pressreader™

The library of the future – **right now**

Are libraries future-proof?

We're all connected by the stories we share. Stories bring us together. They help us discover the world and understand the people around us. But, there's been a shift in the way people read. The reading habits of young people, new students, are changing – especially when it comes to newspapers and magazines.

It's not smartphones and tablets versus physical papers and glossy magazines. It's about giving students and researchers access to the most relevant information in a way that makes sense to them.

"Higher education is shifting because its core constituents – students – are starting to behave more like customers and are less forgiving of some of the inefficient and ineffective aspects of the academy not tailored for a strong customer experience."
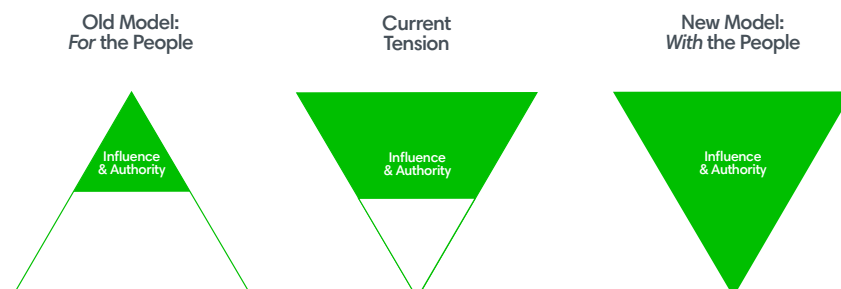Andrew Roth, President Emeritus, Notre Dame College

A recent OCLC (Online Computer Library) study found that most academic librarians think the primary reason students and staff use their services (borrowing books) will shift dramatically in the next five years. So what does the library of the future look like?

Nothing will ever be the same and that's good

This 2017 Edelman Barometer Trust Study reveals a fundamental shift in the relationship between those who traditionally held authority and the people they once controlled.

There's been a shift in the way people discover content of all kinds - whether it's videos, music, newspapers, or peer-reviewed journals. That makes the job of librarians a little harder, but if the final outcome is a better way for more people to discover important information. That's good.

Other industries are listening to what people want and fundamentally changing the way they operate.

In a world where the business models behind newspapers, magazines, literature, movies, music, groceries, and clothing, have transformed to meet drastic changes in human behavior, libraries must follow suit or be left behind. So, let's put on our own researcher hats and ask the important question:

What can libraries learn from other evolving industries?

- Switch gears, from a collection-centric institution to a people-centric service

- Make library services available to students where they want it, when they want it

- Focus on the discovery experience and adapt to changes in patron behavior

A Fundamental Shift

Source: 2017 Edelman Trust Barometer Study

Old Model:
For the People

Influence & Authority

Current Tension

Influence & Authority

New Model:
With the People

Influence & Authority

Shift from a collection-centric institution to a **people-centric service**

Content is King, Distribution is Queen

- **50,000,000,000**
  There are [50 billion webpages](#) indexed by Google. That's more than we could ever hope to read, organize, or even pay attention to. So, content may be king, but it's the distribution solutions that make content discoverable.

The video and music streaming industries learned long ago that while people are interested in particular pieces of content, it's the way that content is discovered that's most important. Remote, unlimited access on all devices – laptops, tablets, desktops and phones.

- **Open Educational Resources**
  As more open-source content is developed, libraries will have to consider their ability to let students self-direct their learning and access content when and where they need it. The key is to invest in more comprehensive, user-friendly services and deliver all kinds of content on a single, searchable service. That's how new technology will help students and faculty find exactly what they need in an ocean of data.

- **Digital Media**
  School libraries often offer printed media with a few select digital editions of periodicals and newspapers, restricted by budgets. The [OCLC study from earlier](#), however, showed that librarians expect usage of their online libraries to grow exponentially over the next few

years. The challenge, then, is that few publishers actually want to work with libraries the way students need them to. The challenge is getting all content creators to sell digital replicas of their product, instead of just a subscription to their website.

- **Technology partnerships**
  Partners like Pop Up Picks and PressReader bring content from thousands of sources onto a single, searchable platform. They also make it easy for students to access information, using IP addresses, referral URLs, or geo-fencing to authenticate connections. When libraries collaborate with distributors, publishers, students, and other digital partners, they can reach readers wherever they are and in a way that makes sense to them. The challenge here is that these partnerships have to align with the mission of the school.

"Content without discovery is like playing chess without a board."
Sarah Richards, Content Design

According to the [2017 Edelman Trust Barometer study](#), by a margin of 2-to-1, our youth fear that innovation is evolving far too quickly and is threatening their privacy, data, and job security.

So, how can academic libraries make things easier?

That's the big question.
Keep reading.

Being people-centric means Giving them what they want

Help your audience find the right content

The music and video industries have adapted to new ways people consume content – by individual songs instead of albums, or by binge-watching a series instead of waiting for weekly episodes. Newspapers and magazines use an array of digital channels to distribute their content. They've diversified their business models, expanded their network.

Libraries of the future need to create new ways for students to find and access the right information when they want it.

- 49% of 18-24 year olds said the library was a place to find information (DeRosa, 2005).

  That's only half. In order to change that perception, libraries have to create new ways to discover information that resonate with and engage a new generation of learners. Libraries have to be clear how and why they're helping students become better researchers, better at discerning fact from fiction, better at finding the content they're looking for. The challenge, for academic libraries, is to win over other faculty members as well as students.

If librarians want to help audiences find the right content, they'll have to fully embrace their role in teaching students to separate fact from fiction and navigate the world of information at each of their fingertips. The internet is full of both credible sources and unsubstantiated claims. More than ever, students need help learning how to sort through their research.

Be a destination, not a path to one

Years ago, the publishing industry learned to adapt to changes in the way people actually use their products and services. It was the same with music. The radio was never a place to discover music. It plays top hits that listeners already know and want to hear. Streaming made music about discovery, about finding something new. But, just as vinyl appeals to some listeners, so do printed books and journals.

It's all about the experience – what it's like getting your hands the book or your ears on the music.

Libraries have long been places to read, study and work. They're places for students to look for specific pieces of information and research particular topics. But expectations have changed. As consumers, students have low "tolerance for multiple contacts, transfers, long wait times, slow responses and ineffective issues resolution" (Business Wire). They're looking to make quick choices and get quick access to a world of information. Libraries have to deliver instant gratification.

So, like streaming services, libraries of the future have to become destinations in themselves, places that make the act of discovery exciting and enjoyable, rather than some vehicle to a predetermined end goal.

"Students want the library to fit with the way they work."
Ben Hickman, The Guardian

Give them what they want and keep them coming back

Be system experts, not a system of experts

Remember video stores. In a video store, the best employees were the ones who knew all of the endings of all the best films. They knew how to make recommendations and help customers make decisions. They made the destination more appealing by focusing on the discovery experience.

Now, streaming services have given that role to an algorithm – for better or worse. That process has been automated and scaled out to millions of people – simultaneously.

For example, Netflix's "differentiator lies in its use of data, terabytes of which are analysed to build recommendations for each subscriber…people expect to get what they ask for on demand without waiting." (James Silver)

The librarians of tomorrow have to transform from experts at helping students find information to experts at helping students use and navigate discovery technology. Libraries have to become service providers, "delivering key services and support activities required by user in line with institutional requirements, often at scale" (SCONUL). Libraries should lead the building of intelligent discovery systems and create an engaging digital library experience.

"The typical Netflix member, on average, will only look at 40 or 50 titles before deciding what they want to watch, even though there are thousands of titles available. So it's important we present the right content to the right member at the right time."
Todd Yellin, Vice President of Product Innovation, Netflix

For libraries, the difference is that their algorithms or search networks should work across all systems and consider other parts of the patron's life as a researcher – unlike Spotify and Netflix which only consider user behaviour within their products.

It's about what happens, not what you find

Grocery stores have transformed to emphasize customer experience over everything else. From store design, to online shopping, to – most recently – subscription delivery services. It's all about making the shopping experience less stressful and more rewarding for the consumer. Libraries of the future should take note.

The whole Whole Foods experience

Whole Foods, a popular high-end supermarket known for organic vegetables and free range meat, has made shopping an experience. When I visit, I first must walk through the bakery and the floral department. I'm greeted by the bakers and the chefs. I'm offered samples.

I'm immediately brought into their world and encouraged to stay. The aisles are designed to bring me along on a journey that leads me to consider new grocery items I hadn't written on my list.
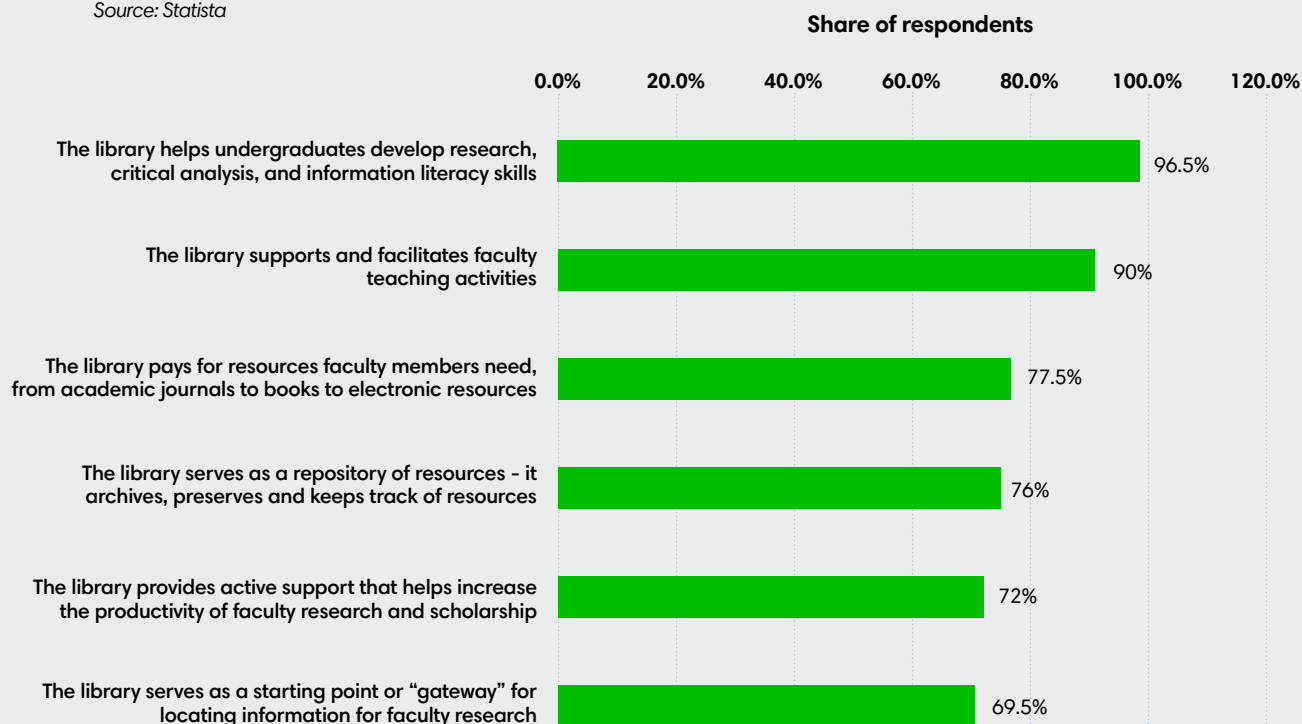
Self-service salad bars and hot food serving stations give me more control, more personalization. Sometimes I try the new thing, sometimes I don't.

Either way, I know that that is the place to go when I want to discover something new.

New resources, spaces, and technologies will help librarians engage students in a way that feels individual, personalized, and helpful. For academia, remaining "relevant and accessible in the digital space means competing with the seamless experiences students are used to in the rest of their lives" (Ben Hickman).

Service priorities of academic libraries according to academic library directors in the United States in 2016

Source: Statista

Share of respondents

The library helps undergraduates develop research, critical analysis, and information literacy skills	96.5%
The library supports and facilitates faculty teaching activities	90%
The library pays for resources faculty members need, from academic journals to books to electronic resources	77.5%
The library serves as a repository of resources - it archives, preserves and keeps track of resources	76%
The library provides active support that helps increase the productivity of faculty research and scholarship	72%
The library serves as a starting point or "gateway" for locating information for faculty research	69.5%

Caption: US academic library directors' prioritiesand borrowing than ever before.

Every priority listed in the survey responses are internal library goals rather than external student or user goals. It's clear that while libraries and librarians emphasize research capabilities and one-on-one education, they're not concerned with the overall student experience.

Academic libraries should think about who their audiences are and what kind of service they're looking for.

It's about getting the right content
in front of the right audiences
at the right time
through the right channels
for the right price.

Academic Library Trend Watch

Over the next few years, academic and research libraries will face a number of challenges. They'll have to improve digital literacy and make services and resources more accessible. They'll have to adapt entire organizations to modern student behaviour while improving library integration with other parts of their institution. They'll also have to contend with increasing political pressures, budget restraints, and demands for radical changes in service.

Here's where we think those factors will take libraries in the next few years:

2018

Adopting new technology

Research data management

Recognizing and valuing the user experience

2019

Reimagining library patrons as content creators

Rethinking library spaces as collaborative makerspaces

Considering online identities and developing personalized experiences

2020

Collaborating across institutions and across industries to create seamless experiences

Implementing smart discovery tools

Integrating artificial intelligence into the discovery process

Communication with patrons through technology