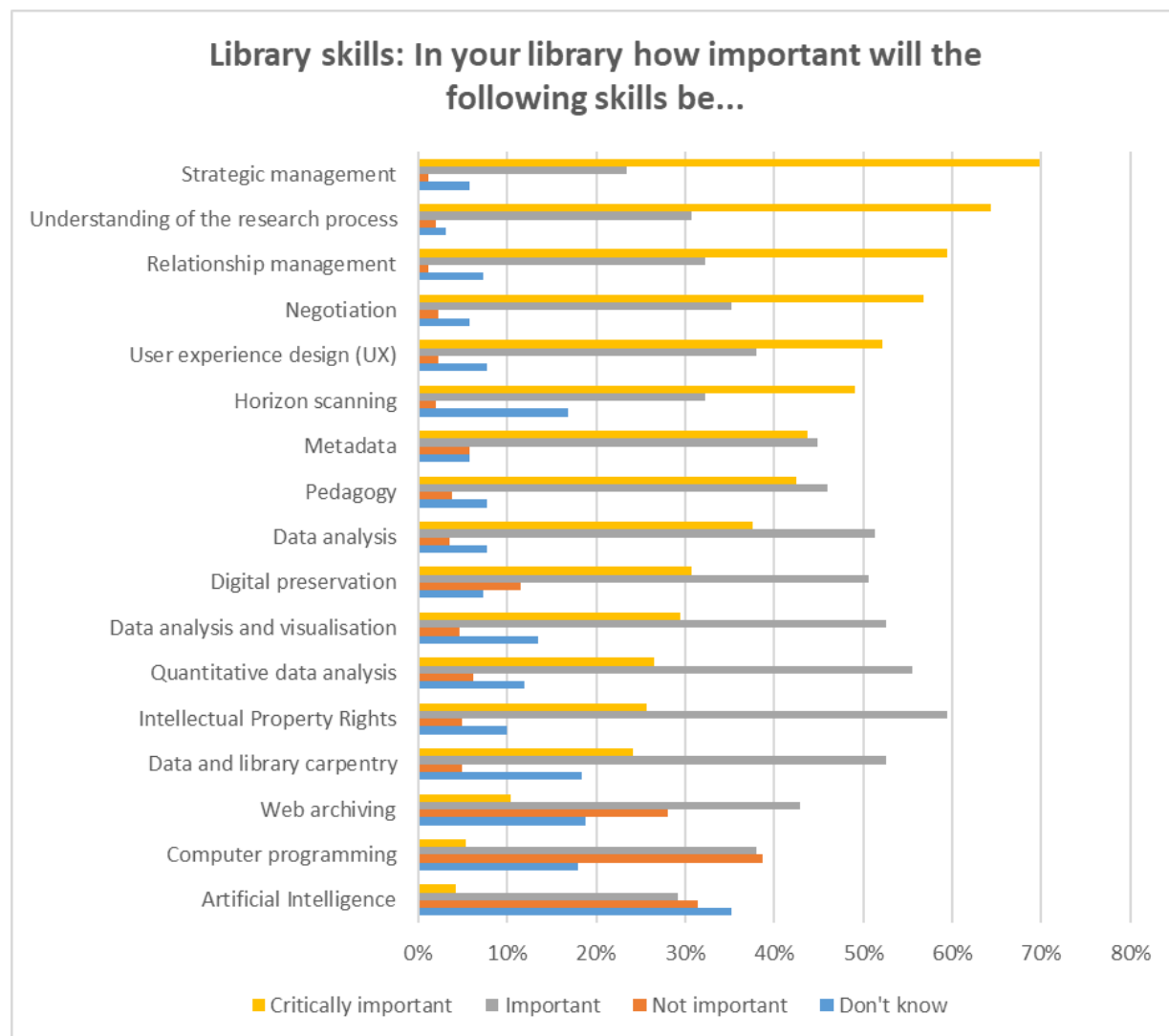
- Misunderstanding seems to be contributing to perceptions of diminishing relevance of the library

Creating and Communicating a Compelling Vision and Changing

- There is clearly a need to create and communicate a compelling vision of the library's current and future role in the institution which can take stakeholders along with the library
- This partly relates to questions of the credibility and influence of the library and its staff
- It also relates to the ability of the library to develop organisations with the right skills
- There may be a need to overcome resistance to change in library organisations

Skills

- Survey participants saw 'softer' skills as key
- Although many technical skills also seen as important

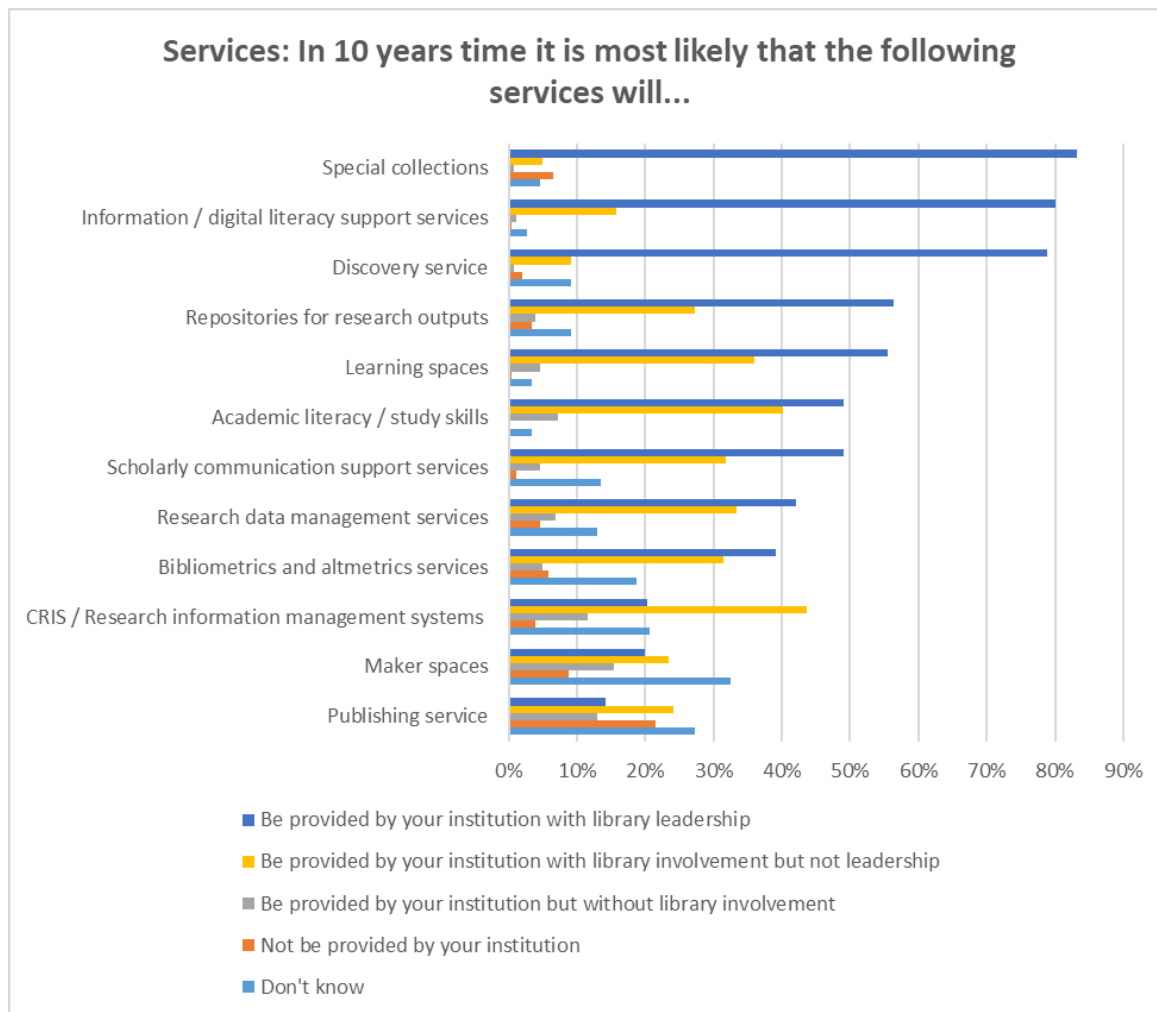


Collaborations

- Libraries have a strong record of inter-library collaboration – these are likely to become more important
- They are likely to operate at “local,...national and ...international” levels
- Shared approaches might head-off calls for outsourcing
- Shared approaches are needed for large-scale challenges such as digital preservation
- Multi-professional collaborations within the library and partnerships beyond are also seen as crucial

The Need for ‘Coopetition’

- A balance needs to be struck between collaboration and competition with other professional groups
- Professional groups compete for “jurisdiction” in new areas as well as needing to collaborate e.g. RDM
- Libraries need to navigate this ‘coopetition’ – cooperation and competition combined
- Existing services may also become contested e.g. learning spaces





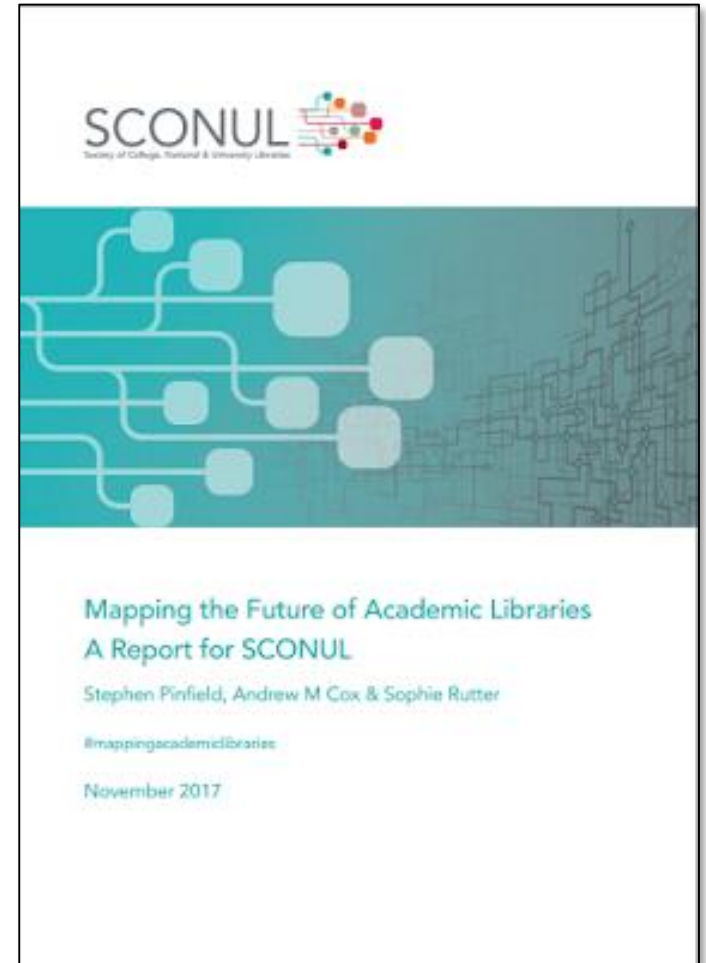
Skills Development: Examples

- Hard skills
 - Strategic planning
 - Techniques/approaches
 - Vision
- Soft skills
 - Communication – within and beyond the profession and the institution
 - Collaboration and coopetition
 - Influencing, Negotiation
- Ethics and values
 - Enduring values in new contexts
- Mindset
 - Professional confidence
 - Proactive
- Contextual knowledge
 - Strong awareness of the HE context
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Questioning Library Mantras

We propose such traditional library ‘mantras’ should be questioned as part of libraries challenging themselves to respond to the rapidly-changing environment in which they operate:

- Mantra 1: ***‘The library is a strong brand’***
- Mantra 2: ***‘The library is neutral’***
- Mantra 3: ***‘The library is trusted’***
- Mantra 4: ***‘Library spaces are unique’***
- Mantra 5: ***‘The library provides for discovery of information’***

Building New Paradigms

- Paradigm 1:
The hybrid library
- Paradigm 2:
The inside-out library
- Paradigm 3:
The library in the life of the user
- Paradigm 4:
The library as platform
- Paradigm 5:
The library as infrastructure
- Paradigm 6:
The computational library
- Paradigm 7:
The service-oriented library
- Paradigm 8:
The library as digital third space
- Paradigm 9:
The globalised library
- Paradigm 10:
The boundaryless library

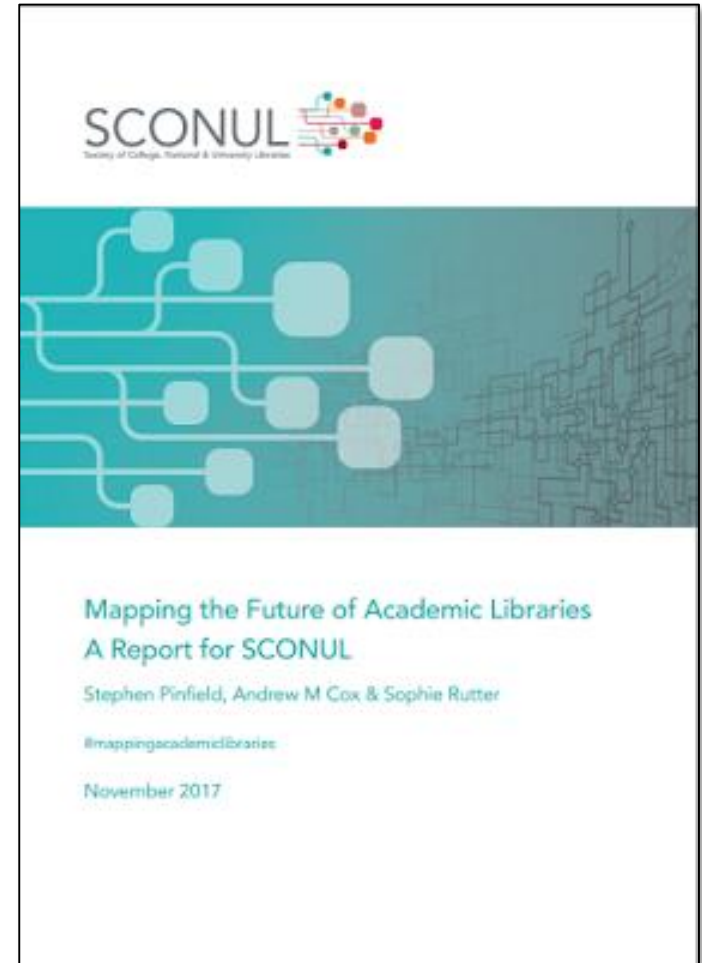
Skills Development: Examples

- Skills/competencies/capabilities required for academic libraries consist of:
 - Hard skills
 - Technical skills: e.g. system design, AI, TDM, digital preservation etc
 - Other skills: e.g. strategic planning, project management etc
 - Soft skills e.g. communication, collaboration, coopetition
 - Mindsets e.g. adaptability, change ready, professional confidence
 - Ethics and values e.g. enduring values in new contexts, customer service
 - Contextual knowledge e.g. strong understanding of the HE environment and organisational priorities, awareness of developments on the horizon and their potential
- Key challenge: Combining different skills at different levels in the organisation

Report

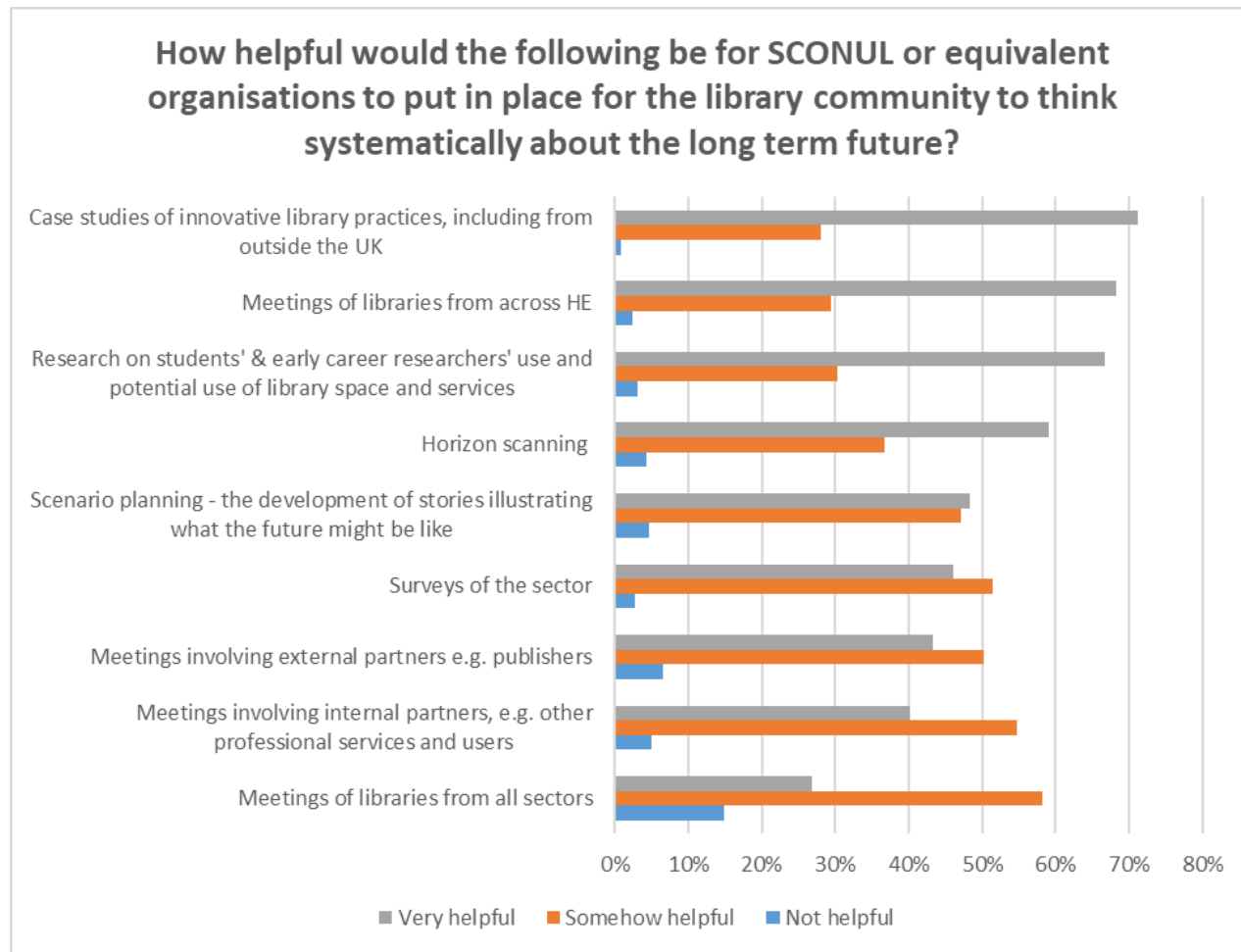
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Role of SCONUL [or other professional organisations]

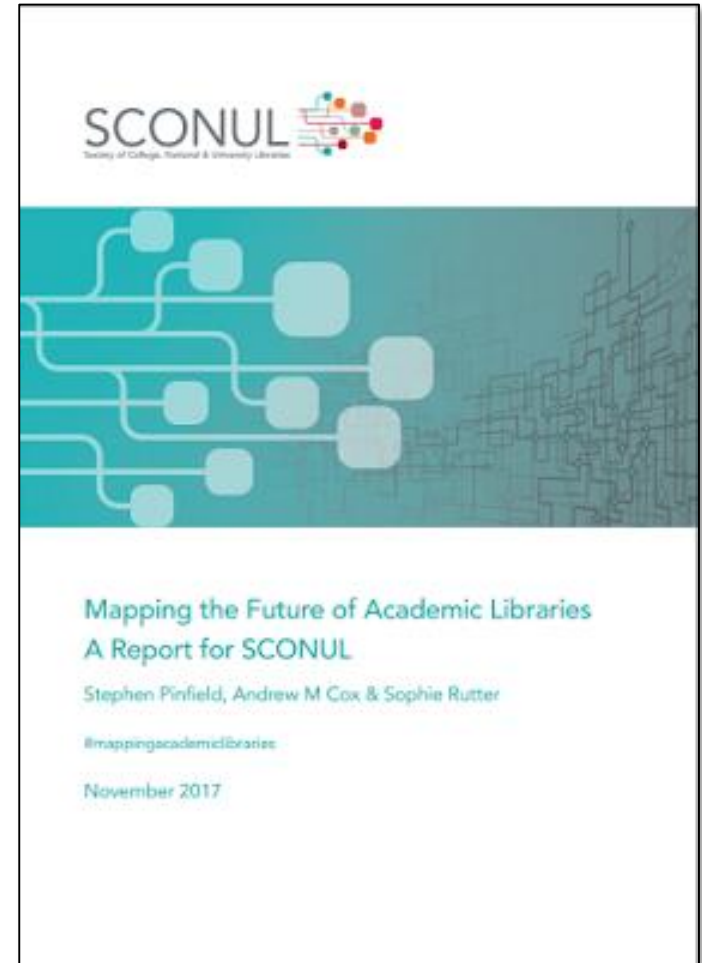
The importance of creating spaces for more long-term thinking around transformational change



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Paradoxes (1)

1. Participants identified a wide range of potentially transformative trends for libraries, but there was no consensus about which trends were most important.
2. Some key nexuses of change can be identified, but the end game for each remains unclear.
3. Despite the recognition of potential for change, images of the library of the future seemed rather similar to what exists now.
4. Despite many trends being recognised, some key transformational forces, such as AI, were not widely understood.
5. Library spaces are seen as unique and valuable, but library digital spaces are far from compelling.
6. Libraries see themselves as good at collaboration but are often too insular.
7. Libraries see themselves as forward looking but often fail to engage in truly innovative thinking and risk taking.

Paradoxes (2)

8. There was agreement that alignment to the institution was essential, but we suggest there are three radically different styles of alignment.
9. Library Participants were optimistic about the future of libraries, but Non-Library Participants less so.
10. The need for change is widely recognised, but so is the existence of resistance to change.
11. Libraries have to respond to the immediate needs of users but have a growing challenge of preserving born-digital objects.
12. There is a need to both collaborate and compete with other departments and organisations.
13. Collaboration is increasingly necessary to deliver library services but can contribute to the erosion of the library's identity.
14. There is wide support for some mantras about the value of libraries, but in reality these need to be questioned.

Recommendations for Academic Libraries (1)

1. Work with stakeholders such as user communities and colleagues in other professional groups to undertake **more analysis of key trends** that affect them and their institutions, especially environmental factors and more long-term issues.
2. Set in motion processes, especially consultation with users, to develop **more clarity around the print-electronic shift** and how it is likely to develop over time in order to inform strategy and policy formulation.
3. Investigate the possibilities of developing collaborations to create meaningful **online scholarly venues** to complement library physical spaces.
4. Review local responses to the **shift from collections to services** in order to position the library effectively in the institution.
5. Examine the implications of the “**inside-out**” **library and its relative prioritisation over time against “outside-in”** functions.
6. **Review the library’s role in discovery**, in particular developing ways of surfacing library content in network discovery tools, and developing services using new discovery and analytical approaches, such as TDM.

Recommendations for Academic Libraries (2)

7. Carry out more work on examining the significance of **key developments** such as AI, machine learning, internet of things, digital humanities, and other areas of datafied scholarship, and begin to develop services in these areas.
8. Consider how best to achieve the **roles of service-provider, partner and leader**, and get the emphasis right between them, in the institutional context.
9. Debate the meaning of the **ten paradigms** that envision what libraries can be in the institutional context.
10. Consider how a **compelling vision of the library can be created for communication** to the wider institution.
11. Create opportunities for **high-risk innovation and longer-term thinking**.
12. Investigate how **cultures encouraging flexibility and innovation** can be encouraged in libraries without undermining necessary established processes and routines.

Recommendations for Academic Libraries (3)

13. Develop ways of making the **preservation of born-digital materials one of the major priorities of the library community**, considering the appropriate level for activity (institutional, regional, national or international) and how these can be coordinated.
14. Consider the **balance between collaboration and competition** with other institutional professional services departments as well as external providers in relation to new and existing services.
15. Focus on developing clear messages about **the value the library adds in providing particular services** to the institution and ensure library staff are equipped to communicate these messages.
16. Review the library's current **staff skills base** in the light of these recommendations.

Recommendations for SCONUL (1)

1. Promote further **discussion** of the current report.
2. Work with other partners to harness expertise and capacity for **horizon scanning**.
3. Promote **greater understanding of trends** whose implications for libraries appear to be less well understood, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, TDM or wider environmental trends.
4. Host more **discussion around potential end-points arising from the complex nexuses of change**, the validity of the five **mantras** and the implications of the 10 **paradigms** defined in this report.
5. Promote more **discussion** around key issues such as the role of library **space**, the balance between **print and electronic** and the balance between **collections and services**.
6. Host more discussion around how, given the need to **align to institutional priorities and different styles of alignment (service-provider, partner and leader)**, different types of academic library might respond in different ways to current changes.

Recommendations for SCONUL (2)

7. Promote the **sharing of best practice** in (a) **explaining the changing nature of the role of the library** to stakeholders; and (b) managing **disruptive change**.
8. Review **skills** required for the further development of the role of libraries in the sector and analyse training and recruitment patterns to ensure libraries are future-ready.
9. Promote and facilitate the **interaction** of the SCONUL community with other key communities among internal and external stakeholders (e.g. estates, IT and publishers), involving user communities.
10. Work to create more opportunities for more **collective long-term thinking**.
11. Sponsor the creation and discussion of **case studies of new practices** (including from outside the UK).
12. Sponsor research on trends in **user behaviours**, e.g. among undergraduates and researchers.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does what has been discussed apply to you and your context? What are the priorities for your organisation?
2. What key skills are required for addressing the challenges considered today? Where are the skills gaps?
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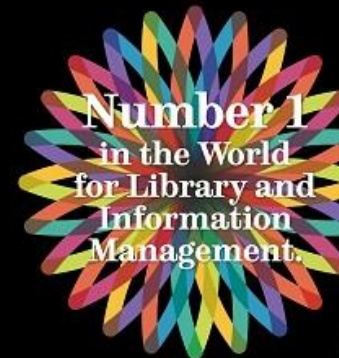
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**The Power of
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Joint first for library and
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