Collaboration in Library and Learning Environments

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London: Facet Publishing, 2013
(ISBN 9781856048583)

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Whether we refer to it as 'working together', 'partnership' or 'collaboration', the practice of working with teams and individuals from outside your particular library environment is becoming more common and frequently expected of the academic library. Until I read this book I hadn't quite realised how much collaboration is needed in modern times in order to achieve our goals and objectives, and in fact collaboration comes in many forms. This volume neatly brings together many different examples and case studies of collaboration across various library and support services in both the academic and public sectors. The editors have cleverly commissioned a diverse range of chapters which makes the book even more informative in that it covers a breadth of practical examples and experiences of collaborations and partnerships.

The book focuses on how the external environment, is bringing about large scale changes to higher education and other public institutions and that on the whole, the strategic response to this is to develop new ways of working with others in order to provide better value for money and an enhanced experience for those using the support services offered within am institution. One of the book's key messages is the need for libraries to work across traditional boundaries and the chapter authors include professionals from outside library and information services as well as those responsible for leading converged or joint service teams.

The opening chapter by Rebecca Davies, sets the scene by addressing the complex themes which have led to the need for HE library and information services to maximise the opportunities for collaboration at every level. This chapter explains the 'global' context in which we are working by illustrating the four main environmental factors which will allow for libraries to focus on collaboration and provide a catalyst for change: globalisation, knowledge access and exchange, student expectations and league tables. The subsequent chapters then provide a series of case studies which effectively complement each other in presenting as broad a picture of library and support services collaboration as possible. Craig Gaskell writes about how student partnerships have been used to develop services at the University of Hull, and this is followed by a very interesting chapter on professional associations (such as SCONUL, AMOSSHE, AUA) and how they are collaborating and working across boundaries in order to support higher education leaders. One of the great things about this collection of essays is that each one of them addresses quite a different topic or case study, but the common underpinning theme is that of collaboration. The richness of the variety of the essays is very obvious in the next sequence of chapters about 'values driven collaboration', 'change management' and 'leadership development'. The chapter by Graham Stone and Dave Pattern provides a particularly interesting overview of library technology developments and how collaborative Web based tools and collaborative partnerships are shaping students' experiences of their academic libraries. There then follows an equally inspiring chapter by Liz Jolly about library spaces and the changing collaborations between university libraries and their institutions. The final chapters cover the ultimate collaboration model, that of super-convergence and finally the phenomenon of 'joint use' libraries in the United States.

This volume consists of ten very different essays, each of them illustrating a different aspect of partnership and collaboration in the modern academic library or student support setting. The collection of chapters in itself represents the very essence of collaboration, and as a complete volume provides an essential overview and comprehensive introduction to some of the key themes in this area of library work.