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Bringing Down the Empire: Remaking Our Work, Our Libraries, Our Selves

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|---------------|---|
| Item Type | presentation;event |
| Authors | Wones, Suzanne L. |
| Download date | 2024-07-23 16:23:50 |
| Link to Item | https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/580 |

Bringing Down the Empire:
Remaking Our Work, Our Libraries, Our
Selves



Suzanne L. Wones
*Director of Digital Strategies and Innovation
Harvard Library, Harvard University*



How many have seen Rogue One? It answered some long standing questions in the Star Wars universe but it also introduced some new ones. Like, who the heck designed the Empire's archive and what were they thinking? I'm not going to answer that question today but I am going to answer some other questions. Including one some of you have probably been asking since you saw the title of this talk. Who is the Empire? There are actually a lot of answers to that question but for today let's just say assume it is every who says "Libraries don't matter."

Here's a picture of Jyn and Cassian in the archives.

Jyn is the daughter of the primary architect of the Empire's death star. He's included a vulnerability so it can be destroyed but it find that flaw she has to get the design plans for the death star.

She assembles a team to infiltrate the archives, steal the plans, and transmit them to the rebel forces who can then use them to destroy the Death Star.

It shouldn't be that difficult to
get the **Death Star plans**
and bring down the **Empire...**

...but it is.

It's very complicated.

Archive is on a heavily armored island, it was built for a paranoid power monger so it is not designed to facilitate access, data retrieval is physically very difficult, everyone is getting shot at, the data file is enormous and requires a huge satellite dish to transmit.

People have to work together, there are dependencies.

In other words, it is just like our libraries, just like our work. Hopefully with far fewer deaths.

our work
our libraries
our selves

So let's talk about how we are bringing down the empire by remaking our work, our libraries, and our selves.

Remaking Our Work

Shift from what we know and what is comfortable to what our patrons want/need/are using NOW.

We serve the information needs of our parent organizations.

Since this is an ACRL conference I'm going to assume that for most of us that means for our college or university. And institutions of higher learning are under a lot of pressure right now and are in a period of great change

Changing demands from our communities require corresponding changes from us.

HARD. Requires commitment from leadership and from staff. I'll talk a little bit about those changing demands and then how that is changing the work that we do.

Is College **Worth** It?

Student debt crisis - Rising tuitions and the under-employment of graduates leads to a situation where people are starting to question the investment of getting a college degree. According to the Federal Reserve Bank, 18% of those who have debt for their own education are behind on those payments.

Colleges and universities are under immense pressure to demonstrate their value.



Image source: Case Western Reserve University,
Case School of Engineering.
<http://engineering.case.edu/sites/engineering.case.edu/files/casecampus674.jpg>

Emphasis on producing students better equipped
for the working world

Pressure to incorporate hands on learning
opportunities

Pressure to create critical thinkers. Which means a renewed focus on Deeper Learning Techniques

Competing Models of Education



coursera



Lynda.com[®]
FROM LINKEDIN

MOOCs, online degree programs. Free or lower cost options.

Pressure to provide personalized learning experiences

Increasing awareness of different learning styles also increasing students ability to advocate for what they need as individuals in order to success. The pedagogical benefits of creating personalized programs have been demonstrated over the past 30 years. Learning technology offers solutions for creating and managing them effectively but still require faculty input and time.

Keep the on campus experience rewarding

Act Like a Start-up

Innovate

Experiment

Blended learning experiences

Be Agile

Keep Education Relevant

Universities are feeling the pressure to Act like Startups. Try new things. Iterate.

- Experiment with learning models
- Create blended learning experiences
- Keep Education Relevant

Digital Literacy

- Create Digitally Literate students
 - Definition and Assessment
 - Balancing connected and unconnected lives

Which means schools are also realizing that the Digital Literacy thing librarians have been talking about is a real thing.

Hard to define and hard to assess. Vitally important to be able to evaluate sources of information and not just parrot them.

Balancing our connected and unconnected lives has a real impact on learning and the experience that students have on campus.

The challenge is addressing this and helping students navigate the plethora of digital tools and sources so that they make the most efficient use of the ones best suited to their needs.

Faculty are starting to get it

+20%

Increase in faculty who **strongly agree** that libraries help students:
“Develop research, critical-analysis, and information-literacy skills.”

On that last point I'd thought I'd introduce a bit of good news. Faculty are expressing concern about students showing up to college without sufficient research skills but the good news at least some of them recognize that the library has a role to play addressing the problem.

This 20% increase is the Difference between the 2012 and 2015 Ithaka survey of faculty attitudes towards their campus library.

The 2015 survey also found an increase in faculty members who believe undergraduate students are arriving at college with inadequate research skills.

Increase, since 2012, from 47% to 54% of faculty strongly agreeing that undergraduates arrive on campus with “poor skills related to locating and evaluating scholarly information,”

“The share of scholars who think libraries help students “develop research, critical-analysis, and information-literacy skills” is up 20 percentage points from 2012.”



Keep this image in mind when I go to the next slide.

Image source:

<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/90/8d/f6/908df6ffd3f06b81b2472fc1c11e6d8d.jpg>

Our Changing Work

Less

Time on the reference desk
Face to face interactions

More

Supervision
Research consultations
Project management
Liaison work
Facilities planning
Strategic planning
Administration
Outreach/marketing
Fundraising
Scholarly work
Data collection and analysis
Committee work
Instruction

This list is generated from a 2014 survey of Canadian librarians. They were asked to reflect on the previous five years and lists activities they were doing more of and those that they were doing less of. Resonates with me, both from what I've experienced over the past ten years and what I hear from librarians and see in job descriptions.

Some of these changes represent shifts in our work based in changing demands from our users.

Reference desk questions have declined because people get quick answers online. At many of our libraries however, we see an increase in students scheduling research consultations either because of the personalized work that their doing, as independent studies, for in depth research projects/papers or for self directed learning.

Data collection and analysis reflects awareness that we need to support our scholars who are doing much more research of this nature. It is also due to the fact that just as our parent organizations need to demonstrate their value to perspective students, we need to demonstrate our continuing value to our the organization and collecting and analyzing data about our own work and impact helps us do just that. As does the emphasis on outreach and marketing.

This survey only collected data from librarians who had been working in the field for five years or more. So this is a list of work being added or shifting in existing

positions. It's worth mentioning that several respondents noted that the new tasks they were asked to take on were due to other staff leaving and their positions not being filled. I think that is a reality we have all witnessed since 2009. Library directors have also been creating new jobs in reaction to the new kinds of work we're creating.

Our work is **changing...** and we are
adapting

Library Postings Since November 2016

Data Informationist

Digital Initiatives Librarian

Data Visualization Specialist

Emerging Technologies Librarian

Business Development Director

Team Leader for Digital Learning & Scholarship

Data Services Officer

Studios Design Technologist

Chief Learning Experiences Librarian



This is just a sampling of titles I've noticed since November on various library listservs I belong to. A Lot of data and a lot of digital but also some learnings and scholarly. Shows the variety of new roles and responsibilities library work now entails. The ALA Placement & Salary Survey in 2016 demonstrated the same variety with varieties of User Experience Librarians showing the greatest growth in the past two years.

Image source:

https://www.lib.ncsu.edu/sites/default/files/huntlibrary/gallery/interior/students_in_immersion_theater.jpg

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New Opportunities

- Electronic Publishing
- Digital Literacy (for adults)
- Augmented and Virtual Reality
- What else can we imagine?

Electronic publishing - There is a real opportunity here as our faculty members are creating works of digital scholarship that don't fit into the traditional print publishing models. Libraries can play a significant role in disseminating and promoting this work.

Digital Literacy - The fake news crisis, has heightened awareness of the importance of evaluating sources of information. Libraries have leapt into the breach offering trainings, exhibits, guides to identifying and refuting fake news.

Virtual Reality - learning opportunities. Exploring Ruins, walking the streets of Paris to practice French, microscopic journeys.

Remaking Our Libraries

Changing habits of our scholars and the work we support means we also need to thinking about our physical spaces and how they need to change.

What are you going to do with your buildings?

Recently I attended a retreat of the Harvard University CIOs. It was facilitated by an external consultant. He had us each talk about the things we were working on and I talked about some of our digital library projects and the digital scholarship support services we are building and as soon as I was done he said “What are you going to do with all of your buildings?” It was kind of a sucker punch. Clearly his view of libraries was the traditional one of library as warehouse. Clearly we have to keep our libraries vital parts of campus or they will be repurposed.

Innovative User Spaces

So let's talk about how we can remake our libraries so that they respond to the **current** needs of our users.

Current - introduce change that is malleable

Caveat - each of our communities is unique and will have its own set of needs. Including quiet. The reading room in the Harvard Law School Library is a temple to quiet and that quiet is policed by the students, not the library staff. I could never wear courduroys during exams when I worked there during. They were too loud.



Olin College of Engineering

My first example is from Olin.

- practical, hands on learning approach.

- Learning outside of the classroom - passionate pursuits, independent study

- Intrinsic motivation over extrinsic

Summer of 2015 the Library Director, Jeff Goldenson, led a Summer Workshop

- Literally remaking the library.

- Hired seven students - Designed and implemented everything themselves. T

- They painted, built tables, made signs, put wheels on bookcases

- Created a library for students by students.

Here's a short video of a student describing how the library works for him now.

Olin College of Engineering



Before



After

The only rules were that everything had to be safe, reversible, and code-compliant.

In the pictures you can see that they added color, some fun elements, and mixed the furniture. Jeff tells me that putting the bookcases on wheels has been transformative - allows the students to create nooks, or open spaces up for events. Students can influence their environment.

Turned the library into massive maker space - with hardware including saws, drills, sanders as well as electronics and means for digital creations. Programming, creating rolling bookcases. Short bookcases on wheels was transformative. Allows constant changing of the environment.

After the renovation they created a club that continues to build things for the library. Same rules apply: Cheap, safe, reversible, code-compliant. Everything is a prototype. It allows students to be creative and perpetuates that sense of ownership.

Example: Pop up coffee shop (once a week) student run. Free coffee. Students do everything, library just pays for the coffee. All about building community.

Photos courtesy of Jeff Goldenson.

From Jeff: How do you design for authenticity? Turning space into place. Sherry Terkel piece in the NY - future of conversation. Doubling down on space. Humans getting together to do things together in space. Libraries are a Unique shelter from capitalism.

Vinyl cutter. To create wall coverings - can stick it on walls and change the space. Frequent sign changes. Can also use it for screen printing.

Whatever the students do has to be reversible - allows them to try many things and undo them if they are not successful. Everything is a prototype.

library@olin.edu

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Olin College of Engineering



Work in progress - shows their work bar with a cardboard desk added to create work nook on the other side. Testing out the concept before adding in something more solid.

Photo Courtesy of Jeff Goldenson.

User Centered Design

A far more mediated example is from Harvard where we recently renovated our science library. It's a relatively small library inside of the campus science center. It was built in the 70s and hadn't been touched since. Between the outdated set up and furnishings and the fact that sciences have come to rely heavily on electronic sources the use of Cabot had declined severely. And it is in a prime location on campus.

So we worked with a company that focuses on user centered design principles, brightspot,

- interviewing users,

- Observing users,

- Visiting gathering spaces that were not libraries

- Developing use cases that we wanted the new library to support.



Here's a picture of the main seating space - formerly all stacks.

Photo Courtesy of Kerry Conley.



Not all of the user data came from interviews. We also observed users and one behavior we saw was the students trying to find quiet corners to have Skype calls in. Either for interviews or with family and friends in other countries. So we designed these little chat rooms - aka phone booths that can be booked for 30 minutes at a time.

Photo Courtesy of Kerry Conley.



In our attempt to support new styles of work we added a self service video room. Fairly bare bones but it allows students to create video for multimedia projects and it allows instructors experimenting with flipped classrooms to quickly capture lecture content.

Photo Courtesy of Kerry Conley

Innovating Staff Spaces

Then there's staff space

User space



Staff space



In his article *Rethink the Staff Workplace*, Felix Elliot (founder of brightspot, as space design company) makes the point that libraries tend to focus on user spaces but that we also need to think about staff spaces and renovate them to better support new types of work and better places to work collaboratively WITH users.

Left photo: Courtesy of Harvard Law School Library. Langdell Hall Reading Room.
Right photo: Screen capture from *Being John Malkovich*, Gramercy Pictures, 1999.

Staff Spaces

“As libraries make their public-facing spaces more people-focused and mobile tech makes big us/them service desks obsolete, it’s important to ensure that **staff have creativity-enhancing spaces** of their own along with the **work processes, tools, and training to be effective.**”

- *Felix Elliot, founder of brightspot*

We can, and should, use the same design processes for thinking about our staff spaces that we do for our public spaces.

Elliot: “The most effective organizations are the ones that treat staff and customers equally well because they know that only engaged staff can create satisfied customers.”

Remaking Our Selves

Changing nature of our work is leading us to change our library space and the jobs in our library.

Also have to ask how do we need to change ourselves.

If I've learned anything in the past 17 years as a librarian it is the old truism "The only constant is change." All of us need to be adaptable and ready to grow.

Managing is a Team Sport

- Discuss strategy
- Interests + Needs
- Support training
- Post-training



Meaningful change requires commitment from leadership and from staff. Discuss Strategy with your Staff. Be open about the user needs you see that need to be met. Discuss when and where changes are needed. Explore the options together. Ask your staff what new work they're interested in and excited by. Match passion as well as skills when reassigning work. If you are asking people to take on activities they feel passionate about and are good at they are more willing to accept the changes.

Staff have to be willing to try new things and both sides need to understand that there is going to be a learning curve and production will take a hit.

Support training and give staff opportunities to use new skills. Need to make sure staff benefit personally as well as bringing new skills to the job. Lots of different ways to get training – I will discuss individual options in a minute.

As a unit there are ways to do this

- Example: **University of Michigan** - had a library conference for their own staff - submitted proposals, scheduled the day, shared a lot of expertise.
- Example: Technology Challenge at **Brigham Young University**
Brigham Young university set up a self directed learning program called the

“technology challenge” which gave staff a variety of topics and technologies to explore. Asked them to spend 15 minutes a day learning. “Participants were asked to spend fifteen minutes each day learning a new technology skill. HBLL leaders used rewards to make the program enjoyable and to motivate participation: For each minute spent learning technology, participants earned one point, and when one thousand points were earned, the participant would receive a gift certificate to the campus bookstore. Staff and faculty participated and tracked their progress through an online board game called "Techopoly." “Participants who completed fifteen out of twenty possible challenges were entered into a drawing for another gift certificate.”

Growth is an Occupational Hazard

- Experiment: Will it have impact?
- Willingness to implement new Ideas: This might be better?
- Opportunities to fail: What can you learn?
- Training/ Support: Future-proof your job.

Professional organizations
Lynda.com
InfoPeople
Codeacademy

i. Employees – experiment where you can. Say yes. Take courses

1. Online courses: Lynda, InfoPeople (maybe? V. library focused, library schools,) Codeacademy

2. Welcome new challenges, take risks.

When I took my current job I was pretty scared - very different work, high profile. I've learned a lot and it's been exciting. WE learn the most when we extend ourselves.

What is a Librarian?

This is a Test

So, if our space is changing, our work is changing and we are changing, How do we know we are still librarians? what makes us librarians?

To help us figure that out I developed a test. At first I thought I'd set up a poll for everyone to answer but I don't want to get into librarian shaming so you can just answer the questions to yourselves and tally them up at the end.

Question 1:

Do you have a cat?



Image source:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=0ahUKEwioq8Lbos3XAhUF9IMKHdJyArkQjBwIBA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fgeborneo.club%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2017%2F09%2Ffluffy-cute-orange-baby-cats-kitten-with-blue-eyes-too-youtube-cat-wallpapers-amazing-hqfx-pictures-backgrounds-cat-cute-orange.jpg&psig=AOvVaw0n2Hz3zww5upigQ1P1iNJv&ust=1511271296465991>

Question 2:

Does your cat wear
glasses?



Image source:

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/36/39/d4/3639d4a86f183ea3f308aae6858f9722--wearing-glasses-funny-pets.jpg>

Question 3:

Do you follow
*Fake Library
Stats* on Twitter?



The image shows a screenshot of the Twitter profile for 'Fake Library Stats' (@FakeLibStats). The profile header includes a bio: 'Tweets from a real librarian. Not currently wearing a cardigan.' and a location: 'From a library near you'. It also shows a link to 'facebook.com/fake/libstats' and the date 'Joined November 2011'. The statistics bar shows 4,682 tweets, 625 following, 23.5K followers, and 756 likes. A pinned tweet is visible, dated 29 Jan 2016, with the text '25% of librarians plan to haunt the library after their death' and an image of a library interior.

| TWEETS | FOLLOWING | FOLLOWERS | LIKES |
|--------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| 4,682 | 625 | 23.5K | 756 |

Fake Library Stats
@FakeLibStats
Tweets from a real librarian. Not currently wearing a cardigan.
From a library near you
facebook.com/fake/libstats
Joined November 2011
Tweet to Fake Library Stats
16 Followers you know

Pinned Tweet
Fake Library Stats @FakeLibStats - 29 Jan 2016
25% of librarians plan to haunt the library after their death

If you answered
yes to **any** of the
questions...

You are a
Librarian



Obviously, we can't rely on any clothing or pet stereotypes. I know librarians with dogs, bunnies, reptiles. I even know some librarians with no pets whatsoever.

Image source: <http://www.trbimg.com/img-57d93469/turbine/bs-ae-librarian-of-congress-carla-hayden-20160914>

Why we do what we do

We're librarians because of our values and our mission.

“We will continue to **speak out** and support our members as they work tirelessly for access to library and **information** resources on behalf of all of their community members, while advocating for privacy, **intellectual freedom**, critical **global research**, information literacy, ongoing access to scientific research, and **fair and equitable treatment** for everyone.”

Julie Todaro, ALA President

The quote from Julie Todaro was part of a press release from the ALA in January. CLIR, DLF, other institutions issued similar statements.

Values – Changes in government policies have led many of us to examine our values and define what is important to us as information professionals.

- Access to Information
- Intellectual freedom
- Support for research
- Fair and equitable treatment for all of our users

These values are critical to democracy and possibly the strongest argument for why we will continue to need libraries in the future.

And our Mission is to serve the information needs of our parent organizations. As long as we continue to work as partners with our schools to advance that mission we will be librarians.

Values - since the U.S. presidential election we have had to examine our values and define what is important to us as information professionals. Those values are critical to democracy and possibly the strongest argument for why we will continue to need libraries in the future.

The Story Continues...



Bringing this back to Rogue One. Even if you haven't seen it you may have heard about the final sequence. It shows the plans they've fought so hard to get being uploaded and then handed off from one ship to another with rebel troopers running through corridors while being shot at to hand the plans off to the next trooper and so on until they are delivered to Princess Leia and we are brought back to the beginning of the very first Star Wars Movie. And we know that she is going to take those plans and the death star will be destroyed.

To bring down the empire we have to keep passing the baton, keep finding new ways to keep each other and our scholars informed. Keep thinking about how we are doing our work, the spaces we are sharing with our users, and how we are changing ourselves. I'm very excited about the programs that are scheduled for today and I think we'll all learn plenty here that we can take back to our libraries and keep that story going.

questions?

I'm looking forward to attending the rest of the day's sessions so please, if you want to ask me anything throughout the day please find me.

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