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# From the Taiga Forum 2006 ...

## OUR Future Scenarios: RSR readers respond

From the Taiga  
Forum 2006 ...

421

### Abstract

**Purpose** - The purpose of this article is to present a series of reflections on future scenarios distributed to Taiga Forum participants in March 2006.

**Design/methodology approach** - Permission was obtained to reprint the scenarios, and select national library leaders, seasoned professionals and mid-career librarians were invited to respond to these scenarios.

**Findings** - Taiga scenarios focus on broad areas - internal organizational structures, advances in information technology, changing user expectations. Local engagement with these scenarios will help staff prepare for the future. Scenarios lend themselves to a variety of uses, including in-service training, staff development, team building. Scenario planning can easily be tailored to the specific needs of an institution.

**Originality/value** - The Taiga Forum was an invitation-only event. Broader dissemination of the scenarios provides others not only with the opportunity to move beyond their borders in technical services, public services, collection development, or information technology, and transcend the traditional library organization, but also with the opportunity to develop new solutions.

**Keywords** Library management, Reference services

**Paper type** Viewpoint

*The Taiga Forum ([taigaforum.org/index.html](http://taigaforum.org/index.html)) - a new conference bringing together Associate University Librarians and Assistant Directors to re-examine the delivery of service, our perceptions of the continuing value of the library, and the very vitality of our internal organizational structures, was held on March 27-28, 2006 at the Palmer House in Chicago, Illinois. The Taiga Forum was an invitation-only event. Prior to the Forum, attendees received a set of 15 "provocative statements" prepared by the Steering Committee[1]. These statements were the main focus of discussion during the breakout sessions on both days, and the Steering Committee hoped to give attendees an opportunity to ponder them before arriving in Chicago. At this first-ever Forum attendees this had an opportunity to think about their organizations' futures by way of the provocative statements.*

*At RSR we believe that shaping the next stage of the library organization is the responsibility of all library workers. We received permission to print the provocative statements, and have asked several individuals to respond to the Taiga statements. Our lineup includes librarians from public and private academic institutions, from small, to mid-sized, to large institutions, with East and West Coast return addresses, and places in between. Here are a college librarian, a university librarian, an associate dean for public services and collection development, an associate director for public services, an associate university librarian for public services (an attendee we invited to set the stage and provide the framework for the responses), a science and engineering team leader, a data specialist, a reference librarian and outreach coordinator, and a special assistant for strategic initiatives. Here are national library leaders, seasoned professionals and mid-career librarians. Respondents were invited to engage one or more scenarios from the mix. Their reflections follow, presented in numeric order as per the sequence of the*



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*original statements. Several respondents chose to engage more than one scenario; these cluster responses conclude the reflections. Associate University librarian Carol Hughes, University of California, Irvine, a Taiga Forum attendee, provides an introduction to the suite of reflections.*

*We challenge our readers to join their colleagues and engage these scenarios. How would you develop a cross-functional vision that makes your library's internal organizational structures more flexible, agile, and effective? Are you prepared to move beyond the borders and transcend the traditional library organization? Have you developed new solutions that take advantage of advances in information technology? To what extent has your organization evolved to meet changing user expectations? Are your leaders, your early career librarians and everyone in between, prepared for the future? Are you prepared?*

*Read on! This is your opportunity to explore various aspects of these statements, either solo or with your colleagues. You might even consider the goal of developing recommendations and opportunities for further exploration within your own organization. Local engagement with these scenarios will help staff at all levels prepare for the future. Scenarios lend themselves to a variety of uses, including in-service training, staff development, and team building, and scenario planning can easily be tailored to the specific needs of an institution. Within our organizations, there are myriad ways we can leverage these scenarios to advantage.*

**Sarah Barbara Watstein and Eleanor Mitchell**  
*Editors*

"Perpetual beta." "The loss of print's sumptuary." "Cultural probes." "The trompe l'oeil library." "Fate of the Megamammals." "Kentucky fried collections at the drive thru library." "Gravitational pull on the web." "Where should we just concede?"

These were some of the memorable sound bites at the Taiga Forum. Forum organizers were true to the meeting's theme of "boundary spanning" as they presented speakers from across the spectrum of library expertise for the purpose of beginning to surface key issues confronting those in top library leadership.

Innovative interfaces gets particular recognition for sponsoring such a valuable experience without having an overt business agenda other than assisting those at the associate university librarian (AUL) and assistant director level in over 60 Association of Research Libraries institutions to begin a "cultural probe" of our own. The impetus for the session was the conviction that leadership today requires vision based an understanding of issues outside the boundary of the department, the library institution, or the campus in order to create solutions with impact and speed.

Invitees were asked to bring their current library organizational chart to the meeting. Charts were posted around the meeting room to embody the fact that no current organizational charts reflect accurately how most of the innovation and "boundary-spanning" work gets done in a research library. After that fact was acknowledged, rather than discuss new organizational models, the attendees turned their attention to mining the vast expertise in the room and tackling the issues directly. Stimulating presentations sparked thoughtful perspectives from the viewpoints of public services, technology, instruction, and technical services.

A list of provocative statements was provided by the organizers to serve as fodder for small breakout sessions. To some the statements were outrageous; to others the

statements were describing daily realities. On Day 1 each small group voted on three statements to discuss and the reporting session was interesting. However the urge to discuss ideas broadly among the entire group was so compelling that the next day most attendees chose to create a discussion group-of-the-whole to continue the exploration.

The program agenda is available at: [www.taigaforum.org/program.html](http://www.taigaforum.org/program.html) and most of the presenters have provided PowerPoints. The slides can not represent the depth of the excellent presentations by Dale Flecker (Associate Director of the University Library for Planning and Systems, Harvard University), Lorcan Dempsey (Vice President and Chief Strategist, OCLC, Paul Duguid (author, *The Social Life of Information*), and James Neal (VP for Information Services and University Librarian, Columbia University). Nor can they convey the humor and insights of the other speakers. However, as valuable as the speakers were, one of the more valuable and enduring aspects of this conference is that it tentatively established a "safe space" for leaders to engage others with complimentary expertise in exploring some of the less comfortable scenarios for the future of our profession.

The organizers have promised that there will be serious consideration of another Taiga Forum. Part of the success of this forum was the limited size of the group and the shared breadth of responsibility that each of us holds back at the home institution. I hope that future meetings can maintain this unique aspect as well as maintaining the focus on the thorniest challenges facing us.

focus on the thorniest challenges facing us. Carol

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### **Taiga Forum provocative statements**

The Taiga Forum Steering Committee instructed participants to note that "All statements are prefaced by "Within the next five years —"

- Traditional library organizational structures will no longer be functional. Reference and catalog librarians as we know them today will no longer exist. Technical services and public services will have merged into a new group called "consulting (something)". Public services and instructional technology, wherever it exists, will have merged or will no longer exist.
- Libraries will have reduced the physical footprint of the physical collection within the library proper by at least 50 percent. Support services see similar reductions and these changes impact the national libraries as well (they are probably merged).
- The majority of reference questions will be answered through Google Answer or something like it. There will no longer be reference desks or reference offices in the library. Instead, public services staff offices will be located outside the physical library. Metasearching will render reference librarians obsolete.
- All information discovery will begin at Google, including discovery of library resources. The continuing disaggregation of content from its original container will cause a revolution in resource discovery.
- A large number of libraries will no longer have local OPACs. Instead, we will have entered a new age of data consolidation (either shared catalogs or catalogs that are integrated into discovery tools), both of our catalogs and our collections. The ERM system and the ILS will be one and discovery will be outsourced.

- There will no longer be a monolithic library web site. Instead, library data will be pushed out to many starting places on the web and directly to users.
- Academic computing and libraries will have merged. The library will be a partner in the Learning and Research Support Services Infrastructure. Its value will depend on its ability to reallocate resources to new curation, workflow, and resource specialization services.
- There will be no more librarians as we know them. Staff may have MBAs or be computer/data scientists. All library staff will need the technical skills equivalent to today's systems and web services personnel. The ever-increasing technology curve will precipitate a high turnover among traditional librarians; the average age of library staff will have dropped to 28.
- Publishers and intermediaries will have changed dramatically. Many small and scholarly publishers will fold. Subscription agents and book vendors will have new business models. Dissemination of non-STM serials and books will no longer be commercially viable.
- E-books and e-book readers will be ubiquitous. Standards will have magically made this possible. Hand-helds will be ubiquitous and library resources will need to be accessible to these devices to meet user needs.
- Simple aggregation of resources will not be enough. They have to be specialized for constituency use and projected into user environments (my.yahoo, e-portfolio, CMS, RSS aggregator). Workflow replaces database and web site as the primary locus of attention. The library role is to project specialized services into research and learning workflows.
- "Intermediate environments" will be as important as consumers of library services as endusers. Intermediate consumers are environments in which users construct workflow and digital identity. RSS aggregators, course management systems, uPortal, my.yahoo, flickr, myspace, microsoft research pane, etc.
- Libraries will provide shared curation services for important portions of the cultural, scholarly, historic and institutional record. This will move from *ad hoc*, sub optimal project working to a collaborative strategy, a shared approach.
- Research support services will become routine. The institutional repository will be one set of services within the wider set of services that assist in the researcher and research administration workflow.
- The library community recognizes the debilitating fragmentation of its collaborative structures and consolidates around fewer targeted initiatives and organizations. This is driven by the recognition that system-wide efficiencies need to drive local improvement.

#### **OUR Future Scenarios: RSR readers respond**

*Provocative Statement #1. Traditional library organizational structures will no longer be functional. Reference and catalog librarians as we know them today will no longer exist. Technical services and public services will have merged into a new group called "consulting [something]". Public services and instructional technology, wherever it exists, will have merged or will no longer exist*

An organization that remains static will die; the same is true for organizational structure. Adherence to a "staff" chart that pigeonholes librarians into discrete job titles,

recognizable in the 1960s, is the mark of a stagnant library. But the good news is that many library organizations have been embracing change in their organizational structure for years. At my library there is hardly a librarian title from 1960 that exists today. The "traditional library organizational structure" ceased to be functional years ago. So, what is a library to do? Some libraries have reorganized into teams while others have flattened their structure. Librarians have become on-call consultants to staff at service desks. Individual service desks have combined to become one-stop shopping points for advice, information, referral and technology. The choices are plentiful. Local culture will determine the new structure best suited for a particular institution.

The smart library manager will always turn a staff vacancy into an opportunity to review overall library needs and plan for a replacement accordingly. In today's changing information environment, replacing a librarian position without considering whether the position is needed or can be done differently is critical. Just as bibliographic instruction evolved into library instruction then information literacy, a cataloger has (or will) evolved into electronic resource coordinator or metadata creator. A systems librarian might now be a web and instructional design librarian. Technical services and public services have not merged but coalesced into new creatures. Rather than a merger of this position or a merger of that position, library organizations will continue to evolve with the goal to support the mission and priorities of the parent organization. Look for more First Year Initiative Librarians, Honors College Librarians, Distance Learning Librarians and Managers of Digital Assets.

There will be common elements in every librarian position. Everyone will need customer service training and continuous upgrading of technology skills. No one should consider a career in librarianship if they are uncomfortable with the role of teacher. All librarians will need to be advocates for their library and in possession of persuasion and influence skills. Within the next five years, librarians as we know them today will exist in dynamic, changing roles, influencing information use in the 2010s.

**Pamela Snelson**

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Within the next five years traditional library organizational structures will change. Maintaining the past structures will not be technologically feasible or economically possible. It is becoming more difficult to maintain a backroom of catalogers and acquisitions personnel as each day passes. Large economically viable companies have emerged to provide cataloging for purchases that numerous libraries make. What catalogers remain in large libraries will be focused on providing metadata rather than MARC cataloging. What acquisitions personnel remain will be focused on negotiating contracts for large databases or datasets. Smaller libraries will refocus their personnel on what today would be seen as multiple duties. All librarians will have capabilities to acquire materials (books, datasets, and local collections) as needed by patrons or required to add depth to a quickly accelerating abundance of materials. The need for quick access to materials will also require librarians to all share metadata duties so that material is easily accessible to all patrons wherever they exist. Librarians in general will be skilled in pushing their collections to patrons. This means providing metadata so people can search for it, instruction (via in-person instruction or podcasts) so people can skillfully locate it, and skills in combining digital material so that the

information is easily accessible when it is needed. Librarians will have skill sets that enable them to participate in a variety of activities to seek, access, provide access, and create collections that will continue to draw patrons to libraries, whether they exist as physical locations for a local population or digital locations for those around the world.

**Stephen Stratton**

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*Provocative Statement #5. A large number of libraries will no longer have local OPACs. Instead, we will have entered a new age of data consolidation (either shared catalogs or catalogs that are integrated into discovery tools), both of our catalogs and our collections. The ERM system and the ILS will be one and discovery will be outsourced*

Libraries will ultimately realize that it is not about the OPAC - it is about preservation. A total of 25 percent of the worlds digital cultural heritage will be permanently lost and another 50 percent will be at risk. Libraries will evolve into large scale servers dedicated to continued refreshing, migration and reformatting of an almost entirely digital information universe.

**Elizabeth Stephenson**

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*Provocative Statement #8 There will be no more librarians as we know them. Staff may have MBAs or be computer/data scientists. All library staff will need the technical skills equivalent to today's systems and web services personnel The ever-increasing technology curve will precipitate a high turnover among traditional librarians; the average age of library staff will have dropped to 28*

An imaginary wish perhaps from information technology specialists, but not true. An MBA or an MS in Computer Science guarantees no more success in the information field than an MFA does. Librarians continue to make their mark on campuses around the country and in the public eye for providing assistance in the location and use of information. Computer specialists do not have the service ethic that has pervaded librarianship since its beginning. Computer specialists do not have the background in civil liberties and dedication of access to information that librarians have. MBAs tend to view information only as a marketable, saleable, entity, and have no way to quantify the uses of information to everyone in a community and the necessity to maintain information over long periods of time. Library and librarian jobs and education may be redefined (as they have always been redefined) but the degree and expertise will endure. The technology curve is no more an issue now than it was 30 years ago when computers first began to appear in libraries. If anything computer technology has become easier to use and to design than at that point in time. Librarians have adjusted to the technology and stayed in the field. Stories abound of the "when I went to library school, we surfed through paper card catalogs" recollections, but everyone has moved on to the technologies in place today, as they will move on into the technologies that will arrive tomorrow. Librarians have shown the ability to adjust to technology changes just as all professions have been asked to adjust in the past 30 years. Library schools will adjust their education to meet the demands and librarians will adjust their skills to meet the needs of their patrons. As older librarians retire younger librarians will

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replace them, but this not mean an average age of 28, as library skills are not limited to younger people any more than they are in the professions of lawyers or doctors.

From the Taiga  
Forum 2006 ...

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Dystopian future anyone? This statement regarding the future of librarians does not provoke a reactionary response as much as a chuckle. A librarian's service to patrons is not wholly about solving technical problems or administering budgets. Library service at its heart is a humanistic art, not a science. It consists of empathy for information needs and sincere passion for helping patrons. It includes inquiry and probing to determine unarticulated questions since users frequently do not know exactly what they are looking for. More than anything, it is the ability to muster and employ multiple sets of knowledge in order to educate.

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427

Effective educators will never disappear. The teaching of information literacy skills is not about bits and bytes or spreadsheets; it is about the added value and expertise that librarians bring to the reference desk or to the classroom. Cultivating teachable moments is not the domain of systems personnel. It is simply one more item in a good librarian's repertoire. To educate requires not only the necessary knowledge base, but also the necessary interpersonal skills. An affable demeanor and focus on good customer service is nearly as important as having the knowledge needed to answer questions. Professionals who have these abilities will not have a high turnover or an average age of 28. They will continue to be of all shapes and sizes, embracing the challenge of teaching people how to help themselves.

Of course, technical skills have become more and more important in today's increasingly electronic environment. Troubleshooting word processing software, HTML code, and PowerPoint presentations is all part of a day's work in the library. So too is evaluating the costs, benefits, and allocation of resources. But these skill sets are far from the only ones that will be needed in the library environment. Computer scientists are wonderful at using technology to make libraries more efficient. MBAs are wonderful at analyzing stakeholders, resources, and other components that give structure to organizations. But it takes a different kind of professional to educate patrons in locating, evaluating, and using information. That kind of person is, and will continue to be, a librarian.

**Mark Sanders**

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*Provocative Statement #10. "E-books and e-book readers will be ubiquitous. Standards will have magically made this possible. Handhelds will be ubiquitous and library resources will need to be accessible to these devices to meet user needs. "*

Speaking as an academic science librarian, I do not think most of statement 10 will come true by 2011, however, parts of it may.

This statement immediately presents a challenge: how do we define e-books? Web-based content found in electronic book collections like Proquest's Safari Tech Books Online? This sort of e-book is proving a cost-effective resource for science and reference librarians - such collections can serve most of our users' needs (other than

RSR  
34,3

reading a whole text) and the format is close to theft-proof. But, key web-based collections like Safari and ebrary do not currently support the revolutionarily useful OpenURL linking to other resources - will they in five years?

428

Or by e-books do we mean content that is downloaded to a particular hardware device like Ebookwise's "Rocket Book" or Sony's forthcoming "Librie" reader? I have not seen a single person with such a reader on our large campus, and no one has inquired at our reference desk about this type of e-book.

However, I recently discovered that the UK *Aslib Handbook of Information Management*, to which I contributed a chapter, is available from Ebookcom! Also recently, a young colleague who works in a music library told me she reads e-books on her Macintosh laptop "all the time" - this surprised me as much as the Aslib e-text. But I do not see enough evidence now to predict ubiquity in five years.

One cannot help but think the Committee wrote the standards phrase tongue-in-cheek! Standards are typically hammered out during long and passionate committee meetings; they have never "magically" appeared and been applied. There is a standards committee for e-books - the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF - <http://www.idpf.org/>). IDPF is working on the Open Ebook Publication Structure consensus specification for a basic electronic document "vocabulary" that all compliant e-book readers must recognize. Thus it is likely we will have an e-book software standard, but I see no assurance that all e-book readers (hardware) will comply with the standard.

"Hand helds" can mean something different than the more common definitions of e-books. If the hardware definition of hand-helds includes PDAs in general, and iPods in particular, then I agree that they will be ubiquitous; they are close to everywhere on our campus already. If podcasts of stories can be considered e-book content, then this sort of e-book may well be everywhere by 2011.

There is no question that libraries must be ready to support, to some degree, e-book hardware and software as patrons begin to demand these resources. However, libraries that have been "early adopters" of PDA services, like our health sciences campus library, have not found a great deal of demand for PDA plug-in or download stations. At least not yet.

E-books fit the model of technology diffusion in which "an old and a new technology are available, both of which improve their performance incrementally over time" (Loch and Huberman, 1999). E-books will continue to increase, but will not be the only, or always the preferred, format choice for libraries and our users.

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*Provocative Statement #11. Simple aggregation of resources will not be enough. They have to be specialized for constituency use and projected into user environments (my.yahoo, e-portfolio, CMS, RSS aggregator). Workflow replaces database and web site as the primary locus of attention. The library role is to project specialized services into research and learning workflows*

If the primary *raison d'être* of an academic library is the aggregation of information resources and content, then the demise of academic libraries is well within sight. The literally billions of dollars that Google and other business can afford to pour into content digitization efforts and R&D for improved search capabilities will soon far

surpass the aggregation abilities of any academic library. Just compare the incredibly primitive state of libraries' federal search offerings with the ease and simplicity of Google Scholar and the newcomer, Microsoft's Windows Live Academic.

Fortunately, ceding the role of primary information provider does not diminish the role of academic libraries because libraries have a much broader, irreplaceable mission, which resides within the differences between information and knowledge. In their book, *The Social Life of Information*, John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid articulate some of the important differences between information and knowledge. Whereas information can be easily located, transferred, and shared, independent of any human involvement, the creation, assimilation, and transference of knowledge requires humans. Because of these differences, Brown and Duguid conclude that a "shift toward knowledge may (or should) represent a shift toward people ... increasingly, as the abundance of information overwhelms us all, we need not simply more information, but people to assimilate, understand, and make sense of it."

The distinction between information and knowledge points towards a mission for academic libraries that cannot be replaced by the internet. I would argue that the primary role of an academic library is to serve the unique educational mission of its home academic institution through being active participants in the creation, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge. While technology, such as the Internet, can be a better information provider, it cannot substitute for the essential role that humans, especially librarians, play in the knowledge lifecycle.

In order to better fulfill this mission, academic libraries must become connoisseurs of the work practices of both their faculty, as well as, student body, which are in many ways quite unique to their academic institution. From this better understanding of local work practices can emerge a growing set of value-added services that an academic library can offer. Once academic libraries no longer have to focus as much time and effort on the aggregation of content, time and resources will be freed to create these more value-added services. For example, librarians could collocate and tailor subsets of their library resources that directly support the teaching, learning, and research needs of individual classes, which are then pushed into students' personal portals, course sites, and RSS feeds. Librarians could partner with faculty in each of the various disciplines to help design authoring tools that seamlessly pull information into the faculty research workflow at point and time of need. Physicists may need a one-click system by which manuscripts are submitted to [arXiv.org](http://arXiv.org), the institutional repository, and the appropriate physics journal - all without manual reformatting or duplication of metadata submission. Greek scholars may want a customized daily alert that informs her whenever a new Greek text has been digitized and placed on the web. A faculty member up for tenure review may want an exhaustive citation analysis done on his work in order to provide quantitative evidence as to his research's impact on the discipline. The possibilities are numerous and invigorating.

These services are too unique to make for a profitable business venture for information companies such as Google. But for an academic library, these services are far too critical to the creation, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge on campus to be ignored. It is here, in these specialized niches that the future of academic librarianship resides.

**Susan Gibbons**

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*Provocative Statements #1, 3, and 7*

Instead of focusing on whether or not traditional library structures are applicable or functional, libraries must focus on the specific communities we serve and the many levels of potential services. In other words, focus on the target audience, adapt the services accordingly and consider the time of the researcher as valuable in developing those services. This is something businesses have been doing for decades. For the next five years or so, we will continue to have a range of library users from the extremely traditional to the ultra technologically savvy. We should be looking to organize services around specific client groups. If we want to change our traditional staffing structures, we must clearly identify our challenges. One vital challenge is to learn how we can truly keep in touch with our communities. For academic libraries, we need to understand our institutions and assess those challenges on both a small and large scale. It has been apparent for several years now that the "one size fits all" model needs to change. We know that for many library users, immediacy, accessibility and convenience are paramount. In knowing this, it is critical that we recognize and utilize technology as a means to maintain personal contact with our community. It is the service to our users that we need to focus on - technology is merely a method to facilitate that service. Applications of library technology must be supported by personal contact with our constituency as we develop services that allow immediacy, convenience and accessibility. Academic Libraries must focus on research and development, as competitive businesses do, to identify what constituencies are using in order to develop new, customized services. We need to learn and think about how the brain is being restructured by new ways of using technology. Academic libraries are producing reports about unique and unexpected applications of technology. Listening to and focusing on the community to be served allows a natural emergence of new staffing and service models for adapting new technologies in ways that users can appreciate. Librarians and information specialists are becoming "scanners" of information and are continually adapting to new structures of information, even if sometimes reluctantly and unknowingly. In reviewing and comparing library usage in the card catalog era and the search engine era, both methods of research allowed users to begin with overwhelming amounts of information from the millions of cards in an enormous card catalog to the millions of hits with any number of search engines. As trusted resources, librarians have the tools necessary to adapt services to specific clientele. For example, why not have several modes of research and consulting service to provide different experiences? These could include services such as personal consulting, on-site virtual tours of library and web resources that occur in the faculty office, the coffee shop or wherever convenient for the user. Federated searching will be used in addition to the mega search engines to refine and customized searching for local resources. Instead of traditional bibliographic instruction, the library will collaborate with the faculty to embed critical research skills as part of the class structure. Libraries and computing services will collaborate to use content management systems and other technology to develop a customized suite of services for specific courses and/or for distance education. These are ideas that have been discussed in some form or another for years but the ability to move quickly and change when necessary has been lacking. The single most important initiative a library can undertake is to understand the needs of the community it serves.

**Susan Currie**

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*Provocative Statements #4, 5, 11 and 12*

Information discovery and contextualized service provision are themes imbedded in a number of the Taiga provocative statements (4, 5, 11, and 12). In the case of information discovery, technological innovations from search engines to personal media devices have brought about fundamental and dramatic changes in behaviors and expectations of library constituents. Google's predominance in web searching is directly tied to user expectations for a simple search interface. At the same time, exponential growth in digital resources licensed or created by libraries and those freely available, has made the provision of access increasingly more challenging and complex.

Recently the River Campus Libraries at the University of Rochester announced an effort funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to develop "an open source online system that can unify access to traditional and digital library resources." ([www.rochester.edu/news/show.php?id=2518](http://www.rochester.edu/news/show.php?id=2518)) This announcement is underscored by news from major library system vendors that first generation metasearch tools such as ENCompass and Metalib are being either replaced outright or enhanced by products such as Endeavor Discovery and Ex Libris' Primo. Analysis work by colleagues at the Library of Congress (LC) and the University of California (UC) system further underscore the need for libraries to rethink their work on fundamental levels. As Karen Calhoun notes in the LC report [sic] "research libraries' investment in catalogs - and in the collections they describe - does not reflect the shift in user demand." (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/calhoun-report-final.pdf>, page 15)

This reality serves as the prime motivator for the growing focus on contextualized service provision. Course management systems have provided an early opportunity in this regard, aligning the library with other university stakeholders in providing content at the point of need. Two points are critical in this example and not mutually exclusive. First is the importance of collaboration with other university groups in the identification and delivery of services to support teaching, learning, and research. Course management integration brings the library in alignment with faculty in the development and delivery of content in direct support of courses. Supporting research, while potentially more challenging, can be similarly accomplished through partnership with allied entities in the academy as well. For example, the library might work with a research computing group to develop web browser-based tool sets that could support grant applications, publication submissions, citation management, and then include discipline specific applications such as CACHE and DNA Star's Lasergene in the case of genetic and molecular research. Lorcan Dempsey, in an article in the April 2006 D-Lib Magazine, identifies this approach as aggregating demand by "project library services into user workspaces." ([www.dlib.org/dlib/april06/dempsev/04dempsev.html](http://www.dlib.org/dlib/april06/dempsev/04dempsev.html))

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*Provocative Statements #4 and 6*

The ease of use of Amazon and Google web sites have raised user expectations of finding information seamlessly, driving libraries to change models of providing access to information. Many already use Google as a starting point for almost all information

searches and so libraries should use this to advantage by providing access by this means. Comments from users from surveys indicate that they are frustrated by databases each with a different interface, and by update changes that require relearning how to use the tool. Using Google would make this more seamless, and updating would be transparent.

Information should be pushed to logical locations wherever users need them instead of requiring users to go to a separate monolithic library website where if they are lucky there will be a search box for the site, and if unlucky must drill down to find the information. The library must anticipate where and when users will need specific information, and provide the next step in that information path before the user is even aware that that is what is needed. This is beginning to be seen in sites that provide links to geographical mapping sites.

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#### **Note**

1. Taiga Forum Steering Committee members include: Meg Bellinger, Yale University; Stephen Bosch, University of Arizona Library; Karen Calhoun, Cornell University Library; Gail Herrera, University of Mississippi Libraries; Linda Miller, Library of Congress; Robert Murdoch, Brigham Young University; Carlen Ruschoff, University of Maryland; Mary Beth Thomson, University of Kentucky; and Robert Wolven, Columbia University

#### **Reference**

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