CREATING A HIGH PERFORMING LIBRARY FUNCTION THAT ADDS VALUE, DRIVES ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND GENERATES SUCCESS

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Andrew Clark has over 15 years of professional library experience and currently heads a small specialist library within a mid-size multinational corporation. In his current position he has successfully transitioned the library function from a localised, under valued service into an innovative global function whose team now has wide recognition from all sectors of the business. With enthusiasm, commitment and a clear vision for the profession and organisation which he presents he is actively involved in a number of professional associations, SLA being one of them.

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1. Introduction

Decreasing budgets … staffing reorganisations, limited resources, the threat of technological overload and users who think they know what they are doing when they don't … the challenges for corporate librarians are plenty … but fear not, this is not the time to head to an information free universe to avoid panic and brain explosion of 21st century earthlings in information chaos. Some careful strategic planning and a little vision will see that you and your library function are sent on a new and exciting cosmic journey full of innovation, opportunity and success.
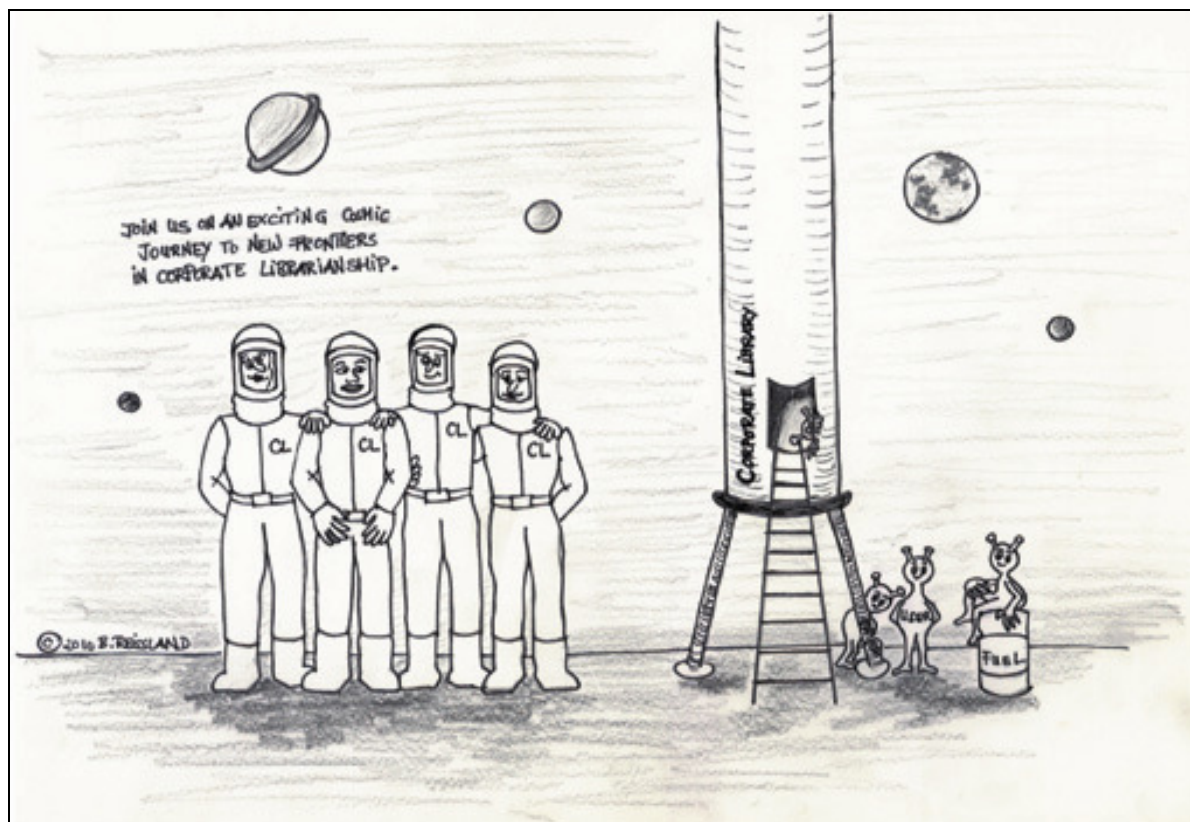
Strategic library planning and the need to maximise the value of both the content and the services delivered by the function is essential to ensuring that any corporate library doesn't remain static but is an invaluable high performing asset to the corporation and continues to meet the growing information needs of library users and corporate executives. Challenging the organisation and embracing difference, information professionals[1] that feel empowered in their responsibilities and having a strong understanding of industry trends and changing business needs are essential in developing a library vision and the key to successful operations in the future.

With endless challenges facing information professionals today – budget and staff cuts, cultural barriers in an international environment, a need to leverage costs against usage and the necessity to be compliant – the use of innovative technologies can play a critical part in the way that any specialist library redefines itself during challenging times, adding value to

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[1] The authors share the opinion that corporate librarians of the future must be both, information professionals and librarians in order to serve their customers. For the purpose of this paper the terms information professionals, corporate librarians, library and information professionals and librarians are used as synonyms for each other and stand for the "new" corporate librarian.

the role of the library function and supporting a knowledge transfer within the organisation that can generate success.

Planning long term changes needs a strategy that is oriented along a company's objectives. However, plenty of challenges abound before an information center is settled comfortably within the organisation. On one side there are heterogeneous user groups with diverse needs that call for new processes and structures within corporate libraries. On the other side there are managements that want to see the added value from content and services offered, a task almost impossible to meet. Any changes need to be promoted vigorously to ensure visibility of a corporate library as a high performing team. This should include a careful selection of providers and systems that can present the corporate library as a specialist function, ensuring that it will be recognised as an innovative department and remain strategically successful in future years, or it might mean a redefining of roles within the information team. Responsible information experts that take in trends and listen to the changing requirements of their users can challenge an organisation to change. These prerequisites are important for the development of a vision for a corporate library and key to future success.

Often under-evaluated are the roles different players in companies take. The challenge for librarians is to position themselves against self-pronounced information or knowledge managers that keep emerging especially during times of changes.

This chapter aims to look at the various challenges facing corporate librarians and ways of meeting them through the deployment of innovative technologies and the redefining of library services – helping to transition library functions into value adding organisational entities. It ends with some simple guidelines on creating an effective strategy to lead change and deliver success.

2. Challenges for Corporate Librarians

"Two years ago we had three physical print libraries, a team of 14 staff and a seemingly endless budget; now our staffing levels have been halved, we have no physical libraries and our budget has been cut significantly."
Patrizia Olah, librarian within a large multinational pharmaceutical company

Unfortunately this is an all too common trend and restructuring processes in corporate organisations are no longer the exception but the rule. Profitability and marketing are slow-burners even in the 21st century. Reasons for this are plenty. With the rise of the internet and digitally available information corporate librarians have accompanied, either voluntarily or forced, the vanishing of their physical print collections. Budgets have always been tight, but with the latest developments of the financial crisis of recent times have dwindled even more. Even the most advanced corporate library now finds it difficult to keep up their collection of e-content and regularly we can read news columns in industry bulletins or speak with other industry professionals where their story is exactly the same. In 2010 the library budget in most pharmaceutical companies has decreased by approximately 10% and with the cost for e-content and technologies increasing it isn't an easy task to align expenditure with needs. With such a decrease in a scientific environment such as pharma this means a large cut in access to e-content reverting to document delivery on a case-by-case base. With up to 80% of a library's budget being consumed through the licensing or acquisition of e-content, this leaves only 20% of the budget for training of staff, travel, marketing, annual fees for existing software and systems – and almost nothing for new technologies or system upgrades.

Aside from dwindling budgets and increased costs the internet allows everyone to search for information themselves, which in turn can create a perception to the organisation and management that a financial investment in content and technologies isn't necessary. The "googlisation" concept of adding a simple search term to a box, hitting the send button and

returning a set of results leads to an assumption that information retrieval skills are no longer relevant. Corporate librarians can often have a low profile, partly due to their own failure to market themselves which in turn can lead to a sense of under value and of not being considered integral to organisational workflows recognised by management; and with a common failure from senior personnel to recognise what is required to retrieve quality proof information.

There is often an abundance of freely available information that remains unidentified to both the individual and scientists who can think they know better. The challenge for corporate librarians is to change their working ways and adapt their skills to meet the requirements and integrate into the workflows of a heterogeneous user group. In a pharma setting both, corporate librarians and scientists, need to engage with each other in order to save time and money for the organisation and enable the library function to develop and ultimately thrive. From this a number of new skills protrude that library and information professionals need to acquire to establish themselves for the future: IT, business and management skills; in a multinational organisation training skills, language skills, cultural skills, and adaptability are indispensable. Additionally, knowledge on products, internal processes, and projects within the organisation as well as legal knowledge for compliancy is important.

With trends such as these, there must come a realisation within corporate libraries to create opportunity and for such functions to position themselves in new and exciting roles within their organisation. **(Author comment: All information professionals out there reading this paper: please start to tingle with excitement!)**

2.1 Opportunity is the key to success

<u>Identify yourself as an expert</u>: corporate librarians are experts in various areas. By becoming part of project teams, they will be seen as the specialists who know where and how to obtain the needed information – fast and reliable.

Behind the scenes they must work with IT on legal compliance and ensuring that information is still available and accessible in 10+ years. Technical changes and new formats must be taken into account and requires close collaboration between the IT department of an organisation and vendors, the corporate librarian being the point of contact. It is indispensable to involve users by continually informing them on any changes. Not involving them will almost always result in a rejection of the changes or – worst – the responsible department, in this case the corporate library.

Copyrights are another area of expertise. Larger organisations in general have a legal department but for various reasons copyright hasn't been an issue within organisations in the past. By nature of the products bought and offered through corporate libraries the information professional has profound knowledge of copyright issues – copyright awareness is a business concern in organisations and should be taken seriously by anyone. There will be resistance from users but with the right technical solutions and processes the work load of answering questions on copyright will dwindle.

CASE REPORT

Using copyright compliance as an example of enabling value added expertise and global visibility to a library or information function, the library team of a pharmaceutical company partnered with another global business unit to implement a technology for the automatic checking of copyrights and search and retrieval of externally published information from both in house licensed collections and externally hosted sources. With a willingness and commitment to wanting to make a difference across the global organisation for the first time the library team was in the driving seat of a project which had a global benefit and positive impact on workflows across all areas of the organisation as well as implementing a technology that significantly added value to the administrative tasks within the library unit by automating processes and thus saving relevant amounts of time. This saving was substantial enough that 1.5 FTE could be reallocated to other library related activities that are of long term strategic benefit to the team and deliver additional value to services that had been previously neglected. With

additional trainings for library staff to increase competence in the copyright fields and with involvement from the legal teams and a little personal creativity, an online copyright training module was successfully created by the team and rolled out in three languages across the organisation. Regular copyright awareness weeks and question and answer sessions accompanied this training and the library team quickly identified themselves as experts in a subject area which was of critical importance to the business, and very relevant to the content and services that the team was delivering but which historically had never been given much significance. Implementing this integrated and innovative technology across the organisation also enabled the library team for the first time to demonstrate the real financial cost of content, leveraging this against usage and thus creating some powerful metrics that help with budget justifications for the library team and in license negotiations with vendors.

Becoming an expert can also mean developing new services for the library, whether this means creating a compliant image library that has never been set up before or pushing boundaries in an area where there has been little investment of time or resource from another department such as IT. Corporate librarians must ask themselves questions like "Can I be an expert in delivering content automatically to remote devices such as kindles or blackberries?" or "Can I deliver content that can be annotated and reviewed by multi groups of users?". They will find opportunities will be endless.

Develop a central knowledge base: the knowledge of sources of information and how to use tools for retrieval and analysis of data are prolific within any organisation and are oftentimes bundled into corporate libraries. In many cases library staff has remained in their functions longer than scientists have in their roles. With this in mind, through a little creativity, opportunity and personal initiative, corporate libraries should rise to the challenge of becoming the central point of access for internal organisational information (supported by internal document management systems). The "How do I…", "Where can I…", "Can I…" are all too common questions asked to a library and information function and - lets face it as information professionals - the user interface of handling user enquiries is the foundations of our daily work. From such questions trends emerge of information which is required regularly. Corporate librarians must begin to capitalise on the questions that library users ask, and identify if there is opportunity to consolidate information into a library knowledge portal, pulling knowledge together from across the organisation and enabling it to be shared through a library system. Examples of this could include developing a literature database for the organisation of all papers that have been authored by employees, or collating a conference reports library where employees can share the knowledge captured through attending a conference or even developing a platform that identifies to what professional bodies employees are affiliated. Accessing knowledge from a central point enables fast and timely decisions and will enable the library to develop as a pivotal function with the organisation. Creating a central knowledge base in an information retrieval system within the corporate library is likely to generate financial savings and from this perspective such a portal will gain support from management too.

Engage with project teams and core groups of library users: A successful library function is one which connects library users with the right information or can deliver that little bit of extra expertise or value. How many times do users remark that they didn't know they had access to a particular piece of information or technology? By being part of many project teams the corporate librarian has the best overview on what is going on within the organisation. Attending regular project meetings or site seminars, introducing the services which can be delivered by the library team or new content which is available, and starting to understand the opportunities there might be for delivering added value to the project team - by developing this style of user engagement the start of a service–trusted relationship can evolve. For the library professional this can be critical for the future success of the library and will also help to generate a good return on investment on the content and systems which are delivered by the team.

Processes from one team can be transported into another and adapted and better organised to meet the needs of the organisation as a whole. Being integral to information workflows and

ultimately decision making processes the information professional will be seen as a competent, skilled and strategic information consultant within the organisation.

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CASE REPORT

Faced with a 10% budget cut for content licensing and with content costs increasing Nadine Vanlombeek, a librarian at a pharmaceutical company, faced an enormous challenge to ensure that critical information could still be delivered to her users. Knowing that she would have to make significant cuts in order to make the expected savings she engaged directly with project teams through regular meetings and an online survey to understand specific information requirements. Of this process Nadine said, "Interaction with project teams proved invaluable and demonstrated the library's commitment to delivering targeted information even through times of uncertainty and challenge – teams really started to believe that we were doing our best for them."
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Become a mediator of social media networks: According to the 2009 statistics[2] released by the developers of the social networking site Facebook there are currently more than 350 million users of which 50% logon to Facebook in any given day. The average user connects with 8 friends per month, writes 25 comments on pieces of information and is a member of 12 groups. The phenomenal growth of this site and others such as Twitter and LinkedIn has exacerbated the rise of social media software within organisations offering exciting opportunities for corporate libraries that replaces the often archaic image associated with them as being the main physical meeting and communication places of the past.

There are opinions that we should stop categorising things, humans, ideas and anything else that is out there in the world. Not categorising would make us all more intelligent. By accepting chaos, disarray and haziness, we will acquire more knowledge at the speed we choose and to the purpose we need it for at a very exact moment. This comes close to a revolution: experts are beginning to loose their influence and power to social networks – everybody can now state an opinion and be heard by an unknown number of people. However, what works in public communities (Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia etc) doesn't always in organisations. We are all aware of the problem "if only we knew what we know" – any organisation struggles to keep pace with the knowledge that is available inhouse, somewhere and to store it for future usage. In this case, categorisation is a vital need for an organisation to remain competitive. Information professionals have the knowledge and the skills to help build categories that will suit the organisation's needs. The corporate library can identify itself as a function supporting a multitude of communities across the organisation and through social media networks encourage the informal process of communication within a visionary library strategy.

In large organisations, employees especially are usually bound to a job description and their function in a team through hierarchy. Social media networks change traditional hierarchical structures of an organisation – a step that is not always welcomed. Corporate librarians have always been communicators and they have served everyone in the organisation with information regardless of their position. They can now put themselves in a role of balancer – balancing between the informal communications while respecting official hierarchical levels. Communities also help to break down barriers between different levels within an organisation or across multiple sites and everyone can have a sense of being equal.

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[2] http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics (20.01.2010)

Fig. 2 The library as a pivotal function

By developing a community focused culture that can be driven by the library team users can connect emotionally. It is important to remember that chaos can be creative and can drive innovation, but it should happen in the right platform. Any social media software offers blogs which should be used rather than other areas of the social media network.

By developing a library blog or Wiki or integrating these applications with software such as Sharepoint the library immediately engages with the whole organisation and starts to evolve itself to a visible level of discussion within the organisation. An idea can be posted, it can be shared and discussed, receive feedback and be used to develop the wider strategic position of the library. The library itself generates a knowledge management tool that is built from the library user community, giving this community a sense of ownership and interaction with 'their' library service. Services can be developed along this model; information shared and customised libraries can be created for targeted project teams. Daily knowledge can be enhanced efficiently by integrating alerts and RSS feeds and with this information user profiling can be defined and competitor intelligence for the organisation be developed.

Identify a role as trainer for information literacy: In order for an organisation to maximise the value of the services which are being delivered by the library function there is often a growing need to raise the level of information literacy within an organisation. The process of obtaining information usually starts with a service offered by the corporate library and the success and usage of it will not simply be down to good marketing but also the training and support that accompany it. As information professionals, surely we have all set up training courses only for there to be a poor attendance for which there may be a number of factors: lack of time, lack of perception that it might be useful, low profile of corporate librarians as experts in the field etc. Developing the skills of corporate librarians and raising awareness of them is absolutely vital in order to become respected as trainers demonstrating passion for what the information profession is about and passing on the knowledge that as professionals has

been nurtured through experience and education and of which most library users may know very little. The real challenge, though, is to educate users that the learning process is an ongoing process and that it can make fun. It is not only useful but very easy to step out of an existing standard for doing things within the organisation to get attention as experts. For example, copyright trainings can be dull but appearing as "Copyright Angels" will make sure you are remembered. Tray mats reminding users at lunchtime about their corporate library will raise visibility – and can be produced with the help of vendors at next to no costs. The same applies for quizzes and prices sponsored by vendors or even other departments – once the idea gets going it is amazing just how creativity can be unleashed.

A broad range of skill development can make for a good all round service, particularly in a large organisation and these may not be simply the obvious skills such as retrieval skills, but slightly more broader such as a general knowledge of the business and processes of the organisation, or language skills and understanding of cultural diversity especially in learning methods.

Collaborating with HR and corporate communications, developing training plans that may be compulsory for certain areas of the business, delivering inductions to new starters within the organisation, producing interactive help guides to support training and for easy reference at a later date are important steps to become an "enabler" for corporate information literacy. Making training fun, doing something different, getting library users enthused and wanting to use a service more and more because they understand all the functions and can use it effectively and efficiently is the most important task for corporate librarians to be successful.

Evolve as experts for diversity management: In today's industry mergers and acquisitions are regular occurrences and – combined with living in a globalised environment – make diversity management skills indispensable which must be factored into any long term library strategy. A core task for corporate librarians is the management of users from diverse backgrounds; these might include
- digital natives and non-digital natives who have different approaches to understanding processes and learning technologies
- users that see the necessity in frequently updating their knowledge through trainings while others think they know everything already; the latter in particular can often make it difficult to change systems and processes as they are resisting any form of consultation or training and so will need handling in a different way
- a "culture of mistakes" which can be particularly apparent in a global company of many international entities; for example, the word "problem" or "mistake" have negative connotations in German while almost not being used at all in Anglo-American backgrounds; instead one would speak of "challenges" and "mistakes" almost always reflect a learning process and are not degrading at all
- language diversity in multinational companies can be a major challenge for any information professional; systems that aren't multilingual are often boycotted by non-English speaking natives – either because of the lack of English skills or by nationalist principle.

As information professionals we need to remember that through cultural diversity in multinational organisations the lack of knowledge on how people learn can torpedo the introduction of any system, platform or process. Belgians, for example, prefer trainings in their mother tongues – Flemish or French; Americans are open for online self-study trainings whereas British like online trainings with webexes and Germans prefer classroom or face-to-face trainings (preferably, but not necessarily in German). Additionally, the number of years a user has been with the organisation plays an important part for introducing changes. Which systems have been available before? How were these trained? How often could users attend trainings? Which training culture does a user know?

Positive and negative experiences always have an impact. The information professional taking into account all of the above will be recognised as an expert for diversity management.

2.2 Management challenges

And finally…Rise to the management challenge! As has already been discussed most corporate libraries are faced with rising costs against reduced budgets. Using integrated technologies helps to provide metrics for demonstrating the value of content and highlights how this leverages against usage. Corporate library users often lack the willingness to pay for content or have no conception of real costs. This was the situation in the pharmaceutical case study mentioned earlier in this chapter. Returning once more to the technology that was implemented here, it was completely transparent and showed clearly to the business all costs associated with the purchasing of externally published literature and associated copyrights. Costs could be shown on an up front article level before purchase and on a real time department spend level.

Rosa Lopes, Senior Documentalist and responsible for document ordering within that pharma company said "until implementing this new platform our library users had no idea at all of the cost of content. Putting this technology in place has not only helped to automate workflows but shown the value associated with externally published content. As a library function the system allowed us to do a detailed analysis on user ordering and we could see clearly where multiple requests were coming from which would alert us to the fact that it might be more cost effective for us to license the content ourselves; it also helped us to intensify our purchasing and negotiating power as a team."

Fig. 3 Management formula

With detailed metrics coming from integrated systems corporate librarians can start to use these to their full potential, for example to carry out benchmarking analysis for management. Until recently terms such as benchmarking, balanced scorecard, economics, added value, and marketing have been terms which information managers have scarcely used. Compared to the library user base information professionals must remain advanced in both their content and technical awareness and additionally must start thinking in economic and strategic terms.

Information managers and corporate librarians must become responsible in what they do and actively involved in the re-shaping of the organisation requirement. To be successful it is inevitable to know the organisation, its objectives, and the partners and users that it works with. Opportunities for raising the corporate library profile are plenty: using corporate initiatives for the benefit of the library and actively engaging in company awareness events or promotions; in terms of metrics there is a lot of room to be creative in the way that results from systems and surveys are used to align the library strategy with the needs from upper management.

3. Value-adding functions and high-performing teams

In spite of having networked with a variety of individuals across the industry over the years the authors haven't met many people that at some point or other haven't commented for themselves that they have felt 'undervalued' or that the library function as a whole has been forgotten. Indeed, this is an all too common feeling, yet as informational professionals we

must stand up and say how we provide a lot of value within our organisations, otherwise it is true that we may not be noticed. With the demise of print libraries becoming a regular occurrence there has been much discussion as to whether libraries are then doomed. The answer to this perception is a most definite 'no', but if we step inside the mind of a library user who has been accustomed to seeing or visiting a physical library space or regularly accessing a print collection of books then it is easy to understand how this negative train of thinking can materialise.

3.1 Time to take action

It is time to be proactive and whilst it is all too easy to sit back and think about what as information professionals we should be doing, we need to be doing it.

As part of strategic planning for the library function and to begin to add value to some of the library services and fulfil some of the opportunities that were identified in the previous section of this chapter, the starting point for any information function has got to be to find out which library functions are value-adding for the organisation. This will involve some time and effort, especially if no feedback or figures have ever been collected before. To obtain this kind of information the use of surveys can often be helpful and there are a number of free web based applications which will enable simple but effective online surveys to be constructed and easily distributed to all sectors of the organisation. Any survey must be designed carefully – and multilingual if time allows, making sure the questions are understood.

Other ways of identifying areas where value might be added could include user studies, usability testing for new systems or training evaluations. Canvassing user requirements must be carried out regularly to establish the corporate library as a pro-active function willing to listen and to change. It also helps the specialist library to remain visible and to promote skills.

3.2 Delivering Added Value

There are multiple ways and opportunities how a corporate library function can deliver added value. In most cases it is already there and just needs some visibility. Concluding on what has been said in the previous sections the following are important steps to be recognised as a corporate value adding function:

- Be seen as an information provider delivering easy access to electronic content either through journal subscriptions, database access or document delivery.
- Be recognised as an enabler, offering fun and intuitive training to users for systems that are supported by the team (journal platforms, document delivery platforms, social media software or portals for retrieving and managing information, or storing it compliantly for easy future access). Support this training with interactive training modules and annotated quick guides that can be easily updated as additional functionalities become available and enhancements are being made.
- Become part of project teams to identify needs and meet requirements. This will ensure that library budgets are well aligned and target the specific needs of both existing and potential new library users. Through embedding yourself in a project team the library function will be in a much better position to really demonstrate the value that the team can deliver to the end user.
- Make sure that systems supported by the team are used to their potential ensuring good use of all functionalities for which they have been implemented. Use innovation and creativity to demonstrate the full value that such technologies can bring to the organisation and for those systems where costs might be out of budget, partner with other business divisions to meet needs and share costs. Focus on delivering both, local and global solutions.

- Build information management structures and processes to save money for the organisation by avoiding information silos which in turn may bring added benefits to the library team through corporate recognition and greater visibility. Adopting a cross functional collaboration stream within the library strategy will ensure that knowledge is shared and the organisation benefits from the huge amount of expertise that is available. It can also aggregate content acquisition and avoid unnecessary costs through multiple purchasing. Taking a proactive approach to managing information and knowledge within the organisation will ensure the success of key projects and a key motivator for the specialist library should be to try and consolidate as much information as possible from across the organisation into one easily retrievable place so that it can be accessed and used more readily.

Any organisational community is part of an official organisational culture where rules, values and expectations need to be met and corporate libraries should be pivotal in this. Already seen as the central communication point, corporate libraries should embrace the call for informal communication platforms and show their expertise in this area, realising the use and growing trend for Web 2.0 technologies. Library and information professionals in corporate libraries must get involved and be part of the project teams for implementation and help users buy in to such technologies and the benefits it can bring them. The use of these informal communication platforms can help reduce social complexity and information overload, though sometimes diplomatic skills are needed, especially if the organisation favours the existence of information silos. Using Web 2.0 applications improves user relationships with the corporate library; organising user information in a simple and effective way, makes communication more user driven and allows library users to interact with you more directly.

For the information professional the challenge is to combine social and technical elements in the right balance so that users are enabled to cooperate effectively in their work place roles to fulfil organisational tasks and this is where corporate librarians can establish themselves as key personnel supporting employees but not controlling content, embracing the role of mediator. Social media networks can replace intranets or federated search engines – if introduced correctly. Scientists and management need to realize that corporate librarians have the skills for managing such platforms and information.

In order to meet the above it is necessary to have skilled staff. Making use of available online trainings from providers; collaborating with providers or outsourcing to an independent information consultant where skills aren't available yet are only a few possibilities. Using internal trainings to learn about the organisation and business needs, being part of project teams to learn informally about what is going on and - most importantly: starting to employ staff with expertise in the information management field makes clear to management and the Human Resources department that the library and information function is equally skilled as a research function.

Besides trying to add value to the organisation it is necessary to become a high-performing team. Restructuring processes preferably result in high-performing teams, as these make sure the function is still successful. Building a high-performing team involves different phases: forming, storming, norming and performing. The manager of the group must have good management skills to lead this process to success. A high-performing team will perform exceptionally even under difficult circumstances. The key to success is that team members will have managed to create an environment for themselves in which everyone is tolerant and values each other. Everybody will have taken on responsibility for their projects and tasks and to outsiders the team seems as an entity. However, once achieved, it is important that the team members go out and communicate with others to avoid being stamped as arrogant. To avoid this inspiring creativity within a team will lead to innovation and opportunity and in strategic planning the best ideas often evolve from fun and interactive brainstorming sessions giving professionals time to relax, engaging with one another and thinking outside the box. With careful nurturing of opportunity, ideas will lead to success and a real sense of ownership and pride from within the team.

4. Vision, strategy and success

So having added value to the library function within an organisation, the role of the information professional is to capitalise on this and strategically align the function with a clear strategy that has a focus not solely on the short term but with a clear vision for the future and which leads to innovation, new ideas and success making a difference not just within the organisation but within the professional information arena also. It is clear that librarians and information professionals have a significant part to play in this process, convincing their organisations of their inherent importance. An important step on the ladder to full recognition and appreciation must be to actively identify and contribute to a company's broad information flow.

Like any strategy there will be unforeseen hurdles to navigate, but with a clear vision and a little flexibility and creativity the library function and the professionals responsible for managing it will be able to retain a high performing and successful position within the organisation.

Key steps to building a successful strategy:
1. Develop an information team aimed at collaboration which incorporates all of those things that are needed to meet user needs and to accommodate their expertise ensuring service – trusted relationships and products which are used more effectively and efficiently. Adopting cross functional collaboration helps break down the 'silo mentality' and encourages users to maximise the services delivered by the library team, generating a good return on investment.

2. Leverage content costs against usage to optimise budget allocation and ensure supply of content that is more targeted and cost efficient.

3. Capitalise on creativity and think out of the box, making (when appropriate) use of free tools and resources on the web such as RSS feeds.

4. Work with vendors to develop functions within existing technologies that enhance the user experience and be aware of new technologies that could be implemented that could potentially automate processes and enable the information professional to move to more 'value adding' or user focused tasks.

5. Create a team of library professionals that feel 'empowered' in their roles, nurturing skill development and a culture of accountability and passion to deliver a first class service. As new roles emerge create opportunity for promotion or develop new positions. Embracing global technologies and training mechanisms may also demand a new kind of information recruit and the skill set required of today's information professional should evolve with the strategy for the library function.

6. Be visible; the more an information professional can help library users through the all too common phenomenon of information overload then the more essential they will become to the ongoing success of their organisation.

7. Affiliate the library unit with professional organisations in the industry, the SLA being a great example.

8. Have fun! … And remember: you will avoid mistakes from gathering experience and you will gather experience by making mistakes.

Fig. 4 The Corporate Library Expert in the 21st Century

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