'Picking the winners'

**The SCONUL Conference 2009,
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The e-mail that went out advertising this year's conference warned us that 'the next ten years could see changes [for librarians] as fundamental as that ushered in by Gutenberg and Fust – in terms of technologies, the expectations of readers, the practices of research and the economics of information'.

Or, to put it another way, the future is a bit of a gamble.

It was perhaps appropriate that the conference – entitled 'Picking the winners' and with a definite horse-racing theme to the programme – aimed to bring together the leading tipsters in our field to help us with our form cards.

WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE

The conference started (appropriately) with 'Starter's orders' from **Jane Core**, the SCONUL chair. Jane said there would be a prize for the most racing metaphors crammed into the speeches and then promised a programme of horizon-scanning without blinkers on.

Next on the horizon was **David Ball**, from the organising team, welcoming us all to sunny Bournemouth. Why 'Picking the winners'? David asserted that we were in the midst of an upheaval of technology, as big an upheaval as the move to printing. When you are in the middle of such a change it is difficult to work out what the lasting contours of the new landscape will be like. The conference aimed to show how we understand the turf and how to best place our bets.

First out of the paddock was **Euan Semple**, advisor on social computing for business, with his reflections on 'The quiet revolution'. Euan had previously been director of knowledge manage-

Euan Semple

ment at the BBC and is a leading authority on the use of social media in organisations. He began by quoting the 'Cluetrain Manifesto' and the importance of 'globally distributed, near instant, person to person conversations'.[1] He stressed that, irrespective of technology, the important thing was trust. For years, those who were the gatekeepers (librarians, the BBC, etc.) were trusted, but they took that trust for granted. Now that is being questioned. We live in a world of growing wikis and declining authority figures. How can we now tell if an author, blogger and so on is authoritative?

Euan went on to describe the current information world as one of 'volunteers' rather than 'conscripts'. It is easier to publish on Web 2.0 than Web 1.0. Authors are even giving their work away free on the web now. Why? As one colleague told him, 'You are at a greater risk of being ignored than ripped off.'

The web is too big to catalogue but people are pointing at (and providing links to) the good stuff. Social networking acts as a filter for many people. A skill we need to learn (and perhaps teach others) is how to select the right bloggers, twitterers and so on to follow. After all, wouldn't you rather get a recommendation from someone you trust than click on a paid-for advert for a web site on Google?

Euan went on to assert that 'documents are dead' and people want bits of information rather than nicely published tomes. As librarians, we need to become hunter-gatherers. In reality, many of us are farmers. Instead of trying to tend all the plants in cyberspace we need to be developing new skills and teaching new forms of information lit-

eracy: how to find Web 2.0 tools and how to set up our own Web 2.0 accounts but (most important of all) how to judge what is trustworthy and useful for the end user.

All of this led nicely to the theme of the next paper from **Sue McKnight**, director of libraries and knowledge resources at Nottingham Trent University. 'Backing the winners', looking at how librarians can add value, outlined the work of the SCONUL learning and teaching task and finish group and ended with a plea for more help from colleagues to develop advocacy tools on behalf of the profession.

The purpose of the group has been to identify and promote the unique contribution we make to learning and teaching and the added value we provide as a profession. The deliverables will be to identify the evidence base (and gaps) of what we have to offer, to identify key messages for stakeholder groups and to recommend ways of reaching the widest possible audience with our messages.

Using a flower motif, Sue then went behind each petal to show how we support higher education institutions, employers, parents, students, the library community, academic staff, professional bodies and the needs of the government. Full details for each segment can be found on Sue's PowerPoint presentation, which is on the SCONUL web site.[2]

The group has already identified some gaps and is asking colleagues specifically to provide evidence of:

- how information literacy support affects student outcomes, including the quality of degrees
- library contributions to e-portfolios
- the qualifications library staff hold, including teaching qualifications.

Sue ended with an animation of the student's voyage to information literacy. This is sometimes a rocky journey and Sue and the team are keen to show how we can navigate students through some difficult waters.

Coming up on the inside lane (and I am starting to exhaust my knowledge of horse-racing so readers might be pleased to know these analogies are likely to fall at the next fence) was **Sheila Corrall**, head of department and professor of librarianship and information management at the University

of Sheffield. Sheila's theme was 'Hybrid roles and blended professionals: what competencies are needed and how can they be acquired?' I am always keen to see how we need to keep our staff one step ahead of our users and, given the messages from the last presentation, this seemed the obvious next step on the programme.

Sheila began by reviewing the contemporary environment: the political downturn, economic downturn, technological convergence, learning collaborations and so on. Change in all these areas is more extreme than in the past and the environment is becoming increasingly complex.

Our responses to all this have similarly been complex. Some staff have become more specialist, taking on 'niche' roles. Others have taken on a mixture of managerial and professional roles. Since the 1980s hybrid roles have become more commonplace, with blended managers (1980s), hybrid learner support professionals (1990s) and hybrid information/knowledge specialists (2000s).

To illustrate the complexity of these models Sheila presented us with a Venn diagram combining information, technical and pedagogical skills. I found it interesting mapping some of my colleagues (and myself!) onto the seven quadrants. She then went on to consider some of the different models of library professionals:

- 'bounded professionals' – tied very much to traditional job descriptions
- 'cross-boundary professionals' – who work across boundaries/departments to get things done
- 'unbounded professionals' – who are less tied to traditional structures
- 'blended professionals' – who are formally expected to span different territories
- 'third space professionals' – who work between traditional domains.

These various models respond to the professional, political and physical structures with which some of us have grown up and which now seem to be blurring.

A most interesting observation for me was that, when blending library, technical, pedagogical and subject roles together, staff can enter territories from any direction. So we are faced with a future of librarians developing skills as teachers, as technicians immersing themselves in subject specialisms, as researchers developing librarianship skills and so on. How will this impact on staff

recruitment? How do we break away from our sometimes traditional models of staff development? And how can we develop the collaboration needed to make new approaches work? Some of us have already started on this path. Some have a long way to go.

With the finishing line for the day in sight the only (erm…) hurdle left was the **AGM**.

The SCONUL chair reviewed the highlights of the year:

- a review of the SCONUL office and plans to remodel the premises
- developing partnerships with other professional bodies, especially JISC (the Joint Information Systems Committee) and HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England)
- the on-going review of activities supporting teaching and learning and the work highlighted by Sue in her paper
- progress with plans to develop the SCONUL web presence
- the 'Libraries of the future' project
- the SCONUL LMS (library management systems) and systems landscape review
- the SCONUL 'top concerns' survey.

Jane ended with the customary dates for the diary, including the autumn conference on 17 November, the 2010 SCONUL tour (to the Netherlands this time) as well as the 2010 conference (venue still to be announced).

Colleagues can read the full minutes of the AGM on the SCONUL web site.[3]

The evening's **reception** (sponsored by Ex Libris) was held in Bournemouth's impressive Oceanarium. The e-mail promoting the event made some tenuous reference to horses by highlighting the presence of seahorses. Whilst *my* horse-racing metaphor machine was outside being shot, we all enjoyed touring around big glass tanks (and tunnels) to get really close to a wide variety of sea

creatures. It was also (of course!) a great opportunity to do more networking with our more land-based colleagues.

Thursday 11 June

The second day started with a session entitled 'Tomorrow's technologies: best bets and likely losers'. The brave man peering into his crystal ball was **Marshall Breeding**, director of innovative technologies and research at Vanderbilt University. Marshall's main focus was 'the demise of the library management system' (LMS). He began by reviewing the wider context and the upheavals taking place in the industry today (recent mergers and acquisitions, the demise of the traditional OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue), new genres of discovery interface, the increased availability of open source options and so on) before looking at how we should place our bets.

Marshall Breeding

The best ways of assessing the form of the LMS suppliers, Marshall believes, is to consider the following:

- Are they interested in new technology, research and development, investing in the future?
- Is their strategy merely to reduce costs (which might be good in the short term but might harm product development in the long term)?
- What is their technology strategy – is it really a technology development plan or more of a public relations statement?

Bearing this in mind, the 'aces' are those companies that:

- invest in research and development
- understand the needs of higher education institutions (HEIs)
- have a track record of positive partnerships
- employ a sound business model
- have high customer retention
- are investing in the future.

Whilst the 'deuces' have:

- ageing technologies
- no R+D (research and development) department
- stagnant business models
- more emphasis on cost-cutting than investment
- high rates of customer defection
- low levels of customer confidence.

Some pretty clear themes there.

The environment, Marshall showed us, is fraught with problems. The basic LMS model has not changed since 1965. Compare an LMS system with new technologies like the iPhone and it becomes clear how dated most of them appear. Our end users are used to an information environment crowded with sophisticated players such as Google, Google Scholar, Amazon and Wikipedia. There is a demand for compelling library interfaces and the ability to search for everything of relevance in one go (ideally with results in one click). Instead we get silos of information, even at the level of information type: books in this part of the catalogue, journals here, digital collections here and so on. We pride ourselves as being the masters of metadata yet deep searching eludes us. Discovery is part of the issue but there is also delivery. Amazon can order you a book on one click. How many clicks would it take to get anywhere close with our systems?

Well before the end of his session, Marshal's conclusion was clear: we need to rethink our LMS.

Next up was **Alma Swan** with the amusingly named 'Remember repositories? They were all the rage'. Despite this rather alarming title, Alma began with some reassuring news. There are 1,406 repositories around the world. The US has 346 (25%), whilst the UK has 153 (11%). Given its relative size, this means the UK is in effect leading the way, with Australia following close behind.

Alma also felt that it would soon be a very strange institution that does not have a repository.

But that is the good news. The bad news is the extent of engagement with these repositories. Still only 15% of what is out there is available through full-text open-access respositories. We have been stuck at this figure for a long time.

So how do we move from 15% to what Alma believes to be a more positive yet realistic target: 95%?

To do this we need to get mandates from funders, HEIs and even individual academic departments. Does this make a real difference? Alma was adamant it does. Without mandates you typically secure 15% of your potential content. With a mandate the figure rises to 60%. But it is not just the stick approach that works. You need to employ some carrots as well: advocacy, advice and assistance are required, for strategists and for researchers themselves.

As an example of advocacy, Alma told the story of one Ray Frost from QUT (Queensland University of Technology) whose readership and citations have rocketed as a result of open access exposure: a powerful example.

This was a lively, funny and entertaining talk with a really powerful message. An empty repository broadcasts a bad investment decision. A full one represents a good return on investment. If we are to fill our repositories we need to be working in partnership with myriad stakeholder groups. As she concluded, we need 'joined-up approaches for open, joined-up institutions'.

Brilliant stuff.

After coffee **Donald W. King** stepped up to the podium. His talk – 'Facing up to the economic realities: placing a bet on the future' – seemed most pertinent. I had just been reading Chris

West's analysis of the SCONUL 'top concerns' survey for 2009. Predictably, the financial situation is what concerns chiefs (and the rest of us) most at the moment,[4] so it would be good to get the perspective of North Carolina's distinguished research professor.

Don's talk was data-rich and reminded me of some of the findings of the RIN (Research Information Network), especially their studies on the cost of research.[5] Don's focus was on the true cost of a university journals collection, with conclusions based on longitudinal studies of reading at Pittsburg University.

The cost of accessing information in journals could be broken down into: purchasing (16.2%), processing (15.2%) and the cost to faculty members of tracking down and reading the journals (68.6%). We always focus on the cost of buying journals. In reality (as with the RIN project), it is finding and reading that takes time. Don found it took 28 hours' finding time a year compared with 125 hours' reading time.

Don covered lots of research in his talk but for me this was the key message. If we want more efficient universities we need to be looking at reducing costs in the 68.6% of activities. Helping researchers to develop their information-finding skills could reduce the 28-hour quest for information. It could also impact on the 125 hours, if searches could prove more focused and if the quality of the resources retrieved improved.

Taking us towards lunch – and building on some of the themes covered in today's earlier papers – **Tom Cochrane**, a deputy vice-chancellor for information and learning support, joined us all the way from Queensland University of Technology.

Starting with a slide of horse-racing for his talk, 'Jockeying for position', Tom promised us to race us through:

- the origins of open access
- why OA is important
- the relationship between OA and research excellence
- confusion … and how the library adds to it.

For Tom (sounding a bit like the American president), OA began for three reasons:

- technology – because we can
- economics – because we should
- researchers – because we must.

Technology has obviously developed rapidly, meaning that there is now a global solution to accessing publications and data. On economics, not only are repositories cheaper forms of publishing than journals but they also yield a greater return on investment. And researchers? To amplify a point made earlier in the conference, our researchers want exposure and they fear being ignored more than being ripped off.

Echoing Alma, Tom called for a carrot-and-stick approach, with mandates followed by advocacy, explaining how deposit leads to an increase in citations. Central to all this is how easy we are going to make it to access (and hence cite) information. Do we see ourselves as the defenders of information or the promoters of information? Tom challenged us with five options:

- non-giveaway or giveaway?
- income or impact?
- plagiarism or piracy?
- vanity or refereed?
- unrefereed preprint or refereed postprint?

We need mandates but we also need advocacy; we need incentives. The legendary Ray Frost appeared again (this time praised for his policy of getting his students to publish in their IR (institutional repository) as quickly as possible). We also heard of researchers being sent coffee vouchers every time they published … but these could only be redeemed if the article had also made its way into the repository.

How often do the staff check the IR in your library coffee bar?!!

Tom had been asked to be provocative, he said, so he ended with a provocation. Why is open access not as successful as it should be? Part of this is down to the library director. He then gave us four scenarios:

- 'The library director is the publishers' friend' – and doesn't want to change things.
- 'The library lirector is just here to serve' – and will only push for change if the academic masters demand it.
- 'The library director is an OA pretender' – and sets up a repository but doesn't get round to filling it.
- And, occasionally, 'The library director commits to transformation.'

We were left to examine our souls. A great end to a very full morning's sessions.

After lunch, delegates were let loose to partake in a visit. The options (for those who didn't want to dodge the showers on the beach) included:

- the Arts Institute at Bournemouth and Bournemouth University libraries
- Bournemouth guided walking tour
- Coutts Information Services
- Waterfront Museum and Scaplen's Court at Poole
- the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum
- the Poole Cockle Trail.

Your correspondent opted for option 1.

The tour of **Bournemouth University libraries** allowed those of us interested in library design to see an award-winning development up close. The Sir Michael Cobham library was awarded SCONUL's prestigious library design award in December 2007. The thing I really liked was the octagonal design and how space was used in such an interestingly shaped building. The upper floors are preserved for silence whilst social learning dominates the ground floor. I really liked the techno booths (think 1950s' diner with smart boards) and the atmosphere to the space.
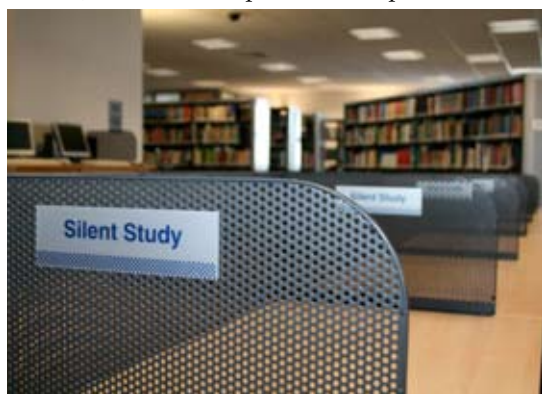
The outside of the building is very impressive. The courtyard boasts a stainless steel and black granite sculpture by Koichi Ishino called 'Wind stone earth sky' which many of us admired. The building itself is similarly iconic with its fibre-optic pinnacle.

Even more of an eye-opener for me was the **Arts Institute at Bournemouth**. Whereas I had read much about the university library developments, my knowledge of the Arts Institute was restricted to a very interesting article in *Focus* on their unique take on guiding and classification.[6] I was in for a real treat. The institute is over 100

years old but has been in its airy building for 11 years. As well as being a beautiful building with some interesting acquisitions (Wayne Hemmingway's 'Butt Butt' water butt for a start), what really impressed me was the way the library staff had worked with the students to design aspects of the service: signage, trolleys, marketing materials, even a book sculpture (though this does not include the library's stock – at least the staff hope it doesn't).

Also housed in the library is **MoDiP**, the Museum of Design in Plastics. This little museum is fantastic and it was good to hear they have got JISC funding to digitise 1,500 items. Oh, and guess who designed their logo? The institute's students strike again!

This was a really desirable library… and at least one of my co-visitors declared they wanted to work there. Heads were counted as we got onto the coach to make sure nobody had defected.

The evening's activities included a **reception** (sponsored by Springer) and the **conference dinner** (sponsored by Coutts). As the weather remained good, the reception was held on the

hotel lawn. Entertainment (for both reception and meal) was provided by two caricaturists who captured the likenesses of the SCONUL membership. As the artists departed delegates made their way

to the SCONUL casino where betting (with money from the Bank of SCONUL rather than materials funds) took

place on the tables until late in the evening.

FRIDAY 12 JUNE

Day three took on a slightly different format from previous SCONUL conferences. The **parallel** sessions are always a valuable addition to the programme, in my opinion, because they allow practitioners to present case studies of the real developments going on out there in our profession/sector. The problem I invariably find, though, is that there are too many interesting sessions and not enough of me to go round. This year I was feeling less grumpy because there were three opportunities to find out about developments. Still, I had also to enlist colleagues to write up the sessions I could not attend, so I hope the reader will get a full picture of what was on offer (see below in this review).

The busy morning was rounded off with the hot off the press – or editing suite – **'conference video'**. David Ball had mentioned that the proceedings were being filmed on day one, and he was justly proud of the outcome, put together by

students from his own Bournemouth University. The video allowed us to revisit the runners and riders – as well as comments from a few punters – from the previous three days. Anyone interested in seeing this impressive piece of work should visit www.sconul.ac.uk/events/agm2009.

Bringing the conference to an end was another popular pundit, **Derek Law**. With the very apt title (for the way some of us at least were feeling) 'From starting gate to knacker's yard: careering round the track', Derek reflected on his career over the last forty years and what the future might hold. His talk took us back to the strange land of 1969. How easy would it have been to predict the future from that vantage point? This was the year when man first set foot on the moon and the first Gap store was opened. Which one of these events has really made the most impact on our lives? This was a world where AACR1 was the new thing at library schools. Library buildings were invariably pre-war constructions and visits to other libraries were rare. The boss's secretary and the head porter knew everything and could stop anything. (Some things never change.) The new technology that we were grappling with was the photocopier.

From this start Derek gave us a humorous tour through his – and the profession's – life. In those early days librarianship was seen as an 'unstressed' profession and Derek was warned that when he became a chief librarian he should recognise that it is a 'two day a week job' … and you needed to decide on how you would spend the other three days: running the senate; leading professional organisations; playing golf – but never micro-managing the library!

We then had a tour of the features of the 'seventies, 'eighties, 'nineties and 'noughties: CD-ROMs; BIDS; PowerPoint; Follet reports; changing skill sets; the web; convergence; the rise of managers with generic skills; fund-raising; digitization and e-learning. Can you see your life flashing before your eyes?

But what of the future? Derek stressed that we need to establish our philosophy for the future. The pieces of the jigsaw are there … we just need to piece them together. So what are the key pieces? Derek focused on four:

- building e-collections – and adding value through metadata
- information literacy – still a critical and core activity
- virtual reference services – focusing on customer needs rather than the latest technology
- collaboration – the need for the profession to work together and not rely on financial handouts.

All that was left to do was for **Jane Core** to bring together this three-day event by thanking the sponsors and the stars of 'SCONUL's Got Talent', the organising team.

This was an excellent conference, thanks largely to the good work of the planning team, the choice of the venue, the quality of the speakers and the willingness of everyone there to take part and discuss further the issues raised. The future may still not be a safe bet… but at least I feel more confident about picking the winners.

THE PARALLEL SESSIONS

'Repositories for teaching and learning materials', by Sarah Currier
(Reviewed by Antony Brewerton, SCONUL Focus *editorial board and University of Warwick)*
Sarah started by highlighting the title of the session. She pointed out that she was not talking about 'learning objects', as the term is no longer really used, is too technical-sounding and is not really understood by academics.

After exploring why we had all chosen to attend this session ('future planning' in my case) Sarah introduced us to useful tools and things we need to consider as we plan and develop our repositories. Two JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) reports were recommended: 'CD-LOR: structured guidelines' stresses that you need to focus on your user community first; 'Good intentions: improving the evidence base in support of sharing learning materials', on the other hand, shows you how to develop a business case and business models for your repository (see www.jisc.ac.uk).

So what do we need to take into consideration?

The basic elements/options we need to consider are:

- the type of system:
  - a stand-alone repository, or
  - a blended repository (combining sub-repositories for research, teaching and learning, images, etc.)
- the software options:
  - commercial systems
  - open source
  - home-grown options
  - distributed, personalised options utilising Web 2.0 technologies
- the nature of the system and – hence – who your key stakeholders will be:
  - an institutional repository
  - a faculty-level repository (covering a particular subject at your institution)
  - a national or regional service (to share materials and costs)
  - a multi-institutional subject consortium.

Before embarking on any of this, though, you need to be asking yourself three key questions:

1 What is the problem to which the repository is the solution?
2 Who identifies this as a problem?
3 What will be the measure of success for your repository?

This was a lively session. A big subject and a passionate presenter meant we ran out of time (perhaps somewhat inevitably). But if I was to take one message away with me it would have to be that – if we develop such a repository for teaching and learning materials – we should think of it as a series of services, not just a repository. That way you will bring real benefits to your end users, which will generate not only use but content.

'Super-convergence: what does it mean for the future role of libraries and librarians?', by Maxine Melling and Elizabeth Selby
(Reviewed by Steve Rose, deputy university librarian (learning resources & academic skills), Southampton Solent University)

This highly interactive session was led by Maxine Melling, director of library & student support services, Liverpool John Moores University, and Elizabeth Selby, dean, learning and information service, Southampton Solent University.

Delegates were provided with some background information to consider ahead of the workshop.

This came out of a meeting of ten directors of service, held earlier in the year to share their super-convergence experiences. It was noted that a wide variety of services could be considered for super-convergence. As well as the library, these include IT, multimedia, reprographics, VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) support, student support services, student administrative support and academic skills. The background information also listed some of the institutional drivers for super-convergence and highlighted some of the challenges identified by service directors.

Four anonymous case studies were presented, which showed how permutations of a number of services – potentially in the mix for inclusion as part of a super-converged service – were being brought together.

Armed with the background information and the case studies, delegates were split into small groups and were tasked with discussing specific issues:

- What does super-convergence mean for the future of libraries?
- What does super-convergence mean for the future role of the university librarian?
- What are the implications for SCONUL?
- How might SCONUL help prepare librarians to operate in a future of super-converged services?

I was in the group which debated the future role of the university librarian. Some lively debate elicited some mixed views, based either on future-proofing ideas or on current experience in operating as part of a super-converged service. Some saw it as a threat, with the librarian losing autonomy/identity by becoming part of a more eclectic senior management team. Others saw opportunities, for example where the librarian took on additional responsibilities, for instance academic skills. Our group noted how there could be many different management models to emerge, depending on who is in the super-convergence mix, and it could well be that the model adopted could affect – positively or negatively – the librarian's role.

This was a very stimulating session, and the focus on delegate participation was welcome – being forced to put the thinking caps on at 9:15 on the Friday morning following on from the conference dinner!

The group of directors who have been looking at super-convergence have set up a JISC mailing list and those with an interest in this area are welcome to join the list at: lis-superconvergence@jiscmail.ac.uk.

'Web 2.0 and libraries: picking the winners' by Peter Godwin
(Reviewed by Antony Brewerton, SCONUL Focus editorial board and University of Warwick)

I was introduced to Peter several years ago when I was a child librarian. I had entered the mysterious world of audiovisual librarianship and Peter was one of the gurus of our small field.

Several years later we had both reinvented ourselves and Peter is now one of the library world's gurus in the field of Web 2.0, especially on how Web 2.0 can be used in teaching information skills.

Peter started with a short talk, appropriately illustrated with pictures from flickr. His top tips included:

- Find out your users' changing needs.
- Get rid of the culture of perfect.
- Become aware of emerging technologies and opportunities.
- Look outside the library world.

He also reminded us:

- Some of the kids are Web 2.0 literate … some are not.
- We are all potentially part of the Google generation – it is attitude not age that matters.
- Our profession is changing.
- One (Web 2.0) size does not fit all.

Most important of all:

- Web 2.0 will not solve everything but it will help some people who like those sorts of thing.

He then left us with a slide of the 'Web 2.0 characters' (some of the familiar – and less familiar – tools out there) and invited us to discuss our own Web 2.0 successes. Peter collected our responses, and added some of the things he likes, to provide a useful list of Web 2.0 examples of good practice. Anyone who wants to explore what Web 2.0 can offer their library is invited to explore the following tools/university libraries:

- podcasts on information skills at Southampton and Cardiff

- Facebook at Warwick, the Open University and Leicester (for the fans of the library's toilets!)
- blogs at Bournemouth
- chat at Bournemouth
- wikis used in teaching at Leicester
- RSS at Cranfield
- and everything at McMaster in Canada…

The session was over all too quickly but it really invigorated me. Since returning home I have dusted off my 'delicious' account (www.delicious.com) and become friends with flickr (www.flickr.com). I have also started to revise my opinions of Twitter (http://twitter.com), which I had thought was just Stephen Fry tweeting about being stuck in lifts. Peter has used Twitter to build up a community of experts to recommend readings and web sites to him. For him it means peer-reviewed support. I had never thought of it like that before. Thank you, dear guru.

'The future of the workforce', by Don King
(Reviewed by Antony Brewerton, SCONUL Focus editorial board and University of Warwick)

Some of those who had enjoyed Don's main stage performance the day before made their way to a side room to hear his views on the future of the profession.

To help us focus our thinking, Don promised a 'snapshot of US academic libraries with a ten-year forecast of librarians'. The areas he covered were:

- the current academic library landscape in the US
- the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) study 'The future of librarians in the workforce'
- trends in staff structures
- career paths for academic librarians
- a ten-year forecast, the methods used and the results
- librarians' attitudes towards work issues and librarianship.

Just like Don's main stage performance, this was all very rich in data.

But what were the key messages that I took away? In many ways we are not an ambitious profession. There is no rush to get into management, and over a third of professionals with over 20 years' experience have non-supervisory roles. Salaries are considered to be low, fringe benefits are low and opportunities for advancement are limited. Most people surveyed said that the type of work that is undertaken is most important to them and this gave the highest satisfaction. Would we all do it again and be librarians if we could live our lives over a second time? With a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = 'no' and 5 = 'definitely', the score for all age ranges was around 4.

The problem isn't really with present attitudes to work but with the future. The key message Don left us with is that around 50% of the profession will leave over the next ten years. Where are our future generations? Where is our succession-planning?

In all, a rather sobering session leaving us all with much to ponder.

'Doing more with less: engaging your teams in the improvement of service', by Heather Green and Geoff Lewis, University of Warwick Library
(Reviewed by Carol Kay, project manager, professional services review/business process improvement, chief operating officer's office, University of Liverpool)

Heather and Geoff delivered a very interesting presentation on improving the shelving process at the University of Warwick. In the previous year the library had been processing over 4,000 returned books per day and reporting an average shelving time of 48 hours. It was recognised that this performance needed to be improved upon because customers were demanding a timely and accurate shelving system, enabling them to find materials that are in heavy demand.

Library staff worked with external consultants Processfix to review the existing shelving processes, with the aim of improving efficiency at minimal extra cost.
Using process-mapping techniques, staff from the shelving team worked together to uncover the real end-to-end process, highlighting the interrupted process flow and the subsequent inefficiencies.

The team came up with a new shelving process that concentrates on improving the flow of materials, eliminating the cause of bottlenecks and the subsequent build-up of unshelved books. The importance of staff 'buying in' to the new process was emphasised; they needed to own the implementation plan.

As a direct result of this process-improvement work, the shelving team achieved a remarkable reduction in shelving time with zero capital expenditure and no loss of accuracy. The former backlogs have effectively been eliminated. The project was so successful that the library staff are now working on similar improvements to their acquisitions and cataloguing processes.

'Mobile learning: lessons for learning and teaching', by Nicky Whitsed, Director of Library Services, Open University
(Reviewed by Carol Kay, project manager, professional services review/business process improvement, chief operating officer's office, University of Liverpool)

Nicky gave a very interesting introduction to the use of mobile devices in the OU, which, due to the nature of its student body, is at the forefront of mobile delivery in UK libraries. She covered several specific initiatives including:

- **MyOpenLibrary**: http://myopenlibrary.open.ac.uk/
  MyOpenLibrary is the first service of its kind in the UK. Students 'sign in' and are presented with their personal and customisable 'library' of electronic resources, selected for their course. These electronic library resources are selected from Open Library (http://library.open.ac.uk/index.html) and include e-journals, e-books, databases, reference materials and ROUTES links.

- **OU on Itunes U**: http://www.open.ac.uk/itunes/
  OU students can download open educational resources free from The Open University as long as they have itunes installed on their PC, or they can do this via their iphone.

- **OU Library Traveller:**
  http://library.open.ac.uk/services/lib-20servs/OUTraveller/
  This tool, also called 'OU Traveller', displays up-to-date information about the status of books in the Open University library collection where a reference has been found either in Amazon or Barnes & Noble. If the book is not held by the library, then an option is provided to request the book, which calls the OU library 'request a book' website page.

- **OU Mobile Safari:** http://www.open.ac.uk/safari/
  An information skills tutorial, Safari is divided into seven sections, each covering a particular aspect of information skills. Within each section there is a series of topics which students can work through at their own pace.

Nicky also described how many of these initiatives had been launched and developed through partnerships with Athabasca University, the Canadian equivalent of the OU, and more recently through a Cambridge University Arcadia Project: 'MLibraries, information use on the move', which looked at the information requirements of academic library users on the move in order to inform future development of library services to mobile devices.

Bournemouth pier

THE VISITS

The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum
(Reviewed by Rupert Wood, University of Reading Library)

'Art is the most immediate form of knowledge.'

So runs an inscription over one of the doors in the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, next door to our conference hotel and the venue for one of our local visits on the Thursday afternoon.

The Royal Bath Hotel was bought by Merton and Annie Russell-Cotes in 1876. It was re-developed

and re-decorated, 'with the greatest beauty and elegance', as Oscar Wilde wrote in the visitor's book. When the Russell-Coteses were in their sixties they built East Cliff Hall as their home next door, opening it as a museum in 1919 while they were still living there.

Boasting what must surely be the best view in Bournemouth from their sitting room, and a large collection of Victorian painting, the museum is especially notable for re-creating much of the original house in fine detail and for displaying the eclectic collection of artefacts they gathered on their travels abroad, some exquisite stained glass, much decoration in the Japanese style and a sequence of rose-hung pergolas and palm trees in the garden. The house never had any kitchens – the Russell-Coteses would summon their food from their hotel.

Sunlight was one of their chosen decorative motifs, in evidence in almost every room of this beautiful museum, and sunlight was certainly in evidence during our conference in the cliff top location of the hotel next door.

References

1   See www.cluetrain.com (accessed July 2009).

2   The slides of Sue's talk and other presentations can be found at www.sconul.ac.uk/events/agm2009 (accessed July 2009).

3   Minutes of AGM can be found at www.sconul.ac.uk/events/agm2009 (accessed July 2009).

4   Christopher West, 'We're all doomed!', the SCONUL Top Concerns Survey 2009 *SCONUL Focus*, 46, 2009, pp 111–15; see also www.sconul.ac.uk/members/topconcerns/focus46_article.pdf (accessed July 2009).

5   RIN (Research Information Network), 'Activities, costs and funding flows in scholarly communications', London: RIN, May 2008, available at www.rin.ac.uk/costs-funding-flows (accessed July 2009)

6   Julia Waite, 'Universal access by design: a visual approach to accessing book stock', *SCONUL Focus*, 38, summer/autumn 2006, pp 79–82, available at www.sconul.ac.uk/publications/newsletter/38/24.pdf (accessed July 2009)