

LIBER Journées Paris May

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The first LIBER Journées took place in Paris in May 2015. Building on the success of its Emerging Leaders Programme, now in its third cohort, LIBER (Association of European Research Libraries) asked its Reshaping the Research Library Steering Committee to consider setting up an event exclusively for LIBER library directors already in leadership positions. Chairing both the Steering Committee and its Leadership and Workforce Working Group, Julien Roche (Director of Libraries at the University of Lille – Sciences and Technologies) took up the challenge and led the work that culminated in the LIBER Journées event that took place at Sciences Po in the centre of Paris, from 20th to 22nd May 2015. Seventeen library directors from countries Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA attended, together with seven international speakers, a chair, members of the Working Group, and the executive directors of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and LIBER.



It was made clear in the strategic vision for the event that 'the purpose of the LIBER Journées at Sciences Po is to bring twenty library directors together with eminent speakers worldwide to deliver a programme that will be stimulating, interactive and strategic, addressing major challenges that face us all. The underpinning theme will be reshaping the library and the role of the director in leading library services and provision in rapidly changing digital, educational and research environments and within a developing trend towards shared – and even outsourced – services.' The focus would be entirely on strategic issues and opportunities that challenge and motivate library directors and not on their personal development, skills, tools, methods or operational matters.

An underpinning requirement was to attract a Chair who would be present throughout the three days and would ensure cohesion, interaction and participation by all. Prof. Dr Norbert Lossau, Vice-President Infrastructures at the University of Göttingen, stepped forward to fulfil this important role. Joining him as speakers were two eminent French academics (Bruno Latour and Bruno Patino), who, of course, spoke perfect English, the Co-Chair of the task force on the future of MIT education (Karen Willcox) and a senior Library Director (MacKenzie Smith, University Librarian, University of California, Davis), a Vice Provost from UCL (G. David Price whose paper was presented on the day by Dr Paul Ayris, Library Director at UCL), a Deputy Vice-Chancellor from Queensland University of Technology (Judy Stokker) and a Library Director from Germany (Wolfram Horstmann). All speakers kindly agreed to give up their time free of charge and some of them attended and contributed to the whole event, as did Elliott Shore, Executive Director of ARL.

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Well in advance of the event the participating directors, who went through a competitive process to attend, were asked to identify the key areas and challenges they felt should be the main themes of the LIBER Journées. There were three clear priorities:

- university library within the university: positioning
- academic research and the role of the library
- leadership.

The speakers were asked to consider these priorities and gear their presentations to them. The programme of the LIBER Journées emerged as follows:

Wednesday 20 May 2015

12.00 – 13.10	Welcome and Opening: François Cavalier / Julien Roche
13.10 – 13.30	Introductions and Expectations: Norbert Lossau / John Tuck
Theme of the day	
The digital future. Visions on research, teaching and learning. What does this mean for the library?	
13.30 – 15.00	Opening Keynote: Bruno Latour, Professor at Sciences Po and Centennial Professor, LSE, London
15.00 – 15.30	Coffee / tea
15.30 – 17.00	Karen Willcox, Professor, Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics, MIT, and co-chair of the Task Force on the Future of MIT Education
17.00 – 18.00	Break-out group to discuss the issues participants have asked to discuss
19.00 –	Reception at Sciences Po

Thursday 21 May 2015

Theme of the morning	
The changing information environment. Use of information in society in the future. What does this mean for media, knowledge organizations, educators, universities, the library in its environment?	
09.00 – 10.30	Bruno Patino, Dean of the School of Journalism, Sciences Po, and Digital Services Director at France Télévision
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee / tea
11.00 – 12.30	David Price, Professor and Vice-Provost (Research), University College London
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch
Theme of the afternoon	
Innovative libraries with new initiatives. Are data the holy grail? Shared services? The visible and invisible library	
13.30 – 15.00	Judy Stokker, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Technology, Information and Learning Support), Queensland University of Technology
15.00 – 15.30	Coffee/tea
15.30 – 17.00	Wolfram Horstmann, Library Director, Georg-August-University, Göttingen
17.00 – 17.30	Reflections by Norbert Lossau
20.00 –	Dinner at the first literary café in the world – Le Procope

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Friday 22 May 2015

<i>Theme of the Day</i>	
Reshaping the library and the role of the library director as leader	
09.00 – 10.45	Break-out sessions
10.45 – 11.00	Coffee / tea
11.00 – 12.30	Closing keynote: MacKenzie Smith, University Librarian, University of California, Davis
12.30 – 13.00	Norbert Lossau, conclusions, evaluation and close
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch

The organisation of the event was not outsourced to a faceless conference management organisation. It was managed by a group of committed colleagues with a common purpose: to ensure that the event would take place, run smoothly and be as successful as possible. François Cavalier, Library Director at Sciences Po, supported by Carine Labory, led the on-site arrangements and played a key role in securing the French speakers as well as the location at the heart of Paris and a warm and friendly welcome from Frédéric Mion, Director of Sciences Po. Cécile Swiatek (secretary to the LIBER Reshaping the Research Library Steering Committee) worked tirelessly as the logistics manager and Hans Geleijnse (former Director of Library and IT Services at Tilburg) provided his input and wisdom from day 1 of preparation right through to the post-LIBER Journées outputs and evaluations. Julien Roche led the team and calmly answered literally thousands of e-mails. This joint cross-border co-operation demonstrated a fundamental strength of LIBER, bringing together like minds across the whole of Europe.

One key output of the event, apart from the personal impact on those who participated, was a set of ten commandments (not set in stone) arising from the presentations, the breakout sessions and the summaries of the chair.

Ten recommendations for library leadership in the 21st century: the library leader

- 1 Shows leadership by having a vision and by taking staff with him / her.
- 2 Supports and is directly involved in the innovation activities of the library.
- 3 Understands the university environment and the university culture.
- 4 Fosters a good relationship with the university board and the deans.
- 5 Organises regular contacts and meetings with researchers and builds up trust and credibility.
- 6 Aims at creating added value to the process of teaching and learning.
- 7 Places emphasis on small projects that can produce fast results for users.
- 8 Realises good co-operation with other departments of the university and a strong collaboration with the IT centre.
- 9 Communicates well with staff and users and clarifies what the library is doing.
- 10 Reallocates functions and positions almost continuously. Questions every single vacant position and is prepared to give up traditional library tasks.

There were lessons to be learned and they were articulated in evaluation responses. Respondents considered the LIBER Journées overall to be very good or good, an average score of 4.91 on a scale of 0 – 6. Areas for improvement were deemed to be more streamlined breakout sessions and more opportunities for discussion.



LIBER

Journées

Paris May

It is fitting to conclude this brief account of the first ever LIBER Journées with an extract from a review by Susan Reilly, LIBER Executive Director (the full review accessible on the LIBER website: (http://libereurope.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Journees_2015.pdf [accessed 24 February 2016])

So, what happens when you bring an international group of library directors together to reflect and discuss the reality of implementing and developing strategy in this period of change and reshaping the library in the process? As the dialogue between participants evolved it became clear that regardless of context, mandate or funding the biggest and shared challenge for library directors was to have a clear vision on how to lead in this changing environment. The signs throughout the Journées clearly pointed to a leadership role for the library but concrete steps or recommendations needed to be taken to establish the library as leader. These recommendations are the outcome of the first LIBER Journées. They are the embodiment of the value of bringing libraries leaders together and should and will evolve over time. Hopefully the Journées will grow to become an iterative process that brings together and strengthens leadership in research libraries not only across Europe but also globally. All of the signs are pointing in this direction.

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