Forging the academic library ahead *

MARY JOAN CROWLEY

Abstract

While academic degree-granting universities have been with us since the ninth century, the academic library is fairly recent. The first academic libraries only began to emerge in the late 1500's and soon established their place as a vital and unique institution in the university. Its role has largely remained unchanged over the centuries as the guarantor of the organized collection of printed and/or other content, with a staff trained to support the learning, teaching and research needs and output of the university and community, an agreed schedule in which services are available, and the physical facilities necessary to support this. With the advent of the web and new social networking tools the community is beginning to question the role that the academic library now plays in acquiring, managing, and delivering information.

> *It is not the strongest of the species that survive,*
> *nor the most intelligent,*
> *but the one most responsive to change.*
> Charles Darwin

This year we celebrate, not only the 10th anniversary of CIBER, but also the 1150th anniversary of what is said to be among the oldest continuously operating academic degree-granting universities, the University of Al-Karaouine, founded by a wealthy woman in Fes, Morocco in 859.

This had already been operating for over 200 years when Bologna University, responsible for coining the word university from the latin, *universitas magistrorum et scholarium*, was founded. By 1400 there were some 40 universities in Europe, many of them in Italy: Naples founded by Frederick II in 1224, Rome founded by Pope Boniface VIII in 1303, Perugia in 1308 following a papal decree by Pope Clement V, Pavia, Siena, Ferrara, to name but some. Today there are almost 4000.

<www.emersonkent.com/images/mediaeval_universities.jpg>
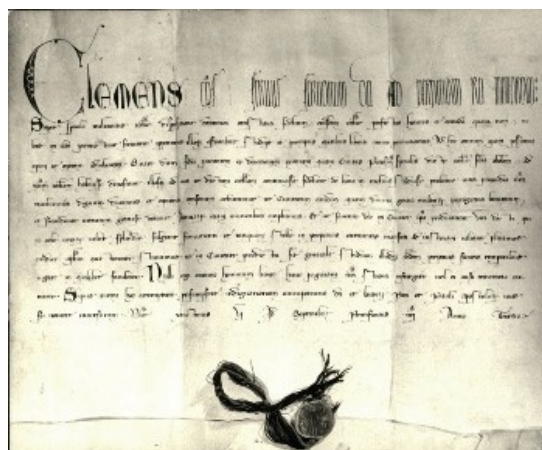
The Papal Bull issued by Pope Clement V in 1308 (State Archives, Perugia)

Many of our universities started off as corporations, associations of students who felt the need to extend their range of knowledge to the emerging sciences not covered by the existing ecclesiastical schools. They pooled their resources together and drew up contracts with visiting "artisti" or scholars paying them as they deemed fit for classes in theology, law, medicine, and

philosophy.

The early universities grew up around colleges, containing lodgings for students, situated in the towns, and who were often not subject to the local jurisdiction, as we learn from the 1564 "Privilegi degli studenti di Padova", but entrusted to the powers of the academic community, i.e. the rector.

Libraries, however, were a relatively late development. Most university or faculty libraries only date from the 1600's. The first universities didn't have any libraries, unlike the ecclesiastical schools which often enjoyed rich endowments and whose libraries were also responsible for the actual production of books. Books were personal property and kept in private collections. The professors' *Lecture notes* were available either for copying or for renting, thus limiting the number of copies that had to be made. The colleges' first books and manuscripts were from donations or bequests, such as those of Petrarch donated first to the city of Venice, later dispersed in libraries over Europe.

These books were often housed in chests along with other precious objects, usually looked after by the university chaplain. Later they were moved to large tables containing books, according to the type of course being taught, to which they were often chained. The reader moved around the hall according to which book he wished to read, thus influencing the very architecture of the library building of the future. These became the first consultation libraries, specialized according to the courses being taught. The University of Paris, the Sorbonne, in 1338 lists 1772 entries.
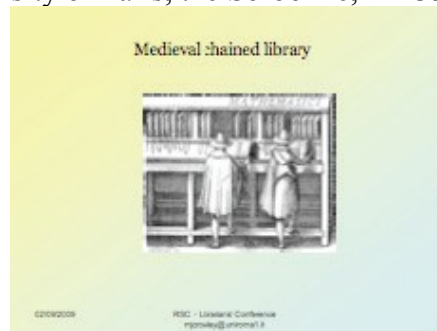
When books began to be produced outside of the libraries and with the advent of printable type, the number of books in the universities possession increased.

Likewise, librarians were a bit of a rarity at the beginning of the university and did not really emerge until the late 1500's along with the establishment of inventories and records, and library rules regarding opening times, admissions and loans.

Giuseppe Arcimboldo (Italian, ca. 1527-1593). - The Librarian (Wolfgang Lazius), ca. 1562. ©

The story of the library over the last 600 years is its gradual emergence as a vital and unique institution in the university. It has come to be a place of scholarly repute, with its usefulness going beyond this.

The academic library has come to guarantee the organized collection of printed and/or other content, provide a staff trained to support the learning, teaching and research needs and output of the university and community, offer an agreed schedule in which services are available, and ensure the physical facilities necessary to support this.

The academic library has always been intrinsically caught up with the, often multiple, politics, cultures and economics of its alma mater or mother institution. It has grown as the universities themselves have expanded, with budgets and acquisitions often being administered or overseen by faculty, whether it be a large university or faculty library or a smaller department library. The library is seen as a source of prestige in the competition for students, faculty or money for research.

Technological developments in the 1990's and the availability of online resources have changed how research and often teaching is done, and academic libraries throughout the CIBER community have successfully adjusted their services to fulfill these functions for their users.

Nonetheless, this is a particularly wrenching moment for librarians as we come to terms with the fact that some of the added value we've prided ourselves on providing no longer seems to be particularly valued by our own community.

Massive changes in the sheer quantity of available content, now available thanks to the "Big Deals" negotiated by CASPUR-CIBER since 1999 and generally throughout the Web, and what and how this is delivered, has everyone questioning the role that the academic library now plays in acquiring, managing, and delivering information.

With the advent of Internet, and the current massive digitization and proliferation of information, some see this as the death knoll for the academic library. The future library is often *envisaged as a social gathering place more like a coffee house.*

<www.rfi.fr/francefr/articles/097/article_61558.asp>
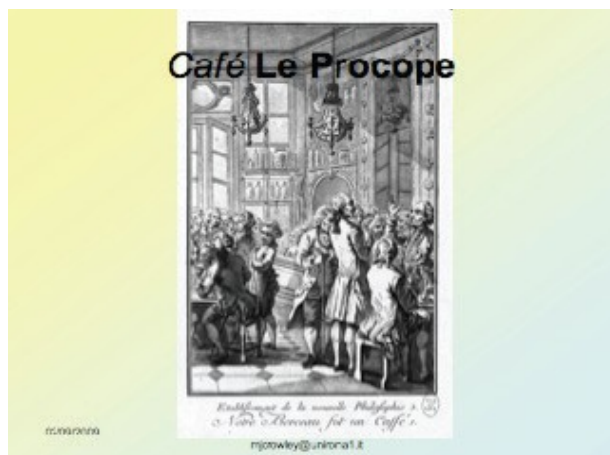
or Cafè than a dusty, whisper-filled hall of dead-tree records. No more stacks, no more catalogues, no need for new spaces to house burgeoning collections, instead comfortable chairs for lounging, barstools for people watching university lectures via you tube, booths for group work or individual study, laptops, MP3's for checkout, wireless Internet access, software suites, multimedia tools, and a cafe.

Librarians are concerned about how to best entice the Netgen, the Ygen, the Xgen, the next gen, the millennial, the digital natives, today's F Generation away from the goozone into the library space?

How to re-engage the researcher? Get them to appreciate that we really can make a difference now that they no longer need to walk from their nearby office into the library space.

Thanks to skillful negotiation by the CASPUR-CIBER consortium with the major vendors when the coffers were full online data bases, journals, e-books and resources, content is delivered straight to their desktop unmediated, apparently, by the library.

Faculty, too, besides those who had been quite happy to continue with the same photocopied Lecture Notes year after year, passed on from one generation to the next, more or less intact but only slightly grubbier, now have online "Coursepacks", posted on their home pages for authorized student access, again thanks to the efforts of the consortium.

And let's not forget the parents! Yes, the children of the baby boomers like to keep in daily touch, actually an average of 1.5 calls a day, with their offspring on a vast of range of topics <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y>, including their recent essay assignments. When they get their term assignments, they don't Google it, they don't even go to the library, they phone home (survey presented UKSG Torquay 2008).

The CIBER librarians have been at the forefront in their universities in keeping a dialogue open with all their users, ensuring that easy access to the online catalogue, keeping them informed of the latest developments through the library homepage, offering virtual reference services and infrastructure and services to support the needs of students and academic staff.

Training for librarians is central to the work of CIBER. Since 2003 two yearly seminars have been held to introduce librarians to new online resources and issues in response to both the evolving information environment and to coping with the requirements of our community for wider user access. These seminars, organized by and for the librarians themselves, have embraced such varied topics as user education, guided research, institutional repositories, negotiation skills for licensing materials, copyright legislation, open access, impact of usage statistics, e-books, e-preservation, new metrics, and much else. Over the course of the years these seminars are also an opportunity for vendors to present their products and for the CIBER librarians to engage with them regarding their pricing strategy and rationale.

Nor have web 2.0 developments seen our librarians unprepared. In 2008 members of the Ciber community published the first Italian version of the the "*23 library things*", an OA staff development learning concept centered on social collaboration tools (blogs and vlogs, wikis, podcasts, vidcasts, webinars, RSS, share, IM, Flickr, Picasa, and YouTube, social bookmarking, tagging and folksonomies, user-driven comment, rating, and recommender systems), and how these can be applied in a library environment. The goal at all times is to offer technology competencies to our librarians and help staff provide better services as well as enhance the technology of our researchers and students, and transform our library into an institution that continuously promotes lifetime learning among our communities.

However, just when we thought we had come to grips with these new information tools, with our newly-styled homepage up and running, blog blogging, podcasts released, library presentation on YouTube, library on Facebook, made it delicious, circulation might be plummeting, reference queries declining, but page visits are visibly rising, then along comes the recession.
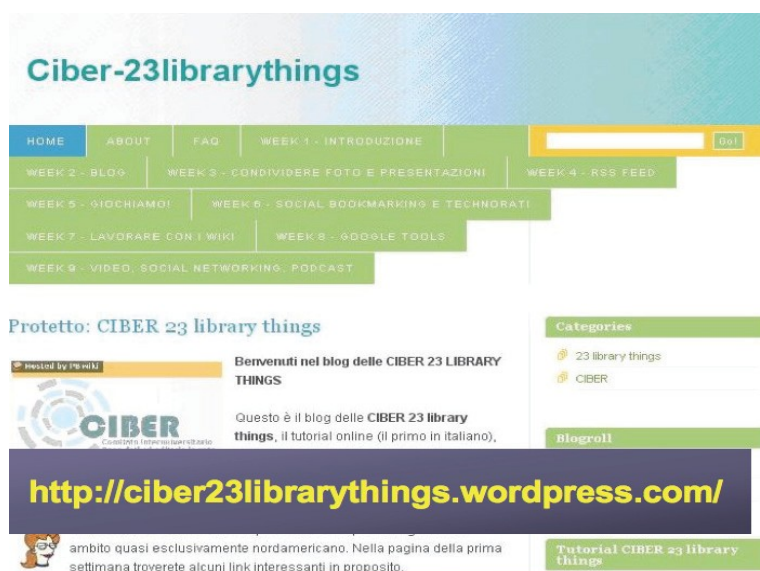
Whatever affects higher education affects the academic library

American universities have been particularly hard hit by financial retrenchment. In lean times benefactors (particularly those who earned their fortunes in hedge funds) are less willing to make endowments. Harvard has lost $8 billion between last July and October 2008 <www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2009/06/harvard.html>. Cost-cutting measures right across the board have also affected the libraries and some houses will reduce their budget by 15 percent and staff cuts have also taken place. A precedent does exist in history. Paris, the university with the most colleges in 1400 - 40 in all - saw the value of its endowments plummet because of inflation so that by 1650 bursaries were fewer than 200 years earlier.
<www.springerlink.com/index/R18661476U2J7186.pdf>.

But Europe, too, has begun to feel the pinch.

In **Italy** funding sanctions will be applied to Universities that have breached government requirements. This performance related funding is on top of a previously scheduled 10% cut in budget allocation to the universities. Up to 7% of the approximately €7-billion (US$10-billion) national university budget will be allocated according to this ranking. **Finland** has favoured mergers as a to tailor resources. In **Ireland** universities have announced early closing and cutbacks in services. The **Czech** government has frozen the science budget for research. In **Greece** the national consortium HEAL has had access cut access to some major online resources due to difficulty in renewing contracts. A survey of 38 **UK** university libraries conducted by the Research Information Network (RIN) reveals that nearly 40 per cent of libraries plan cuts to books and serial purchases from next year. One in five plans to cancel one or more big deals.

The publishing world has also been affected by the downturn in the economy and is also pondering changes in scholarly communication.

ACS laid off 56 staff in April, 40 in the publishing sector, including 10 staff members at *Chemical & Engineering News* and the entire reporting team at *Environmental Science & Technology*. Mention was made of the fact that publishing enterprise has entered probably one of the more momentous times in its history.

The sale of **Springer** was recently rumoured, but the CEO Derk Haank, speaking at the U.K. Serials Group conference in Torquay (2 April 2009), denied this. He did, however, reveal that Springer's private-equity owners Candover and Cinven were in discussion with a third partner in order to provide additional investment.

In an article in the Guardian (Richard Wray, guardian.co.uk, Thursday 30 July 2009 21.40 BST) it is reported that **Reed Elsevier** is strapped for cash and as the recession hit prices, they plan to offload some of US-based magazines, such as Furniture Today.

Alongside technology and economics, **new forms of scholarly communication** are also harbingers of change, both for the libraries and the publishers.

<www.interdisciplines.org/liquidpub/papers/4>
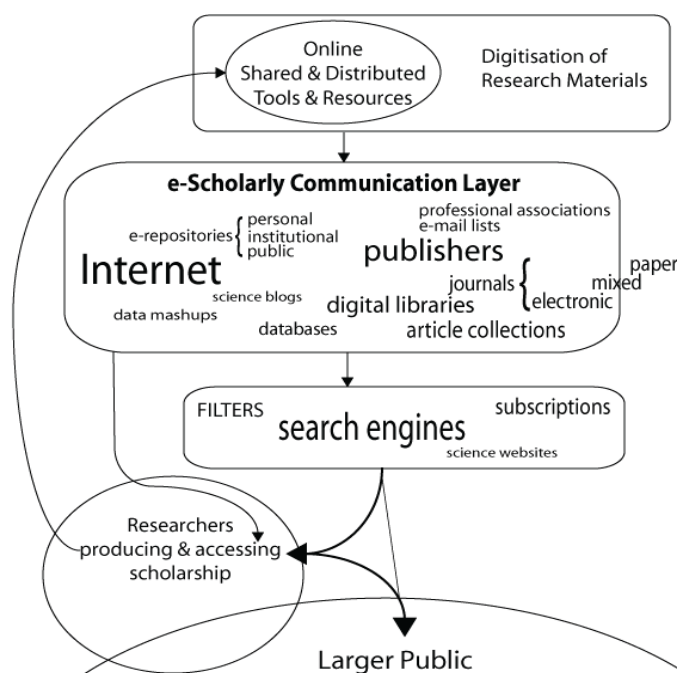
Briefly, publishers, universities and the libraries are having to face the challenges posed by

Open Access publishing , the greater availability of scholarly content as faculty members are being encouraged to submit all their peer-reviewed articles accepted for publication to an Open Access <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_access_(publishing)> Institutional Repository, the new role of University Presses as universities and their libraries reassume responsibility for publishing, new forms of social networking research without borders and interdisciplinary research among younger researcher now populating the halls of academe who have grown up sharing peer to peer information, the academic award structure and peer review under scrutiny in the electronic environment, copyright issues, new metrics beyond the journal level, enhanced publishing.

CIBER librarians, in supporting their institutional repositories, feel that it is the **library's responsibility** to optimise access and usage of the research products of its community. Publishers should be aware of the changes underway, technological, economic and cultural and decide to move along with the other members of the community - the universities and their libraries and authors. Failed business models in the newspaper world and the challenges posed by different forms of online content should act as a warning.

It's a tough time all round and the ripple effect has been hard on our libraries. When a budget cut is proposed the library is immediately affected. Experience has shown that it is usually the collection that is cut. For academic libraries today throughout our 27 member universities, often part of a cooperative purchasing programme aided by CASPUR-CIBER, the lion's share of their spending is on electronic resources and these are the first to come under scrutiny.

In response to this crisis, ICOLC, the International Consortium of Library Consortia of which CIBER is an active member, has issued a Statement on the Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Consortial Licenses <www.library.yale.edu/consortia/icolc-econcrisis-0109.htm>.

The statements makes several important points:

- We expect significant and widespread cuts in budget levels for libraries and consortia: reductions unlike the sporadic or regional episodes experienced from year to year, with real and permanent reductions to base budgets. It may not be uncommon for library and consortia budgets to decline by double digits year over year.
- These cuts will be prolonged. The public and education sectors will likely lag in funding recovery.
- Putting price first will help all parties, because budget pressures will drive decisions in a way never seen before. Real price reductions will be welcomed and can help to sustain relationships through the hard times.
- Multi-year contracts will be possible only with clear opt-out and/or reduction clauses.
- Although the statement was made when 2009 renewals were already in place, there is ongoing concern in the library community that these could mask the further downturn in library finances since.
- A number or recommendations are also made that provide a solid foundation for the information community, including the publishers of scholarly information, to go forward together in these difficult times.

The Southern-European Libraries Link (SELL) <www.heal-link.gr/SELL>, of which CIBER is also a member, has issued a similar statement, while the American ARL has stated zero intolerance for any price increases.

Some vendors have responded to the crisis by offering lower or zero increases for 2010 however, proposals or solutions from the major **vendors are conspicuously absent**. Indeed, they have each published their 2010 price lists seemingly ignoring the current situation.

Our libraries, however, have to perform in the crisis. Budgets in all our member universities are under stress and libraries will have to seek further negotiation opportunities. This does not mean that resources that have been centrally negotiated and often, but not always, centrally funded should now be cancelled and dramatic negotiation return to the single library which some vendors are currently pushing for. However, as a recent NYT article pointed out "When money is tight, everything is negotiable". Even previous agreements! Thus, for academic libraries some legal knowledge and negotiating skills are today at a premium as they try to secure rights at acceptable prices, skills that the CIBER community has consolidated over the last ten years' activity.

The **Big Deal** as a business model will have to be re-modelled as this is really no longer affordable and other models sought. The Big Deal provides access to all titles in a publisher's package, accessible at all campuses, with pricing based on historic print, and offered as a multi-year agreement with negotiated price caps for each year of the agreement. This model, apart from its obvious advantages, has come up for a lot of criticism. It is a vendor lock-in model. Confidentially clauses contained in these contracts hinder an economic analysis of these type of deals across universities and countries <www.econ.ucsb.edu/~tedb/Journals/BundleContracts.html>.

Multi-year price caps are none other than programmed yearly increments at a time of slashed budgets. And, finally, allocating costs by historical precedent, penalises departments or faculties that have been more active, and is regardless of whether their research has since shifted perspective.

The vendors together with the universities are advised to meet together to devise new licensing options that will embrace the changing environment.
An example of this is the experimental pilot project put in place by Springer, first with Max Planck after a highly publicized split, and then with UC, the UKB and Georg-August University of Göttingen.

Under the agreement, authors accepted for publication in a Springer journal will be published using **Springer's Open Choice program**, offering "full and immediate open access," with per-article charges factored into the cost of the overall license. In addition, "final published articles" will also be deposited in the institutions' Repository.

The academic library through its consortium CASPUR-CIBER has to establish leadership in its dealings with the vendors. Essential in this are stronger library-faculty relationships where trust is nurtured through continuous communication. Cuts will have to be made, list titles restricted, and faculty should be involved in decisions made regarding the collection so that well-informed decisions can be made. Discussions could be launched regarding different forms of allocation of spending that move away the historical spend.

Moreover, the alma mater usually decides funding for the library and together all the stakeholders could devise new payment plans to ease budgets to be proposed to the vendors. After all they do not want to loose our business !

Meaningful library-faculty liaison is also essential in making known the range of services offered by the academic library and engaging with our users.

Researchers and students want the web to work smoothly and regularly 24/365.

Like water on tap they want it clean. This is where the CIBER library needs to acquire and reinforce visibility and drive the user into their space where they are responsible for channeling as well as filtering information, both to and from the library. Branding is essential. Portals need to be redesigned to enhance communication. When users access content supplied by the library this should appear on the resource they are consulting, i.e. This is brought to you by…, or the library logo.
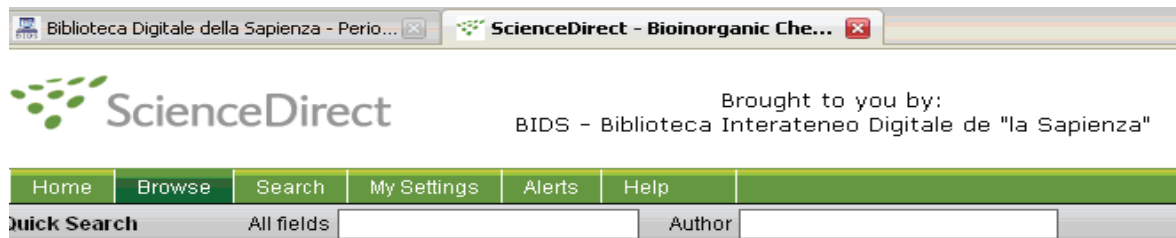
By applying widgets and other library apps when researchers find content on Google or even Wikipedia, thanks to these mashups they will be informed that this material is available in their library and driven back to the catalogue.
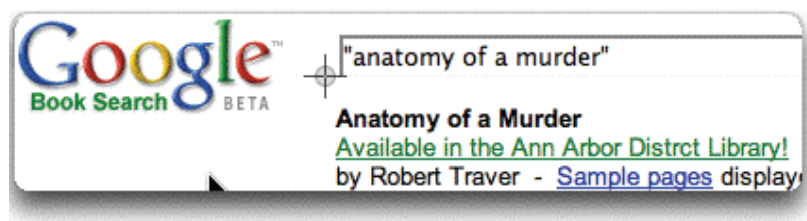
This type of branding pushes up visits to the library page and expands the idea of the library as space beyond the library walls.

And no that library 2.0 that we did is not wasted. Open source software have given us blogs and wikis, powerful, freely-available tools with which to share and create content, further information literacy and document progress with faculty and students alike. Wikis can be used to explain the use of various tools, including exploring the catalogue.

YouTube videos can teach information literacy to undergraduates, training in bibliographic reference tools and in the use of the software packages purchased by the library so that they are used to the full.

Streaming podcasts of lectures given by faculty on the library homepage or a description of the library services.

RSS feeds to inform users of new arrivals or events in the library.
Facebook, Myspace, Delicious, Connotea, IM are also useful forms of social networking that bring the library into the users space and promote interaction with them.
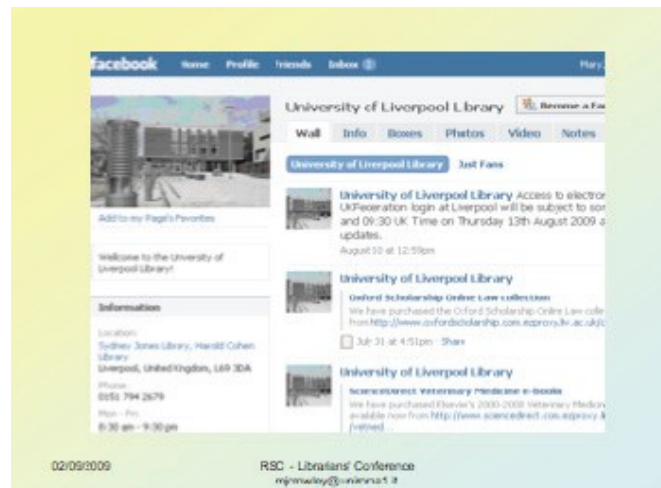
By inserting libraries into the processes people are using the CIBER library is being proactive while guaranteeing the authoritativeness of the sources it makes available.

Likewise Faculty can provide links to the library on their institutional homepage and help promote their libraries.

Continued face-to-face reference services and literacy programmes are also essential.

Promoting access to content through direct encounters continues to have an important role. Many CIBER libraries now hold regular meetings with their students. Initially, these were expositions of the library resources available and how to use them. Now they are extended to include librarian-student, or student-student conversations on a broader range of academic issues. This has become an enriching experience for all concerned that provides valuable insights into student's behaviour, study habits and needs.

A take-away from this is the student's idea of space and need for different spaces: individual spaces, silent spaces, collaborating spaces, computer-free spaces, and so. We are currently assessing how we can tackle this in the spaces we have available.

Different use of space

Peer-to-peer communication among students is crucial. Our student collaborators are vital sources of information and a valuable resource to exchange user experience and campus information.

Similarly, by offering an introduction courses to the libraries during classes, this opens up other channels of direct communication and liaison.

These are just some of the ways that we in CIBER find that interest can be kindled in the library and begin to explore what it can do for and with researchers and students and together learn to exploit opportunities for the future. The Library ensures its place in the information flow, is seen to be a knowledgeable provider of information and helps mould how students interact in a critical manner with the content accessed.

Naturally this involves staff management and organizational changes among the workforce. Even though a staff freeze is being applied in many of our university libraries, luckily certain routine tasks now require less time or have become redundant and investment and human resources can be shifted into other areas such as digitization projects and Open Access.

Online access to local content is vital if this is not to remain invisible. However, this also requires the creation of good metadata in the service of discovery, yet another task to be absolved and it is not clear by whom. Digitisation does, however, offer new possibilities in research, facilitating unknown and unforeseen connections among resources as well as opening up the academy to the general public.

Institutional repositories, faculty practice of posting research online, disciplinary repositories, open access publishing are all raising the exposure of faculty research as well as preserving it. For these to be successfully built the support of the university authorities is vital. It is the task of the librarians to create greater awareness among researchers and enable them to post their research. This has been a recurring element in CIBER business since its first seminars in 2003 and our members were active in promoting the Messina Declaration among Italian universities in support for the views outlined in the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities <www.biomedcentral.com/openaccess/www/?issue=10>. The signatories states that «national and international academic communities feel the need to identify alternative models of scientific communication that can provide the largest dissemination and the highest impact of their research output».

Institutional repositories, by posting the intellectual output of their faculty, are a visible display of academic quality concentrated in one place and its scientific, social and, even, financial value.

Virtual learning environments, virtual research environments, distance learning, lifelong learning, are important interactions between the university and the broader community. These are intrinsically tied in with the academic library digital information environment, providing invaluable resources to remote users. The role of the librarian as teachers of information literacy, custodians and managers of digital resources, as well as experts in copyright clearance and procedures for the dissemination of electronic content, is vital.

Benchmarking, establishing standards, measuring the impact of the library services and new functions, both traditional and electronic, are an invaluable part of the work of the library. This involves user satisfaction, economic returns, statistics, surveys, processes, staff and infrastructure.

The librarians in the CIBER universities are aware that the library in the 21st century is evolving into something that looks quite different than it did twenty years ago. We feel that it is important to be at the forefront of that change and guide this by forging a partnership ahead with all the protagonists. Profit cannot be the only logic nor academic reward and it is our intention to make content available to the wider audience, including environments outside the library walls, to benefit learning and teaching.