

DOMAIN: The Academic Library

ARTICLE: “Economics and the Transformation of Libraries” (18-pages) by
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Manuscript (Rev 08) : 08.02.05

Growing budget cuts in higher education appropriations, magnified by inflating library costs, buttress the authors fundamental belief that economics, not technology, will be the driving factor in major changes in higher educational institutions—and in libraries. To remain vibrant in this constraining environment, librarians have begun to reshape and transform the structures of their organizations to be more efficient and effective.

With the largest portions of library budgets assigned to collection-building and managing legacy collections, the transitioning library must follow these essential directions to arrive at the newly “transformed” library:

- + From cooperation (informal relationships between organizations) to collaboration (pooling of resources and shared authority): partnerships, consortia, cooperative cataloging, group purchasing of digital databases
- + Sharing, outsourcing and contracting outside the library: only do locally what must be done locally
- + Target needs of their campus and aggressively seek ways to connect to departments; the need to make resources and services simpler, transparent, and easily decrypted
- + Provide services to the greatest extent possible to the desktop (reference services, interlibrary loan requests, access to digital databases, services to faculty: enable students to gain information literacy)
- + Rethink collection-building and reallocate resources: reduce budget monies for the purchasing of information and transition to a preferred digital collection format
- + Eliminate resources devoted to managing legacy collections: dollars, staff time and space are more suitably directed to new digital projects and open access repositories
- + Redesign library spaces: acknowledge the growing importance of group work and digital resources and less required space for physical collections: the library as a logical extension of the classroom
- + Develop new performance measures: the need to demonstrate the impact libraries have on the value of organizationally identified outcomes (e.g., assess service to customer orientation, electronic resource access)
- + Create new resources for funding and revenue (document delivery service)

Economics and technology will ensure that libraries will continue to face the issue of change for the better or worse. If the library can accommodate and shape the digital revolution to its benefit, this may serve to assist in the ongoing reinvigoration of the institution towards a greater efficiency.