

Change: Are we leading or just surviving?

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When preparing for this conference and reflecting on its themes it struck me that much of what we will be discussing is about change and how we deal with and manage change. I thought of a story I heard from a colleague in Ireland some years ago who used to be the Librarian of the University of Guyana in South America. When he went to work each day, he used to get a ferry across the estuary of the Esiquiba River. He said that one day, he turned up and the regular ferryman was not there. The next day the regular man was there and my colleague said to him. 'I missed you yesterday'. The man said, 'yes, we were having a baby'. My colleague replied, "Congratulations. Was it your first? And he said, 'No, it was our eleventh'. My colleague said 'Well you and your wife must be either very pleased or very weary of the whole business'. The man replied, 'She isn't my wife, we're not ready for that level of commitment'. This, I think, illustrates very clearly something about the attitude that we need to adopt to change: It is all around us, like the couple's children. Wherever we go, we see it, we encounter it, and I wonder how many of us are prepared to deal with it and with the major issues that arise from it, because change has become both endemic and dramatic in our society.

Again, without digressing too far from my main theme, a hundred years ago, my great grandfather served in the British Indian Army on the North West frontier with Afghanistan. Fifty years ago, the European colonial empires were coming to an end. As a small boy in England I can remember 'Empire Day' when we dressed up in the costumes of the various nations of the British Empire, and I am sure that French and Dutch and Portuguese colleagues may have similar memories as their countries had empires too. Twenty years ago, the Soviet Union was one of two superpowers in the world and many of us were somewhat afraid of what it might do. Today we have one superpower, fortunately a friendly and a benign one and, again, they are engaged in Afghanistan. Huge change, and yet the wheel has come full circle. In another domain, my grandparents wouldn't have known what a computer was. My five-year-old granddaughter tells me now what she can do by clicking on the right hand side of the mouse, in the longer term that may be a more significant change than anything in the political sphere.

Thirty years ago I began my career – it seems a terribly long time ago - in university libraries. We had no computers. We had no concepts of value for money, of quality audit, of performance indicators. In my working life, those huge changes have come about, and in libraries, there has been more change in the last thirty years than there had been in the previous 500. The libraries of thirty years ago bore more resemblance to those of the great medieval cathedrals than they do to the kind of modern library we are talking about today. Today we have bibliographical records or meta-data in electronic form, with direct links to the contents of whatever is recorded. Users access most material, certainly most journals, electronically. Virtually all of our business, except for those things that require face to face contact, is conducted electronically. Today, I write very few letters. I send vast numbers of emails, and like most of you, I dread to think how many will be there for me, when I get back to my office. And in Trinity, where we recently completed our James Ussher Library, the previous main

library we had, the Berkeley, bears more resemblance to the Old Library, which was completed in 1731 (The Berkeley was completed in 1967), than it does to our James Ussher Library. The Berkeley Library, only 35 years old, is very much in the tradition of fixed libraries designed for books which are permanent and durable, not envisaging any very significant change. Our James Ussher Library is a library designed around the concept of flexibility, simply because none of us knows where information is going. We have built it in such a way that we could strip out most or all of the book space very quickly and turn it into IT space if necessary. We have built in that level of flexibility and at the same time that kind of interoperability of the space that we do provide, so that one can use any type of material at the same desk, simultaneously. Whether it is manuscript, electronic or printed material, you can use it at the same time in the same place. This is something which was probably not conceivable thirty years ago.

Because of the significance of this type of change, we get back to my story about my colleague and the ferryman; we cannot ignore it, it will not go away, we have to deal with it, we have to confront it and we have to make it happen to our advantage and to our benefit. An example of change in the culture of librarianship is what I call the strange demise of the scholar librarian. I had my own pretensions when I became an academic librarian, of being a scholar librarian myself. It didn't quite happen, because unlike the generation of scholar librarians of the time who were just disappearing over the horizon, we never had the time. I am only the fifth professional Librarian of my university library in 410 years of its history. Most of the Librarians were scholar librarians; they were academics, Fellows of Trinity College, who were appointed to run the library in their spare time. There was professional staff, who supported them, but they were academics, they were scholars. And among them were people like Bishop George Berkeley, the philosopher of immaterialism, I often think of him as a powerful advocate of the virtual library, given the nature of what he did. He is the Berkeley of Berkeley in California. People such as he were the kind of predecessors that we have. I knew many scholar librarians in the early stage of my career. I knew those who were Shakespearean scholars. I knew those, who operated in my own field, of Near Eastern languages, and who maintained a lively and effective library presence. And I remember in my last job, when I was University Librarian at London, discovering one day in the early 1990s, the diary of my predecessor, Jack Pafford, in the 1950s and comparing what we each did on particular dates. His diary said: Lunch at Athenaeum with Lord So-and-so about such-and-such a collection. My diary said: Meeting with Planning and Resource Committee about allocation of funding. That is the way in which the world has moved on. We are doing very different things. The scholarly librarian, sadly, is almost extinct, except in very small and very highly specialised libraries. The culture of management has taken over. It is predicated on resource issues. It is about gaining more from the same pot or sometimes what seems to be a diminishing pot, whilst maintaining and whilst improving quality of service. The same problems are faced by academics and administrative colleagues, but libraries and librarians are perhaps unique in that we are the ones that have to provide the service and fight directly for the resource to provide that service. It is an odd situation because we are almost running a business in what we do and, at the same time, we have to maintain that business whilst fighting the political battle to enable us to resource it and give our customers (and that is what I tend to call them nowadays) the resource which they need.

A very real change in how we do things in our universities as well in our libraries is required by society, as we are required to increase numbers participating in higher education. We are expected to meet the needs of an economy. In recent years, at Trinity College Dublin, both Computer Science and, in particular, Nursing have been huge issues for us in terms of providing for people with no significant additional resource. We have to promote social inclusion in our societies. We have to provide a second chance for those people who either missed out first time, or if they did not miss out, now wish to change direction later in their lives. And we have to meet the needs of non-traditional learners. All of this involves remote access, 7X24 access. It involves better service delivery models than we have usually had in the past. It also involves new roles in teaching and in learning for librarians, as we can

no longer assume that all of our students come from the kind of background where literacy, fluency and ability in information technology are given. We have to provide much more support than was the case in the past. I am very proud of Trinity, where we have a team of subject librarians, who do this very effectively, not only for our own students, but also for access students, who come in from deprived backgrounds.

A question we might ask is whether the changes that have taken place in libraries are really for the better. My view is that they are, in that most librarians are fulfilling a much wider role to a wider community and we are giving vastly more value than our predecessors did in the past. This is not because they were any worse as people or as librarians than we are, but because we are faced with challenges and opportunities that they did not have to face. Technology has brought about the biggest shift in how we do our jobs. It gives us more of everything, including more choice. It will give what I want and what my users want, but at a price. And the question we are faced with is how we pay that price. In relation to journals, we cannot always cancel the print version, because models on which we pay for the electronic versions tend to be based on the cost of print plus an added element. So we do not have the choice to control our budgets, or our destiny in the way that we might like. If we buy management systems, we have to find the resources to pay for them. Very often we do it by having fewer staff. That brings us the problems that go with downsizing, the loss of moral that sometimes occurs when this happens, the difficult choices that people face. At the end of it, we have the systems doing the job rather than the people. The question really is, whether the systems are doing the job better. My guess would be that they are doing it much more cost effectively, but whether with that personal interaction that people value, is another matter.

We also have many more users with much higher expectations. How do we meet those expectations? We seek a better share of the budget. We generate income where we can. In my own job, I am very lucky we have this magnificent object, called the Book of Kells, which brings in huge numbers of people to see “Kelly's book”, as it is called and brings me vast resources to many things. Most of you probably do not have that and you have to find other ways of meeting that challenge. But we do have to generate, where we can, sufficient income to enable us to get beyond those low thresholds that our state and institutional funding usually provides. And we have to use greater imagination, find other ways around the problems of meeting the needs of our users. Even in the absence of additional income, how can we use the resource we have better, how can we use our people better, how can we motivate ourselves, be more effective ourselves, as directors and as managers. At the end of it, the thing to bear in mind is that, as librarian, it is your problem. It is not the academics' problem; it is not the administrators' problem. You may think it is, at the end of it, you are the person in the hot seat, you are paid to do it, and you had better find the answers. The difficulty is, of course, that very often we find solutions but those, whom we serve, our academics, do not like the solutions. People cannot have it both ways. We have to be able to find the solutions, we have to be able to sell them, we have to be able to accept the fact that whatever we do, someone is going to be displeased, but ultimately it comes back to ourselves to deal with the issues and to solve the problems.

We move on to issues arising from technological change. Probably the biggest is, does the library have a future, and if so, what is it? We hear constantly now, of the bookless library, of the library without walls, of the virtual library, and of legacy collections. This last term always puzzles me a little, because all collections are part of a legacy in some way, but it has a specialised meaning, I know. And I remember the comment of a very distinguished colleague in Britain, some years ago, who said to me: “in a hundred years' time” - and he was librarian of a major university library - “your library at Trinity College Dublin will exist, the Bodleian Library at Oxford will exist, so will Harvard University Library, but my library will not, because there will be better ways of doing the things that we do at present. Only those libraries with great historic collections will continue to exist”. Now, I do not know the answer to this. I am hoping that Hans Geleijnse will tell us a little more about that later

on, in his own talk. But my personal view is that the library does have a future. I think that the work in codex form is in many ways an excellent technology for particular purposes and I have my own kind of vision that the library of the future will be a somewhat Alexandrian body. When people are living in their little boxes, each communicating electronically with very little physical or social interaction, I think libraries will come into a new role as places where people do meet to share ideas, to encounter each other and to express their concerns. I have a vision in fact, in which rather than libraries being quiet places, we are saying to people: "talk to each other, interact". In a way it is rediscovering an earlier purpose of libraries, but in that sense, and in the sense that I think there is still a future for the physical book, libraries have a future. So the issue really is how we deal with that future and how we design our buildings and services for it.

I mentioned a little earlier the total flexibility of our James Ussher Library and the seam-less use of resources that we offer in it. This was a deliberate choice because we recognised that the balance of print and electronic resources is shifting quite dramatically. In relation to buildings it means that we must devise the flexibility for them to go through an immense and probably very intense period of change. If we build a major new library, and if it is a half-decent building, it will have a life of a 100, 150 or 200 years. None of us can foresee what will happen at that time. We can only build in the flexibility to ensure that whatever happens, as far as we can foresee this, we will be able to cope with the changes that come about. But, as an example of how quickly change moves ahead, we have wired every single reader space in our new library. We looked at the use of wire-less technology three and a half years ago but a member of our Information Systems Services (Computing) team who is a member of the Library Planning Committee advised us not to go with wireless technology on the grounds that it would never give sufficiently quick response times to meet your needs. He was totally wrong. I do not say this simply to make a point at the Computing people's expense. I say it simply to point out that how quick is the pace of change and we cannot say "no", or "never" to something, simply because at that time it does not deliver. We are seeing today such a rate of change that most things happen far more rapidly and far more comprehensively than we could have imagined a very few years ago.

I touched on issues on cost in all of this. But an additional cost for libraries - and it is a massive one, given the nature of change as we move from print to electronic - is the area of digital preservation in the absence of a stable technology. One of the biggest issues we face, and I have mentioned it already in relation to wireless technology, is that the whole area of IT is moving so rapidly that we cannot get a fix on it. We cannot say: 'this is the steady state' as was possible with the book. We can preserve things in digital form but, whatever method we use of preservation, we have no way of knowing how long it will remain valid as the technology develops. It is interesting that there are varying approaches between the United States and Europe in relation to this. Europeans in my experience, tend to be somewhat sceptical of digital technology as a preservation medium. Yet, when I was at a meeting in the United States not long ago and hinted at this fact amongst Americans, who were terribly enthusiastic about it, I could almost hear the cries of "Luddite!" around the table, for saying such a thing. It may be a resource issue, I do not know. But the issues are so big, and so potentially costly that we have a need for international solutions if we are going to deal with it. An example of international co-operation as a way forward is the partnership between the British Library and the Royal Library of the Netherlands. We have a need also for links with the commercial players also because, again, we do not know what commercial players are going to do in relation to preserving their own outputs. Organisations such as JSTOR are doing an immensely valuable work, but they do not cover everything and they are unlikely to do so. We have to find ways of ensuring that we do maintain access to this huge archive that we are building up of non-print resources, and it will be costly and will require co-operation on a very significant scale, both nationally and internationally.

If we look at the impact of technology on our core business for our universities we see the way in which teaching and learning technologies are developing, the use of electronic resources in teaching.

One of the difficulties for librarians is maintaining a role for the library, a sense of relevance for the library, as these changes come about. I do not say it simply because I am beating the drum for libraries and trying to preserve our jobs. I say it because librarians have so much to contribute in the selection of material, in the way in which material is recorded, organised and made accessible. Unfortunately, I think that in many institutions, academics have seen this as their own preserve, perhaps understandably, but I think it is also a pity that librarians are neither being asked to become involved nor lobbying for that kind of involvement where they are. And we look at web-based learning; the whole issue of how we harvest the information that is available arises, together with an interesting philosophical question of monitoring the use of the web for learning purposes. I had one of our medical academics come to me at Trinity a little while ago. He said to me: "Can you do something that about the fact that so many of our students now are going to sites on the web now and finding all kind of oddities. They look at alternative medicine, and when we ask them for the answer to a question on some surgical problem, they come back with something based on aromatherapy or something of that kind. How do we control this?" I had to say: Well, that really is your problem, not ours. We cannot control what people do with the information that is out there, it is your job to be able to say to people: 'you have to use this material carefully'. It is difficult. When one had print, you could tell students what books to read and what to avoid. When people are on the web, you have no way of controlling it. But just what is the role of librarians, if any, in guiding the usage of the web by students who are working in professional disciplines where the answers they find can be highly significant?

In relation to research with the expanding universe of knowledge and the limited resources that we have, no library can meet all of its users' needs single-handedly. All of the great National Libraries are learning this lesson. What happens is not just that people discover the material that's available on the Web; they discover also new references to print materials. There is an increase in demand for documents supply; we are certainly seeing that in my University Library. We need new resource and funding models to enable us to deal with these issues and I know that Sir Brian Follett has been working on this in the UK and that he has done a great deal of work already both before now and as part of the current review. We are looking forward to hearing about that. In Ireland, we have an organisation called Science Foundation Ireland, which is helping us with this by funding access to electronic resources for science across all seven universities in the country. This is the kind of national initiative that we have lacked, which some countries have already had. But we welcome this enormously because it enables us not just to obtain the resource but to plan, on a national basis, to deal with the total information needs of the Irish Higher Education and Research communities.

As well as finding ways of resourcing materials, we can often do things very effectively by acting in consultation with each other and acting centrally within our institutions. We can also add value to what we have through our role in training, teaching and other activities. One of the things I find now with departmental reviews at Trinity is that from time to time reviewers will talk of the need for training in the use of electronic resources. We are providing that. I mentioned our excellent team of subject librarians who do it. It is the kind of added value that librarians can bring to the system, something which probably nobody else within the University can do, either because people do not have the time or because they do not have the skills. We can contribute a huge amount in this area.

In relation to management we have more sophisticated tools than we have ever had before. We have much greater financial control. We have 7X24 data. The question really is whether our institutions give us the power, the environment if you like, to use that information to plan our resource use, our equipment, our staffing bids or information resources themselves more effectively, and to change course in mid stream if need be. A further question is, if we have the power. Do we have the will and the nerve to use it, to take a risk periodically, to go with a hunch as long as we do not leave so much risk that we cannot row back if we go too far? We have more information about who uses us and when and why they use us, than ever before. Are we using that information to match services to need,

or do we just collect statistics? We have user surveys which tell us what our users actually want and how well we are doing in providing it. We have performance indicators and quality audits that give us comparisons both year on year with our own library's performance and, for any given year, with the performance of other libraries. Do they result in improved? In other words, are our libraries better led and managed after all the changes of the last thirty years? I would answer "Probably". We are almost certainly better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of our libraries than our predecessors. We have better data and much clearer sense of what is expected of us. The Library is reviewed every time an academic department is reviewed. This means that we are all reviewed almost constantly in relation to our service provision whilst there is, simultaneously, growing external pressure from government, on behalf of the taxpayer, for efficiency gains and value for money. All of these processes are drivers which ensure that, if we are not to fail, we have to be responsive, must listen to what we hear, then reflect, plan and act. This is why we are probably better managers than were our predecessors of a generation ago but it leaves us little time for scholarship!

In considering issues of quality it is worth remembering that a library does not have to be great to be good. Although I have the privilege of being Librarian of a very great library, I do not think that we are always a very good one in relation to the service that we provide to our users. This is because we focus on many things such as legal deposit, heritage and tourism, as well as on the bread and butter business of providing an effective information service to the University. Apart from a spell of about five years as Director of a (then) fairly small technological university library in England I have spent all of my career in great research libraries. Yet, in my judgment, the small technological university library gave the service of all the libraries in which I have worked. This was because it had no pretensions to greatness or self-sufficiency but recognised its limitations and how to overcome them quickly and effectively. Unlike some much better endowed libraries elsewhere that library was described in the "Good Universities Guide" as excellent. I was surprised and delighted at this but it reflected not what we had but what we did for our readers.

Technology can help us to identify issues and provide means of meeting needs but the main driving force for all that we do is still the level of resources that we can provide. Everyone wants more of everything, and no one has enough of anything. So we adopt coping strategies. All countries can, no doubt, point to similar examples, but in Ireland we have consortia, through which we buy periodicals, site licences and other things collectively and achieve deals which are at least as good as those obtained in much bigger countries with larger markets. We provide enhanced access to each other's libraries through organisations such as ALCID (Academic Libraries Co-operation ID). ALCID has, in effect, turned the entire Irish university library system into a single research library. Academic staff and postgraduate students of any of the universities, of the Dublin Institute of Technology, of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and of the Royal Irish Academy have automatic access to each other's libraries. We have worked at deep resource searing, the whole business of joint collection management. This is a difficult area for a number of reasons - academics are not keen on travelling to use what they once have used in their own library, finance officers have reservations about our using part of our budget to support other institutions unless the benefits are transparent, and none of us, as librarians, likes to relinquish control. Despite the problems, however, I believe that this is an issue on which we should not give up and it may be that more will be achievable in smaller countries such as Ireland, where co-operation delivers much and rivalry is a luxury that we can ill afford, than in larger ones.

I am not going to say much about SPARC or the various open archives initiatives because I know Duane Webster will discuss them at length. To a degree they are beyond the immediate control of libraries or librarians, since they require significant input and support from academics. I find it puzzling that many academics who bewail the effects of serials price inflation in our ability to purchase are still reluctant to consider new methods of publication, and that some are even hostile to

them, but this simply means that we must lend whatever weight we can to the process of persuading colleagues that the answer to the problem lies largely in their own hands. Whatever else SPARC and other initiatives may achieve, they will at least ensure that publishers are aware that there are alternative strategies and products to their own and that scholarly publishing may cease to be a licence to print money.

But what is the bigger institutional context of what we do? I have said quite a lot about the nuts and bolts of managing libraries but perhaps more important than the internal library issues is the attitude of the Head of the University – Vice-Chancellor, President, the Provost, whatever (s)he is called – to the library. Sir Brian Follett, himself a former Vice-Chancellor, has said that the library tends not to loom large in the thinking of Heads of universities unless there is a problem with it. I have no doubt that he is correct since most libraries are reasonably well run (at least to the extent that people are not screaming about how awful they are) and funding “big science” is a much greater headache than funding the library. However we, as librarians, see our libraries we must, realistically, accept that we and they come some way down the pecking order of institutional priorities.

In one sense this is reassuring because it means that we are not threatened with closure and that most of us will have jobs until we reach retirement age or choose to move on. In another way, though, it is worrying because there is a danger that the library may be seen as irrelevant by the really big players – not just the Heads of Universities but those who themselves bring in large research income and control significant budgets. So we must do a selling job in relation to the value we add to the institutional research effort whether by our consortial purchasing arrangements, our advocacy and support of new scholarly publishing initiatives, our management of information content (as opposed to delivery, which is for the IT specialists) on behalf of the whole research community or the training and guidance we provide in the most effective ways of accessing and using that content. The relevance of the library to undergraduate students is not yet seriously questioned and so, for the present at least, is not an issue. Beyond all this, we must include our academic community in all major decision making process related to the library. They may argue that they are too busy to become involved but we must do our utmost to overcome this resistance because, if we fail to do so, they will still complain later about decisions we make that they do not like. In planning the new library at Trinity I found the process of consultation with the academic community invaluable, not only in relation to the feedback and valuable insights we gained from the process but also because it promoted a sense of ownership of the new building by the entire academic community. I have, I think, managed to promote a similar sense of ownership of the entire library system by occasionally holding events, most recently the launch of a History of the Library, spanning 400 years, not in our historic Old Library but in our modern and fairly modest Science Library. This was to promote both a sense of continuity (the Library is as much about what happens now and will happen in the future as about the past) and the idea that we are as much concerned about Science Engineering and Medicine as with the Humanities.

There are several naïve institutional assumptions about libraries. One of the most persistent and pernicious is that libraries are a drain on resources that could be better used in other ways. If the University grows by a thousand students individual departments may gain forty or fifty at most. The Library gains the whole thousand, very often without any increase in its own resources. Libraries genuinely add value, maintain a significant physical presence, open to everyone, whether or not the resources are provided to do so. We have nothing to apologise for and much of which we should be proud. Whatever sexy name we feel obliged to give to our libraries for political reasons or to attract funding (and I have been as guilty of this as anyone in calling the new James Ussher Library at Trinity the “Library and Information Research Centre”!) let us remember that there is nothing to be ashamed of in libraries or librarianship. We may not be quite the oldest profession in the world but we are certainly one of the oldest and we have contributed much that is of value to the life of humanity. What we do may be seen by many as rather dull and boring but those of us who are practitioners know how

exhilarating it can be. It is arguably one of the best jobs in the world, in both senses, as we stimulate and feed the intellectual curiosity on which our species and our civilisation depend. We have at Trinity College Dublin one of the most beautiful and certainly the best-known Western manuscript in the world, the Book of Kells. I sometime think of the monks of Iona and Kells, of Lindisfarne and of Echternacht in their scriptoria producing works of such immense power and beauty drawn from their faith, skill and imagination. Whether or not they left physical descendants, (and doubtless some of us would find a mediaeval abbot or two among our ancestors if we could search back far enough) we are their spiritual descendants. We may be unable to create the masterpieces that they produced but we preserve and transmit to posterity the beauty and the values that they passed on to us. The big question is, I suppose, how we continue to do this and all the other things that are required of us to ensure that, in the jargon, we are “sexy and relevant”, with the same staff and lack of resources as we have always had.

Motivating staff is a key issue in all of this. One can feel sympathy for many colleagues who came into librarianship twenty or twenty-five years ago expecting to do a job that no longer exists. They have been overtaken by evolution in our profession. Many have successfully evolved themselves into new and often very rewarding roles but for some this transition has been impossible. We must find a humane exit strategy which enables such people to find new roles in which they can perform happily and successfully, whether within the institution or elsewhere, whilst creating the excitement and stimulus to encourage those who can make the change to do so. And we must motivate ourselves to do all this, just as we had to motivate ourselves to make our personal evolutionary leap in the past. As many of you know, I shall be leaving Trinity to move to Manchester next month. After eight years in Dublin I feel that I have about created the staffing team that I would like to have had when I arrived. My successor will inherit a very good team though, of course, he or she may want to do things quite differently. I make this point to emphasise that we must sometimes play a long game and it may be our successors who ultimately benefit from the developments that we bring about. But individuals are transient and what really matters is that the Library and the University benefit from what we do.

Finally, what about the resource issue, quality on a shoestring? If we are going to achieve this we will need imagination to identify new possibilities, flexibility to move when we see new niches or other opportunities in the market place, entrepreneurship to develop activities and generate surplus income to enable us to do the things that our usually inadequate institutional funding cannot support. We will need political skills to engage with the academic community and persuade them of the importance of the Library to what they do and what more can we do for them if given the resources. We shall need openness to engage academic colleagues in our decision-making processes. In leaving my present post I have had many very kind messages from academic colleagues but the one that pleased me most said simply “Thank you for all you have done. I have always appreciated the fact that you have been frank and unpretentious”. I took this as a great compliment since I have always tried, wherever I have worked, to avoid falling into the trap of thinking that librarians know best what their users want. This is not so and by engaging with our users openly and frankly we will, at best, gain their support on funding and related issues and, at worst, gain a more sympathetic appreciation of the issues facing the Library and the constraints within which we operate. If the consumer is involved in agreeing the targets in the light of those constraints there is a much greater likelihood of their being satisfied with the outcomes than if those targets are set without discussion or consultation.

I believe in naivety. It is a very good strategy. Be naïve and open, recognise that everyone in the University has their own problems that worry them as much as yours worry you, accept that everyone has their story and that, ultimately, the best judges of how good we are or how well our libraries are doing are not our fellow librarians but the staff and students of our universities. I am delighted that, as well as librarians, we have senior academics and administrators at our seminar because it means that

we can engage with what concerns them as they do their jobs and hear what they need from us librarians. It is a joint venture from which I hope and expect to learn a great deal.