

Fachbeitrag

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Collaboration and Change within Library & University Collections: Perspectives from the University of Edinburgh

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Abstract: Kirsty Lingstadt and Dominic Tate discuss approaches to change, cooperation and collaboration within the University of Edinburgh’s library service. We consider organisational context, strategy development, digital skills, equality, diversity & inclusion, the impact of COVID-19 and workforce planning. We discuss planned and organic change and provide short case studies reflecting on recent experiences of changes to the library’s organisation and services, and the importance of cooperation and collaboration with the aim of developing and improving library services.

Keywords: Management, Change Management, Digital Transformation

Kollaboration und Veränderung innerhalb der Library & University Collections: Ein Blick auf die Universität Edinburgh

Zusammenfassung: Kirsty Lingstadt und Dominic Tate diskutieren Ansätze für Veränderung, Kooperation und Kollaboration im Bereich der Bibliotheksservices der Universität Edinburgh. Wir betrachten den organisatorischen Kontext, Strategieentwicklung, digitale Kompetenzen, Chancengerechtigkeit, Vielfalt und Inklusion, die Auswirkungen von COVID-19 und die Personalplanung. Wir diskutieren geplante und organische Veränderungen und präsentieren kurze Fallstudien, die unsere jüngsten Erfahrungen mit Änderungen an der Organisation und den Diensten der Bibliothek aber auch die Bedeutung von Kooperation und Kollaboration mit dem Ziel der Entwicklung und Verbesserung der Bibliotheksservices widerspiegeln.

Schlüsselwörter: Management, Change-Management, digitale Transformation

1 Foreword

This is not the article we had intended to write. Following a chance conversation at the FORCE2019 scholarly communications conference in Edinburgh in October 2019, we were approached to write an article for ABI Technik on new cooperations, mergers and convergences. At the beginning of the process, we were considering changes we had already made within our organisation, and our strategy for the future and the importance of collaboration in these changes. COVID-19 continues to change our library services and our strategic direction in ways we could not have imagined just a few months ago. We allude to some of the short- and medium-term changes in this article.

2 Organisational Context

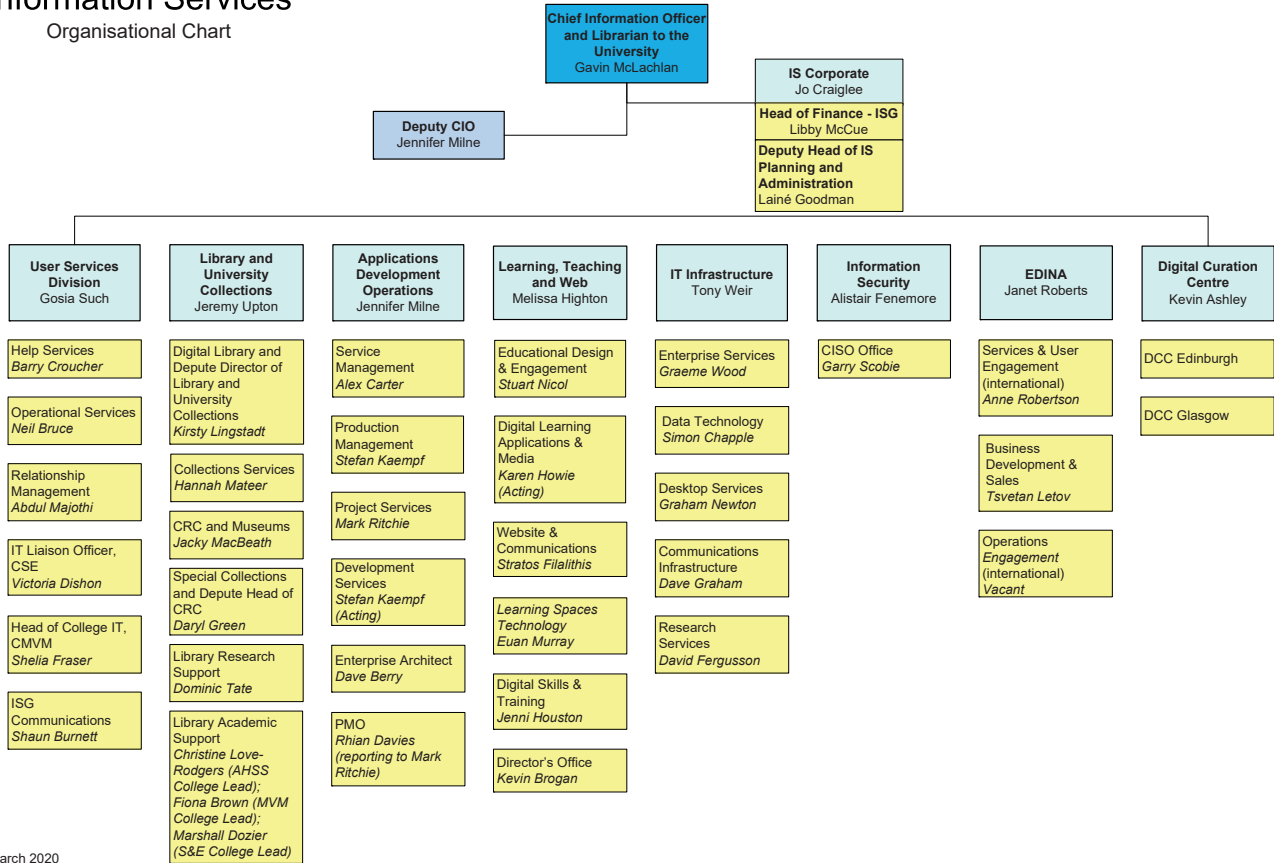
The University of Edinburgh was founded in 1583 and is the largest university in Scotland. It is a research-intensive institution and large by UK standards, with approx. 40 000 students and approx. 15 000 staff (headcount). In a relatively small city of just about 500 000 inhabitants, the university is a major employer, and plays a leading role in the cultural life of the city. The university was founded with the donation of a collection of books to the city in 1582, so it can be said that the library actually predates the university by a year!

The organisational structure of the University of Edinburgh comprises six organisational units. There are three academic Colleges: Arts Humanities & Social Sciences, Medicine & Veterinary Medicine, and Science & Engineering. There are three Support Groups: Corporate Services Group, University Secretary’s Group, and Information Services Group.

Library & University Collections (L&UC) is a directorate of Information Services, the university’s converged Information Technology and Library service. Such converged library and IT services are relatively common in UK

Information Services

Organisational Chart



March 2020

Fig. 1: Organisation Charts

universities, with probably around half of research universities structured in this way. The converged model reflects the close alignment between libraries and IT departments, and the fact that historically libraries have been influential in the implementation of IT in universities.

Within Library & University Collections, we have five sections, each led by a Head of Department who is a member of the library’s Senior Management Team (SMT), as well as a team of Academic Support Librarians, who report to the Director, via three College-leads.

Heads of Section work with the Director and the divisional Business Administrator to form the Senior Management Team, which meets on a weekly basis to discuss library business, review finances, and oversee projects. Every month there is an SMT Strategy Meeting, at which progress in relation to the strategy is discussed and SMT consider matters with longer-term strategic implications.

The importance of teamwork across SMT cannot be overstated. Each member of the team has unique skills and expertise and we recognise that it is this diversity of professional background, as well as experience gained in different universities and in other sectors (including pub-

lishing, museums, and cultural heritage organisations) which contributes to the strength of the team.

The way in which we prioritise and resource different library services to ensure the best possible service whilst managing a tight budget means that there needs to be a degree of give-and-take between the sections in the library. This can only happen effectively because there is mutual trust and respect between the members of SMT, and a willingness to occasionally sacrifice resources to enable other parts of the team to achieve more pressing targets. Because of our organisational structure, it is natural for staff to default to working in silos and it is therefore essential that we have mechanisms in place to prevent this, to encourage cross-service cooperation and to discourage territorial attitudes. Good examples of this include the *Digital Preservation Working Group*, which is a cross-service group of practitioners leading on matters to do with digital preservation, and the *Digital Engagement Group*, which was a fixed-term task-and-finish group looking at improving digital engagement with all our collections from research datasets to museum artefacts. Leads for these groups are identified by the SMT – often from volunteers – and the

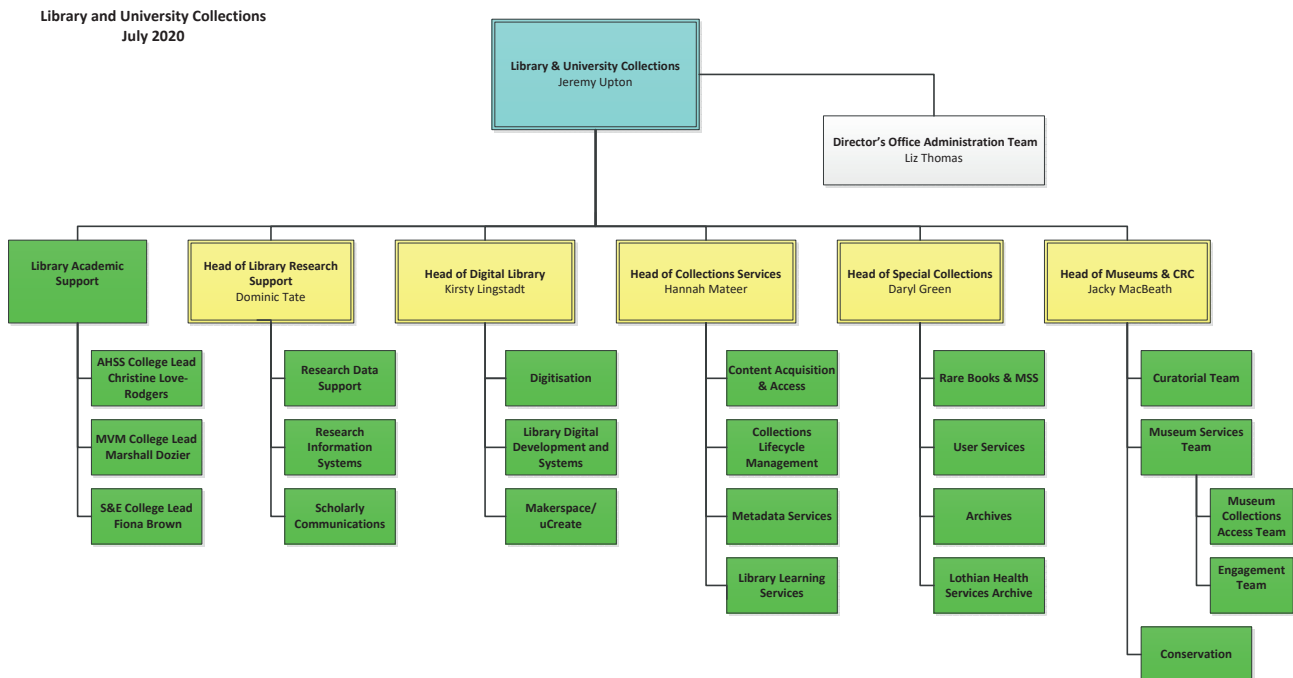


Fig. 2: Library and University Collections

groups then look at issues, identify and clarify the group remit which is then submitted to the SMT for approval. Suggestions and decisions for projects and pieces of work go back to the SMT for authorisation. Membership of the group can change but members consist mainly of volunteers and interested members of staff plus some SMT nominated/suggested members. Group leads are not necessarily the most senior staff in these groups.

3 Planning for Change

Our approach to change is informed by the context of being part of Information Services and the wider university. The Information Services Directorate sees change as necessary, and there is always some change going on within the directorate. Over the last decade, the overall approach to change could best be described as ‘little and often’. Incremental changes are made as needed, sometimes reactively, sometimes pro-actively. Typical drivers for change might include new or discontinued services, organisational changes prompted by retirements or resignations, the need to make savings, or a desire to invest in something new.

These small incremental changes which are noted locally are not always very visible across the Information Services Directorate. This means that there is an overall perception that there is no change, especially from staff

who are engaged in specific tasks or projects, and who do not have a wider view of the directorate. This in turn creates a culture that values stability but does not look for change. Therefore, people are willing to engage in improving systems but there is less appetite for more significant change.

This is reflected more widely across the university and there has been little appetite for really fundamental changes such as redesigning the service from scratch. The financial situation resulting from COVID-19 is likely to become a driver for more fundamental changes, although at the time of writing there is still considerable uncertainty as to how this will play out.

4 Development of a New Strategy

In late 2019, we began work to review our library strategy,¹ to bring the existing strategy up to date and also develop in new directions. This work was undertaken in tandem with the launch of the university’s Strategy for 2030² developed by our new Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Mathieson.

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/about/organisation/library-and-collections/strategy-planning> (14.09.2020).

² <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/strategy-2030> (14.09.2020).

In line with the university's Strategy for 2030, the Library Strategy has four main focal areas: People, Research, Teaching & Learning and Social & Civic Responsibility.

In this strategy it is also clearly stated that the university will use the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to guide our decision making.

We facilitated a series of workshops for staff to contribute to the new strategy with around 30 staff participating. A large amount of valuable input was gathered, which then needed to be distilled down into the key strategic priorities. In fact, so much valuable information came out of these workshops that in editing the material we were able to formulate the basis of a workplan as well as a top-level strategy for the department.

This exercise was particularly useful as it engaged a wide cross section of staff from all the library teams in the development. These workshops involved staff being placed in small groups to work with colleagues from different library departments to work on the four themes of the strategy. The workshop started with a brief presentation that laid out the four university themes. Each group was then allocated a theme and asked what work within the library contributed to that theme. After a short period of time the group moved onto the next theme until each group had completed the themes. This work was then collated and prioritised by the Senior Management Team written up and synthesised into the strategy document. This draft document was then circulated amongst the participants to ensure that the content reflected accurately what had been discussed at the workshops.

Anecdotal feedback from the sessions indicated that staff valued the opportunity to collaborate, and that this shared work resulted in a more balanced outcome, recognising the essential but often unloved everyday tasks which underpin the more exciting project work.

Keen for the strategy to be a 'living' document, we have arranged for the objectives within the strategy to be linked to the staff working objectives. Each member of staff has a set of work objectives for the year that they need to achieve. These are reviewed and discussed annually. Now the work objectives are aligned with the strategy themes. The work plans and annual reporting will also be described within this thematic framework.

There were two main reasons for this collaborative approach to strategy development. Aside from the obvious need to listen to staff in the development of the strategy, involving people in the process helped to keep people aware of the bigger picture. Our aim was to keep a line of sight between the top-level university strategy and local

practice, so that everyone can easily understand how their work supports the aims of the university.

Thinking about the culture of change previously described, we hope that the process we undertook to develop the library strategy will help to foster a culture in which change is easier because we can clearly communicate how our work supports the university. Since COVID-19, the way the university works has changed fundamentally (e.g. some degree of online learning is becoming standard for most courses) and library services are already changing to support this.

5 Digital Skills

Staff turnover in Library & University Collections is low. This is a good thing, as it is an indicator that staff enjoy their roles and can build a career in the library with opportunities for progression. This low turnover means we have incredibly well-experienced staff who know their jobs and the university very well indeed.

Low turnover also means we do not often have the opportunity to bring in new staff with experience of different institutions, different countries, different contexts. For this reason, it is even more important that all staff at all levels continue to develop new skills, especially digital skills.

All staff within Information Services should include the learning of at least one new digital skill in their objectives for their annual performance review. The expectation is that these digital skills can be learned in a variety of ways through online courses or through training offered by the university or other providers. Courses undertaken so far have included data science, Library Carpentry³ and others have refined their skills in Microsoft Teams, SharePoint and other software packages through online courses from LinkedIn Learning.

Perhaps the best example of staff learning new digital skills at scale was seen as the COVID-19 lockdown came into effect, and we had to move our library's day-to-day operations across the board to Microsoft Teams. MS Teams was already being used in pockets, and some people were very confident using it: others had sworn never to touch it! Very quickly it became apparent that this was the way we were expected to communicate and continue our business in the lockdown, avoiding it altogether meant exclusion. Training and guidance were made widely available, and managers were encouraged to ensure that staff could use

³ <https://librarycarpentry.org/> (14.09.2020).

the software. Some of those who swore never to touch it are now the most active users. Whilst we are sure this anecdote will be familiar to libraries across the world, we need to ensure that we capitalise on this experience to further our programme of digital skills training. Many staff have gained new confidence using technology since lockdown and we have a duty to encourage further development of these new skills.

6 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) are central to the university's mission. We are an international organisation, located in the capital city of a small European country, and the University of Edinburgh very much considers itself to be a global university.

Despite long-standing protections in law, it is clear that certain groups remain disadvantaged in society, something which has been brought into sharper focus in a number of ways over recent years from an increased awareness of the gender pay gap to the global discourse on racism in the wake of the killing of George Floyd.

It is fundamental to the success of any information service that ED&I are hardwired into the strategy and to any approach to change. For a number of years, the university has required that committee papers must include a section in which matters of equality and diversity are considered, with the intention to help decision-makers to consider the impact those decisions may have on different groups of people. In some cases, Equality Impact Assessments are required before changes to policy or procedures are allowed, as required by the Scottish Government. Unconscious bias training is mandatory for all staff involved in any aspect of staff recruitment.

We believe that we can do better and have taken a number of steps within the library, ahead of directives from the university.

Human Resources

- All staff are required to have at least one ED&I-related objective in their annual reviews. These objectives will depend of the staff roles, from attending training to making specific changes to services to improve the service for certain groups of users.
- All new or revised job descriptions need to state that staff must have a “demonstrable commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion” as an essential criterion. This allows for ED&I to be discussed in job applications and during interviews, to ensure we continue

to recruit staff with awareness of the problems and who are committed to making improvements for all.

Decolonising Collections

- Over recent years there have been a variety of projects looking at decolonising collections – in particular the heritage collections. In 2019, a PhD student worked with library staff to run an analysis on the gender of authors of texts on reading lists which showed considerable imbalance in some disciplines.
- During 2020, we came to realise that a fundamental problem with our approach was that, to date, we have always approached the decolonisation of our collections on a project-by-project basis. Previous projects were well-intentioned and made good progress, but have not been sufficient to effect the change we wish to see.
- From October 2020 on, we will put in place a cross-university advisory group which will seek to build the decolonisation of collections into our day-to-day operations, including regular reporting to the Library Committee (the formal university committee which superintends the library service).

7 Four Case Studies in Collaboration and Change

We have identified four case studies based on recent work, in which we consider the drivers for making changes in our library service, the benefits and implications of making changes, and the benefits of working more collaboratively.

7.1 Digital Library

Formed in 2017, the Digital Library is a group dedicated to bringing into greater focus the delivery of digital services within the library. The Digital Library aims to provide easily accessible digital collections to be widely used in supporting creative learning, teaching and research. Its broad portfolio covers: discovery of collections through library management systems as well as other systems, including online delivery; digitisation of collections so as to be accessible online; digital preservation of digitised content and delivering technical solutions for digital preservation; digital making; and digital scholarship.

The Digital Library originally comprised three teams: Systems, Development and Digitisation & Innovation,

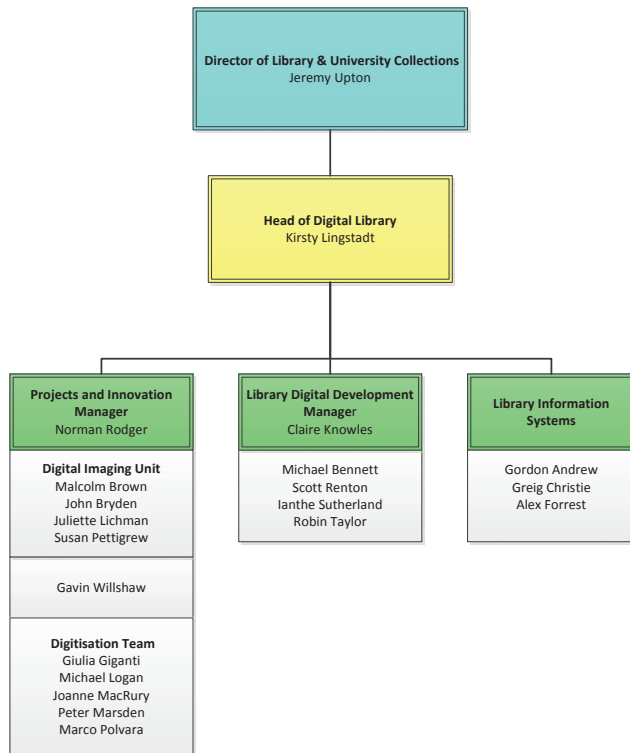


Fig. 3: Digital Library August 2017

bringing together professional IT staff ranging from developers to digital systems specialists in not just library management systems but also other specialist collections systems such as Digital Asset Management System, Archives and Museums Collections Management Systems, as well as digitisation specialists including photographers.

The appointment of a new Head during the groups formation, provided the opportunity to review what the original three teams delivered, and to also deliver new services from scratch such as digital scholarship and latterly also a makerspace the uCreate Studio – with a strong focus on supporting students engaging with digital making and learning new digital skills. While many of the staff and teams had previously worked together, they did not see themselves as one large team, nor were they always sure how the different elements contributed to what they delivered to Library & University Collections overall. Much of their activity had developed organically and in isolation in response to requests or projects. There was now the opportunity to see how this work could better further the evolving aims of the Library & University Collections.

The recently-procured Library Management System provides a solid solution for both managing the general library collections and providing access to these online. The previously used systems were older or had developed from supporting specific projects. This evaluation led to a

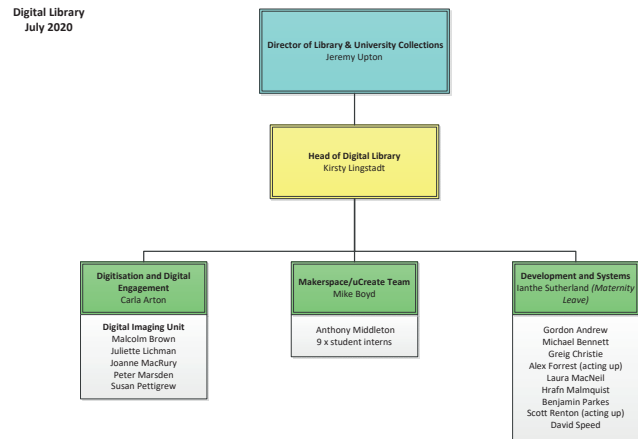


Fig. 4: Digital Library July 2020

bid for funding to overhaul the Digital Library's systems. The team secured a substantial investment over a three-year period to upgrade the infrastructure and provide a more resilient and sustainable Digital Library platform. At the same time, the uCreate Studio makerspace joined the Digital Library. This project had been successfully piloted by the Learning, Teaching and Web team, and was now seen as a better fit with the Digital Library.

These developments enabled the Head of Digital Library to review the team structure and to finalise her approach to the organisation of the teams. She decided to merge the Systems and Development teams as there was already considerable overlap with the Development team routinely providing cover for the Support team, and also providing specific support when making alterations to particular elements or projects. Meanwhile, the Digitisation and Innovation team became the Digitisation Team with a renewed focus on delivering digitisation as a service to the wider university including: digitisation of Special Collections; digitisation to support research projects and orders; providing guidance to academics who are increasingly requiring collections content in digital format; and exploring 3D digitisation, which crosses over into some of the work of the uCreate Studio.

The uCreate Studio⁴ is the service which is most strongly student facing. It evolved from 1 part-time member of staff to a team of 1.6 staff and 10 students delivering workshops, one-to-one project advice, and teaching sessions, all supporting an expanding range of equipment to enable primarily students but also staff and researchers to use new technologies and acquire digital skills. The aim is to stay at the cutting edge of technology and explore and understand these emerging technologies through this

⁴ <https://www.ucreatestudio.is.ed.ac.uk/> (14.09.2020).

space to see what can be fed back into the library. During COVID-19, the team like the wider university has changed its offers to be hybrid, with workshops in the future being both online and in person.

Through the focus on new technologies and the delivery of the Digital Library programme to provide a structured approach to the university's Digital Library infrastructure as well as in order to improve online delivery of collections, the Digital Library Team has come together. The team is now actively engaged in evolving services to meet customer needs as well as exploring areas for innovation which is an important part of the digital transformation process.

7.2 Digital Transformation & Digital Maturity Modelling

Digital change and transformation are very current topics for libraries. Many UK university libraries have been at the forefront of automation and the exploration of new technologies, but are now beginning to lag behind. In part, that is because the easy areas have been tackled. Libraries now use Library Management Systems, electronic discovery systems and reading/resource lists. Increasingly, many have moved from mainly physical stock to physical plus digital stock and online delivery of content. Libraries no longer provide access to just textual content but also databases, images, software and much more. The COVID-19 crisis has driven libraries to further embrace this move. In many cases, digital is the main way to access required resources.

However, the other significant factor is that user requirements have expanded with the technology. Researchers no longer just want to read our collections and metadata, they want to actively work with them using digital scholarship techniques such as text and data mining or visual recognition, all of which require the content to be available in digital format.

At Edinburgh University, we realised that we had been digitally transforming for a period of time and we were aware that more needed to be achieved. We were on a journey and we had an idea of where we wanted to get to, but how far along the road were we and when would we know we had arrived?

While the term "digital transformation" suggests that this process is all about technology, in fact, it is not. Fundamentally, digital transformation is about people, culture, processes and how we can use technology to place our users first and deliver services that are useful, fun, empowering or all of the above. In 2019, Information Services established a Digital Transformation Team to help move these

change processes forward across the service. The team was interested in exploring how Digital Maturity Modelling could be used as a tool. This is a framework which allows an organisation to understand how mature it is digitally and where it needs to go. This was a useful approach for the Library, and an opportunity to establish a model, which could be more widely used across the university.

The process involved reviewing a variety of Maturity Models from different sectors and organisations. While there was no authoritative standard that defined levels of maturity, there was considerable commonality between them.

This informed the work and led to the following definition of Digital Maturity: the extent to which an organisation has adapted to operate effectively and meet service user expectations in an increasing digital world.

The work also enabled us to define more clearly what we meant by Digital Transformation namely making changes to operate effectively and meet service users' expectations in an increasing digital world through:

1. Core systems transformation
2. Transforming the user experience
3. Implementing new and disruptive business models

In order to understand the library's level of digital maturity, techniques were applied to working with different constituents of the Library:

- Service Owners: undertaken as part of journey mapping activities
- Students, academics, researchers, colleagues, partners, externals: in focus groups
- All Library Service colleagues: using online assessment questionnaire
- All Library Service end users: using online assessment questionnaire

We identified the following dimensions as being critical to digital transformation:

Strategy & Leadership:	The leadership team's vision, understanding, support and enablement of digital transformation
Colleagues & Culture:	The organisation's culture, including customer-focus, innovation, risk appetite, digital literacy and commitment to creating a digital culture
Ways of Working:	How the organisation supports digital transformation and digital ways of working
Digital Innovation:	The commitment and ability to imagine new services and products, and new ways of service delivery.

	Level of proactivity and desire to assess and implement new technologies, business processes and modes of working
Digital Information & Technology Governance:	The extent to which the IT function and services are aligned with and support new digital services and ways of working
Digital Services Experience:	The service users' experience of using digital services and how well they are supported

The Digital Library found that it was on the second point of a 5-point scale moving strongly towards the next point. This gave a clear understanding of where we were and how much more we still had to achieve. Based on that we began implementing a series of resulting recommendations. One was, rather than having a separate Digital Strategy, to embed the digital transformation activity within our Library & University Collections Strategy through a few well-placed objectives.

In addition, we are delivering further digital transformation through the Digital Library Programme. This currently tackles the Digital Infrastructure – the core systems infrastructure within the library, including riskier and more experimental elements to support digital scholarship activities. Going forward, it will look at developing staff skills particularly with a focus on digital scholarship.

A key part of digital transformation is digital innovation, which entails being willing to take a risk and try out new ways of working and exploring new services. From the start, the Digital Library has seen the uCreate studio as a place to experiment with different technologies and explore how these might be used within a range of services. This is now embedded in the thinking about how the space evolves, and helps the library to identify technologies mature enough to move from this space into mainstream services, e.g. 3D printing. In addition, the library now uses this approach when working with others to deliver tools and approaches to enable researchers to undertake digital scholarship.

The advantage of having applied the digital maturity model to digital transformation is that it has given us a structure for our long terms goals, it has helped to align our different stakeholders as well as provide a structure to our long term goals, to bring a greater sense of realism into our efforts and expectations, and to motivate us by helping us to identify where we need to go. It also makes it easier to have a structured conversation about digital transformation and the future provision of services.

7.3 From Data Library to Research Data Support

The University of Edinburgh was early in recognising the importance of shared and easy access to research data. The Data Library was founded in 1983, initially as a means of collecting and making available tapes containing research data. This later resulted in the foundation of EDINA,⁵ which is now a technology innovation arm of the university.

EDINA is also a directorate of Information Services, and until 2017 maintained a Data Library team, though by this point staffed by a team of world-leading experts who specialise in the long-term preservation of and access to research data. EDINA had thus far served dual remits of providing services outside of the university on a contractual basis and providing support to University of Edinburgh researchers. As EDINA's remit changed to become an exclusively external-facing organisation, we made the case to integrate the Data Library into L&UC.

The Library already had a Scholarly Communications Team (dealing with open access and everything to do with research publications), a Research Information Systems Team (managing our current research information systems) and a small team of just two individuals working on research data. These teams were recently grouped together under the banner of the newly formed “Library Research Support” section. After a process of consultation with staff and with the campus trade unions, we transitioned the Data Library staff over to work in L&UC with the existing research data staff, forming a new Research Data Support Team.

Some thought went into the naming of this team: the obvious choice would have been to call it “Research Data Management”, but we settled on “support” as we wanted to signal, albeit very subtly, that researchers themselves should manage their data, and this team provides support to help them do that: team members do not really do the data management but rather act in an advisory capacity.

Many of the individuals in the new wider team knew one another already, through work and socially. Bringing these teams together has re-invigorated the team made the way we work more efficient, and provided the correct structure to allow for end-to-end research support services. We have some good examples of staff in this new team working together in innovative ways to provide better services. It is really important that it is not simply the organisational structure that changes, and that we realise the benefits of the change in service delivery.

⁵ <https://edina.ac.uk/about-us/> (14.09.2020).

7.4 Cooperation with Freie Universität Berlin

Scottish and UK Universities are generally very collaborative, both nationally and internationally in terms of research and teaching (although institutions must compete with one another in the recruitment of students).

Our libraries work in a very collaborative way; many of the staff are members of national and international professional networks, there is a general willingness to share expertise, some services are shared and joint procurement arrangements exist.

It is typical for UK university libraries to have external members as part of governance arrangements and the University of Edinburgh is no exception, with the Director of Library Services from the University of Birmingham providing vital input to our Library Committee.

Various serendipitous events led to the development of a partnership between the Library & University Collections at the University of Edinburgh and the Freie Universität Berlin's Universitätsbibliothek. Members of staff from both libraries met at conferences in Scotland and Germany and conversations continued in person and online.

Our library services have much in common: we are both seeking change, though in different ways, and we both value the opportunity to share and compare experiences in different national contexts.

One of the activities we have discussed with colleagues at the Freie Universität Berlin is the possibility for managers from each library to participate in an annual site visit, alternating annually between Berlin and Edinburgh. During this visit, staff from one institution undertakes a light-touch assessment of one or more library services, with the opportunity to talk to service managers and staff, and to make a series of recommendations. Staff can also provide advice on particularly difficult problems, or act as advisors in relation to proposed changes. The idea is that each library acts as a so-called "critical friend", able to provide impartial, external advice to the other.

We are also keen to enable staff mobility between our libraries, so that we are able to share ideas and learn from one another on all levels. In light of possible future travel restrictions, it is crucial that we find ways to enable this partnership to develop digitally.

8 The Impact of COVID-19

The immediate impact of COVID-19 on the university has been significant and has triggered a large number of big changes across the university. Similar to many other

universities, teaching switched from in-person to online within a week, which required a considerable effort by academics and support staff. The end of term was very different from usual with exams cancelled for first- and second-year students and a variety of online assessments for third- and fourth-year students.

The University of Edinburgh had already invested heavily in online learning and was looking to expand into this market. The university was able to use what it had learnt here to support the change through a six-week online learning course aimed at training teaching staff to deliver courses online. Overall, the university is looking at delivering its courses through a hybrid model with online and face-to-face teaching where appropriate.

There has also been significant impact on the library with new services such as 'Click and Collect' emerging – order a book online and collect it from the Main Library – to new online training courses for students highlighting how to use the different services the library offers. Resource lists are now a core component of the online learning offer for all courses. Overall, the library has been well served by its 'digital first' approach when purchasing resources though there is still more work to be done.

The University of Edinburgh welcomes a large proportion of its students from outside of the UK. Restrictions on international travel and lack of economic confidence, combined with ongoing uncertainty around Brexit mean that the university is planning for lower international student numbers from September 2020 onwards.

Despite being a relatively wealthy institution, our dependence on international students, combined with the fact that the full cost of conducting research is not always covered by funders means that rapid organisational change will be needed in the coming months, with a clear need to reduce both salary and non-staff costs.

Immediately following the initial COVID-19 lockdown, the University Research Office estimated that research activity was operating at just 40 % of its capacity. It has therefore been essential to focus activities on 're-starting research'. The library has been able to play a vital role here and this has proven a useful opportunity to highlight the range of services we can provide to support the research endeavour.

In the first two months of lockdown (March to May 2020), the Library's Research Support service received an 89 % increase in the number of inbound help requests for its services supporting open access publications, research data management and data management planning. In planning the re-opening of the Main Library building, access to the Centre for Research Collections (Special Collections and Archives) was considered to be a priority

because this space is seen as been a lab for the arts and humanities.

9 Managing (in times of) Uncertainty

The 2014 referendum on Scottish independence (in which 55 % of Scotland's population voted to remain in the United Kingdom) was followed by the UK's Brexit referendum in 2016, in which 52 % of the UK population voted to leave the European Union. No single administrative area of Scotland voted to leave the EU, and in the City of Edinburgh 66 % of voters chose to remain.

With the Scottish National Party leading the government in Holyrood, the issue of Scottish independence is still on the table. So, we are managing our work in a period of considerable political uncertainty and have been since 2013.

Against this backdrop of political uncertainty, we have the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that we are in a period of greater uncertainty than any of us remember in our careers.

The ability to recognise uncertainty and to recognise and understand attitudes towards uncertainty in oneself and in others are vital skills. One person might thrive on uncertainty and find it exciting whilst another might find the inability to plan and the constantly changing environment incredibly stressful. Both of these reactions are completely understandable and equally valid, but it is important that these different approaches are recognised.

On an organisational level a new management style is evolving. Uncertainty requires a greater ability to have an agile management team that is able to constantly respond to changes both external and internal to the university and it requires a workforce that is equally agile.

10 Workforce Planning

As previously discussed, the overall approach to change within our library has been more organic and incremental, rather than planned and fundamental. This approach has served the library well over recent years, but it is likely that we will need to change our approach in the wake of COVID-19.

Workforce Planning involves the analysis and forecasting of labour supply and demand, and the skills needed to run the library services. Different services see

peaks and troughs in demand across the academic year and it is likely that future resource constraints will mean that we need a more flexible and multi-skilled labour force across our library services – and most likely across the wider Information Services Group. We are beginning to tackle this through some of the digital skills training that we have been doing. We recognise that roles are not static but evolve and this will be in part due to the way that we use technology and evolve our services but also interact with our users in ever evolving ways.

To date, we have not undertaken formal workforce planning exercises. We expect to work closely with the university's central Human Resources Department to undertake a workforce planning exercise and to develop our own skills in this area.

There are two characteristics of the labour market for librarians in the UK which need to be considered in workforce planning. Firstly, there is no longer a retirement age and for a number of reasons (e.g. higher life expectancy, better healthcare) the average age at which staff choose to retire is rising. Because it is quite rightly illegal to discriminate on the grounds of age, managers are reluctant to talk about retirement, so effectively, we cannot really factor retirement into workforce planning.

Secondly, within the professional services group of the university there are, as a general rule, no 'promotions'. Career progression for librarians can occur when a more senior position is created or becomes available, but typically best practice dictates that almost all vacant positions are advertised on the open market and we invite applications from both internal and external candidates. This differs from the typical academic career pathway, in which promotions can happen when individuals meet certain criteria.

11 Looking to the Future

The political and economic uncertainties today can only mean that tomorrow's library services must be different. In the so-called 'post-truth' society, libraries are more important than ever. Our universities are changing their research and teaching at incredible speed. We need to change accordingly and we need to acknowledge change as part of our day-to-day work.

Local and international cooperation and collaboration are tools to make us stronger. We live in difficult times. With a positive outlook, flexible plans and a healthy attitude towards uncertainty, the future for libraries is bright. Here's to the future!

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