



The changing role of the subject librarian: A wider professional services perspective

SCURL Developing the learners and researchers of the future

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Outline

- Environmental and wider professional services context
- Corporate ambition and library reality
- Faculty liaison
- New opportunities
- Conclusions

Environmental Context

- Declining budgets and rising costs – ‘the new normal’ and a need to focus on value and impact of all services
- Move from print to online to is an opportunity we may not yet fully understand but we will have to be agile and nimble around the challenges from licensing to open access and new scholarly communications.
- It may be more risky to keep revising and tweaking the things we have been doing (asking for more, adding more, bolting on new tech) than standing back further and looking forward further – scenarios can show us that a complete re ‘vision’ around our ‘customers’, applications, collections and information and service infrastructure would be more sustainable and valuable to our universities in 20 or 30 years
- Corporate strategic frameworks and CRM approaches have already started to change our perspective on service design and organisation and although not widely evident to all, these are starting to drive a transformational approach

Wider Professional Services Context

- Academic Services - an opportunity to join up the student service journey – potentially transformational positioning of three distinctive professional services fronted by our ask4help single point of contact..
- Student Support and Wellbeing Services operate across 2 campus sites
 - Shortlisted for Guardian Student Experience Award 2013
 - First CSE – due December 2014
- Careers and Employment Services operate across 2 campus sites
 - Recognised by MATRIX accreditation for excellence in advice and guidance
 - Winner of national AGCAS awards – first CSE 2014
- The University Library operates 24x7 across 3 campus sites
 - Third equal in the UK in the THE student Satisfaction Survey for the last 3 years
 - Internal student satisfaction of over 90% for the last 5 years
 - Customer Service Excellence Accreditation for 4 years

October 2014

**Director of Academic Services and
University Librarian**

Jisc Infonet

Business Manager

**Head of Student Support and
Wellbeing**

**Head of Careers and
Employment**

Head of Library Services

Welfare Support
Financial Advice and Support
including Access to Learning Fund

International Student Support,
including visa support/renewals

Visa Compliance

**Counselling and Mental Health
Support**

Disability and Dyslexia Support

Student Progress Team
Case managing student 'changes of
circumstances'

Chaplaincy and Faith Advice

Policy Projects and Inclusion
Student support policies, projects and
equality and diversity for students

Guidance
1-1, group work, Faculty and Central
Delivery

Information
Multi-media careers resources, DLHE
survey

Employer Liaison
Vacancy Advertising, presentations, fairs
and events, managing internship
programmes

Learning Support
Skills Development, SkillsPlus,
Programme Support

Research Support
Research Skills, Collection
Development, Scholarly Publications

Content Services
Reading Lists, Copyright, Interlending,
Resource Discovery and Access

Customer Support
Specialist Services, Circulation,
Shelving, Library IT

Business Support
Subscriptions, Metadata, Collection
Management, Systems

 **Ask4Help – Careers and Employment, Student Support and Wellbeing, University Library** 

Management Support and Planning
Resource Management (staffing and finance), Space planning and management
Management Information, Service Quality Co-ordination
Health & Safety, Projects and Corporate Initiatives, Publications

Customer focus via a distributed service model

- **ASK4HELP** is the single service gateway joining up all points in the student journey through Academic Service
- Referrals to specialist groups from first contacts using a clear support model and triage
- Making use of social media and online services wherever possible and self service wherever possible
- Ask4help can commission experts to populate FAQs or self service support



**Ask4Help - information and advice
24/7 on or off campus.
E-mail, telephone or visit an
Ask4Help point.**

ask4help@northumbria.ac.uk
0191 227 4125
www.northumbria.ac.uk/ask4help



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Academic Services

The complex block contains the Ask4Help logo, which is a blue location pin shape with a white circle in the center containing the text 'ASK 4HELP'. To the right of the logo is contact information for Ask4Help, including a 24/7 service statement, contact methods (email, telephone, or visit a point), an email address, a phone number, and a website URL. In the bottom right corner of the block is the Northumbria University Academic Services logo, featuring a blue arc above the text 'northumbria UNIVERSITY' and 'Academic Services' below it.

Ambition

Corporate Strategy 2013-2018

- KPI 3 - International
- KPI 4 - Employability
- KPI 5 - Student Satisfaction
- KPI 6 – Research growth
- KPI 10 – Staff contribution as defined by vision 2025

Partners in learning with students and staff

- The challenge was it felt like doing more – so we had to be very clear that we were doing things differently
- In 2013 we refocused organisational structures roles and workflows to develop new services to support learning and research and reach wider user groups in line with corporate ambitions (2013-18)
- This meant moving to functional service structures and away from the traditional subject librarian and completely re visioning services including being clear about the offer – minimum standards and a relationship management approach embedding services in key workflows of the wider university business
- We also emphasised further the importance of evidence/ data driven decisions and service design and of using student feedback at the heart of that. In line with our corporate ambition and steer

Library Services Functional Structure

- Ask4help
- Business Support
- Content Services
- Customer Support
- Learning Support
- Research Support
- All services to be embedded in learning teaching and research workflows
- All services to operate to agreed standards including customer service excellence
- All service design and development to be use feedback and student voice
- All service design and development to be steered by a 'digital first' framework which had been developed in some detail

Embedding services and support to add value at the right time and place

- Developed the 'research compass' which aligned service offer to key stages in the research process from implementation to experimentation and review.
- This also helps staff focus on planning the important things with the higher impact in terms of day to day and week to week priorities
- It offers a single common language about what we do and where it fits

Student voice - embedding services and support to add value at the right time and place

Representation, e.g.

- Selection, development and training of course representatives
- Representation on committees: staff student liaison committees at course and faculty level
- Representation on institutional committees

Participation, e.g.

- Meetings between senior staff and SU officers
- Involvement of students in periodic review and course approval
- Teaching: awards and enhancement projects
- Focus groups e.g. library collections and learning space review
- Stakeholder groups – cross university

Consultation including

- Surveys (electronic), e.g.
 - Module evaluation – NU specific
 - Programme evaluation – NU specific
 - NUSSS – NU specific
 - NSS – National
 - ISB – National
 - PTES – National
 - Specific University Service / Function / experience Surveys

Feedback, e.g.

- Communication from the institution to students:
- By text, email and letter
- Verbal and face to face
- Social media
- Website

Digital First - an enabling framework

- Digital Library Place
- Digital Library Online
- Digital Library back office
- Embedded around digital literacy

What happened to Faculty Liaison 1?

- Faculty Library Liaison Managers are within the role of four service of the managers who submit a library report to all Programme Management Committee meetings. Feedback, comments and issues raised are sought, logged and acted upon systematically, supporting the Library's commitment to continuous improvement and to closing the feedback loop.
- The tangible benefits of Library provision are built into the Module and Programme Approval process. Early involvement and consultation with Library staff ensures that the correct resources and entitlements are in place to reflect and support new developments, leading to greater, long-term student satisfaction.
- The Library provides support for all Periodic Reviews and Accreditations by Professional Bodies . A tailored University Library Documentation Electronic Pack is prepared by Programme Support team in Learning Support.
- All access to services for students is through the generic service links online – ask4help can mediate these and use these to help students and as required referral to 1 to 1 support may be made available
- Staff now have direct access to library service teams in the functional areas e.g. reading list team, research support team – prioritising high touch approaches where there is greatest impact – bearing in mind the influence academic staff have on student behaviour
- The Library's [Reading List Service](#) provisions all new modules and programmes.

What happened to Faculty Liaison 2?

- All access to services for students is through the generic service links online – ask4help can mediate these and use these to help students and as required referral to 1 to 1 support may be made available
- Staff now have direct access to library service teams in the functional areas e.g. reading list team, research support team – prioritising high touch approaches where there is greatest impact – bearing in mind the influence academic staff have on student behaviour
- The Library's [Reading List Service](#) provisions all new modules and programmes.
- The reading list service is standardised and made lean using business process review and a set of business rules around acquisition and digitisation – format agnostic

Subject librarian - what's in a name?

- Richard Heseltine 1996 (Hull) predicted that the delivery of end user services will be much more systematized... the generic model of subject librarianship will disappear.. we shall have service convergence around functional responsibilities
- More sympathetically .. Stephen Pinfield 2001 (Nottingham) argued that subject staff have a crucial role to play.. But already saw more emphasis on liaison not subject specialism and more advocacy of the collections, more organisation of the information landscape, more team and project working.
- John MacColl (2010) identified the explosion of retrievable information as signalling a move from scarcity to abundance where empowerment signalled a decline in mediation and so in the role of the subject librarian – people were happy to do stuff themselves and library mediation was not the norm
- Nottingham and Hull with Manchester, Northumbria and probably others are now showing moves to functional responsibilities
- RLUK 2012 brings us up to date.. Focussing on reskilling for research Mary Auckland's findings included a high skills gap in 9 key areas, a clear trend to support driven more by researchers' requirements, a need to change the challenges faced into an opportunity and to ensure best value for money for institutions

New opportunities...

- Redesign along functional service model to fit into the scholarly workflows/ customer journeys and make best use of CRM, scholar's time and our time/ value
- Prioritise advocacy and identify our real USPs – aligned to strategic objectives 'the KPI persuaders' – refreshing our understanding of what customers want and what we and only we can offer
- Establish minimum standards and adopt a unified/ systematic approach to end to end processes and services – so underpin quality services and scale the offer for different users, in different locations, and different time zones
- Use the opportunity created to position our professional teams to deliver the added value and the new services that the scholarly audience needs
 - being proactive around research support
 - skills evidenced to outcomes like employability, graduateness and digital literacies
 - an access focus over ownership of our collections; of use business rules to segment core business while we shift our attention to research and scholarly support
 - a support model that will reach the students just in time and encourage independence
 - 'digital first' as a concept which is greater than collections online

Conclusions

- Capacity - How to make the journey - evolution, revolution or transformational change? We need to shift to make the exceptions part of a business as usual approach e.g. overseas campuses, growth in research ambition, distance learners, international students
- Capability - Identifying new roles and developing corresponding liaison, advocacy, research support roles and functional capabilities, subject matter experts and commissioning of their contributions being used to develop services with an emphasis on end to end processes, digital first and independent use
- The approach, speed, timing and risk taken will reflect institutional culture but there are some looking at transformational approaches based on CRM and recognise that inclusive systematic service design will release professional energy e.g. single point of contact for enquiries, new approaches to skills delivery, functional services around our collections – all of which can be informed and transformed using user generated evidence – e.g. service desk analytics, PDA, wider learning analytics

And finally..

‘The report of my death was an exaggeration’. (Mark Twain)

- The challenge of the role of the subject librarian seems to have been around for a very long time.. it is clear there is relevance – but we have not been successful in transitioning that
- We now have real business challenges plus new systems and technology that has brought the issue to a head again – there are new opportunities
- Whatever we do timing is of the essence

If (research libraries) are to continue to provide responsive and relevant support and services... they will need to ensure they have staff who embrace the role they play and feel confident and skilled to deliver the support and services expected of them,
And they will need to do it soon....

Auckland 2012 for RLUK
Reskilling for research

Thank you..

