

Future Directions for Digital Libraries

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Introduction to SERS

- The Bodleian Library
- ~30 “Bodleian” libraries
- ~30 other libraries
- 46 college libraries
- And a few others!
- 750 Staff
- £25M budget
- 11 million items
- 156 shelf miles (250 km)
- SERS provides all electronic services



Key Influences

- Changing nature of intellectual discourse
- Shift of emphasis in outcomes
- Resource pressures
- Impact of technology
- ...this is by no means exhaustive!

Changing nature of intellectual discourse

- Artifacts of discourse
 - Books, letters, papers, websites, social media, linked-data
- Reduced turnaround times
 - Currency of content
- Rise of interdisciplinary projects
 - Reduce silo-ization
- Rise of collaborative projects
 - Reach and openness

Shift of emphasis in outputs

- Shift to born-digital content
- Publication not necessarily the primary outcome
 - Creation of (online) resources
 - Data/information unpackaged, linked, diverse format
 - Creation of communities
 - Dynamic and ephemeral content
 - Concept of “impact”
 - How is this measured?
- There is no “thing” that can be deposited

Resource pressures

- Declining/static library budgets
 - Growth in digital at expense of paper
- Increasing unit costs of traditional resources
- Lack of technical skills
 - Transition of existing skills
- Explosion of digital content
 - Digital legal deposit
- More non-digital formats

Impact of technology

- Internet technologies and standards encroach on many traditional library and academic areas
 - Often more pragmatic and better supported
 - Open Source and Open Standards
- RDF, Semantic Web and linked data
 - Access and reuse of content is a key value proposition
- Decreasing unit costs of processing and storage
- High rate of change
 - With engagement by users



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Implications for Libraries

...how to maintain our role as information custodians in this changing environment...

Proactive approach to content

- Involvement early in the content creation cycle
 - Proposal or bid stage
- Embed standards and preservation at the outset
 - Preservation and curation of online content after the event is not cost effective
- Dynamic resources need hosting rather than archiving
 - Store knowledge directly – channel rather than artefact
 - Versioning
- Visibility of hosting and preservation costs

Need for flexibility

- Cannot know what content types we will need to store
 - Today's standards are tomorrow's file-format obsolescence problems
 - Accept and support heterogeneity – one size does not fit all
- Need new skills
 - Engagement with content creators
 - Wider range of technical skills
- Review design decision from the viewpoint of what it might prevent you from doing

Break down silos

- Assemble diverse ad-hoc collections to order
- Interoperability and accessibility are key aspects of preservation
 - Otherwise it is hard to justify the costs
- Accept heterogeneous metadata
 - Domain specific and web-driven standards
- Registries as enhanced catalogues
 - Linked data and distributed data

Expand view of content

- Objects have a context from which much of their meaning is derived
 - Instead of flat metadata, generate additional context objects
 - People, places, events/activities, organisations
 - Especially true for datasets
 - Much can be generated automatically via administrative systems
- Context objects provide hooks for developing online resources
 - They are often the objects of real interest to academics
- Objects are not static – preservation challenge



Be pragmatic

- Not feasible to curate everything (like the real world)
 - The “Bit-Bucket” preservation store
- Not all material is preservable for reasonable cost
 - Store or forget
- There is no single route for service delivery
 - Most of our users aren't born yet
- There is no graceful exit strategy
 - Continuous migration/evolution



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Questions

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