

Slide 1 Library Futures

Thank you for welcoming me to the University of South Florida, Saint Petersburg. I have been asked to address Library Futures, Vision and Reality and will be focusing in on academic library futures in the next 20 minutes.

This is a recent image from the computer lab that is on the first floor of the library at the University of Regina. I chose this image because it shows a vision – it is a visually stunning space, designed by the architect Minoru Yamasaki, who was also the architect responsible for the design of the original World Trade Centre Buildings. Yet the featured image reflects some of the challenges facing us as we attempt to move forward in today's reality.

Slide 2 View of Poynter Library

In 20 minutes, I can't go into depth so your questions afterwards will be very important in you getting a better sense of my thinking about the future of academic libraries.

Slide 3

View of Regina

For those of you who have never heard of Regina and who think that Canada is little more than a frozen wasteland, this picture from my office window in June gives you a small glimpse into the beauty of a small city of 200,000 people on the Canadian plains.

Slide 4

View of my house

And this picture of my house following the first snowfall of the 2008/2009 winter season perhaps provides you a glimpse into the other 7-8 months of the year.

Before I get into my vision of the future of libraries and the challenges we face, let me provide for you my assessment of our environment – the library environment, the academic environment, the socio/cultural environment. My own personal environmental scan. Some of these observations fall into the “no brainer” category and others may not be as readily accepted by everyone. These are based on my observations, my conversations, my readings.

Libraries are not in charge of information – we once had the illusion that we were; only the most myopic can sustain that illusion (no news there)

Libraries do not operate in a vacuum – we are part of an academic and broader community that is facing great challenges and is making some significant changes to the way it operates

Technology is pervasive – technology is changing the way that people interact with each other and with information

Expectations are growing – expectation of strong customer service, expectation of the ability to customize or influence, expectation of instant gratification or response, expectation of greater accountability

Education is changing – online and distance courses, greater collaboration among students, greater interdisciplinarity, greater use of technology – WebCT, blogs, wikis, etc.

Financial resources are tight – unprecedented in the lifetime of everyone in this room today

Staffing challenges - Work force is aging – and we're not necessarily prepared; need for ongoing professional development and continuing education – we must all be lifelong learners

Blurring of boundaries - boundaries between different levels of staffing continue to break down and require re-examination; boundaries between disciplines;

Greater diversity – ethnically, linguistically, sexual orientation, culturally, age, personal preferences in the way people express themselves (very different from when I grew up in the 60s and 70s- and better) This is a better world than the one I grew up in. The diversity enriches all of our lives.

Slide 6 Wrong way

Given this environment, some people have become paralyzed. The way forward is not clear to most of us and the fear of failure is keeping many of us from taking any steps. Almost any idea advanced has its detractors who warn that it is the wrong way. Or that it was tried before and it didn't work so therefore it could never work.

I don't deny that the costs of failure can be high. But the risks faced through inaction are even higher. Stagnation means death, in the natural world, the business world, and the world of academia.

Slide 7

Tornado

How do we feel about our environment? I know that I often feel that I am being swept up in a violent storm that I have no hope of controlling and precious little hope of surviving. Yet for those of us who have survived tornado and hurricane season in Florida, we know that there is hope and that there can sometimes be great opportunities for positive change in the midst of what seems to be a time of chaos.

Slide 8

Can't please everyone

I don't want to overburden you with cliches, but they became cliches because they contained kernels of truth or wisdom.

In articulating a vision, charting a course forward, developing a strategy, you have to acknowledge that you will not please everyone all of the time. And you have to be okay with that. You have to be willing to take some risks.

That doesn't mean being insensitive or not listening or not being responsive. But it does mean that choices will have to be made, priorities will have to be set, sometimes you will have to say "no." Because attempting to please everyone usually means that no one is pleased and that nothing happens.

Slide 9

Visionaries

There are as many visions of libraries as there are librarians, multiplied by the number of faculty and students. These are some of the individuals who have caused me to think and reflect on my vision and how to reach it recently – recently meaning the past few years or perhaps the past few days. I'll be drawing on the pearls I have picked up from all of them.

Slide 10 Vision for the Library (1)

So, let's cut to the chase – what is my vision?

Student centred. The U of R – and many other institutions – are feeling the pinch of declining or stagnant enrollments. Students have choices and they are exercising those choices. Students expect to be involved and included in the discussion.

Responsive and evidence-based. This is what Jeannette Woodward in the book *_Creating the Customer-Driven Academic Library_* explains as taking the Web 2.0/Library 2.0 concept and expanding it to ALL interactions with our patrons – it is viewing our library patrons as FULL PARTNERS.

I want to lead a library that is at the center of everything going on academically on a campus. We have the resources (collections and staff) to play a central role in our campus community. We also have a service ethic

and a tradition of providing unbiased and open access to information for everyone in our communities. We should be the heart of the university because we are here to serve every member of the campus and give them the tools that they need to be successful. We've always said we're the heart of the university – we have to earn that place today – it's not universally understood or believed.

Slide 11 Archer Library Commons

The library should use the physical space allotted to it in creative, exciting ways that enhance the life of the members of the University community and that help them discover and explore the resources they need to be successful lifelong learners. The collaboration that must be the hallmark of everything an academic library does in the future should be reflected in the space allocated to us, as well as through the relationships we build with individuals and groups.

This so-called information commons at the U of R is nothing more than a computer lab with several isolated, siloed service desks on the periphery. We have proposed a new building to the provincial government that would have a first floor that would be a “cultural and intellectual hub which would enhance the opportunities for students to achieve success in a supportive environment so that they could truly become “one who serves” their communities. Taking advantage of the cultural diversity of the campus ... this cultural hub would bring to life the idea of an international education available to students in their backyard; an education that gives them the training and skills they need to make a difference in their communities.”

Although we haven't even gotten funding for a new building as of yet, we are proceeding with part of this vision by bringing other service units into the library to share a service point on a rotating basis – services such as the TLC, ISSO, Aboriginal Students Centre. The Disability Resource Office, Student Services. We are calling it the University Engagement Centre. The sign has just been put in place and two of the groups have started to provide some hours of staffing at the shared service point.

Slide 12 U Vic Commons

This learning commons has the Writing Center, Peer Mentoring Centre, Math and Stat Assistance Centre, Chemistry Centre, Physics Centre, Computer Help Desk, Library Technical Help, Respite Room (for disabled students) – this is the type of collaborative venture that students – and faculty – need and want

Slide 13 U of Rochester, Gleason Library

the Gleason library, designed after the extensive surveys and studies undertaken by the River Campus Libraries at Rochester is a hub of individual and group study and activity. It reflects some of the key elements to come out of that study – one key principle is that one size does NOT fit all. Flexibility, color, variety of furniture and spaces are some of the hallmarks of this space designed to serve undergraduates.

Slide 14 Space challenges

It's hard to be creative about the use of space when you are dealing with a critical lack of space for collections.

Many academic libraries are facing challenges in terms of space. This is a picture I took of the stacks at the U of R library a few months ago. We are at or near capacity in most of our stack areas and over capacity in our University Archives. Problems like this can be approached through collaboration, through cooperative collection development, regional storage facilities, etc.

Slide 15 Vision for the Library (2)

Library staff should know how to access, evaluate, and utilize all types of information: be it a licensed e-journal, a print monograph, an image from a special collection or archive, a digital collection, a web site, or an article from Wikipedia or a blog. Our role is not to judge the information but to provide our users with the skills they need to make independent judgments on the value and quality of the information they find.

I would hope that the library staff would be recognized for their innovation and leadership and that we would be active partners in creating the University's path through the changing educational, scholarly, and information environments. To do that, we must be extremely well versed in copyright and intellectual property issues.

The library should be known as a collection of services that is ubiquitous and not just a collection of resources tied to a particular physical space.

We have to demonstrate that we are needed and that we are making good use of the resources that have been allocated to us.

One of the areas of expertise for libraries today is in the creation and management of digital content, and in the interpretation of copyright and intellectual property. An institutional repository is a service that many libraries have undertaken on behalf of their campuses – a place where a wide variety of the content created by and for a university can be stored. At the U of R, ours is a place for capturing faculty and student work, newsletters, university records, journals, and university press publications and more. The CDA has put the library in the center of discussions on support for research, development of student potential, alumni relations, digital storage capacity, and understanding of intellectual property.

The role of the university library in an increasingly digital world is more proactive than it used to be. University libraries must today help their campuses develop and present new types of course materials, such as multimedia, digital images, streaming video and audio; they must provide them the means of making that content available over time through trusted digital archives that adhere to international standards; they must help them publish their work, through institutional repositories and other means; they must help them navigate the increasingly complex world of intellectual property in the digital era.

To survive and be useful, university libraries must be active partners in scholarly communication and instruction, as well as provide access to a variety of rich information resources.

Slide 17 Suite of services

More than just traditional reference, circulation, interlibrary loan, we have to get out to where our users are and provide services in new ways- whether that be IM reference, email, on-site services in academic units or in spaces where students congregate; helping faculty research and write grants; helping faculty develop curriculum that make good use of information resources and sometimes co-teaching – the types of services will vary from campus to campus and will be dependent on the resources available. But the one thing that we all have in common is a need to revamp, revise, and broaden our role.

We have to be in the forefront of what is happening and be constantly upgrading our services. One example of this is in implementing a next generation catalogue; this is something that is expected of all libraries at this point in time.

Slide 18 Accountability

A culture of accountability is very important, especially in times of greater financial constraint. The Nelson Poynter Library seems to be well on the road to having such a culture, as is evidenced by the outcomes assessments that are available on the library's website.

Slide 19 Jumping through hoops

Sometimes, as we attempt to move forward, people feel as if they are being asked to jump through one hoop after another.

As I try to move forward with my vision at the University of Regina, I sometimes feel that I am being asked to jump through hoops - the hoop of past practice, the hoop of who can do what, the hoop of who owns what.

I know that some of my librarians feel that they are being asked to jump through the hoop of the “flavor of the month” or that they are being stretched too thin. Support staff sometimes feel that they are jumping through the hoop of increasing expectations for taking on new roles without recognition or compensation.

Slide 20 Strategies

These are the strategies that I utilize for moving forward. I'll elaborate on them all a bit in the next couple of minutes.

Slide 21 Consult

At some point, any library has to make choices and decide which legacy services it will continue and which ones it will replace or transform. Moving forward can only take place with continuous consultation both with the people the library serves and the individuals who provide the service. We must ask questions of ourselves and the people who use our services – and those who don't – and use what we learn from them to inform our decisions.

One of the first -and ongoing - steps for any new Dean of the Library would be to meet with library staff, students, faculty, administrators and the broader community and listen to what they thought was important and needed. One key strategy is to consult, lay out some plans, take some steps, consult more, refine plans – and continue on that path forever. The need to consult never stops. And it never excludes anyone.

Slide 22 Collaborate

Libraries have been collaborating with one another for a long time, in the creation and sharing of bibliographic records, in interlibrary loans, in shared licensing of electronic resources, and much more.

I see more need and opportunities for collaboration in the future, not just with other academic libraries but also with other campus partners and our broader communities. This collaboration is a way of sharing expertise and leveraging our resources for maximum advantage. I believe that collaboration with our broader community also allows us to demonstrate our utility and accountability in new ways, something that is going to become increasingly important for institutions that get a portion of their funding from public funds.

Working collaboratively is the only way to proceed today. Libraries need to actively develop partnerships across divisions in the library, with academic and administrative units on campus and be willing to let go of turf and traditional barriers.

One of the obvious collaborations for the USF-St. Pete is to work with the USF Tampa campus. But never lose sight of the fact that the campus is independent. This is a partnership of equals, where all sides have something to gain and contribute.

Slide 23 Incremental change – plant seeds

How do we move from where we are today to where we want to be? How do we even decide what it is we want to be?

Like an ecosystem, the life of an academic library begins with a seed planted. A healthy ecosystem has plenty of nutrients and it also has variety. And it evolves and changes over time.

I am a firm believer in incremental change, in adding nutrients to the mix, in weeding out elements that are not healthy or that are no longer needed or desired. I want a garden that has something to offer everyone, and that doesn't cater to just one group's tastes or needs. And it has to take into account the changing seasons and the changing environment.

Slide 24 Gather evidence

LibQual+ is one way that libraries have gathered evidence. U of Rochester has demonstrated that there are other models for reviewing services and gathering evidence about user needs and satisfaction. Many of Rochester's techniques can be replicated – there was an ACRL presentation that talked about this.

Slide 25 Ford quote - planning

Of course, a successful library needs a plan. So I believe in strategic planning, or what I prefer to call strategic visioning. Yet, how many of us really enjoy the process of creating a strategic plan? We approach it as if it is something we have to do because it's good for us, like castor oil was rumored to be in my mother's childhood. And the reason so many people hate the process is that we have had so many bad experiences with them.

Strategic plans fail, in my opinion, for several reasons. One reason is that they are sometimes used as a roadmap that must be religiously followed. In such cases, the plan becomes an excuse for inaction. These types of plans have too much detail and arise out of a culture that feels that every course must be fully charted. A strategic plan needs to be reviewed frequently and modified. Not following through on a specific strategy outlined in a strategic plan is not necessarily a sign of failure but may rather be a sign of facing reality and acknowledging that the environment has changed.

Other strategic plans fail because they are too general and they don't really say anything. Strategic plans should enable us to set priorities.

Other strategic plans are doomed because of a belief that nothing can be done without consensus. Patrick Lencioni in the book "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team" states that "great teams understand the danger of seeking consensus, and find ways to achieve buy-in even when complete agreement is impossible. So before embarking on strategic planning today, I would want to make sure that I had a fully functional strategic planning team.

Slide 26 Take risks - balance

Any path forward has to reflect balance. For me, that balance lies between taking steps into the unknown and just trying something out – taking a risk and being willing to be wrong and learn from a mistake – and careful study and planning. I believe in collecting evidence for making decisions – as the folks at Rochester did in their studies of faculty, undergraduate, and graduate student behavior.

Too often, we in libraries think we know what's best for our users. But we often haven't collected any recent evidence or we rely on anecdotal evidence from a few experiences at a service desk.

Lencioni says in his book that “Great teams also pride themselves on being able to unite behind decisions and commit to clear courses of action even when there is little assurance about whether the decision is correct. That's because they understand the old military axiom that A decision is better than NO decision.” Part of the balance for me is being comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty.

Slide 27 Dream big

I believe we need to dream big. The obstacles will assert themselves as we move forward. But we shouldn't limit our vision.

The Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) is a collaborative program of Canada's universities. Widely recognized in Canada and abroad for playing a significant role in the development of Canada's infrastructure for research excellence, CRKN's most important initiative is its content licensing program. Through its licensing agreements, CRKN provides desktop access to electronic versions of scholarly journals and research databases for 72 participating universities across Canada. Currently, more than 2,200 scholarly journals are available online to over 650,000 university researchers and students.

CRKN grew out of the work of a joint task force of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL). CARL had a big vision and it came true. CARL has played the role of mentor to this organization that is now independent and a force to be reckoned with. Now that I serve on the Board of Directors of CARL, I know how limited their resources are. We had trouble balancing our budget last year. But that didn't stop them from articulating a big vision and taking incremental steps forward to make it a reality.

Slide 28 Beauty

Something that one of the speakers said at a library design conference I attended in April 2008. As we move forward in designing new services and spaces in our libraries, we should remember to develop things that are not just functional but that also appeal to our aesthetic sense.

And Try not to get hit by lightning