IT as a Utility Network+ workshop: Libraries of the Future

25 March 2014, Sir Duncan Rice Library, Aberdeen

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1. Introduction and summary

This workshop was the latest in a series on this subject. The first event took place at the Bodleian Library in Oxford on 17 April 2013 (read the report) and a smaller, scoping group met on 18 September 2013 at the University of Southampton, A further meeting was held at the British Library on the 13th of November (read the report) and there was a subsequent workshop with a focus on scientific research data at the OERC, Oxford, 5th December. This last event was timed to coincide with the "research data management: finding our role", the Annual Workshop of the International Association of Scientific and Technological Libraries (IATUL) to which ITaaU contributed.

The goals of the day for this meeting in Aberdeen were to:

- Explore role of IT utilities in the context of the evolving role of libraries
- Capture key issues for libraries engaging with their communities
- Articulate a route forward for investigating and developing these findings
- Broaden the network of people with interests in this area.

The event was attended by participants from the National Library of Scotland, National Archives and British Library as well as from several academic institutions including researchers from the dot.rural Digital Economy Hub, University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon University and University of Northumbria. The majority of attendees had not been at previous ITaaU Network+ events.

Dr Simon Burnett from Robert Gordon University started off the discussion with a presentation on knowledge management in libraries which was followed by a presentation by Tim Gollins and Professor Michael Moss on the Digital Sensitivity

Review. A further presentation was made by Sarah Chapman and Lynsey McNab on the University of Aberdeen's Learning and Outreach programme.

The discussion that followed, in breakout groups was based around two areas: Memory and Business Models.

Ideas for future work that emerged out of the discussion included:

1. Running a joint workshop with the NEMODE Digital Economy Group specifically looking at digitization, the 'multiplier effect', the impact on changes to library real estate, trust models;
2. A project involving knowledge exchange with communities to identify community needs and identify lessons learned from other initiatives.
3. Exploring the idea of the community as the library and new methods of co-creation to enable the 'community as creator and curator'. Experimental online resources could be created for communities to develop online presence.

A number of pledges were made of work to take forward, key of which were developing a journal article based on work to date, developing wikis or communal work spaces to share ideas and developing pilot projects.

2. Summary of Presentations

Simon Burnett presented on the topic of Knowledge Management for Libraries.

Simon gave an overview of the 'murky waters' of information and knowledge and how the complexity of unpicking relationships between knowledge and information make it very difficult to create models. Rather than getting into a lengthy debate about the differences between knowledge and information (which is a recurring debate in KM) it was suggested that these mean different things to different people and is a personal issue.

Knowledge management (KM) echoes the function and traditional historical notion of what a library is, as guardians or curators of knowledge. KM processes and enablers include: the capture and access of knowledge, how it's shared, how it is captured and accessed, how new knowledge is created, culture and behaviour, organisational infrastructure, strategic vision and retention and storage.

Recent research on KM has had a focus on KM as a service offering. There is a focus on internal use of KM and a renaissance of existing skills in library science. It is not just knowledge management but knowledge processes that are important to consider.

Key issues/Scope for Future Research

- Using KM as a lens to look at the relevance of libraries to the knowledge economy
- Role and engagement in broader organisational KM initiatives
- Use of tools/technologies (Intranets/Semantic Web)
- Potential renaissance of 'traditional' library skills in new (digital) contexts
- Role of libraries in facilitation/democratisation of knowledge production
- Role of libraries in reconceptualising knowledge itself

Presentation 2: Tim Gollins and Michael Moss: Digital Sensitivity Review

In this presentation the myth of the 'digital black hole' was dispelled and instead it was argued there is a 'digital supernova' with too much and not too little digital information.

These challenges are being compounded by changes in working practices and that 'policy by email' quadruples the amount of information that archivists and librarians have to keep.

Decisions need to be made about what to collect and who should collect it. As libraries are collecting institutions it makes sense for them to take this role on but there is a need to manage sensitive materials. A significant problem is the unknown contingent liability and digital artefacts have different challenges due to the factors of volume, complexity and risk. Paper material is also now being perceived differently because of the potential for digitisation. Tim and Michel outlined the Abaca project which is technically assisted sensitivity review of digital records. Abaca is:

- A framework that is generic and configurable.
- Method about managing risk
- Need to establish processes for reviewing material
- Tool to prioritise, review and estimate residual risk
- Information retrieval and machine learning

For more information see: projectabaca.wordpress.com

The presentation concluded with an overview of the debate surrounding who pays for digital preservation and what the justification is for keeping these materials.

Presentation 3: Lynsey McNab and Sarah Chapman

The final presentation on the second day of the workshop was by two members of staff from the University of Aberdeen Special Collections department. Sarah and Lynsey outlined the learning and outreach programme which involves:
Schools, Communities, Volunteers and interns, Exhibitions, and the Wider community (via online and social media) plus large project collaborations.

The University library had no previous provision for school programmes but the new building includes facilities such as a learning room and other facilities which enabled the programme to be developed. It was decided to create a programme of workshops that would be available to schools and the team found collection requirements that met the needs of schools (e.g. Ancient Egypt, Jacobites etc) To date there have been 105 school visits and nearly 3000 individual visits to the new library.

Lynsey and Sarah discussed some of the challenges that they face in their work. These included the fact that teachers don't always think of archives and manuscripts as materials that they can work with. There are further barriers because some members of the community view the University as a closed off place and an academic institution. Many of the children are very young and therefore innovative activities are being designed engage them. The team discussed the specific challenges of engagement with documents rather than artefacts such as swords which is a much more 'layered' experience and requires skilled facilitation to help the children with interpretation.

Lynsey and Sarah indicated that have had a positive response so far - teachers say that the experience makes children feel that the experience has made university as a realistic option for them. Future initiatives will include creating resources for secondary school teachers to use in the classroom and CPD activities for teachers.

Other initiatives that were discussed included community activities such as 'family fun' that gets parents and children working together. To date 42 events with 2000 participants (parents and children) have been conducted. The aim is to change the way people think of the university and the community and the library are reaching out to the community. Other initiatives included:

- Summer School- Aberdeen Biodiversity Centre and Kings Museum
- Adult events- book binding workshops,
- Volunteers and interns
- Blog
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest and Flickr
- Large projects and collaborations such as Book Week Scotland and Explore your Archive

Hi Res images are on the formal part of the website but the team indicated that there was some concerns about the use of social media. This was not so much for copyright or privacy concerns but more about generating additional work for the departments but this is under review

The presentation concluded with a discussion about how monitoring and evaluating impact was consistently carried out and they believed that the process of continuous consultation with the community was key to the success of the initiatives.

3. Overview of topics covered in discussions

Challenges of digitisation of sensitive information

Material used to be withheld under a 30-year transition into the public domain which was perceived to be 'a career duration' but it is now moving to 20 years and 15 in Scotland. Different communities have different sensitivities. Digital artefacts have different levels of discoverability- people can copy and share. Key questions included:

- Why would you make material more available if there are issues around sensitivities?
- Why should we make things available if its creating problems?

It was agreed that if a citizen wants to hold the state to account they need to have access to information but that there are still great challenges in determining how to enable this access. The discussion moved beyond the sensitivity of the information and how to increase usage of the data. One participant suggested that once sensitive information had been removed it could be 'gamified'

Complexities of community engagement and libraries

It was discussed that learning needs to be done by both libraries and communities and that it is simplistic to consider the relationship as unidirectional. There was a discussion as to whether libraries and librarians needed to be 'rebranded' but the consensus was that debating roles and titles was not useful as long as the value of

information is recognised. A further definitional issue raised was the different concepts of community- from small to large and between geographical and distributed communities

The discussion moved on to the potential role of the library for assisting local community heritage initiatives. While discussing how libraries could assist community groups, the issue of autonomy of locally based groups was raised. These groups have very different senses of value than state led ones and personal historical narratives are developed by them. Community groups can feel restricted because they can't publish some materials that they've collected but legal restrictions are in place. A further issue raised was who should be able to edit the information gathered and how to ensure that the provenance was maintained.

Digital Inclusion

The 'Scottish context' of Digital Inclusion and Participation was discussed. A participant indicated that the Scottish Government are moving towards content and not just infrastructure and that there is now need to improve government services. The group discussed the issue of usability and how usability of technology is not necessarily equated to use. The RSE- digital engagement report was recommended as a useful resource that analyses initiatives to widen participation. Other digital inclusion efforts mentioned was the initiatives in Glasgow where broadband is included in the rent of housing association

Mechanisms for engagement between libraries and community groups

The team discussed innovative projects that have been developed to date. Numerous projects were mentioned and a potential future endeavour for the group could be to map these and develop a typology and metrics for evaluating which were successful and why. Projects mentioned included: an initiative at a library in Surrey City Centre Canada that you can book out people. Sound Scotland- sound archives from 75 archives. The aim of the Sound Scotland project is to make oral history much more discoverable.

The discussion also discussed how there was a move away from libraries **collecting** vast amounts of records and information and towards **connecting** existing collections.

Some groups do not want the library to 'take' their collections but do benefit from support and training from libraries.

Breakout group 1: Where does the community keep its memories?

The role of the library was discussed as being able to direct people to information and knowledge. The group discussed the fact that while libraries are sometimes argued to have been made obsolete due to search engines, there is an important role in terms of fulfilling the functions that 'google doesn't know' such as adding context and value to information. Libraries were proposed to be spaces that could facilitate participate and enable the construction of knowledge. It was also argued that libraries and librarians could provide education about the processes of risk assessment and information literacy.

The group discussed how the library could potentially be a 'community curation facilitator' and that this may lead to dissolving the logical boundary between the library and the community

Breakout group 2 Business Models

The second group discussed the development of new business models. Points of discussion included whether a new model was required or whether existing models could be modified. A further discussion was how to build audiences and the impact that 'open access' materials could have on this. A further point that was raised was how the library of the future could provide access to content but not necessarily collect all materials themselves. It was also discussed that interoperability of services is key. Further issues raised included:

- Building digital democracy
- All knowledge is interconnected
- Digitisisation of unique material
- Orphan works and IP
- Need broad teams
- Role of paying vs free
- Role of tasters

Examples provided included how the National Library of Scotland is investigating 'digitisation on demand' which is a model that is quick and cheap. Also, the Norwegian library trying to digitise entire Norwegian corpus

4. Project ideas

- A project involving knowledge exchange with communities to identify community needs and identify lessons learned from other initiatives.
- Exploring the idea of the community as the library and new methods of co-creation to enable the 'community as creator and curator'. Experimental online resources could be created for communities to develop online presence.
- Examining the business value and impact of shared catalogues and systems and new economic models for library collections

5. Next Steps

1. Proposed joint workshop with NEMODE- digitisation, multiplier effect, real estate
2. 19th and 20th June - summer conference for IT as a Utility
3. Produce a journal article on work to date.
4. developing wikis or communal work spaces to share ideas
5. Identify a location for a future workshop