



The Unusable Library: urban myth or user reality

Professor Derek Law

University of Strathclyde

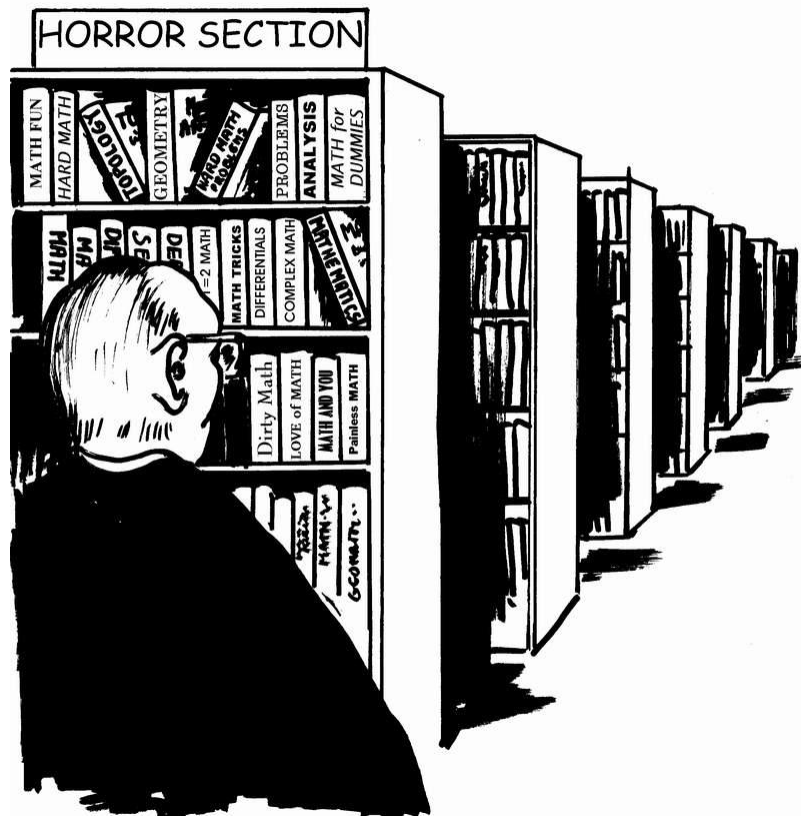
(a.k.a. The Can Do Thistle Big School)

Everything in the garden is rosy?



- More traffic through the door
- The Information Society
- Knowledge Economy
- Need for information management understood
- Library as place
- OCLC is doing our R&D
- Thomas Young died in 1826
- Come to us and we will reveal the treasures of the world

Be afraid, be very afraid



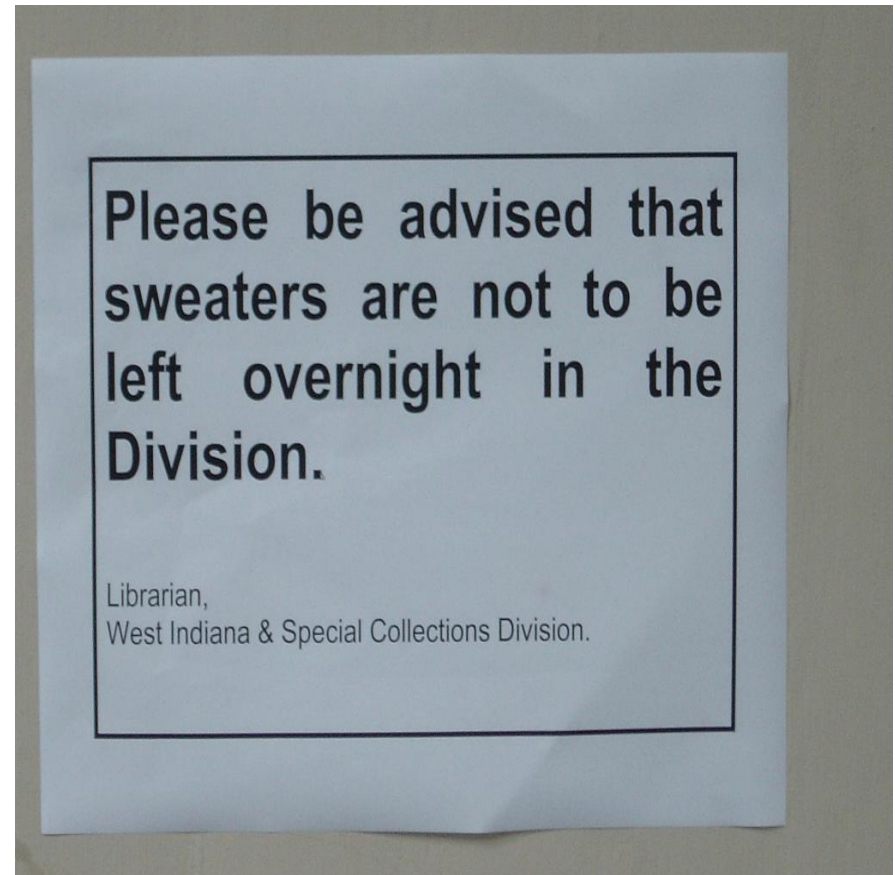
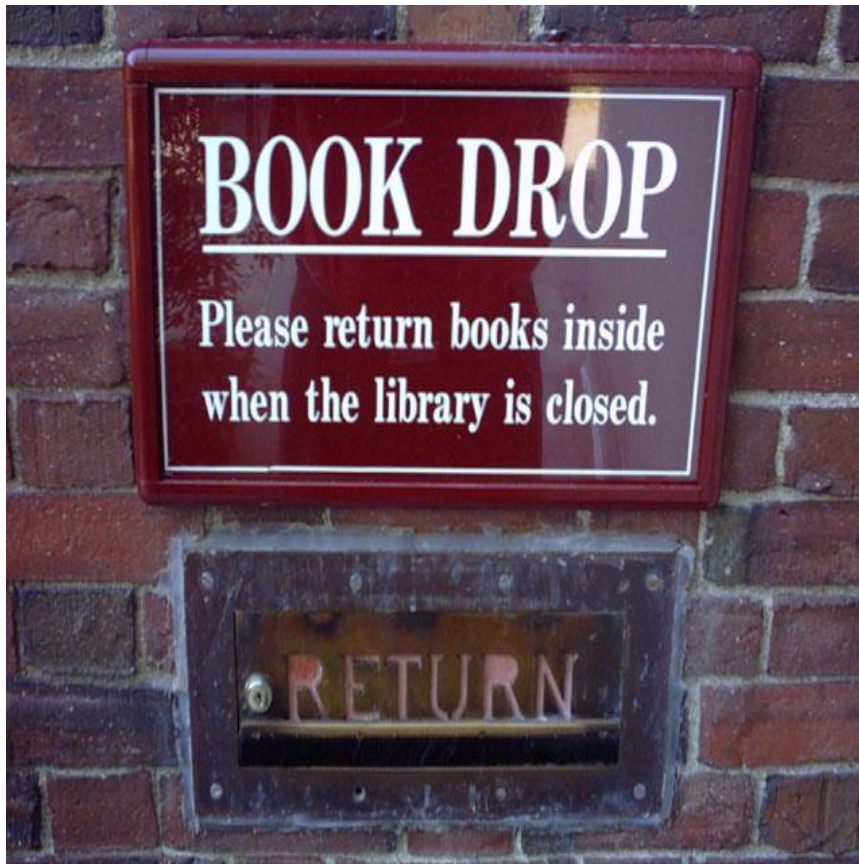
- Amazoogole defines expectations
- Declining book loans
- Decreasing use by researchers
- Seduction by the Internet
- Just enough not just in time
- Irrelevance of librarians
- Changes in user body
- Changes in pedagogy
- Libraries are no longer the heart of the university - they are the child's comfort blanket of the university

The Unusable Library



- Libraries are defined by what you can't do not what you can do
- No kindling of naked flame
- Food wars
- Silence!!!!!!
- This terminal may not be used for e-mail
- Dewey Decimal Classification

Our message?



The Google Phenomenon

- When everything is in Google why did we need a library?
- What makes your library distinctive?
- Where do you add value?
- Blending of home and office/workplace
 - Ubiquitous and mobile computing
- Difference between selection and recruitment
- The library as (alien) place
 - Success of Internet Cafes and Bookshops with Coffee

End of the story for librarians?



University of Bangor
School of Oriental and African
Studies

You....?

A New Breed of Staff

- Well bred staff?
- The Nancy Pearl Phenomenon
- A new breed of staff?
 - Marketing skills
 - Communication skills
 - Service not custodial orientation
- Breeding new staff?

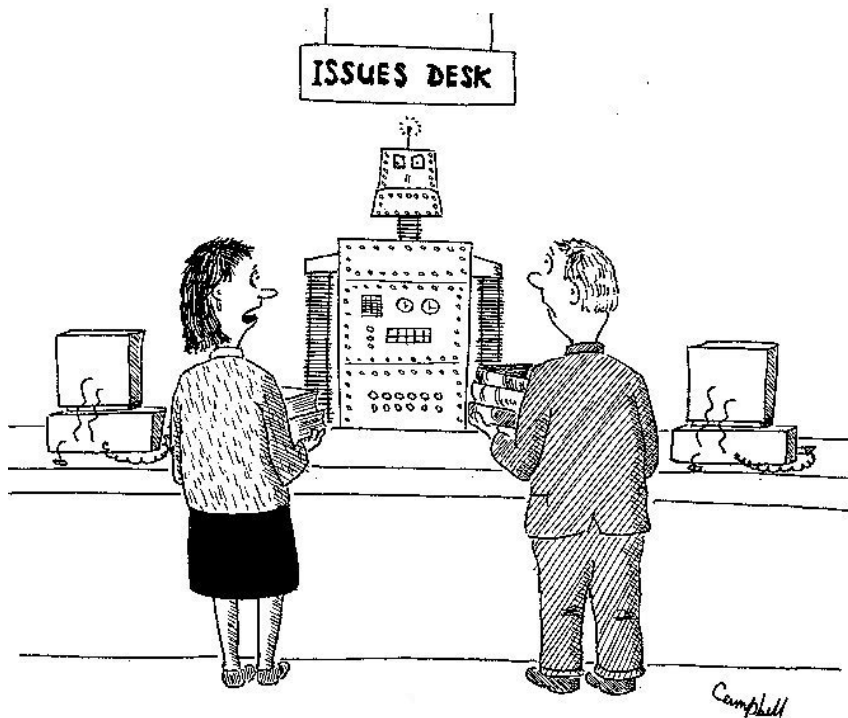


Breeding constraints



- The Unusable librarian
 - Sociable cataloguers?
- Low-flying librarians
- People who behave like prima donnas should first learn to sing
- Attitudes are more important than techniques
- Role of library schools and library associations in cpd

Training implications



- Courteous and efficient self service
- Wikis and user contributed content
- The growth of the a-literate
 - Note the OCLC numbers!!
- Image and sound define the world, not text
- Academic staff need training too
- Avoid employing unlucky people - throw half of the pile of CVs in the bin without reading them.
- Convert them to policemen, the only business where the customer is always wrong

Personally I think they went a step too far making the library electronic

Ignoring our users: a history of librarianship

- The unusable library
 - Use it when it suits us not when it suits you
 - Our rules not your needs
 - Try to do your children's homework
- Unused by academic staff
 - Disconnection with research - and budget setters
- Unused by many students
 - Changing demography and work patterns (24x7)
- Disconnection with learning and changes in pedagogy

The Virtual Research Environment

- offers personalised services
- synthesises access to information and services
- provides a supported working environment
- used for finding information
- used for disseminating information
- facilitates collaboration in new ways and across old boundaries
 - international and inter-institutional
 - pooled research

Be sceptical of researchers

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The danger of wearing an anorak

Chui M G Cheung MRCOphth Omar M Durrani FRCS(Glas) Ming S Lim MB
BS Mahesh Ramchandani FRCS(Ed) Somnath Banerjee FRCS(Ed) Philip I
Murray PhD FRCOphth

Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre, Birmingham, UK

**Correspondence to: Professor P I Murray, Academic Unit of Ophthalmology,
Division of Immunity and Infection, Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre, City
Hospital NHS Trust, Dudley Road, Birmingham B18 7QU, UK E-mail:**

P.I.Murray@bham.ac.uk

Campaigns to reduce road traffic accidents have paid little attention to the way headgear could interfere with vision. Binocular visual field measurement was undertaken in six healthy volunteers wearing four different types of anorak. All four anoraks greatly reduced the horizontal and superior field of vision. The anorak producing the worst reduction resulted in a width of vision of 99° and only 15° of vision above eye level, versus 167° and 52° respectively without an anorak.

Anorak wearers should turn their heads to look sideways before crossing the road.

Information Skills for Users



- Change in nature of student body after massification
- 50% participation changes need
- Teach them at school, not on arrival?
- Links to Virtual Learning Environment
- The satisfied inept
- The University of Melbourne Language School in Glasgow
- Third Stream income and different user needs

"I'm a librarian, not a search engine"

Information Services from libraries, not!

- Quality assurance of resources
- Creating special collections – real or virtual
- Digitisation
- Digital Asset Management
 - Cataloguing what you don't have
 - IP management
- Digital Curation
- Information Arbitrage
- Institutional Repository
- Data storage for humanities as well as science

Institutional repositories

“Digital collections that preserve and provide access the intellectual output of an institution.”*

encouraging wider use of open access information assets

may contain a variety of digital objects

- e-prints,

- theses,

- e-learning objects,

- datasets

* Raym Crow The case for institutional repositories: a SPARC position paper. 2002.

“Studied ambiguity guided by parsimony”

- No increase in resource – at best
- What will replace photocopying income?
- Library staff are very good at working incredibly hard doing the wrong the things
- What did you do with your document supply staff and your serials check-in staff?
 - Mine write web pages!!
 - Others make signs



User alienation

- The unusable electronic library
 - Compare your OPAC with Google
- The web is the information space
- We excel in mechanisation not automation
- Airport luggage trolleys with internet access
- The hard coffee drive



Disposable culture and instant gratification

- You have ten seconds and two clicks
 - Page 12 of the Google search
 - Googlewhacking
 - Buckminsterfullerine sundae
- Just enough not just in time
- The i-pod and micro-payments
 - The buy-it link



- Not delivering what we promise
- “It was the sort of library where you wiped your feet on the way out rather than the way in” (*Brian Enright*)
- Libraries are defined by what you cannot do **not** what you can do
- Universities are producers **not** just consumers

Electronic Library Design

- Cultural assumptions
- Linguistic Assumptions
- Disabled Users
- Bandwidth assumptions (pdf and graphics and sound)
- We have students from 102 countries
- The library is a point on the web, not the point of entry
- The website with no hotlinks
- Look like Amazon – cover art, reviews, you may also like...
- Create virtual collections –where is your e-collection strategy?
- E-collections or Cabinets of Curiosities

Put not your trust in university management

- They manage by exception
- As you know university management is a gathering of important people who singly can do nothing but together can decide that nothing can be done
- Not Dragons but Wurlitzers: Our management team is known as Wurlitzer. This refers to a collection of tubes of various shapes and sizes which make all sorts of queer noises but only in response to the commands of a remote operator. Appropriately enough they are only called on to work at periodic intervals and spend most of the time being on display and doing nothing!

Library Future Options

- For every problem there is a solution which is neat, plausible and wrong [HL Mencken]
- The librarian of hidden shallows
- Vanilla services or customisable personalised services

SO

- Think services not products
- Advice for course designers on ethics, plagiarism and quality assurance
- Find where you add value
 - – or get used to running a book museum
- Look at the production of information not its consumption

Because, lots of people confuse destiny with bad management