Q&A Responses

Library Strategy: Beyond Covid - Ed Fay

1. Really interesting around decolonisation, bias of collections and academia. Could you expand on what your plans are in this area?

The University has convened an anti-racism steering group [link] to coordinate activities, which include areas that Library support: decolonising curricula (through diversifying reading lists; we have worked so far in Medical and Arts subject areas); decolonising collections (we will appoint an advisory board who will steer a review of our collection development policy, curatorial, interpretation, and exhibition practice, and documentation and cataloguing); and research into the history of the founding and funding of the University (which is supported in part through our University archive).

2. You talked about financial sustainability and blended learning - what strategic role should institutions' senior leadership take in the campaigns regarding the prices of ebooks and the likes of Jisc's dealings with Elsevier.

Senior leadership can help to focus us on outcomes – the purposes and impact of blended learning on the educational outcomes and student experience of our community – and the financial realities of our institutions. I think that those narratives can strengthen our collaborative work with Jisc and through other consortia – the way that journal subscription negotiations now have a joint UUK/Jisc lead for example.

3. How the post covid strategy would be costed, given that pressures on finance is increasing ?

A real difficulty, given that the pandemic brings both significant change expectations and financial risk and restraint for our institutions. This can only be done through prioritisation – the evidence base on which new investment is really needed in infrastructure to support blended learning and research – and through stopping doing the old. In my experience, the pandemic has meant that we've got better at stopping things – we've had no choice – but we've also had a year with significant pressure. A lot of that comes from the constant pace of change, so we also need to pace ourselves over a multi-year roadmap of change.

4. The pandemic has given our staff the opportunity to display their adaptability and creativity. I am concerned that may be lost as we return to normal. Any suggestions on how we might harness that approach and keep it going?

The character we have shown has been so impressive, I don't see how we can build these futures if we don't continue to work in these ways. Any institution which quickly retrenches and doesn't deliberately take these opportunities will flounder. At Bristol, we will focus more on cross-team working, more structured opportunities for personal development across wider areas of work, more flexibility in how and where our services are delivered, and better team cohesion and information sharing.

5. There is a tension between digital by default and decolonising the collections. So much decolonisation content is still only available in print. I was wondering if you had any thoughts on this?

Absolutely, the equity of knowledge infrastructures is widely dispersed and inconsistent. We should invest our content budgets in diversifying our sources of knowledge which will increase their sustainability (linking them to institutional activities I mention in answer to the previous question) and also consider our global role in promoting equity of access and ways in which can support more collaborative research and partnerships which will foster knowledge creation. University Presses are another way in which we can make our platforms and infrastructure available to support those partnerships and knowledge dissemination.

6. We have a policy of buying the digital copy of any print resources we buy. However, some publishers still charge an unrealistic price which costs our FE library out of the market. What is your view on how we can persuade publishers that this is not an equitable position?

Our power comes through collaboration, in the short-term by working better through procurement consortia, particularly when we are investing more as a sector in these purchasing models. There is a lobbying role for our senior leaders, as discussed above in the previous question, to amplify the issues of inequity and link to strategic agendas – for example around government policy and lifelong learning. In the longer-term, other collaborative initiatives such as OERs need to be given serious consideration as alternative routes for investment. They will take time to provide credible alternatives, but some moves are starting to be made. For specific titles, the publisher may negotiate on price if not purchasing i.e. no revenue is the alternative.

Stop! Carry on…

Reflections on managing a library collection and a collection management team - Ruth Philips

1. Ruth, in your opinion, has the Covid strengthened the case for a integrated LSP, where Reading list is part of the single architecture hence avoiding the cumbersome editing of data?

Certainly for me it has. The work last Spring highlighted to me how much 'more' work the team were needing to do working in separate systems, it was definitely a multi-step process rather than just a few additional clicks. Obviously this is not quantified at this point, but my gut feeling is that it was more time and labour intensive and left us open to errors.

Data matching has long been one of my teams most laborious and least satisfying tasks. We do a significant amount of reading list matching to manage the collection, both in terms of acquisitions and weeding (deselection / collection management whatever you wish to call it) and it is so easy for things to go wrong. It's also very time consuming if you need to run multiple reports at different stages of a process and then need to rematch plus anything which involves excel formulas and transfer / manipulation of data is risky.

We're starting to see the benefits of moving the majority of our purchasing to Rialto, joining up holdings, circulation and acquisitions information is really useful and we already note that the missing part of the jigsaw is reading list data.

Whilst I am realistic that having everything in one system will no doubt present its own issues, bugs can still skew things and editions / formats will always be an issue, as I said in my talk it's definitely informed some of the requirements I want to see in action as part of a future reading list review.

2. Would you be open to other institutions contacting you to discuss your experience with Rialto?

Absolutely, my email is r.phillips@mdx.ac.uk, happy to arrange a chat / show and tell if that's easier

3. I'm interested to know if there are any new/pandemic services which have been a bit of a Pandora's Box? I'm thinking specifically about Click & Collect which I suspect we'll be pressured to continue with so many learners not living locally and with fewer days required on campus

Not specifically 'click and collect' but we have always offered self-service collection of requests for titles which were available on the shelf, the argument is that this supports organised students who may only be on campus part of the week and are planning their reading in advance.

In theory it does what it needs to, in practice a significant number of the requests remain uncollected (wasted staff time) – for a variety of reasons, so I would suggest reviewing the data on this before agreeing to making it a permanent service offering. It is not enough to just say the item was uncollected, it may because the request process time did not align with the student being on campus, additionally need to separate out 'on shelf' request data, from 'on loan' request data.

But yes I think there will be other things, really anything which may be seen as supporting remote learners! As I mentioned in my talk I think eBook access without turnaway will be a challenge for us to move away from without negative feedback and hard to meet without ongoing changes to the budget. Additionally I can see bookable spaces being something which is valued by students, in the same way that it's great to be able to book a table in a pub and have drinks brought to you!

Acquiring, integrating and troubleshooting eResources - Fiona Durham

1. How do you keep the wiki? On a google doc?

   The Wiki we use is based on MediaWiki: https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/MediaWiki

2. Could you tell us a little more about your library authoring team?

   The learning and teaching librarians work in a matrix structure of which authoring is one role. (the others are academic liaison, live engagement, enquiries and accessibility) each librarian will have two or three roles in the matrix. The authoring team create learning activities both generic and for

particular modules or faculties. The longer activities are written in an XML editor and rendered to the VLE and look like other OU module material, unfortunately this is not available outside the OU. They also create activities in Being Digital which is freely available. https://www.open.ac.uk/libraryservices/beingdigital/ They train on specialist software including Camtasia, Oxygen (xml editor) Xerte and animation. Like all the librarians they have a remit to create accessible activities. We are currently looking into an inhouse tool to use an equal, diverse and inclusive approach to the activities.

3. Do you use 'remote diagnostic service' such as LogMeIn or teamviewer to troubleshoot e-access problem within user's device?

    We have access to a tool called GoToAssist which would allow us to look at a user's screen but this is not really used by the librarians although it is in use by our computing helpdesk. We use Comm100 webchat tool and we are looking into whether to use its functionality to share screens.