
Digital Library as Community not Repository

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Overview

- Digital Library Functions
- Key challenges as drivers
- Concluding remarks

The digital library. An online environment that:

- mediates between users and information
- is in itself a form of scholarly publishing
- extends and integrates the library's information management, service, and user support functions
- adds value to information content (and so is never free)
- reflects institutional priorities
- transforms institutional roles

Key challenges: technologies and their use

- The problem: mobilizing R&D capacity; supplying library appropriate systems and services
- Promising directions and logical trajectories
 - Sharing in the technology transfer challenge
 - Architecting the digital library and its protocols
 - Specifying requirements and aggregating demand for utility services (digitization, repository, registry, name resolution, certificate authorities)
- Assembling barbarians at the gate

Key challenges: benchmarking the digital library

- The problem: minimizing risks and costs while maximizing consistency and predictability
- Promising directions and logical trajectories
 - Documenting practice (through assembly and review)
 - Defining preferences (for data creation, production, and with a view of fitness for purpose)
 - Benchmarking collections and services (..)
- Assembling barbarians at the gate



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Key challenges: collections - *problems*

- Problem: potentially transforming activity which has yet to engage users, produce critical mass (for research), or survive on inflated (commercial content) or false (home-grown data) economies...
 - Collections driven by a knee-jerk NIKE response – let's do it – limited long-term view of purposes, costs, audiences and use
 - Distance from user, closeness to collection... all about us, needs to be all about them or we become content farms
 - Reliance on short-term external funding; on boxes in rooms; on overstretched and unprofessional production services; on grad-student labor (and equivalents)
 - Limited reference to data on how digitized collections are used and perceived
 - Competition for profile on the net resulting in patchwork of thin collections

Key challenges: collections - *prospects*

- Parsing purpose and surfacing division of labor: (for preservation; for exhibitions, for specific user needs; for repositories of eprints, primary research and other data; for digitized special and rare collections)
- Policies, checklists, guidelines, and data standards
- Some very interesting user-driven or focused collections (LANL), richly contextualized collections (LC), community-specific integrating gateways (OSTI, NLM)
- Emerging models for sustainability

Key challenges: collections – *remaining effort*

- Information:
 - on use and non-use
 - on how to plan strategically and assess institutional readiness and risk
 - on different organizational forms
 - on what services costs, on what users value
- Internal review: of mission; of staff requirement and development opportunities; of relations with end-users; of organization
- Infrastructure (the standards, the tools, the utility services)

Key challenges: institutional obstacles

- Letting go of the digital library to get a grip on it
 - Giving it to users, professional staff, and senior managers
 - Informing policy to influence practice
- Re-examining the roles, goals, and public perceptions of libraries and other CHOs – balancing not-for-profit (public) service orientation with need to support *additional new services*



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Assemblies of barbarians

- In content farms – New York Public, Library of Congress, Michigan
- Scattered thinly along a large water front - Cornell, Indiana
- In the tow of user groups - Virginia, California Digital Library
- In the engine room - Harvard, Columbia
- Sitting comfortably in club chairs - Ohiolink CDL
- In partnership - AMICO
- In spinoffs - HighWire, JSTOR, ArtStor
- In utility services - OCLC, RLG, DOI
- In venture funds - DLF
- In membership organizations – ARL



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Assembling barbarians

- Around “killer apps”
- Around “killer collections”
- Around pyramid schemes
- Around shared values
- Around tables laid with meat and drink –
stuff of life

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Key challenges: use, users, and user support

- The problem: meeting users' personal information needs in an impersonal networked space
- Promising directions and logical trajectories
 - Nuanced understanding of need
 - More practical experience (empirical data) than we admit to
 - Substantial largely untapped expertise in the commercial sector with a commercial interest

Key challenges: digital preservation in an heroic phase

- The problem: cost-effective long-term access to educational and cultural heritage
- Promising directions and logical trajectories
 - Research and awareness raising (about the problem, its dimensions, and possible solutions) and information sharing
 - Frameworks, strategies, and decision tools
 - Practical and applied experience with the web, research data, and electronic records
- What's left
 - Applied experience with commercial electronic resources
 - Agreed preservation benchmark and different understanding of information's value



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The DLF's Mission

Leveraging members' expertise and investments to:

- share and evaluate information about digital library tools, methods, trends, and strategies to inform and help validate local digital library activities, decisions, and investments;
- share and evaluate digital library practices and experiences to gain an understanding of good and best practice;
- stimulate and share in necessary research and development;
- pool investment to incubate new services and service organizations;
- respond quickly and effectively to new digital library challenges;
- foster strategic alliances;
- build a community of professionals.



Key challenges: mobilizing expertise

- Working groups
- Strategic alliances
- Commissioned research
- CLIR/DLF Fellows
- Facilitated planning processes

Key challenges: communications

- Website
- Forum
- Newsletters
- Registries

Key challenges: transitioning interesting R&D

- With an eye to exiting
- In strategic alliance