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**AN EXPLORATION OF  
PROFESSIONALISM WITHIN THE  
LANDSCAPE OF CHANGE  
IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP**

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PhD

2015

**AN EXPLORATION OF  
PROFESSIONALISM WITHIN THE  
LANDSCAPE OF CHANGE IN ACADEMIC  
LIBRARIANSHIP**

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of the requirements of the  
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## **Abstract**

This study focused on the research question: how do higher education academic librarians in the UK respond to changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system? Placing the experiences and conceptions of academic librarians at the heart of the investigation, it aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the changes and challenges identified by practitioners from their perspectives. Following a traditional literature review and a purposeful literature mapping, the multi-layered contexts surrounding academic librarians were established respectively through the presentation of the major themes discussed in existing research on professionalism and the topics including their patterns researched by Library and Information Science (LIS) researchers from a purposive sample of journals. With the data from the literature mapping review being validated through a community consultation with LIS practitioners and compared against the identified trends reviewed by professional body, the triangulation of the themes provided further understanding of the professional landscape. Adopting a qualitative methodology of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), semi-structured interviews were carried out with a purposively selected homogenous sample of three individual academic librarians, for whom the research question was directed at, to acquire their unique experiential accounts. The philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography of the IPA approach have illuminated the rich microscopic detail of the narratives. Findings from the single and cross case analysis led to the development of a conceptual framework which presents how the multi-faceted professional identities are being shaped by the contextual spheres of influence of: core professional values, organisational culture and wider environments. Drawing on the knowledge of this understanding and the insight developed from the detailed examination of the wider contexts and the experiences and perspectives of practitioners, this study suggested ways forward for the future development of the LIS profession.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved (RE19-05-12884). Approval has been sought and granted by the Research Ethics Committee on 10 April 2013.

**I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 84,910 words**

Name: Lillian Tsang Phillips

Signature:

Date:

## Abbreviations

ALA	American Library Association
ACRL	Association of College & Research Libraries
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council For England
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
IIS	Institute of Information Scientists
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
JISC	The Joint Information Systems Committee
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
LA	The Library Association
LIS	Library and Information Sciences
LISA	Library and Information Science Abstracts
PKB	Professional Knowledge Base
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
REF	Research Excellence Framework
RIN	Research Information Network
RLUK	Research Libraries UK
SCONUL	Society of College, National and University Libraries
UKRR	The UK Research Reserve

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Introduction

The research question – *how do Higher Education academic librarians in the UK respond to changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system* presented the central focus of this study. A review of the current situation of the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession within the context of the wider environment will help to establish the value and significance of the inquiry. Through the presentation of the conceptual framework of this study, the methodological approach will reveal the intention and course of action of the research investigation. Following the presentation of the research question, aims and objectives, the outline structure of the thesis is introduced to establish an overview of the research.

## 1.2 Existing challenges in academic librarianship

As the social and information environments continue to evolve, the role played by the 21st century academic librarians is continuing to shift and becoming more complex and vibrant. The advancement of technologies, being the main driver of change, has significantly impacted on and reshaped the role of academic librarians. Digital transition has taken away librarians' role as information gatekeepers creating the phenomenon of disintermediation (Nicholas, 2012). Competition from information sources and providers has taken away the traditional role of librarians as points of contact to information and content. Changing information seeking behaviour prompted by the availability of digital information has allowed users to bypass the library, hence diminishing its stature as a starting point for information (Dunn and Menchaca, 2009). Shifting patterns of scholarship and scholarly communication, decreasing visibility caused by the digital library with services provided remotely, and decreasing value of the library brand (Housewright and Schonfeld, 2008) are some of the real issues faced by academic librarians. Wider impact of government policies has also played a key role in influencing the strategic and operational plans adopted by the LIS profession. Demonstrating their support for transparency and focus of student experience as illustrated in the two White Papers published in December and June 2011 respectively (Great Britain, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011), the position assumed by the UK Government has influenced university libraries' decision-making as seen in the modernisation of libraries and reformation of librarians' roles. A number of factors have contributed to the perceived value of librarians' work; the public

assumption of presumed redundancy because of the reduced physical presence of academic librarians; stereotyped perception of roles and the lack of awareness and understanding of professional contributions, particularly their input in the overall educational process (Lloyd and Bannister, 1999), have diminished this perceived value and further exacerbate the status of LIS professionals. Professional marginalisation has prompted practitioners to go out of their way to demonstrate their values and promote their professional existence in order to recover the attention that was taken away by the digital information and technologies. *'In the face of these challenges librarians became activists, lobbyists, and publicists — terms that our students and the public do not often associate with our profession'* so as to develop *'a stronger professional voice and a broadened concept of their profession'* (Preer, 2006: 490). All of these challenges have warranted a fresh look into the way in which academic librarians adapt in this new environment to facilitate teaching, learning and research.

### **1.3 The changing role of academic librarians**

Against this backdrop of existing challenges, the professional role and identities of academic librarians have naturally been reshaped to correspond with the wider context. Research looking into the new roles and identities (Fourie, 2004; Melchionda, 2007; Bickley and Corral, 2011) has reflected the changes experienced by LIS professionals. With the merging of traditional and evolving technological skills set to support the teaching and learning agenda, there is an increasing demand for practitioners to stretch their boundaries and perform cross-departmental tasks generating the concept of a 'blended librarian' (Bell and Shank, 2004). The trend of moving from hybrid to digital libraries has continued to provide new meaning to the library as place. Focusing on user engagement and outreach service, *'the role of the librarian as a student advisor is now helping to drive convergence between the library and support services within HEIs'* (SCONUL, 2014). Amongst the various aspects of their professional responsibilities, certain roles performed by academic librarians have attracted particular attention and are more widely considered, such as the increasing emphasis on liaison (Bennett and Gilbert, 2009; Attebury and Finnell, 2009), teaching (Bewick and Corral, 2010; Bundy, 2001), and research support (Diaz, 2014; Pinfield, Cox & Smith, 2014). The emphasis on developing collaborative partnership with faculties (Bennett and Gilbert, 2009; Parsons, 2010) and the focus on supporting effective pedagogy (ACRL, 2007; Levy, 2005; Williams, 2009; Elmborg, 2002; Zald and Williams, 1997) are also areas that have emerged from the evolving landscape. In many respects, the changing role as manifested in the shifting of priorities, expanding of tasks or creating of new tasks, can be seen as a response to the evolving needs, where through the

carrying out of their business in a different way, academic librarians have demonstrated their proactivity and professional adaptability to rise to the challenge regardless of their situations. Summing up the importance of continual professional development (CPD), the Research Information Network (RIN) guide stated that '*unless [libraries] have staff with the skills necessary to deliver the kinds of services that students and academics require, libraries will be unable to provide effective support for institutional missions*' (RIN, 2009: 10). Academic librarians must continue to update and renew their skills to ensure that they have the competence to meet or better still, exceed, the needs of their constituencies. Professional capabilities remain one of the key factors in determining the professional future of Librarians, and research has suggested the importance and the need for up-to-date CPD (Terry, 2001; Bertot, Jaeger & McClure 2010; Broady-Preston, 2009; Corral, 2010). Professional competence nevertheless, presents only a single perspective in viewing professionalism.

#### **1.4 Academic rationale for the research**

Aspiring to better serving the increasing demands from stakeholders, librarians can get disoriented as they focus their attention on the growing new trends and developments. Taking a step back to reflect allows librarians to appropriately positioning their roles and putting their experiences into perspective. To illustrate its significant function, Finlay (2008) has stated how reflective practice, being the bedrock of professional identity in practice, has provided another CPD approach in allowing practitioners the opportunity to make sense of their experiences, and through the process of critical reflection, to inform future practice. '*The task of articulating the philosophy and values that guide one's professional practice provides an opportunity for reflection that may not be available in the midst of keeping up with one's [everyday] commitments*' (Meulemans and Carr, 2013: 87) demonstrates the importance of periodically returning to the blueprint of LIS as a way to bring professional practice back to focus. An exploration of professionalism from the perspective of the philosophical underpinnings of librarianship, in terms of the core professional values and their relevance to who librarians truly are and what they stand for, forms the foundation of this study.

The great number of user studies carried out in LIS (Connaway and Dickey, 2010) suggests the extent to which the interests of the user communities are being valued by information professionals. However when it comes to understanding their own, the amount of effort that is being put into examining practitioners' experiences and perspectives, particularly in terms of qualitative studies, are nowhere near comparable. With information professionals making up of

the 'LIS profession', the future of the profession is therefore depended upon *the people* themselves. Since LIS is operating within a human context, understanding the human experience is crucial for the generation of informative insights that feed into the development of constructive strategies. At a time of unprecedented challenges faced by academic librarians, understanding the experiences of their changing role and their interpretations of professional identities in relation to their surrounding contexts from a practitioner's perspective has therefore set the premise of the academic rationale for this research. By amalgamating the key elements through a review of the core philosophy and value system of librarianship, exploring the professional role and identities of academic librarians, using reflective practice and CPD as means to strengthen the approach, this research hopes to offer a strategic approach for future development of professionals and contribute to the discussion of the future direction of the profession.

### **1.5 Aims and objectives**

The overarching question of this research was: 'how do higher education academic librarians in the UK respond to changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system?'

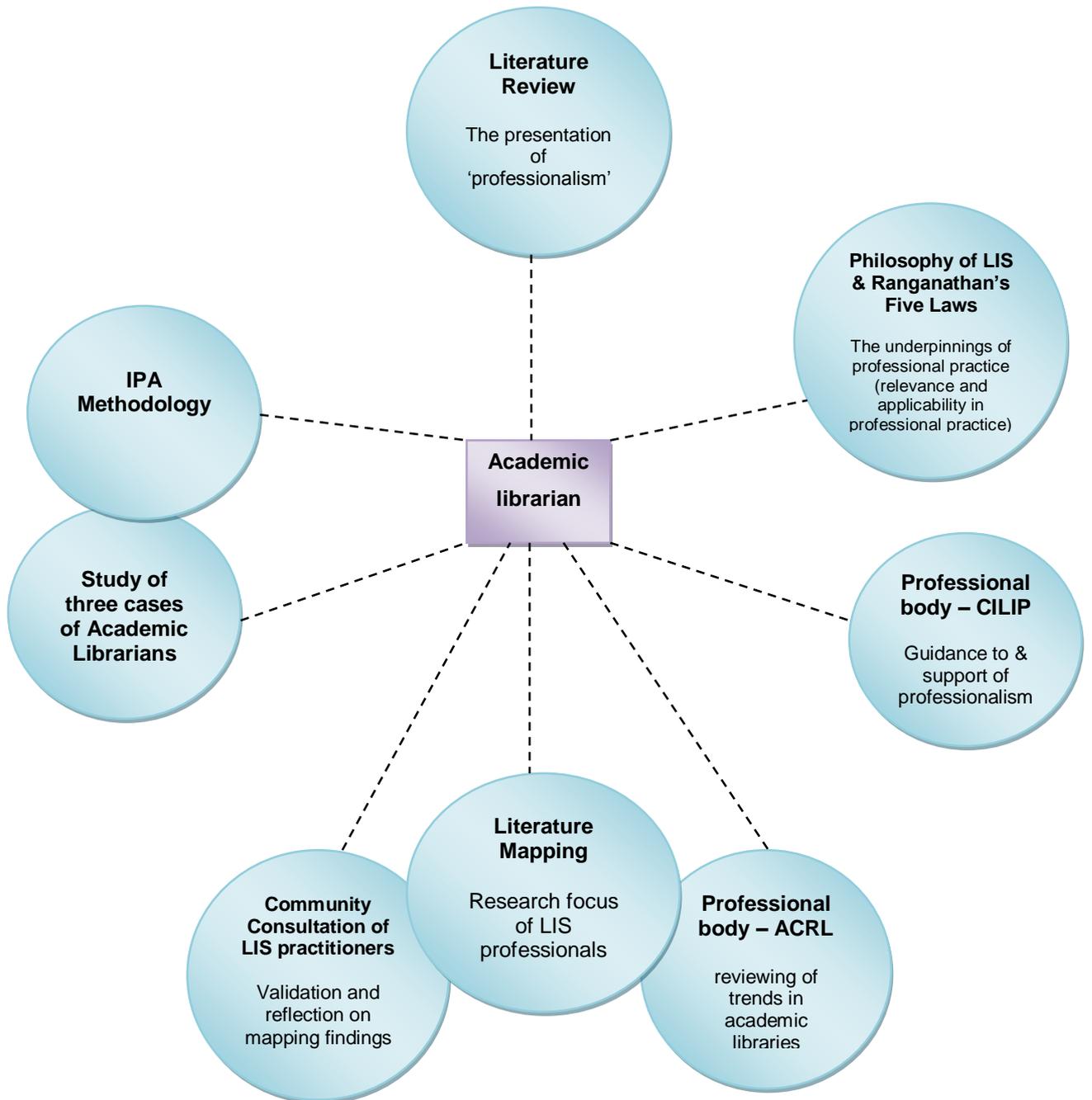
Informed by the changes and challenges presented in the research literature and literature mapping and drawing on the researcher's own experience in academic librarianship, this study examined how the professional identities of academic librarians are reflected in research and practice with the research focuses on:

- the experiences and responses of UK academic librarians working in Higher Education in light of a multitude of challenges and developments induced by the wider contextual environments
- the pertinence and functions of the core philosophy and value system of librarianship in the upholding of professionalism and professional identities
- suggesting ways forward for the support of professionalism and the future development of the LIS profession

In order to develop an understanding of the experiences of academic librarians, this study presents the multiple contexts surrounding the academic librarian with the investigation including the following elements: the discussion of professionalism in existing literature including the support from professional body and the philosophical underpinnings of LIS in current practice; literature mapping of the topics researched by information professionals from a sample of journal publications; reflection from LIS practitioners through a community consultation on the mapping findings and drawing the link between the mapping and the future trends identified by professional body; the study of three in-depth cases of academic librarians using the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to collect detailed insight and perspective from practitioners (**figure 1.1**). The objectives of the project were to present an original piece of research that:

- Evaluated the professional landscape of the changes in LIS through a literature mapping of journal publications and the professional priorities identified by a community of LIS practitioners and professional body review
- Examined LIS philosophy and theories and identified their purposes and functions in today's HE through the review of literature and IPA studies of three cases of academic librarians
- Identified existing challenges and opportunities faced by research participants
- Reviewed the contexts of professionalism and the identity of information professionals in academic librarianship in existing literature and compared current research and the findings from the three cases of academic librarians
- Suggested ways forward for the future development of the LIS profession through the research findings

Figure 1.1 A map of the investigation: the multiple elements



## 1.6 Conceptual framework

To provide a rich picture of the contexts surrounding the academic librarian, this study reviewed existing literature to examine the way in which professionalism was portrayed. A literature mapping of journal publications was conducted to review the subjects researched by information professionals to establish the professional landscape. The process of triangulating the mapping findings through a community consultation with LIS practitioners and comparative review of future trends researched by a professional body helped facilitating the comparison between research and practice. By collecting the perspectives from these different sources, the applied method sought to provide a wider scope in understanding the background and develop insight to the changes that took place in LIS.

With the intention to explore the subjective experiences of academic librarians and the researcher's worldview in terms of '*thinking about and making sense of the complexities of the real world*' (Patton, 2002: 69) from a perspective that each individual is '*an active interpreter of his or her subjective world*' (Wagstaff et al, 2014: 2), this study adopted a qualitative research methodology, using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach to inform the research design. Guided by the theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography that inform IPA, the methodological framework has followed the procedures prescribed by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) for the examination, analysis and presentation of the findings.

IPA was considered to be an appropriate approach because of its conceptual and epistemological capacity to explore, describe, make sense of and understand the meaning of the idiographic and phenomenological experiences of academic librarians who have undergone changes in their role and related challenges within the context of their professional lives. Focusing on the philosophy of idiography, IPA cherishes the subjective and unique perspective of the individual's experience. Beside the exemplification of the strengths of IPA through the process of detailed and nuanced analysis, the meticulousness devoted to the interpretation of meanings which academic librarians attributed to their sense-making of the changing role and identities have provided invaluable insights to inform future professional development. Stemming directly from the participants' experiential claims that were based on their lived experience, the philosophical principles and methodological procedures of IPA offered academic librarians a voice to fulfil the aspiration of this study.

## 1.7 Thesis structure

The thesis is composed of seven chapters. This opening chapter (**Chapter 1**) outlines the background to the research subject of investigation and academic rationale for this study. Setting the foundation to this study, **Chapter 2** critically reviews and analyses existing research literature of relevance to establish the changing professional landscape particularly the presentation of professionalism and the significance of the core professional principles and value system in the practice of librarianship. Professional education and continuing professional development (CPD) as a response to the changes and the exemplification of professionalism, are other prominent themes to have emerged from this literature review. With the intention to establish a rich picture of professional contexts, **Chapter 3** portrays the contemporary landscape of the LIS profession through a literature mapping review to examine the research subjects and their patterns over a ten year period as an illustration of the professional evolution. Community consultation with LIS practitioners provides feedback for the literature mapping where a connection between research and practice is drawn. Comparing the mapping findings against the top trends identified by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) (2012) of the issues affecting academic libraries, the evaluation highlights the similarities and differences to provide further understanding of the journey of librarianship and the context in which information professionals are embedded. **Chapter 4** introduces the IPA method and the research design, the discussion focuses on its application in LIS, its theoretical underpinnings and the significant role of the researcher in this specific method. Following a detailed description of the methodological procedures, the validity and limitation of the IPA approach are examined. **Chapter 5** presents the IPA findings of the single case and convergence across cases. With the findings exemplified in super-ordinate themes, the single case approach helps to illuminate the idiographic uniqueness of each participant whereas the convergence focuses on the overarching themes and patterns identified from cross case. Positioning the findings with reference to extent literature, **Chapter 6** frames the discussion within the wider context with a view to establishing the meaning and significance of the findings through a process of comparing and contrasting with existing knowledge. The conceptual model developed from this study as a research outcome is presented. **Chapter 7** provides the conclusions of the thesis. Suggestion of ways forward for the LIS profession is offered. Reviewing the experience and lessons learned, the final chapter reflects on the IPA method, the contribution to knowledge of this study and how the research aims and objectives have been achieved. Drawing from the experience and knowledge gained, further questions for research are identified.

## **2 The context of professionalism**

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### **2.1 Introduction**

Faced with new operational processes and procedures and new information needs of their user communities, the changing role of academic librarians can be understood as a natural way of progression. Reflected in the shifting of focus and service priorities, modification in library operations has seen certain roles of academic librarians being replaced whilst new ones are created following the emergence of new area of activities. It is within this context that the roles of academic librarians appear to have evolved and it is against this backdrop that the changing role, as a reflection of professionalism, is examined. Serving as the founding philosophy of librarianship, Ranganathan's Five Laws of library science have provided a framework for professional practice and served as an essential underpinning to define professionalism and professional identity. In a time of instability, new demands from the changing environments have required librarians to continue to reposition themselves by updating their skills set to meet with the rapid developments and to seek new ways to contribute. Besides the core philosophy of librarianship, professional bodies also play a key role in upholding professionalism. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) being the main representative of the information profession in the UK has interpreted and laid down the specifications for professionalism through its establishment of a professional knowledge base and the provision for training and development support. Continuing professional development (CPD) and education have provided another perspective in defining professionalism, where the collaborations between research and practice help to deliver the professional knowledge and skills that are required in practice. Reviewing professionalism through these various perspectives provides some background to the topics discussed in current literature.

### **2.2 Changing role of academic librarians**

As an exemplification of change, the changing role of academic librarians has been widely discussed in research literature (Biddiscombe, 1999; Pinfield, 2001; Pomerantz, 2010; Anderson, 2011; Shank, Bell & Zabel, 2012). Technological advances being the primary motivator of change have affected library services and operations in terms of the tasks librarians perform and the way these activities are carried out. New methods of discovery and access coupled with heightened user expectations as direct outcomes of technological advances have

created a new service paradigm in academia. Facing the precarious prospect of becoming ever more professionally marginalised, academic librarians' changing role stemmed from a realisation that fewer users visit the physical library building because there are now alternative ways of access, and the university library '*ceases to be the de facto center of information on campus amid the growing popularity of learning management systems, ebooks and ejournals, online textbooks, Amazon, Google, and a host of other competing commercial services*' (Sinclair, 2009: 504). Instead of interpreting 'change' from a perspective of taking on new areas and abandoning old tasks, the changing responsibilities of librarians have become a mixture of old and new activities with a shifting emphasis as well as taking on the new areas of services. As evidenced in current literature, the changing roles of academic librarians are often exemplified within the context of shifting and renewed emphasis, expansion of existing tasks and new-found areas of activities (Chan, Kwok & Yip, 2005; MacMullen, Vaughan & Moore, 2004; Seal, 2001; Dunikowski et al, 2013; McGowan, 2012; Candela, Castelli & Pagano, 2009; Harrison, Creaser & Greenwood, 2013; Goetsch, 2008). Using the example of the changing role experienced by subject librarians, Pinfield encapsulates the aspects of change as additional to existing roles ('the old job ... plus'), reprioritisation of role, more emphasis on specific areas, and taking on completely new roles (Pinfield, 2001). This kind of multiple dimension in interpreting academic librarians' role can be found in the examination of catalogue librarians' changing roles and responsibilities in Boydston and Leysen's study (2014), where it has shown that '*catalogue librarian roles and responsibilities are expanding to include more electronic resources such as e-books and digitised materials; yet, print material cataloguing is continuing. Cataloguing librarians are creating non-MARC metadata and more emphasis is being placed on the cataloguing of local hidden collections*' (Boydston and Leysen, 2014: 244). The same applies to the '*acquiring, creating and making available electronic resources*' that has been extended from the traditional core function of managing the print information resources performed by academic librarians, where a growing task of managing the intellectual capital of their institutions has seen to be added to the role of librarians (Horwood et al, 2004: 174). Instead of seeing academic librarians being transformed into an entirely 'new species', the example demonstrates how catalogue librarians have expanded their area of work whilst retaining their core tasks in company with a small shift of emphasis. This argument that the underlying roles of academic librarians have not changed has mirrored Pinfield's (2001) point that academic librarians' changing responsibilities are simply extensions of traditional roles stretching into the new environment. Believing academic librarians have continued to be

fulcrums of academic productivity and knowledge creation, the ACRL see the approach librarians carry out and perform their core functions is what has changed (ACRL, 2006).

The idea that the role of librarians has not changed has been supported by Gaston, who believes that *'the role of subject librarians has not changed; they were, and still are, involved in collection development and bibliographic instruction for specific subject areas. What has changed is the way in which the role is performed: acquiring, cataloguing and classifying locally-held information has given way to the locating, indexing of, and user education about, remotely-held information'* (Gaston, 2001: 20-21). In fact, Buchsbaum argues that the increasing formats of resources made the role librarians have in collection development *'in selecting the best and most important resources for their users [...] [and] to determine which items the library still needs to actually own in print and which items can be accessed digitally'* even more the important (Buchsbaum, 2009: 4). When the changing role of librarians is examined from the perspective of the way the role is performed, it has become clear that *'changes have occurred in the types of jobs most frequently performed, and also in the amount of time spent on particular jobs'* (Cardina and Wicks, 2004: 141). Affecting all areas of activities, information technologies and the digital environment have inevitably made the work of academic librarians more dynamic and complex. *'Information technology brought changes not only to the operation of libraries but also to work processes'* (Kim and Lee, 2011: 79). Besides these outside forces of influence such as the new information habits of users and the competitions for content from information service providers, technologies have also led to new ways of working and the managing of a hybrid if not an increasingly digital library. With the merging of university libraries with other servicing departments being the norm, academic librarians have seen *'the increasingly specialised nature of their work [being] reflected in the use of terms such as "para-academic", "hybrid librarian" and "blended professional" to highlight their boundary-spanning activities and identities'* (Corrall, 2010: 568). Having to master information technology as part of their responsibilities, the 'blended' nature can be seen as a natural extension of the academic librarian's role that has been developed from the changing environment. As an attempt to reflect the changes that took place within roles, the revision of job titles observed by Wilson has seen new descriptors such as "Information", "Learning" and "Advisor" incorporated in job titles *'for what was in essence the same role'* (Wilson, 2003: 80). Bosseau has also drawn a link between name changes with the changes experienced in the profession (Bosseau, 1996). With *'the organisation, maintenance, access, and retrieval of information'* being at the core of librarianship, Sinclair argues that *'the blended librarian takes these traditional skills and values and enhances them with the latest*

*developments in information technology and instructional design in order to meet the needs of the 21st-century learner* (Sinclair, 2009: 504). Whilst some of these activities are not by their very nature 'new' tasks, their scale in terms of emphasis has certainly shifted. Technologies have unquestionably created a new service paradigm for academic librarians, prompting them to readjust their service priority and work focus. An example of the increasing role for reference librarians *'to assist [users] in developing the skills to critically evaluate the information they access for authoritativeness and appropriateness'* (Burke, 2008: 275) illustrates how the complex information environment has shifted the emphasis of activities for academic librarians (Haglund and Herron, 2009). The emphasis on end-user services has rekindled the connections between researchers and librarians as Nolin (2013: 509) argues that this development has shifted the status of librarians *'from an outsider to an insider'* as they become an active participant devoting increasing time in research-based tasks. Believing that the nature of the electronic library is user-centred, Moyo (2004) notes how much time librarians have devoted in adopting technologies in their work and developing and evaluating the access tools to ensure that they can service the needs of library users. Unlike the old fashioned circulation count, the use of electronic resources in information seeking has created new performance metrics and prompted librarians to monitor more closely the usage of these resources and pay special attention to the ways users learn. Besides technologies, professional marginalisation, serving as a genuine threat has prompted librarians to be ever more user-focused than they have before. Instead of working in silos and waiting for users to come to them, librarians have now adopted a more dynamic approach by proactively communicating and reaching out to their institution communities. *'Traditionally, libraries have played a direct role in providing collections to support research activities, as well as information literacy education and search strategy consultation. As technologies have changed how researchers interface with the physical and virtual library collection, this traditional role has expanded'* (Bresnahan and Johnson, 2013: 415). Amongst the expanding traditional roles of academic librarians, research support has gained noticeable prominence (Diaz, 2014; Green, 2014; Nielsen and Hjørland, 2013; Raju and Schoombee, 2013) as university libraries step up their effort in aligning their operational plan with the institution's objectives. Rapid development and availability of electronic information have necessitated the demand on digital literacy which in turn has heightened the emphasis on librarians' teaching role (Biddiscombe, 2002; Marcum, 2002; Austin and Bhandol, 2013), where a significant increase of their time has seen being spent on delivering literacy training (Moselen and Wang, 2014; Clyde, 2005; Julien and Genuis, 2011).

### **2.2.1 Prominent research support role**

With technologies changing the process of scholarly communication, there has been an increasing demand for academic librarians to support the scholarly communities. There is the argument that academic librarians should be integrated into the research cycle and be active players engaging in research collaborations by implementing e-research strategies, where librarians are *'to design personal portals and current awareness services, structure access to electronic journals, develop and maintain repositories, manage access to the exploding body of grey literature, and deal with issues of e-data / information management in the grant writing process'* (Genoni, Merrick & Willson, 2006: 744). Whilst it is believed that the support for teaching and research are of equal importance, hence should be given equal attention in a holistic approach to supporting the education agenda, the reality indicates that the time librarians spent in supporting research is not quite the same as with teaching. Creaser and Spezi's study on the value of academic libraries for teaching and research staff supports this phenomenon where their findings suggest that research support is not quite as developed as teaching support with more work needing to be done (Creaser and Spezi, 2012). Although the reasons behind the disproportionate support are complex and varied, with the lack of time often being commonly cited as one of the major challenges, it is undeniable that academic librarians have always been more inclined and associated to teaching support as a traditional practice even though their role is to support both teaching and research. With the activities in seeking information and managing retrieved information being identified as the traditional domain in which librarians provide research support, subject librarians are struggling to identify ways to extend their offer beyond this boundary (Brewerton, 2012). As the research agenda continues to intensify as a strategic priority for HE institutions, university libraries follow closely the developments to adjust their service provision to align with the organisational goal. Whilst research support is not a 'new' role for academic librarians, *'emerging technologies, analysis tools, and methods of information organisation [that] are gradually altering the landscape of scholarly discourse, communication and dissemination'* (ACRL, 2013: 11) have created new aspects within research support, raising the need for librarians to articulate the information needs to researchers. Research has indicated that there has been an increasing emphasis on research support activities in academic libraries such as developments on research data management, open access and bibliometrics (Pinfield, Cox & Smith, 2014; Burns, 2014; Corral, Kennan & Afzal, 2013).

Apart from the research agenda being reinvigorated for some and set as a new prioritised institutional goal for others, the changing process and system of scholarly communication is the other driving force for academic librarians to integrate more research support tasks into their existing responsibilities. This advancing role has seen librarians investing more time and effort in carrying out regular outreach service, communicating and collaborating with faculties on the scholarly communication initiatives, providing technical support and advice to the research communities and promoting the research support service to the wider college community. Arguing the need for academic librarians to look beyond their present role in scholarly communication, Carpenter et al suggest librarians get ready to take advantage of the variety of available tools and services such as '*institutional repositories, open access initiatives, self-publishing / e-publishing models, and social media software*' so that they can better position themselves '*to optimally serve the future needs of researchers in the area of scholarly communication*' (Carpenter et al., 2011: 661). Operations in the process of Open Access and institutional repositories are amongst some of the priority areas of which academic librarians are actively involved in and responsible for in the realm of electronic publishing. Cullen and Chawner (2010) note the implication for mandatory deposit of all peer-reviewed publications by staff within the organisation will require long term strategic planning and staffing support. Their research findings suggest the part played by academic librarians in the Open Access and e-publishing processes are vital. Providing ways to change the current pattern of behaviour, their recommendations suggest academic librarians needing to work in partnership with academics, developing and communicating clearer goals and value system of institutional repository within the framework of the academic community and acknowledging academics' desire to share research outputs with the scholarly communities (Cullen and Chawner, 2010). All of the recommendations have offered a glimpse into the crucial tasks and efforts in the advocating and promoting of Open Access and e-publishing activities of which academic librarians need to carry out until the process are fully integrated into the scholarly communication culture. Institutional repositories and Open Access provide an invaluable addition to the university's knowledge base. Not only do they help to raise the university's reputation and enhance prestige, but they also provide added value in terms of service provision for academic scholars and researchers. With the continuing competition for students and funding, research support will continue to be an important area that requires academic librarians to devote their time. Reprioritisation implies shifting the focus of the library's position from '*predominantly reader services to services for researchers as creators and authors*' and developing partnerships and stronger relationships across the college community (Frances, Fletcher & Harmer, 2011: n.p). Time and again,

relationships between librarians and faculties have been referenced as one of the determining factors for successful research support since an existing relationship can facilitate collaboration and will allow librarians to *'take a more proactive role, working in partnership with academic departments and acting as consultants'* (Jubb, 2011: 44). Collaborations between academic librarians and faculties therefore, hold the key to effective research support service and make the activities on promotion and outreach, and communication and relationship building critical to demonstrating the value of academic librarians.

### **2.2.2 Stronger librarian-faculty collaborations**

Back in the early nineties, the Fielden Report (1993) written for the Joint Funding Councils' Libraries Review Group predicted that future academic librarians, with subject librarians in particular, would have to work closely with academic colleagues in a wide range of support activities, ranging from attending course planning committees to providing technical support on accessing and retrieving electronic information resources. Amongst these activities, the report forecast that practitioners would be providing tuition and participating in academic audit and quality assurance initiatives that could help contribute to the quality of learning (Fielden, 1993: paragraph 3.26). Information technology advances have meant collaboration and convergence of roles and departments are effective ways to streamline services. A subsequent publication to the Fielden Report – the Follett Report (1993), also made a similar recommendation in terms of strategic coordination between library and academic staff stating that *'as part of their overall information planning, institutions should ensure that there is effective co-ordination between teaching staff and those responsible for the library and related provision; and that clear mechanisms exist to implement and monitor this co-ordination'* (Joint Funding Councils' Libraries Review Group, 1993: paragraph 146). The teaching role of academic librarians was exemplified in the Fielden Report in the sense that they have moved away from the pragmatic administrative tasks and are actually becoming partners to the academics. Reprioritisation therefore has become a necessity when academic librarians are now stepping up to embrace a broader range of tasks and new aspects of responsibilities with partnership building being one aspect that was not so much of an emphasis in the past. This view has been echoed by Biddiscombe (2002) who also agrees that information technology has clearly magnified practitioners' skills and professional values in terms of learning support, where they are in close working partnerships with academic departments and are directly involved in the education process, for example their contribution to the formal research methodology qualification as the dimension of their services expands.

The extensive changes that have been occurring in HE however have demanded academic librarians move away from the merely training support role and reposition themselves as educators and leaders, therefore raising their professional profile in the educational environment as raised by Peacock (1999, 2001), Lupton (2002) and Mavodza (2011). Plutchak (2012) sees the digital age offering an opportunity for academic librarians to contribute in the education arena especially in a time when academics and schools are beginning to recognise '*the complexity of the information space that their students need to work in requires specialists in information management to help them develop the skills that they need*' (Plutchak, 2012: 15). Like librarians, academics are also receiving heavier and more diverse workloads following the changes in key departmental policies, objectives and strategic plans. This provides academic librarians with the opportunity to demonstrate their educational partnership role fully by getting more involved in teaching activities (Bundy, 2003). In the world of scholarly communications, academic librarians are being put on the centre stage in terms of taking on the tasks of administrating and conducting the processes by ensuring a seamless transmission of data and for the information to reach its final destination successfully via the appropriate network so that knowledge can be generated and shared amongst the research communities. Having both expert knowledge and skills is imperative operating under time constraints particularly when scholarly communications have become more complex over the years: '*ten years ago, SC [scholarly communication] education mostly focused on fair use and copyright restrictions. Now, open access, author rights management, institutional repositories, and the economics of scholarly publishing are the topics of these education initiatives*' (Newman, Belcic & Armstrong 2007: 17). A survey with the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member libraries conducted by Newman et al. (2007) indicates that 75% of the participating libraries have engaged in educational activities on scholarly communication issues, and each of these libraries has their own librarians with various titles and positions carrying the responsibility for education initiatives. In order to promote their academic roles, librarians need to strengthen partnerships with academic staff and reinforce their presence in the physical and online learning environments (Thomson, 2012). Mavodza (2011) suggests collaboration and networking with faculty are some of the ways to reinforce academic librarians' identity and secure their places in academia, and through the increasing of their involvement in the scholarly communication and teaching processes, for example the design and integration of information technology and library resources into courses will help establish their relationship with academics and faculty and secure their role within the academic community. While Lindstrom and Shonrock (2006)

examine the various arguments about the importance and benefits for collaborations between librarians and academics, they revealed that some scholars hold the belief that success can only be claimed when the library is fully integrated into all elements of the planning of the curriculum, and that effective collaborations should mean librarians '*[are working] with faculty in educating students to find, critically evaluate, and use information ... [and] involve librarians in the development of the learning program*' (citing Lippincott, 2000 in Lindstrom and Shonrock, 2008: 19). Sharing the same pedagogical objectives, both academics and librarians are '*aware of the need to provide programs that develop student communication and research skill*' in terms of information literacy instruction (Lindstrom and Shonrock, 2008: 19). A report by Creaser and Spezi (2012) and other studies have demonstrated a high number of successful cases with information literacy instruction being embedded in the curriculum in the form of compulsory courses and programs which has resulted in an enhanced student learning experience. Nevertheless, such success stories required collaborations between academic librarians and teaching staff to carefully plan and design librarians' interventions by embedding librarians into a module or a course (Creaser and Spezi, 2012). An example of the Blackboard Embedded Librarian program, that was piloted at the Gardner-Harvey Library, Miami University Middletown in the U.S., has demonstrated a successful case of academic instructors and librarians collaborating, with the embedded librarian being invited to the various instruction sessions. This resulted in a greater demand for the embedded librarian's services as students began to recognise that librarians have a proper understanding of their course syllabus and assignments (Burke, Tumbleson & Frye, 2010). The identification of gatekeepers and receptively open-minded academics are other factors that determine the successful achievement of partnership and support the smooth-running of embedding information literacy in the curriculum. Academic librarians have to proactively reach out to their faculty counterparts and communicate to them the benefits of collaborations by presenting the evidence of the positive outcomes following any joint ventures so that more integration of information literacy initiatives into course curriculum and assessment can be implemented. Through their intervention and involvement in course planning, academic librarians can develop a better understanding of the changing students' needs and transform the learning experience for the better. Since '*informed learning is underpinned by cohesive and relevant curriculum*' (Bruce, Hughes & Somerville, 2012: 536), librarians can work closely with faculties in modifying and improving the syllabus to deliver the right level of information literacy training that is fit for purpose and to appropriately meet users' research and development needs. With establishing connections with faculties and ultimately supporting institutional objectives, academic librarians

need to design programs and assignments that can cultivate students' lifelong learning skills, skills that can, not only satisfy their current academic needs, but can also adequately prepare them for their future careers. For an effective partnership to take place, Bell and Shank (2004) have outlined the need for academic librarians to be aware and have an understanding of the pedagogy of instruction and to adopt the principles of instructional design theory and practice, so as to improve their knowledge *'of how learning takes place, how structures for effective learning are designed, and how learning outcomes are assessed'* (Bell and Shank, 2004: 373) in order for them to participate fully in the teaching and learning process. Pedagogical knowledge is a particularly important skill set of which academic librarians need to equip themselves with to demonstrating their relevance and strengthening their roles in teaching and research support.

### **2.2.3 Increasing teaching role: librarian as educator**

Digital resources and information overload have expanded academic librarians' role in literacy teaching and exemplified, as well as put greater emphasis on, their role as educator. Arguing that *'librarians have always had some sort of educational role, even if it was only showing students how to use the library catalog, find various print materials, and the other basics of using a traditional library'*, Sun et al believe that *'new technology has enormously expanded the roles of librarians in teaching students to use information searching equipments. The role continually evolves because the technology to which it is yoked also does'* (Sun et al, 2011: 330). Arguably, the professional principles and specialised training received by academic librarians in their formal education and throughout their professional lives have positioned them squarely in the education arena, as Walter supports the teacher identity of librarians to be an important facet of their broader professional identity (Walter, 2008). Recognising academic librarians' unique quality as educators because of their awareness of information needs and their commitment in the development of their users' skills, Bundy (2001) also believes that academic librarians have the understanding of the importance of creating informed citizens through integrating information literacy training into the educational process. This concept of librarian as educator has been shared by many (Hepworth, 2000; Hepworth and Walton, 2009; Lupton, 2002; Doskatsch, 2003; Powis, 2008). The increasing information choice available in the digital age has brought about greater emphasis for academic librarians in teaching users to handle information. This has caused *'librarians [to] often see their teaching role as essential for them to remain relevant in the new information age, on top of their more traditional role of collection building and care'* (Creaser and Spezi, 2012: 7). In addition to mastering information

technology and deploying it to facilitate teaching, librarians' educator role is '*an evolution in the profession that challenges established definitions of librarianship*' and the way LIS professionals '*generate knowledge of professional values and practices*' (Elmborg, 2006: 192). Describing it as '*an academic librarian who combines the traditional skill set of librarianship with the information technologist's hardware/software skills, and the instructional or educational designer's ability to apply technology appropriately in the teaching-learning process*', the concept of a blended librarian is precisely defined by Bell and Shank (2004: 374). Furthermore, their six principles of blended librarianship have flagged up instruction as the key feature of the profession, where the designing of instructional and educational programs and classes to assist patrons in using library services and understanding information literacy is '*essential to gaining the necessary skills (trade) and knowledge (profession) for lifelong success*' (Bell and Shank, 2004: 374).

In the context of literacy within the education arena, the central role of academic librarians rests in the empowerment of students and supporting faculties in the delivering of information literacy programmes where '*expanded instructional activities to include an emphasis on information competencies and lifelong learning*' has seen the focus move away from basic bibliographic instruction (Burke, 2008: 271). Through the process of user education, librarians are equipping users with the transferrable skills which will be applicable in their life and future career beyond university education. The integration of academic librarians in the teaching and learning process, for example their involvement in course planning and interventions in the curriculum, has also proven to be vital for meeting the lifelong learning objective. The provision of lifelong learning has responded to the recommendations made in the *Dearing Report* (1997) on students' learning (recommendation 8) where it was proposed UK HEIs develop and implement learning and teaching strategies, and for staff to engage in the management of students' learning processes as ways to empower students to become responsible learners who can effectively manage their own learning. Within the supportive scholarly contexts as in the case of universities, Bruce, Hughes and Somerville have noted that academic librarians being informed educators themselves, should work in conjunction with faculty staff to act as learning guides and consultants by ensuring that students are '*equipped with understanding and capabilities to take advantage of a range of established and emerging technologies and to interact safely, responsibly, and productively in online environments*' (Bruce, Hughes & Somerville, 2012: 536). The complexities present in the digital environment are continuing to exemplify academic librarians' educator role. Since the availability of information everywhere '*will not in itself create*

*a more informed citizenry without a complementary cluster of abilities necessary to use information effectively'* (ALA, 2000: 2), this has made the teaching of information literacy an increasingly important role for academic librarians. Elmborg sees it as a professional duty for academic librarians to develop strategies to help students get to grips with the cultural identity and master the academic styles and patterns of thinking and shared values with a view for them to develop a critical consciousness on information and ultimately create their own knowable reality (2006). With the support of information use being situated at the heart of academic librarians' professional mission, their teaching role has constituted a big part of their professional identity.

### ***More pedagogically focused***

According to the ACRL Standards & Guidelines for libraries in Higher Education, the changes in scholarly communication, the rocketing number of electronic publications and the increase in the availability of information have created an evolving role for academic librarians where they have the opportunity to work in close partnership with users and take on greater responsibility for the educational process (ACRL, 2004). Formal user education services as in the case of information literacy training have enabled the facilitation of lifelong learning (Brendle-Moczuk, 2006; ALA, 2000; UNESCO, 2006; Lau, 2006; Clairoux et al, 2013) and concurrently demonstrated its pedagogical value in contributing to students' success (Webber and Johnston, 2000; Leckie and Fullerton, 1999). With the incorporation of information literacy into university libraries' strategic plans having been widely adopted across Higher Education, academic librarians have found themselves getting even more involved in the teaching and learning process to support the institution educational goal. Continuing evaluation and assessment of learning outcomes as a way to substantiate instructional efforts can provide the opportunity for academic librarians to be effective practitioners (Julien and Boon, 2004) and to improve cumulative student learning (Stowe, 2013). The focus on pedagogy has offered the chance for academic librarians to be responsible for, and contribute to, the creation of informed citizens for an information society. With fulfilling the potential of information literacy in mind, academic librarians have become more aware of the pedagogical concepts as a basic background in order to develop a better understanding of how students learn (Alvarez et al, 2014; Jacobs, 2008). Embedding information literacy instruction has afforded academic librarians the opportunity to develop a network with users and facilitated user-centric interactive learning (Travis, 2008). Through a close-knit partnership with faculties and users, the established alliance helps to advance the fulfilment of the information literacy objective; and by placing a stronger focus on the

pedagogical aspect of literacy training, the retuning of emphasis has exemplified academic librarians' teaching role within the education framework, legitimising their position to impart knowledge as with their academic counterparts.

### **2.3 Professionalism & professional identity**

Following the identification of the way in which their role has evolved in academia, the question of professionalism in terms of the credentials and qualities that makes librarians unique is vital for distinguishing the professional identity of the 21st century academic librarian, of who they really are, and the professional values which define them. Regarding professionalism as an ethos, Cross believes that providing service to users and maximising resources for the greater good is the ultimate ethos that permeates LIS professionals (Cross, 2011). With the information profession being a people-centred one, connecting people and information is the underlying value that guides the actions of librarians. Often seen as the intrinsic concepts to professionalism, CPD, professional knowledge and qualifications are considered to be the main attributes for defining a profession (Feather, 2009; Wilson and Halpin, 2006; Broady-Preston, 2010). Within the sociological context, professional identity is believed to be developed and maintained through professional bodies (Payne, 2008 quoted in Broady-Preston, 2010) where these groups have the '*collective responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the profession as a whole*' (Watkins, 1999: 39). Professional associations being the traditional custodians of professionalism therefore play a vital role in the future development of a profession (Broady-Preston and Preston, 2007).

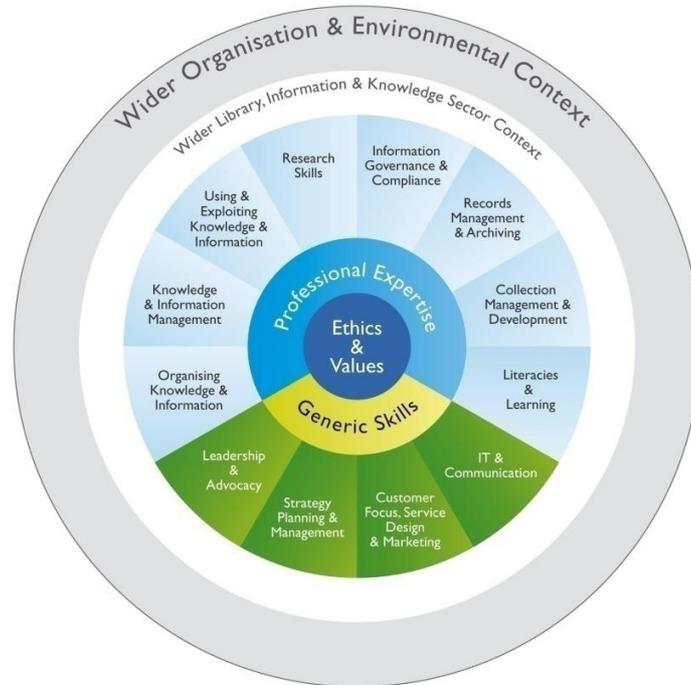
#### **2.3.1 The role of the professional body CILIP**

One of the strategies which CILIP helps to support, is the development of the professional standards through the recreation of a new set of Body of Professional Knowledge (BPK) to provide an updated framework of core knowledge and skills set for the use by its members. Running the education, training and development programme, CILIP strives to ensure the relevance of LIS professionals in measuring up to the challenges of the wider environments and meeting their workplace demands. The qualifications and training programmes also aim to satisfying individuals' professional aspirations and enhancing self value. With the purpose of providing a framework of ethical practice, CILIP draws up a set of shared values and code of professional practice so that LIS professionals are able to reflect upon. The following section provides further discussion of the application of CILIP's strategies in strengthening professionalism.

### **Professional standards: Body of Professional Knowledge (BPK)**

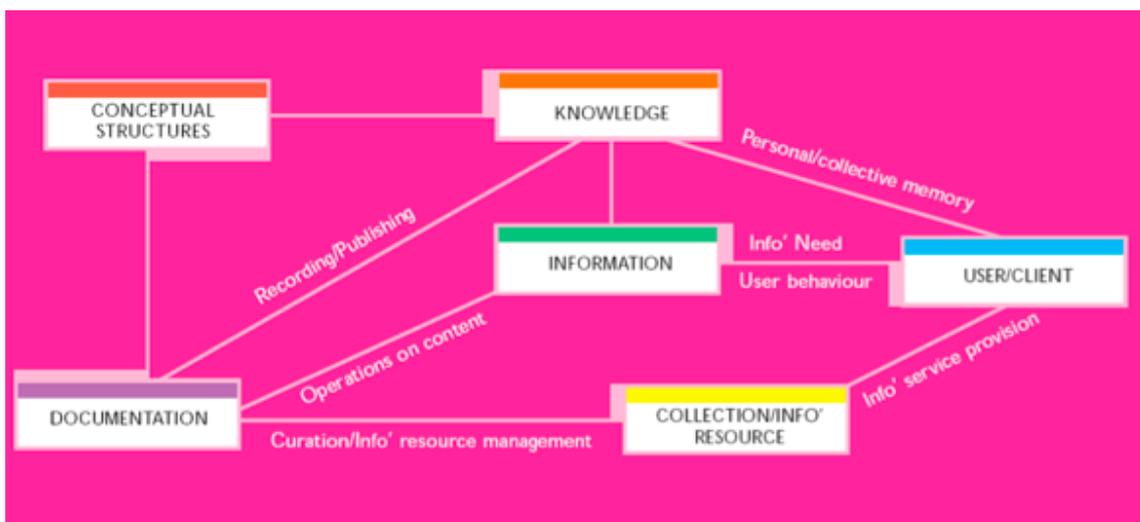
Every profession has a knowledge base and professional competence is the underpinning of professionalism. What makes the LIS profession distinctive from the other professions is this key set of skills and knowledge for which it possesses, a special knowledge base it develops in order to practice effectively, legally and ethically. Whether it is formal education, experience gained through practice, explicit and tacit knowledge developed in the field, ongoing training and professional development have all contributed to this central knowledge base. Broady-Preston (2010) identifies from previous studies of professionalism has approved established BPK as a cornerstone of the maintenance of professional identity. A BPK framework (2004) drawn out by CILIP is unique to the LIS profession, as it describes '*the specialist subject knowledge that practitioners are expected to acquire for current and future professional practice*' (CILIP, 2004: n.p.). A range of fundamental components are covered in the BPK – knowledge, information, user/client, collection/information resources, documentation and conceptual structures, which are linked by the operations to complete the circle of the scheme. The document also outlines the contextual environment for which information professionals have to operate within in order to practice. To ensure that they provide an effective service to the community, the refinement and updating of the body of knowledge is vital for LIS to stay relevant (McMenemy, 2010), and CILIP's continuous effort in revising and modernising their standards such as their revision of their BPK to address the changes experienced by LIS professionals in reflection of current practice and development needs can be seen as an illustration of their awareness and forward-looking disposition. The new Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB) helps CILIP to maintain its connection and engagement with its members and to act effectively as the representative of its membership and the LIS profession. As part of the *Future Skills* project (CILIP, 2013), the new PKSB wheel (**Figure 2.1**) has adopted a fresh approach and added an extra layer of complexity to its structure by having included additional elements to the original BPK core schema (**Figure 2.2**). The multidimensional design serves as a reflection of the dynamic nature and setting in which LIS professionals operate. With professional ethics and values being placed at the heart of the wheel, there are now more noticeable skills set and knowledge requirements in the new PKSB than previously prescribed. High up on the list are generic skills such as leadership and strategy management. Some of the other additional skills sets, for example the emphasis on research skills, knowledge management and literacy and learning are described as core professional expertise of which LIS professionals are expected to acquire.

**Figure 2.1 CILIP PKSB Wheel**



**Source:** [www.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Your%20PKSB%20WEB.pdf](http://www.cilip.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Your%20PKSB%20WEB.pdf)

**Figure 2.2 CILIP BPK core schema**



**Source:** <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20091007221841/http://www.cilip.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3CA8898C-902F-4B1F-AE07-58B0BAE6AEB2/0/BPK.pdf>

## **Education, training and development**

Another key strategy of CILIP is the Accreditation Framework, which oversees the education, training and development of the discipline. Relating to the accreditation to courses in library schools and the method candidates are admitted to the register (Wood, 1997), the accreditation instrument of which CILIP has adopted '*enables peer reviewers to assess a course in terms of current and developing practice in LIS*' (Enser, 2002: 215). In response to the trend of modularised programmes of study as a preferable option for students (Huckle, 2004), CILIP has revised its accreditation framework to accommodate students' learning choices and their practical needs. Through its demonstration of flexibility and receptivity towards the latest developments, CILIP has strengthened its prospect of broadening the membership base for the organisation. Following the outcomes of the *Defining our Professional Future* report, CILIP is running the *Future Skills* project which is set to review its Body of Knowledge, accreditation and qualifications schemes. While explaining the rationale behind the project, the Chair of the Future Skills Project Board, Keith Wilson, acknowledges CILIP Council's recognition of qualifications being '*a key part of what makes CILIP unique*' (Wilson, 2012: 37). Whilst there are increasing numbers of professionals joining the LIS sectors from different routes and with university courses offering more choices to students, Wilson believes CILIP must make sure that its qualifications remain relevant and be recognised; this means that it needs to promote itself '*simply and compellingly*' (Wilson, 2012: 37). On the agenda of accreditation, CILIP is keen to ensure a greater recognition of CILIP qualifications and to widen out the accreditation to all academic qualifications. The new CPD programme is, in effect, a reflection of the changing role carried out by LIS professionals, and by revising and updating its services, CILIP is equipping the organisation to be in a better position to provide the kind of support that their members ask for and are relevant in their workplace. By setting out the accreditation assessment criteria and matching the programmes against the PKSB, CILIP is providing clear guidelines to assess the relevance of courses and is practically defining the standards for the sector and the wider profession.

## **Professional ethics**

Supporting good practice by encouraging LIS professionals to apply ethical principles in their daily work, CILIP's Code of Professional Practice for Library and Information Professionals outlines the responsibilities of its members, laying down the areas for which they should be responsible for: responsibility for themselves, to information and its users, colleagues and the

information community, employees and society (CILIP, 2004). Just like the BPK, the Code is not a prescriptive document, but rather serves as a guidance of good practice for members to follow. Methodically designed, the guidelines are there to address the broad spectrum of the information work *'to avoid the attempt to create a document narrowly designed to distinguish right from wrong in the interests of professional discipline'* (Sturges, 2003: 99). The document is thought to have reflected the change in modern day practice, where it has embodied *'a set of principles and a code of conduct [...] designed to help professionals resolve their own ethical dilemmas'* (Broady-Preston, 2006: 55). Since the purpose of professional codes and guidelines is for *'members to use – and perhaps place in their own work environments – rather than for the Society to enforce'* (Boles, 2009: n.p.), members are advised to be flexible when following and applying these guidelines. LIS professionals are encouraged, rather than coerced, into embracing the founding values and principles of the profession to ensure that equality and diversity are observed in their workplace and practice. Noting the moral and ethical issues faced by librarians on a daily basis, particularly with the increased legal regulation and requirements for accountability, Hayes (2009) believes that the skills of librarians in dealing with ethical issues is especially illuminating in the present day. In light of this development, CILIP continues to increase its effort to support members in adhering to the Ethical Principles and Code of Professional Practice. An example of a CILIP published document *User Privacy in Libraries: Guidelines for the Reflective Practitioner* in 2010, with a revised edition in 2011, has provided guidelines and recommendations for good professional practice. The document does not only aim for and applicable to individual members, and it also serves to protect the interest of the users of their service in response to the conflict and anxiety between the freedom of access to information and the individual right to privacy and personal data (CILIP, 2011). The ethical codes and relevant documents have therefore provided the reference and guidance for practitioners.

## **2.4 CPD & Library education**

Constituting the core of a profession, *'competence is a central concept for understanding the preferred qualities of professionals'* (Huvila et al, 2013: 199). Whether it is the expansion of traditional duties or shifting focus of tasks, academic librarians need to constantly update their skills set and professional knowledge for the successful performance of the roles, and to maintain their professional competence and relevance in the evolving environment. Increasing user expectations, arising needs from stakeholders, de-professionalisation and *'the blurring of boundaries between traditional silos of professionalism'* are thought to be forceful drivers for

change in relation to professional education and development (Broady-Preston and Preston, 2007: 290), making the updating of the skills and knowledge base a direct response to the changing needs and a pressing issue for the survival of the LIS profession. With the knowledge and skills practitioners possess and exercise being the defining factors of the profession, Feather believes that the PKSB captured by CILIP has provided the necessary basis for librarians to update their skills and develop professionally (Feather, 2006). This core knowledge base has offered information professionals a development framework to measure their knowledge and skill sets against the requirements of their current roles. In addition, the Chartership qualification and Revalidation scheme offered by CILIP have evidenced their support in promoting the continuous professional development and improving the professional status of practitioners. Given that the schemes are on a voluntary basis, practitioners who are willing to undertake the process have demonstrated their commitment to the profession and fulfilment of reflective practice by taking responsibility of their own professional future through the constant updating of their skills sets and continuous learning. As the traditional boundaries continue to expand and new areas of focus are incorporated into their roles, academic librarians are encouraged to develop new skills alongside traditional knowledge since traditional skills will remain valid but new skills will be required to perform the tasks (Mathews and Pardue, 2009) so that they can effectively fulfil the needs of their college communities. Prominent methods that have been identified in research literature such as formal and further education (Corrall, 2010), keeping abreast with the latest trends through training courses, attending conferences (Harrison, 2010) and workshops, self learning using online technologies (Cassner and Adams, 2006; Flatley and Weber, 2004); organisational support in fostering a work-based learning culture such as the facilitation of mentoring (Freedman, 2009; Bello and Mansor, 2013) and job shadowing (Parry, 2008) schemes are some forms of professional development that can help preserve the relevance and professionalism of information professionals, and tackle changes and developments.

As illustrated in the expansion in capacity and the inclusion of new aspects in the teaching and research support roles carried out by academic librarians, development of new skills and competence is a necessity for successful performance of tasks. Taking into account the new specialties emerge in the role of academic librarians such as the case of information literacy educators, it is believed that information-related and subject-based pedagogical knowledge are required for academic librarians to fulfil their roles effectively (Corrall, 2010) and to convince stakeholders of the values which academic librarians bring to achieve the institution's research

objectives. Pedagogical knowledge as a CPD priority has been reinforced by the American Library Association (ALA) where, within the framework of information literacy, *'learning theories, instructional methods, and achievement measures [...] the principles related to the teaching and learning of concepts, processes and skills used in seeking, evaluating, and using recorded knowledge and information'* are defined to be the basic knowledge and core competences of which information professionals need to acquire and develop upon (ALA, 2009: 4). In the latest Library Survey conducted by Ithaka in 2013 examining the issues on strategy and leadership in academic libraries, the findings show an almost complete unanimity from library directors *'a very strong commitment to the role that their libraries play in research skills and information literacy education for undergraduate students'* (Long and Schonfeld, 2014: 6) demonstrating a strategic shift and rebalancing of services. With supporting the research and education agenda being at the core of institutions' missions, the skill sets and knowledge of academic librarians need to reflect this strategic positioning. Mavodza believes academic librarians have to develop their skills by engaging in original research activities to create knowledge and obtaining qualifications that warrant them equal or comparable status to their academic counterparts, *'so that they are versatile and their efforts are relevant as they work towards reinforcing and enhancing their value across the curriculum'* (Mavodza, 2011: 449). Outlining the challenges which academic librarians face to be credible practitioners, Brophy (2007) believes that their top priority is to secure resources stewardship in the new environments by proving their understanding of the publishing authors' perspectives, concerns and their 'language'; in addition, they also need to communicate with and convince academics to accept institutional repositories as part of the mainstream of scholarly communication in the new work matrix. Besides their ability to embrace change, for example their adoption of constructivist pedagogies, academic librarians' approach in placing users at the centre of their policies and service delivery that focuses on the importance of meeting users in their own environments has enabled practitioners gaining knowledge and understanding of users' learning and research processes, where such knowledge and understanding have in turn, helped underpinning academic librarians' success in the networked environments (Brophy, 2007). The idea of matching qualifications as a way for academic librarians to enhance professional practice has been suggested by Macauley, who has advocated the benefits of studying for a doctorate in professional practice not only helps librarians to develop transferable skills but has also allowed them to contribute to knowledge within the LIS discipline and be involved in teaching including research supervision (Macauley, 2004; Macauley et al, 2010). As a method of professional development, furthering education, for example studying for advanced degree has provided a recognition and evidence of using

education, research and development to inform, enhance and advance university library practice (Corrall, 2010), something that is particularly valuable within the context of academic librarianship.

Professional qualification through formal education has constituted the basis of professionalism. Changing needs that stem from the new environments has necessitated the '*continual review and renewal of the contents and delivery of [library course] at both module and programme levels*' (Corrall, 2010: 578) to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and relevant in equipping practitioners to perform their roles in the workplace. To keep pace with professional practice, revision and modernisation of library education must be based on the objective to eliminate gaps between the programme on offer and the skill sets required by the information market. Shifting of focus reflected in the syllabus is a direct response to the changing needs, where an increase emphasis on '*providing adequate preparation for [practitioners and graduates] roles as information skills trainers and information literacy educators*' (Corrall, 2010: 581) has been put in place in many of the curriculum programmes within library education. Moving towards more specialised training, with courses offered in specific subject areas such as digital libraries education (Wildemuth et al, 2009), some i-Schools<sup>1</sup> are offering individual module-based CPD specific professional enhancement courses (Corrall, 2010) and delivering distance education curriculum online (Chu, 2012) to accommodate the needs of practitioners.

The modernisation of i-Schools education programmes serves as a reflection of coping with the changes in the environments and meeting the requirements of the job market, with the courses indicating '*the essential competencies that students in each degree programme should acquire, including an awareness of the contemporary issues related to the professions within the iField*' (Wu et al, 2012: 32). In a study of student perceptions of library education, over 90% of the respondents agreed that greater emphasis should be placed on professional work, demonstrating their support for '*a practically and professionally oriented program that will prepare them to work in the field*' (Cherry et al, 2011: 129). The findings demonstrate the importance of bringing together curriculum and professional practice which in turn has offered course designers clear indicators for their programme planning. It is all the more important to

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<sup>1</sup> 'The iSchools organisation was founded in 2005 by a collective Information Schools dedicated to advancing the information field in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These schools, colleges, and departments have been newly created or are evolving from programs formerly focused on specific tasks such as information technology, library science, informatics, and information science. Together they share a fundamental interest in the relationships between information, people and technology.' (<http://ischools.org/about/>)

think in terms of current professional practice when developing CPD related modules for practitioners who seek to update their knowledge and skills. Apart from pedagogical and research knowledge to meet the needs of the scholarly communities, there are a few other areas that have been identified as prominent topics in current research.

Noted by various scholars, information technology including Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 being a major driver for change in the skills base of professional practice is believed to be an essential area in professional education and CPD (Isfandyari-Moghaddam and Hosseini-Shoar, 2014; Corral, 2010; Arif and Mahmood, 2012; Broady-Preston, 2009). Leadership development has also been identified as one of the key priorities for librarians (Roberts and Rowley, 2008; Nixon, 2008; Camille and Westbrook, 2013) where the management capabilities of staff are believed to be critical to carry out their responsibilities and remain relevant in the changing environments. Succession planning is vital for the development of organisations and nurturing talents in-house to allow '*management continuity, which can help to ensure the implementation of a consistent strategy and set of values and any planned changes*' (Murray, 2007: n.p). Institutions must put in place a plan to develop future leaders by providing training opportunities for staff and developing a culture in encouraging staff to fulfil their potential. Whilst examining the qualifications and skills of digital librarians in academic libraries, Choi and Rasmussen found that '*current awareness and appropriate technological skills and experience in digital library environment, knowledge and experience in creation and management of digital information, and metadata are the most required qualifications for digital librarian positions with high emphasis on management skills*' (Choi and Rasmussen, 2009: 465). Far from being exhaustive, the identified skills from current literature have nonetheless highlighted the areas which LIS professionals considered to be important for their development needs even if some of the recommendations come across as 'standard'. What this has indicated is that, regardless of whether it is traditional or emerging 'new' skills, a careful balance needs to be struck between popular trends and traditional skills set where the curriculum designers need to take into account the requirements of the professional workplace, the core values of the professional knowledge base and the future development needs of information professionals.

## **2.5 The philosophy and core principles of librarianship: the conceptual foundation of LIS and the Five Laws of Ranganathan**

Underpinning professional practice, the core principles and philosophy of librarianship offer an important perspective in defining professionalism. The existing threats of the digital transition

that have caused the issue of disintermediation (Nicholas, 2012; Barner, 2011; Brown and Swan, 2007) and alienation (Nicholas and Rowlands, 2008) have prompted librarians to assess their positions by revisiting the purpose of their professional existence.

### **The conceptual foundation of LIS**

Information and knowledge are some fundamental concepts underpinning librarianship and defining professionalism in relation to professional identity and the fulfilment of practice. The study of knowledge and information in LIS has a unique focus to support progress and the improvement of things within the information ecology (Hjørland, 2014). Existing in the same continuous process, information and knowledge are believed to play a key role in facilitating and expanding the scope of people understanding (Nitecki, 1985), making the use of information a process of informing and knowledge imparted (Buckland, 1991). As a definable outcome of human action, the process from information to knowledge growth signifies the presence of a social dynamic in a sense that knowledge can only be gained through interactions within the social context. Defining information as a '*meaningful communicative action that aims at truth claims and conditions*', Budd has pointed out the obligation of information professionals to study and familiarise themselves with its philosophical conception in order to confidently carry out their responsibilities in helping people inquire meaningful and true communicative acts in facilitating knowledge growth (Budd, 2011: 70). There is the suggestion that, whilst the spectrum of information professionals has expanded in reflection of change and progression, their responsibility to the birth and flow of knowledge has continued to endure (Herold, 2005). In fact, the importance of knowledge is believed to be so pivotal to LIS that, in Budd's (2001) classic text *Knowledge and Knowing in Library and Information Science*, which serves as the pinnacle of LIS philosophy, he has painstakingly discussed the genealogy of modern science and by doing so, highlighted the connection of the philosophy of science and the working of LIS. On the basic premise that practice is bounded to thought hence guided by the way of thinking, reflection on the philosophy in terms of the conceptualisation behind actions becomes the knowledge-based goal of LIS. Budd (2001) believes the intentionality of communication such as the seeking of information being a human action has rejected the information as object argument. Similarly, rather than being '*a passive information repository*', Budd supports the idea that the library is '*a locus of the social phenomena that contribute to knowledge*' (Budd, 2004: 363). This contemporary perspective in terms of the way knowledge is viewed directly '*affects our assumptions about records, evidence, works, storage, access, ownership, and provenance*' (Herold, 2004: 374). The proposal for a social epistemic framework and the adoption of a

hermeneutical phenomenology approach in LIS (Budd, 2004; 2001) is contrary to the natural sciences' system of thoughts, specifically logical positivism, that have been influencing the conception of library sciences for centuries. Since professional practice is guided by a purpose to facilitating knowledge through social processes, the aim of knowledge generation and achieving meaning as the result of those actions has suggested the pertinence of social epistemic in the grounding of librarianship. Being an integral component of '*the system of production, dissemination, reception, and assessment*' (Budd, 2004: 362) to assist the achieving of epistemic goal, academic libraries operating within the framework of social epistemology has made the examination of the connection of librarianship and knowledge a practical endeavour for reflective practice.

Despite the practical orientation of LIS, critics continue to advocate the consideration of the philosophical foundations of LIS in contemporary practice (Budd, 2001; Cornelius, 2004; Wilson, 2003; Hjørland, 2005; Herold, 2004; Buckland, 1991; Floridi, 2002). Besides the importance of information and theory of knowledge as the core concepts and foundation of LIS in response to critics' concerns, progression of the profession relies on setting a clear path guided by a conceptual framework that is robust and in line with the professional value. Supporting the relevance and the function of the philosophical foundations of LIS to professional practice, Wilson believes the discussion is necessary because '*if we wish to understand the world of the information user and his or her actions in settings where information is made available by one means or another, we need to have conceptual tools that have been designed to foster that understanding*' (Wilson, 2003: 450). Many philosophical discussions and debates such as the social epistemology discussed by Budd (2001), philosophy of information proposed by Floridi (2002, 2010), philosophical realism advocated by Hjørland (2004), knowledge representations offered by Svenonius (2004), human information behaviour approach presented by Spink and Cole (2004), theory of communicative action suggested by Habermas (2001) and so forth were conducted to finding a suitable paradigm and metatheory as an exemplary conceptual foundation for LIS. Despite the ongoing philosophical discourse, the common ground remains – that professionalism is more than the practice of managing libraries even though it is an essential aspect of LIS. Besides the practical side of librarianship, the focus on knowledge and epistemology is intrinsic to professionalism because of the purpose of LIS to foster knowledge production which in turn has guided the activities of information professionals. To take into account the academic discipline of LIS as well as the practice of librarianship, Cornelius believes that there needs to be a holistic approach in considering '*the relationship between our*

*purpose, our practices, and the social context of information*' (Cornelius, 2004: 386). By constructing a conceptual grounding, the examination on actions and thoughts through reflection can lead to knowledge and inform practice. The process of reflection and interpretation involves a mechanism of social interactions which helps to facilitate knowledge growth. Describing it as *'something you work out or construe to solve problems related to your field of study and your profession'*, the value and applicability of philosophy suggests the significance of *'[basing] a discipline on a proper philosophical framework'* (Hjørland, 2004: 502). The connection between philosophy and research depends on the belief system in guiding the pattern of thoughts and the subsequent actions in practice. Understood as the paradigm, this basic belief system that is *'based on ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions'* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 107) is there to inform and guide the approach of inquiries. For the purposes of furthering the development of LIS as a field of inquiry and developing theories to be applied to the practice of librarianship, examination of the intellectual underpinnings of LIS warrants consideration for all information professionals. Supporting the relevance and value of establishing a conceptual foundation, Labaree and Scimeca have encapsulated the ways in which philosophical thoughts help in facilitating professional practice: *'philosophy is necessary so that librarians may understand and defend themselves against philosophical criticisms of their profession; [...] [it] provides a basis for applying ethical decision making to practice [...] [and] functions as a means of gaining greater self-understanding and self-knowledge about the purposes of librarianship; [...] philosophy brings clarity to general guiding practices and principles of an individual or group; [...] [it] informs methodology [...] [and] critical thinking about epistemology and the structure of reality (metaphysics); [...] philosophy [also] brings clarity and definition to the practical and theoretical uses of terms, concepts and ideas'* (Labaree and Scimeca, 2008: 45-48). Cornelius suggests that for librarians to accept their professional purpose, they must also accept the role of knowledge in the practical work of librarianship and the *'realistic representation or schema of knowledge'* in the construction of LIS (Cornelius, 2004: 381). LIS practitioners often reflect on their service operations to modify practice. Their receptiveness towards the role of reflective practice in supporting professionalism and CPD are reflected in research literature (Schön, 1995; Greenall and Sen, 2014; Grant, 2007; Galea, 2012; Sen, 2009; Thompson and Pascal, 2012). However, because of the practice-focused argument of the profession, practitioners' enthusiasm towards the theory and philosophy of librarianship are not well-developed. With reflective practice allowing information professionals to gain deeper understanding of their experience, reflection on professional purpose in terms of the meaning of professional existence can also lead to

knowledge and improve practice. With the ethical imperatives of which praxis in LIS carries, *'the nature of professional practice implies judgments of obligation that lead to actions based on principles of equal access to information, balance in library collections, and mediation between information seekers and content. Ethical considerations [...] can make ideas real in the way we inquire and practice in LIS'* (Budd, 2001: 314). Recognising knowledge is a vital part of LIS praxis, reflection on praxis becomes an ethical obligation of LIS professionals. Focus on the philosophical foundation of the systems of thought and epistemology therefore bears significance to upholding of professionalism. By critically reflecting on the values underlying social knowledge and the purposes underlying information, philosophical reflection on *'the values inherent in information, library practices, and those of library users'* (Weissinger, 2005: 7) places LIS practice within a wider context of professionalism and supports the value of librarianship against criticism of its intellectual foundation and long-term existence.

### **The Five Laws of Ranganathan**

Ranganathan's Five Laws present the fundamental guiding principles of librarianship and ideal library services. Zabel and Rimland believe that if professionals ever lose sight of the reasons and purposes of doing the job, the best way to find their way back is by referring to Ranganathan's Five Laws, which *'provide guidance and structure ... [and offer] timeless objectives that put our profession's goals in perspective'* (Zabel and Rimland, 2007: 24). They further explain that the timeless nature of the five laws lies in the value that library services provide, and state that when libraries acquire and provide the necessary materials for consumption, knowledge is then generated for empowerment (Zabel and Rimland, 2007). This concept of knowledge as power echoes with Leiter's idea of librarians' mission as *'keepers of the knowledge of our culture'* (Leiter, 2003: 413). One way for academic librarians to uphold their professionalism is by reflecting on current practices. Reflective practice can help to develop a strategic approach and provide an overall direction for the profession, as Brewerton stresses the importance of practical reflection, where it has *'a positive effect on how we function on a day to day basis ... without reflection we get stuck in our ways and refuse to see the viewpoint of others'* (Brewerton, 2003: 50). Nicholas and Rowlands (2008) also acknowledge the importance of the principles of librarianship and state that, *'the time has come for all the information professionals to re-examine their core values and discipline boundaries'* (Nicholas and Rowlands, 2008: 5) in this information filled world. Brewerton (2003) has advocated the reflection to *'consider what is the philosophy – and reason for being – of libraries and librarians'* (Brewerton, 2003: 48) for the profession to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some scholars have

supported Ranganathan's vision as both prudent and farseeing, and that his philosophies did not only remain steadfast and relevant but are particularly important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century academic librarianship. Referring to Ranganathan's fifth law of the library being a growing organism, Barner (2011) believes academic libraries and librarians must change and evolve with time by expanding their boundaries and reposition themselves in the heart of the learning community as a way to ensure their survival and upholding of their professionalism, and to bring forth Ranganathan's notions in contemporary academic librarianship.

Highly-regarded, the five laws of library science have '*[provided] a paradigm of how libraries function, how they grow and serve, how they live, and so provide for us a framework through which to examine our professional lives and our libraries ... [and they are] the only clear definition of a library's functions and responsibilities*' to date (Leiter, 2003: 413). From the time when they were first published in the 1930s, Ranganathan's Five Laws have since been revised, expanded, modernised and readapted by many to address the evolving library landscape. Amongst some of these re-adaptations, the most recognised version was the one by leading scholar and librarian Michael Gorman *Our Singular Strengths: Meditations for Librarians* (Gorman, 1998) in which he based on Ranganathan's philosophy, modified and recreated his own set of five new laws of librarianship. More recent adaptations include Croft (2001), Satija (2003), Noruzi (2004), Chowdry et al (2006), Zabel and Rimland (2007), Simpson (2008), Cloonan and Dove (2009), all of which have been published within the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For the purposes of this research, a quick investigation using a simple *abstract=Ranganathan* search of peer reviewed journal articles was conducted on the Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) at the end of 2014 to examine the citation of Ranganathan with the aim of exploring the relevance and application of Ranganathan and his philosophy in recent LIS research. The search returned a total of 215 articles and duplicates were removed, with 94 articles (44%) published since year 2000, 78 articles (36%) published in the nineties, and 43 articles (20%) published in the 1980s and before. One interpretation could be that the profession is paying increasing attention to Ranganathan's philosophy. Not only do these discussions offer a contemporary perspective and broader dimension to the five laws, but they also carry significant weight and value in terms of the relevance and applicability of these core principles and philosophy in the current professional landscape. The reference to Ranganathan in recent year's research suggests that the Five Laws are continuing to receive attention in the LIS community, and that information professionals are embracing the laws as '*a blueprint for our professional values*' (McMenemy, 2007: 100) when reflecting on practice. In

order to accommodate the changing environments, the Five Laws have been reinterpreted according to the different contexts in a way that can be more easily applied within the progressive framework of modern-day society. Gorman's (1998) new laws were created as an experiment to review the situation of contemporary librarianship and to reflect the social and cultural changes experienced by the profession; Kuronen and Pekkarinen (1999) believe supplementary laws are necessary because of the virtual library environment and global information networks that have empowered individual reader to contribute and to become part of the global collection. Kabir (2003) acknowledges the frequent reference to Ranganathan and his philosophy serve as evidence to his unwavering status of 'universal librarian' (Kabir, 2003). To illuminate the applicability and versatility of Ranganathan's underlying principles, the following section examines in detail of how the five laws have been put into practice by academic librarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **2.5.1 Law 1: Books are for use**

The first law highlights the purpose of library collections and resources are for use. Any restrictions and constraints put on book access, such as the traditional concept of books being only for preservation purposes are, therefore, against the basic principle of delivering library services. Academic libraries in the modern day have adopted the first law effectively in many respects to accommodate the changing needs of the users. 24/7 opening, information commons, extended study space, remote access, and WiFi service, are some of the many examples of how academic libraries strive to meet users' demand by bringing the service closer to them and fulfilling users' research and learning needs. The issue of access has been further complicated since the development of the internet and the introduction of electronic resources. The major areas in this new found challenge range from licensing to authentication, digital rights management (DRM) to digital preservation, all of which have posed restrictions on user access in the digital arena. Information technology and electronic information resources have opened up opportunities and possibilities, where the concept of the virtual library which provides anytime and anywhere service has presented a new angle on interpreting user access in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Academic librarians' continuing efforts in exercising flexibility and fine tuning services have ensured that users' changing needs are adequately met and the challenges brought by the digital era properly addressed. There are existing areas in which academic librarians are already applying their professional skills in ensuring the rule on 'books are for use' remains a

guiding principle of professional practice. But new processes have given rise to new challenges. Though some of the daily tasks performed in digital libraries are, in essence, largely similar to the ones carried out 80 years ago, the new environments and the technology mean that these activities are not all without concerns. The First Law continues to impact on the various areas of service in academic librarianship, while librarians are striving to incorporate the laws into professional practice:

- (1) Information storage and retrieval: Cataloguing and classification remain a significant activity in academic libraries. In addition to traditional books, electronic resources and digital repositories are newer forms of content which librarians organise and manage. With serving users as the primary focus, Ranganathan's classification system continues to provide a practical set of tools for librarians. The introduction of the digital format '*allows for rapid reclassification and diversification [...] [and] for data assets to be processed not only rapidly, but meaningfully*' (Fox, 2005: 24). By creating the metadata and access points according to rules and standards, librarians have enabled effective information retrieval and facilitated the use of collections and materials.
- (2) Collection development: Academic librarians are in constant liaison and communication with faculties to obtain the much needed materials to support learning and teaching. Relevance is key to ensuring the resources are to be used. Although now that the format of materials is no longer restricted to books, libraries have nevertheless continued to source for information resources that are fit for purpose and allow ease of use. An example is the assessment of the advantages of print and ebooks, where the freedom and convenience brought about by ebooks has made the preference of electronic versus print and the expansion of digital collections common phenomena found in many academic libraries.
- (3) Resources access: Licensing and authentication continue to be the major barriers relating to accessing electronic resources. Memberships, eligibility and copyright restrictions are '*modern equivalents of chaining books to the shelves*' (Leiter, 2003: 414) and moving libraries further away from the first law. Academic librarians therefore need to avoid such pitfalls by continuing negotiation with vendors for the most favourable licensing terms, and improving authentication techniques, such as the use of Proxy and Shibboleth, so that the access to knowledge will not be hampered. JISC Collections – NESLi2 in the UK, who

negotiate the model licence and subscriptions deals on behalf of Higher Education institutions has demonstrated the value of forming a consortium.

- (4) Information literacy and user education: The issue relating to born digital collections has raised the question of preservation and access. Academic librarians need to ensure digitised materials can be accessed perpetually into the future. Examples of the Lots Of Copies Keep Stuff Safe (LOCKSS) Alliance for preserving perpetual electronic journal access, ITHAKA's Portico centralised archiving service, and collaborative ventures of 19<sup>th</sup> century book collections digitisation project to be added to the UK Medical Heritage Library (UK MHL) by nine UK institutions are illustrations of long term endeavours to safeguard access of scholarly literature. However, ensuring accessibility is not the end. Librarians also have the professional responsibility to educate users on the much needed information literacy skills so that more resources can be used. By users becoming more digitally literate, the discovery and access of information resources can be enhanced. For the LIS profession to maintain their relevance within the scholarly endeavour, Little believes academic librarians should take advantage of their professional expertise in showing the research communities how to make use of the relevant tools and techniques required in the digital humanities landscape (Little, 2011) as a way to fulfil the user education agenda.

The reference to the using of books is not merely about the physical object but rather the available information and embodied knowledge incorporated in these library materials, whether as print or digital resources. The ALA Policy Manual 53.1.14 states that the core values are what guided professional practice in modern librarianship, and with access being one of the core values, that '*all information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users*' (ALA, 2013: 13). Ranganathan's justification for a qualified librarian has also presented the argument on the professional status in terms of the perception and attitude towards the recognition of the social standing of information professionals in contemporary society particularly in the UK. The skill sets and specialist knowledge of information professionals are undoubtedly what ensure that the library materials and services can be successfully delivered to the widest possible audiences.

### **2.5.2 Law 2: Every reader his [or her] book**

The second law presents the needs of all library users. It '*materialises the roles of the library as an organisation that brings books and readers together by focusing on "every person"*' (Takeuchi, 2010: 150). With the increasing formats and content being made available, it could be argued that the impact of electronic and digital technologies in the modern day have resulted in the variety of user needs being even more diverse. The library therefore, has to be able to provide the different content and collections for the different types of users so that the information needs of *every* library reader can be met. One way of achieving this is by developing a collection and delivery of content that is fit-for-purpose and relevant to the needs of the academic communities within the context of fulfilling their research and learning purposes. Having a good understanding of the needs of the academic communities requires librarians' professional knowledge. The relationship librarians have with faculties that was established through constant communication can allow accurate provision of information and content that service their needs. Librarians must seek to eliminate any barriers that will prevent users from accessing as well as the using of collections and resources. Using their professional knowledge, academic librarians are able to eliminate barriers by guiding users in information seeking and resource discovery. Within the context of academic librarianship, the application of the second law can be seen to have been exemplified as follows:

- (1) Collection development: In response to the changing demands of the academic communities, academic libraries continue to strive to acquire content that is relevant to their learning and research needs through the activities of collection development. The digital environment has expanded the realm of services as academic libraries extend from the management of traditional to a wider range of materials. Since no one library is able to provide all content, interlibrary loans has provided the solution in complimenting the library collection by offering a service that will reach an extensive scope of users and achieve the aim of allowing each reader to access his / her required content. Offering a 'just in time' service with an expanding content being opened up, patron-driven acquisitions (PDA) helps to complement the library collections and serves to demonstrate the proactivity of libraries in aligning their service with the changing information needs of the academic communities.
- (2) Cataloguing & classification: Apart from creating high quality metadata to allow content to be discovered, librarians are providing '*as many access points to information as possible*' by multidimensional classification '*that would make appeals to both the breadth and depth of*

*knowledge*' (Fox, 2005: 25). Through the process of cataloguing and classification, librarians are ensuring that content can be discovered and access is maximised. With the aim of stretching discovery and delivery of content further, library catalogues have integrated with online resources and linked up with the open Web search engines to open for indexing. Using '*search engine optimisation, syndication of metadata through OAI-PMH or RSS*', the library has created other discovery dynamics of outside-in and inside-out methods to '*help researchers and students at the home institution to find resources of interest to them across the broad output of available research and learning material*' and simultaneously '*to promote discoverability of institutional resources, or to have them discovered*' (Dempsey, 2012: n.p.). The gap between every reader and his / her book requires '*knowledge*' to link up the two.

- (3) Information literacy and service promotion: Having the contents in itself is insufficient if users are unable to perform a search. Librarians play a significant role in information literacy training to direct users to their needed information through their expertise of knowing the kind of materials that best suit their users and knowing how and when to use them; librarians can ensure that every reader has his or her book (Zabel and Rimland, 2007). The result of collaboration on the delivery of information literacy programmes has expanded communication opportunities with faculties. It enables academic librarians to plan for service provision and develop content and collections that can satisfy the needs of the academic communities, and at the same time afford them the opportunity to promote library resources and services to their constituents.

### **2.5.3 Law 3: Every book its reader**

Serving as a supplement to the second and first laws, the third law advocates the connections of resources and users with an emphasis put on the maximisation of *all* resources ('every book'). '*The third law concerns context rather than raw content. The mission of the librarian is to build a well-organised collection of resources in order to maximize the chance that users will find what they need*' (Cloonan and Dove, 2005: n.p.). With access and utilisation being at the heart of the subject, the third law points out the importance of promoting and marketing library resources so that these costly materials and collections can find their way to their readers. Whilst it has been agreed that the formats and choice of resources have significantly progressed from the time of Ranganathan, which has subsequently altered the information seeking behaviour of users, the one thing that has remained unchanged is that '*the majority of readers do not know their requirements*' (Ranganathan, 1931: 302) and the observation that

users do not always necessarily know what they need especially holds true in the digital age where the overwhelming amount of information that are readily accessible on the Web can certainly cause confusion. Resorting to Google and other information sources on the Web raises the issues of quality and authenticity and the potential omission of useful materials. Raising awareness with regard to resources promotion and reader development in terms of information literacy skills training offers solutions to the said problem by exposing users to trusted sources and for them to develop the ability to explore authoritative content that will better fulfil their information needs. Although traditional reference work has become a thing of the past, librarians have been seen to have shifted their focus by reaching out to their academic communities as a way to maintain the connections. Taking advantage of the latest programs and technologies, academic librarians continue to create new pathways from book to reader, adding unique values along the process.

- (1) Classification: Through the application of standard indexing and classification schemes to create subject headings, librarians have enabled information search and retrieval for users to find the information and content. By integrating electronic resources into the virtual learning space and online environment, librarians have provided multiple ways and effective cross references and places for users to find what they need (Cloonan and Dove, 2005). Electronic resources that are being '*described and indexed in the search engines' indexes*' (Noruzi, 2004: n.p.) is similar to an 'open' (as opposed to closed) access system which can facilitate browsing and linking that subsequently exposes users to unexpected materials and serendipitous information discovery experience. Using an architectural framework to combine faceted classification and content management tools, the creation of a multidimensional taxonomy allows speedy searching, browsing and discovery of content and relevant information (Nasir Uddin and Janecek, 2007). Academic librarians have also incorporated other mediation methods to support access, discovery and use of content, for example adding discovery layers by putting links to Google Scholar and Wikipedia to increase the exposure of library's resources and collections (Mussell and Croft, 2013; Lally and Dunford, 2007; Galloway and DellaCorte, 2014). Coherent and effectively designed systems and tools help to broaden the chance for 'every book' to be discovered by 'its reader'. Whilst having a well-organised system in place has opened up the essential doors, the implication of information evaluation relating to relevance and suitability means that users will continue to require support and guidance from librarians through their delivery of training programmes.

- (2) Information literacy: With the increasing role academic librarians play in literacy training, this development has demonstrated the value of librarians' contribution in maximising the discoverability, access and use of *'every single, possible piece of communicative material that anyone, anywhere might find useful'* (Connaway and Faniel, 2014: 67). Standing between 'every book' and 'its reader', librarians facilitate the connection between the two through their professional knowledge of the resources and an understanding of the requirements of users to effectively match them together. Another fundamental difference between Google and the information provider role of academic librarians lies in the professional knowledge and human intervention in terms of the evaluative function, where *'librarians know how to search and evaluate information in order to teach, to train their users'* (Garoufallou et al, 2008: 139) a role of which Google simply cannot replace. Academic librarians being the *'canvassing agents'* for books are believed to be one of the effective devices (Ranganathan, 1931: 313), who can supply credible and quality sources for users to fulfil their academic purposes. Their ability to offer advice on sources and resources options and interpret users' needs demonstrates the much needed flexibility which is of particular value in the changing information seeking landscape.
- (3) Reference Services: The development and application of modern tools has allowed librarians to stay in touch with the academic communities. Through their developed knowledge of users' changing information needs and information seeking habits, librarians are able to effectively match the appropriate information resources with users' requirements. Making use of Web 2.0 applications, librarians carry out virtual reference services via a computer-mediated *'two-way communication mechanisms between the operator and the user, and product and service integration to assure training and information needs are met from a single communication interface'* (Pinto and Manso, 2012: 53). Roaming and point of need reference services supported by mobile technologies, for example the use of iPads to engage and interact with users in a variety of contexts, are used to meet their changing information seeking behaviours and work patterns (McCabe and MacDonald, 2011). In order to ensure library resources can be connected with 'every reader' so that no one is missed out, academic librarians have also expanded their spheres of influence and taken the initiative to physically reach out to users and to promote services.

(4) Service promotion & outreach: Expanding their services and bringing the library to the user communities, librarians are proactively seeking ways to satisfying users' information needs. *'Reported that they were leaving the library and meeting patrons where they work, do research, or teach'* (Scherrer, 2004: 229), librarians are taking on a marketing role to promote the various library services and resources to a wide audience. Taking advantage of other outreach initiatives, librarians invest in collaborative efforts such as the 'One Book One Community' project (Dennis, 2012) to create pathways to connect the campus with communities and *'involvement in department, faculty, and campus-wide orientation events'* to promote the modernised functions of the 'library as place' that is more than 'just books' as a way to connect users with the library (Collins and Dodsworth, 2011: 1). Through their relentless efforts in marketing activities, academic librarians facilitate engagement by attracting users and delivering library services at their doorstep (Bhatt, 2011). The process has enabled librarians to demonstrate the value and relevance of the library, of how it can be woven into the workflow of users and eradicate any misconceptions through proven actions. Promotion of library as an information source and teaching users to differentiate between library and non-library resources can be achieved through this process. An increasing role of benchmarking and evaluation activities carried out by academic librarians further fulfils the aim of streamlining services and resources to strengthen the relationship of the library and the academic communities.

#### **2.5.4 Law 4: Save the time of the reader**

Providing efficient access to information and services can be understood as the essence of the fourth law. There is a clear sense of priority in terms of service focus and culture, as academic librarians strive to understand the information needs and behaviour of users in order for the library to accurately position their services and embed them into users' workflow. Time saving is an essential concept in contemporary librarianship. Connaway, Dickey and Radford's study on users' information seeking behaviour – 'if it is too inconvenient I'm not going after it' has summed up the mentality of 21<sup>st</sup> century users towards accessing information and resources, where convenience as a concept is a major driving force behind information seeking decisions (Connaway, Dickey & Radford, 2011; Connaway, Lanclos & Hood, 2013; Lee, 2005; Makani and WooShue, 2006). The increasing competition from other service providers has heightened users' expectations for convenient discovery and access as they are now faced with an unprecedented number of choices. To effectively compete with other service providers in the market and exemplify their unique values, many university libraries have invested in resource

discovery tools such as Primo and Summon that has a similar interface as Google and Amazon, with a single search of seamless from discovery to access functionality which users are accustomed. Other services such as the British Library's secure electronic delivery (SED) of interlibrary loans have enabled libraries to achieve an efficient turnaround time for the delivery of documents at users' point of needs. With speed and ease of use in mind, these services are adopted to accommodate the new information seeking culture and fulfil the requirement for convenience. The examples illustrated in the previous sections of how academic librarians have incorporated the first three laws in their professional practice have all served to contribute to time saving for the readers. From collection development, access management, cataloguing and classification, to reference services and information literacy training, academic librarians are organising information and developing effective systems with a view to facilitate a seamless service provision that is efficient to meet the teaching, learning and research needs of their constituents. One of the deciding elements in play to truly bring about the law is the observation of 'context'. Since '*information seeking behaviour is not isolated from the context within which the information seeker works*' (Foster, 2004: 232), effective intervention to 'save time' must therefore be context-specific to yield success. The emphasis on understanding users' needs has prompted academic librarians to reconsider their service priority. Fitting library services into users' workflows as an example of reprioritisation of focus, where libraries '*need to be more proactive in seeking to understand user behaviour and workflows*' (RIN, 2010: 16), is a point that has been agreed by many (Connaway and Faniel, 2014; Connaway, Dickey & Radford, 2011; Dempsey, 2008). The fourth law has highlighted the important function of library instructions and information literacy. Academic librarians being the experts in efficient searching, selecting, identifying, accessing and evaluating of information and data are in the best position to help users meander through the digital maze to successfully discover and retrieve the information they seek in a timely fashion. The teaching of information literacy skills allows users to be information literate and become effective learners, who can '*recognize when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information*' (ALA, 1989: n.p.). The power of education and knowledge help to break down the barriers imposed by the Web where users can feel confident to approach information.

#### **2.5.5 Law 5: The library is a growing organism**

As librarianship is '*connecting a user and a book ... [and] the very life of a library is in the personal service given to the people*' (Ranganathan, 1931: 67), users are therefore seen to be at the centre of the first four laws. These laws have provided a guiding framework for patron-

driven service provision and are applicable across every division of librarianship. Whilst they have focused on the library's functionalities, they have yet to spell out the nature and characteristics of the library – that as a growing organism, it has adapted in time and within the external environment, which is '*the primary driver of changes in meaning*' (Carr, 2014: 159). The fifth law can be seen as an abstraction of change and a reflection of the past, present and future of the library profession as a whole. Manifested in both a physical and conceptual sense, growth can be seen from the perspective of a physical expansion as well as the progression and development of which the profession went through. Whilst the expanding library collections and resources is the common concept associated with growth, one must not overlook the journey of librarianship which in itself, is a testimony and an illustration of how this growing organism has evolved. With the increasing demand for social and learning facilities to be embedded in the HE environment together with the forever expanding collections, university libraries are continuing to face the issue with space. Investigations into the library as place and the modernisation and redesigning of university libraries have been well documented, with the main focus often to review user expectations, the outcome after creating the space users demanded, and evaluation of the end product as to whether or not it has delivered its aim in fulfilling the needs of the research, teaching and learning community (Webster, 2010; Bayne, 2011; Campbell, 2006; Beard and Bawden, 2012; Frances, Fletcher & Harmer, 2011; Jackson and Hahn, 2011). The reformation and remodelling of the library space stresses the point of place and services convergence, which includes: the collaborative arrangements on a departmental, institutional, regional and national level to overcome existing pressures on stock, space and resources, enabling cross teams and network support, enhancing communication, and better streamlining of services (Dunaway, 2012). The redesigning of the physical space and hybrid library has provided an illustration of how this growing organism is changing.

- (1) Modernisation of physical space: National joint venture schemes such as the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) initiative for de-duplicating journal holdings of participating HE libraries, and the JISC NESLi2 initiative for licensing online journals, are two of the many examples of successful strategic partnerships that help to achieve the efficiency saving objective. In a document prepared by the ACRL, the *Futures Thinking For Academic Librarians: Higher Education in 2025*, it has identified 26 potential scenarios based on an implications assessment of current trends. One of the scenarios that has been identified as high impact with a slightly below medium probability of occurring is the creation of a pop-up campus where '*all the services and functions remain, "the college" and "the library" exist only*

*virtually, with no physical home. Higher education emulates retail with “pop up” work / class spaces [...] faculty and staff work from home-based offices or in rented office space* (Staley and Malenfant, 2010: 17). The *Defining Our Professional Future* report has acknowledged that while there are expectations of the continuing progression into virtual spaces for accessing resources, the demand for a physical location for learning and social spaces for the next two decades will remain, leading to the belief that the library will continue to play a vital role in both physical and virtual space (CILIP, 2010). Whilst the library is being increasingly perceived as a social place serving a variety of needs, a survey conducted by the University of Washington and University of Haifa has nevertheless indicated how users actually appreciate and endorse the idea of the library being a workplace (Hiller and Porat, 2009). Between creating a modern library in answer to users’ changing information needs and enabling collaboration and partnerships across departments, academic libraries need to take into consideration the traditional values and key purposes of libraries: *‘university libraries will continue to be important places for contemplation and study, and this role should be balanced against the need to increase revenue and build collaborations’* (Dunaway, 2012: 6). The fundamental point about service delivery and assessing the library as place depends profoundly on the university and users’ perspectives in terms of whether or not it has met the university mission and fulfilled the teaching and learning objectives. Academic libraries have to weigh up the competing demands and requirements across the different areas; between the library collections, student and staff space, IT infrastructures, efficiency savings and costs. It will be a rebalancing act for librarians to make a strategic decision in finding the most effective and economical way to utilise the already limited space and satisfy the needs of the different parties.

- (2) Updating of professional skills and knowledge: Besides the development of resource and service provision, professional skills and knowledge of academic librarians have continued to develop in parallel with the evolving requirements to support the needs of their constituents. The reprioritisation and shifting focus of the role of librarians as a reflection of the changes in the profession has required updated skill sets to carry out the activities. Having interpreted *‘the library as a growing organism in relation to its impact on staffing and skills’*, McMenemy believes that *‘as the library grows in terms of its services the skills of the library that will be necessary to deliver these services will also grow’* (McMenemy, 2007: 100). Finding the fifth law to be speaking directly to the changing role of the LIS education and the continuing professional development of librarians, Cooke observes how *‘LIS*

*programs have certainly shifted, adjusted and changed over the years to accommodate new outlooks and technologies, the latest incarnation of which is online, or distance, or computer-mediated LIS education'* where the online personal learning network have been found to be a popular form of CPD (Cooke, 2012: 3). Taking advantage of Web 2.0, librarians have connected on the social media and other networking communities to engage with other information professionals and carry out professional development activities through the platforms. With the increasing focus on research support, librarians are also investing their efforts in understanding researchers' information needs and information seeking behaviour, particularly '*activities that researchers generally engage in during the "research life cycle"*' (Auckland, 2012: 16) so that librarians can mediate and support researchers' work more effectively. Virtual reference service and outreach activities such as the use of Facebook and Twitter as a way to maintain their online presence and engage with the user community (Zohoorian-Fooladi and Abrizah, 2014; Boateng and Liu, 2014) have evidenced the proactive position taken by academic librarians to evolve with time and adapt in accordance with their environments. Through activities such as informal ad hoc communication with colleagues working in research, attending vendor training sessions; participating in formal program of research support skills workshops and seminars '*on topics ranging from research data management, intellectual property issues, liaison for research, bibliometrics, research grant cycle*' (Mamtora, 2013: 363), librarians are continuing to take part in the upskilling activities to better support their constituents' changing information needs.

- (3) Information literacy and lifelong learning: Barner believes the practical interpretation of Ranganathan's fifth law helps to aspire for change and growth and by putting it into practice helps to tackle the challenge of disintermediation (Barner, 2011). Stronger collaborations between librarians and faculties, prominent outreach service and the embedding of information literacy into courses have reinforced librarians' presence in academia as well as demonstrated their efforts to adapt in the new environments. With facilitating the freedom of knowledge being '*a central frame of reference for librarianship's profession*' (Gray, 2013: 12), librarians have the responsibility to help library users to autonomously connect with information. Libraries and librarians therefore play an important role of empowerment (Zabel and Rimland, 2007) exemplified in their provision of the discovery, access and using of resources, and their role to impart knowledge through the delivery of information literacy training. Building on traditional research skills, which they have been teaching for years

(Yucht, 2001), librarians have expanded their focus in the area to include research and digital literacy to reflect institutional agendas. As an aspect of information literacy, research data management has been seen to have fallen naturally within the remit of librarians simply because *'they have an understanding of generic information management principles that can potentially be applied to data management'* (Cox, Verbaan & Sen, 2012: n.p). Consider it to be a product of rationality, Gorman believes that the fifth law is *'related to stewardship in that libraries must allow for growth in their collections and services if they are to be good stewards for the indefinite future'* (Gorman, 2000: 19). This interpretation has suggested growth to be a determining factor for continual survival and for LIS professionals to retain their place in society.

## **Summary**

The corpus of LIS literature notes the developments and conditions stem from the evolving environment have reshaped the role of academic librarians. Discussions from research literature suggest changing role is largely reflected in the shifting of focus, modification of processes and activities, extension of traditional functions into new service, performance of core tasks with renewed focus and expansion of existing role. Changing process of scholarly communication and the continuing intensification of the research agenda as a strategic priority in Higher Education have seen an increase in academic librarians' role of research support. Allowing librarians a greater opportunity to demonstrate their professional skills and knowledge in resource and information management, new education initiatives have created a stronger partnership between librarians and academics. The emphasis on information literacy over the years has increased teaching support and illuminated the educator identity of academic librarians. Professionalism being a concept related to professional role and identity, requires a robust framework to support its development. Through its updated BPK, renewed strategy on education, training and development, promotion of a code of professional practice and ethical principles, CILIP continues its role in strengthening of professionalism in LIS. The increasing expansion of tasks and ongoing development of new activities require updated skills sets for academic librarians to successfully fulfil their role. Knowledge of pedagogy and thorough understanding of the research process are argued to be CPD priorities in response to the intensive focus on research and teaching support presented in academic librarians' role. Modernisation of library education is vital to reflect the requirements in professional practice. Playing a significant role in defining the purpose of librarianship, the conceptual foundation of LIS and the core values of Ranganathan's Five Laws continue to underpin the LIS profession.

The continuing re-adaptations and applications of the Five Laws by researchers and practitioners alike suggest the relevance of these principles being the framework of professional practice in modern librarianship.

### 3 Connecting current landscapes with future horizons

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#### 3.1 Introduction

Librarians function within wider social systems and are therefore influenced by and have influence upon, those systems. Having reviewed the major themes presented in the research literature relating to the subject of changing role of academic librarians, the discussion in the preceding chapter established the background surrounding the practitioners in terms of existing research within the discipline, the guiding framework and principles prescribed by the professional body CILIP, the conceptual foundation of LIS and the application of Ranganathan's Five Laws as the philosophical underpinnings in current professional practice. Amongst the multi-layered contexts in which academic librarians are situated, research has informed practice and strengthened professional knowledge. *'There is an increasing emphasis on the importance of practice making use of research and it is also highlighted that research is conducted on problems relevant to practice'* (Pilerot, 2014: 1). Besides serving as a source of subject knowledge, research literature can also provide insight into the professional landscape through the research topics that reflect professional concerns and developments in changing information environments. This demonstrates a significant shift in this relationship when Bawden highlighted that it was *'common to find information researchers criticising practitioners for failing to value research and practitioners charging researchers with conducting studies of little relevance to practice'* (Bawden, 2008: 421). In order to establish the current shape of this landscape and explore possible future horizons, a literature mapping review (Grant & Booth, 2009) of the topics investigated by LIS researchers identified subjects and patterns of change over a decade. This mapping provided another dimension to the current contexts in which academic librarians are embedded. By presenting the data to practitioners for verification and carrying out a comparative analysis of the findings against the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) top trends forecast (2012), the triangulation of the themes further enriches the understanding of the multifaceted contexts surrounding academic librarians.

#### 3.2 Research methods

This stage of the research involved three major activities: a literature mapping exercise to establish the narrative within the research literature; a community consultation (Pickard, Gannon-Leary & Coventry, 2010) with practitioners and a comparative analysis of the ACRL Top Trends Forecast (ACRL, 2012).

### 3.2.1 Literature Mapping

In light of the pressure the LIS profession is under, conceivably one of the most useful places to begin looking at the changes that have taken place in the profession is through the examination of the topics researched in journal publications. Providing the context with regard to setting the historical background to the profession, subjects researched by information professionals and their patterns presented in research publications offer insights into how the profession has evolved over time. With this purpose in mind, a literature mapping of seven reputable LIS journals between 2002 and 2012 was conducted. Setting the parameter of a ten year period, the year 2002 was selected with a view to coinciding with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) as a new professional body. Until that date many of the changes brought about by technology had been related to automating existing processes (Lamont, 1999; Butcher, 1999) whereas the past decade has seen a massive change in access to a wide range of resources, sources and systems for both users and practitioners (Lo, 2008; Spitzer, 2009; Knight, 2013). More focus has since been redirected to understanding user information needs and fine tuning service provision to fulfil the demand of the user communities (Gibbons, 2013; Comeaux, 2008) as well as to align with the strategic goals of the organisation. Common phenomena such as joint ventures and other collaborative initiatives and services, which were caused by various social and economic developments, have also meant that information professionals have to deal with more complex issues and to develop new ways of handling the services. The evolution of the profession as reflected in the research publications therefore, provides insight into the shifting focus of professional concerns.

Two databases – Library and Information Science Abstract (LISA) and Journal Citation Reports (JCR) in Web of Science (WoS) were also used as supplementary references to identify the reputable peer-reviewed journals related to academic librarianship. Whilst the lack of professionally accepted tiered or ranked list of journals in LIS has made the identification of top-level journals a challenge (Nixon, 2014), LISA and WoS provided an authoritative source and best possible option for the selection despite their potential limitations. Advanced search on LISA (*ab='keywords'*) was used to identify the recurring journals where the major articles appeared. Quartile scorings of the journals within the category of 'Information Science & Library Science' in the JCR were checked to establish the journals' impact. Amongst the seven selected journals, Journal of Documentation, Journal of Information Science, The Journal of Academic Librarianship and College & Research Libraries had all received a quartile 2 (Q2) scoring in

2012. Whilst *Library Trends* had received a scoring of Q4 and both *Library Management* and *New Review of Academic Librarianship* were not covered in the JCR, it was decided that they were crucial practitioner titles that should not be missed. The period between 2002 and 2012 were selected for the review of the articles in these seven journals. A set of subject headings was developed through the adoption of: (1) Koufogiannakis, Slater and Crumley's (2004) six-item subject domain taxonomy including information access and retrieval, collections, management, education, reference and professional issues; (2) Hildreth and Aytac's (2007) studies including use and user studies, library operations and services; and (3) other subject categories identified in the research publications which were information society, change management, CPD, performance measurement and metrics and knowledge management. These categories were subsequently modified and rearranged into 13 subject headings as presented below in **Table 3.1 (a)**, where the 3122 journal articles were then reviewed and classified according to those subject headings. Each article was assessed on the basis of its content, and any keywords available in the abstracts were also considered for classification purposes.

**Table 3.1 (a) Subject Headings for literature mapping**

<b>Subject Headings</b>
Information storage and retrieval
Collections
Management
Education and CPD
Reference
Professional issues
User studies
Library operations and services
Information society
Change management
Performance measurement and metrics
Knowledge management
Other subjects

### **3.2.2 Community Consultation**

In order to further explore the significance of the literature mapping, practitioners were exposed to the findings and asked to engage in a 'collective conversation' (Kamberelis and Dimitriads, 2013). The community consultation took place at CILIP's Academic & Research Libraries Group (ARLG) 2014 annual conference, where the researcher was invited to present a workshop for LIS practitioners on the topic of the evolving professional research trends. 22 practitioners signed up and attended the workshop in which the researcher presented the literature mapping findings and following the presentation, engaged practitioners through an interactive workshop session for reflection based on the findings from the research. Splitting the practitioners into four groups, each group was provided with a summary of the research data, flipchart papers and markers to jot down ideas, and a question for discussion. These questions were:

1. *What issues are regarded as priorities for the future from your professional point of view?*
2. *Based on the research findings, do they reflect your experience in practice?*
3. *How best to prepare the profession for the future considering the challenges ahead?*
4. *How can LIS professionals prepare themselves for the challenges ahead in terms of CPD?.*

The questions were debated within each group and at the end of the session each group reported back their views and shared their ideas with colleagues. The discussion was recorded in note form by the researcher. Acknowledging that not all of the 22 participants were academic

librarians, they were nevertheless information professionals of various background and experience bounded by their individual contexts who are practicing in the field. By presenting the findings to the wider community and engaging a diverse group of practitioners, the interaction provided an authentic conversation with around professional issues that transcended academic librarianship but retained it as the central focus. Practitioners in this collective conversation, which included academic librarians, were compelled to listen to the different views from other information professionals in relation to the bigger professional values. The purposeful exchange provided practitioners a wider perspective in reflection of their considered opinions which has the potential to contribute to further future discussion.

### **3.2.3 Comparative analysis**

Putting the literature mapping into a broader context, the 2012 Top Ten Trends in Academic Libraries and Environmental Scan published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) provided a useful framework to triangulate the findings of the literature mapping. This Environmental Scan is seen as an authoritative source on academic librarianship and is the only source to include such extensive participation by Academic Librarians. Although the ACRL review had a specific focus to the U.S, the trends identified nevertheless contained a common element that was relevant to academic librarianship on a global scale. The ten trends were compared against the rankings and patterns of the subjects from the literature mapping where the similarities and differences were identified.

### **3.3 Findings from the literature mapping**

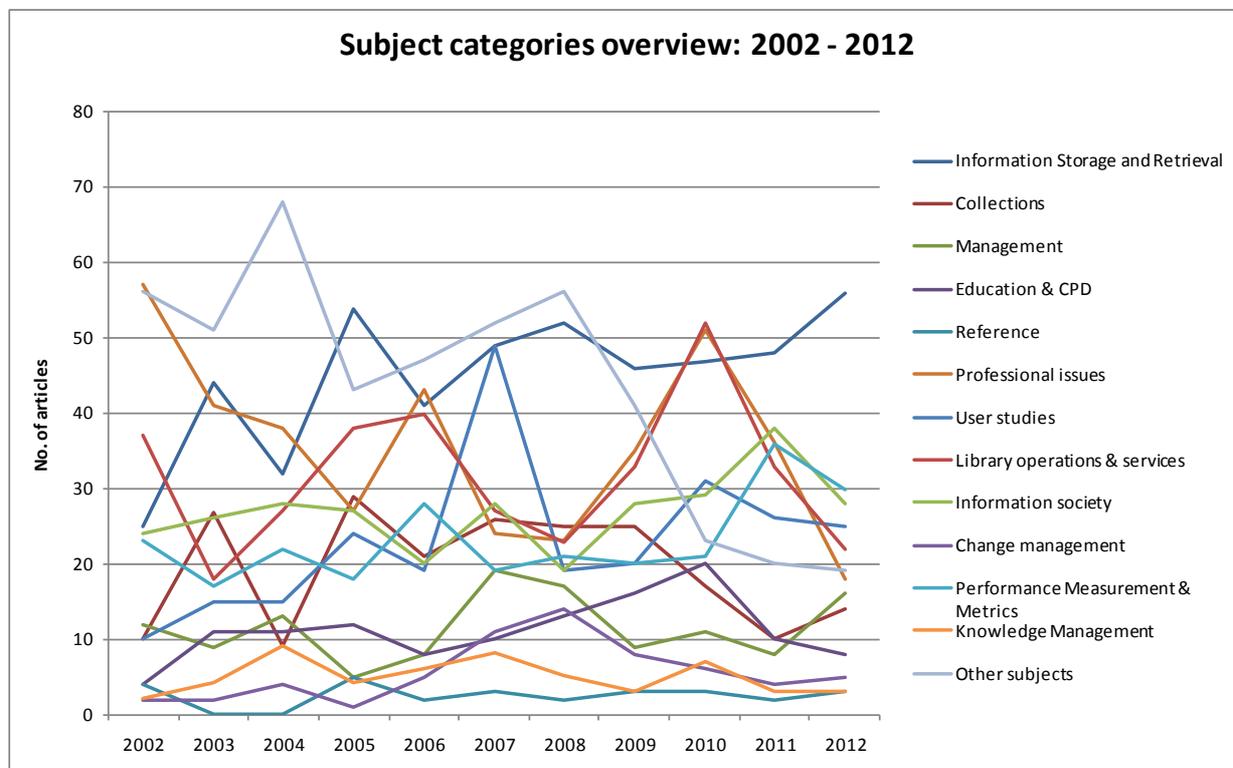
From the 3122 articles included in the literature mapping provides the distribution of articles across the subject headings (**Table 3.1 b**) over the ten year period under review.

**Table 3.1 (b) Distribution of articles across 13 subject headings**

<b>Subject Headings</b>	<b>Number (n)</b>
Information storage and retrieval	494
Other subjects	476
Professional issues	393
Library operations and services	350
Information society	295
Performance measurement and metrics	255
User studies	253
Collections	213
Management	127
Education and CPD	123
Change management	62
Knowledge management	54
Reference	27
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3122</b>

The changes in the number of articles per subject category as presented in the seven LIS journals between 2002 to 2012 is illustrated in **Figure 3.2**. The performance of the 13 subjects in each journal over the ten year period is broken down in **Appendix 4**. None of the subject categories appear to have a permanent upward, downward or plateau pattern. Whilst the numbers show variations across all the 13 subject categories in general, each subject has its own individual fluctuation pattern. The pattern variations presented in the number of journal articles for each category indicates that some subjects have attracted more attention and peaked in certain years, whereas others have received less research interest from information professionals in several consecutive years. It was evident that not a single subject category demonstrated any longitudinal status of strength or weakness throughout in the ten year period, and there is not a year when all 13 categories peak or drop all at the same time. While some subjects have experienced more dramatic peaks, there are others which have shown only gentle to moderate variations. In 2002, the most researched subject was professional issues with 57 articles (constituting 21% of the articles) but the number fell to 18 articles (7%) by 2012. The subject of information storage and retrieval has its lowest number of 25 articles (9%) in 2002 but soared and reached its peak in 2012 with a total number of 56 articles (23%), which was over a 50% increase. Management and user studies show similar variations when both subjects have their highest number of articles (19 articles – 6% and 49 articles – 15% respectively) in 2007. Subjects on reference and knowledge management have fluctuated steadily over the years despite the low number of articles.

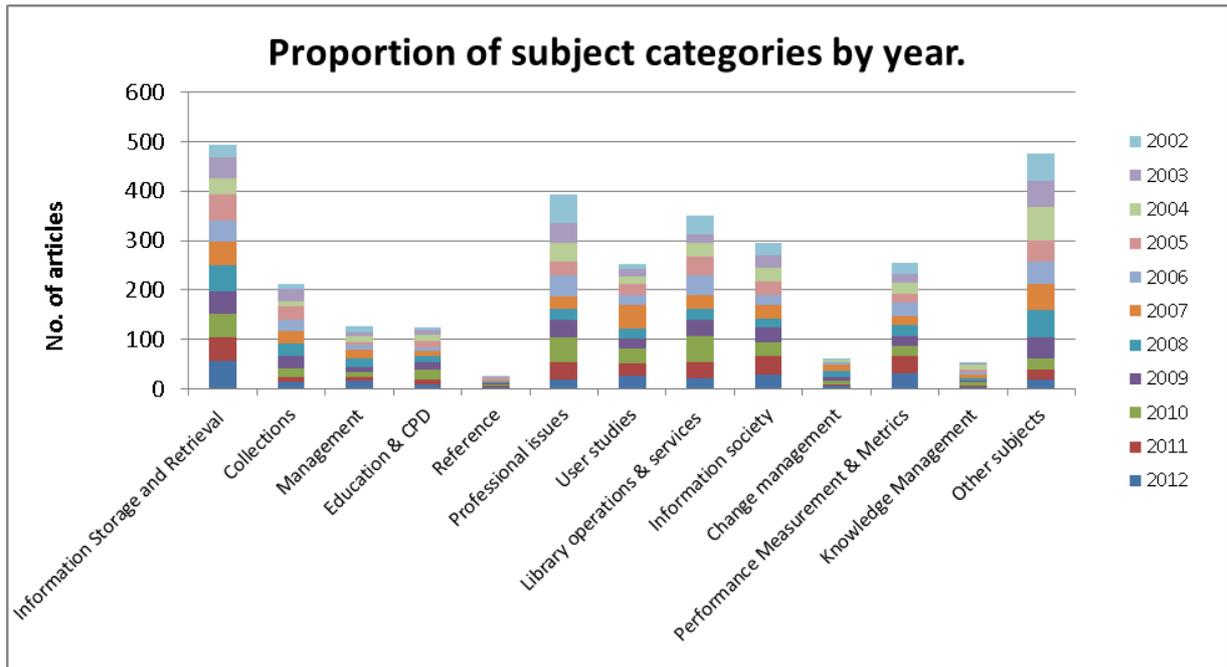
Figure 3.2 Subject categories overview 2002 – 2012



The bar chart in **Figure 3.3** presents the proportion of subject headings in each of the ten years under investigation. A detailed summary of the number of articles for each subject heading between 2002 and 2012 is provided in **Table 3.2**. Amongst the 13 categories, information storage and retrieval, professional issues, library operations and services, information society and performance measurement and metrics have dominated the research landscape as the top five most researched subjects in the period with articles on information storage and retrieval contributing the highest amount of 16% (494 articles), followed by articles on professional issues of 13% (393 articles), library operations and services of 11% (350 articles), information society of 9% (295 articles), performance measurement and metrics (255 articles) and user studies (253 articles) both made up equally of 8% of the total. It needs to be stressed however, that although these five categories have the highest average percentage in terms of total number of articles over the ten years, none of the subjects has consistently achieved the highest number each year and they did not maintain the same order of ranking throughout the ten year period. Reference (27 articles), change management (62 articles) and knowledge

management (54 articles) on the other hand, were found to be the least researched areas with the number of articles making up between 1% and 2% of the overall figures.

**Figure 3.3 Proportion of subject categories in each year**



**Table 3.2 Number of articles per subject heading in each year**

Year	Total no. of articles	Information Storage and Retrieval	Collections	Management	Education & CPD	Reference	Professional issues	User studies	Library operations & services	Information society	Change management	PM&M	Knowledge Management	Other categories
2002	266	25	10	12	4	4	57	10	37	24	2	23	2	56
2003	265	44	27	9	11	0	41	15	18	26	2	17	4	51
2004	276	32	9	13	11	0	38	15	27	28	4	22	9	68
2005	287	54	29	5	12	5	27	24	38	27	1	18	4	43
2006	288	41	21	8	8	2	43	19	40	20	5	28	6	47
2007	325	49	26	19	10	3	24	49	27	28	11	19	8	52
2008	289	52	25	17	13	2	23	19	23	19	14	21	5	56
2009	287	46	25	9	16	3	35	20	33	28	8	20	3	41
2010	318	47	17	11	20	3	51	31	52	29	6	21	7	23
2011	274	48	10	8	10	2	36	26	33	38	4	36	3	20
2012	247	56	14	16	8	3	18	25	22	28	5	30	3	19
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3122</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>476</b>

### 3.4 Findings of the community consultation (CC)

In order to put the literature mapping into context and to further examine the relationship between research and practice, the findings of the mapping were presented to a group of 22 practitioners for reflection and review. By comparing the patterns of research with the experience from daily practice, perspectives of practitioners provided validation and insight into the research contexts surrounding academic librarians. The pertinence of the topics as experienced in professional practice were recognised by practitioners who believed the top five most researched subjects and the overall findings of the literature mapping review in general *'reflect[ed] our day to day life as librarians'* (**CC Group 2**). Ranking at the top of the list, information storage and retrieval was considered by practitioners to be an important subject that *'is actually quite relevant to what we do'* (**CC Group 2**). Information storage and retrieval continues to remain a service priority in academic libraries to improve user experience: *'University of [anonymised] just introduced cloud based library system so we've been doing a lot of work around that and kind of not just what we're doing but how it impacts on the students and how it's changed the way in which they interact with the library'* (**CC Group 2**). On the fourth

most researched topic of information society, practitioners agreed that *'digital literacy [...] was important'* (**CC Group 3**) in their professional role. Whilst digital literacy remains a priority in daily practice, practitioners believed the implementation of the initiative must fit in with the overall hybrid environment. For the effective support of the different learning needs, practitioners suggested the broadening of their influence and positioning themselves in multiple platforms: *'digital literacy ties in with how we use VLEs to support distance learners, and whether we need a digital literacy strategy if we don't have one'* (**CC Group 1**). Being aware of their contextual constraints, practitioners recognised how their business plan including the development of strategies must align with the organisational goals: *'we definitely need to be clear in terms of our alignment with our institutional and strategic planning that's very important'* (**CC Group 3**). With the changing environments removing the boundaries of domains and activities, the increasing interrelatedness has seen greater integrations between service operations and solidarity within institutions. The concept of collaboration was extended to the third most researched topic – library operations and services, where practitioners supported the relevance of the subject in their role: *'sharing and collaboration in terms of sharing systems, sharing resources [which] we're already doing a lot of'* (**CC Group 3**). The emphasis on user experience prompted practitioners *'to assess more'* and to regularly evaluate their performance *'[to] measure in terms of metrics and benchmarking ourselves'* (**CC Group 3**). Sensitivity towards service standards have made the topic of performance measurement and metrics an existing issue faced by practitioners: *'the PM&M where [...] [we] said to begin with we don't do a formal kind of analysis of our services, but we do on a more informal basis [...] [so] we are conscious of it and it does affect us'* (**CC Group 2**). Pressure to justifying existence and demonstrating values was reported to be commonly experienced amongst practitioners. The strategy of stretching beyond practitioners' immediate environment and broadening of engagement were served as direct response to the challenge faced: *'we just need to be engaged with all our stakeholders so that we can show value'* (**CC Group 3**). This professional reality prompted practitioners to reflect on their professional position in terms of *'where [we] fit in academic institution and profession?'* (**CC Group 2**). Highlighting that *'[LIS] needs credibility to be [a] profession'* (**CC Group 4**), practitioners suggested the way in which the profession operates need to be reviewed in conjunction with the planning of their professional future.

The experience of practitioners on the subject of education and CPD did not correspond with the findings from the mapping review (4%) as the topic was considered vital from a practice perspective. Having connected CPD with the changes they faced, practitioners acknowledged

that understanding the challenges are crucial to accurately preparing themselves for their CPD: *'first of all you need to know what the challenges ahead are, and then start to think what sort of CPD you might find'* (**CC Group 4**). Developing a broad ranging outlook and understanding of the challenges ahead provides pre-requisites for the effective planning of CPD. In terms of the gaps in professional practice, practitioners reported that *'one of the things that came up quite quickly was finance and budgeting'* (**CC Group 4**). An awareness of current issues helps librarians to anticipate of what is to come, and that *'lots of it come down to keeping up [...] stay relevant, where obviously conferences [...] reading, just making sure we're engaged in social media'* were suggested by practitioners to keep abreast of new developments *'as there's just so much out there'* (**CC Group 4**). Besides seeking external support, practitioners also suggested *'finding something like coaching and mentoring to help you'* to be an effective CPD and that *'there's got to be a culture within the organisation in a library of actually allowing people you know the fact that four hour a week or however you structure it, it is okay to sit and read, it is okay to do horizon scanning through the internet on a topic that you are interested in, it is okay to sit and discuss that with your colleague as part of your working day. And until that becomes established, people will think I have to go on a course'* (**CC Group 4**). Two of the least researched subjects in the literature mapping – change management and knowledge management were thought to be important issues in professional practice but failed to reflect in research: *'there are a couple of things that came important change management and knowledge management that we think are actually really relevant'* (**CC Group 2**). In discussion of practitioners conducting research, an important idea was introduced regarding the medium of publication and research habit, which has contributed to the discourse of professional research: *'what we really came to the conclusion of was what are we reading. Are we reading the academic journals or are we communicating by blogs, mailing lists, discussion groups and things like Twitter instead? So are those day to day issues actually we think being discussed in a different forum and that's why we think that's why it's moving away [...] and there was a discussion around the fact is it because we are actually getting on doing them and there isn't time for anyone sit back and reflect'* (**CC Group 2**). Such recognition provided practitioner research some food for thought and library school some indicators in terms of curriculum planning.

### **3.5 Comparative analysis**

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) two-phased project – '2012 Top Ten Trends in Academic Libraries' followed by an 'Environmental Scan' conducted by the Research

Planning and Review Committee of the American Library Association (ALA), have examined the current trends and issues of academic libraries and Higher Education and subsequently identified the top ten issues that are most mentioned and discussed in current literature, at conferences and by experts in the field (ACRL, 2012; 2013). The 2012 ACRL review provided an appropriate source of reference to the context in which the academic librarians who were at the heart of this study were operating. The top ten trends identified were: communicating value, data curation, digital preservation, higher education, information technology, mobile environments, patron driven e-book acquisition, scholarly communication, staffing, and user behaviours and expectations (ACRL, 2012). Having set forth the direction for professional practice and research, the ACRL review provided perceptive insights for LIS in preparing of what is to come. By positioning the findings from the literature mapping against the ACRL top ten trends, the comparison between the data can enable links to be drawn in terms of how closely the mapping reflects the trends identified in the review to develop further insight into the changing professional landscape. ACRL did not rank these top ten trends, they were listed in alphabetical order with no weighting given.

- ***Communicating value and Higher Education***

This subject heading is very closely aligned to 'performance measurement & metrics' (PM&M) which was found to be the fifth most researched subjects in the literature mapping. The issue of performance management is a development since the 1990s, when the evaluation of user satisfaction was a major concern for academic libraries in planning for service provision and meeting operational objectives. The soaring number of LibQUAL surveys (Cook et al, 2014; Hakala and Nygrén, 2010; Garthwait and Richardson, 2008) conducted in professional publications to evaluate service quality and user satisfaction indicates this clear change of focus in terms of research direction and subjects of interest. Addressing the increasing demand for performance measurement to justify service decision, the example of an existing Emerald journal *Performance Measurement and Metrics* that is measurement and metrics focused, illustrates just how much attention the subject has received, and that interest from the profession is continuously developing. Academic libraries are keen to showcase their every success and highlight the value of their services to the scholarly communities. To be able to demonstrate value meaningfully, libraries now need to take advantage of new methods and techniques to produce concrete evidence in measuring and determining success. With more choices now available, together with the Higher Education reforms, students can easily 'shop around' and are more prone to question the return on investment which in turn has increased

the competition between HE institutions. The Universities UK 2015 report *Efficiency, Effectiveness and Value for Money* (Universities UK, 2015) and the HEFCE funded review of the *Financial Health of the Higher Education 2013-2014* (HEFCE, 2015) have concurrently reported that the demonstration of value for money is a requirement for HE institutions to evidence their accountability and to achieve this, a robust mechanism and performance evaluation metrics must be put in place to improve transparency for public support. Academic libraries being the auxiliary of HE institutions will therefore, be expected to support their institutional goal in achieving the communicating value agenda.

- ***Data curation and scholarly communication***

Relating to the research support agenda, data curation and scholarly communication can be examined together in terms of the challenges and opportunities presented for academic librarians in supporting the research communities for the effective curation, sharing and dissemination of research data (ACRL, 2012; Brandt and Kim, 2014; Bresnahan and Johnson, 2013). Many academic libraries have already been proactively engaged in the research data management and Open Access initiatives and have adjusted service provision in response to these developments. New forms of scholarly communication have led to a growing focus on research output preservation. Increased attention on institutional and digital repositories, as a result of the policies and information strategy of organisations, has impacted on the work of academic librarians, for example metadata creation and data repository support amongst the many areas of the service. The Digital Curation Centre in the UK has offered an overview of digital repositories outlining the roles and responsibilities and required systems to support effective curation (Semple, 2006). Placed as two of the top five subjects in the literature mapping, 'information storage and retrieval' (16%) and 'library operations and services' (11%) having received a proportionately high level of research interest, appear to have supported the trends identified in the ACRL review. Whilst the emphasis on research support has offered opportunities for librarians to demonstrate their value, gaps in current knowledge and competencies have posed a certain degree of challenge to information professionals, particularly in the case of the liaison librarian who has a close working relationship with faculties. As digital scholarship and new publishing models continue to gain prominence in the new environment, the situation will demand an updated set of skills and specialised knowledge of librarians for the successful delivery of services.

- ***Digital preservation***

With the continuing expansion of content in the digital environment, academic librarians are faced with the challenge of competing with other service providers to provide a wide range of content to the user communities and, at the same time, make available and share the content produced by their institution to the outside world. As born-digital are becoming the norm, ensuring future access is of paramount importance for libraries. All of the said challenges have raised the issue of the preservation of digital collections and content for future access. The ACRL trend review identified some potential limitations in the current provision for long term preservation on a local level. Echoing concerns presented in the review, digital collections and preservation management which came under the subject of 'collections' (7%), the seventh most researched subject in the literature mapping, suggests that more attention may be required from a research perspective. An example of the creation of a consistent policy and long-term preservation plan adopted on an institutional level and shared across all research organisations could help to establish a sustainable and effective infrastructure that informs good practice. Having the knowledge to select the materials to be preserved in terms of recognising the type of data and understanding the requirements of digital preservation, requires appropriate training for librarians to successfully implement the specific service plan.

- ***Information technology and mobile environments***

Whilst the issue of information and communication technologies (ICT) is not a fresh subject for investigation, the continuing advancement of technologies means that finding the best way to effectively embed and utilise ICT in serving the user communities will continue to require renewed examination. With 'library operations and services' (11%) being the third most researched subject in the literature mapping, the findings may suggest that professional research is in line with the ACRL's observation of information technology continuing to dominate future service direction, and that the high quantity of research on 'library operations and services' reflects a significant interest and awareness of the planning of service provision in meeting changing needs. How to take advantage of advancing technologies to enhance service delivery and fulfilling organisational objectives, are deciding factors for the success of academic libraries. The popularity of using digital devices for academic purposes has provided unprecedented challenges and opportunities for librarians. Considered to be the main drivers for service provision, digital technologies and the mobile environments are expected to influence the design of systems and the planning of service infrastructure. Immersing themselves in the

new information environments, academic librarians continue to find ways to support the teaching, learning and research agenda by adjusting their roles to ensure they are relevant and fit for purpose. Projects such as the *JISC Developing Digital Literacies programme* (JISC, 2011) and the Research Information Network (RIN) and Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) jointly funded *Research Information Literacy and Digital Scholarship* (RIN, 2012) illustrate the collaborative efforts in digital scholarship and literacy to review current practice and offer recommendations, including areas of professional development to better support and enhance services.

- ***Patron-driven acquisitions (PDA)***

Considered as a paradigm shift in collection development, the trend of using PDA as an acquisition model continues to be widely adopted by academic libraries. With the purpose of achieving efficiencies and satisfying user demands for wider title access, PDA provides a solution to just-in-time requirement of the user communities and facilitates the alignment of library expenditure with institution policies. The long-term success of the service depends on having a comprehensible infrastructure such as setting up a compatible technical system and developing an appropriate purchasing model to support the advancement of PDA. Ongoing discussion with suppliers on package, licensing and access agreements, liaison with faculties and feedback from user communities on quality of service, and collaboration with IT departments on technical specifications are some of the tasks relating to PDA that are included in the academic librarians remit. With the continuing pressure on library space and increasing demand for content, 'collections' (7%) being the seventh most researched subject in the literature mapping, will warrant further attention in professional research.

- ***Staffing***

Inarguably professional development and continuing education have underlined the majority of the identified trends in the ACRL review. Whether it is data curation, digital preservation or scholarly communication, they all require new skills set and the much needed leadership coordination to steer the various activities and developments forward. Resulting from the retirement wave that is beginning to take place in the profession, succession planning in terms of preparing future leaders, and putting them in place after the period of post-retirement boom, has long been a topic of interest (Nixon, 2008; Galbraith, Smith & Walker, 2012; Murray, 2007). An awareness of the need of leadership to guide the profession forward has led to the

development of national and international projects such as IFLA's *International Leaders Programme 2012-2014* (IFLA, 2014) and CILIP's *Leadership Programme 2015-2016* (CILIP, 2015) to foster leadership skills, with a view to nurturing the next generation of LIS leaders. Increasing emphasis on CPD and the qualifications base of the profession has raised the issue of reforming library education and redesigning the curriculum to keep pace with practice and the changing information environments. A portfolio of skill descriptors, developed by The Learning and Teaching Support Network for Information and Computer Sciences (Brine and Feather, 2003) and the *European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning* proposed by the European Commission (2006) are some examples of wider policies and initiatives to support the engagement of CPD. 'Education and CPD' was found to be one of the least researched subjects in the literature mapping with the subject making up only 4% of the total number of articles. This clear discrepancy between the review and the mapping, highlights that current changes in the profession indicate the importance of continuing professional education and updating of CPD to keep pace with the environments, an area which appears to be somewhat neglected in the published literature of the journals included in this mapping.

- ***User behaviours and expectations***

Information professionals are becoming more interested in exploring and understanding customer needs and expectations as a way to improving service quality and better planning of service provision in meeting academic objectives. As their perspectives become more strategic and outward looking, the focus of information professionals in understanding the needs of library users has noticeably risen as a research priority as they shifted their attention from systems to users. By integrating users' needs and their information seeking behaviour into the wider social and cultural contexts, the process has added an extra layer of complexity from a research perspective, thereby moving the examination of the issues away from their traditional approach and replacing them with a fresh focus. Advancing technologies have made the internet a common form of information discovery and the use of digital media a part of daily lives. The availability of content from other sources has presented competition for libraries. Understanding information seeking behaviour continues to remain a priority for academic librarians when conducting user studies. With the strategic aim of using research to inform policy and practice, information professionals are keen to examine the learning pattern and behaviour of the user communities with a view to facilitating relevant provision to support users in their use of library resources and services. Found to be one of the five most researched subjects in the literature

mapping, 'user studies' (8%) has provided an illustration of how interests on the topic were translated into large quantities of surveys and usage studies.

### **Summary**

The literature mapping of the subjects researched in the sample of journal publications over the decade 2002 - 2012 has provided a research perspective on some of the issues of interest in reflection of the changes and challenges experienced in the profession. Besides offering a glimpse into the developments that took place, the frequencies and patterns of the subjects researched have provided insights into their values as perceived by information professionals. Amongst the 13 subject categories from across the seven LIS journals, information storage and retrieval, professional issues and library operations and services were found to be the most researched areas. The findings suggest that, whilst traditional topics have remained popular, growing complexity of the surrounding environments have potentially prompted information professionals to becoming increasingly sensitive towards related issues that have an impact on the profession. Topics on reference, knowledge management, change management, education and CPD were found to be lesser explored, with a relatively small number of research being done compared to the top subjects. Through the reflection of LIS practitioners, the community consultation provided another perspective on interpreting the research context in terms of the relationship between research and practice. Drawing a connection between past research and future trends, the predicted topics identified in the ACRL 2012 top ten trends review demonstrated the significance of the literature mapping. By positioning the mapping against the community consultation and ACRL review, the comparison helps to put the mapping into context, leading to a deeper understanding of the background to the evolving professional landscape and future horizons. With a majority of the subject patterns from the literature mapping supported by LIS practitioners and mirrored by the trends identified in the ACRL review, their similarities suggest the continuing validity of past concerns.

## 4 The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Method

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### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to obtain insight into how Higher Education academic librarians in the UK respond to the changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identity within the core philosophical framework and value system. Having established on the previous chapters the macro contexts in which academic librarians are situated against, the focus in this chapter will turn to the main subject of concern – the individuals within the systems. Being keen to explore the academic practitioners' perspectives and to obtain their side of the story, this study adopts a methodology that will allow those rich narratives of each individual to take precedence. The philosophical premise and commitment of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to understanding the lived experience of a phenomenon at an idiographic level provides a suitable methodological choice for this study. Positioning '*the initial "description" in relation to a wider social, cultural, [...] theoretical context*' (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006: 104), the emphasis of contextualised interpretation in IPA allows the person-in-context and their relatedness to their bounded systems to be examined. With its modest claim to generalisation, IPA rather focuses on the transferability of findings through a small sample size across to readers' comparable professional contexts as applicable. The unique experiences of the three academic librarians chosen for this study will shed light on the understanding of professionalism at great length from a practitioner's perspective where the findings will inform the ways forward for the LIS profession. The following sections look at the pertinence of the philosophical foundation and the application of IPA in LIS, and discuss in detail the theoretical underpinnings, methodological procedures, validity and limitation of IPA.

### 4.2 The philosophical underpinnings of LIS

In examination of the intellectual history and heritage of thought in his essential work *Knowledge and Knowing in Library and Information Science*, Budd (2001) discussed the importance of learning the professional conceptual foundations as a '*consciousness of purpose*' (Budd citing Butler, 1961: 103), which he believes to be grounded in and have a direct influence on LIS practice. With the progression of the profession depends on critical examination into the professional workings in particular the ways of thinking that is guiding practice, critical investigation is fundamental for '*knowing where we came from and how we got here, as well as where we're going*' (Budd, 2001: 2). Whilst there are arguments that the pragmatic nature of LIS

has made philosophical investigation an academic concern, Budd however, considers epistemology in terms of knowledge growth to be vital for professional practice. His argument is that, professional practice is grounded in a collective way of thinking manifested in conceptions of knowledge that guided and informed activities. Borrowing from Cornelius' (1996) discussion on praxis (the technical application regarding proficiency in practice as well as the social meaning and ethical basis of action), Budd points out that '*a fundamental purpose of any praxis is to find meaning in what is done. What is needed in LIS is much more attention given over to the meanings that, first of all, inhere in the things we do and the things we say and, next, are to be sought and found by us*' (Budd, 2001: 287). Stating the achievement of knowledge as the ultimate goal of LIS, Budd (2001) advocates for a hermeneutical phenomenology approach based on human experience to inform practice and to foster understanding as the basis to knowledge. With meaning and understanding serving as the bedrock of hermeneutical phenomenology, reflective practice being '*a consciously interpretive and intentional approach to praxis*' (Budd, 2001: 287) is essential for the examination of reality and knowledge generation. Theorising as an outcome of the reflective process allows meaning and knowledge to be shared, practice to be informed and the progression of the profession facilitated. Differing from theoreticism which is a theory about the theory itself, the focus on the theory of being presented in the phenomenological framework indicates the presence of a higher epistemological intention to achieve knowledge within hermeneutical phenomenology. With human constructions placing at the centre of LIS, understanding the human action of practitioners' experience therefore, provides a vital source for the development of knowledge. Through the communicative actions of reflection and interpretation, meaning and understanding can be established to inform praxis. This synopsis of Budd's advocacy for the consideration of the philosophical foundation of the profession presented the potentials of which his proposed hermeneutical phenomenology framework has posed for the fostering of knowledge and informing the development of LIS.

#### **4.3 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA): an introduction**

Commonly applied within the discipline of psychology and gradually adopted further afield in business (Cope, 2011), education (Gallacher et al, 2007; Borisov and Reid, 2010; Klockare, Gustafsson & Nordin-Bates, 2011), occupational therapy (Willson, 2013) and alternative medicine (Brien, Dibb & Burch, 2011), IPA is a new qualitative method still to be explored in LIS but is beginning to receive notice within the community (VanScoy and Evenstad, 2015) such as the studies of the experience of reference and information service librarians (VanScoy, 2012; 2013) and the experience of burnout of information and computer technology professionals

(Evenstad, 2011). Deeply qualitative, IPA is an idiographic inductive approach which aims to explore in detail the subjective lived experience of the subject under study within their specific context, and through the analytic process of interactive interpretation between the researcher and the participant's narrative to generate meaning and understanding in answer to the research question at hand. IPA aims to explore in detail the experience of individuals, of how they make sense of that contextualised experience with typical research questions addressing the '*complexity, process or novelty*' (Smith and Osborn, 2008: 55) of a particular phenomenon. Research questions in IPA seek to reveal the *how* and *what* aspects of an experience and situation, and the applicability of the approach as in the case of this research study is exemplified by the topic in question: How do academic librarians respond to the changing environments whilst maintaining their role and identities amidst of current challenges? Related examination includes 'what are their experiences of the change?' and 'how does that change impact on their professional identities?'

With the participant's experience and perspective serving as the main focus, the research approach embraces the subjectivity brought forth by the narrative instead of striving for an objective account. To fully comprehend such subjective experience, the researcher attempt to obtain an insider's perspective of the participant's phenomenological world through the use of detailed and nuanced analysis of the experiential claims. This involves an interpretative process where, through the use of descriptive, linguistic and conceptual exploratory commenting (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) the researcher effectively deciphers the sense-making activities. However, interpretation is a complex two-way process that involves the effort of both the researcher and the participants. By relating the research question to their personal experience, the participants automatically engage in a reflective process when they attempt to work out the meaning of their experience. At the same time, the researcher is trying to make sense of what s/he has been told. Smith, Flowers & Larkin present the two-stage double hermeneutic process where '*the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 3). Interpretation is only made possible through the subjective account of the individual's phenomenological experience which places the participants' narrative squarely at the centre of the analysis and interpretation, with each case being treated as a single standalone unit to reflect the idiographic nature of the approach. Combining the phenomenological, interpretative and idiographic aspects of IPA, the *person* being the main focus of the study means a small homogeneous sample size can afford the researcher an opportunity to explore, describe and understand at great length the reality of the

participant and to reconstruct that reality through an interactive interpretive effort by both the researcher and participant. In addition to offering insights into the research question, the aim of IPA seeks to generate '*theoretical rather than empirical generalisability*' (Smith and Osborn, 2008: 56), where readers are expected to draw their own conclusion and apply the findings in their own individual comparable professional context as an outcome.

#### **4.4 The application of IPA in LIS**

Recent studies of VanScoy (2013) and Evenstad (2011) including their discussions (VanScoy and Evenstad, 2015) referenced in the previous section provided some practical examples of how the method has been applied in LIS practice. By jointly presenting the methodological procedures of the two studies, the examination will highlight the similarities and variations in their applications of the approach.

With the aim of obtaining the perspective from practitioners, both studies have purposively chosen a relatively small homogeneous sample of eight academic research librarians (VanScoy, 2013) and three ICT professionals (Evenstad, 2011) where their respective lived experience of reference and information service (RIS) and experience of burnout were examined. Besides the common criterion of selecting samples who shared the experience of the phenomenon under study, homogeneity was in some cases, decided on other factors such as psychological symptoms (burnout), professional experience (two years), job positions (RIS) and context (academic research libraries). Highly participant-led, the data was collected using semi-structured interviews with flexibility built-in to the approach. Whilst VanScoy (2013) used an interview schedule with prompts, Evenstad (2011) decided to send the theme list of the interview to participants prior to the meetings. Each participant was interviewed individually with each case being considered in its entirety. Different strategies were adopted to secure the needed depth, with VanScoy opted for a multiple interviews approach whilst Evenstad invited further reflections from participants through transcription verification. With enriching the data set in mind like the studies of VanScoy and Evenstad, within this study research participants were invited to attend a second interview to discuss emerging concepts and develop further insight. Acknowledging the essential role the researcher played in the interpretative process, VanScoy's (2013) awareness of her background as a former academic reference librarian made her particularly conscious in questioning her own understandings to avoid taking things for granted. Also sharing the same professional background as her research participants, the researcher of this study applied the same critical questioning as used by VanScoy. To fulfil the interpretative

element of IPA, tacit knowledge and professional understandings were used to assist the scholars in making sense of their participants' experience.

The data from the transcribed interviews were solely used as the basis for analysis to align with the idiographic commitment of IPA. Both VanScoy and Evenstad's studies followed a systematic multi-stage procedure in their case-by-case analysis of data and development of themes. Some variations in the scholars' personal styling preference have seen VanScoy' meticulous use of the different categories of exploratory comments whereas Evenstad decided on a more customised approach. Emergent themes were inducted from the data through detailed analysis and super-ordinate themes were created through the abstraction process of combining of related emergent themes. Continuing to be in line with the idiographic commitment of IPA, super-ordinate themes were developed for each participant before a master thematic table was created for the group to present their patterns of commonality. Cross case analysis resulted in five master themes (VanScoy, 2013) and a model of a brief master table with master and subthemes (Evenstad, 2011). The final narratives were structured through the discussion of super-ordinate themes supported by excerpts from the transcripts. Findings from the studies highlighted areas of phenomena and experience that were not covered or being approached from a specific perspective in LIS research. This included areas that were often considered to be unrelated to the 'practical' tradition of LIS but could have a deep impact on and provide insight into service performance such as, the psychological ('emotional connection'), cognitive ('shame', 'sense of self') and physical ('exhaustion') aspects of practitioners (VanScoy and Evenstad, 2015). Through the process of nuanced analytic inspection of the linguistic and conceptual aspects of the experiential claims and progressive levels of abstraction, hidden concepts were successfully unveiled and the understanding of meanings deepened. The examples illustrated how the focus on individual experience makes IPA particularly useful in a people-centric discipline of LIS. For studies that value the understanding of unique perspectives with research questions focus on the new aspects of an experience or phenomenon, the philosophical principles of IPA provide a structured framework to achieve the objectives.

#### **4.5 Philosophical approaches informing the IPA development**

Informed by the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and hermeneutics, IPA draws on and develops from the works of Husserl (1982), Heidegger (1962), Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Sartre's (2009) phenomenological conception, and Schleiermacher (1998), Dilthey (1972) and Gadamer's (2004) hermeneutic theory. With phenomenology being concerned with consciousness that constructs the human experience, the focus on the participants' experience and perception of the lifeworld therefore helps to provide insight into the specific phenomena. In order to successfully gain a deep understanding of the human lived experience, interpretation is required which makes the influence of hermeneutic theory an essential conceptual base to develop critical analysis. Recognising the primary purpose of IPA is to describe, explore and understand the participants lived experience and perspective at an idiographic level within a contextualised environment, and the second aim to carry out interpretations to generate meaning from the claims, it has provided the necessary background to the positioning of the epistemological principles that informed the development of the IPA approach.

#### **4.6 Theoretical underpinnings of IPA: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography applied in IPA**

Committed to the understanding of the lived experience and perception of the individual, the IPA method is directly informed by the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology and hermeneutics as the centre of its approach. As the first body of knowledge, the focus on the participant's subjective experience of the *lifeworld* – '*a phenomenon appears in everyday life*' (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008: 28) establishes the phenomenological marker for IPA where it has followed Husserl's tradition in describing and understanding the participant's experiential claim as it presents to us through the use of reduction by bracketing (the *epoché*) our assumptions in order '*to free ourselves from our prejudices and previous understandings [...] [so] that we can encounter the things themselves in their appearing*' (Finlay, 2008: 4). In other words, to be able to allow the participant's subjective account of the particular phenomenon to present in its untainted form, the researcher has to refrain from letting his / her past knowledge and former personal experiences (Giorgi, 2007) interfere with the experiential claim. Nevertheless, the important concept of the 'person-in-context' suggests that, the researcher being '*an inclusive part of the world they are describing [...] can never fully escape the "preconceptions" that our world brings with it*' (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006: 108). Interested to discover the participants, i.e. the academic librarians' personal perspective of how they cope with the changes which they experienced in the profession together with the implication on their professional identity, the

researcher attempted to explore with an open mind, their lifeworld from the insider's perspective and their views in relation to the research question. As one begins to examine the participants' thoughts to construct meaning, one becomes aware that the access to the insider's perspective is complex and that it cannot be done directly or completely (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999). Reasons behind this are to do with the nature of experience, which is personal hence complex, and consists of many levels and parts. With accessing the insider's perspective being more of an endeavor than an absolute goal, achieving a *perfect understanding* can only be '*an ideal which is ever approximated but never attained*' (Duke, 1977 cited by Smith, 2007: 7). Suggesting that the best the researcher can achieve is to get close to the experience through a third person account, scholars explain that the understanding of the phenomenon must be informed by the participants' first-person experiential claims without which the access to the experiences would not be possible (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). When setting against their social and cultural context, the person and their experience become a relation to and an involvement in the world (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). Therefore whatever the phenomenon is, it can only be a partial presentation instead of being the totality of the experience per se because of the unattainable task of accessing every single aspect and minute detail of the person's life and their relations to the world. Sharing the same feature as the participants of being human beings in the world bounded by his / her contexts, the researcher's perception and understanding are going to complicate yet assist with the interpretation.

In order to learn about a person's experience and to enter his / her world to '*understand what it is like, from the point of view of the participants*' (Smith and Osborn, 2008: 53), a descriptive account is no longer sufficient or meaningful. The minute one tries to 'understand' something and to uncover meaning, an inevitable interpretative process occurs. So in order to make sense of a person's experience and to generate meaning one needs to go deeper. At the point where the analytic process has gone beyond the phenomenological commitment lays the second epistemological underpinning of IPA – hermeneutics. According to Heidegger's phenomenology (1962), meanings as they appear in our consciousness, are always hidden which requires interpretation to bring them into the forefront. As participants relate their experience with the research question, they begin to pull together the various aspects and elements of those experience which are fragmented at the time, and make them complete by creating a frame of reference that is affixed with meaning. Placing the descriptive experiential claim against the wider context, the research question and subsequently the research interview are seen to be used as vehicles to connect the fragmented parts of the experience, and through the process of

reflection discover meaning (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This reflective activity is a reflexive process that happens *whilst* the participants are trying to amalgamate the pieces to make sense of their experience as a simultaneous response. By reinforcing the concept of the 'person-in-context', Larkin, Watts and Clifton have made it clear that the focus of IPA is not concerned with the *nature* of the topic in question, but rather it is '*that person's relatedness to "the phenomena at hand" ... we are interested in [and] how [the person] understand and make sense of their experiences in terms of their relatedness to, and their engagement with, those phenomena*' (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006: 109). Heidegger's phenomenology emphasised the person's involvement and relationship with the world which serves as the background of developing an interpretative perspective, i.e. '*interpretative and worldly position with a focus on understanding the perspectival directness of our involvement in the lived world – something which is personal to each of us, but which is a property of our relationships to the world and others, rather than to us as creatures in isolation*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 2).

When the participants try to reflect, they are automatically engaged in an interpretative sense-making process. This activity also involves the researcher's own conceptions and reflection of what s/he has been told. This dual process of interpretative activity is conceptualised as double hermeneutics in IPA. Instead of carrying out interpretation as an isolated activity, both the participants and the researcher are needed to engage in the sense-making process which has made cognition a central analytic concern in the approach (Smith and Osborn, 2008). With the interpretation activity dependent upon the participants' first person interpretative narration to make sense of their own experiences, the researcher's critical interrogation and reflection of the experiential accounts become the second order sense making activity (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Smith and Eatough, 2007). This makes the researcher's interpretation a third person account of the participants' experience. But a third person account does not insinuate superficiality or the achievement of a purely descriptive outcome. The emphasis of developing critical interpretations that are stemmed from the data provides a measure to avoid such pitfalls. From a cognitive perspective, it could be argued that the participants' approach to the question and their subsequent response in relating their experiences to the question would be subjected to their own interpretations. Once relaxes into a natural setting and continued into the interviews, it is expected to see the participants' reflections on their experiences and the subsequent articulations of their thoughts and ideas to flow naturally. However, it is possible for these thoughts to fail to be organised in a structured manner. The participants' verbal accounts of their experiences could embody multiple meanings

or indeed impeded by various barriers that could range from psychological to emotional to verbal such as personal reservation, emotional sensitivity, conceptual articulation and so forth, all of which require the researcher's critical and analytical skills to interpret of what is being said. Because while *'IPA has a theoretical commitment to the person as a cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being and assumes a chain of connection between people's talk and their thinking and emotional state [...] people struggle to express what they are thinking and feeling; there may be reasons why they do not wish to self-disclose'*, the researcher must be able to distinguish the psychological from the verbal through a process of critical interpretations (Smith and Eatough, 2007: 36). By questioning the meaning of the text, the researcher can avoid taking the words at their face value. Setting the findings that emerge from the data against the preconceptions as a reflective analytic process enables new insights to develop. The process also helps to guide the research towards unknown territories and to conceptualise ideas that are shaped by the data from within. During the analytic process, the researcher's understandings might change or their pre-existing knowledge and conception might reinforce. The preconceived foreknowledge are then irreversibly transformed as in the case of being either consolidated, renewed or replaced by fresh ideas and new revelations following the process of interpretation (Smith, 2007). As the researcher develops deeper understanding of the experience, they are inevitably changed by the new found knowledge from the process. Once meaning is generated and drawn, the final interpretative account, being a representation of the renewed insight, ceases to be the same piece of narrative as when the participants first introduce it and the researcher first approaches it. Arguing the value of the double hermeneutic process lies in the perspective differences, where the participants and the researcher could approach the same phenomenon with a different assessment; Wagstaff et al believe Smith et al's acknowledgement of the researcher's theoretical knowledge implies that it is conceptually acceptable for the researcher to disagree with the surface meaning yet still manage to reach some consensus with the deeper meaning of the participants' accounts (Wagstaff et al, 2014).

The idiographic commitment to interpret meaning from the participants' perspectives of their own experiences that are circumscribed by their specific contexts requires a substantial amount of time to carry out the analysis. Consequently, IPA tends to purposively draws on a small homogeneous sample to allow a systematic analysis to take place. A small sample size in IPA offers the advantage of allowing the voice of the individual to illuminate and take precedence and avoiding it being subsumed or faded into the background. The value of the unique perspective of the individual helps to reveal the insightful detail of the phenomenon. The

commitment to detailed analysis and the focus on the individuals is only the beginning in understanding the essence of the idiographic-ness. There have been arguments on the point that the emphasis on understanding meanings from a person's perspective of his / her experience has some underlying difference to the 'focus on the individual' and would create a distorted and incomprehensive understanding if equating the two (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Smith and Eatough, 2007). This reasoning follows the logic that although the unique perspective offered by the context-bounded individual is what contribute to the 'idiographic-ness' and is therefore in line with the idiographic principle, the phenomenological positioning of the individual as being part of the world however raises the argument that the person's experience is not exclusively their own. This is because in accordance with Heidegger's (1996) phenomenological reinterpretation of Dasein (i.e. the human being out there in the world), the *'Dasein's experience is [...] an in-relation-to phenomenon, [that] it is [therefore] not really a property of the individual per se'* (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 29). The role of 'the individual' in the idiographic approach is seen to be complicated by this intertwining relationship between the individual and the world. What has emerged from the Dasein philosophy is the suggestion of a shared experience which people shared as human beings: *'at the deepest level we share a great deal with a person whose personal circumstances may at face value seem entirely different from our own. Thus in some ways the detail of the individual also brings us closer to significant aspects of the general; connecting with his / her individual unique life also connects with a shared humanity'* (Smith and Eatough, 2007: 39-40). Such a belief system supports the value of the idiographic focus on the individual in its strength to, through the experience of the person, offer insight to the whole.

#### **4.7 The significant role and tacit knowledge of the researcher**

From data collection to data analysis and interpretation, IPA explicitly recognises the central role played by the researcher over the course of the research. Fundamentally, Smith et al advocate awareness towards the double meaning embodied within the 'I' in IPA which signifies the essential 'investigator' (researcher) and his / her 'interpretative' task in the method (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), where the dynamic interaction and joint reflection between the 'I' (investigator) and the 'P' (participants) being the bedrock of creating the analytic account. Butler simply argues for *'all human existence is hermeneutic at its essence ... the act of interpretation is central to the mode of being of all social actors, researchers included'* (Butler, 1998: 298). The phenomenological principle to obtain the insider story of the participant's lifeworld requires the researcher as instrument to gain access to that information, and *'what determines the quality of*

*the outcome is the personal analytic work done at each stage of the procedure*' (Smith, 2004: 40). The researcher is not a bystander attempting for an objective reality. To decipher the participant's subjective account of the sense-making of their experience requires systematic analysis and interpretation to bring out the salient concepts. Particularly, the researcher's preconceptions and knowledge has an influence on their analysis and understanding. Having an awareness and honest acknowledgement of the existence of the researcher's tacit knowledge helps the researcher to remain focused and vigilant towards the detail of the participant's account. Whilst the researcher's preconceptions are temporarily put at bay, tacit knowledge as a secondary source can be used during the interpretative process as a way to strengthen understanding and uncover meaning based on the participant's account. By being aware and recognising the existence of their own subjectivity and preconceptions, the researcher consciously bracketing and then utilising them according to the functional needs at the different stages of the analytic process. What this has highlighted are two essential issues: (1) 'the purpose' in terms of function and (2) 'order of significance' in terms of focus and priority of the epoché application in the research process. It needs to be stated that the 'purpose' of the epoché in the interpretative process is not meant to 'take over' the story but rather serves as an assistive tool in analysing what the participant is trying to say by digging deeper and avoid taking the words at their face value. There is also a clear priority issue where the participant's account should always take precedence and remain the central focus, and interpretation must therefore be grounded in the research data, i.e. the transcript itself. According to Heidegger's philosophy on interpretation, conceptual foundations as reflected in prior knowledge and presuppositions are considered to be preconditions for interpretation without which the original quest would not have been borne. Throughout the interpretative analytic process of vigorous engagement with the text, the researcher's reflection on their own prior experience as a natural process to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experience, brings the researcher's preconceptions to the forefront. A variety of techniques are recommended by scholars (Smith, 2007; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Finlay, 2008; Flowers et al, 1998; Butler, 1998; Walsham, 1995) to make use of the researcher's own preconceptions and tacit knowledge in their interpretative analysis as a way of cultivating the emergence of new ideas from the data and gaining deeper insights into the participant's experience. By employing these techniques, the researcher manage to not only see the world as experienced by the participant but also discover deeper meaning through '*the circle of understanding*' (Butler, 1998: 296). Within the hermeneutic philosophy, the interpretative activity between the researcher and participant creates a dynamic hermeneutic circle between 'the part and the whole' that impacts on the

researcher's prior conceptions. When the readers inspect the participant's account, they are examining the participant's experience and simultaneously evaluating the researcher's interpretation of that account. In other words, the participant's experiential claim and the researcher's interpretation of it as reflected in the final narrative are subjected to inspection.

#### **4.8 Methodological procedures of IPA**

With IPA being considered a suitable approach '*when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal world*' (Smith and Osborn, 2008: 55), its purposive strength fitted the aim of this study. Purposively selecting the participants, the researcher sought for a defined group of academic librarians with shared similarities in terms of professional knowledge and experience, as well as the relevance of the research question to be the basis of recruitment. With data quality in mind, the study recruited three academic librarians with extensive professional experience of similar background who were interested in the professional future. Using the semi-structured interview technique on a one-to-one basis, each case was independently analysed and examined in its entirety as an isolated case consistent with the idiographic commitment of the approach before progressing to the next. As the principal source and data, the verbatim transcripts provided the foundation for examination and the centre for analysis. The researcher engaged with the transcripts to allow ideas and concepts to develop and unfold naturally from the data. Through a lengthy and painstaking process of analysis and establishing meanings that was manifested into themes, a hierarchy of themes was subsequently developed from each case to demonstrate and present the connections between the emergent themes. Cross-case examination to discover convergent and divergent themes as the next stage of analysis was carried out after the narrative of each case was being written up as a single entity. Adopting the IPA methodology to capture the meaning of academic librarians' experience, the sections below present the procedures of the detailed application of the approach in the study.

##### **4.8.1 Sample size and selection**

In order to preserve the uniqueness of the particular and to reveal meaning with depth, the small sample size is a concomitant of the idiographic approach and a common strategy applied in IPA. This idiographic aspiration guided the sample selection decision, where a purposive homogeneous sample of a closely defined group with a shared background and experience for whom the research question will be of importance and relevance (Smith and Eatough, 2007) was selected for the study. Since there is no 'right' sample size in an IPA approach, other than

the common constraints of limited time and resources, the decision made by the individual is dependent upon the degree of commitment to the level of analysis and reporting as well as the richness of the individual cases (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Reiterating the purpose of the research and the importance of the research question, Patton emphasises the size of the sample really '*depends on what you want to find out, why you want to find it out, how the findings will be used, and what resources you have for the study*' (Patton, 2002: 244). Besides the all important research question together with the research aims and objectives, finding a small number of cases as a subset from a larger population was the first step in planning of the research design. To ensure that there will be quality data to feed into the research question, the professional experience of the participants were taken into account. Purposeful sampling seeks information-rich cases that can be studied in depth '*from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research*' (Patton, 2002: 46) whose study will also illuminate the questions under study (Hoepfl, 1997). Strictly related to the purpose of the research, scholars have agreed that all sampling selection in qualitative research is always purposeful by its very nature because of its major role to inform the study (Coyne, 1997; Sandelowski et al, 1992; Patton, 2002).

Adequately contextualising the size of the samples, the three recruited librarians with varying levels of positions and experience and from a mixture of backgrounds are situated within the contexts of old (multidisciplinary university), modern (ex-metropolitan), and specialist (small university) HE institutions. The participants shared the commonality of working in the profession for a considerable period of time having achieved senior management level and accumulated a wealth of professional knowledge and experience and continued to maintain an enthusiasm for the LIS profession. The participants were chosen on the basis of their potential significant contributions to the question under study, where their unique perspectives and opinions being the main focus, were weighed above any claims from literature and pre-existing knowledge of the researcher. With the purpose '*to describe some particular subgroup in depth*' (Patton, 2002: 235), the aim of choosing a small homogeneous sample was to enrich the data set for analysis. Amongst the three participants, there were two male and one female academic librarians, each with over 15 years of experience in the profession working at various levels and departments within three different HE institutions in the UK. **Appendix 9** provided the profiles of the participants with their name and affiliated institutions anonymised into alias to protect their identities. In terms of the philosophical commitment of IPA, the idiographic emphasis of focusing on the individual's experience and perspective means that a small sample size is an important

criterion to achieve the analytic depth and to effectively illuminate the qualitative richness of the data. By providing a sufficient perspective with adequate contextualisation, the small sample warranted the researcher an in depth engagement with the narratives and to allow the generation of a sufficiently penetrating analysis (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Brocki and Wearden, 2006) that can be retraced to the 'individual' providing the data. With IPA being an iterative process, the information that emerged from the analysis helps to generate a set of useful data that can sufficiently answer the research question. The time required for the methodological procedure of micro-analysis to achieve an analytic depth meant three cases was practical and sufficient for IPA. Sacrificing breadth for depth (Smith and Osborn, 2008), less is definitely more (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005) in contributing to rich insight. Conscious of the fact that the three participants are not a representative sample across a wide population of academic librarians in the UK, the study does not suggest a universal application of the findings or attempt to make general claims from these accounts. Instead, by recognising and embracing the powerful potential of the unique individual's voice, the study allowed the richness of the data and the significant particular within those voices to shed light on the research question.

Another element – acquaintanceship, played a significant part in the sample selection decision. The three academic librarians chosen for the study were recruited through the researcher's previous work contacts, this purposive sampling was done to make best use of their professional background and expertise in order to offer insight to the research question. Having already established two levels of understanding through being in the same profession and having worked within the same context, initial barriers were reduced. The common ground between the researcher and the participants helped them to relax and settle in the environment. Whilst the researcher was confident that the participants' professional background would provide them the needed reference when interpreting the questions put forward to them, the participants by the same token, were prepared to share and divulge their thoughts knowing that the researcher was able to understand the issues they describe. It could be argued that the unique perspective which the researcher has of the participants' working context provided the researcher with a specific way of interpretation and that the same information interpreted by another researcher, would generate a different outcome. The philosophical underpinning of hermeneutics in IPA provided a solution where its emphasis on the person-in-context who is influenced by his / her subjectivity suggests that interpretation is inevitably a subjective task. Whilst no two analysts will come to the same conclusion, interpretative subjectiveness should not be confused with baseless or unproven beliefs and conclusions that are fictitious. Affirmation

of the interpretation's integrity is based upon the information gathered from within and the analysis firmly supported by clear evidence from the participant's experiential account. Verbatim excerpts from the data are commonly used in the IPA approach as evidence to support the development of new concepts and emergent themes. The identification of themes and recognising the relationships between and across concepts require attention to detail since the evidence could potentially be scattered across the transcript. The utilisation of verbatim excerpts helps to reduce bias and address the question of subjectivity. As not only do these excerpts help to illuminate the participants' voice but their prominent role in the interpretation also put the focus back to the participants. The importance of paying attention to the original text and allowing the participants to introduce any new concepts on their own accord as an inductive process also means that being receptive to those accounts is crucial to the analysis. Focusing on the participants' claims and maintaining a sense of curiosity enable the acceptance of new ideas and confronting any preconception. The frequent forward and backward checking of the analysis and joining the parts with the whole in search for clues and evidence in the text to support and strengthen the argument became part of the interpretative process. By asking questions of the meaning and the significance of the emerging concepts, the process helped enhancing the analysis and taking the interpretation up to the next level.

### **Sampling phase**

In compliance with the University Ethics in Research procedures, the participants were recruited following the researcher's completion of the online process and receipt of ethical approval. A participant information sheet (**Appendix 1**) and an informed consent form (**Appendix 2**) detailing the purpose and process of the research were prepared prior the initial formal communication with the participants. Explaining to the participants '*the nature, scope, and format of the interview and clarify any points that the interviewee [was] unclear about*' (Bates, 2004: 18), they were also made aware of the ethical issues. Between February and April 2013, the researcher sent out recruitment emails accompanied with the participant information sheet and consent form to invite the academic librarians to participate in the research as the first step to establish contact. During this time, four participants replied with a positive response where one failed to respond despite the sending out of a chaser. Just before the pilot was about to begin, the participant for the pilot study withdrew from the study because of personal circumstances. With a specific timeframe systematically mapped out and all procedures in place, the researcher decided to proceed with the three participants despite the minor setbacks. Rather than conducting a pilot study, the researcher completed a mock interview and rehearsed

the procedures with her supervisor to 'get a feel' for the method and context. With the purpose of reviewing the research design and interview technique, the pilot study offered the researcher the chance to practice on her interviewing skills and to receive feedback from her supervisor to make the necessary adjustments. The researcher entered the field in June 2013 and left in September 2013. Detailed fieldwork schedule can be found in **Table 4.1**.

#### **4.8.2 Data collection**

With meanings and experience being the key features in qualitative research, the understanding of meanings and building up a rich narrative with thick descriptions of participants' experiences were what the research sought to explore. Focusing on the idiographic particular of the individual by allowing their voices and perspectives to be heard, the research design adopted the semi-structured interview technique to collect the data from each case. A general interview guide<sup>2</sup> was used to ensure that all the areas and topics related to the research question were discussed and that the basic information collected from each interviewee was covered. Having broad and purposively designed open-ended questions provided scope to flexibly respond according to the development of the conversation. Fourteen open-ended questions along with possible prompts were included in the interview guide (**Appendix 3**). The interview guide was not rigidly applied as there was no set wording or ordering of questions, as '*one of the obvious issues with [...] [semi-structured] interview is the lack of consistency in the way research questions are posed because researchers can interchange the way he or she poses them*' (Turner, 2010: 755). The researcher was willing to adapt as long as the main topics the research sought to discuss with each participant were covered.

After receiving their consent, the interview with the first participant was arranged a suitable date, time and location of their choice. Two interviews were conducted at the participants' offices, and one at a café following a quick campus tour. On the day of the interview during these meetings, the researcher presented the informed consent form and invited the participants to go over it again and sign before the interview. Observing the requirements of research ethics and confidentiality, the researcher explained to the participants again the process of the research,

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<sup>2</sup> An interview guide 'is a list of topics, themes or areas to be covered in a semi-structured interview. This is normally created in advance of the interview by the researcher and is constructed in such a way as to allow flexibility and fluidity in the topics and areas that are to be covered [...] The interview guide normally will be linked to the research questions that guide the study and will cover areas likely to generate data that can address those questions.' Liao, Bryman and Lewis-Beck, *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, Sage, London, 2004, p. 518.

the handling of their data including the information they provided at the interview, and the confirmation of the use of pseudonyms to protect both their identities and affiliated institutions.

Without following the sequence on the interview guide or asking the questions in exactly the same way of each participant (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), the interview guide was used as a prompt to structure the discussion. The researcher offered the participants a free reign to guide the conversation to some degree once they had satisfied the conditions of remaining within the predetermined parameter of the research subject under study and having the essential topics covered. Notes were taken and, with the participants' consent, the conversations were also recorded. While the researcher was prepared to enter into the unknown to explore the participant's lifeworld, she was at the same time cautious of the immediate task at hand of fulfilling the research question. In order to fulfil the idiographic aspiration of participant-led research, a progressive strategy of moving from general questions to the more specific purposeful conversation was applied. Points raised by the participants were referred to even if these topics were not covered in the interview schedule. The spontaneous use of wordings allowed a natural conversation to take place; and by feeling that they could respond to the questions easily, the participants provided the researcher detailed and comprehensive data (Gorman and Clayton, 2005). To make it truly participant led, the researcher paid attention to the detail of the conversation and instinctively pursued a line of inquiry when an interesting issue had been raised. Such flexibility did not only offer participants a sense of control by disclosing the information they wanted to share but it has also allowed them to introduce fresh concepts that were outside the schedule to enrich the data set. Whilst the researcher listened to the participants' narratives, she was also consciously recording her own response and interpretations. Allowing the participants to take the conversations to unfamiliar territories, the researcher was able to question her pre-existing knowledge and strengthen her own understanding. Providing participants with sufficient scope to introduce new topics and express their own views (Flick, 2002), the process illuminated the collaborative effort between the researcher and participants. Another benefit of requesting more detail and elaboration was that the participants were being given the opportunity to analyse and reflect on their experience and consolidate their thoughts. The subsequent generation of a rich pool of data could therefore be seen as a reward resulting from the semi-structured interview which, when effectively and sensitively applied, facilitated '*rappport and empathy, and permit greatly flexibility of coverage*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 66). At the end of each interviews, the researcher deliberately made the point of asking the participants whether they felt that

everything had been covered and if they had said everything they wished to say. The positive response offered by all participants demonstrated the idiographic value of the IPA approach where the participants were guaranteed a voice and the liberty of control.

Each interview lasted between 1 and 2 hours. Having identified the areas that required further exploration following the transcription of the interviews, follow-up interviews were carried out to collect additional information and clarify issues and in some cases open up new topics for discussion. With one participant withdrew from the study after the first interview because of other commitments, two participants were interviewed for a second time. A total number of five interviews were conducted over the data collection period. Besides the main body of the interview, the researcher also paid attention to, where applicable, conversations of interest prior to the interviews and noted the participants' body language and their emotional state during the interviews. Moments when the participants felt particularly passionate or disturbed about certain topics were noted down for analysis. Special attention was also paid to the venue of the interview in the case of the participants' offices and their situated campus. In addition to the digital recordings and field notes, the researcher also kept an activities log and a reflective diary to record afterthoughts, new ideas and other research related processes. All this additional information offered extra layers of depth for the analysis and interpretation of the data. A verbatim transcription of each conversation including all observations made was carried out immediately following each interview. Staying truthful to and honouring the purpose of a verbatim record to accurately capture the totality of the verbal account, the transcript included all spoken expressions, exclamations, pauses and inaudible gaps as displayed from the recordings. Copies of the transcripts were sent to the participants for comment and to review accuracy and, where possible, fill in the inaudible gaps and ambiguities.

#### **4.8.3 Analytic procedure**

The analytic procedure followed closely the method recommended by Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009). The flexible nature of the approach allowed the analysis to be conducted in the most logical manner. With the interview transcripts serving as the primary source of analysis, the method adopted an iterative and inductive approach to allow the concepts and themes to naturally unfold from the data. Without being prescriptive, Smith et al's (2009) systematic analytic procedure provided an informative step-by-step guide to carry out a thorough and in-depth analysis. The analytic ability of the researcher as human instrument exemplified during this process where the emergent themes were identified through an interpretative effort to make

sense of the participants' experience. With the information rich case being the main object of focus, each case was being treated and analysed in isolation to preserve its uniqueness. Having applied the same circle of analytic process, each case was written up as a single case before the analysis was repeated again with the next case. Concentrating on the case in isolation not only helps to reveal the idiosyncrasy within the individual but by immersing in the narrative facilitated the understanding of the participants' phenomenological experience hence getting close to the insider's perspective. Through the application of conceptual and linguistic commentaries to uncover the psychological aspects of the narratives, the technique enhanced the understanding and sense making of the participant's experiential claim which in turn helped answers the research question. Following the analysis and writing up of the individual case, the next analytic phase involved a cross-case analysis to explore patterns and connections across the three cases with the purpose of looking '*across the entire corpus of data (i.e. all cases) to obtain a more generalised understanding of the phenomenon*' (Willig, 2008: 91). The process of identifying the higher order level of themes through the examination of convergence and divergence in the data deepened the analysis by driving the interpretation to a higher level. Recognising the similarities amongst the narratives, while simultaneously highlighting the individual uniqueness, the delicate effort of determining the theoretical commonality and individual idiosyncrasy (Smith and Osborn, 2008; Smith, 2011) achieved the analytic depth and complexity that are attributed as the key feature of the IPA approach. Having adapted Smith, Flowers & Larkin's (2009) analytic strategies with some slight modifications (highlighted in \*), the interpretation process followed the procedures below:

1. Reading and re-reading
2. Initial noting
3. Exploratory comments: descriptive, linguistic, conceptual
4. Developing emergent themes: first level of abstraction
5. Searching for connections across emergent themes:  
developing 'middle-level' themes – second level of abstraction\*
6. Searching for connections across 'middle-level' themes:  
developing super-ordinate themes – third level of abstraction
7. Writing up: single case narrative
8. Moving to the next case: repeat analytic process
9. Convergence and divergence: patterns across cases

(Adapted from Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 79-107)

Each transcript was examined on average five times spanning a period from July 2013 to May 2014. The implication of a cyclical process to frequently move forwards and backwards to develop the interpretation meant that it was impractical to affirm a definitive time spent on each stage of the analysis. The analytic process is summarised in **Table 4.1**:

**Table 4.1: Fieldwork & Analysis Schedule**

Case No.	Case	1 <sup>st</sup> interview	Duration	Initial noting & critical comments	Levels of interpretation / abstractions	Story write-up (single case)	Convergence & Divergence
1	Alex	19/06/2013	1.20 hrs	June – Sept 2013	Oct – Nov 2013	Dec 2013	Feb – May 2014
2	Beth	09/07/2013	1.50 hrs	July – Oct 2013	Oct – Jan 2014	—	
3	Carl	20/08/2013	1.05 hrs	Aug – Nov 2013	Nov – Jan 2014	—	
		Follow-up interview	Duration	Initial noting & critical comments	Levels of interpretation / abstractions	Story write-up	
2	Beth	09/09/2013	1.10 hrs	Sept – Nov 2013	Oct – Feb 2014	Feb 2014	
3	Carl	10/09/2013	40 min	Sept – Nov 2013	Nov – Jan 2014	Jan 2014	

### **Reading and re-reading being the first step of analysis**

Following the transcription of the interviews, a substantial amount of time was spent reading and re-reading the text as a way to attentively engaging with the participants' experiential claims. Getting close to the data provided the opportunity to review and acquire 'a feel' about the interview. Having carried out several rounds of reading, at times in full and other in parts, ideas that sprung to mind was noted down as a way to record initial thoughts and impressions. The forward and backward reading of the transcripts in chunks and in full, of what Smith et al describe as '*the part is interpreted in relation to the whole*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 92), helped to achieve deep meaning and put the participants' claims in context. By familiarising with the transcripts, the process consolidated the understanding of the content. Whilst referencing the parts with the whole and vice versa allowed the subtle aspects to illuminate through the micro-analysis. The use of de-contextualisation unveiled the important details that eluded attention at first glance. Through the resounding of the participants' voices contained in the transcript, the researcher was brought into the 'lifeworld' of the participants. With a view to better develop empathy, the researcher sought to experience the participants' thoughts and emotions by putting herself in their shoes and appreciating their perspectives. As the reading continued, the sense of empathy intensified concurrently throughout the process, enabled the

gaining of an analytic depth of the narratives. The reading and re-reading of the transcripts was a reflective and analytic one that had specific purposes of understanding the participants' sense-making experience, their social and psychological world, and exploring meanings from the narratives. Allowing a deliberate reflection on the content, the process helped to develop deeper understanding of what was said.

### **Initial noting and critical exploratory comments**

Each page of a transcript was divided into three columns with the 'exploratory comments' and 'emergent themes' placed on the right and left hand side respectively of the transcript ('the content') (**Appendix 5**). Using the exploratory comments column to carry out the 'initial noting' of early thoughts during the reading and re-reading phase, this space was also used to perform further detailed analytic work. Taking advantage of the annotating technique to analyse the less transparent aspects such as the grammatical and psychological influence within the experiential claims, the process used descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments in the 'exploratory comments' column to examine the participants' sense-making experience as the next stage of analytic interpretation. As the analysis progressed, further comments and conceptual questions were added, and the 'new comment' function on Microsoft Word was also used to record new thoughts for the final reading attempt. With the advantage of the open-ended nature of the exploratory commentary, interpretation continued to develop in this dynamic process of free textual analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) up to the point of developing of emergent themes and ended when the analysis was considered 'good enough'. Suspending any pre-existing knowledge and preconceptions, the process required open minded interpretation of the narrative. There was clear difference between 'judging' the participants' claim for the purpose of criticising that was neither informative nor constructive, and critically evaluating the transcripts with an aim to deepen understanding and develop knowledge. Detailed critical evaluation therefore, helped to prevent any hasty conclusion. Adapting Smith et al's recommended analytic cycle, the process undertook a relatively flexible but systematic approach with the analysis in recording the new concepts as and when they emerged from the data. Through an analytic dialogue between her sense-making mind and the text, the researcher was able to question the participants' experiential claims from a critical perspective with the main objectives focused on the understanding of meaning, establishing relationships between concepts, confronting the researcher's own pre-existing knowledge and preconceptions, identifying convergence and divergence and ultimately developing an interpretative narrative to inform the research question.

Adopting a coding system implemented by Smith et al separating the various types of commentaries into three different font styles to allow easier identification of the different analytic focus, the researcher applied this approach to the critical commentaries of descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments (**Appendix 5**):

*“Descriptive comments focused on describing the content of what the person has said and the subject of the narrative within the transcript - normal text*

*Linguistic comments focused upon exploring the specific use of language by the participant - italics*

*Conceptual comments focused on engaging at a more interrogative and conceptual level – underlined”*

(Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 84)

With the transcript sitting in the middle column of the page, the critical commentaries began on the right hand column of ‘exploratory comments’. Whilst Smith et al encourage researchers to conduct the analytic process creatively, the sequential procedures of moving from the right margin of ‘exploratory comments’ to the left margin of ‘emergent themes’ as illustrated in **Appendix 5** worked well for the researcher. This system of organisation allowed straightforward transformation of notes into emergent themes. Besides utilising the critical conceptual commentary, the researcher also applied purposeful questions to interrogate the text and interpret the experiential claim with a view to gain deeper understanding of the participants’ perceptions and experiences. To prohibit the researcher from dwelling in her own knowledge and assumption, attention was paid to the participants’ sense-making activities and the meaning of their experiences instead. Questions such as: ‘What are the participants’ experiences of change in relation to their professional role?’ ‘How do the participants feel about their current positions and existing challenges?’ illustrated the priority to make sense of the participants’ perspectives and the related phenomena as they appear. The use of empathy, sensitivity, responsiveness, openness and critical inquisition helped to diminish the potential bias accompanied with the preconceptions and served as a powerful tool in the interpretative and sense making process by allowing the phenomenon to appear in its true nature. Other strategic applications of phenomenological reduction and reflexivity were employed, such as a balancing

act of restraining pre-understanding and reflexive self-awareness, making use of the epoché to consolidate knowledge and critical openness (i.e. an open mind instead of an empty head) so that fresh revelations can be generated (Finlay, 2008).

### **Developing emergent themes: first level of abstraction**

Following the completion of critical exploratory commenting, better understanding was developed through the process of detailed interpretation and analysis of the transcript and resulted in an expansion of the total data set. With the interpretation based closely to the transcripts, the generation of the critical notes and commentaries that contributed to this additional pool of data presented a true reflection of the participants' accounts. After the completion of the first interpretative phase of turning transcripts into exploratory comments and notes, the next stage of analysis demanded a reduction in the volume of detail in order to achieve the first level of abstraction – the development of emergent themes. This involved an analytic shift of focus from the close reading and interpreting the transcript to identifying patterns and relationships between the exploratory comments to allow emergent themes to develop. Whilst the interview transcripts continued to maintain its central position in the analysis, the analytic and interpretative process nevertheless turned them into something new. Instead of using the interview transcript, the initial notes and exploratory comments were used as the basis of identifying emergent themes at this stage of analysis. From transcript to initial notes, and exploratory comments to emergent themes, this journey of transformation recorded the analytic procedures of the approach. The development of emergent themes aimed to consolidate the initial notes and exploratory comments by capturing their essence and turning them into concise statements that correspond with the salient issues identified in the earlier steps of analysis. Transformed into pithy descriptive expressions, the emergent themes were then recorded on the column to the left of the transcript, directly relating to the notes and comments on the right hand column (**see Appendix 5**). Following the analysis, each case produced a significant number of emergent themes:

**Case 1:** 223 themes

**Case 2:** 270 themes – including first interview: 171 themes; follow-up interview: 99 themes

**Case 3:** 100 themes – including first interview: 54 themes; follow-up interview: 46 themes

Focusing on the illumination of the significant details presented in the various parts and the whole of the transcripts, this process of identifying the emergent themes conformed with the hermeneutic circle within the hermeneutics tradition, where the parts and the whole were informed by each other throughout the course of interpretative activities. Through the interpretation and reorganisation of the data, the interview was initially broken down for analysis and then assembled into a new whole again at the end of the process, where a participant's and researcher collaborative efforts of a final narrative was produced.

### **Searching for connections across emergent themes: developing 'middle-level' themes – second level of abstraction**

The analytic process of turning the initial notes and exploratory comments into pithy descriptive expressions, as exemplified by the emergent themes, produced a set of themes following the first level of abstraction. The emergent themes were listed and numbered chronologically as they emerged from the transcripts. At this point, the themes appeared to exist in isolation with no connection with each other, and the overwhelming number of emergent themes unfolded in each case implied that systematic organisation was needed to make-sense of the relationships between the themes. Their organisation required creative competence and analytic strength to paint a meaningful picture and subsequently produce an intelligible narrative. By listing and numbering the themes, the process allowed patterns and connections across the emergent themes to be identified and the stories to take shape. Striking a balance between being vigilant to capture the important ideas and relaxed at the same time to avoid looking too hard and missing out on the obvious, the process involved cognitive and intuitive effort to map out the relationships, patterns and connections between the emergent themes. The benefit of chronologically listing the themes allowed the researcher to easily skim through the list and arrange the related concepts together to develop a structure, whilst the purpose of numbering the themes was to prepare for the next step of analysis.

Amongst the various methods of abstraction, subsumption, polarisation, contextualisation, numeration and function to identify patterns and connections between the emergent themes, a few of the techniques were employed to develop a second level of higher order concepts – the 'middle-level' themes, to further consolidate the analysis. An appropriate description was employed to represent the concept of each of these clusters of related themes. With effective description at the heart of articulating meaning, some emergent themes, where appropriate, were used as 'middle-level' themes depending on their suitability and accuracy in representing

the concepts, while others were given new names. On the same list of 'middle-level' themes, the chronologically numbered emergent themes were individually attached to each of the 'middle-level' themes (**Table 4.2 & Appendix 6**). Tying in with the relevant 'middle-level' themes, the numbered emergent themes were also linked to the specific excerpts within the original transcript (**Appendix 7**). By cross-referencing the themes with the original transcripts, the evaluation process helped to verify that the emerging interpretative analysis has accurately reflected the participants' experiential claims. Whilst some emergent themes were uniquely attached to a specific group of 'middle-level' themes, some were found to fit into more than one group. There were however, a small number of emergent themes that failed to fit into any groups of 'middle-level' themes. Unable to bring together other themes or stand independently in the structure, these less prominent themes were left out from the developing stories following the analytic process. Pointing to the most significant aspects of the participants' accounts in relation to the research question, the process of developing and structuring the 'middle-level' could be argued as a selection process in itself. The exclusion of some the emergent themes was an illustration of this selective process. With an organised structure in front and a story beginning to emerge, a decision was made on the positions and significance of the standalone emergent themes within this bigger framework. Being able to identify the potent and significant concepts and allowing these prominent themes to illuminate was part of the process in developing higher order concepts.

**Table 4.2 Linking of emergent themes to middle-level themes**

<b>Emergent &amp; Middle-level Themes Case 3: Carl</b>	
<b>'Middle-level' themes</b>	
Career & support	1,8,59,
Impact of technology	3,4,5,6,24,29,56,58,
Users the raison d'être	7,9,23,62,63,64,73,75,
Professional role & identity	10,11,12,13,14,15,18,26,27,28,29,30,32,34,54,57,59,65,66,67,74,89,93,95,96,98
Professional pride	16,17,18,90,91,92,
Organisational culture	19,20,21,22,25,36,37,78-88,
Existing pressure & future challenge	22,23,35,44,67-72,
Value & impact - performance metrics	7,30,31,32,40,41,42,43,46,51,53,54,94,
LIS research	38,39,45,97,
Library education & qualification	47,48,51,52,55,74,76,77,
Professional knowledge & development	2,30,32,33,49,50,60,61,99,100
<b>Emergent themes</b>	
1	Management support enable career development
2	Proactive in own career development
3	Technological development as biggest change
4	Technology affects all areas of people's lives
5	Technology enabled freedom of access – resources independent of physical library
6	Technology enabled greater efficiencies
7	Shift from collection to resources usage and performance
8	Professional duty as mentor
9	Users as raison d'être
10	Professional identity - help people find information efficiently
11	Modernised job title does not change role and identity
12	Tacit knowledge on 'library'
13	Identified self with library
14	Professional identity = purpose of the job – remain unchanged

Whilst the analysis might appear to have torn the texts apart and gone further away from the original transcripts, it was nevertheless an inevitable process to enable deep interpretation to take place where the hidden concepts behind the narratives were uncovered. The rebuilding activity involved the process of going backward and forward in creating the parts and building them into a new whole. Systematically reordering the emergent themes into groups and drawing together relating concepts, a table of graphic presentation (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) of the structure of 'middle-level' themes was created (**Table 4.2**). After the table of 'middle-level' themes was finished with the emergent themes being put together, the researcher spent time to analyse and re-arranged the structure in preparation for the next stage of abstraction.

Whilst Smith et al (2009) propose a two-level abstraction for IPA analysis, i.e. emergent themes as the first level, then super-ordinate themes as the ultimate level of thematic development, this study intuitively created an additional layer of abstraction – 'middle-level' themes, and incorporated into the analysis. The development of an intermediate hierarchy of 'middle-level' themes between the two prescribed levels of abstraction was to provide a transitional gap to

draw together the emergent themes and produce a graphic structure to highlight the prominent aspects of the participants' accounts. The high volume of emergent themes derived from each case meant that a leap from such granularity (e.g. 200 emergent themes) to the 'big picture' of developing a final narrative, as exemplified by the super-ordinate themes, was neither feasible nor effective. To make the organisation of the developing concepts more manageable, the creation of an extra layer of abstraction was practical to allow a more systematic structure to gradually develop. A graphic presentation of the analytic process is illustrated in **Appendix 8**. Acknowledging that the researcher's single opinion does not represent universal absolute, such an individual approach was a personal decision, and it is always up to the individual analyst to conduct the analysis in a way that they find most logical and effective to suit their study.

#### **Searching for connections across 'middle-level' themes: developing super-ordinate themes – third level of abstraction**

As the last step of analysis before writing up the final narrative, the development of the final level of abstraction as exemplified by the super-ordinate themes was created. Largely following the procedures adopted in the preceding step of searching for connections across the emergent themes, the development of the super-ordinate themes was based on the result gathered from the second level of abstraction (i.e. 'middle-level' themes), where the analysis had produced a concise structure for the highest order concepts to be built upon. Whilst the preceding steps had already begun the selection process of filtering out certain ambivalent emergent themes, the elimination process became more stringent when approaching the top of the hierarchy in refining less prominent themes to developing the final narratives. There were multiple qualifiers to determine the criteria of prominence and significance. Techniques such as numeration in terms of the frequency of a topic appeared in the interviews, the length of discussion, contextualisation in terms of the impact of major events were some strategies used for the task. Besides prevalence, there were other important factors for themes to be selected, for example, *'the articulacy and immediacy with which passage [exemplified] themes [...] and the manner in which the theme [assisted] in the explanation of other aspects of the account'* (Brocki and Wearden, 2006: 97). Above all of the criteria, the one condition which the themes needed to satisfy was the ability to shed light on the study in question. The idiographic focus of IPA could imply that everything the participants conveyed should be considered significant as otherwise they would not have discussed in the first place. However, with the 'purpose' of the investigation being the central issue, pertinent themes that could effectively shed light to the research question must be identified and highlighted. Allowing ideas to emerge from the data, the

inductive principle of IPA took into account new concepts to inform the study. The inductive nature of the approach therefore afforded the process a wide scope of flexibility to guide the analysis and to enrich the investigation.

Adopting the same rationale as the 'middle-level' themes, the super-ordinate themes were created based from the concepts presented from the clusters of related 'middle-level' as well as emergent themes. According to their appropriateness, some 'middle-level' themes were reused as super-ordinate themes, while others were given new names. The clusters of related themes were then presented as higher order concepts of super-ordinate themes, which were assigned descriptive headings to portray the relevant concepts. Like the selective process that took place in the development of 'middle-level' themes, the researcher decided if the themes fitted in well with the overall structure and if there was sufficient evidence within the transcripts to justify their inclusion in the final narratives. Clearly there were 'middle-level' themes that were not chosen and absorbed into the super-ordinate themes. With selection being part of the analytic process, it has been argued that *'as one begins to write, some themes loom large, others fade, and so this changes the report [...] like the magnet metaphor – some extracts portray the themes better than others so they can begin to take centre stage'* (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 110).

Once the super-ordinate themes were developed, the original transcripts were reviewed once again to verify the emerging interpretation, in particular to check them against the evidence to ensure that the interpretative analysis was supported by the participants' claims and that the process was consistent, reliable and sound. In order to tell a story in the most effective and meaningful way, all important aspects would be highlighted with the prominent themes selected to be shared with the readers. However, it was believed that this purposeful selection decision did not materially change the story. With interpretation being a crucial element of IPA, the essence of the cases, as communicated through the super-ordinate themes in the final narratives, were the end products of the analytic process.

### **Writing up: single case narrative**

Once the super-ordinate themes were developed, an individual participant's interview, including its follow-up, was written up as a single case in its own right. The writing-up of a single case has the recognised benefits of preserving the idiographic particular by presenting the unique and distinctive experience of the individual to the readers, and avoiding the influence from other cases. Just like the analytic process that was carried out separately for each case to maintain

the idiographic focus, the final narrative was also discussed in isolation, concentrating wholly on the findings following the interpretation of that particular individual's experience. With the story being structured around the super-ordinate themes, the organisation of the findings adopted a thematic approach of systematically discussing each super-ordinate theme with its sub-themes, and the narrative involved detailed analytic interpretations of the text. Using the verbatim excerpts from the transcript to reinforce and illuminate the themes, the quotations were ultimately used as evidence to support the interpretation of the narrative. Without placing the final narrative against the wider context of existing literature, the focus on the phenomenological experience of the individual allowed the idiographic uniqueness to take centre stage. The interpretative underpinning of IPA implies that the final narrative produced by the researcher was not intended to be a *definitive* account per se, as while the interpretation should be supported by the claims made by the participants demonstrated through the multiple levels of analysis, *'it is unlikely that an independent researcher would identify exactly the same themes in exactly the same way; the emphases may differ, based on the researcher's personal contexts and experiences'* (Cassidy et al, 2011: 269).

### **Convergence: patterns across cases**

As no divergence was identified, the final step of the analytic process involved the identification of common themes as reflected by the shared experience of relevance to all participants. Through reflection on the super-ordinate themes and the table of graphic presentation of the structure of 'middle-level' themes for each case, connections between the list of themes and the patterns across cases were explored with a view to distinguish the important themes that could illuminate the multiple cases (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Whilst examining the 'middle-level' and super-ordinate themes developed from the individual case, there were concepts that were both unique to a particular participant and simultaneously shared by the others. In this process, the purpose of analysis was to develop higher order concepts of super-ordinate themes to represent the whole group. Based on the 'middle-level' themes from each case, commonalities from across cases were selected to create a master table of super-ordinate themes. With the requirement for attention and meticulousness to perform cross-case analysis, detailed review of the patterns and structure of themes, in particular the abstraction hierarchy, was vital to grasp the underlying concepts that emerged from each case. Checking through the stages of analysis again both during and after the interpretation by retracing the steps to review the accuracy and reliability of the interpretation was carried out to ensure each level of analysis was consistent with the preceding one. By moving forwards and backwards through the three

levels of abstractions, the process consolidated the interpretation by effectively verifying the interpretation's credibility in accurately reflecting the claims made in the original transcripts and that the hermeneutic circle of analysis succeeded in taking the interpretation further. Another purpose of re-reading the participants' original claims against the developed analysis was to ensure that the interpretation was derived 'from within' so as to support the commitment to the philosophical underpinnings of IPA in understanding meanings through the participants' sense-making of their experience.

#### **4.9 Validity**

There are different evaluation criteria for assessing the quality and validity of qualitative research. The assessment criteria need to be relevant and adaptable to accommodate the individual methodological approach. In the case of IPA, a less prescriptive guideline with sophisticated and pluralistic positions (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009 referenced Elliott, Fischer & Rennie, 1999; Yardley, 2000, 2008) could help to address the flexibility issue required by the approach. Evaluating against the guidelines recommended by Yardley (2000, 2008), Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999), and Smith (2011), IPA focused on the criteria of sensitivity to context, clear theoretical orientations, and demonstration of commitment, coherence, transparency and impact. From sampling selection to the design of the methodological procedures, IPA demonstrated transparency by explicating the focus of investigation, presenting a clear argument of the purpose, providing a systematic data collection and data analysis process, and justifying the decisions made in every step of the procedures. Whilst member checking is a common evaluative principle used in qualitative research, it is however, not a concept adopted in IPA. Scholars have highlighted the potential problems of using participants' views to member check the interpretation, in particular its inappropriateness to serve as evidence of validity in the different strands of qualitative methods (Ashworth, 1993; Yardley, 2000, 2008; Webb and Kevern, 2001; McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis, 2011; Bradbury-Jones, Irvine & Sambrook, 2010). With the final narratives being an outcome of an *interpretative* process of analysis, member checks therefore become ineffective in terms of substantiating and strengthening the interpretation in IPA. The use of verbatim excerpts helped to support the researcher's interpretation and served as evidence to validate the final narratives. Besides being '*a form of evaluation in qualitative research*' (Brocki and Wearden, 2006: 97), verbatim excerpts show that any claims made were solidly grounded from the data and that the reference to the original interviews strengthened the interpretation of emerged themes. The interpretative effort to closely engage with the text allowed the issues which the participants shared

subconsciously to be identified and be revealed. With subjectivity being an essential feature of interpretation, any interpretative account can therefore, only be one of the many possible interpretations of a phenomenon (Yardley, 2000). The key issue is to ensure that '*the account produced is a credible one, not the only credible one*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 183). The three levels of abstractions that were generated from the analytic process demonstrate the credibility of the approach and its critical scrupulousness and methodological commitment to advance the interpretation by pushing the analysis further so to achieve the analytic depth and breadth. Apart from demonstrating transparency and credibility, hierarchical abstractions have also enriched the analysis by presenting the convergence and divergence between the narratives, where through the process of interpretative analysis that it enabled similarities and dichotomy, if any, across cases identified and the uniqueness of the participants' experience captured. The validity of the IPA study can also be measured within the context of impact and significance, where the application of the findings from the small sample in further research could potentially have a wider impact to inform a broader population.

#### **4.10 Limitations of IPA**

With subjectivity being the essential nature of interpretation, it could be argued that the interpretative philosophical underpinning of IPA presented potential limitations in itself. The fact that subjectivity can provoke bias has facilitated the basis for criticism and debate over the reliability of the approach (Pringle et al, 2011). Whilst it has been acknowledged that interpretation is a pre-requisite to achieve the insider's perspective, recognition of the subjective nature of interpretation and presence of tacit knowledge of the interpreter inevitably imply the absence of a single absolute interpretation, which correspond with the interpretivist ontology of multiple realities and multiple truths (Shaw, 2010; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). In addition, '*the broadly inductivist approach to inquiry*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 202) adopted by IPA indicates that the emphasis on interpretations based on the experiential claims, instead of existing theoretical frameworks, enabled the researcher to remain truthful to the original accounts so that the analysis and final narratives were a result of the data stemmed from within as a way to offset subjectivity. Linguistic and conceptual exploratory commentaries and the critical analytic process are other methods applied in IPA to avoid bias.

The implication of the cyclical hermeneutic process of interpretation being that the '*the final interpretation may never be reached as the circle could theoretically go on forever*' (Smith, 2007: 5) serves to be another potential limitation of IPA. Such dynamic hermeneutic circle of

interpretation that is time and space bound also suggests that interpretation is subjected to change over time (Blumer, 1969). Nevertheless, with the hermeneutic principle of the approach making interpretation an intrinsic process of analysis, the researcher is ultimately the one to decide on sufficiency, and who should be confident with the decision once the analysis achieves the analytic depth required to answer the research question. With knowledge being closely linked with time and place (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), continuing reflection and evaluation could potentially alter one's established understanding. Since interpretation takes place '*as a movement between the interpreter's past and present*' (Finlay discussing Gadamer, 2008: 9), the implication of today's present quickly becomes tomorrow's past highlights the dynamic nature of experience and the limitation of interpretation.

With achieving theoretical generalisability in terms of allowing the reader to '*assess the evidence in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge*' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 4) via a small sample size being the research goal of IPA, the inapplicability of the findings across a wider population presents yet another potential limitation of the approach. That said, the illumination of the individual voices and the focus on the convergence and divergence across cases could really only be achieved through a small sample of the population. Having the capacity to offer contextualised contributions, the insights generated from the findings bring into light the salient issues that, however small, deserve consideration. It is hoped that through the commonality presented in the individuals' experiences, that the findings could inform further studies to develop theory in a broader population and to offer insight to the whole.

## **Summary**

Phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography being the central philosophical underpinnings of IPA, provided a methodological framework for this research study. With phenomenology focuses on the person's subjective lived experience of a particular phenomenon, the effort to obtain a near enough insider's perspective requires an interpretative process of hermeneutics to uncover meaning and achieve understanding of experience. Committed to the unique *particular*, idiography prioritises the individual's perspective through the performance of detailed and nuanced analysis of the experiential claim. With understanding the experience of change and its meaning from the academic librarians' unique perspective, IPA was therefore, considered an appropriate research strategy for this study. The researcher's critical interpretation of the participants' sense making of their own experience involved a dual process of interpretative activity, realised as double hermeneutics, was served as the basis of sense making of the

participants' personal world. In recognition of the significant role the researcher played in the interpretative process, the existence of preconceptions and tacit knowledge were discussed. Guided by Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) prescribed application of IPA, the research design followed a systematic process of data collection and an inductive analytic procedures for the development of high level abstraction of themes and the delivery of the final narratives. Through the use of verbatim transcripts to support the critical interpretation and the identification of emerging patterns to bring out the convergence and divergence between narratives, this commitment to transparency and credibility demonstrated the validity of the IPA approach. Highlighting the subjective and perpetual nature of interpretation and the incapability of generalising claims across larger populations, the limitations of IPA were acknowledged.

## 5 Findings from IPA studies

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### 5.1 Introduction

Following the methodological IPA process of systematic interpretative analysis, this chapter presents the super-ordinate themes – the highest order of abstraction that has emerged from the study. Providing an in-depth understanding of the experience of changing role and identities through the interpretation and analysis of the participants' experiential accounts, the concepts inducted from the data are the results of the researcher's interpretative effort of academic practitioners' sense-making of their professional experiences in reflection of the theoretical framework of IPA. With each case being examined in isolation from other cases, the first part of this chapter presents the findings as a single case to illuminate the idiographic particular and bring out the voices of the individuals; and, whilst there was no divergence found, the second part highlights convergence to present the commonalities across the three cases. A complete thematic summary is illustrated in **Table 5.1**. Focusing on the participants' experiential claims, verbatim excerpts from the transcripts were used as illustrations to support the themes that emerged from the analytic process. In light of the consequential reference to a large number of original quotations, which has significantly increased the overall size of the findings, this chapter has consolidated the results by presenting high-level summaries of the single case with the extended versions being covered in the appendices section (**Appendix 10, 11 & 12**). With the exception of editorial ellipsis, which is indicated by three dots in a square bracket ([...]), the researcher has remained accurate to the participants' accounts and deliberately cited the excerpts as they appeared from the transcripts, including repeated words and utterances. The original texts will also be underlined wherever there is an acute accent used to emphasise specific words. Having anonymised the research participants and their affiliated institutions for the purpose of confidentiality, each participant has been provided an alias to disguise their identities.

**Table 5.1 Super-ordinate themes of academic librarians' professional experiences of change and challenges in academic librarianship.**

<b>Single Case</b>		
<b>Case no.</b>	<b>Alias</b>	<b>Super-ordinate themes</b>
1	'Alex'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The intertwining of professional-personal self</li> <li>- Impact of wider contexts on professional identity</li> <li>- Adapt in accordance with professional mission</li> <li>- Affirmed value of LIS</li> <li>- Traditional gatekeeping &amp; professional knowledge</li> </ul>
2	'Beth'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Connecting professional self with institution's identity</li> <li>- Making contact and reaching out: the ultimate challenge</li> <li>- Getting out the library: establish the connection and develop the network</li> <li>- Prominent research support: a comprehensive service that targets the core</li> <li>- Increasing teaching support: a traditional role expanding</li> <li>- 'Blowing your own trumpet': demonstrating value and impact</li> <li>- Proactive professional development</li> </ul>
3	'Carl'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional mission and identity</li> <li>- The deep impact of organisational culture and politics</li> <li>- Supporting 'others': the basis of achievements</li> <li>- Users: the raison d'être</li> <li>- Technology: the biggest impact on professional and personal life</li> <li>- Professional qualification and CPD</li> </ul>
<b>Convergence</b>		
<b>Case no.</b>	<b>Super-ordinate themes</b>	
1, 2 & 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unwavering role and identity: librarians adapt in accordance with professional mission</li> <li>- Librarianship: an important role unappreciated and misunderstood</li> <li>- Demonstrating value: pressure to justify existence</li> <li>- Continuing professional development: the essential role of library education and the importance of practical knowledge and current awareness</li> <li>- Deep impact of organisational culture on professional self and identity</li> </ul>	

## 5.2 Case 1: 'Alex'

### 5.2.1 The intertwining of professional-personal self

Combining four middle-level themes, namely (1) 'be the change', (2) 'making a difference', (3) 'influencing' and (4) 'behavioural change', these concepts have encapsulated Alex's career and his position in senior management. Alex, the current professional, is the end product of the management experience and the making of someone who has undergone the process in librarianship. The theme of 'being the change' ran through the interview and formed a significant part of his professional identity. Alex was conscious that he would want to make changes that are within his control, and the concept was referenced in the discussion of a professional mission – *'be the change you want to see', 'I think I just would be the change I want to see and develop as I feel I need to'*. Refusing to shift the responsibility to someone else, he believed in controlling what he wanted to see by putting visions into practice. Because *'leadership isn't, doesn't, always come where it signified as being, or illustrated via, various em, you know, em, nominal titles or honorary titles, it can be in what people do', 'so do it, em, don't err, preach it, tell the people'* it is then clear that, to Alex, leadership must be reflected through actions and practice. By suggesting one should support the professional status of LIS through being a good professional, with its key features being *'deeds, not words and be the change you want to see', 'being seen as a force for change and for good'*, it became clear that Alex, the leader, the good professional himself, *is* in fact the change. Believing that *'if we said is librarianship a religion, then I'd be a Taoist', 'I wouldn't be trying to impose my way of doing things on other people'*, this acceptable code of behaviour perceived by Alex is particularly significant as it laid the foundation and provided an inkling to the behavioural aspect of his professional-personal self.

Behavioural change is something Alex is consciously aware of as he progresses through his career and as his experience in management and leadership grows. Asked whether he felt his role and identity have changed, the reference to a change of behaviour was mentioned five times in a conversation: *'as you develop through your career and you become more of a mature, practitioner, you view changes, how you behave changes [...] you learn to govern your natural instinct better ... So you-you change your behaviour [...] to increase your chances of influencing people and you change of behaviour [...] you do change your behaviour quite a lot'*. His personal and professional self are inseparable because the experience of 'Alex the practitioner', who has gone through the career progression, was the one who changed 'Alex the non-practitioner' into a wiser and more experienced individual outside his professional life, understood as his personal self. The process that changes Alex from the professional he was

yesterday to the experienced senior manager he is today is an outcome driven by practical needs, understood as an obligation to create a potentially authoritative image and to succeed in influencing people: *'you have to govern your passion for your profession you have to consider how other people see you' 'to increase your chances of influencing people and you change of behaviour'*. This controlled persona presented to the people he works with, and which has formed part of Alex's identity, has made the isolation of the personal from the professional self an impossible task. With a view of achieving a favourable outcome, influencing was also closely linked to his experience of career progression. Cross-departmental collaborations have created barriers which have made successful influencing of paramount importance in senior management: *'because if you can't, er, get what you want, on the table, and you can't, influence, er, and shape things, you know it's a non-starter'*, of which the persona of an experienced, mature practitioner who has changed his behaviour has once again come through: *'it's something I have to do a lot of work on to improve my approach I think you know a few years ago I would probably be banging on the table and saying but can't you see it it's obvious we have to do this'*.

Providing a sense of calling, 'making a difference' as a recurring theme emerged from Alex's case has carried deep meaning and significance for his professional identity from both a professional value and personal-professional integrity perspectives. Acknowledging that *'you're never gonna be rich, working as librarian, em, in terms of wealth, but you're certainly rich in terms of experience and what you contribute, and the difference you can make, um, and particular in Higher Education'*, Alex demonstrated his value system of how the LIS profession is more than a job and where he is striving to shape a future that can make a difference and create an impact. Making a difference was also reflected in his professional sense of responsibility by nurturing the next generation of librarians as a way to contribute to professional practice: *'I think for me em, helping, nurture and develop talent and help people see, you know where they can go what their potential is and help them get there I think is one of the most rewarding things, em and probably one of the best ways you can make a difference you know'*. The example illustrates Alex's consistent outlook of favouring a greater cause for the profession than personal achievements. In the discussion on professional identity, Alex indicated that, from a core value perspective, his has not changed. Regardless of the various roles and positions he has taken on, he has considered himself a librarian through and through and has closely identified his professional identity with one of a 'librarian': *'in terms of my professional identity, you know I think I'd consider myself a librarian [...] it's part of who I am'*. While Alex appeared to

be grounded in his role, his decision to choose the term 'librarian' to describe his professional identity has significance, as it is one tacit traditional concept relating to LIS work that people have no difficulties in understanding. Whilst he identified his professional identity with that of a librarian, Alex believes that this identity is neither a dividing factor nor a totality of his entire self, but is only a part of who he is at any moment in time. The compositions of Alex's total self, therefore, consist of an element of: 'a librarian' at present; a librarian not (*'for a long time I wasn't a librarian', 'I was at a UK university, er, doing research [...] I was, er, pursuing an academic career'*), and a future potential professional other (*'I think it's fairly typical these days for people to, you know, change track every, you know, ten fifteen, twenty years and to have a number of careers rather than just one'*).

### **5.2.2 Impact of wider contexts on professional identity**

This super-ordinate theme absorbed the following concepts from the middle-level themes: (1) demonstrating value and impact; (2) bandwagon effect; (3) critical thinking; (4) culture of the organisation; and (5) competitive market. All of these concepts indicated the effect the wider contexts have on professional identity. As a response to the threat to their identity, Alex acknowledged organisations' desperate attempt in proving LIS as a recognised profession, with librarians constantly championing their role and value to society as a way to, according to Alex, survive in their various spheres of existence: *'are we just trying to survive are we trying to make ourselves relevant to higher education, er, or community services, I think I think you know the um, these are different spheres of activity and existence'*. Commercialisation and competition, being some of the drivers affecting academic librarians' identity, have turned them into campaigners and promoters of the profession with *'a huge thing there about lobbying [with librarians] trying to make ourselves appear important to politicians who are policy makers and [...] trying to make ourselves look important to business so they give us some money'*. Being faced with the task of winning arguments and developing strategies to successfully implement their business plans because *'at the moment we are in a period of austerity, we're under economic pressure, there's been massive changes to how higher education's financed' particularly in 'a time of scarcity'*, the surrounding environments have instigated the creation of the roles of negotiator and diplomat for academic librarians. Higher Education has become increasingly more competitive creating a change of organisational culture in academia: as *'we're moving more and more to marketised environment' 'many er organisations are becoming increasingly corporate because they feel they have to survive and compete, with each other, and the rest of the world!'* where *'universities are becoming more like brands everyday'*. Alex did

not seek to hide his uneasiness towards this development, where UK Higher Education is going down the route of becoming nothing more than a *'financial transaction'* with university education being diminished to *'selling a good which might be a qualification'*, *'I'm not entirely comfortable with, er, you know, turning it just into a sales pitch'*, *'I wouldn't necessarily agree with that [development]'*.

Bounded by their environments, academic librarians have been significantly affected by this wider change, which has impacted on their perspectives and operations. As organisations compete for survival, things have become more unpredictable for librarians in terms of their positions. This sense of uncertainty (*'things are becoming a bit hard to know'*) has permeated into their daily existence, which affects the operation of services, as well as the behavioural and psychological aspects of librarians' professional beings, as seen in the discussion on the impact of organisational culture: *'that's certainly affects how people do their job, everywhere, including er, librarianship and library services. It, I think it affects how we behave, I think it affects how we think about ourselves, I think it affects how we plan how we deliver services'*. A tacit understanding that the library, being a supporting service body, is expected to be in line with its organisations to support their missions and objectives, has come over in Alex's comment. The impact organisational culture has on librarians' identity is reflected in their alignment of, if not endorsement on, the changing organisational ethics and values. Plus, the theme of demonstrating value and impact as a way to survive in the corporate environment and counteract professional marginalisation has also begun to emerge at this point: *'I think we have to become more and more rigorous, around er, why we do what we do. And this comes back to demonstrating value and impact, ultimately'*. Advancing technologies, as another factor driving librarians to justify their existence, has cast a shadow over their professional identity in terms of public opinion and the way librarians have to project themselves and exhibit their contributions to earn approvals: *'there is a popular myth that, information professionals and librarians are, by concept, by the age redundant, er, makes it a challenge. Because you feel sometimes you're having to make, argue a case for things which you know, would argued in one, year's ago'*. Whilst he acknowledged again the difficulty in meaningfully measuring the value and impact of library work, Alex believes that *'if you show people what the facts are, er, which tell a different story, then you will help educate them as to what the real picture looks like'* and *'that if you took librarians away from the university and all the services they offer, er, things will get very difficult very quickly'* could provide evidence of the values and contributions of librarians. With the

profession seeing increasing competition from other professions, educating people about the 'real picture' and promoting the values of librarians are believed to be important tasks to combat professional marginalisation.

In the discussion regarding the future trends affecting academic librarianship, Alex observed a phenomenon of professionals blindly following common beliefs from other people without careful consideration of the evidence and logic. Alex referenced the concept as bandwagon jumping, which he revisited several times throughout the interview, criticising librarians of following fashion aimlessly by jumping on the bandwagon without giving sufficient thought and analysis on practicality: *'you know there's a very horrible tendency for er, some fairly, grotesque bandwagon jumping [...] Is that a-a-an act of desperation? Profession feeling, that they have to, reach out and make themselves look relevant? And with the times? Lack of critical analysis, was shocking'*. There is a clear relationship between the bandwagon phenomenon and the wider environments presented in this conversation, while the pressure being put on librarians has driven them to go to great lengths demonstrate their value, with the act of *'reaching out'* reflected in their unreserved support of popular beliefs just to *'make themselves look relevant'*. Jumping on the bandwagon can, therefore, be interpreted as an attempt of librarians defying their subjected invisibility and professional marginalisation. Criticising the so-called new developments in the market, which librarians have often fallen victims of because of their lack of analysis, Alex believes librarians should avoid following popular trends and instead make sensible judgements that are fit for purpose and work according to their own unique circumstances: *'I think there's lots of assumptions that can make you have to put those aside, take everything as it comes, em, and not get too carried away by trends and fashions and what people are telling us, and doing the right thing'*. Whilst he disregarded many 'hypes' and much 'rubbish' from the unreliable hearsay, constructive debates are still needed and, instead of completely ignoring the trends and developments, Alex suggested that librarians should consider and analyse them with caution so that they do not get sucked in to the bandwagon. Whether it is service provision or professional development, librarians need to put the assumptions aside and autonomously examine the practicality, sustainability and suitability of each decision they make.

### 5.2.3 Adapt in accordance with professional mission

Being made up of three middle-level themes: (1) common mission; (2) better position self; (3) students as paying customers, the super-ordinate theme illustrated how academic librarians, with their professional mission in mind, adapted in the changing environments. Associating his professional identity with that of a librarian, Alex believes that modern-day academic librarians have continued to adapt and apply their expert skills and knowledge in the new environments, as reflected in the traditional value and principles of librarianship he affixed to them: *'our role is to facilitate and enable, and to and broker, er, you know, may be a glue, er, do things that no one else can do or, they don't want to do or they don't understand, em, and it's a platform for other people'* *'a mission we would have is to create, you know trusted information and environments and act as gatekeepers to the scholarly world'*. The role of librarian, acting as a platform to connect (*'a glue'*) and to facilitate, is a central element of librarianship, and whilst the interventions of academic librarians are not always visible to people, their contributions are nevertheless highly critical to research and learning. In the discussion of the core principles and philosophy of librarianship, Alex felt it was appropriate to illustrate the concept through the common professional mission: *'I think really this would being capitulated most practically or most commonly shall we say em, in terms of, what the mission of a librarian would be, what's the common mission'*. The emerging theme of facilitating and enabling, once again, came through in the articulation of the common mission as Alex believes that the political philosophy of librarianship is to facilitate. Since librarians are *'not trying to stop people find stuff, we are trying to facilitate that, we are not making that judgement for them'*, their supporting role can, therefore, be understood as the anchor of all operations within librarianship. Highlighting the disparity between the philosophical and practical professional mission (*'so how that philosophy translates into practice is complex'* *'I think conceptually philosophically it'll be very similar but it look very different'*), Alex believes that their conceptual mission will remain unchanged, but librarians will have to continue to adapt and go about delivering their common mission in their daily practice differently: *'we have to look to adapt, er, and carry on doing what we are doing [...] there'll always be need for that what it looks like will change'*. With the task of *'creating trusted information environments, helping people learn and how to access information and have skills'* remained the central philosophical mission of the profession, librarians will continue to *'carry on doing what we are doing'* based on their common mission, whilst the methods and the processes involved in achieving those ideals will continue to be modified and evolved within the boundaries of *'organising [and] safeguarding knowledge'*.

To add unique value and continue to play an essential role, Alex believes librarians need to know their precise position and their own strengths so that they can apply their specialised skills and expertise in an effective way: *'in terms of where we going we have to understand where we should position ourselves' 'let's find where we can add unique value that's legitimate that's real that's within our reach'*. While the role and mission of librarians depend upon having an understanding of their unique value, Alex associated uniqueness with *'do the stuff no one else can do'*, a point which he previously referred to regarding librarians acting as a platform to connect and facilitate. After having identified the purpose of their role, staying relevant, which has been repeatedly emphasised by Alex, was thought to be a key factor in securing the role of librarians. When asked his opinion of the future developments and preparations for librarians, Alex advocated that shaping the future is the best way to prepare for what is to come: *'the best way would to shape it would be to shape it. You know, if you if you want that control then you control what happens'*. This notion of shaping the future echoes with an earlier theme, 'being the change', where, through the exercise of control, it is believed that librarians can design a future as they plan it to be.

Observing the way people interact with the world, Alex commented on how the online media and technologies have changed the culture in society: *'the rise of the web and the role of the web in people's daily lives their everyday lives has become incredibly strong [...] how they engage with the world around them is very different'*. The idea of changing user expectations was introduced during the discussion of rising tuition fees, which Alex believes is the underlying factor altering the relationship between the library and users, while an increase in user expectations has come to the forefront: *'as students at universities become paying customers [...] who have different expectations. And that you know they might not be uniformly higher, but they'd be different, and we have to respond to that'*. With user-focused *'always been a goal, but I think we know we probably always have a myth'*, and as users take on their new identity as paying customers, librarians are compelled to re-address their focus. A goal, yet also a myth, suggests that user focus has always been an area librarians aspired to focus upon, but has somehow taken the back seat because of other priorities. The rising tuition fee serves to rekindle librarians' original goal and motivates them to carry on with their mission with refreshed methods and new focus.

#### 5.2.4 Affirmed value of LIS

Consisting of two middle-level themes, namely (1) 'librarianship has an important role in society' and (2) 'research value and professional status', Alex demonstrated his utter confidence of the value of librarianship. Recognising the paradox of the trivialisation of LIS, Alex acknowledged the value and the important role the profession plays in society and academia: *'I think it's er... genuinely em important role in society. I think it's not understood to the degree it should' 'you would expect information professionals including librarians to therefore be pivotal, em and I would argue that many cases we...are'*. With the value and contributions of librarianship exemplified in their role in *'organising, safeguarding knowledge and information'* and particularly *'if you look at supporting research and learning, I think, err, libraries make are, are fundamental impact'*, the reality has shown that *'contrary to what we expect from the statue books public libraries services are being, em, you know, decimated and turned over to the big society and volunteers'*. More assured than ever of the value of the profession, Alex went on to employ the analogy of a successful surgery to illustrate the contributions of librarians where he felt their invisibility, as a result of their successful intervention, has gone unnoticed, just like a successful surgery that has been taken for granted: *'if you go for surgery and you come home and you are like you were before that's successful'*. Having appeared to be totally at ease with this professional invisibility and accepting it as a condition of being successful, Alex considered it a risk he is willing to take: *'if we think we are making that contribution, but, we are also em, relatively, invisible, then actually we are being successful' 'when you are successful, then you know your intervention goes unnoticed actually [...] if we are successful then, then we risk being invisible'*. Whilst he believes that educating people of the *'real picture'* and promoting the values of librarians to counteract marginalisation, as previously discussed, are still vital activities to market the profession, Alex suggested librarians to *'not shout too loud about how important we are because, that's a clear indication that we probably think we are not'* but to turn inwardly to examine the profession instead. Rather than seeking attention and status externally (*'do we need to be up there, you know, do we need to think do we feel aggrieved that we don't have the status as a sportstar [...] should we be like a grinning politician? Er, are we publicity seekers well not every not every profession is'*), of which LIS professionals have already possessed through their invisible successful intervention to his mind, Alex suggested librarians should focus their efforts on evaluating their practice and focusing on progression and staying relevant.

### 5.2.5 Traditional gatekeeping & professional knowledge

Professional standards and the required knowledge from future librarians were the prominent themes emerging from the discussion of library education and professional qualification. Speaking passionately on the subjects, Alex demonstrated that he cares deeply about the profession's future in terms of the quality of the workforce and the reputation of the profession. Consisting four middle-level themes of (1) traditional gatekeeping, (2) deficiency in professional knowledge, (3) nurturing and developing staff and (4) competitive market, 'traditional gatekeeping and professional knowledge' examines the relevance of professional qualifications and knowledge in the current environment.

Professional qualification, as being considered traditionally an entrance requirement into the profession, has, in recent years, seen increasing competition and fresh demands emerging in the labour market, creating a new phenomenon that is both challenging and changing the conventional practice and presumption. Acknowledging how '*some of the ceilings we put in, or the..., threshold to want people to reach in terms of you have to have a professional qualification to be a professional before you can do this particular thing, some of those things are, are disappearing*', Alex witnessed a workforce from other sectors joining the profession, where people with equivalent skills are gaining a stronghold and being valued by the profession '*because we are understanding that people can bring things from other careers other sectors, which are equivalent*'. With professional qualification ceasing to be a unique identifier for professional librarians, the disappearing of this traditional gatekeeping practice is going to impact on librarians' professional identity. Alex believes it has come to the crunch for changes to take place in response to the new demands and environments. Librarians must find new ways and alternative means to maintain their advantage and regain their standings. Acknowledging librarians have lost their former prestige ('*there was time when we were, one of those esteemed minorities who could sign the back of passport photos, and er, you know it's true I don't I don't think we have that uniquely status anymore*'), Alex suggested a forward-looking approach to support the professional status by being a '*good professional*', '*being seen as a force for change and for good and, er, people who can deliver, know what they are about, er, are talented, are able, are competent, or are authoritative, are compelling or have credibility, er, all that kind of things*'.

Placing suitability and safeguarding service quality above professional qualification, Alex admitted that he would '*want the right person in the right job. And that right person might not be*

*someone who's got a library qualification*'. Because of his position of being *'someone who's accountable for delivering a service that is standard and at a cost'* and someone who *'wants to see a good student experience and support excellent research'*, Alex wanted to get *'the right person for the right job'*. With service quality and the reputation of the profession in mind, Alex is prepared to break away from tradition and do what he deems appropriate to facilitate the wider good. Highly critical of the standards observed in the current delivery of library education and the quality of new professionals, Alex argued that *'we got an issue of standards because I think a lot of people are going through library schools who aren't talented people. Not everyone. Em, but my personal experience is that the bar isn't always set very high'*. Instead of undermining the professional status (*'I don't want to undermine the professional status we have. I want to support it'*), Alex proposed that *'if we seriously wanna gatekeep on the basis of that, we have to look at what we're delivering, and how we set ourselves apart'*. Believing the profession has come to the crunch, that *'if we want to be taken seriously we have to have standards and be selective'*. Standards and quality should be reflected in both the intake and generation of future information professionals, who will be able to demonstrate their unique value and contributions via high-quality services delivery. Library schools being the 'gatekeeper', therefore, play an important role in recruiting the right talents that will determine the future of the profession. The next step then is the adjustment of the curriculum.

Observing the existing gap between the library school curriculum and professional practice, Alex believes that the current library education has failed to reflect the requirements of practice and that new librarians' lack of professional knowledge has posed a risk to the profession's future: *'I think we have got a bit of a crisis in our library education because I just think it's not em, ... re ... sufficiently reflecting the requirements of, of the profession and of practice [...] [having] wider considerations [...] adds a richness to what you do and where you sight yourself in your in your work [...] [yet] there is a, extremely obviously deficit of professional knowledge, er, which isn't just the kind of stuff you learn on the job, that it's actually bread and butter that it's actually incredibly important'*. Considering professional knowledge to be a sustaining element directly relating to practice, Alex feels it is essential for librarians to carry out their job. Repeatedly advocating the importance of current awareness, he believes teaching the background knowledge and theories of the latest issues taking place in the profession can offer new professionals a broader perspective and is an area library education has fallen short of, which makes the tackling of the disconnection between library education and the requirements from practice a priority.

Having a '*strong feelings around [...] the role of practitioners in educating the next generation of librarians and the formal, you know, library school context*', Alex saw practitioners' involvement in the formal library school setting an important development for professionals, where education can be used as a two-way process for practitioners to educate themselves and develop professionally, at the same time using their practical experience to inform the curriculum to enhance the professional knowledge of the next generation of librarians. Envisaging that the landscape of the profession will change within the framework of LIS philosophies, Alex believes there are implications on the skills set requirements and future workforce type: '*in terms of that competence and that skills of what they can develop or who they are, might also change*'. The fact that there is competition from other sectors should motivate librarians to develop themselves, with the need to keep up to date being an indispensable CPD activity. Whilst having accepted change as a natural process, Alex encouraged librarians to better equip themselves in preparation for the challenge, and to maintain their relevance by finding that sweet spot to add unique value, as he relentlessly advocates.

### **5.3 Case 2: 'Beth'**

#### **5.3.1 Connecting professional self with institution's identity**

Consisting of three middle-level themes, namely (1) 'impact of organisational culture', (2) 'aware of organisation's priorities' and (3) 'the essence of the role has maintained', 'connecting professional self with an institution's identity' focused on the relationship between organisational culture and professional identity. Having only started working in librarianship during the later years of her life, Beth considered her career path an unusual one. Despite the different positions she has held within the organisation, Beth believes they were '*the similar sort of role*' and that the essence of her librarian role remains unchanged. Until her recent move to support research full-time, her tasks as an information specialist have remained over the years where '*it was training, it was em... user guides and web pages*'. The advances in technology have only expanded Beth's user training role, which she believes to be the major task that has '*always been important the whole time I've been in academic librarianship*' and it '*hasn't changed hugely in the time that I've been in it*'. Having always focused on '*the teaching and the information skills*', Beth felt that '*I haven't noticed any huge change from that point of view*'. The one major change she experienced was '*the move obviously from the physical media to the electronic which is different, expanding all the time*' and has acknowledged that '*there are new things coming in new all the time*'. Observing how librarians have changed with the times, Beth saw

the library changing from *'emphasise on those sort of physical environments'* to a new culture where *'the philosophy and the library [...] has been much more, to have people available to help, em and to provide support, and not just be shelving books or whatever, I think it definitely em has moving away from that direction'*.

With the delivering of information remaining at the centre of the service, Beth stated the core of librarianship is to *'provide the information in whatever format it's available. And, enable people to use it as effectively as possible. [...] [covering] all the things that you have to do to make that happen, both physically and electronically'*. To her, the underpinning value and principles of LIS lies in *'helping [...] people to find the information in the best way. And that's the basis of it all, you know. I remember when I was in the school library cataloguing things and helping them to find things, em, and now in electronic world you know helping people to find the right information and use it'*. Regardless of the changes in the media and environments, the library has continued to provide a service that is *'as seamless as possible so that people don't have to jump through too many hoops to get what they want'*. Maintaining the same professional mission, *'the library is always sort of trying to help [users] and give them ebooks and things when they can and whatever they can'* and continue to adapt and accommodate users' needs. Believing information specialists *'are still maintaining their same role and identity, but they can engage with it'*, Beth recognised that the new situation in academia has provided the perfect opportunity for librarians to apply their role effectively. In her opinion, maintaining an awareness towards the institution's priorities (*'to be on the ball, and and ready to help wherever we can'*) provides a way for librarians to engage with their role, while it also serves as the basis for librarians to apply their expert knowledge and skills to contribute to the organisation. By providing a quality service in the library, Beth believes academic librarians are *'making it a better college people want to come to'*.

Besides being able to contribute professionally, Beth's sensitivity and awareness towards the organisation's agenda and priorities have affected her perspectives in terms of her professional ethics and attitude. Having worked in the same organisation for a lengthy period, Beth approved of and identified herself with the institutional culture: *'I think you know there definitely a culture of that [anonymised] has to be the best, in everything. Em, and I think that, sort of, that permeates the whole thing really where you know you have to, do provide the best service possible and em keep everybody happy'*. In support of the organisation's philosophy (*'I mean, probably every institution should have that culture anyway and strive to be the best'*), Beth

demonstrated an alignment of her professional self with that of the organisation. *'I think just part of the job really, I mean it's just part of what I am really, because I was like, a bit of a perfectionist'* presents an ambiguity in terms of whether Beth the perfectionist is *'part of the job'* or whether it is part of who she is (*'part of what I am'*). Based on her conscious self-awareness and understanding, Beth believes that the organisational culture had not impacted on her behaviour. What has been illustrated here is a connection between the institution's identity and the professional self. Since the subconscious is deeply rooted, the line has subsequently become blurred.

### **5.3.2 Making contact and reaching out: the ultimate challenge**

'Making contact and reaching out' is combined of two middle-level themes, namely (1) 'contact challenge' and (2) 'technologies and role'. With the biggest challenge of *'actually getting to talk to the academics and to the researchers themselves'* and *'getting to understand what the academics really are interested in and what they need to know'* being a major theme that emerged from Beth's case, of which she mentioned repeatedly in the two interviews, establishing contacts with the academics and researchers was the hardest hurdle she experienced in her career. Understanding how *'academics don't really want to answer emails and they certainly don't want to come to training'* and who, at the same time, have a unique information-seeking pattern where *'they find their information in other ways, even in the old days'*, has made it *'the biggest issues and problems that librarians face'*. Physical restrictions was further identified as a known barrier to initiating contact, as *'most researchers [...] are behind, erm, swipe access'*, *'you have to have the opportunity [to get invited], you can't just barge into meetings'*. Modernisation of the library also implies that *'most of [the information specialists] don't have individual offices anymore that people could just knock on the door'*, *'so people need to make appointments to see them, you know, which makes it a little bit more difficult even'* and librarians have to make extra efforts *'to go out of the library to help'*. Reduction of researcher inductions as a result of the change in college policy has made the ability to establish contact *'quite tricky'*. *'From the physical media to the electronic, which is [...] expanding all the time [...] [as] one of the changes that's happened'* has contributed to the disintegration of contacts and made it more difficult for librarians to maintain the much-needed communication: *'in the past, the library was the library, and everyone came to the library and did your reference interviews and all the rest of it and just isn't like that anymore. That's the biggest change I think'*. Advocating librarians to engage in research projects and related initiatives, Beth believes that *'having projects like this, being involved with the REF, which is so important to the*

*academics themselves, em, helps to make some of those contacts*'. High-profile projects and services that speak to the heart of academics and researchers have set the pretext and provide rare opportunities for information specialists to approach and engage with academics and researchers, where they would not be able to otherwise.

### **5.3.3 Getting out the library: establish the connection and develop the network**

Two middle-level themes, namely (1) 'getting out there!' and (2) 'institutions and cross team collaborations' highlighted the importance for academic librarians to proactively establishing connections with the wider contexts. Besides the physical barriers together with the information-seeking and working habits of academics, Beth believes the new library environment in terms of the widespread use of electronic resources and the library's structure and physical layout have made it a necessity for librarians to reach out to users: *'in the old days we used to speak about the reference interview and that kind of thing that that's really, or was at that time, based on someone coming into the library to ask you something. Em, where people aren't doing that, em where possible, you need to reach out to them*'. With traditional services being revolutionised by the new model of information-seeking habits, Beth believes proactive outreach is *'one of the more important things we need to be doing in the future. Because I think that it's going to be much more the role of the library in the future*'. Evidently, getting out there and reaching out to academics and researchers has emerged as one of the main themes which Beth reiterated in numerous occasions throughout the interview: *'they have to get out, they have to get out of the library' 'it's just sort of getting out there talking to people' 'because, staff so rarely come into the library these days that you've actually got to reach out to them*'. With electronic resources and the digital media continuing to intensify, Beth believes research support in particular outreach services would be *'an increasing role'* for information specialists, where they would be expected to bring the service directly to users and *'to say you know we've got this help we can give you. We'll come and talk to you, and it's the going out to them, it's part of what's changed*'. For users to build up their confidence in order to approach librarians, *'researchers, staff and students need to be aware that the information specialists are there and they can come to them, to ask for advice*'. They need to know that librarians can actually help them with their issues, and librarians need to *'[make] people aware that [they] do understand what the issues are, and are able to help*'. In order for the message to get through, Beth believes public exposure is key. By *'putting yourself about, making yourself available to people and being at meetings*', librarians have laid the foundation of the development of relationship, as *'[faculties] knew who you were and knew who to ask for things*' which helps information specialists to get one step closer to

establishing the contact they desperately desired. Stepping out of their immediate environment and comfort zone does not only prevent librarians from working in silos, but it also allows them to broaden their understanding of *'the more overall culture of the college and not just the library side of things'*. Arguing that an outreach service as an important aspect in the research support role, Beth urged academic librarians to break away from the professional cliché and stereotype by proactively engaging in outreach and network building activities so that they can further their connections and develop professionally.

#### **5.3.4 Prominent research support: a comprehensive service that targets the core**

'Prominent research support' is a combination of two middle-level themes, namely (1) 'research support' and (2) 'develop of broader understanding'. As *'the role of the library has changed to a certain extent from being a kind of repository for books, to being a source of help and information'*, it has driven the library to adapt a different attitude in reassessing its services' priorities. A new way of thinking was thought to have served as the driver for change and for the research support role having gained in prominence. Whilst research support *'was relatively important before as well, but it wasn't part of the thinking at that time. At that time, it was thought that if an academic needed help they'd come in to the library and ask. Erm, but now we don't expect them to'*, which has triggered the realisation that *'we've realised that the role is important'*. Besides reaching out and making contact, Beth believes that it is important for librarians to discover users' perspective, that *'the more library services people understand, the pressures that the researchers are under'* the easier it makes for librarians to provide the appropriate support for users. Her idea of engaging with the role was partly based upon insiders' knowledge, the understanding of what researchers and academics do and *'that the challenge is to understand their point of view'* and *'how important that [research work] is to them'* rather than to make assumptions. Having extensive knowledge and understanding of the whole research process was considered an essential skill for information specialists to succeed in their research support work and emerged as one of the main themes that Beth referred to on numerous occasions throughout the interviews: *'in terms of research support, we need to be more involved in [...] understanding the whole publication process'* *'about what the researchers do, not specifically their research as such, but, the other aspects of it [...] right through their work'* *'I think information specialists really need to understand that the pressure to publish and all the issues around, submitting something for publication'* *'we need to understand that aspect of it and how much, how important that is to them'*. Instead of providing something lightweight, the recommendations have suggested the delivery of an in-depth research support service that

is both knowledgeable and comprehensive. Anticipating that the support of the scholarly communication and research process will continue to be a prominent role for information specialists, Beth encouraged colleagues to familiarise themselves with the research cycle and all the finer details associated with it, to *'show that we understand what [the academics and researchers] issues are'* and be *'ready to help wherever we can'*, which returns to the earlier concept of value sharing and demonstrating competence with a view to earn users' trust and confidence in the service.

Acknowledging that, whilst the research support role performed by academic librarians is *'something that the world, if you like, erm, understanding what a librarian does, wouldn't think it was anything to do with that'* and *'even in academia itself, academic staff might not think it was a concern of the library that they should be thinking about that at all'*, Beth was however confident that academic librarians' expert knowledge of bibliographic software, institutional repository, copyright and open access issues have specifically put them in a unique position to contribute in the scholarly communication process and assist academics and researchers on their research journey. Her comment *'we have considered that it should be part of our role to help people with that. Because there are some of our skills and knowledge that could help them, erm with those issues'* suggests librarians have, on their own accord, made a conscious decision to proactively apply their professional skills and contribute in the research process. By offering an all-round technical and professional advice, Beth believes librarians are effectively engaging with their role and *'using the librarian's skills to sort of bring those to bear'*. Apart from familiarising themselves with the research process, Beth suggested information specialists should use the opportunity of attending committee meetings as a platform for *'absorbing the issues that were important to them [faculties]'* because *'at those meetings you're getting the kind of atmosphere of what research is like in the college. You're seeing what the issues are for them'*. Information specialists are encouraged to take advantage of the committee meetings strategically as a way of gathering intelligence and discovering issues that academics and researchers are concerned about. Such knowledge and findings can, in turn, feed into service provision and enhancement.

### 5.3.5 Increasing teaching support: a traditional role expanding

Two middle-level themes, namely (1) 'teaching support' and (2) 'new environments and attitude' explained how the traditional teaching support role of academic librarians is expanding. As a traditional task for information specialists, Beth witnessed an increasing emphasis in teaching support with the role continuing to expand over the years. Digital resources and the increasing number of online databases have revolutionised information seeking and changed the delivery of library services: *'academic librarianship these days is not, just about finding things in books it's finding things, wherever they are, whether they are electronically or in print' 'we are talking electronic information rather than information in the library itself, there is, there are a lot of different ways of finding that information'*. With the varying levels of literacy, where *'some are more skilled than others and depends on their age, you know, what they are used to'*, users are not often aware of the resources available *'so often [information specialists] need to get out and tell them'*. Because of the spheres of their professional work, librarians' expert knowledge of academic resources has not only allowed them to alert the services to users, but they are also able to demonstrate the using of these resources effectively. Advancing technologies which contribute to the development of electronic resources have illuminated as well as expanded the teaching support role of librarians. Whilst teaching support has always been a task performed by information specialists, it has expanded and gained unprecedented significance to reflect the changing information needs. *'Information specialists are increasingly getting involved in much more teaching and a lot more one-to-one with students'* and the high volume of user teaching has taken up most of their time: *'in terms of time, I would say, their focuses more on the teaching because it's because it's a lot of it. And because it's more organised [...] and sometimes it's just because the teaching takes up so much of your time you don't have so much time for the research work'*.

Regarding the teaching role as being an important part of their professional remit, Beth embraced her teacher identity as that shared by the academics. Considering that the teaching identity has defined information specialists, Beth believes *'that's how most of their contacts first meet them in that context the undergraduates, and then also they all go to the teaching committees so it's in that context that they're, em, they are representing the library as people who are interested in both teaching of the undergraduates by the academics, but also they're offering their teaching expertise as well'*. It could be argued that librarians' teaching identity can be interpreted on the basis of how they perceive themselves and the image they project. To begin with, Beth considered the information skills teaching conducted by information specialists

are within the education framework, and therefore they are in their own right teachers of information and resources. Because the majority of the users have their first encounter with the information specialists in the induction sessions, their image of a teacher offering knowledge was, therefore, created in the process. Furthermore, through the attending of the teaching committee meetings, information specialists have proclaimed their commitment to support teaching and research and have established their teaching identity within the realm of information literacy, which is where their expertise lies. The value of librarians' educating role has been especially exemplified through their information skills teaching in the Google era, as although *'Google search is pretty clever [...] it certainly doesn't get you necessarily the best, em, results academically [...] teaching people [how] to extract information is just a much more prominent side of what the library is there to do'*. Librarians' intervention serves to highlight the difference between quality and quantity and, through embedding *'information skills teaching as part of the course it's timetabled into their course'*, librarians are directly contributing to students' academic success. By *'doing the same kind of teaching as an academic would'* and now that *'most of the information specialists [...] are going to the same course as the academics do'*, Beth believes this has provided librarians a reasonable status that is *'sort of roughly on a par with the academics'*. With teaching support continuing to play a major part in the information specialists' role, Beth trusted that the teaching skill will continue to be an important skill for librarians in order to retain their educator's role and excel in the profession.

### **5.3.6 'Blowing your own trumpet': demonstrating value and impact**

'Blowing your own trumpet' is consisted of two middle-level themes, namely (1) 'impact and value' and (2) 'promotion of service and value'. Associated with the challenge of reaching out to users, demonstrating value and impact is a notable theme that has emerged from Beth's narrative. Professional marginalisation has compelled librarians to believe that *'you have got to justify your existence'* where they feel obliged to demonstrate their impact and value *'because academics now see the library not really the place where they need to come, as to the time they might wonder why we actually need certain staff to be there still'*. The fact that users *'don't come into the library'*, and with the development of a digital library together with a diminishing of staff presence, this has led to the perception that the library is assumed obsolete, simply because library users *'don't see a lot of what we do [...]. It's more visible when you are taking a class, and you know you are doing your training'*. It has become critical for librarians to demonstrate that they *'can still do something useful'*, and Beth was convinced that the contributions librarians have made in academia are without question: *'the college has to recruit the right students and*

*the right staff. I think we just feed into that in the library because by giving the best possible service in the library you know, we we're making it a better college people want to come to'. Whilst recognising that librarians should be promoting themselves and the services they offer, the process is not without its challenge with it being 'quite an uphill battle', which requires 'perseverance' where 'you just gonna keep plugging your way off, I think really'. Unawareness of services, while users 'may not be really conscious of what we can do to help them', the deep-seated information-seeking habits with 'academics not necessarily wanting to use the databases we've been training them on' and the consequence of the library providing a service 'as seamless as possible so that people don't have to jump through too many hoops to get what they want, is that many, em, of the end users don't actually realise that we've paid for and have made these things available for them, they think they are just there free on the web', have further legitimised the need for service promotions. With the majority of their interventions being invisible to the user communities, librarians will have to find a way to educate users in the relevance and true value of librarians in a way that they can understand. Since 'a lot of the staff in the college still think of the library in the old way, a bit just being the library full of books, and don't realise some of the skills that we have already had for quite a few years but they haven't realised', efforts need to be made for librarians to 'get the message out more wider in the college as a whole, that librarians do have these skills and they can help people' and, through their exposures on the web, that 'we are here to help you'. The disconnection between facts and common misconceptions requires tireless efforts for it to be straightened out. As a keen advocator of technologies, Beth urged librarians to promote themselves 'so that you are blowing your own trumpet a little bit' and, through the attending of committee meetings, 'to convince the academics that we are still doing a good job in the way we are teaching the students' and 'to fight your corner' in terms of defending their professionalism and 'to speak up for what they believe [particularly] their specialist skills' despite opposing views. Changing users' mindsets takes time and, only until people can experience the benefits themselves, will their perceptions begin to change. Librarians have to persistently raise awareness and present with evidence their contribution made, which continues to be an important task.*

### **5.3.7 Proactive professional development**

'Proactive professional development' was developed from three middle-level themes, namely (1) 'proactive professional development', (2) 'skills and competence' and (3) 'management's support'. Being proactive throughout her career, Beth demonstrated an unstoppable appetite for knowledge where she appeared to be eager to learn and develop. Always ready to embrace the

latest issues and developments in the profession, Beth's proactive attitude was rewarded by management's support which, in turn, has created opportunities for her career progression. Whilst the environment is fast-changing, Beth advocated the upholding of traditional skills, which has remained vital for the much needed principles and background to the profession: *'you got to still know the basics' 'understanding the principles is still important' 'they just need to be aware of the background'*. Acknowledging the role of these skills is expanding into new areas such as bibliometrics, open access and *'I've seen quite a number of erm advertisements just recently, erm a lot of universities who are recruiting data management specialists'*, Beth believes it is important for new professionals to keep with up the changes in order to remain relevant. The idea of *'just need to, to keep up with things and to make sure that we are always relevant to people'* as a method for professional development is an important theme that appeared several times in the discussion: *'making sure they know what the latest trends are really just keep up to date. I always thought that was important [...] just making sure they know what's going on and keep up with it'*. Simple and practical, Beth recommended librarians should *'play to your own strengths really to what works, for you'*, *'if they need to go on courses go on courses. I've always sort of felt that that was important and has always been valued here, you know, that people should develop themselves'*. Emphasising the importance of *'just to be interested really'* and readiness to develop, Beth advised future professionals to keep their ears to the ground and get their hands dirty whenever possible and seize any development opportunity as they arise. Commenting that *'it's not a nine to five job [...] you have to be willing to put in the extra effort'* illustrated how librarianship, the changing organism being a dynamic and versatile profession, will continue to evolve accordingly in the future.

## **5.4 Case 3: 'Carl'**

### **5.4.1 Professional mission and identity**

'Professional mission and identity' is combined of four middle-level themes, namely (1) 'existing pressure and future challenge', (2) 'value and impact', (3) 'professional role and identity' and (4) 'professional pride'. Considering that the concepts of his professional role and identity are closely interwoven, Carl instantaneously related his role with the 'purpose' and 'functionality' of his profession. Believing that the essence of his librarian role and identity *'is to, erm, help people, find the information that they want in the shortest time possible'*, of which he reiterated, Carl considered this to be the main element of the job he most enjoyed: *'I'm an information professional my role is to, help people find information' 'helping people find things, that they have difficulties with, mainly'*. Believing that this purpose and function *'to, erm, help people, find*

*the information that they want in the shortest time possible* has remained (*that's always been the case*) and will continue to remain (*the library has always existed to support teaching and research, and that hasn't changed and I don't see it changing*) the essence of his professional existence, Carl felt that this professional identity of his, *'I'm an information professional'*, has not changed. He concluded that *'I don't think the essence of the role has changed'* throughout his career, despite the new environments and challenges he experienced. Serving as the central theme of Carl's perception of his own professional identity, the essence of the role lies in *'the purpose of my job'*. It is clear to Carl that, just as the LIS professional philosophy *'is to unite people with the information with good quality information, and I don't think that's changed really'*, the purpose of the library *'has always existed to support teaching and research'*. His status quo to support teaching and research as an end result by means of helping people to find information is, therefore, going to remain the same. What is different for librarians is *'the way you do things might change'*, *'the means to doing it, have changed now'* in terms of the details of the process in carrying out their role because *'the paraphernalia surrounding it, they are all different now'*. With *'the change is more in the way that people find information'*, the library, although having *'the same role as it's always been'*, now needs to *'help people adapt to new ways of finding information'*. Using the example of the *'fashion for re-naming libraries'* and *'students of today, they know what a library is, they know what to expect from a library'*, Carl illustrated how *'the identity, the function hasn't changed. It's the way, it's what you offer, you offer more or different things in the service but the role of the service is still the same'*, which suggests that changing *'the, paraphernalia surrounding'* the role of librarians does not alter their core mission.

The comparison Carl drew between the changes experienced in librarianship and the renaming of libraries has demonstrated the tacit understanding people have of the functions of a library and that the *'paraphernalia'* such as the abolishing of names simply cannot change the identity and the purpose of a service because *'it's what you do that matters, not what you call'*. Associating his professional self with *'the library'*, Carl believes that it is practical and important *'to hold on to concepts that are meaningful. And library still means something to most people'*. Whilst library services continue to evolve and offer *'more or different things'*, their central role will nevertheless remain. If modernising the title for libraries does not change the core function and purpose of their existence, then the core mission of librarians by the same token have not changed, regardless of the new environments and challenges they experienced. *'It's what you do that matters not what you call'* suggests that names and titles simply do not define or

stipulate the purpose of the role. For Carl, the purpose of academic librarians aka the library has always been to support teaching and research, and that purpose has not or will never change. What has changed for librarians as they move on in time, is the expansion of their remit by them offering '*more or different things in the service*'. The advance in technologies also means that their operating procedures in terms of the methods and processes have changed accordingly. This central theme of Carl's core professional role to help people find information echoes Ranganathan's first four laws in connecting users and information.

There are various challenges of which Carl believes have had an impact on the role of librarians. The paraphernalia and the wider environment are the underpinnings of the changes which Carl experienced in his career. In his experience of the changes surrounding his role, Carl recognised the competitive and commercialised environment has led to a result-driven and end-product oriented culture: '*there's less focus, on doing, housekeeping things internally, erm, like cataloguing [...] there's more focus on, on perhaps the end product now rather than they're doing of something. Erm, so you are looking more at, again user satisfaction user outcome surveys [...] particularly in academic libraries there are more competitions for students, it's much more commercial now, so people, libraries are looking at the, the results of their processes perhaps more than, the detail of the process itself*'. Indicating the connections between existing pressure and change of focus because '*the time has changed, the culture's changed*', Carl saw the relationship between the result-driven practice and the pressure of meeting users' needs with the '*monitoring [of] systems, how things are working and how people are using those systems [...] how much are they using them*' being an end product of a commercialised environment and customer-oriented culture. Observing how '*people feel bound to follow fashions if you like, they feel oh you can't be out, you got to be in it, you can't be out of it*' as they do with the renaming of libraries, Carl has had first-hand experience of librarians responding to pressure through reorganisation with '*an element of [...] not wanting to be left out, left behind*'. The prospect of being sidelined is so daunting that libraries tried to do everything in their power to follow the herd.

With helping people find information being the central role of the librarian, Carl believes the fact that technology has increased '*the range of information that available and the nature of it and how you, er, find it*' has actually highlighted the educating role of the librarian. There is an increasing focus for librarians to teach information skills and literacy, as '*they're teaching people how to find good-quality information and how to use that information*', whether it is through

*'formal situations like timetabled sessions'* or ad hoc information searches, *'as a result of an inquiry, a one-off inquiry'*. Stressing the difference between quality and quantity, Carl believes *'Google is fine [...] if you want a quick answer to something'* but *'librarians have an understanding of how the process that resources go through to be published, like journals for instance'* and *'users do benefit from being shown how to use resources and finding information effectively'*, of which the value of librarians are exemplified. *'Because there is much more information around. Erm, people have more choices to make. Erm more decisions to make. So they probably need more guidance than they used to'*, the teaching role of librarians has become prominent in modern librarianship. Carl believes in service excellence: *'I think you just have to do a good job. Judged by how you how well you do the job'*. With professionalism being demonstrated through actions which, in turn, will earn librarians the status and reputation they deserved, carrying out their role to the best of their ability is the only thing Carl believes librarians have control over and *'that's all you can do'*. Furthermore, librarians *'need to ask the right questions'* and reflect on whether *'the questions themselves are the right questions'* by putting in place a reliable and properly designed measuring mechanism to allow an accurate picture of performance and contributions to emerge. Although Carl appeared to adopt a laid-back attitude towards the status of a librarian, he nevertheless pointed out the challenge and pressure academic librarians faced in carrying out their role.

#### **5.4.2 The deep impact of organisational culture and politics**

The middle-level theme – 'organisational culture' informed the development of the super-ordinate theme 'the deep impact of organisational culture and politics'. The long-lasting memory of a bitter organisation restructuring experience proved to be a prominent theme that emerged from Carl's story. In addition to an unpleasant memory lingering on, the experience has somewhat transformed Carl's perspective towards the profession and impacted on his career outlook. Considering himself as *'I'm very old fashioned'*, Carl's appreciation for traditional values did not conflict with his willingness to embrace change. His acceptance for change was demonstrated in his attitude towards organisational reform, believing that *'[if] you want to make changes which you think will bring greater efficiencies [...] you have to go through this process'*, and his forward-looking position in welcoming new developments and accepting change as a natural process in life is reflected in his view that, without progress, *'we'd still be, you know, writing with quill pens and typing catalogue cards'*. A noticeable quality of leadership is exemplified in Carl's support and understanding of the rationality behind the painful process which organisations must go through in order to progress. The repeated use of the expression

'have to' suggested a necessity where, for change to happen, service review is an inevitable reality that comes with the territory.

Having dedicated three decades of his life to the profession, Carl acknowledged that *'I'm probably near the end of my career so I don't have great ambitions'*. The turning point of his journey from a proactive professional to *'it's just a job to me'*, *'I am focused on my immediate remit'* has signified a transformation of attitude which appears to be linked to the negative organisational experience. Frustrated by the mismanaged restructuring process, Carl felt the lack of transparency, honesty and respect were major insults to his professionalism: *'if you're up front with people if you are honest, and say this is what's going to happen or this is what very likely to happen, then at least people understand it [...] at least they kind of prepared, for what's going to happen'*. By projecting the impression of wanting *'to retain you know the staff are the best, are their most important asset'*, but *'when it comes to saving money, then that seems to be secondary'* has greatly damaged Carl's faith and trust, not only towards the organisation, but it has potentially, to some extent, dampened his spirit towards the profession, leaving him feeling undervalued and *'demoralised'*.

Carl considered institutional politics a particularly difficult area to handle outside his everyday challenge as *'the longer you work in an institution, the more aware you become of institutional politics'*. While institutions often *'have a vision of how they want to be perceived. Erm, and they take great pains to advertise this, but it doesn't always translate into corresponding actions'* was a revelation to Carl, who found *'it's a difficult area to deal with'*. In order to adapt to the organisational culture, an obligation of having to *'saying the right thing and being seen to saying the right thing'* and *'putting your own, personal reservations to the back, and then emphasising the positives of whatever's going at the time'* has put an enormous amount of pressure on Carl. *'I feel sometimes that I have to emphasise the positive side of things when perhaps normally, in an ordinary life, everyday life situation I wouldn't'* has portrayed a polarising approach of the professional and personal self, where Carl found he has to deliberately adjust his own personal belief to get accepted and survive in the organisation. Comparing the act of pretence to the socially acceptable behaviour of good manners, conforming to the organisation's culture is simply regarded as *'respecting the rules of society'*. Although conforming, *'a bit like good manners'*, is considered *'a natural way of behaviour'* for some people, the analogy of *'playing a game'* suggests this imposed obligation and expectation from organisations is something unnatural and artificial.

Carl believes his professional identity has not been undermined by his experience and that '*[it] is just part of life*'. His professionalism is demonstrated through his belief that librarians '*should try to embrace the values of your organisation... [but] doesn't mean you have to become a "yes" person*' as a way to support professional practice. Weighing customer experience and user welfare above personal feeling, Carl believes the offering of a cohesive service to be his professional obligation, where such professionalism must be maintained regardless of circumstances: '*so that people approach situations in a similar way [...] where seem to be a cohesive organisation [...] [which] it's better for the service*'. With a clear difference between '*putting your own, personal reservations to the back*' due to a lack of choice in order to survive in the organisation, and embracing the organisation's value as a way to provide a professional and consistent service as a practical approach by choice, Carl appeared to demonstrate an uncompromising professional integrity and principles that cannot, under any circumstances, be undermined.

#### **5.4.3 Supporting 'others': the basis of achievements**

Comprising of two middle-level themes, namely (1) 'professional pride' and (2) 'career and support', 'supporting "others"' emerged as a noticeable theme that ran through the interviews. Being firstly introduced in the description of his professional identity of helping people to information, followed by his articulation of the purpose of his professional existence being to support teaching and research, service for others appeared to be at the centre of Carl's professional mission and the basis for his sense of pride. Based around the service to others, '*I just want to do, to feel that I've made a difference to the department that I've worked in, erm, getting to, things to work in the most efficient way possible, helping staff to achieve their objectives [...] supporting er, high profile institutions*', the theme of facilitating 'others' has once again resurfaced. '*Being viewed as a professional and helping people find what they are looking for*' is another contributor to Carl's sense of pride. Based upon his professional mission, Carl believes one's professionalism is judged by the '*quality of [user's] experience*'. With the library being '*a supporting department [in] supporting teaching and research*', successfully supporting the academic communities and institutions to attain their goals by '*getting to, things to work in the most efficient way possible*' has, therefore, contributed to Carl's achievement. Considering it to be his professional duty to act as mentor to nurture the next generation of librarians to succeed in their career, Carl appeared to be dedicated to helping his staff '*to achieve their objectives*', particularly '*in the context of helping new staff who, perhaps, it's their first post*'.

Having experienced first-hand the effect of the lack of support from management, Carl is determined to empower his staff to excel and succeed in their career, which he considers to be his professional obligation and achievement.

#### **5.4.4 Users: the raison d'être**

As an important concept introduced by Carl, the middle-level theme 'users: the raison d'être' was used again as a super-ordinate theme. Believing users to be the sole purpose of librarians' professional existence, Carl acknowledged that *'if they weren't there then there will be no role for us'* and legitimising the rationale that *'everything is focused on them in the end'*. With users serving as librarians' livelihoods, it is imperative for them to readjust their priorities by putting users at the centre of their professional mission and daily practice, which *'always has been a focus, but it's more perhaps more so now'*. Observing how *'the student fees have made the students more of customer now more than ever'*, the transformation from *'the users of the service'* to users who are *'paying to use the service'* has resulted in a change of relationship and it is anticipated that this change of role will intensify users' expectations towards the service they receive. The fact that society is becoming a *'customer focused environment'*, with institutions *'particularly in academic libraries there are more competitions for students, it's much more commercial now'* means *'there's no way of avoiding [...] listening to what their users want [...] [where] they must be seen to be, listening'*. Another contributing factor to the development of users becoming the raison d'être is a shift of focus from librarians' perspectives in terms of the reprioritisation of tasks. *'In the past there was, perhaps more focus on erm, collection, building and collection development'* and *'an emphasis on acquiring things'*, whereas technological advances have seen librarians dedicate their efforts to *'help people adapt to new ways of finding information'*. The result of this more recent development has shifted the focus on professional practice with *'a lot of it is all to do with monitoring systems, how things are working and how people are using those systems [...] how much are they using them'*, turning librarians into facilitators between systems and users and allowing greater interactions between librarians and their user communities.

#### **5.4.5 Technology: the biggest impact on professional and personal life**

Serving as a significant concept, middle-level theme – 'impact of technology' informed the development of the super-ordinate theme 'technology: the biggest impact on professional and personal life'. Technology appears to have a major influence across Carl's professional and personal life. Stating that *'personal challenge was technology, for me, and it still is'*, and with

technology being the biggest change he has experienced, Carl believes technology has *'affected all areas of people's lives'* and, within his professional practice, has allowed *'greater efficiencies'* and altered the activities of librarians where *'technology has driven away how we do things, erm, it applies to all kind what used to call library house-keeping activities, you know circulations, acquisitions, interlibrary loans, it's affected everything'*. A shift of priority in his line of work has resulted in *'less focus on doing housekeeping things internally, erm, like cataloguing'*, which *'the library can delegate, to erm, to outsource'* and the traditional tasks *'are still there and they are still important but they are not quite as prominent'*. Changing *'life as a whole'*, Carl observed how the impact of technology has affected the way users access information as they are *'not restricted by opening hours by time and place'*. Changing library as place, *'the atmosphere has become more, more cafe-like. It's more, it's become more of a place to meet and chat, than at one time you know, exclusively, seen as a place to study'*. Having *'a lot to do with technology'*, modernisation and the redesigning of libraries has become necessary to *'cater for these two types of use by having designated areas for silent study and, not so silent, study'*.

On a personal level, Carl revealed that *'the biggest challenge to me was technology because I'm not a naturally, not naturally adapt with technology'*, and the fact that *'I had a bad experience really at library school with the computing part of the course'* has left a lasting impression and has left him feeling *'it must be me being stupid'* and that *'it really kind of knocked my confidence'* in using technology. With information technology and *'computers in libraries were in their infancy'*, and *'I thought it was very badly taught'* being the underpinning of Carl's uneasiness towards technology, the negative emotions of feeling incapable and inadequate, the frustration of feeling not good enough, have cast a shadow over Carl's career and made him believe that *'I'm not naturally adapt with technology'*. Suggesting a total acceptance of something that is innate and cannot be changed or manipulated, the use of *'naturally'* as a choice of word could infer Carl's belief that his feeling of inadequacy in technology could all be psychological. If things at library school were as *'sophisticated as they are now'*, Carl might have had an entirely different experience all together, which has illustrated the important role library schools play in the career and future of LIS professionals.

#### **5.4.6 Professional qualification and CPD**

This super-ordinate theme is combined of two middle-level themes, namely (1) library education and qualification and (2) professional knowledge and development. Reflecting on the library

school curriculum, Carl believes *'the area that's, I imagine, has improved in library school is the area, information technology'* which he considered to be a prominent area in today's teaching. Appreciating the value of library education, Carl viewed the professional qualification as an *'evidence of commitment to your profession'* and *'a commitment and determination to, to progress'*. Illustrating the value of the library qualification, Carl compared it to other entrance requirements as a standard point of entry to practice in other professions: *'it's like, you wouldn't be a lawyer without having your lawyers exams or your bankers exams or your solicitors exams would you? 'it's like any of the profession really that you've, you've been you had training in your profession and you've shown, evidence of, continued professional development'*. With the achievement of the library qualification being a natural step towards becoming a professional, Carl considered it to be *'the main thing'* that signifies professionalism. Other than serving as evidence of commitment and continuing professional development, Carl believes a library qualification can give an advantage under competitive situations *'if it comes to choosing between two [...] people for a post [who are] fairly equal in all of the respects, erm, the qualification would count in one person's favour'*. Having a professional qualification is also a necessity for career progression as *'there's always been, you know, if you start at the bottom, you don't need a qualification do you?'*, but then it would be an essential criteria if one is aspired to progress in the profession. Regarding this to be a standard practice in the trade, Carl believes that *'I don't think it has changed really'*.

Looking into the future of the profession, Carl believes new information professionals have *'got the knowledge but they need experience to develop those skills'*. Stressing experience as the underlying principle of becoming proficient, Carl saw no better way to develop than *'just by working really on the job experience'*. In order to enhance their professional knowledge, librarians need *'experience and keeping up to date. And signing up to appropriate alerting type services'* besides the *'formal training like library school'*. His experience of having *'made some very good appointments recently'* has given him an indication that new professionals *'must be doing something right'* in meeting the requirements, which suggests a healthy development. Going forward, Carl believes traditional skills, including some of the essential attributes, will continue to be valid with a *'lot of them around customer service. Er, intellectual curiosity, erm, facility for using information technology-based information. And, desire for, accuracy, attention to detail, [which] are kind of constant really. They've always been there'*. With the formats of information and the digital era continue to evolve, Carl predicted that the focus on *'technology is [going to be] more important than it was ten years ago'* and helping users to *'adapt to new ways*

*of finding information*' will also be a crucial role for librarians. For the profession to avoid a leadership gap, Carl believes '*planning ahead*' is the key to ensuring the next generation of leaders are prepared for what is to come. Suggesting organisations can internally '*support staff by encouraging them to go on training events, current awareness courses*', Carl proposed a broader collaborative effort '*with other sectors [...] maybe industry, commerce*' in particular '*the information units within these types of organisations*' to '*think of what's going to be required in the future*' to facilitate coherent planning. Considering leadership training to be an important area for continuing professional development, Carl believes that collaborations with other industries will allow librarians the opportunity to develop and broaden their horizon.

## **5.5 Convergent themes**

### **5.5.1 Unwavering role and identity: librarians adapt in accordance with professional mission**

One of the main findings from the three cases was the perception of the practitioners' own professional role and identity as experienced by the interviewees. Considering that the role and identity originate from the same concept (*they are very closely [related]* **Carl**), the three participants unanimously related their professional identity to the purpose and common mission of the profession. Having all experienced a varying degree of change throughout their professional lives regardless of positions, experience, and length of service, the narratives of all the participants indicated their founding values have endured the change and that the principles of their professional mission have continued throughout their career:

#### **Alex:**

*'In terms of my professional identity, you know I think I'd consider myself a librarian in a way I consider everyone who works in, you know er, with me, a librarian. Em, and I don't mind telling people I'm a librarian, but I wouldn't say, it's the one thing that, identifies me as different from anyone else you know, it's part of who I am.'*

*'our role is to facilitate and enable, and to and broker, err you know, may be a glue, er, do things that no one else can do or, they don't want to do or they don't understand, em, and it's a platform for other people'*

**Beth:**

*'we provide the information in whatever format it's available. And, enable people to use it, as effectively as possible. That's in just a nutshell. Em, which's sort of cover all the things that you have to do to make that happen, both physically and electronically.'*

*'helping [...] help people to find the information in the best way. And that's the basis of it all you know. I remember when I was in the school library cataloguing things and helping them to find things, em, and now in electronic world you know helping people to find the right information and use it.'*

**Carl:**

*'I'd say my role is to, erm, help people, find the information that they want in the, shortest time possible. So I and I think that's always been the case. It's just the means to doing it, have changed now so I don't think, I don't think the, the essence of the role has changed, really. It's just the, paraphernalia surrounding it they are all different now.'*

There is an implied timeframe of the 'then and now' in reference to their past experience when the practitioners describe their professional identity. This suggests that the participants do not see an alteration in their professional identity, even after all the changes they have experienced and witnessed in the profession. Even though he is almost at the top of his career, Alex still considers himself a librarian (*'I don't mind telling people I'm a librarian'*) and continues to embrace such an identity rather than adopting some other prestigious title; while Beth believes that, whether it was *'in the school library cataloguing things'* or *'now in electronic world'*, her role to help people finding the information they need has maintained, regardless of the medium; and Carl has simply pointed out that the means had not, and will not, alter the cause (*'that's always been the case' 'I don't think the, the essence of the role has changed'*). Offering their own interpretations of the concept and philosophical underpinnings of librarianship, the participants have together associated their identity with traditional concepts such as 'librarian' and 'information'. This idea of connecting people and information as the fundamental principle of their role can be traced across the various narratives, while the most representative interpretation has been encapsulated by Alex: *'our role is to facilitate and enable [...] it's a platform for other people'* with the common mission to *'organising safeguarding knowledge and information so people can use it, have their information needs met'*. Such comment evidences

how librarians have kept 'practice' in mind regardless of the changes, whether it is with the medium or process, that basic service principle has proved to be timeless for them. Emphasising *'it's what you do that matters not what you call [the library]'*, Carl has acknowledged that librarians are constrained by their wider context, and such realisation has prompted his acceptance of change as a natural process and a way to progress, since *'otherwise we'd still be, you know, writing with quill pens and typing catalogue cards'*. Convinced of the future existence of the role (*'there'll always be need for that' 'still a need for it I wouldn't say we we're not needed anymore' Beth*), the participants believe they may have to go a different way in delivering their service as a response to change. Since *'what we are doing is essentially based around context and philosophies [...] around creating trusted information environments, about helping people learn and how to access information and have skills' (Alex)*, and while this common mission, which acts as the professional blueprint, will remain, adjustments will nevertheless have to be made in order to fit in with wider environmental needs and demands.

Describing how the wider environment and the different paraphernalia surrounding their role has influenced the way librarians carry out their duties, Carl has illustrated the relationship between the purpose and process of the profession as a way to explain how the changes took place: *'the purpose of my job hasn't changed it's just that, the details the way things are done that has changed. Let me you know in the case of a current academic institution, the library has the library has always existed to support teaching and research and they that hasn't changed and, I don't see it changing. The way things the way you do things might change, but the end result has, your reason for doing it is the same'*. While reviewing her own career path, Beth also believes her role has not changed over the years: *'it hasn't changed hugely in the time that I've been in it, that's the main thing I could say' 'it was always the teaching and the information skills that attracted me about the whole process [...] that's what I always focus on so I haven't I haven't noticed any huge change from that point of view'*. Beth's comment suggests that, like Carl, she has taken a similar approach in conceptualising the role and identity in a way that she is considering her professional identity from a duty-outcome perspective, where both participants are interpreting their professional identity in view of the purpose and essential tasks of the role. In the case of Alex, he is relating his professional identity with 'a librarian' instead of applying other terminologies, despite his position in senior management. Even after acknowledging his change of behaviour, which he believes to be an inevitable process as he progresses up the career ladder, Alex still considers himself a librarian through and through in

spite of his transformation and the changes he experienced. The three narratives have a significant implication in demonstrating how librarians are adapting in accordance with the environments, whether it be from a procedural or emotional perspective, all the while having the core professional mission in their hearts.

Amongst the various changes affecting the profession, the three participants have all agreed that the advancement of technology was the main contributor in redesigning the professional way of life. It is the biggest driver behind the current status quo and future planning of library services on both an operational and strategic front:

**Alex:**

*'I think there are certainly changes are manifesting because of, the ... advances in technology, that we've all experienced socially. So, you know, the ubiquity and the pervasiveness of, online media and em, you know em ... people living their lives online [...] the rise of the web and the role of the web in people's daily lives their everyday lives has become incredibly strong. Em, for younger generation it's become a very different kind of thing than it is for the older generations. Er, we know that having internet access at home has become like a utility, but we also know about people's attention, trust, er how they engage with the world around them is very different depending on their age and depending er on their experience [...] so, the world moves very fast. And er ... toddlers now with who intuitively understand, well developed and designed you know, touch interfaces you know, so, children with with er, iPads, use them in a way adults can't.'*

**Beth:**

*'it's the move obviously from the physical media to the electronic which is different, expanding all the time.'*

*'now we are talking electronic information rather than information in the library itself, there is, there are a lot of different ways of finding that information'*

*'I mean the physical library will still be there, but, particularly on the health and sciences side, electronic information just sort of completely taken over from them'*

*and you know, academics they health and sciences academics just don't come into the library full stop it's completely rare.'*

**Carl:**

*'technology has driven away we do things, erm, it applies to all kind what used to call library house-keeping activities you know circulations acquisitions interlibrary loans it's affected everything.'*

*'there were big changes obviously in the way, things were done just through the pace of automation things more things becoming electronically searchable, that was, that was that was the biggest change, I've seen [...] I think that's true of, life as a whole [...] It's affected all areas of people's lives ... So where things were very much, paper-based, erm, things' been paper-based meant that they were also time and place restricted [...] But of course now it's a lot of resources are completely independent of, physical restrictions so, that's really the biggest change.'*

In addition to explaining the cause of the changes that the participants have experienced in the profession, the above excerpts have also offered insights into what is to come, as illustrated in the discussion of the technological habits and their applications in young people's lives. This observation has provided a focus and direction for service preparation in the future. Another area of change, which is particularly noticeable and has considerable significance, is an increasing effort of collaborations across departments and between institutions and organisations:

**Alex:**

*'I think the biggest challenges, er ..., influencing er, colleagues and stakeholders, who, have a different set of priorities and understanding er, and typically that could be er, people working in em IT, it could be people working in finance, em, explaining why and how libraries work, er, demonstrating value, articulating business requirements [...] reaching consensus and a shared understanding to, work together, for the good of the organisation.'*

**Beth:**

*'we, knew quite a lot of people, who were, who were already taken on, em, [anonymised research system], em particularly the University of [anonymised] and the University of [anonymised], em we are in touch with them. We have to, we didn't have to go through the full tendering process for it luckily, because we were able to piggyback on [anonymised]'s em, tendering, so it didn't take too long hopefully to get it.'*

*'because I'm in the new directorate now, that I've got to know other people and I've got to know people through being on other projects [...] some of the projects I've been involved with have, not just been with the library so I've had a lot to do with IT people through developing the em the previous [anonymised research system] and now the current one. And now, I'm getting to know the other side of the research the other side of things [...] I've been to the odd talk em I went on recently em, a CILIP em session where, [anonymised] asked me to speak about my research support [work]*

**Carl:**

*'Well I'm trying to start with [anonymised supplier]. It's just linking everything up.'*

*'there was more of a fixation on [organising the collection] than previously whereas, if you look at nowadays, erm, the growth of shelf-ready services and, the focus is not on these areas erm, you know there's still a need for those things, but they are something that perhaps erm, the library can delegate, to erm, to outsource as you know.'*

Reprioritising the service's focus and expanding the sphere of professional activities are believed to be inevitable developments that are vital for progression. These changes can be understood as the '*paraphernalia surrounding the role*', which Carl described. Nevertheless, these potential circumstances have not altered the essence of the professional mission of librarianship. The narratives have demonstrated that the scope within the participants' tasks has expanded and the way processes are carried out, including the facilitators of the service, has changed, although it does not in any way alter the purpose of the profession. An example of user support has provided an illustration of how librarians' professional mission has remained.

Acknowledging users as being the *'raison d'être'* (**Carl**), the participants have continued to appreciate their role in helping users to find information as the core value system of their professionalism (*'that's what you, exist to do'* **Carl**), because *'if they weren't there then there will be no role for us [...] everything is focused on them in the end'* (**Carl**). When considering this to be the essence of the role, which has remained timeless, the participants' awareness that the user agenda, which *'always has been there'* (**Carl**), has now risen up on the organisation's priority list (*'there's more awareness now of erm, because erm of users because we are in a much more, customer focused environment [...] people are much more aware of them so it's consumers of information now'* **Carl**) and has an immense implication on the planning of service provision as well as librarians' tasks within the establishment. It could therefore be argued that the user becoming the *raison d'être*, being the eternal principle of the librarian's role, has been reprioritised instead of it emerging as a new role. The idea of users becoming the paying customers has suggested a change of relationship: *'the students, more of customer now more than ever'* (**Carl**) *'students at universities become paying customers'* (**Alex**), and what comes with this change is the raising of expectations. The reprioritisation of focus to *'keep everybody happy, particularly students these days'* (**Beth**) can therefore be seen as a reflection to address the changes in the new environments.

The participants believe that, for them to survive in the new environment, they will have to develop a strategy to maintain their core mission while they together progress within the profession. By having an awareness of their professional strength and developing an ability to assess situations and analyse their environments, librarians will have the competitive advantage in times of change. Suggestions of accurate positioning of self to apply their unique skills and, at the same time, actively engaging with their role and proactively contributing to research and learning are ways in which librarians can take control of their professional destiny and adapt to the evolving challenges. In this way, librarians can successfully preserve their professional values and identity while they progress with the changes.

**Alex:**

*'we have to understand where we should position ourselves [...] it's fine to talk about Big Data [...] What is that? What is our role in it? Er, let's find where we can add unique value that's legitimate that's real that's within our reach.'*

*'finding that position that sweet spot where we can do the stuff no one else can do'*

**Beth:**

*'[information specialists] are still maintaining their same role and identity but they can, engage with it'*

*'one way of us being able to engage with people [is] to understand what [users] are interested to do'*

The significance of the given examples is projected through the resilient nature of librarians' role, where the participants are advocating a forward-looking approach in creating a place for their professional existence. It is important to note the upholding of the 'core' as participants encourage an innovative application of librarians' skills and expertise in the new and updated service areas. Whilst they continue '*maintaining their same role and identity*' (**Beth**), librarians should pay attention to the detailed aspects of the service and to find '*that sweet spot*' to '*add unique value*' (**Alex**) so that they can contribute in a meaningful manner. Instead of suggesting that librarians should transform into something different, all the examples are pointing at the direction of adapting their role in the new environments. Although adaptation involves adjustment and creativity, it is nevertheless an attempt to change whilst remaining in harmony with the core principles and foundations of the professional mission.

### **5.5.2 Librarianship: an important role unappreciated and misunderstood**

There is a consensus from the three participants that librarians play an important role in society. They believe the focus on the development of science and research, as reflected in governments' investment, means '*you would expect information professionals including librarians to therefore be pivotal, em and I would argue that in many cases we are*' (**Alex**). Nevertheless, it is not a notion commonly shared by the outside world: '*I think being a librarian [...] genuinely em important role in society. I think it's not understood to the degree it should. Em, you know, information and knowledge are fundamental, where you know, we are told that we have an information society, we are told we have a knowledge economy [...] but overlook the role of libraries [...] And I think there's not a, a sufficient value placed on the role of the profession*' (**Alex**). The statement presents a criticism towards society for delivering a mixed message when they are promoting a learning society and knowledge economy on the one hand, and yet disregarding the function of libraries on the other. Such a disparity could be stemmed from a conventional misconception and a failure to comprehend the relationship between

librarianship and information and knowledge. The participants believe that the purpose and value of the LIS profession has not been understood or appreciated by the general public, and such a lack of appreciation has often extended to their own institutional context within higher education: *'you don't see a lot of what we do I supposed. It's more visible when you are taking a class, and you know you are doing your training [...] understanding the research process and the publication process, it's something that, the world if you like, erm understanding what a librarian does, wouldn't think it was anything to do with that. But in academic circles, erm, even, even in academia itself, academic staff might not think it was a concern of the library that they should be thinking about, that at all (Beth)*. It can, therefore, be assumed that the lack of physical visibility of their contributions is another reason for people's incomprehension of the role of librarians: *'I honestly think that, we are the victim of our own success because I think we've been at the cutting-edge of a lot of em, innovation, em and so by the time it reaches everyone else, they think you aren't doing it. They don't see you done it already' 'when you are successful, then you know your intervention goes unnoticed' 'if we are successful then, then we risk being invisible' (Alex)*. There is no ambiguity in the participants' minds of the value of their professional role, in which they have taken great pride. Participants have argued that, just because the end users and academics *'don't see a lot of what we do'*, they automatically assume *'you aren't doing it' (Alex)*, which does not change the contributions made or the hard work of the librarians behind the scenes. The metaphor of invisibility implies success is a powerful yet revealing analogy in redefining the meaning of achievements. Where the traditional concept of success is usually visible, Alex has argued against the common belief by explaining how success cannot be quantified since librarianship is, by its very nature, a servicing profession. Through their effective interventions, a seamless service operation and delivery is, therefore, an evidence of success. By drawing a parallel between invisibility and success, the importance of the role performed by librarians in society has once again been reaffirmed.

In addition to their role being taken for granted, librarians' professionalism and expertise does not usually correspond with monetary rewards (*'you're never gonna be rich, working as librarian, em, in terms of wealth' Alex*) or being granted the social status as it does for their counterparts in other professions. Typically, librarians' jobs are first on the line when it comes to budget cuts, especially in times of austerity, as experienced in recent years by librarians within the context of public libraries in the UK:

**Alex:** *'contrary to what we expect from the statue books public libraries services are being, em, you know, decimated and turned over to the big society and volunteers.'*

**Carl:** *'all the, the cuts in public library services that have been made and there's this idea that, libraries can be run by volunteers. Erm, it's been it's because it seems, as a soft option really, people are less likely to, feel strongly about, libraries than they are about health or education or, transport.'*

While admitting *'the academic libraries [are] on, safer ground, because it has, the university has a specific programme'* (**Carl**), the general observation from the participants has nevertheless indicated a trend of continual marginalisation of the profession as a whole. With the advancing technologies accelerating in every corner, the development has brought about greater efficiencies and, at the same time, a new focus for librarians. As a result of the increasing reliance and popularity of automated procedures, the library has witnessed the traditional housekeeping activities disappearing over the years. Whilst the hybrid library and other digital interfaces are becoming the norm, the decreasing numbers of library visitors and print resources have contributed to a skewed assumption that librarians are now obsolete. Ironically, by providing a seamless service for users, librarians have actually aggravated the situation by exacerbating their perceived professional existence even further: *'one of the consequences of everything moving more electronic and also the efforts that the library makes to make that as seamless as possible so that people don't have to jump through too many hoops to get what they want, is that many em, of the end users don't actually realise that we've paid for and have made these things available for them they think they are just there free on the web'* (**Beth**). The statement has expressed an outcry for injustice when librarians' professionalism is being crucified and, worst still, misunderstood by the very constitution they served. This positional dilemma has mirrored Alex's point about librarians being the victims of their own success because of the nature of their role (*'we are the victim of our own success because I think we've been at the cutting-edge of a lot of em, innovation, em and so by the time it reaches everyone else, they think you aren't doing it. They don't see you done it already [...] And now people think we don't have that, we haven't done that'* **Alex**).

Another implication for changing priorities in library services is the creation of more prominent tasks for librarians. As Beth observes, technologies have replaced the less skilful and menial jobs for junior staff, as seen in the case of information assistants: *'a higher proportion of the*

people working in libraries [...] are not doing the more menial tasks. So there may be [...] more interesting jobs' (**Beth**). Electronic resources, online databases and other digital media have broadened the dimensions for information discovery, which has made the physical library and print collections a thing of the past ('*in the past, the library was the library, and everyone came to the library and did your reference interviews and all the rest of it and just isn't like that anymore*' **Beth**). For librarians, the advancing technologies have intensified the demand on supporting teaching and research; as a result, it has illuminated their educating role, which is typically exemplified in the form of information literacy skills teaching. The popular use of Google has widened the debate on the role of librarians. In addition to the common assumptions of invisibility implies redundant, the three participants have argued the point of quality against quantity regarding information seeking:

**Alex:**

*'These new technologies the way information presented you know, we are told there are things called digital natives, er, they might be digital natives but th-that doesn't mean that they are di-digitally literate. We are told we've got a Google generation that's the people who use it, that doesn't mean they know how to use it particularly well'*

**Beth:**

*'although Google search is pretty clever and its algorithm and all of the rest of it, but it certainly doesn't get you necessarily the best em, results academically. So, I think [the educating role] it's increasingly importantly now really. Em because, em, now that, people just don't come in to the library and borrow books em, and get their information from there em, the teaching people had to extract information is, is, just a much more prominent side of what the library is there to do. Because you can't just sort of have a physical library there and say you know, come and get it or even, have electronic resources sitting there that we produce for them and say, come and get them because, em, just having them there doesn't make them as useful as if you know how to get the most out of them'*

**Carl:**

*'I think it's a question of, quality and quantity. Erm, librarians have an understanding of how, the process that resources go through to be published like journals for*

*instance the fact that they are peer reviewed erm. Er, so, if you are not too concerned about, the quality of your or the authenticity of your information then, then Google is fine and if you want a quick answer to something it's fine. But erm, you have to be, beware that of the pitfalls of the internet [...] Google has its part to play and Google is useful in many ways but, erm, it's important to keep, quality, in mind'*

Librarians' professional knowledge and expertise, which they have gained through years of experience, is unquestionable as far as the participants are concerned ('*[librarians are] familiar with the key, and quality resources and their in their area, which people might not, easily come across'* **Carl**). While accepting Google has its advantages, the participants do not believe it can replace the human intellect, however '*clever*' and '*useful*' (**Beth**) Google might be. A common assumption that the easy accessibility of information online implies one must be information literate and having the research competence was highlighted in the discussion. This form of association, which the participants believe to be a general misconception, is the cause for the undermining of librarians' professional identity and existence. The participants have challenged that, by providing resources to users, it does not necessarily mean they will learn to use them intuitively; nor does the using of resources guarantee effective application and manipulation. With the issue of quality to consider, it means that, in order to fulfil their academic purposes and yield desirable results, users will need help from librarians, who are experts in quality information and resources, to guide them through the process. As a traditional task in the profession, librarians' educating role has become, more than ever, increasingly important and prominent in the digital age.

Despite the numerous classical assumptions and misconceptions, the participants have remained positive and confident of their professional value. Even if they are not being understood by the general public and the constitution they serve, it has not diminished their professionalism, as demonstrated by their self-recognition of their own contributions. Such determination is demonstrated through the perception of their own professional status and social standing:

**Alex:**

*'I don't want to undermine the professional status we have. I want to support it. How I do that, is may be not through the professional body. Em, that might be through*

*being a good professional. You know er, so you know er, deeds not words and, be the change you want to see in the world'*

**Beth:**

*'[information skills teaching] it's the same, I felt sort of roughly on a par with the academics. Yeah I think so. I mean it's a different kind of it's ... I suppose it's an ancillary skill but it's such an important skill and I and I didn't feel it was sort of a, poor relation.'*

*'[information specialists] do have you know, a reasonable status erm. And, when they are doing teaching as we were saying earlier they are doing the same kind of teaching as an academic would [...] they're [...] certainly on the level with any, academic er. [...] so I wouldn't want to put it up too high, but I wouldn't like to belittle [ourselves] we got our place!'*

**Carl:**

*'I think I think you just have to do a good job. Judged by how you how well you do the job. And that's all you can do.'*

There is a sense of conviction and defiance from the above statements, as the participants deliver this simple message of being a good professional and doing a good job as a way to uphold their professional status. The idea of '*just do whatever you do the best you can*' (**Beth**) has echoed across the three narratives, which has demonstrated how the participants have remained truthful to their core principles that have made them unique rather than employing calculating means to seek attention and gain public support. The fact that the participants are not overly concerned with their professional status in itself can be revealing. One way of looking at it is that participants believe they have already possessed the necessary status that has been recognised amongst practitioners, the professional bodies and within the profession. Their awareness of their core values and confidence of their professional abilities have signified the status they perceived in themselves. There is, therefore, no need to fight for more status and recognition simply because they already know their worth. And, because they are not wasting valuable time and efforts in pursuing unnecessary fame and vanity, it can be understood that librarianship, being a service for others, is an authenticated profession that is making genuine contributions with a difference. Nevertheless, participants believe that professional reputation in

terms of making people understand the true nature of the profession is both necessary and beneficial for their work and progression, as Alex advocates to showcase what the LIS profession is about: *'it's ... education isn't it. Er, if you show people what the facts are, er, which tell a different story, then you will help educate them as to, what the real picture looks like'*. Education is, therefore, needed in order to change the public's perception and to inform people of the truth about the profession. Similarly, Beth has highlighted academic staff's attachment to the traditional concept of a library: *'still a lot of the staff in the college, still think of the library in the old way a bit just being the library full of books, and don't realise some of the skills that we have already had for quite a few years but they haven't realised'*. Believing the problem lies in their inability to comprehend the concept of a modern-day library, thus the people working in it, Beth acknowledges how academic staff have no idea of the skills librarians have and the services they provide. Communication and education offer an approach to persuade and in time, alter people's understanding of the contributions of librarians.

### **5.5.3 Demonstrating value: pressure to justify existence**

Whilst believing librarians are successful in their own right, irrespective of public opinion, and that they have played an important role in academia and society, the participants have nevertheless made an observation of how librarians are under pressure and are obliged to justify their value. Such observation is evidenced by the conscious decision librarians have made to demonstrate their value and impact, which is often manifested through their efforts to keep pace with the popular trends and their attempts to communicate their achievements on every available platform. The influence of traditional preconceptions and the changing environments, as discussed in the previous section, have played a major role in causing anxiety and triggering the need in librarians to *'blowing your own trumpet a little bit'* (**Beth**). To a larger extent, librarians' roles being undervalued, and the wider college community and the outside world's lack of understanding, is the underlying cause for librarians to take action in demonstrating their value-for-money services. It is as though the more cohesive public opinions are, the more their ideas are being accepted as 'truth', making participants feel they have to constantly battle against public prejudice and stereotyping, which they find challenging:

**Alex:** *'we are going through a time where there is a popular myth that, information professionals and librarians are, by concept, by the age redundant, er, makes it a challenge. Because you feel sometimes you're having to make, argue a case for things which you know, would argued in one, year's ago'*

**Beth:** *'because academics now, see the library not really the place where they need to come as to the time they might wonder why we actually need certain staff to be there still. So you have got to justify your existence'*

With every aspect of people's lives moving increasingly towards the digital media, this development is shifting the concept of the traditional library. As a result of modernisation to meet the changing needs, the development of a hybrid library has created the illusion that the library is no longer needed simply because people are no longer visiting the library and using its resources physically. Librarians are constantly forced to explain their positions with an aim to convince stakeholders and to put their message and argument across. Besides feeling frustrated, the enormous pressure now being imposed upon the participants has provided them with legitimate reasons to go the extra mile to showcase their success stories as a way to increase their professional appeal. With their professional position at stake, the act of demonstrating value has actually served as a defence mechanism for librarians to protect the continuity of their professional values and existence.

Using the example of practitioners following popular trends, Alex has identified how librarians, like the people living in the widespread celebrity culture, desire to be in with the crowd by doing what he called 'bandwagon jumping' because of their professional insecurity: *'I think it's fair to say there is a, er a growing phenomena where people want to become a celebrity, and be famous for being famous. Hence this hideous, relentless, stream of talent shows, on television'*. Whilst Alex has disapproved of the practice and believed *'that shouldn't be how we think'*, the example has nevertheless demonstrated how the pressure to justify their value, added to the profession being under threat, can push practitioners to the extremes just to get their voices heard. Sharing a similar view, Carl believes librarians and institutions are carrying out comparable practices simply because *'nobody wants to be seen in a bad light'* and *'there's an element of not wanting to be left out, left behind'*. This idea of not wanting to be left out is similar to Alex's idea of bandwagon jumping, where librarians are so eager to gain recognition that they are doing it at the expense of thorough analysis and rationality. Together with the pressure of users becoming paying customers, Carl believes it has made the demonstrating of value more important. Such an understanding allows him to appreciate the reason for librarians and institutions wanting to follow the others: *'I think they, they can't avoid, listening to, what their users want [...] they must be seen to be, listening. Because that, with the obviously the student*

*fees have made, the students, more of customer now more than ever. Whereas before they were just the users of the service you could say, they are actually paying to use the service now'. Predicting a rise in user expectations, Alex and Beth shared the opinion that the increased tuition fees will impact on service demand:*

**Beth:** *'It's probably made them more even more demanding, than they were before expect everything to be provided [for them]'*

**Alex:** *'changes in student finance are, something which we would expect to change expectations but so far they don't seem to make a huge difference but they will do. And that's gonna happen year by year'*

Student as paying customers has changed the relationship between the library and users. These rising expectations has in turn applied further pressure on librarians to evidence their contributions to the research and learning experience of users and to showcase their professional value in academia. Whilst agreeing that it is useful and important to demonstrate their impact, participants believe it is 'difficult' to articulate and more so to measure their professional value and impact because of the nature of the service:

**Alex:**

*'demonstrating value and impact [...] doing that is quite difficult, are you trying to show, what you know, have we got a figure for, the net worth, of librarians in the UK for the UK economy. Em, you know some activities, some professions and activities would have a figure there, have we got a figure can we calculate it I don't know [...] some things are difficult to measure by their very nature [...] I think we just have to do a lot more work on how we how em articulate our value and impact, and that's the difficult thing to do.'*

**Beth:**

*'Measure it, that's quite difficult measuring it. It's difficult.'*

*'It's quite difficult to do even in teaching you know because not many of us actually sort of examine the students or anything [...] but I think the fact that the library, is being drawn into these other things you know people are consulting us from other*

*parts of the college, must say something you know that they, so the fact that they are asking us is a kind of measure, that, they know, that we should have the answers and are probably willing to share them with them [...] trying to measure something like that, is almost impossible really I think.'*

**Carl:**

*'I think the quality of the service will speak for itself but it will be highlighted in erm, surveys and, feedback.'*

By repeatedly emphasising how difficult it is to meaningfully measure value and impact, the participants have highlighted the challenge in terms of the practicality and accuracy of measuring librarians' value and contributions. Instead of obtaining meaningful figures, participants have considered consultation practice and traditional surveys as alternatives in order to gauge service quality and measure librarians' professional value. The fact that these 'better alternatives' are equally ambiguous suggests the complications involved when implementing the procedures. Arguing the case for librarians, Alex chooses to demonstrate their value by taking away the support they offered: *'I know that if you took librarians away from the university and all the services they offer, er, things will get very difficult very quickly'*. Despite the challenge discussed, Alex remains adamant that librarians should work towards a plausible plan to make their achievements known (*'we do have to look really carefully about how we articulate what value and impact we bring er, to our organisations and to society at large'*). Carl believes the credibility of evaluation depends upon putting forward the right questions (*'you need to ask the right questions'*) if librarians decided to continue with their current survey practice.

#### **5.5.4 Continuing professional development: the essential role of library education and the importance of practical knowledge and current awareness**

Library school remains an essential part in librarians' professional development and to prepare librarians to fulfil the requirements of practice. Whilst agreeing that not everything can be covered in library school, the participants nevertheless believe the design of the curriculum could deliver the basics by teaching the background of the profession so that new professionals can acquire the basic skills and develop an understanding and knowledge of how the profession operates (*'you've can't teach everything in library school you got to still know the basics'* **Beth**). Using the example of cataloguing and classification, Beth illustrates the benefits of having the background knowledge and basic understandings of traditional library skills to suitably apply the

principles across the new environments (*'[information specialists] just need to be aware of the background. But they are aware of it in terms of thesaurus for databases so that you know, not for library catalogues but for, for databases they are still aware'*). On top of fulfilling the requirements of practice, Alex believes that a wider consideration and the knowledge of broader issues through formal library education can provide librarians the panorama to effectively assess their positions within the professional context: *'I mean you know I [...] don't have to read Manuel Castells or, understand the knowledge economy particularly or, think about the history of resource description in my job, but it's useful to know, I think it's useful to know in a professional context, em, its it adds a richness to what you do and where you sight yourself in your in your work'*. To demonstrate the importance of library education, the participants have considered professional qualification to be mandatory and served as a prerequisite for entry into the profession. Working as an underpinning to their professionalism, participants believe professional qualification is what separates them from non-professionals. Signifying commitment, it is a means which allows them to belong to a profession than simply doing a job and ultimately constitutes to their sense of pride and purpose:

**Carl:** *'It's evidence of, a commitment to your, profession, to have qualification.'* *'It's like, you wouldn't be a lawyer without having your lawyers exams or your bankers exams or your solicitors exams would you?'*

**Alex:** *'Er, profession, is something where em, you know er, that career, that job, is, related to one professional activity, and is seen as profession has a recognition or its em, er transmitted, is er ... you know, there're some form of educational route there's some qualification some accreditation which sets it apart from something you know, which might not be we could talk about blue collar v. white collar em, but you know, tho that that would set those terms apart.'*

The example has highlighted participants' awareness of the common practice of using professional qualifications and accreditation schemes, not only as an entry requirement as used by other professions, but also as a way to gain acceptance and recognition as 'professionals'. By putting themselves in the same bracket with other white collar professionals such as lawyers and bankers, librarians seek to achieve their social standing through the highly-valued professional qualification. The attainment of formal qualification has therefore legitimised their positions as professionals and created a prestigious status for them that has been

acknowledged by practitioners themselves, as well as those within the professional circle. In addition to professional pride, participants have also associated professional qualification with its accompanied benefits by stating its advantage in times of stiff job competition and have considered it an essential condition for career progression:

**Alex:** *'profession is when they start saying okay I'll go down the professional route and that will be defined by professional body and here's the qualification you get, and here's how you do it and that gives me access to this.'*

**Beth:** *'I would say for an information specialist it is still important. Em ... and ... yeah, I would have thought to progress, in any part of the library service, I think you need you would need it to have the overall background and the understanding of the whole process.'*

**Carl:** *'if it comes to choosing between two, say a people for a post to a fairly equal in all of the respects, erm, the qualification would count in one person's favour.'*

Appreciating the value of professional qualification, the statements have demonstrated participants' attitudes towards library education where they have continued to endorse its significant impact and relevance in the development of the profession. Whilst formal education has provided the necessary background for professionals, practical experience is a highly regarded CPD approach following library school training to allow theories to be put into practice. Nothing short of widespread approval, the emphasis on current awareness and the building on the foundation of practical knowledge as the main framework for CPD have been shared amongst participants. With practice and experience situated at the heart of professional development, participants believe that the value of *'on the job experience'* (**Carl**) should not be taken for granted. Instead of mindlessly following fashionable means and employing unsustainable methods, it is recommended that librarians build on existing knowledge and develop their skills and experience gained from their daily work:

**Alex:** *'we are living in a consumer society where people think they can buy experience [...] You, get good at something by doing it.'*

**Carl:** *'they got the knowledge but they need experience to develop those skills [...] it's just by working really, on the job experience.'*

Strongly supporting the use of practice and experience as the best ways for librarians to develop professionally, participants advised colleagues to enjoy what they do (*'be confident, enjoy ourselves, do some good'* **Alex**) in order to get the most out of their career:

**Beth:** *'you have to be willing to put in put in the extra effort I think, and just, do whatever you do the best you can'*

**Carl:** *'I think you just have to do a good job. Judged by how you how well you do the job. And that's all you can do.'*

The idea of putting in their best effort has been introduced from the statements, where participants believe continuing progression can only be achieved through enthusiasm, hence *'to be interested'* (**Beth**) in the job is the basis of any professional development. Since doing a good job is not something that can be forced, in order for people to be motivated to put in that extra effort and develop professionally, they need to be interested in what they do. Doing a good job to the best of their ability can be interpreted as a demonstration of pride and professionalism that is in accordance with one's values. Besides practising in their role and developing their skills through experience, participants have repeatedly emphasised the importance of current awareness, where practitioners need to keep up to date with the latest issues (*'just making sure they know what's going on and keep up with it'* **Beth**) and maintain their relevance by identifying their strengths, positions and best areas to contribute:

**Alex:** *'stay relevant, er, understand what's going on, you know at wider level'*

**Carl:** *'a combination of, formal training like library school and, erm, experience and keeping up to date.'*

**Beth:** *'just need to, to keep up with things and to make sure that we are always relevant to people [...] Just need to sort of keep up with things you know [...] be more aware of the trends really and getting involved'*

Recommending the use of traditional methods, participants have suggested that attending courses, reading professional publications and signing up to mailing lists as ways of keeping up to date and staying alert to current professional affairs:

**Carl:** *'signing up to, appropriate, alerting type services, that sort of things.'*

**Beth:** *'they need to sort of being on the mailing lists and making sure they know what the latest trends are really just keep up to date. I always thought that was important. They should be reading you know the, the library em, the research publications for the librarians and em er keeping up with them'*

*'if they need to go on courses go on courses. I've always sort of felt that that was important and has always been em valued here you know that people should develop themselves'*

Participants' opinions on the validity and timelessness of traditional methods are evidenced in the above statements. By stating *'I don't think there's anything new about'* attending training courses and related events, which is something they have *'always sort of felt that that was important and has always been valued'* (**Beth**), it is clear that the participants have continued to appreciate the value of traditional courses and training for their professional development. It is important to note that there is a proactive element in carrying out CPD activities, where *'people should develop themselves'* (**Beth**), suggesting a conscious decision to improve and take charge of their career and professional future. *'If they need to go on courses go on courses'* and *'do whatever works for you'* (**Beth**) indicates a flexible approach to personal development. Such a proactive attitude is also applicable in other areas. Advocating the importance of establishing an external professional network, participants have advised librarians to collaborate and connect with the outside world with a view to developing a wider perspective:

**Alex:** *'not to sit in an ivory tower. Not to kind of build walls, or live in a silo'*

**Beth:** *'I suppose making contacts getting to know other people in the college getting to know people outside of library services I think that has been quite important'*

**Carl:** *'By trying to, think of what's going to be required in the future by collaborating with other sectors perhaps. Well may be industry, commerce. Erm ... well I'm thinking of in the information units within these types of organisations.'*

Getting in touch with the wider environments has been emphasised in the participants' responses as something they have personal experience of and have considered it to be particularly important in current practice. With joint ventures becoming a common phenomenon, people are aware of the power in which collaboration brings in doubling their chances of success. While deepening the network of communication and reaching out, the participants have illustrated how librarians could extend their circle of contacts, thus creating a network with the wider college community and collaborating with the various information units in other sectors. It is believed that having external contacts is a useful way to gain a wider perspective and develop knowledge to support professional development.

#### **5.5.5 Deep impact of organisational culture on professional self and identity**

The impact of organisational culture is one of the major themes that has emerged from the three cases. Affecting the participants on different levels and to varying extents, the effects of the organisation's value and management's influence have not only impacted on the overall work ethos and service directions, but have also potentially shaped the participants' perceptions towards their professional identity. With HE institutions facing competition from across the board on a national and global scale, the pressure has ultimately trickled down the organisations, while librarians, being at the sharp end, continue to be taking the brunt. Highlighting an observation of how *'universities are becoming more like brands everyday'* (**Alex**), this prominent idea on an institution's competitiveness and commercialisation has resonated amongst participants:

**Alex:** *'I think what we are seeing is that, many er organisations are becoming increasingly corporate because they feel they have to survive and compete, with each other, and the rest of the world! Yeah? Em, and that's certainly affects how people do their job, everywhere, including er, librarianship and library services. It, I think it affects how we behave, I think it affects how we think about ourselves, I think it affects how we plan how we deliver services. And I think we have to become more and more rigorous, around er, why we do what we do.'*

**Beth:** *'talking about becoming more competitive well it certainly is here at [anonymised] because em, they are really interested in their rankings you know, the Times Higher and the rest of it [...] we sort of have to be on the ball, and ready to help wherever we can em, on that competitive side of things. So you know we are still using the librarian's skills to sort of bringing those to bear'*

**Carl:** *'there's more focus on, on perhaps the end product now rather than they're doing of something. Erm, so you are looking more at, again user satisfaction user outcome surveys. People are more because we are in a more, well particularly in academic libraries there are more competitions for students, it's much more commercial now'*

Believing *'the time has changed, the culture's changed'* (**Carl**), libraries have to change accordingly to keep pace with the wider environments. Competition pressure as one of the compelling factors has prompted institutions to commercialise and to adopt a business ethos that is quite different from their traditional values. With the new way of thinking permeating down the organisation, commercialisation has therefore resulted in a results-driven culture where *'libraries are looking at the results of their processes, perhaps more than the detail of the process itself'* (**Carl**), which has affected the way services are delivered including their priorities. What once used to be considered as valuable traditional library processes have now given way to operations that can generate results because of the preference for efficiency. Besides the carrying out of daily operations and the planning of service delivery, the pressure imposed by the organisational culture has impacted on librarians' professional identity, where participants believe that *'it affects how we behave, I think it affects how we think about ourselves'* (**Alex**). Fully aware of their vulnerable position caused by the popular misconception that *'information professionals and librarians are, by concept, by the age redundant'* has prompted them to *'become more and more rigorous, around er, why we do what we do'* (**Alex**). The pressure to demonstrate value and justify professional existence can, therefore, be understood as obligations imposed by the bigger context that has influenced the culture of organisations. Whilst a renewed work ethic and the tireless proactive effort to demonstrate value has prompted the changes in librarians' behaviour and the way they work, the impact of the organisational culture on librarians' professional identity can, however, be illustrated through participants' positions towards organisational ethics and value. Bounded by their social contexts, all three

participants have appeared to be influenced by their organisational culture regardless of the length of service in the organisation, position or experience:

**Alex:** *'organisations are becoming increasingly corporate [...] I think we have to become more and more rigorous, around er, why we do what we do.'*

**Beth:** *'every institution should have that culture anyway and strive to be the best'*

**Carl:** *'I think you should, try to embrace the values of, your organisation'*

There is a sense of general agreement from the above statements in support of the organisation's value and agenda, where participants have appeared to conform, on a professional level, to their organisational culture. Together, they have all related their professional value with that of their organisations, and have in some cases identified their professional self with the organisation – or, more accurately, their servicing department. Most of them have service quality and user experience at heart, where they believe in the benefits of adopting such an outlook *'so that people approach situations in a similar way. Erm, where seem to be a cohesive organisation'* that aspires *'to provide the best possible service'* (**Carl**). However, it has been found along the journey of adapting in the new environment that there are participants who have not only identified themselves comfortably with the organisational culture, but they have also approved and accepted the prescribed principles to the extent that they can no longer distinguish their personal and professional self from that of the organisation's: *'I think just part of the job really I mean it's just part of what I am really because I was like, a bit of a perfectionist [...] when you are in a college particularly that is sort of always striving to be at the top of the tree, that's what you've got to be doing as well'* (**Beth**). For some, to be a team player and to fit in could mean the giving up part of the personal self in certain situations: *'I feel sometimes that I have to, emphasise the positive side of things when perhaps normally in an in an ordinary life, everyday life situation I wouldn't'* (**Carl**). In order to be in line with the organisational culture and thrive in the new environment, the participants believe *'we have to understand where we should position ourselves' 'where we can make a difference'* (**Alex**). While supporting the institution's competitive agenda, participants have advocated the continuous *'using the librarian's skills to sort of bringing those to bear'* (**Beth**) in the case of supporting institutional agendas. In order to demonstrate their value and to allow their professionalism illuminates in the present environment, participants believe they need to find innovative ways to

make them indispensable. However it has been noted that the idea of their positions under threat has often driven librarians to employ drastic measures to regain attention. Rather than being a unique course of action solely adopted by practitioners, such disposition is also seen to be favoured by librarians' affiliated institutions.

On the related issue of behavioural change under the influence of organisational culture, participants have shared their observations of how institutions and librarians do not want to feel left out, resulting in the bandwagon jumping phenomenon of the trends-following practice:

**Alex:** *'there's a very horrible tendency for er, some fairly, grotesque bandwagon jumping [...] Is that a-a- an act of desperation? Profession feeling, that they have to, reach out and make themselves look relevant? And with the times?'*

**Carl:** *'I think there's an element of, want not wanting to be left out, left behind. But you have to, evaluate that a service or a product whatever it is, and say well, is this is this really, useful for our, particular group of users because, their needs might be different from, another institutions.'*

Perceived as the consequence of the pressure imposed on librarians, the action of bandwagon jumping can be understood as a response to the public's scepticism towards librarians' professional relevance and the *'popular myth that information professionals and librarians are, by concept, by the age redundant'* (**Alex**). What the participants appear to be criticising is librarians' readiness to follow popular trends without going through the process of proper assessment and analysis. Anxious to avoid being further marginalised, librarians feel they *'have to be on the ball, and ready to help wherever we can em, on that competitive side of things'* (**Beth**) regardless of their own opinion on whether or not it is the best place they could contribute, hence the need to *'putting your own, personal reservations to the back'* (**Carl**). By surrendering to the majority pressure, the bandwagon jumping practice could potentially be jeopardising librarians' professional values and identities. Like librarians who are striving for their existence, institutions are also finding the prospect of being left behind daunting and potentially damaging to their reputations. Since *'nobody wants to be seen in a bad light'* (**Carl**), institutions feel obliged to follow their competitors' practice, which often results in the carrying out of services and policies without taking into consideration their appropriateness and sustainability. All that this has demonstrated is the effect the bigger context has on

organisational culture and, in turn, HE institutions and their affiliated academic libraries and librarians.

Besides driving librarians to take up new and innovative practice, the influence and pressure created by the organisational culture has also impacted on participants' perceptions of their professional self and the vision they have on their professional future. As evidenced by the participants' career stories, the support from management has played a huge part in their success and, in some cases, posed a setback to their professional experience and development when being mismanaged. The make or break examples, as illustrated in the three cases, have seen Alex and Beth's careers flourish; on the other hand, having also progressed accordingly, the negative restructuring experience for Carl has cast a shadow over his professional life and dampened his spirit in terms of his career outlook. Whilst he has allowed his professional identity to exist on a professional level, Carl has refused to view it as anything more than just a job (*'it's just a job to me'*), which is in contrast to Beth's instinctive attachment of her professional and personal self with that of the organisation's (*'I think just part of the job really I mean it's just part of what I am really because I was like, a bit of a perfectionist'*). After the various roles he has held in his career, Alex continues to hold on to his core professional identity and considers *'I'm a librarian [...] it's part of who I am'*. His enthusiasm and genuine concerns towards the future of the profession could be explained by the success he has experienced in his career and the satisfaction he experienced in his professional life (*'in terms of em, is it a rewarding profession, and I'm happy that my career has developed as it has, yes'*). Having witnessed the positivity in management, it has not only instigated his career decision, but it has also served as an inspiration for him to want to make a difference (*'you're certainly rich in terms of experience and what you contribute, and the difference you can make'*). The three participants' perspectives on their professional self and the profession itself have demonstrated the extent to which they have been shaped by their organisational context.

### **Summary**

The interpretative analytic process of understanding three academic librarians' sense making of their lived experience generated a set of super-ordinate themes for the single case and convergence across cases to respectively, present the uniqueness in each case and the commonalities amongst the cases. Emerging directly from the data, the themes derived from the experiential claims in the transcripts went through a process of conceptual abstraction to develop the highest order of super-ordinate themes. Representing a shared experience of all

the participants, the five super-ordinate themes that described the pattern of convergence had shown the steadfastness of academic librarians' professional role and identities within the core mission of the LIS profession. Participants' understanding and conviction towards their professionalism led to their belief that the important role of librarianship was unappreciated and misunderstood by the academic institutions and society at large. With the pressure of having to justify their professional existence, demonstrating value was a common experience shared by the participants. Considering CPD to be a necessity for advancement, the participants highlighted the continuing central role library education holds in preserving professionalism and that the emphasis on the all-important practical knowledge and current awareness were particularly crucial during the time of challenges experienced. Affecting them emotionally and behaviourally, the deep impact of organisational culture has an essential role in the shaping of the professional self and identity of academic practitioners.

## 6 Discussion

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### 6.1 Introduction

With the understanding of human experience, perspectives and meaning within the wider contexts of professionalism and professional change in academic librarianship being the central focus of this study, the multiple methodological approach applied for the investigation addressed the complexities presented in the topic of concern. By critically evaluating existing knowledge in the field, literature review provided the necessary background and an overview of the subject on professionalism. The review focused on the major themes discussed in current research on professionalism through the various perspectives of: the changing role of academic librarians, the role and the strategic framework of the professional body CILIP to support LIS professionals, CPD and library education as key attributes to define professionalism, the philosophical foundation of LIS and the Five Laws of Ranganathan as the underpinnings of professional existence. For the purpose of obtaining insight into the evolution of the profession, the topics discussed by LIS researchers in research publications unveiled the state of the shifting professional landscapes and provided another dimension to the multi-layered contexts in which academic librarians are embedded. Mapping out and categorising the subjects and their patterns discussed by LIS researchers in existing research publications, literature mapping allowed a diagrammatic representation (Hart, 1998) of the evidence to be presented at a broad descriptive level and provided a picture of the evolving professional landscapes from a research perspective. To effectively contextualise the findings from the literature mapping, the carrying out of a collective discussion with LIS professionals through a community consultation allowed the significance of the findings from the literature mapping to be highlighted where the perspectives of practitioners had shed light on the relationship between research and practice. By triangulating the themes from the literature mapping against the future trends identified by the ACRL (2012), the comparative analysis to identify the similarities and differences enabled links to be drawn and further insight into the changing professional landscape to develop.

Given that one of the main goals was to obtain unique perspectives from the context bound academic librarians and ultimately achieve meaning and understanding, this purposeful intent implied the adoption of a certain belief system that underlay the methodological framework. Since the lived experience and perspective of the individuals (who are bounded by their contexts) are subjective and are based upon their interpretation and relatedness to the world

(which is consisted of multiple socially-constructed realities created by the individuals), this specific ontological stance has squarely placed the investigation within the interpretivist paradigm. Believing reality to be complex and multiple (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), interpretivism assumes that *'knowledge is gained through social constructions, [...] it does not include predefined dependent and independent variables; [its focus] on sense making in complex and emerging situations [is] to understand phenomena through the meanings assigned to them by individuals in situations'* (Stahl, 2014: 2). With its focus on meanings and experiences of human beings (Williamson, 2006), interpretivism sets as an appropriate paradigm for this study for the examination of how human understand and interpret their lived experience in their natural settings against the socially constructed world. Interpretivism considers it an impossibility to achieve an objective reality when phenomenon can only be understood through representations and interpretations as noted by Denzin and Lincoln: *'objective reality can never be captured. We can know a thing only through its representations'* (2003: 8). Patton also acknowledges how *'the ideals of absolute objectivity and value-free science are impossible to attain in practice'* and considers such ideals to be *'questionable desirability in the first place since they ignore the intrinsically social nature and human purposes of research'* (Patton, 2002: 50). Another epistemological assumption of interpretivism regards knowledge to be something that can only be achieved through understanding and meaning. This epistemological character of knowledge suggests an interpretative process involved in the achievement of understanding (Goldkuhl, 2012), with interpretation being a backward and forward movement to create a holistic understanding of the studied phenomenon. *'As meanings are formed, transferred, and used, they are also negotiated, and hence that interpretations of reality may shift over time as circumstances, objectives, and constituencies change'* (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991: 5), which suggests that description and interpretation are always time, space and context bound; it is through the iterative process of ongoing interactions that social realities and meanings are reproduced. The interaction between the researcher and the researched is believed to be a necessary process to unveil the individuals' subjective realities. Operating within the interpretivist paradigm, the IPA method focuses on the in-depth exploration of the experience of a given person within a given context to make sense of a given phenomenon with a view to achieve meaning and understanding. The epistemological framework of phenomenology and hermeneutics that underpins IPA has corresponded with the principles of interpretivism. Addressing the gaps and adding new insights to current research, the idiographic commitment of IPA and its inductive and iterative methodological procedures illuminated the voices of academic librarians and allowed research participants to introduce fresh ideas that were

potentially suppressed. Findings developed from the critical analysis help to improve understanding of the relationships between academic librarians' perceptions and interpretations of their professional role and identities and the challenges they experienced in their professional lives.

The following section examines the meaning of the themes identified from this research to reflect on their significance and implications in relation to the wider context of extant professional knowledge. Contextualisation helps to enrich the understanding of the findings and exemplifies their values in informing existing literature. Based on the major themes developed from the previous chapters, the discussion was organised in a way to correspond with and bring together the overall investigation under the following themes:

- **'purpose and common mission as the core values of LIS'** which focused on the pertinence of academic librarians' interpretations of professional values to the philosophical principles developed by Ranganathan;
- **'professional role and identity remain steadfast'** discussed the conceptual disparities between research and practice and offered an alternative perspective on professionalism;
- **'the contextual influences on the shaping of professional identities'** examined the emerging theoretical construct of academic librarians' professional identities;
- **'challenges and opportunities faced by academic librarians'** assessed the professional position as experienced and perceived by research participants with reference to the wider context;
- **'the needed skills set and CPD'** established the competencies needed to inform ways forward taken into account all of the above themes.

## **6.2 Purpose and common mission as the core values of LIS**

Often considered as being too conceptual to be useful in a 'practical' discipline such as LIS, the core philosophical framework and value system of LIS seldom takes up the front page of mainstream professional research. Taking into account the current challenges faced by

academic librarians, it was believed that going back to the basics helped practitioners to assess their situations and have a better view of their path so that they can accurately position themselves in preparation of what is to come. Relating the core philosophical principles with the 'purpose' and 'common mission' of LIS, the participants demonstrated the relevance of the core professional values in practice in their discussions of the underpinnings of librarianship: *'I think the philosophy [...] is to unite people with [...] good quality information'* (**Carl**); *'looking at the common mission, I think that's where that [philosophy] would emerge, in a practitioner's world'* (**Alex**). Simply approaching the subject from a pragmatic angle, the participants did not immediately relate the core values of LIS from a philosophical perspective, hence the applicability and influence of the LIS philosophy in their daily practice was not instantly apparent to participants. However, when comparing their own conceptualisation of the core values of LIS with the philosophy of Ranganathan's Five Laws, the connections between the two start to emerge. With the core professional values being translated into 'purpose' and 'common mission', the participants identified these concepts as their own interpretations of the 'philosophy of librarianship'. When drawing a comparison between the purpose and common mission identified by the participants and the service principles proposed by Ranganathan, synergies are evident (**Table 6.1**), with his first four laws mainly referred to access and customer service, or simply 'userism' as described by Noruzi (2004). To a large extent, the core professional values, understood as the 'purpose' and 'common mission' of librarians in terms of what they stood for, remain constant: *'I think the principles are still the same'* (**Beth**); *'I don't think that's changed really'* (**Carl**). This idea of equating professionalism with core functions can be found in existing literature, where it is believed that having served the enduring core functions to *'identify, organise and make accessible authoritative information for specific user populations'* in society *'for the past 10, 20, 100, or more years'*, librarians will continue to *'serve these functional roles in society for the foreseeable future'* (Eldredge, 2013: 103). Citing Foskett, Alkan has also discussed the notions of the purpose and functions presented within the philosophy of librarianship, suggesting how librarians' positions are shaped by and *'depend[ed] upon the function that libraries carry out, the purpose for which they are established'* (Alkan, 2008: 3). By equating purpose and common mission with the core values, practitioners are supporting the argument that the functions of the profession are still in line with the central concepts and principles as proposed by Ranganathan. The difference however, lies in the profound changes which the profession has gone through, and technological advances was identified as the main contributing factor of altering the process and operations of university libraries and driving academic librarians to go about their business in a different way. This

phenomenon has been supported by the ACRL top trends review (2012) where ‘information technology’ being the fifth leading trend, is believed to challenge the role of academic libraries and librarians in their service provision. The ALA suggests that the changes caused by technological advances have created a different context for academic libraries to carry out their missions, and while there are new and diverse needs arising within academia, ‘*many of which [are] closely [aligned] with the traditional self-definitions of academic and research libraries*’ (ALA, 2007: n.p.). Such recognition can be applied in the case of Ranganathan’s Five Laws, as while they have been readapted and reinterpreted time and again (Chappell, 1976; Sowards, 1997; Gorman, 1998; Satija, 2003; Noruzi, 2004; Cloonan and Dove, 2005; Barner, 2011; Connaway and Faniel, 2014) throughout the history of librarianship indicating the relevance of Ranganathan, some research have suggested that the values and principles embodied in the laws that have remained the library’s bedrock for decades will continue to guide the profession through the perfect storm (Mitchell, 2008).

**Table 6.1: The connections between academic librarians’ conceptualisation of core professional values and Ranganathan’s first four laws**

<b>LAW 1: Books are for use</b>	<b>LAW 2: Every reader his [or her] book</b>	<b>LAW 3: Every book its reader</b>	<b>LAW 4: Save the time of the reader</b>
<b>Alex:</b>  'a mission we would have is to create, you know trusted information and environments and act as gatekeepers to the scholarly world'		<b>Alex:</b> ‘a core traditional area [...] around how we organise knowledge, er, how we provide access to knowledge, how we do that technically, how we do that er, conceptually. Er, there’s a huge, er, area around skills and literacy, how we instruct coach teach, er, facilitate knowledge exchange, how we safeguard and preserve knowledge, how we collaborate and, share, enhance what we do.’	
	<b>Carl:</b> 'I think the philosophy is the idea is to unite people with the information with good quality information, and I don’t think that’s changed really.'		<b>Carl:</b> [functions of librarians] 'to, erm, help people, find the information that they want in the, shortest time possible. So I and I think that’s always been the case.'
	<b>Beth:</b> 'the philosophy	<b>Beth:</b>	<b>Beth:</b> 'the library

<b>LAW 1: Books are for use</b>	<b>LAW 2: Every reader his [or her] book</b>	<b>LAW 3: Every book its reader</b>	<b>LAW 4: Save the time of the reader</b>
	and the library here now at [anonymised institution] has been much more, to have people available to help, em and to provide support'	'I think it's helping [...] people to find the information in the best way. And that's the basis of it all you know. I remember when I was in the school library cataloguing things and helping them to find things, em, and now in electronic world you know helping people to find the right information and use it.'	makes to make [information seeking] as seamless as possible so that people don't have to jump through too many hoops to get what they want'

In essence, Laws 1, 2, 3 and 4 can be encapsulated as providing access and connecting every user with the content they need by creating a path in support of access and discovery. Understood to be the four cornerstones of the LIS profession, the idea of collecting, storing, organising and disseminating of information (Wallace, Tolley-Stokes & Estep, 2011) has been brought up in the participants' response as they conceptualised their understandings of the philosophy of librarianship into the common mission of the profession. Whilst the fifth law: *the library is a growing organism* is concerned with the issues of change and growth, therefore may have appeared to be detached from the other four laws, it has however provided a focus of future forecast in relations to service provision and preparations for change. Fundamentally, the relationship between the first four and the fifth law is based around library users, connecting users with information at the heart of library services particularly in reference and bibliographic instruction (Wilder, 2005). Putting forward Buckland's argument that the basic universal purpose of libraries is to facilitate access, Sapp and Gilmour support the discussion by advocating that with the needs of the library user being the most important consideration, understanding users' needs and how they are changing are therefore vital for future planning purposes (Sapp and Gilmour, 2003). LIS professionals appear to have shared the same awareness as illustrated in the literature mapping, where the category of 'user studies' was found to be the sixth most researched subject (8%) in journal publications. The action of connecting the common mission with the Five Laws will suggest academic practitioners' recognitions that the basis of their professional existence are depended upon those core service principles and highlighted the true value of librarianship. In many respects, the way in which participants understood the purpose and common mission of the profession demonstrated the service ideals embodied in the core values of librarianship, and that these core values are what direct its members' behaviour, actions and judgements (Hicks, 2013). By reflecting on the reasons for their practice and the

meaning behind their professional existence, practitioners had applied in practice the LIS philosophy where these principles that served as the foundation of the profession are the reasons for librarians doing what they do. In that respect, the philosophy of librarianship should be understood in itself to be a practical philosophy that guides the actions of librarians (Houle, 1946; Mukherjee, 1966).

It is noted that the identification of 'purpose' and 'common mission' as the key concepts related to the philosophy of librarianship is reflected in research literature (Labaree and Scimeca, 2008). Whether they are operating within a traditional setting or in the digital world, the purpose of librarians working in academic libraries has always been to support the teaching and research needs of their universities (Meulemans and Carr, 2013; Corral, Kennan & Afzal, 2013; Gumpenberger, Wieland & Gorraiz, 2012). With this primary mission to '*support educational goals and priorities through whatever media, means and services are most appropriate*' (Mitchell, 2008: 2) in mind, academic librarians were adamant that this traditional core purpose of existence had not and will never change regardless of circumstance:

**Beth:** *'the information specialist's role, is to support it is specifically to support teaching and research coz that's part of the title, and that's what they are supposed to do'*

**Carl:** *'it's a supporting department. Supporting teaching and research [...] in the case of a current academic institution, the library has the library has always existed to support teaching and research and they that hasn't changed and, I don't see it changing'*

**Alex:** *'if you look at supporting research and learning, I think err, libraries make are, are fundamental impact'*

Findings from an investigation of UK academic librarians on their experiences of their changing role in the increasingly digital environment conducted almost two decades ago have also shown similar result. Back in the early nineties between 1993 and 1995, academic librarians from the *Impact on People of Electronic Libraries* (IMPEL) project have introduced the concept of the 'core purpose' of the role and the changing methods and process, coinciding with the perception of the research participants (*'the, paraphernalia surrounding [the role]* **Carl**):

*"I don't so much feel that the role itself has changed. It's the way you carry it out."*

*"I suppose their role has always been on advising students on sources of information and methods of searching, so the overall role hasn't changed."*

(Walton, Day and Edwards, 1996: 346)

Considering the significant changes that the LIS profession has gone through, the fact that 20 years on practitioners have still maintained the view that their role has remained is revealing. Supporting teaching, research and learning – a practical and modest statement it might be, this core purpose identified by participants has remained timelessly relevant as it has astoundingly echoed with the library's function portrayed by the British University Grants Committee back in 1922, who described the library as being an integral part and the heart of the university and life-supporting function in higher education (Nitecki, 1993). This concept has continued into the twenty-first century where the ALA stated that *'a library's fundamental purpose has always been to support the process of research and education by helping users find information and ascertain its value'* (ALA, 2007: n.p.). Acutely aware of the reason of their professional existence, each academic librarian demonstrated a clear sense of self awareness and collectively, they created a sense of professional consciousness. This collective consciousness that stemmed from within the profession was not a result of regulatory obligations such as the code of conduct being imposed by professional bodies, or was it being influenced by other external forces such as social pressure or organisational values. Unlike professional identities which *are*, on the other hand, affected by these factors, which will be discussed in the next section, academic librarians' understandings of and beliefs in the purpose and principles of the profession has remained constant. Whilst the academic librarians made it clear that their professional mission and the purpose of doing what they do have and will continue to withstand the test of time, the new environments in which they work including the paraphernalia that are stipulating the operations of services have provided different focus and emphasis prompting them to find new ways to carry out their business. Examples such as the *'University of [anonymised] just introduced cloud based library system'* (**CC Group 2**) as a popular service provision adopted by academic libraries to fulfil the changing needs of their institution community, and 'library operations and services' (11%) being the third most researched subject in the literature mapping have all served to reflect the shifting focus and priorities in the

profession. *'In the past, the library was the library, and everyone came to the library and did your reference interviews and all the rest of it and just isn't like that anymore [...] [people] don't come into the library you just don't see them otherwise [...] now we are talking electronic information rather than information in the library itself'* which makes it vital *'to reach out to them [...] we'll come and talk to you, and it's the going out to them it's part of what's changed'* (**Beth**). The excerpt illustrates that whilst the core values have remained the same, academic librarians have to adjust according to the developments and adapt in the information environment in order to meet their user communities' changing needs. By proactively *'paying close attention to what currently is going on inside and outside of the library environment to determine what might happen next'* (Connaway and Faniel, 2014: 18), librarians are more conscious and informed of new developments and are therefore more responsive to change. Turning the core values of librarianship into a set of policy statements, the ALA recommends librarians embrace those values as the foundations to guide all professional practice (ALA, 2013). There is an emerging argument brought to light by research literature that, going back to the basics by examining the philosophical underpinnings of librarianship is the way for the profession to develop and flourish in years to come (Brewerton, 2003; Foster and McMenemy, 2013; McMenemy, 2006; Foskett, 1962; Gorman, 2000). Whilst they were not directly related to the philosophy of librarianship at the time of the conversations, the reference to the delivery of professional qualification *'we have to look at what we're delivering, and how we set ourselves apart. And you can't be third rate (Alex)'* and the requirement for professional credibility credentials *'it needs credibility to be [a] profession (CC Group 4)'* suggested by research participants indicate the significance of professional uniqueness. The core professional values of librarianship have therefore provided the answer for the needed standards and principles that make LIS credible and distinguishable from other professions. Stoffle et al (2003) encapsulated with precision the essence of the professional values stating that:

*'The values and philosophical framework that librarians bring to information issues set us apart from other information professionals. We must be clear about our values. If we are not acting from these values, then there is no rationale for the library to be separate from any other information technology unit. And there is no reason for librarians to be special members of the faculty or professional staff.'*

(Stoffle et al, 2003: 375)

Further examination into the meaning of professional values has found an existence of a higher purpose that is beyond anything materialistic. Besides acting as the guiding principles, it is believed that the core values of LIS are what draw librarians into the profession (Burd, 2003). Conceptualising into contributions and achievements, professional values in terms of the purpose and meaning of being a librarian and what it stands for, can be considered as a vocational ideal from a professional perspective that offers practitioners a sense of pride: *'you're never gonna be rich, working as librarian, em, in terms of wealth, but you're certainly rich in terms of experience and what you contribute, and the difference you can make, um, and particular in Higher Education'* (**Alex**). This notion has been echoed by OCLC: *'as the information landscape continues to evolve, libraries play a unique role in that landscape, driven by their shared purpose and values, not economic reward'* (OCLC, 2011: 56). Maintaining the focus on core values is therefore believed to help supporting librarians' reputations and preserving their values to their organisations (Bryant, 2006). Serving as a crucial foundation for maintaining work ethos and guiding service directions, the core principles and philosophy of librarianship have provided deciding significance in assisting practitioners to position themselves through the connecting of what they do with their professional value system.

### **6.3 Professional role and identity remain steadfast**

There have been discussions of the changing role in relations to the hybrid specialist tasks academic librarians took on as a result of ICT driven movements and initiatives *'to balance technology and humanism and an overarching focus on student-centered service'* (Bell and Shank, 2004: 373) with the more specialised areas such as the skills and knowledge of instructional design incorporated into their existing workflow (Corrall, 2010). The emergence of hybrid libraries, increased collaboration and the library's convergence with the technical departments have changed and impacted on the traditional identity of academic librarians (Antonesa, 2007) where the changes in technology and modes of academic work have created new kinds of needs that libraries can help fulfil (ALA, 2007). Consequently, the crossing of professional boundaries has created a mixture of skills set of what has been described as 'blended professionals' (Bell and Shank, 2004; Corrall, 2010; Cox and Corrall, 2013). Academic librarians' understandings of their own professional role and identities has however suggested a contradicting view to research literature, as findings from the three cases have indicated academic librarians' recognitions of the professional resoluteness in which they believe that their role and identities have not altered despite the changes and challenges they have experienced in their professional lives. Whilst research has emphasised the 'newness' of the

roles, academic librarians on the other hand have argued that although they have experienced a shift in priorities and an expansion in traditional areas, the underpinning values in terms of their professional *raison d'être* and duties being articulated as the purpose and common mission of librarianship, have remained fundamentally the same.

Whilst accepting teaching support has indeed expanded and intensified because of the new information environment, academic librarians have however disregarded the 'newness' argument and believe that information skills teaching has always been a part of their role. Acknowledging the core function of the library being a service department, academic librarians considered their role has always been and continued to be supporting teaching and research. Although they have to reprioritise services where they have experienced the expanding of traditional tasks and the undertaking of new tasks because of the changing environments accompanied with the new focus and emphasis, practitioners' personal perceptions of their 'librarian' identity has not changed. Suggesting the fundamental role of librarians '*to support our institutions in the delivery of their research and learning strategies*' has remained unchanged, Baines recognises that 'change' has in fact been reflected in the way this primary role is delivered and the way in which this goal is being achieved (quoting Bains, Anyangwe, 2012: n.p.). From the academic librarians' perspectives, whether the library has '*offer[ed], more or different things in the service [...] the role of the service is still the same*' (**Carl**). Cox and Corral argue that new trends such as information literacy and research support have defended the LIS profession's core jurisdictions whilst others have generated hybrid roles for librarians and created opportunity for them to embed within the wider process (Cox and Corral, 2013). The second and eighth identified trends of 'data curation' and 'scholarly communication' in the ACRL top trends review (2012) also suggest how librarians are expanding and developing their roles to fit into these traditional areas that are evolving in the new environment. In their updated top trends review, ACRL (2014) has identified 'digital humanities' to be an area where academic librarians could play a key role. When professional role and identities are being interpreted as 'purpose' and 'common mission' based on the core values and principles of librarianship, it has become clear that whilst academic librarians are faced with expanding and related tasks, their role are still based around the same philosophical underpinnings as before which has meant the essence of their role has seen to have endured instead of being changed. As long as their activities continue to evolve around the underlying principles of librarianship, the 'changing roles' of academic librarians from this core value perspective, will not change (Hisle, 2005). Referencing Akeroyd, Barton believes that whilst the fundamental purposes of libraries have not

changed, the fact that the relative importance of the different aspects have been reorganised has nevertheless shifted librarians' remit (Barton, 2006). It is thought that *'what has changed are the actions librarians perform and services they provide in carrying out these core functions. The challenge for libraries, their leadership and staff, is to recast their identities in relation to the changing modes of knowledge creation and dissemination, and in relation to the academic communities they serve. Librarians need to reposition the fulcrum and reconceive the kinds of leverage they can provide to faculty and student productivity'* (ALA, 2007: n.p.).

In the process of understanding the construction of professional identities, the significant relationship between the core professional values and their connections regarding the causation of the shaping of professional identities as demonstrated in the psychology (outlook and attitude) and behaviour (actions and activities) of academic librarians is highlighted. Apart from their roles to inform professional practice and fulfil their functions within society, the values of the philosophical underpinnings of LIS lie in their qualities of being *'the driving force of an inner conviction of the value of [LIS] work'* and offering an affirmation of *'why libraries exist in the first place'* (McMenemy, 2006: n.p.). Similar to the ALA Policy Statements, CILIP has defined professionalism through a *Code of Professional Practice for Library and Information Professionals* where it has documented a set of principles and values to guide professional behaviour. Setting as a code of conduct, the founding values of librarianship has articulated the ethical duties and responsibilities that information professionals have towards their own standard of practice, services to users, engagement with the information community, obligations and commitments to society and their individual organisations (CILIP, 2012).

*'Professionalism as a concept, and as a motivating factor for LIS staff, is intrinsic to issues surrounding continuing professional development and staff training'* (Wilson and Halpin, 2006: 79). Knowledge, skills and competencies prescribed by CILIP's Professional Knowledge and Skills Base (PKSB) has provided the standard framework for defining professional identity (CILIP, 2013; Corral, 2010). However, academic librarians have interpreted the concept beyond the generic CPD definition, and have associated professional identities with the core values and ethics as they introduced the notion of professional credibility and service excellence. This has supported the argument that *'values and ethical issues are intrinsically linked to questions of professional identity for LIS professional'* and *'professionalism was not associated with professional membership, but with the ability to perform on the job'* (Wilson and Halpin, 2006: 82, 84). Undoubtedly, CPD and professional qualifications are the key elements and

inseparable features associated with professionalism; nevertheless, there appeared to be a broader remit to the concept that exists beyond what has been traditionally defined. Other than their demonstrations of determination to keep abreast with the latest developments, findings that emerged from the cases and community consultation indicate that the development of unique professional knowledge (**Carl**: *'it's just by working really on the job experience'*) and competence (**Alex**: *'we have to look at what we're delivering, and how we set ourselves apart. And you can't be third rate'*), professional dedication and commitment (**Beth**: *'it's not a nine to five job. You know you have to be willing to put in put in the extra effort'*), and professional credibility (**Alex**: *'being seen as a force for change and for good and em, people who can deliver, know what they are about, er are talented are able are competent, er or are authoritative, are compelling or have credibility'*; **CC Group 4**: *'it needs credibility to be [a] profession'*) were some of the other connections practitioners made on reflection of professionalism. Being distinguished from tradesmen for whom profits are the major motivator, professional people value their inner needs which could be spiritual, physical and intellectual (Feather, 2009). According to the encyclopedia of sociology, *'an identity is a set of meanings used to define the self as a group member (e.g. American), as a role occupant (e.g. student), or as a unique individual (e.g. honest). While people possess multiple identities, each identity is made up of meanings that are understood and shared by members of society'* (Ryan and Ritzer, 2011: 301). Meanings and understanding of practitioners' professional identities are impacted by their contexts and constructed through a dynamic interactive mechanism between individual experience and surroundings. Confident and assured of their 'librarian' identity, academic librarians have demonstrated a conviction towards: the conceptualisation of this identity as a tacit concept to their users, the implication of their professional values, and the conscious recognition of the expectations of their functions and responsibilities within academia.

#### **6.4 The contextual influences on the shaping of professional identities**

Identity being something that is developed through personal and social processes, *'depending on the context the person is in, she or he may be able to make sense of her or himself in many different ways. The self, therefore, is historically and culturally bound and dependent on social practices. Identity is a description of the self within those boundaries and practices'* (Hicks, 2013: 10-11). This contextual connection is reflected in the findings from the three cases as it has been noted how the academic librarians' professional identities are exemplified through social and organisational interactions. To elucidate the point further, the use of identity theory to examine the psychological aspect helps to exemplify how social interactions come into play in

contributing to and constructing academic librarians' multiple sense of professional self: '*theory of self [is concerned with] the reflexive nature between self and society, and conceives the self as comprised of multiple identities [...] an identity is an internal positional destination which defines who one is in relation to others in the social structure ... meanings emerge from socialisation and through culture, and from the unique, individual assessment of what playing a role means to an actor ... [different types of identities] can potentially operate simultaneously to influence perceptions, behaviour, and emotions during social interactions*' (Ryan and Ritzer, 2011: 303). Conceptually, academic librarians' professional identities being influenced by the multiple factors and various spheres have subsequently seen to be manifested at three levels: (1) the core professional values, (2) organisational culture, and (3) the wider environments.

#### **6.4.1 Core professional values**

Whilst it has been suggested that '*the phrases "knowledge managers", "learning development advisors", "information managers" may sometimes thought to be overblown but they often describe jobs in a far more precise way than the term "librarian"*' (Biddiscombe, 2002: 235), 'librarian' however, emerged as the exact concept academic librarians have attached themselves to irrespective of their job title, position and experience and an identity of which they embraced. The study from Wilson and Halpin suggests that practitioners have valued service quality and their own performance in doing their job professionally over professional standing and status (Wilson and Halpin, 2006). Referencing Akintunde in highlighting the changes in the vocabulary used in librarianship, Ogunsola suggests how librarians are continuing to adapt in the new environments despite the replacement of familiar terms as he believes librarians have remained '*responsible for acquiring or providing access to books, periodicals, and other media that meet the educational, recreational, and information needs of their users*' (Ogunsola, 2011: n.p.). This idea echoes the point where: '*it's what you do that matters not what you call 'the identity, the function hasn't changed. It's it's the way, it's it's what you offer, you offer, more or different things in the service but the role of the service is still the same*' (**Carl**). Reflecting on their professional role, academic librarians related the underpinning values and principles of librarianship to their professional functions and missions as they began to describe the purpose of librarianship:

**Alex:** '*our role is to facilitate and enable, and to and broker, err you know, may be a glue, er, do things that no one else can do or, they don't want to do or they don't understand, em, and it's a platform for other people*' '*a mission we would have is to*

*create, you know trusted information and environments and act as gatekeepers to the the scholarly world'.*

**Beth:** *'we provide the information in whatever format it's available. And, enable people to use it, as effectively as possible. That's in in just a nutshell. Em, which's sort of cover all the things that you have to do to make that happen, both physically and and electronically'.*

**Carl:** *'I'd say my role is to, erm, help people, find the information that they want in the, shortest time possible. So I and I think that's always been the case. It's just the means to doing it, have changed now so I don't think, I don't think the, the essence of the role has changed, really. It's just the, paraphernalia surrounding it they are all different now [...] I'm an information professional my role is to, help people find information.'*

Echoing the first four laws of Ranganathan's principles, academic librarians related their professional role with access and customer service which has highlighted their responsibility in connecting users and information. Providing information and access to resources being a timeless role of academic librarians has therefore reaffirmed the belief that this function has remained to be the centre of their identities. With *users the raison d'être* being the essence of the role, academic librarians associate quality customer experience with professionalism and have assumed their unique positions in connecting users with information to be their enduring professional identity since the beginning of time that will continue into the future. Users' needs as a concept, is also reflected in research studies where academic librarians have indicated their beliefs that service to patron is their top priority value (Dole, Hurych & Koehler, 2000). Experience plays a major role in allowing academic librarians to develop awareness and understanding of being a LIS professional. Through personal experience and reflection, such realisation was stemmed from the individual person's consciousness irrespective of outside forces, that is, it is concerned with academic librarians' perceptions of their own work and professional values. This is similar to Butler's description of librarianship being a state of intense self consciousness (Sare and Bales citing Butler, 2014). Besides practical experiences and conscious reflection, knowledge and education are the main contributors in affecting the way academic librarians perceive, make sense of, position and subsequently develop and define their own professional role and identities in academia. Whether it is through education or

experience, the identification of professional identities is not a straightforward moment of enlightenment. Instead, it requires allegorically, a brewing process, of repositioning and modification over a period of time to orient oneself within a whole distinct from its constituent parts (Sare, Bales & Neville, 2012) for one to ascertain their professional footing and to establish his / her identity. Oliver describes this as an occupational culture where a shared educational background has generated certain '*values and practices which have been learned in the course of vocational education and training*' (Oliver, 2011: 93). Based on their own individual professional values, academic librarians' personal perspectives on their professional identities can only be measured and defined by themselves, and in some ways, individual professional values are inevitably shaped by the underpinning principles and values of librarianship. By identifying their own professional values with the core values of librarianship, academic librarians have affirmed their beliefs of their unchanging role and at the same time supported the steadfastness and relevance of the core professional values in modern-day librarianship. Acknowledging that their professional mission and what they stand for has remained the same, academic librarians however suggested the need to undertake service operations differently because of the shifting focus and changing paraphernalia around what they do. Whilst the guiding principles of the role of academic librarians have remained the same, the adoption of a new mindset following the development and progression that took place in the surrounding environments has meant that a different approach must be adopted to lay down the service focus and priorities. Adaptation as a notion has been introduced by academic librarians from the three cases and a concept referenced in research literature. Examples of the sixth and seventh identified trends – 'mobile environments' and 'patron driven e-book acquisition' in the ACRL top trends review (2012) illustrate how academic libraries are changing their ways of delivering services and information. Instead of reinventing something new, librarians are adjusting their ways of working and developing their skills in line with the technological changes so that they can adapt to the new systems and techniques required in the virtual library environment (Sarasvathy, Nambratha & Giddaiah, 2012). With adaptation requires making choices and compromise, sacrificing certain service areas to give priority to new developments and generating flexibility for movement and change (Abbott, 1998) has been reflected in the advancing of technologies, where automation has improved efficiency and replaced old processes. Whilst they believe their core identity has remained the same and the philosophical principles of LIS continue to underpin their professional mission, academic librarians are also receptive towards change and have accepted change as the very nature of the profession as reflected in Ranganathan's Fifth Law, making librarians' adaptations and adjustment to the

environments a professional instinct of survival. Adaptation can therefore be understood as a reflection of academic librarians' dispositions towards change. Acceptance of change can be perceived as part of librarians' professional identities (Sare and Bales, 2014) not only because this mindset is in line with the philosophical underpinnings of librarianship but because by defining professionalism through actions, librarians have demonstrated their recognitions of the underlying values and belief that these guiding principles to be their professional way of life. By embedding the library systems and services into users' existing workflows and defining library services according to users' expectations and needs (Connaway and Faniel, 2014), librarians can meaningfully fulfil the core values to facilitate access and connect users and information as the basis of their professional identities. The result driven agenda and outsourcing of housekeeping tasks have provided some illustrations of how service focus and attention has changed. However, the fact that information storage and retrieval being the core traditional activities of librarianship has continued to dominate the research landscape as indicated in the literature mapping with the subject taking up the first place (contributed to 16%) in the overall research trend in the ten year period and endorsed by practitioners from the community consultation to be an important subject that '*reflect our day to day life as librarians*' (**CC Group 2**) has illustrated how LIS professionals have carried on to embrace their central values in the twenty-first century (*'information storage and retrieval [...] is actually quite relevant to what we do [...] because we are talking about new systems being introduced [...] we've been doing a lot of work around that and kind of not just what we're doing but how it impacts on the students and how it's changed the way in which they interact with the library'* **CC Group 2**). This idea to embrace traditional values is also evidenced in the cases where the research participants have supported the need for traditional library skills: '*I don't have to [...] think about the history of resource description in my job, but it's useful to know, I think it's useful to know in a professional context, em, its it adds a richness to what you do and where you sight yourself in your work*' (**Alex**); '*understanding the principles is still important I think because, erm ... free text searching and just erm, using unsystematic vocabularies, might well find you some good stuff, but there are times, when using a thesaurus [...] actually does a better job [...] [information specialists] just need to be aware of the background. But they are aware of it in terms of thesaurus for databases*' (**Beth**). Contrary to common beliefs that the LIS profession is uncertain about its status and has caused insecurity about its values and roles in society (Foster and McMenemy, 2013), academic practitioners from the three cases demonstrated a relentless sense of conviction and confidence towards their professional identities and values in contributing to academia and society at large. A thorough understanding and absolute belief in the core

philosophical values and underpinnings has given librarians a sense of confidence and pride in their professional self and identities. By embracing the core values of librarianship, the participants are recognising that professionalism is embodied in their identity. Despite their personal recognitions of their own professional identities and commitment to the common mission of their professional role, participants are however, aware of the impact of the organisational culture and the wider environments have on their behaviour and service planning and provision: *'it affects how we behave, I think it affects how we think about ourselves, I think it affects how we plan how we deliver services'* (**Alex**).

#### **6.4.2 Organisational culture**

Acting as their immediate contextual boundary, organisational culture being impacted by the wider environments has in turn impacted on the participants' perceptions of their professional sense of self which has subsequently created their second level of professional identity. The complexity of this layer lies in the fact that because *'organisations are microcosms of their broader societal context'* (Oliver, 2011: 10), the wider environments have therefore played a key role in shaping the culture of the organisation. Defined as *'a collective understanding, a shared and integrated set of perceptions, memories, values, attitudes and definitions that have been learned over time and which determine expectations (implicit and explicit) of behaviour that are taught to new members in their socialisation into the organisation'*, organisational culture is believed to be what gives identity (Shepstone and Currie, 2008: 358). On this level, participants aligned organisational values with their professional identity and acknowledged who they are in terms of their professional self. Since values direct members' behaviour, actions and judgements (Hicks, 2013), academic librarians being members of organisations, their behaviour and ways of thinking are expected to be influenced by the implicit values that has been inflicted upon them. The three cases illustrate a consistent reasoning of how organisational values have impacted on academic librarians' perspectives on their professional self as they believe that the culture of the organisation *'certainly affects how people do their job, everywhere, including er, librarianship and library services. It, I think it affects how we behave, I think it affects how we think about ourselves, I think it affects how we plan how we deliver services'* (**Alex**). Besides being aware of the impact of organisational culture has on their professional beings, academic librarians also acknowledged the influence of the wider environments have on the constitution of organisational culture as illustrated in the examples under the convergent theme 'deep impact of organisational culture on professional self' in Chapter 5. Confined by their contexts, academic practitioners acted accordingly as they demonstrate a thorough understanding of the

organisational values and the subsequent expectations that their organisations have of them. This sense of obligation and awareness of *'we definitely need to be clear in terms of our alignment with our institutional and strategic planning'* (**CC Group 3**) was shared amongst research participants. With 'members of the college community' being part of their identities, participants were keen to act as team players to contribute and work towards the organisational goal. In some cases, this was done at the expense of personal beliefs: *'I feel sometimes that I have to, emphasise the positive side of things when perhaps normally in an in an ordinary life, everyday life situation I wouldn't'* (**Carl**). People appeared to be subconsciously and on some level simultaneously, knowingly allowing their way of thinking and behaviours to be influenced by their organisations to a point where they have identified their professional values with the one of the organisation's. There was a noticeable sense of endorsement towards the organisational culture where participants believe that they *'should, try to embrace the values of, your organisation'* (**Carl**) and *'every institution should have that culture anyway and strive to be the best'* (**Beth**) which makes them *'become more and more rigorous, around er, why we do what we do'* (**Alex**). Associating the adoption of a team player mindset to fit in as something positive and constructive, maintaining the professional image and conforming for the interest of greater good, such as *'so that people approach situations in a similar way [...] where seem to be a cohesive organisation [...] it's better for the service'* (**Carl**) was considered to be a legitimate rationale for academic librarians to embrace the organisational values. The three cases suggested that a supportive organisational culture can help to foster the cultivation of positive professional identities and a constructive and positive sense of self. Recognising how important culture is in the effective functioning of organisations (Shepstone and Currie, 2008), support from management in terms of providing staff the opportunity to achieve and progress, together with the implementation of an engaging environment have proved to go a long way as illustrated in the three cases. Being categorised under the subject 'management' (4% - the eighth researched subject) in the literature mapping, leadership needs to be an area of focus as discussed in the ACRL top trends review (2012) where leadership skills and coordination are required to make provision for the emerging trend of 'digital preservation'. In a study on the work values of academic librarians, Burd has revealed how professionals who work in library organisations that adopt and promote ethical values such as open communication and building relationship on honesty and trust tend to be more satisfied and committed (Burd, 2003). Practitioners who are immersed in an organisational environment over a long period are more likely to be indiscernibly transformed by the organisational culture where they are likely to accept that culture to be part of their professional identity. To demonstrate the importance of

organisational culture on professional identity, Wilson and Halpin's study suggests how academic practitioners have expressed a strong allegiance to their organisation, or employer, than to the profession of librarianship and its representative body (Wilson and Halpin, 2006). Academic librarians' identification of their professional values with organisational culture is a powerful revelation of the extent of influence organisational cultures have on professional identities.

#### **6.4.3 Wider environments**

Positioning at the outermost layer of contextual influence, the wider environments have impacted on the position of organisations and shaped the professional identities of academic librarians through their ongoing interactions. On this level of manifestation, academic librarians' professional identities are being presented through the perceptions of service users, the college communities and the general public in society on the 'public image' of academic librarians. This social construction and conceptualisation of professional identity is '*about the meanings and understandings associated with the public self, the self that is visible and known to others*' (Callero, 2003: 121). Responsible for shaping the development of academic librarians' professional identities, the impact of the wider environments has on the presentation and subsequent portrayal of academic librarians' public self is perceptibly different from practitioners' own perceptions of their professional identities and values of which they themselves have considered with high regard. Whilst they showed absolute confidence and conviction in recognising who they are, what they do and what librarianship represents, they are mindful of the power of which the wider environments have on their way of working, planning of services and more importantly, the presentation and perception of their professional self to others.

In reference to Watson-Boone's discussion on professional identity, Walter has highlighted how the wider environment has caused rapid changes in academic libraries and its role in contributing to the evolution of new and potentially contradictory professional identities (Walter, 2008; Watson-Boone, 1998). The issues of technological advances causing professional marginalisation, furthering existing prejudice and creating new use of library as place are some of the identified challenges imposed by the wider environments. Whilst users did not see the background work done for the many services and the interventions put in place by academic librarians, the instinctive assumption and association of invisibility equates redundancy quickly came into play. Since faculty members and users '*just don't come into the library*' (**Beth**) and the ones who do are using the library space for alternative purposes, the situation has given

users the impression that they have managed to bypass the library all together and remove the mediation of librarians to access information. Easy accessibility and perpetual availability of online information has led to the legitimate question of the relevance and necessity of librarians, where the astonishment exhibited by faculty members of the skills librarians possessed and the services they offered illustrates the acuteness of the situation as revealed in the findings in Chapter 5. As a result of the convergence of role across boundaries, the creation of new job titles has thought to impact on the way academic librarians' professional identities are being perceived by others. Wilson and Halpin's research suggest that, academic librarians believe their new job title has directly affected user expectations, and are concerned of the negative effect on librarians' professional identities when job titles do not accurately reflect librarians' skills and experiences (Wilson and Halpin, 2006). Perceptions of the general public can pose a threat to undermining the professional identities of academic librarians. Suggestions of getting users on their side by '*help educate them as to, what the real picture looks like*' (**Alex**) and let them understand the values information professionals can bring to the research, teaching and learning process are thought to help inverting the situation. '*Just having [the resources] there doesn't make them as useful [...] you can use them well or you can use them, very well*' (**Beth**) has highlighted the issue on quality versus quantity, where the fact that librarians are '*familiar with the key, and quality resources and their in their area, which people might not, easily come across*' (**Carl**) and their ability to '*help the client to identify his or her real needs and then to satisfy them*' (Feather, 2009: 7) has posed an opportunity for librarians to better engage in users' existing workflow and demonstrate their role as information experts in supporting literacy and research.

Like the participants from this study, librarians from other research studies also '*believed that many of their campus colleagues were either unaware of what they do, or under mistaken impressions fuelled by stereotypes in the popular culture*' (Walter, 2008: 63). Besides being unaware, they are also unable to '*distinguish between librarians and support staff as well as a similarly truncated vision of the scope of librarian work*' (Walter, 2008: 60). Similar to academics, library users also have little comprehension of what librarians do, let alone their offers of their professional expertise. Students are holding onto old-fashioned concepts that are used to typecast librarians as demonstrated in Datig's study on students' perceptions of libraries where students continue to believe librarians' role is to organise books (Datig, 2014). References to the image of librarians are vast and the historic stereotype has appeared to continue into the twenty-first century. Citing Abbott, Cox and Corral echo the problem of the deep-rooted image

of librarian, acknowledging that *'the public image of a profession is slow to change [...] it is difficult for the profession to adjust and disconnect itself from images of the physical library'* (Cox and Corral, 2013: 1528). Although conceptually, this perception gap has no bearing on academic librarians' confidence in terms of their self-conceptions of the values of their professional identities, general opinion from outside the profession such as society and the public perceptions of librarians and the LIS profession does however, have practical implications to librarians' professional identities. Demonstrating value as a professional obligation can be seen as a response of information professionals who are under pressure to defend their professionalism. Since the way faculty members perceive libraries *'will influence their perceptions of the purpose and policies of a library'* (Nitecki, 1993: 255), academic librarians' awareness of the public perception of their professional image could help to address the gaps between their perceptions of their own professional identities and the one of the wider college communities and the general public such as the promotion of *'the values, expertise, and leadership of the profession throughout the campus to ensure appreciation for the roles librarians do and can play'* (Hisle, 2005: 169). Having open and informative discussions with the wider college communities could help overcome prejudice and misunderstanding where academic librarians could *'present a well-defined professional identity to campus colleagues who have historically misunderstood their work'* (Walter, 2008: 60). Understanding the shaping of professional identities by the wider environments can help to inform the development of strategies to strengthen professionalism.

### **6.5 Challenges and opportunities faced by academic librarians**

After seeing how their professional identities are being shaped by their surrounding spheres of influence, academic librarians being bounded by their contexts choose to respond to the changing environments through the adjustment to the evolving needs and expectations, where their act of adaptation can be seen as a fulfilment of their professional duty within the philosophical framework of librarianship. Besides serving as the main underlying force amongst the challenges faced by academic librarians, technological advances being the driver for change has amounted to a paradigm shift in the profession (Ross and Sennyey, 2008). With technologies being the stone, new organisational culture and work ethos, shifting focus and priorities, renewed processes and operations are the ripples effects across the wider social-and cultural pond in response to the pressures displayed. Whilst there are many existing challenges in store for academic librarians, amidst every challenging situation however, presents an opportunity.

### 6.5.1 Professional marginalisation and the application of professional expertise

For academic librarians, perhaps the one challenge that can level with technological change is professional marginalisation, where the value of librarians has been seen to be depreciated by the academic community and society at large. In many respects, technological advances being the underlying cause of the majority of challenges has exacerbated professional marginalisation by causing the already misunderstood and overlooked LIS profession even more sidelined. Because *'the shift from print to electronic materials has made the library and its services virtually invisible to many faculty and other researchers'* (Corrall, Kennan & Afzal, 2013: 637), the phenomenon has resulted in the development of disintermediation. Professional marginalisation can be seen to take place on a physical as well as a conceptual level with one affecting and responding to the other. Users assuming librarians are obsolete are often surprised to find the presence of library staff within the premises: *'academics now, see the library not really the place where they need to come as to the time they might wonder why we actually need certain staff to be there still'* (**Beth**). Like a vicious circle, the outdated concept of equating librarians with books, traditional stereotyping and the general lack of understanding of the role and expertise of librarians have prejudiced and even conditioned users into believing that librarians are unable to help. When such assumption is drawn out and eventually attached to people's mind, beliefs are then taken as facts until they are turned into a reality. The disconnection between users and librarians' understanding in terms what librarians do has provided an illustration and a reflection of how beliefs are being put into action and become a reality resulting in the actual marginalisation of librarians. However, positive user experience can help to generate feelings of appreciation of librarians' expertise, as *'students with the largest number of positive interactions with librarians had a greater sense of the scope of their responsibility, and felt more positively towards libraries in general'*, suggesting that *'everyday interactions with students, no matter how small, can therefore have a large effect on how students view the library'* (Datig, 2014: 356), which in turn echoing the view that *'[if] you show people what the facts are, er, which tell a different story, then you will help educate them as to, what the real picture looks like'* (**Alex**).

Having interpreted invisibility as a sign of success, participants from the three case believed that with libraries being early adopters of new technologies, their incorporation of digital media into users' workflow to provide a seamless service has made academic librarians more invisible because of their effective intervention: *'one of the consequences of everything moving more*

*electronic and also the efforts that the library makes to make that as seamless as possible so that people don't have to jump through too many hoops to get what they want, is that many of the end users don't actually realise that we've paid for and have made these things available for them they think they are just there free on the web' (Beth).* Besides 'the implementation of OPACs, and searchable databases', evidence of librarians being early adopters has been traced back to earlier times as Johnson and Magusin suggest how librarians have used 'the technology for punch cards in the 1950s' (Lukasiewicz citing Johnson and Magusin, 2007: 825). With a seamless service in place, having smooth operations running in the background contributed to a coherent argument that the more invisible librarians are the more it signifies their success. This observation has been raised by Connaway and Faniel (2014) who has noted how information professionals are living in an environment 'where being as invisible as possible within our users' information searches is a sign of success' (Connaway and Faniel, 2014: 99), supporting academic librarians' belief that the better a job they do, the more they should be able to incorporate themselves into the fabric without attracting attention when delivering their services: 'when you are successful, then you know your intervention goes unnoticed' 'if we are successful then, then we risk being invisible' (Alex). There is a consensus from research literature that professional invisibility generated by advancing technologies accompanied by traditional concept ascribed to librarianship has continued to jeopardise librarians' professional value and existence. Following a series of focus groups discussions with senior academic librarians on the challenge of financial cuts, the Research Information Network (RIN) reported that 'there is a strong feeling among senior librarians that they have failed effectively to communicate the value of their services to those who fund and use them. [Our focus groups] believe that many senior managers in universities, as well as academics and students, have outdated views and expectations about the services that libraries now provide. And it is true that there is an increasing risk that much of what libraries actually do may be invisible in a virtual environment' (RIN, 2010: 16). However, the professional existence of academic librarians being threatened has not been reflected in users' expectations and demand. As instead of seeing a drop, 'the availability of information [has seen] user expectations [to] have risen substantially [where] librarians are increasingly expected to assist users in evaluating the information they receive [...] [which gives rise to] a closer partnership with users and a greater responsibility for the educational process' (ACRL, 2004: 536). The category of 'user studies' (8%) and the topic of 'user behaviours and expectations' being identified as key focus respectively in the literature mapping and the ACRL top trends review (2012) appears to correspond with this observation of increasing focus on users. Being aware of the increasing demand and applicability of LIS

professionals' professional expertise in a wide range of user activities has contributed to the prominence of the user-centric research agenda.

This contradicting irony generated by the digital age has suggested that just as users thought they can be self-sufficient without the mediation of librarians are actually a time when they are in need of librarians' support the most. With students being overwhelmed by the volume of resources, they need the *'effective guidance from librarians [...] [and] without interaction with trained professionals, students are likely to find barriers to information access'* (Lukasiewicz, 2007: 822). The continuing discourse between quality and quantity has seen the situation where *'people who use [technology] [...] doesn't mean they know how to use it particularly well'* (**Alex**), which has allowed the information and digital literacy teaching expertise of academic librarians to illuminate (Hale, 1991; Bundy, 2003). Research has suggested that while users *'understand how to use technology to meet a particular need, their understanding of the technical capabilities generally stops there'* (Reyes, 2006: 303). The emphasis of information literacy and the increasing user expectations have indicated that there are more opportunities for academic librarians to demonstrate their expertise in determining 'trusted' resources (Massis, 2012) and to play a vital role in academia than the public assumed. The issue with *'selectivity and for quality control [has reiterated] the need for information intermediaries whose skills and expertise become part of the evaluative process in transmitting information from source to user'* (Feather, 2004: 196). Greater consideration about ease of access and stronger emphasis on convenience has dictated the type of service strategy where the effective time saving of users is anticipated to be a key priority.

### **6.5.2 Adding value through engagement, partnerships and collaborations**

With *'the role of the web in people's daily lives their everyday lives has become incredibly strong [...] having internet access at home has become like "a utility"'* (**Alex**), the dominance of the social network and media and digital applications has reinforced the strong hold of information technology in Higher Education. Identified as the fifth trend in the 2012 ACRL top trends review, information technology that has prompted the popular utilisation of *'social networks and new publishing paradigms, such as open content'* has challenged the legitimacy and *'the library's role as curator and place libraries under pressure to evolve new ways of supporting and curating scholarship'* (ACRL, 2012: 314). Changing the way users interact with the library, digital technologies have allowed academic librarians' interventions between users and IT. With a view to achieve efficiency and accessibility *'so that people don't have to jump through too many*

*hoops to get what they want* (**Beth**), librarians regularly adjust the library's systems and infrastructure by '*designing effective, standardised interfaces*' (Ross and Sennyey, 2008: 147) to ensure that their platforms are compatible with the latest technologies of which users applied such as the using of digital devices to seamlessly link up with the library and its resources. On the recommendation of integrating into users' workflow, Connaway and Faniel (2014) suggest how '*the library needs to move from an institutional resource to a network resource. We need to provide better, more natural links to library resources in places like Wikipedia and other network services. In that way, people will be able to discover, access and contribute content through other channels besides the library*' (Connaway and Faniel, 2014: 16). Moving away from outdated service concepts, academic librarians strive for an irreplaceable position to exercise their competitive advantage and demonstrate their unique values. Considered it to be a service command, Holt believes that to 'save the time of the reader' is an essential measure for libraries and librarians to demonstrate their values and to stay relevant (Holt, 2010). Staying relevant and justification of professional existence were identified by practitioners from the community consultation as some of the major challenges they faced: '*things like stay relevant, where obviously conferences [...] reading, just making sure we're engaged in social media*' and that '*[LIS] needs credibility to be [a] profession*' (**CC Group 4**).

From traditional areas such as bibliographic management and copyright support, to the latest services of bibliometrics, research data management and open access initiatives developed from the digital environment (Carpenter et al, 2011; Corral, Kennan & Afzal, 2013), the widening scope of professional involvement has demonstrated the versatile applicability of academic librarians' expertise in the professional domain. Collaborative partnership and relationship building as a concept was raised by participants: '*we get quite integrated [...] into what the academics were teaching students*' '*making contacts getting to know other people in the college [...] outside of library services I think that has been quite important, to understand the, more overall culture of the college*' (**Beth**); '*not to sit in an ivory tower, not to kind of build walls, or live in a silo*' (**Alex**); '*we just need to be engaged with all our stakeholders so that we can show value*' (**CC Group 3**). This has also been supported by research literature (Bryant, 2006; Meulemans and Carr, 2013), where both practice and research have stressed the importance to engage with the wider college community and to establish both an internal and external network. Whilst collaborations and partnerships is not a 'new' role for academic librarians, it is an activity that has received increasing emphasis with success being depended upon librarians' ability to reach beyond their traditional roles to develop a collaborative

relationship with other parties on campus (Hisle, 2005). By building a close strategic partnership and getting involved in diverse areas, librarians are allowed to apply their expert knowledge and skills in broader remits which helps to enhance their visibility and promote their contributions.

Collaborations being an important concept must be applied beyond the standard spheres of partnership and traditional operations, as the ACRL advocate for a more radical collaborative approach in the merging of technical services, resource sharing and collection building, as well as the sharing of regional repositories (ACRL, 2013). Professional issues being found to be the second highest researched subject (13%) in the literature mapping has included the recurrent topic on collaborative relationships, particularly its significance in the current environment. In the UK, the wheels have already been set in motion with numerous initiatives being successfully implemented such as the UK Research Reserve (UKRR) journal consolidation project, NESLi2 electronic journal licensing; ongoing projects such as Research Libraries UK (RLUK) Shared Cataloguing project and the JISC-led Research Data Spring project collaborating UK research data but to name a few. Confident of their collaborative efforts thus far (*'sharing and collaboration in terms of sharing systems, sharing resources, and we're already doing a lot of it already'* **CC Group 3**), academic librarians had relentlessly encouraged colleagues to keep up the momentum by extending their engagement with new types of partners: *'by trying to, think of what's going to be required in the future by collaborating with other sectors [...] may be industry, commerce [...] [within] the information units within these types of organisations'* (**Carl**). Internally, necessary reforms need to be carried out so that a supportive network can be established to allow staff to engage and develop on every level possible.

### **6.5.3 Demonstrating value and justifying existence**

As a result of the threatening of librarians' professional value and existence imposed by the wider environments, the pressure to demonstrate value and justify existence can be understood as an obligation prompted by practical considerations for academic librarians to counteract disintermediation and marginalisation of their professional being. Whilst participants from the cases have unanimously agreed on the complexity to meaningfully measure their values and contributions, it is nevertheless a necessity for upholding their positions in academia. Understanding that *'new demands for accountability are rejecting the traditional input and output measures of quality'* (Stoffle et al, 2003: 367), librarians draw on alternative measures to assess values such as return on investment (RIN, 2010; Tenopir, 2013) and the added value librarians can bring (Walton, Day & Edwards, 1996) to contribute to users' success (Dunaway, 2012). It is

suggested that libraries must be able to define outcomes of institutional relevance and then demonstrate their contributions in helping the institution to achieve its mission. The ACRL top trends review (2012) has also supported the importance of demonstrating value. Identified as the top first and fourth trends respectively in the review, 'communicating value' and 'Higher Education' highlighted the obligation of academic libraries to demonstrate value to their institutions. Documenting academic librarians' roles in contributing to 'student success' such as their support in learning outcomes has also been identified as the fourth top trend in the updated ACRL review (2014). Other examples to measure academic librarians' contributions include the examination of the relationships between graduation rates and library instruction participations, academic libraries and student job success, and library service and student enrolment (Oakleaf, 2010; Brown and Malenfant, 2015) which has echoed practitioners' belief that '*by giving the best possible service in the library you know, we we're making it a better college people want to come to*' (**Beth**). LIS professionals' focus on performance evaluation was demonstrated in the literature mapping where the subject 'performance measurement and metrics' was found to be the fourth most researched topic (8%) and its importance supported by practitioners as they are aware of the need '*to assess more [...] [and to] measure in terms of metrics and benchmarking ourselves*' (**CC Group 3**). 'Altmetrics' has also been identified as the sixth top trends in the updated ACRL review (2014) where academic librarians are expected to provide support for the use of altmetrics to promote the impact and value of the scholarly community. By being fully integrated into the research process, librarians are using their skills to manage access and the administration of institutional repositories, support the grant submission process, and '*overseeing effective communications, data-flow and information management*' (Genoni, Merrick & Willson, 2006: 744) with a view to demonstrating their value in making profound contributions to the scholarly communities.

The research information system in relations to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) suggested by 'Beth' has provided a perfect example of how the introduction of new projects and initiatives that are of relevance to the scholarly communities accompanied with the right publicity, can yield effective results. Being aware of how users access information has allowed librarians to learn about the areas in which users need help the most so that they can appropriately intervene. In order to achieve the purpose of demonstrating value, there is a shift of emphasis in the delivery of user training. With the creation of lifelong learners being the ultimate goal, librarians have focused on empowering users for them to become self sufficiently information literate and confident to know when and why they need information, where to find,

how to evaluate, and ethically use and communicate information (CILIP, 2004) beyond their course and extend into their working lives. The diverse user types have prompted librarians to be strategic in their service planning: *'demonstrating the library's value can be accomplished by identifying and promoting collections and services. One size does not fit all for library services, which need to be offered in multiple delivery modes to meet the different information needs of users in different situations'* (Connaway, Dickey and Radford, 2011: 187). Service promotion has been flagged up as a priority by academic librarians as they observe how the college communities are often unaware of the services librarians provide. By making users aware of the existence of the library resources which ultimately impact on users' experience can provide the needed measurement for the quality of services. The competitive HE environments and the popular notion of student as paying customer, has been acknowledged in research (Rose, 2009; Molesworth, Nixon & Scullion, 2009) and by academic librarians: *'the students, more of customer now more than ever'* (**Carl**) *'students at universities become paying customers'* (**Alex**). Since it is an obligation for academic librarians to develop a strategic direction *'to advance the missions of the institution'* (Oakleaf, 2010: 11), by aligning themselves and their business plan with the organisation's strategic goals (*'we definitely need to be clear in terms of our alignment with our institutional and strategic planning that's very important'* (**CC Group 3**) and *'[engaging] with all our stakeholders so that we can show value'* (**CC Group 3**)), librarians are actively 'shaping' their destiny, and as they progress simultaneously with their organisations, they are making themselves an indispensable part of the infrastructure.

## **6.6 The needed skills set & CPD**

With the challenges and opportunities presented in front, assessment of their situation has allowed academic librarians to prepare and get ahead of what is to come. Having a clear understanding of what those needs and expectations allows librarians to respond to the challenges more effectively: *'first of all you need to know what the challenges ahead are, and then start to think what sort of CPD you might find'* (**CC Group 4**). Intrinsically linked to professionalism, professional competence in terms of CPD is an essential contributor to the construction and understanding of professional identity. With the skills and knowledge acquired by practitioners seen as the defining factors of a profession, the CILIP ascribed Body of Professional Knowledge has reflected the essence of professionalism. As 'what' librarians do entails 'who' they are, which in turn forms the basis of professional identity, maintenance of professional skills and knowledge updated by means of CPD therefore has provided the necessary vehicle to achieve the successful execution of role. *'Arguably the speed of change,*

*especially with regard to ICT developments means that logically, professional knowledge and skills must be subject to continual updating and evolution if the profession is to remain categorised as such, as opposed to being perceived as a skilled or technical occupation. CPD is one element in making the case for the information profession as a profession' and a key element to define professionalism (Broady-Preston and Cossham, 2011: 35). Following the challenges and opportunities identified in the previous section, practitioners and research have offered insights into the skills set development and CPD provision for academic librarians to prepare themselves in meeting the current and future needs of their constituents.*

### **6.6.1 Current awareness & keeping up to date**

There is an impression from research participants that the amount of activities and speed of new trends taking place both inside and outside the organisation has prompted them to be increasingly sensitive towards current awareness: *'there are so many [...] initiatives going on all over, and you can be because of email and internet and everything, you are aware of all these stuff going on [...] there's massive information and the fact that, it's perhaps easier to get swarmed by it now' (Carl) 'as there's just so much out there' (CC Group 4)*. The reality of the fast-moving information technologies and digital media has made keeping up a necessity. In a study on the skills requirements of digital librarians in academic libraries, current awareness was found to be one of the highly valued prerequisite skills expected of information professionals according to the job advertisements (Choi and Rasmussen, 2009). With a broad ranging outlook and the awareness towards current issues, academic librarians are able to accurately prepare for what is to come and effectively plan for their CPD training.

As illustrated in the convergent theme 'continuing professional development' in Chapter 5, keeping up-to-date with the latest developments and maintaining the currency of knowledge and skills has been supported by all research participants. Unlike the results from the literature mapping where the subject on 'education and CPD' (4%) was found to be one of the least researched areas, LIS professionals and the ACRL both acknowledged the significance of CPD where the subject on 'staffing' was identified as one of the top trends (ACRL, 2012), advocating the development of librarians in meeting the new areas of needs to be a priority. Apart from their long-term personal development, there are obvious practical benefits for librarians to keep abreast of the latest issues. With the increasing focus on research support, staying ahead of the game allows librarians to better inform researchers of the support they required, and by seeing the *'needs which the individual researcher does not see [...] we can be of even greater*

*assistance*' (Hansson and Johannesson, 2013: 238) can be seen as a proactive way to demonstrate value. With the changing nature and the new form of scholarly communication, keeping pace with the changes can allow librarians to accurately position and embed themselves in supporting academics and researchers in prominent areas such as data curation and research data management. Considering the important role information technology plays in the academic communities' teaching, learning and research and the popularity of digital applications and devices that have been incorporated in the education and learning process, academic librarians strive to understand how this information seeking behaviour is changing in tandem with the electronic product development in order to implement appropriate interventions to engage with and facilitate users in the best possible way. Examples of developing a sustainable strategy for budgeting and the frequency of technical updates to ensure cross-platform compatibility (ACRL, 2013), the development of cloud-based service and the integration of one-stop resources discovery systems have demonstrated librarians' responsiveness towards users' changing needs. Besides meeting stakeholders' demands, competitions from other service providers have legitimised the emphasis on current awareness. Whilst accepting their traditional monopolistic role as information curators are days of the past and that they are no longer the sole gatekeepers to content, librarians who are '*familiar with the key, and quality resources [...] which people might not, easily come across*' (**Carl**) continue to have the competitive advantage to contribute to the institutional goals. Seeing that to '*sit in an ivory tower [...] build walls, or live in a silo*' (**Alex**) can greatly jeopardise their professional existence, librarians believe that keeping up-to-date is the only way to avoid being left behind. Focusing on user behaviours and expectations, the ACRL tenth top trend (ACRL, 2012) implies that librarians must '*be on the ball, and ready to help wherever we can*' (**Beth**). By being acutely aware of their surroundings, librarians are able to gather insights and develop service provision in real time that their user communities require.

### **6.6.2 Updating of skills and knowledge**

Up-skilling remains a priority for academic librarians in the forever changing environments. There are clearly expanded and new areas which required specific attention. Information literacy and digital literacy in particular, stand out from the crowd and have been identified as a major area of development, not only because '*information literacy digital literacy we are best placed, er, it's [...] most efficient and effective to come consistently from a central service*' (**Alex**) and '*digital literacy ties in with how we use VLEs to support distance learners, and whether we need a digital literacy strategy if we don't have one*' (**CC Group 1**), but also of its significance in the

overall students' learning experience in the digital age (Fallon and Breen, 2012). With the growing emphasis on teaching standards and research excellence in academia, pedagogical knowledge has gained prominence in the new environment, where *'most of the information specialists are doing that [teaching qualification] now and they are going to the same course as the academics do [...] to do their teaching training' (Beth)*. Within the context of academia, *'understanding the whole publication process [...] for information specialists supporting researchers' (Beth)* is believed to be essential if librarians wished to truly contribute and work as partners to the research communities. Aiming at an all round development, it is believed that *'librarians need to develop new abilities if they are going to play a proactive role in the future, including developing project management skills to aid in planning for long-term sustainability of new services, having a better understanding of the needs of faculty as authors, and developing better knowledge of the publishing process as a whole' (Carpenter et al, 2011: 663)*.

Stressing the importance of 'getting on with the job' in relation to practical knowledge and experience, practitioners believe that: *'you, get good at something by doing it' (Alex)*; *'they got the knowledge but they need experience to develop those skills [...] it's just by working really on the job experience' (Carl)*. Whilst by being sensible they give the impression of being ordinary and mundane, practical knowledge and experience were nevertheless concepts introduced by academic librarians from the cases who believe they are the key elements to CPD. A study to examine the way in which academic librarians keep current with their CPD in Dublin has also found *'learning on the job'* to be a prominent theme emerged from the findings (Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014: 186). Another study on managerial competence for information professionals has found that eighty percent of the directors of information services have stated that their management skills were developed through on the job experience (de Grandbois, 2013). All the said examples highlight the significance of practical knowledge and experience that have often been taken for granted, and illustrate at the same time, how common on-the-job training is in the workplace regardless of levels and positions. Highly-valued, practical experience is believed to be the building block on which academic librarians have established their career upon and progressed from and is also a concept echoed in research literature (Reeves and Hahn, 2010; Eckard, Rosener & Scripps-Hoekstra, 2014; Sproles and Ratledge, 2004). The importance of practical knowledge has made library school education a vital medium to provide the necessary background in preparing information professionals for the workplace. Observing an existing gap between library school curriculum and requirements of the work place where *'there is a, extremely obviously deficit of professional knowledge' (Alex)*, academic

librarians believe the disconnection is an issue of concern: *'professional knowledge [...] it's actually bread and butter that it's actually incredibly important' 'I don't have to [...] think about the history of resource description in my job, but it's useful to know, I think it's useful to know in a professional context, em, it adds richness to what you do and where you sight yourself in your work' (Alex)*. Having an awareness and understanding of the broader professional issues allows librarians to have an overview of their circumstance for them to better assess and plan for their future. In order to do that, preparation is vital and library school should be responsible to adequately prepare LIS graduates for what is to come in the work environments such as the prominent emerging areas of research support (Corrall, Kennan & Afzal, 2014).

### **6.6.3 Library education and professional qualification**

The changes experienced in the professional arena have stipulated library education to continue its modernisation in reflection of the changing needs of practitioners. LIS education and training *'needs to evolve to meet the challenges of the new knowledge and skills requirements of the digital age academic library'* (Raju, 2014: 169). Another significant element in relation to library education is the value of professional qualification. There is a consensus from both research and practice that whilst professional qualification has remained important, *'librarians can no longer rely on their initial LIS qualifications, and need to be proactive in up-skilling and keeping up to date'* (Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014: 178). Practitioners from the community consultation have echoed the observation and believed that the outdated mentality of *'[we] think we got our qualification brilliant we never need to study ever again' (CC Group 4)* would not suffice in the current environments and advocated the need for further education and refreshment of skills. Supportive towards the achievement of professional qualification, the practitioners equated library qualification to professionalism, considering *'the qualification [...] shows erm, a commitment and determination to, to progress [...] it's evidence of, a commitment to your, profession, to have [professional] qualification' (Carl)*; *'I would said [professional qualifications] for an information specialist is still important [...] I would have thought to progress, in any part of the library service' (Beth)*. Whilst consider it to remain as the distinguishing criterion between professionals and para-professionals and a prerequisite for career progression, library qualification being a *'threshold to want people to reach in terms of you have to have a professional qualification to be a professional before you can do this particular thing, some of those things are disappearing' (Alex)* in the wider job market. The fourth trend – Higher Education, in the ACRL top ten trends review (ACRL, 2012) has raised the issue on the new model of education where the growing phenomenon of more choices being

made available and the demand for ROI in an education has changed the way Higher Education is being perceived which has impacted on its operations. Competing with domestic as well as institutions on a global scale, colleges and universities must be able to demonstrate their courses can offer good, if not better value for money than their competitors. The university library as a supporting department can contribute to this competitive agenda by planning its policies and infrastructure in terms of resources, library instructions and skills training (ACRL, 2013) in accordance with the organisation mission and the wider teaching environments. Besides their parent institutions, professional qualification for librarians has also been affected by this shifting trend in HE where the traditional culture and value systems towards education has continued to be redefined. With the increasing competitions from other sectors' individuals holding equivalent credentials meeting the job specifications competing for traditionally 'professionally qualified' positions (ACRL, 2013), the perceived privilege and traditional perception of LIS qualification can no longer sustain. By proactively developing their programmes, library education has ensured its relevance and currency to offer continuing competitive advantage for LIS professionals to carry out their roles effectively in the changing workplace. Reviewing its qualifications to ensure that they are relevant and fit-for-purpose, CILIP '*are providing the recognition needed and are capable of promoting themselves and being promoted simply and compellingly*' so that their uniqueness can be maintained (Wilson, 2012: 37). The PKSB, CILIP's revised body of knowledge has illustrated the continuing efforts from professional bodies and organisations in supporting the development of LIS as a whole.

### **6.7 Outcomes of the discussion: a new perspective on interpreting professional identities**

In the course of understanding the presentation of professionalism in relation to the academic librarians' experience of professional change, it brought to light the micro and macro contexts in which librarians are situated, of how these dimensions have actually contributed to the construction of the multi-layered professional identities. With their biographical experience being an outcome of their interactions with the wider contexts, academic librarians' professional identities have intertwined with and been unavoidably influenced by their situated environments. As a representation of the grounded data as it had emerged from the three cases, Layder's (1993) contextual framework of the interactions between the individual self and the micro and macro environments illustrated in **Figure 6.1** that facilitated the development of a conceptual model (**Figure 6.2**) has provided a central focus in understanding the manifestation of professional identities. Whilst Layder's model has provided a tool for the structuring and organisation of the grounded data as illustrated by the resemblance between the two models,

the findings from this study have to a great extent, validated the legitimacy of Layder’s model for contextualisation.

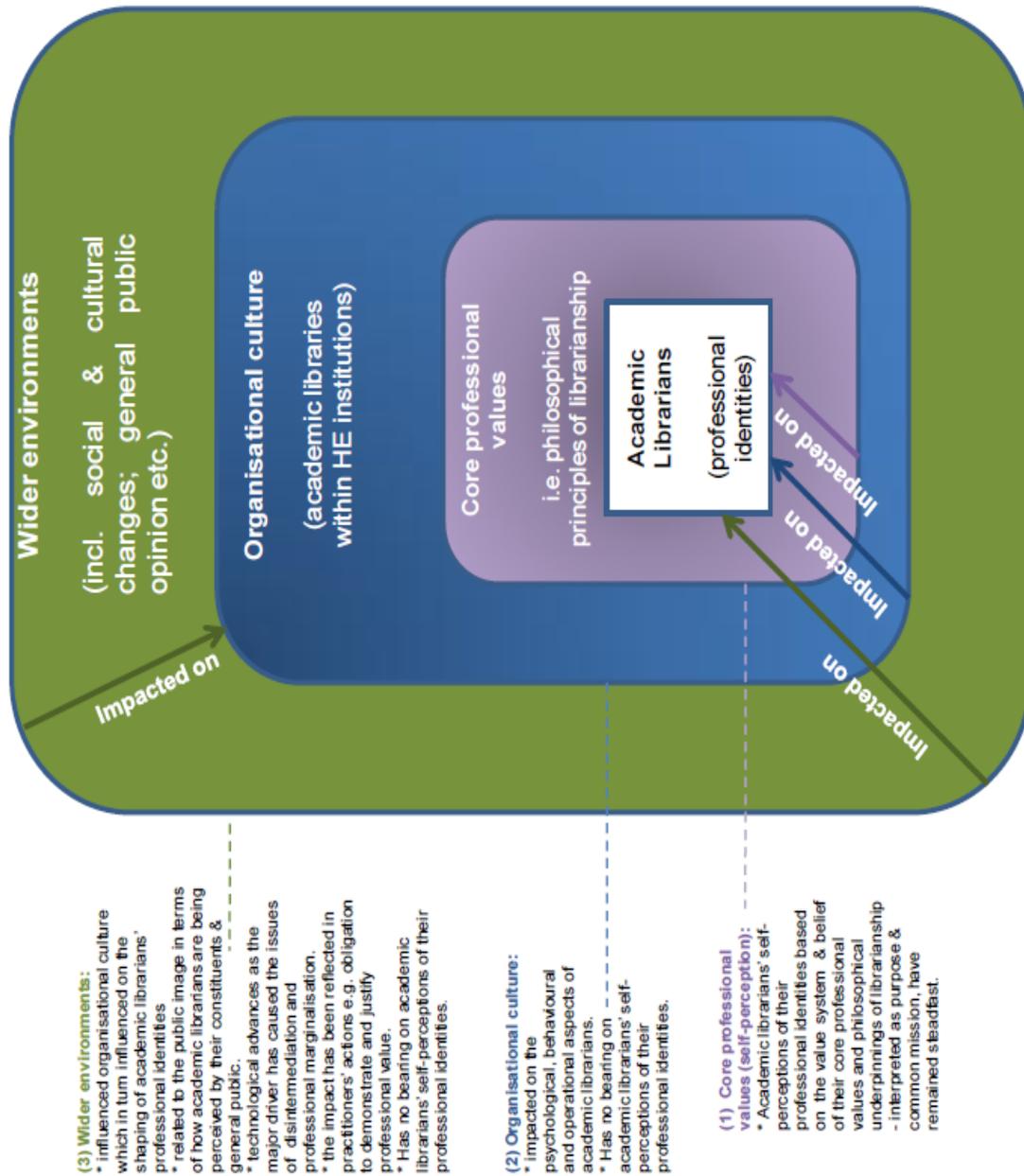
**Figure 6.1: Conceptual framework adapted from Layder’s research map, 1993 (structure of the original model highlighted in bold)**

<b>CONTEXT</b>	<p><b><i>Macro social organisation:</i></b> Wider environments – society, the general public</p>
<b>SETTING</b>	<p><b><i>Intermediate social organisation:</i></b> Organisations – HE institutions of case 1, 2 &amp; 3 (organisational culture of academic libraries within the HE institutions)</p>
FRAMEWORK	<p><i>Micro social organisation:</i> Core professional values – the philosophical principles and value system of librarianship</p>
<b>SITUATED ACTIVITY</b>	<p><b><i>Social activity</i></b></p>

	Activity (e.g. communications and connections) within the above contexts & settings – participants' experiences in their professional lives (incl. knowledge of professional underpinnings, adapting to organisational culture, responding to technological and sociological changes and the subsequent new societal demands and attitudes).
<b>SELF</b>	<i>Professional identities of the 'self' (= participants)</i> Subjected to the influence of the above sectors through the course of interactions

Following the process of detailed examination and analysis, three layers of hierarchical settings surrounding 'the academic librarian' were identified: core professional values in terms of the philosophical principles of librarianship, organisational culture, specifically the culture of academic libraries within HE institutions, and the wider environments (**Figure 6.2**).

Figure 6.2 The conceptual model of academic librarians' professional identities



By examining professional identities in relation to each of these layers, it becomes apparent that professional identities are complex and multi-faceted because of these various spheres of influence. Each dimension of influence has impacted on the manifestation of professional identities which offers insights into the psychological and behavioural aspects and value system of academic librarians. Understanding the working of this dynamic has contributed to original knowledge. Instead of approaching professional identity solely from a CPD angle, the model developed from this study offers an alternative perspective to interpret professionalism where the social, cultural, psychological and behavioural aspects associated with professional identities are unmasked. At a micro level, the first level of professional identity exemplified as the 'self-perception of professional identity' was mainly influenced by the core professional values and philosophical principles of librarianship, which had been translated by practitioners as the 'purpose' and 'common mission' of the profession. Affecting the attitude and behaviour of professionals, practitioners' perceptions towards their professional value system could potentially determine how far they would go in their career, level of job satisfaction, professional outlook, quality of service delivery and ultimately the overall success of an institution. Findings from the three cases suggested academic librarians' recognition of the values of their professional identities and demonstrated conviction towards their core professional values. Seeing that *'the notion of self points to an individual's sense of identity, personality and perception of the social world as these things are influenced by her or his social experience'* (Layder, 1993: 74), the belief system of librarians could potentially be interpreted as a result developed from their social situations in terms of the knowledge gained from professional experience and education. Serving as the intermediate form of social organisation that provides the immediate arena for social activity (Layder, 1993), the setting of the organisation and in the case of this study, the academic institutions, their organisational culture was a contributing factor that impacted on academic librarians' professional identities. The extensive impact of organisational culture meant that academic librarians were either being consciously or subconsciously influenced by it and was affecting their behaviour, way of thinking, attitudes, service ethos and operations in general. At the outermost of the contextual boundaries lies the macro social organisation that provides the remote environment of social activity (Layder, 1993), understood as the wider environments which include society, the general public and any other related forces of influence that exist in the field. This third and final sphere of influence has impacted on the manifestation of professional identities, translated as the public image of how academic librarians are being perceived by the general public which has subsequently affected the behaviour and associated actions carried out by academic librarians. Bounded by their

contexts and settings, the professional identities of academic librarians are, through their interactions and activities with their immediate environments, subjected to the influence of these various spheres. Understanding how the professional identities of academic librarians have actually been impacted by and interacted with these different factors and dynamics are crucial for neutralising some of the challenges faced by librarians. By uncovering these various layers, the findings allow librarians to assess their situations in an informed manner and to positioning themselves strategically in making unique contributions.

### **Summary**

Framing the discussion within a wider context of existing literature, the contextualisation of the findings allowed the consolidation of concepts and development of new insights to contribute to and further existing knowledge. By positioning the emergent themes against current research, the comparison revealed the implications identified in the concepts developed through this research and highlighted the significance of the reported findings. Interpreting the 'purpose' and 'common mission' of the profession to be the core values and philosophy of librarianship, the interpretation has significance to the understanding of professionalism from an academic librarian's perspective. By situating the 'Academic Librarian' within the wider social contexts, it revealed the impact of the various spheres of influence on the reflection of professional identity. The conceptual model subsequently developed from this study as portrayed in **Figure 6.2** presented a new interpretation and understanding of the multifaceted professional identities of academic librarians that are being shaped by (1) the core professional values, (2) organisational culture and (3) the wider environments. Identifying professional marginalisation and the pressure to demonstrating value and justifying of existence to be some major issues they faced, research participants were conscious that the meeting of those challenges required appropriate actions. Contrary to the findings from the literature mapping review, research participants from the community consultation and the three cases supported the importance of education and CPD in their professional lives. Their identification of continuing professional awareness and updating of professional knowledge being some of the crucial CPD priorities have corresponded with the findings in existing literature. The continuing importance of library education required regular revision and modernisation to reflect the changing demands in professional practice.

## 7 Conclusion

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With the focus of this research to answer the main question: 'how do higher education academic librarians in the UK respond to changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system?', the researcher set off on a quest to discover the experience of academic librarians in higher education within the evolving landscape specifically their perspectives on their role and professional identity in relations to their core values and their subsequent approach to managing their situation.

This research has identified the development of a multi-faceted professional identity as a result of academic librarians' interaction with their multi-layered surroundings. Whilst practitioners' self-perception of their professional identity exemplified as the core functions and common mission within the framework of the philosophical principles and value system of librarianship has remained unchanged, the influence from the wider environments has prompted librarians to adapt through the modification of practice in meeting the new challenge and achieving those same core functions. Continuing to embrace the core philosophy and value system of LIS, academic librarians remained adamant of the steadfastness of their 'librarian' identity to support teaching, learning and research. With the main focus to 'help people', librarians considered the core function of connecting users and information to be the essence of their professional existence. Professional uniqueness, professional credibility, service excellence, professional knowledge, competence, professional dedication and commitment are some of the key concepts introduced by the research participants in defining professionalism. Placing user service and the quality of user experience above public recognition and professional status of which academic librarians have confidently accepted their 'invisible success' and shown true convictions of their own core values and contributions, the moral ideals of making a difference and maintaining their relevance and significance continue to be motivators in driving academic librarians forward. Ranganathan's Fifth Law – 'The Library is a Growing Organism' presents not only the reality of the shifting nature of the profession but it also helps with sketching the horizons for the future of LIS. Whether it is through professional education and CPD or practical experience, academic librarians continue to find new ways to position and reorient themselves in academia and society, suggesting professional identity being an ongoing concept, is something that evolves and develops over time as librarians continue to explore and reinvent

their space and context bound identities in relation to the changing information environments. Adaptation can therefore, be understood as part of academic librarians' professional identity and a fulfillment of the Five Laws in practice. What this has demonstrated once again, is the relevance and applicability of the core philosophy of LIS in contemporary academic librarianship and how these core values have continued to be embraced and treasured by practitioners. Through determination and commitment, it is with hope that these fundamental values will continue to be appreciated and cherished by generations to come.

The original research question and the subsequent findings led to a number of suggestions to moving the profession forward. With an overall aim accompanied by its objectives, the stated purpose provided a framework to answer the research question and the defined course of action presented a specific focus to guide the research process:

### ***Aims***

The aim of this research was to offer insight into the way Higher Education academic librarians in the UK respond to the changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identity within the core philosophical framework and value system. The study reviewed the changes and challenges surrounding academic librarians from the various perspectives in research and practice. Current practices on an operational level and theories within the philosophical framework of LIS were explored in an attempt to offer insight and suggest ways forward for the profession.

### ***Objectives***

The specific objectives were to:

- **evaluate the contexts surrounding information professionals and the historical background of the changing landscape in LIS**

A review of current literature provided the context in which academic librarians are embedded, the major themes that emerged from the LIS literature suggest how the information environment has led to an increasing emphasis on the tasks of research support and literacy teaching performed by academic librarians. Through the literature mapping of seven LIS journals from 2002 to 2012 and a community consultation with LIS professionals, the historical background of the changes in the profession revealed the shifting focus of professional concerns and set a prelude to the examination of professional change as experienced in practice by the academic

librarians from three cases of IPA studies. Whilst the comparison between research and practice was supported by LIS professionals regarding the significance of the findings from the literature mapping, some of the lesser researched topics did not reflect practitioners' experience in practice. The comparative analysis of the ACRL 2012 top trends review further enriches the understanding of the evolving context in academic librarianship that are surrounding information professionals. With some topics becoming less prominent and other existing concepts are extending into the future, the renewed focus of the identified trends as illustrated in the revised ACRL top trends review (2014) has highlighted the transient nature of the developments in the profession in response to its changing contexts.

- **examine LIS philosophy and theories and identifies their purposes and functions in today's HE**

A review of the conceptual foundation of LIS and Ranganathan's Five Laws in current literature examined the way in which the philosophy of librarianship underpinned the profession. Discussions and debates on the building of an exemplary conceptual framework of LIS and the continuing re-adaptations of the Five Laws in professional research suggest the important function of the philosophical foundations of LIS to professional practice and the relevance of the philosophical principles in contemporary librarianship. Examination of the functions of LIS philosophy particularly their pertinence to professional identity within the context of purpose and functions highlighted their values in current practice. With the core professional values being interpreted by academic librarians in the three cases to be the 'purpose' and 'common mission' of their professional existence which are something that have remained timeless, the thinking would suggest that those same core values of which their professional identity is based upon have also endured the test of time. By looking in detail at how the Five Laws were put into practice by academic librarians in today's HE, the comparison highlighted the relevance and applicability of the professional principles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Operating within the guiding principles of its core values, the LIS profession adapts and changes as 'a growing organism' where it is believed that *'the values and philosophical framework that librarians bring to information issues set [them] apart from other information professionals'* (Stoffle et al, 2003: 375). Adaptation could therefore, be interpreted as a fulfilment of the professional duty of information professionals within the philosophical framework of librarianship.

- **identify existing challenges and opportunities faced by research participants**

The insights shared by LIS professionals from the community consultation and the IPA studies of the three cases of academic librarians highlighted the priorities, challenges and opportunities from a practice perspective. Influences of the wider context have continued to impact on the operational processes and service activities of practitioners. Reflections from the research participants fed into the identification of the skills set requirements and development needs for academic librarians. Technological advances being the underlying driver of the majority of challenges was thought to have initiated the professional marginalisation as identified by research participants as one of the major challenges. The complex information environment has created opportunities for librarians to apply and extend their professional expertise in existing and emerging service areas. Relating to the challenge of professional marginalisation, the pressure to demonstrating value was evidenced in all data sources and mirrored the findings from professional research. Examples of performance measurement and metrics and the focus on user studies were found to be prominent topics of interest from the literature mapping and the ACRL top trends review. The experience of LIS professionals had supported the prominence of these areas in practice. With a view to demonstrate their value and maintain their professional relevance, research participants proactively engaged with their stakeholders and involved in collaborative partnerships to align with the institutional goals. By identifying their professional strengths and adding values that are both specialised and unique, academic librarians continue to contribute to the information and knowledge agenda as they bring their professional role to bear.

- **review the identity of academic librarians in academic librarianship**

The conceptualisation of professionalism was examined in current literature to establish the different perspectives of how professionalism was reflected. As a major theme emerged from existing research, 'changing role' has illustrated the professionalism of academic librarians as they respond to the shifting information environment. With CPD, professional knowledge and qualifications being the main attributes for defining professionalism, the role of CILIP was reviewed to examine the way in which the professional body helped defining and upholding of professionalism in LIS. A variety of strategies were employed by CILIP to promote an effective framework of support which includes: the introduction of a new PKSB in an effort to updating and modernising of professional standards; the development an Accreditation Framework focusing on the education, training and development of the discipline; updating the Code of Professional Practice to reflect the changing context experienced by practitioners; and the latest ballot for the proposed implementation of obligatory revalidation to further the professional

standing of LIS and promote the knowledge, skills and professional qualifications of LIS professionals. Professional competence being an important aspect of professionalism was reviewed to determine how it has been reflected in research literature and to identify the growing areas of CPD priorities. With an increasing emphasis being put on the research and teaching support role performed by academic librarians, existing research suggest that the knowledge of pedagogy and better understanding of the research process are high on the CPD agenda. Education, particularly the continuing modernisation of library school training to reflect the changing requirements of employers is another CPD priority identified in research literature. Reviewing of the conceptual foundation of LIS and Ranganathans' Five Laws and the applications of those principles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century academic librarianship provided a theoretical perspective in defining professionalism. By demonstrating the ways in which the Five Laws have been put into practice, existing research has revealed the value of the philosophical foundation of the profession in modern practice.

Through the IPA studies of three cases of academic librarians, the reflection of the experience of practitioners was examined to gather insight into the presentation of professionalism in relation to professional change from a practice perspective. The methodological procedures of IPA facilitated the development of super-ordinate themes for the individual case and convergent themes across cases to respectively highlighting the idiographic particular and commonalities shared between the narratives. Findings from the cases contributed to a conceptual model of academic librarians' professional identities (**Figure 6.2**). The model provided a new perspective on interpreting professionalism, where it was found that the construction of professional identities are complex, and that professional identities are multi-faceted and are shaped by the various contexts of: core professional values, organisational culture and the wider environments. Insight emerged from the data helped to develop understanding into the connections between research and practice. When existing literature on Layder's contextual framework (1993) was used as a tool to organise the grounded data, the conceptual model developed from this study had validated Layder's research map for contextualisation (**Figure 6.1**). By identifying themselves as 'librarians' and interpreting the core purpose and common mission as the philosophical underpinnings of librarianship, academic librarians demonstrated a sense of conviction towards their professional role and identity of which they believe have remained constant. Rich meanings hidden behind personal perspectives required exploration for them to come to light. Those perspectives in turn offer understanding and invaluable insights

that feed into the suggestion of ways forward. The experience of academic librarians, and indeed all LIS practitioners, warrants recognition.

- **suggest ways forward for the future development of LIS through the research findings**

Informed by the findings from this study, the systematic research process contributed to the development of a conceptual model and suggestion of ways forward that focus on a targeted CPD approach and a collective strategy to inform the future development of the profession. Understanding the impact organisational culture has on the shaping of professional identities suggests that, academic libraries as a scaled-down representation of 'an organisation', could strive to strengthening their culture by establishing a good communication process and investing in training and development to harnessing the commitment of staff as ways to support professionalism. A collaborative approach between providers of professional degree programmes, academic libraries and CILIP to supporting core professional values within the different settings provides yet another method to strengthening of professionalism. Facilitating a foundation for developing an understanding and appreciation of professional values, providers of professional degree programmes could contribute by teaching the necessary background and setting the context for prospective information professionals, whilst academic libraries and CILIP continuing their roles in supporting and promoting the core values within the institutions as well as in the wider remit. Resembling the discussion from current literature, research participants recognised the importance of CPD remains a training priority and considered it a professional obligation and also a way to demonstrating of professionalism. With the requirement of traditional skills continue to remain essential in the role of academic librarians, a balance between generic and new skills sets allows practitioners to adequately meeting users' information needs. The emphasis on developing professional knowledge, keeping abreast with the latest professional issues and developments, fulfilling internal and external collaborations and engagement, and adding unique values were identified to be vital in the role of academic librarians. Reviewing of professional qualifications to ensure that it can offer value for money, identifying of professional strength to offering support in areas that can contribute to institutional goals with an impact are some methods to achieve the needed professional credibility advocated by research participants.

## **7.1 Suggested ways forward**

With the conceptual model (**Figure 6.2**) unveiling the impact of the core professional values, organisational culture and wider environments on the professional identities of academic librarians, this suggests that organisations in the case of academic libraries within HE institutions, library education and professional associations have an important role to play to strengthening professionalism. Whilst practitioners themselves are for the most part responsible for their own professional future and development, support and collaborations from other establishments will nevertheless help maximise the outcome. Informed by the research findings, this research proposes for the different LIS related bodies from CILIP to all information units and libraries to take responsibility for the future of the profession and work together as a team with: academic libraries continuing to foster and update an effective system of staffing support, promoting the professional values and championing for librarians; professional bodies continuing their role to uphold professional practice and deliver fit-for-purpose CPD support; LIS professionals taking charge of their professional future through proactive engagement in CPD activities, identifying their strengths to make unique contributions and working together with library education to secure the continuity of the profession and its position in academia and society.

### **7.1.1 Reinforcing the organisational culture of academic libraries and drawing on management's support**

The influence of the organisational culture and impact of management support of academic libraries on staff morale and career prospects have been demonstrated in the three cases. Research also acknowledge management support to be a significant factor in motivating staff to participate in training and development activities (Chan and Auster, 2003), supporting the argument that happy staff tend to more productive and likely to achieve more in their careers. With academic practitioners having expressed a strong allegiance to their organisation than to their professional body (Wilson and Halpin, 2006), academic libraries should make use of this commitment by harnessing this sense of belonging and cultivating this remarkable value amongst staff. Instead of using materialistic reward to induce performance, simple methods such as the establishment of a good communication process and investment in staff training and development can make staff feel that they are being taken care of by the organisation and that their professionalism are being valued. *'Training is effective both because it increases the knowledge and skills acquired by trainees and because it communicates to employees that the organisation values them, thus increasing organisational commitment and motivation. The*

*benefits of training and development programs extend beyond the individual, directly and indirectly enhancing organisational performance'* (Shupe and Pung, 2011: 411). A favourable organisational culture that embraces new ideas and focus on the welfare and development of their staff tends to be harmonious and productive. With a supportive organisational climate having a major impact on the professional development activities of librarians, *'institutional support policies [can] correlate positively with academic librarians' professional activities'* where academic libraries would be able to *'influence the types of professional activities in which their employees engage by targeting the activities that they support'* (Havener and Stolt, 1994: 35). Considering how the organisational culture affects the behaviour and psychology of librarians, it is beneficial for academic libraries to achieve their desirable service goals through the promotion of a healthy work ethos. Serving as the basis for securing long term success, an open and receptive organisational culture that encourages communication helps to facilitate a positive work environment and ultimately elicit personal as well as collective achievements. With staff making up half of the library's budget, which has turned library staff into 'the library' in budget terms, meant that *'how well we function together as a teaching-learning unit and academic service will be reflected in the value the institution sees us as a resource [...] and how it [then] invests in that resource [...] our organisational culture and internal relationships inevitably leak out into our relationships with our communities'* (Buschman, 2013: 358). This concept of public image echoes practitioners' belief in offering a cohesive service *'so that people approach situations in a similar way [...] where [there] seem to be a cohesive organisation [...] [is] better for the service'* (**Carl**).

The research from Shepstone and Currie has *'identified the desire on the part of the librarians for more elements of Adhocracy and Clan cultures, to a workplace characterised by creativity, innovation and risk taking which values people, relationships, teamwork, individual development, commitment and consensus [...] staff success can be achieved through both an individual and a collective change process that involves a continuous negotiation between perceptions, values, goals and actions. All of these must be aligned in order to promote staff success and organisational transformation'* (Shepstone and Currie, 2008: 366). Since the destiny of organisations and academic librarians are intrinsically intertwined, both parties therefore need to share the responsibility in safeguarding each other's future, as *'it is the success at an individual level that will lead to success at the organisational level [...] individual themselves need to [...] initiate learning opportunities in order to affect sustainable change in the organisation'* (Arant-Kaspar and VanDuinkerken, 2012: 189). Fostering a cultural change

requires efforts from every level in management to be on board in making the changes happen and transforming ideas into action. Invaluable insight gathered from the three cases demonstrated the importance for libraries to focus on their own staff's experience as they do with the experience of their users. Disparities between management's interpretations of the situations on-the-ground and the actual experience of librarians could affect service quality and hinder the achievement of organisational goals. With librarians situating at the centre of the system, the future of the profession is dependent on librarians to a great extent in terms of how well-equipped and committed they are in carrying out their roles and in leading the profession forward. The success stories and lessons learned from the three cases demonstrated the potential of organisational culture in strengthening professionalism and fostering future leaders. To gather collective efforts, academic libraries need to encourage staff to develop a sense of professional responsibility in mentoring the next generation of staff and supporting colleagues to progress professionally as illustrated in the research participants' aspirations '*in educating the next generation of librarians*' (**Alex**) and '*helping staff to achieve their objectives*' (**Carl**). Being a twofold development opportunity, coaching and mentoring have afforded academic librarians the CPD opportunity and at the same time allowed them to orchestrate the direction and contribute to the overall success of the profession. '*Reorientation of aspiring or new librarians by their aspirational peers may be seen as an essential element of what it means to be an academic librarian: to reorient colleagues as well as oneself to the profession and therefore to shape the profession by doing so*' (Sare and Bales, 2014: 584). All this can be done from within the organisation through the continuing effort to maintaining and updating an effective staffing support scheme. Besides the common CPD activities of '*signing up to, appropriate, alerting type services*' (**Carl**), '*keep up to date*' '*go on courses*' '*making contacts*' (**Beth**) '*not to sit in an ivory tower*' (**Alex**) as suggested by the research participants, offering of release time for professional courses such as professional degree training as a traditional practice which has been adopted by many organisations should be continued to support professional education. In addition to the standard training opportunities, institutions can also encourage CPD '*without having to leave the workplace or home*' (Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014: 192) by fostering '*a culture within the organisation in a library of actually allowing people [...] to sit and read [...] to do horizon scanning through the internet on a topic that you are interested in [...] to sit and discuss that with your colleague as part of your working day*' (**CC Group 4**). Establishing an environment of informal learning, staff are encouraged to be learning organisms themselves to identify appropriate learning and development opportunities that are suitable to their needs. Through the

support from management, the aspiration of normalising professional development as an everyday workplace activity can be achievable.

### **7.1.2 Cultivating the core values of librarianship together: the role of providers of professional degree programmes, academic libraries, and professional organisations**

The experiences of the academic practitioners reveal that the core values in relation to the purpose and common mission of librarianship have remained to be the underpinnings of their role and professional identity. Planning the future of the profession therefore needs to be based on this understanding where the establishments, ranging from providers of professional degree programmes, academic institutions and professional bodies, should make use of practitioners' support for professional values to assist advancing the profession by cultivating the philosophical principles of librarianship in the different settings. As the majority of LIS professionals' knowledge of professional values was often learned through library education and gradually developed through work experience, providers of professional degree programmes have therefore become the natural place to build the foundation and begin the cultivation of professionalism. Considering the importance of professional values in the construction of professional identity and planning of future service direction, early appreciation of professional values could have far-reaching benefits. Whilst the shift of syllabus focus in response to the changes in practice has implied that a lot of the traditional modules have now become obsolete, reintroduction of the history and philosophy of librarianship in LIS courses could offer some contextual background for prospective information professionals. A study from Cherry et al has also found that the perceptions of LIS students in terms of their belief in their social status has grown stronger and they have become more certain of their professional value as they progressed through their course (Cherry et al, 2011), which has provided an indication that professional educations are heading in the right direction in the cultivation and promotion of professional values.

Considering their extent of influence on the construction of professional identity, libraries need to do their part in promoting professional values by developing a work ethos that is in line with the core values of librarianship. Particularly if library education chooses to incorporate the history and philosophy of librarianship into their curriculum, the workplace should support professional education through practice. There are different ways in which libraries can help to develop a favourable environment in facilitating a positive sense of professional identity for staff development and organisational progression. Besides ensuring that services are aligned with

the core professional values, management can support, and if necessary defend, academic librarians' strategic and operational decisions in testing situations. This point directly addresses the participants reported experience of being overlooked and sidelined by the institutional communities and society and the accompanying pressure to justify their existence. Providing a foundational means for supporting the credibility and legitimacy of the profession, LIS philosophy can bring *'clarity to the defense of library values and beliefs, and strengthening social legitimacy by deflecting external criticism based primarily upon economic or legal precedents'* (Labaree and Scimeca, 2008: 46). Without compromising their professional values during service negotiations, library management must be able to convey their professional principles to the college communities and make compelling arguments to justify academic librarians' decisions based on their value system. Opportunities in committee meetings and departmental presentations provide academic librarians platforms to market their services and promote their values and contributions in academia. With the support of top library management to foster and permeate the value of social epistemic goals across all functions and operations, Budd believes the pragmatic application of social epistemology has the potential to fit into the wider institutional goal of knowledge growth which is *'at the heart of the academy's educational and research programs'* (Budd, 2004: 366-367). Libraries that are prepared to defend the core values of librarianship will increase their chances to strengthening practitioners' sense of professional identity and inspiring dedication towards their department and organisation.

Since professional associations *'play a key role in ensuring that values, beliefs and norms are maintained and upheld, often by formulating a code of ethics'* (Oliver, 2011: 96), CILIP being the main professional body of LIS in the UK are therefore in the best position to promote the core values of the profession. Having already provided a guiding framework of the Ethical Principles and Code of Professional Practice to inform best practice of which information professionals are encouraged to refer back to on a regular basis, CILIP must maintain their momentum in raising the profile and marketing the values of LIS. As a responsibility shared by every individuals and establishments within the profession, collaborations and engagement can be beneficial as the participants highlighted the importance of avoiding silos through the building of networks and making contacts with other sectors.

### **7.1.3 Taking control of the professional future**

*'One of the best ways we can constantly reinforce our role in society is to reflect on our profession and our practice'* where *'introspection begins with reflective practice and with a focus*

*first on the individual skills of the professional librarian, followed by an examination of the entire profession and its role and value'* (McMenemy, 2007: 8-9). Reflective practice provides practitioners the opportunity to evaluate where they are in relations to where they need to go. Having a value system that recognises and manages to reflect librarians' professional contributions is perhaps favourable in challenging times where the professionalism of librarians are being constantly questioned and disagreed by faculties (Meulemans and Carr, 2013) as participants described the pressure of having to justify their existence. Advocating for librarians to regain control of their professional fate through the reflection and application of the core values of librarianship, McMenemy suggests they must fight and champion for their professional values in the face of a misinformed and prejudiced society (McMenemy, 2006), resembling Meulemans and Carr's point of standing up to the prejudice practitioners experienced in academia. Demonstrating their convictions in their unwavering role and identity, participants advocated the making use of the advantage contained in their role and the core values of their professional identity to *'planning ahead and [...] trying to shape what's happening'* (**Alex**) as ways of taking control of their own professional future.

### ***Strategic positioning: adding unique values***

With research participants acknowledging the pressure they experienced when the legitimacy of their professional existence is being questioned and that *'[LIS] needs credibility to be [a] profession'* (**CC Group 4**), adding unique value as a strategic positioning was introduced as a way for them to take control of their future: *'we just need to be engaged with all our stakeholders so that we can show value'* (**CC Group 3**) *'let's find where we can add unique value that's legitimate that's real that's within our reach'* (**Alex**). Adding unique value requires academic librarians to understand where their strengths (Fourie, 2004) and competitive advantages are and build upon them. From a traditional support services perspective, areas such as information literacy training and resources access and discovery remain a key role and practitioners being *'familiar with the key, and quality resources [...] in their area, which people might not, easily come across'* (**Carl**) continue to provide a strategic advantage for academic librarians. With the aim of ease of access, academic librarians' metadata skills can allow more paths to be opened up through the use of multi-dimensional classification, and their collection development knowledge has exposed them to models such as the patron-driven acquisitions to expand content. Additionally, academic librarians' specialised knowledge on quality resources (Williamson et al, 2007; Rice-Lively and Racine, 1997) and their core mission to connect users with information means that their efforts and refined methods to support teaching, learning and

research at patrons' point of need will continue to be required. Building on their traditional knowledge on bibliographic management and copyright support, academic librarians naturally extended their expertise in other expanding teaching and research areas as demonstrated in their increasing contributions and support in bibliometrics, research data management and open access initiatives, making their competencies in research support a prominent area for professional development (Bonn, 2014). For academic librarians to ascertain their footing in academia, demonstration of value in terms of contributions to the effectiveness of their parent institutions was highlighted by participants (*'where we can make a difference'* **Alex**; *'using the librarian's skills to sort of bringing those to bear [in the institutional agenda]'* **Beth**; *'where [we] fit in academic institution and profession?'* **CC Group 2**; *'we definitely need to be clear in terms of our alignment with our institutional and strategic planning that's very important'* **CC Group 3**) and also in research literature. Professional repositioning requires practitioners to *'re-envision their roles and define new opportunities'* and *'to serve an unmet need'* (ACRL, 2013: 2-5). Proactive engagement with their institutional communities, promotion of services and embedding in users' activities continue to allow academic librarians to add values to their institutions. The strong institutionally-based physical presence of librarians (Connaway and Faniel, 2014) has provided them with competitive advantage to build on their existing relationship with faculties and constituents and furthering their engagement and outreach services to a wider audience such as advancing their on-campus influence, and strengthening their collaborative activities with the college communities to attain common goals to improve recruitment and retention and effective management of student success. By applying the consulting model of librarianship (Donham and Green, 2004) librarians can be valued as consultants to users and academics alike to help boost their professional values. Bearing in mind the influence of the wider environments have on academic librarians' professional identities, *'blowing your own trumpet'* (**Beth**) in the long run may prove to be pivotal in a seemingly alienating environment where invisibility is being interpreted respectively, as an obsolete and successful by the academic communities and practitioners. Being confident that *'if you took librarians away from the university and all the services they offer [...] things will get very difficult very quickly'* (**Alex**) and as true believers that *'the quality of the service will speak for itself'* (**Carl**), participants believed that user experience and service reputation help demonstrate the true value of librarians. Nevertheless, vigorous marketing to *'get the message out more wider in the college as a whole, that librarians do have these skills and they can help people'* (**Beth**) and promotions remain vital to *'show people what the facts are, er, which tell a different story, then you will help educate them as to, what the real picture looks like'* (**Alex**).

### ***CPD as a professional obligation***

Facing with increasing demands from the evermore competitive environments, the effective support of teaching and learning hinges on how well-equipped academic librarians are, making the continuous renewal of skills a professional obligation for practitioners to successfully carry out their role. Amongst the various areas of development, current awareness in terms of being aware of the issues around the wider profession and keeping up with the latest trends and developments were identified unanimously by research participants as the ultimate development activity that is fundamental for the maintenance of their knowledge and planning of service provision. The increasing emphasis on pedagogy and learning has prompted librarians to '*going to the same course as the academics do*' (**Beth**). With the growing number of activities and initiatives, '*signing up to, appropriate, alerting type services*' (**Carl**) '*keeping up [...] stay relevant, where obviously conferences [...] reading, just making sure we're engaged in social media*' (**CC Group 4**) remain to be some CPD options supported by LIS professionals for keeping abreast with the developments. Besides the traditional avenue of disseminating research in professional publications, '*[communication] by blogs, mailing lists, discussion groups and things like Twitter*' (**CC Group 2**) have been identified as a popular form of CPD activity for the sharing of professional interests. In the same vein as being aware of the issues around the profession, the increasing emphasis on proactivity for academic librarians to engage and build network both internally and externally allows practitioners to avoid operating in silos and to develop a broader perspective beyond their immediate contexts. From collaborations with academic faculties and engagement across teams to contract negotiation with service suppliers, the scale of activities and the widening operational boundaries have made interpersonal skills such as communication and mediation skills particularly important in professional practice (Gerolimos and Konsta, 2008; Choi and Rasmussen, 2009; Chawner and Oliver, 2013). Whilst team efforts by means of support and coordination from the various establishments can provide additional advantage to strengthen the CPD endeavour, participants emphasised the personal responsibility of practitioners to proactively engage in development activities as a professional obligation to demonstrate their professionalism. Having the professional awareness that '*the world moves very fast*' (**Alex**) and that librarianship '*[is] not a nine to five job*' (**Beth**) makes practitioners' willingness '*to put in the extra effort*' (**Beth**) to advancing their professional knowledge and skills a necessity for their continual survival in the changing environments.

### ***Strengthening of professional knowledge, bringing together education and practice & reviewing of professional qualification***

As a reflection of the speed of developments, the three cases of participants' emphasis on professional knowledge where they believe practitioners '*need experience to develop [their] skills [...] by working [...] on the job*' (**Carl**) highlighted the importance of professional knowledge in everyday practice. Supporting the focus on professional knowledge and practice, official bodies such as the QAA has produced a subject benchmark statement, advocating LIS students to integrate their learning experiences in the practical environment (QAA, 2007). Building up of experience as a professional development activity underpins knowledge expansion and is a condition for proficiency. The focus on building practical experience and developing professional knowledge that had been continuously emphasised by practitioners in the three cases was also echoed in research literature where it was found that the demand for experience in conjunction with '*a mixture of professional skills, generic skills and personal qualities*' (Orme, 2008: 630) of LIS professionals are frequently required by employers. The continuing need for the knowledge of traditional skills in professional practice ('*you got to still know the basics*' '*understanding the principles is still important*' **Beth**; '*I think it's useful to know in a professional context [...] it adds a richness to what you do and where you sight yourself in your in your work*' **Alex**) suggests a right balance is required when planning the courses in library education. Besides being a criteria of the workplace, LIS students have also requested for '*a practically and professionally oriented program that will prepare them to work in the field [...] [with] the option of greater emphasis on professional work [...] strongly supported by the majority*' (Cherry et al, 2011: 129). Observation of this development means it would be beneficial for any CPD provision and library curriculum to periodically review their appropriateness and applicability to the challenges faced in the workplace so that library education can '*sufficiently reflecting the requirements of, of the profession and of practice*' (**Alex**). Whilst CILIP and library education continue to play an important role to support practice, participants also advocated '*the role of practitioners in educating the next generation of librarians and the formal [...] library school context*' (**Alex**). Efforts in partnership and communication between education and practice ensure the provision of training and courses correspond with the developments in the wider professional arena.

The library qualification has continued to be valued by participants who believed that it has remained a pre-requisite for employment and career progression in academic libraries. Witnessing '*big changes in the kind of people coming into the profession over the years*' (**Alex**) where professionals from other sectors competing in the LIS market with professionally qualified

librarians, the development warrants a fresh look on the standard and delivery of the professional qualification. With the aim of maintaining credibility and recognition, the professional qualification needs to be able to offer a unique selling point and practical values to capture interest from prospective and existing professionals. From new to experienced professionals, practitioners can help preserving the value of the professional qualification and ensure its continuity by proactively getting involved and contributing to the design of the LIS curriculum as a way to resume control. Johnston and Webber's example of the role of LIS faculty in facilitating an information literate university highlights the need for '*a dialogue between those who are curriculum designers and implementers, and those who are formulating strategy*' (Johnston and Webber, 2004: 19). Being situated right at the centre of daily practice, librarians are in an advantageous position to feed back their practical experiences that are both relevant and current to inform the design and development of professional degree curriculum. Participants from the cases suggested that by getting '*involved in either setting curriculums or delivering them*' (**Alex**) within the professional degree context, practitioners can help narrowing the gap between education and professional practice. Frequent review of existing programmes and setting up a robust system can ensure professional observations and opinions of practitioners are fed into course planning and a proper channel of communication and effective collaboration established. Every professional is ultimately responsible for securing the continuity of the profession for future generations and ensuring the success of the profession. This obligation is making professional development and renewal of skills a long term endeavour.

## **7.2 Reflection on the IPA method & the research design**

With a view to fulfil the aim of reflective practice, the researcher raised questions on professional identity, the orientation of professional role and the purpose of professional existence. Evidently, professional literature has to some degree reflected the practical reality of the mounting pressure experienced by librarians who are working against the backdrop of an environment that is forever challenging their professionalism and identity, continuously pressuring them to justify their value and existence. This disposition reflected Heidegger's reasoning that '*an interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us*' (Heidegger, 1962: 191-192 cited by Smith, 2007: 6), and the challenges to academic librarian's role and identity was the basic assumption or defined preconception upon which the interpretation was established. The way in which academic librarians position within academia and the provision for their development and long term survival have raised some practical concerns. 'Where do academic librarians stand?' 'How can they position themselves to

optimise their contributions in terms of their professional role?’ were key questions to the issues. It was against this backdrop that the researcher’s preconceptions and tacit knowledge guided her quest and assisted her interpretation of the participants’ experience.

In order to establish an appropriate context to obtain the insider’s story, the researcher spoke directly to the people that matter – that is, the academic practitioners themselves. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) provided the much needed tool for the researcher to fulfil the purpose of carrying out in-depth examination and analysis of the lived experience of the individuals. The idiographic and interpretative nature of the method afforded the researcher the luxury to analyse in great detail the significant meaning of which academic practitioners perceived. Through the various levels of abstraction, the analytic process illuminated the richness in the data and highlighted the intellectual effort between the researcher and the experiential accounts. With the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, these theoretical principles of IPA allowed this study to develop an understanding of the experiences of academic librarians who have lived through the changes, including but not limited to the changing of role, in their professional lives. With the focus on the idiographic ‘particular’, the small sample size allowed the individual voices of academic librarians to take precedence which was found to be an advantage of the approach in particular to satisfy the research aim. The systematic analytic procedures facilitated the understanding of the meanings which academic practitioners ascribed to their perceptions of their changing role and identities, and the challenges facing the profession. Consistent with the conceptual and epistemological principles of the approach, the flexible application of IPA enabled the researcher to create another level of abstraction of ‘middle-level’ themes and allowed her the freedom to portray the final narratives in a form of story-telling that flow naturally. Staying true to the participants’ accounts, the researcher believes that she has done the participants justice and with each of the claims being supported by verbatim extracts, that the interpretation was genuine and well-grounded. Applying close attention and scrutiny to the detail of the text offers confidence in the integrity of the interpretation and analytic process, and that the interpretation has certainly *‘[came] from within rather than from without’* (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 106).

Presented as one of the many potential research methods, the appropriateness of IPA for this study does not insinuate a ‘perfect’ or challenge-free method as the limitations of IPA have been stated in Chapter 4, which include the issues of subjectivity, the cyclical hermeneutic process and limitations of interpretation, and the incapability to achieve empirical generalisation on a

wide population. This idea of methodological constraints can also be said for the overall research design where the final product was truly a journey of evolution. Having a broad conceptual framework guided by the research question, the different aspects included in the research design were simply emerged and progressed during the research process through the deepening of knowledge of the subject under study as well as conceptual maturity. Whilst not having been able to predetermine or foresee every detail might present potential risks and create uncertainties, the reward of a research / participant-led approach can be equally gratifying. The idea of an emergent design as opposed to a preordained enquiry, emphasises on the interaction between the researcher and context, and because the investigator '*does not know what he or she doesn't know*', what is to be discovered along the research journey can only be known when they are witnessed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 208-209). The community consultation for example, has demonstrated how an occasion of opportunistic serendipity contributed to an important part of the research design as the researcher seized the opportunity to carry out a collective conversation with LIS professionals in the ARLG conference where she was invited to present the findings of the literature mapping. Insight gathered from practitioners did not only validate the findings but it also highlighted the relationship between research and practice and enriched the understanding of the shifting profession. This experience of an emergent design provided the researcher the confidence in the value of the 'unforeseen' presented in the research process and to accept that *the unknown* as part of the nature of interpretivist research, is what contributes to deep insight and understanding.

### **7.3 Contribution to original knowledge**

The overall research design of the amalgamation of the multiple methods of literature review, literature mapping, community consultation, comparative analysis and the IPA approach to examine how *Higher Education academic librarians in the UK respond to changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system* where research and practice were compared provided a contribution to original knowledge. The successful combination of the said methods to approach the topic from the different angles evidenced the values and potential of emergent designs and innovative research methods. A new interpretation and understanding of professionalism beyond the CPD perspective presented another key contribution to original knowledge where it was found that professional identities of academic librarians are multi-faceted and are being shaped by: the core professional values, organisational culture and the wider environments. Through the interactions with their bounded contexts, the presentation of

academic librarians' professional identities in terms of self and public perceptions of identities has shed light on the psychology and behaviour of practitioners. Understanding the impact of the various spheres of contextual influence allows the different establishments in the LIS profession to take appropriate measures to support and strengthen the professional identities of practitioners. The comparison of the lived experiences of research participants with existing literature has offered insight into their perceived challenges and priorities in practice. Whilst the surroundings have created new needs and subsequently changing the way LIS practitioners carry out their tasks, academic librarians remain committed to their professional 'librarian' identity and continue to adapt in the new environments and evolve as '*a growing organism*' within the backdrop of their philosophical underpinnings and in accordance with their core professional principles and values. Findings from this study suggest the adoption of a collaborative approach to strengthening of professionalism through the reinforcement of organisational culture and the cultivation of the core professional values through professional education and qualifications, academic libraries and CILIP as ways to drive the profession forward. Commitment to CPD activities as a professional obligation requires academic librarians to identify their strengths to make unique contributions and be aware of the changing information environment so that they are prepared of what is to come. Updating of skills sets, developing of professional knowledge and reviewing of professional qualification were identified as some main areas of focus for the profession going forward. With IPA being a relatively new approach in qualitative research, the adoption of this novel method in LIS has made its application in this study a methodological contribution in the field. Through the detailed implementation of the approach, the systematic procedures have demonstrated the method's value in examining LIS practitioners' experiences of phenomena from their perspective which has led to the development of new insights and understanding. Demonstrating the flexibility of the approach, the researcher's original creation of the 'middle-level' themes as an extra layer of analytic abstraction has provided another methodological contribution which adds to the knowledge base of IPA studies applied in LIS.

#### **7.4 Further questions for research**

The in-depth examination of the experience and perspectives of three academic librarians, in discussion of the future priorities and preparation of the profession have provided rich insight into the changes of which academic librarians have lived through and their strategic positioning of the professional future. Allowing a micro analysis of individual experience, the small sample size enabled the generation of incisive knowledge of which practitioners can apply in their own

comparable professional context. Recognition of this potential in relation to the capacity of the approach means that future research could replicate the methodological procedures and, based on the findings from this study, conduct further investigation on a wider population. Large scale investigation could lead to the development of a theoretical claim with a broad conclusion that would contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of change as experienced by practitioners and subsequently enrich the knowledge base of the profession. Although the experience of each individual academic librarian is unique, their circumstances of being bounded by certain common contexts signify that they will inevitably be sharing some similarities. Longitudinal studies and a larger sample can therefore allow the building of a bigger data set and a clearer pattern to emerge. This study maintains its position that, in order to understand the context of experience, speaking directly to the people that matter is crucial. Situated at the heart of the profession, the perspectives of information professionals therefore, matter.

Findings from the literature mapping review, its relations with the comparative analysis and the perspectives collected from the community consultation, presented the multi-layered contexts and provided perceptive insights into the environments and changes surrounding academic information professionals. By mapping out and categorising the research subjects and their patterns in existing literature and triangulating the findings with other sources, the approach initiated the understanding of evolving professional landscapes. Building upon the triangulation of the themes, the examination of the findings and replication of the research methods could help to inform further studies into the shifting focus of professional priorities and illuminating the relationship between research and practice. Whilst this empirical research did not seek to explain the patterns of the identified trends, it has offered potentials for future studies to addressing the cause behind the discovered phenomenon.

Following the identification of the various spheres of influence that have impacted on the professional identity of academic librarians, the findings have provided some groundwork for more detailed investigation into the understanding of professional identity within the wider context of change. Research on a bigger scale building on the issues raised in this study will present a bigger picture of the phenomenon. Issues on ascertaining the future continuation of professional uniqueness and rectifying the preconception of librarians in society require more research to determine if they can contribute to the facilitation and upholding of professional identity. More research is needed to identify other potential factors of influence on professional

identity to develop a framework for the supporting of professionalism with a view to drive forward the LIS profession in the changing environments. Particular focus on the level of support amongst practitioners towards the potential function of professional values as instrument to steer the profession and the role the different establishments play to promote professional values would prove beneficial. Whilst this study has focused on academic librarians as the main subjects of investigation, it has been recognised through the research journey that library users and HE institutions in the case of academic librarianship contribute to a fundamental part in the understanding of professionalism. Gathering perspectives from these key players will therefore add substance to the development of an all-round strategic plan for the LIS profession.

### **Summary**

The research aims and objectives of this study were discussed to examine the way in which they have been fulfilled and suggested ways forward in the development of the LIS profession. Instead of generalising the findings across a wide population, the purpose of the research design of this study aims for the readers to draw links between their own experience and the research findings and transfer the applicable points across to their comparable professional context. In the process of examining the presentation of professionalism in academic librarianship, this study reviewed current research literature and completed a literature mapping and comparative analysis which provided the big picture of the wider contexts surrounding academic librarians; the community consultation with LIS professionals and the IPA studies of three cases of academic librarians offered insight into the professional priorities and the everyday challenges experienced by research participants. Findings emerged from the data revealed that there are various spheres of contextual influence that have a role in the shaping of the multifaceted professional identities of academic librarians. This understanding contributed to the development of a conceptual model which unveiled a bigger picture of professionalism within the framework of professional change. Information shared by the research participants has informed the development of a multiple approach to: reinforcing the organisational culture of academic libraries; cultivating the core values of librarianship between providers of professional degree programmes, academic libraries and professional organisations; identifying professional strength and adding unique values by academic librarians; taking responsibility and accepting CPD as an individual's professional obligation; strengthening of professional knowledge and reviewing of professional qualification as ways forward for the LIS profession. Whilst some of the suggestions are specifically related to academic librarianship, more could be applied to

other branches of librarianship with the emphasis remains that the findings are localised and that their applicability is depended upon the readers' own unique circumstances.

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## Appendices

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## Appendix 1

### Participant information sheet

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#### The Participant Information Sheet

(included in the email invitation)

#### Working Thesis Title

The evolution of academic librarianship: an investigation into the changing role of academic librarians and the continued relevance of core LIS philosophy in the 21st century.

#### Interview

I am going to carry out interview with academic librarians of various roles and experiences. Information collected from the cases will provide insight into the continued relevance of the core principles and philosophy of librarianship and establish if these continue to be the driving force behind professional practice in academic librarianship.

My aim is to conduct an in depth interview with them within their own contexts (their working environments), and develop an understanding from their narratives, of their individual experiences & perspectives. It is *your* story I am interested in. It is about your visions of the current landscape & future horizon of the profession I am interested in.

#### What is required?

You are not required to travel anywhere as initially all data collection will take place in your organisation during office hours and at no point in the research will you be asked to do anything during weekends or holidays. At this stage it is impossible to predict how long the activities will take, but it is anticipated that there will be a minimum of 2 meetings: face-to-face and/or via Skype and all will be arranged at a time that suits you. Email and telephone correspondence will be maintained throughout the process. If you agreed, your name, job title and name of the institution will all be anonymised to protect your identity. You will be able to fully review your narrative if you agreed to participate. Follow-up meetings will be conducted to pick up on ideas and to share further information, if any. Interview transcripts and other related documentations are to be reviewed, refined and verified by you for member checking. It is a fully transparent process and any details you are unhappy with *will not* be included in the thesis.

#### Abstract

The focus of this research is to examine how the academic information professionals in the United Kingdom respond to the changing environments and expectations whilst still maintaining professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system. The theoretical framework of this PhD research takes the position that despite the changing environments and practice, we continue to adapt and operate within the core principles and value system of librarianship, hence our professional identities have remained, and will continue to be the same regardless of what the future holds. Through a systematic analysis of the major areas of publish research, the evolving trends of LIS together with the current roles and functions of academic librarians will be examined from the perspective of the published literature; while the research carried out in the field will provide empirical evidence to explore the theoretical assumption (as stated above) from a perspective of practice. This constructivist aspect of the inquiry will focus on three individual cases taking a grounded theory approach in order to provide insight into contextual realities. The amalgamation of the two distinct perspectives will provide insight as to whether the core principles and value system of LIS are still fit for purpose and remain an appropriate philosophy and driving force for our future.

#### Research question

How do academic librarians in the UK respond to changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system?

## **Aims**

The aim of this research is to investigate the way higher education academic information professionals in the UK respond to the multiple challenges created by the changing environments and expectations whilst maintaining their professional identities within the core philosophical framework and value system. The study will review the core philosophy and value system of librarianship (such as Ranganathan's five laws and Gorman's eight principles) as key to maintaining practitioners' identities. Current practices on an operational level and theories within the philosophical framework of LIS will be examined with an aim to offer recommendations for the strategic planning and future development of the profession.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the project are to present an original piece of research that:

- Evaluates the historical background of the changes in LIS (such as a systematic analysis of the major areas of published research in the past decade)
- Examines LIS philosophy and theories and identifies their purposes and functions in today's academic librarianship
- Identifies existing challenges and opportunities faced by academic library professionals
- Critically reviews the identity of academic librarians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Establishes the skills set required and the development needs of future LIS professionals

## **The overall picture of my research project consists of:**

- systematic analysis of the major areas of published research in the past decade (journal survey)
- field work: 3 cases of academic librarians
- compare research & practice
- conclusion & recommendations

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## **Appendix 2**

### **Informed consent form**

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#### **Informed Consent Form**

##### **Working title of the research project**

The evolution of academic librarianship: an investigation into the changing role of academic librarians and the continued relevance of core LIS philosophy in the 21st century.

##### **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this research is to find out how the role of academic information professionals has evolved due to the new network environment and the changing information services needs. The aim is to discover the ways in which academic practitioners meeting those needs whilst maintaining their professional identities and integrities. The research findings should provide insights into continuing professional development needs and inform better practice for service provision, policies making as well as the overall development of LIS.

##### **Data collection and handling**

This study is designed to take an in-depth approach to finding out academic LIS practitioners' perspectives on the questions under investigation. The data collection will continue for a period of approximately 12 months. During that time you will be interviewed together with the potential of taking part in follow-up meetings for further discussions. At this stage it is impossible to say exactly how long each of these activities will take and how many you will be asked to participate in. Initially all data collection will take place in your organisation during office hours and at no point in the research will you be asked to do anything during weekends or holidays. All of these activities will be arranged at a time that suits you.

##### **Confidentiality and anonymity**

You are guaranteed total confidentiality with regard to anything you say, do or write in relation to this research within the normal boundaries of the laws. You will not be asked to reveal anything that could harm or distress you in any way. All data will be identified by a fictional name that is only known to the researcher. Total anonymity cannot be guaranteed as contact with you has been made through your organisation and you will meet the researcher face-to-face (with the potential of Skype meetings and email correspondence for follow-up discussions), but no data will be directly associated with you by your real name and in the event of publication no identifying personal data will be revealed. All data will be sorted at the home of Lillian Tsang Phillips and destroyed at the end of the formal period of retention. The

only people with access to this data are the researcher's supervisors and examiners who may request to see it but in no way will they attempt to identify you through this data.

**Voluntary involvement**

You are free to end your participation in this research at any time, you may refuse to answer any questions or take part in any activity you do not wish to engage in. You are encouraged to ask as many questions as you wish. A process known as 'member checking' will be used to allow you to see how the data you have provided is being used.

**Please sign and date this form**

Name: ..... Signature:.....

Date: .....

(Adapted from Pickard, 1998, Informed Consent Form, unpublished)

## Appendix 3

### Interview Guide

# INTERVIEW GUIDE

## Professional identities (philosophical level)

Opening question to start the conversation

Could you tell me your career story of how you entered the library profession?

What is your sense of the professional mission?

*[Is it significant?] [Was it what guided you to the profession?] [Was it and is it continued to be your guiding principle? Still valid?]*

## Core philosophy of librarianship:

In your view, what is the core philosophy in terms of the underpinning value and principles of librarianship?

Why are they valid / important?

Yes

Do you think the guiding principles *[such as Ranganathan]* are still valid in today's librarianship?

No

What has changed? Can they be useful if modernised

## Professional roles (practical level)

Professional Experience

What are the various jobs you have done and roles performed?

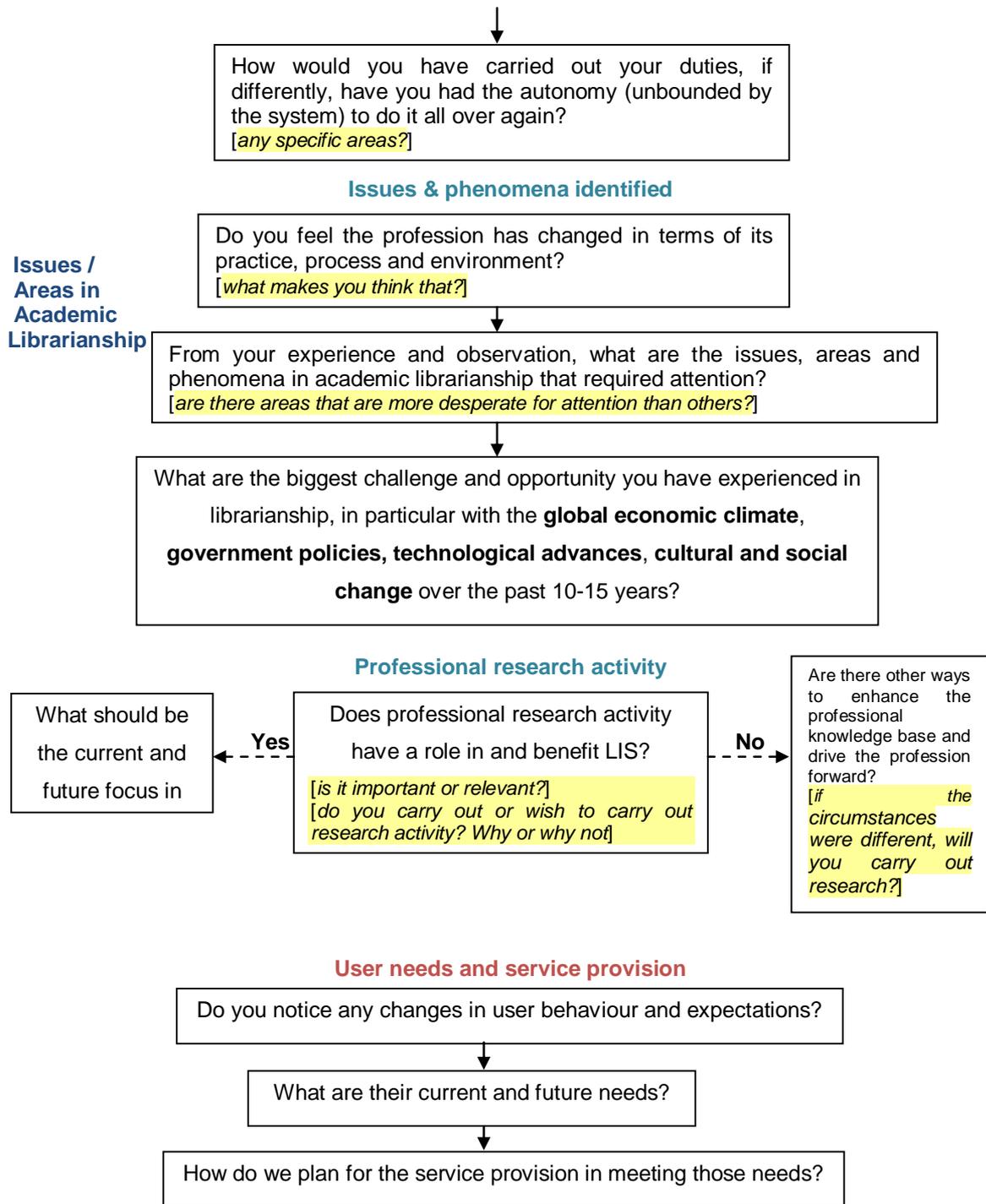
How do you feel are your major achievements and contributions?  
*[on a personal and professional level - within your organisation and/or within LIS]*

How do you pride yourself as an academic librarian?

What is your view on the notion of librarian as educator?  
*[your personal experience]*

## Context & Reflection

Has institutional culture affected your thinking and performance as a professional?  
*[did that shape you as a librarian, affect the way you think and carry out your job?] [in what way?]*



**Future  
Perspective**

**Development needs**

How should academic librarians prepare and develop themselves in meeting the ongoing and upcoming challenge?

**Professional existence**

How can academic librarians uphold their professional identity and secure their place in academia?

**Future trends in HE**

What is your perspective on the trends and phenomena of future academic librarianship?

**Future direction of the profession**

What is your view of the future of the profession?

Appendix 4: Subject categories in each journal 2002 - 2012

Journal Title	Year	No. of articles	Information Storage and Retrieval	Collections	Management	Reference	Professional issues	User studies	Library operations & services	Information society	Education & CPD	Change management	PM&M	Knowledge Management	Others	
Library Trends	2002	44	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	23	
	2003	51	12	17	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	
	2004	55	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	32	
	2005	42	11	11	0	0	0	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	
	2006	44	0	11	0	0	11	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	13	
	2007	72	1	18	0	0	0	24	0	1	0	0	0	0	28	
	2008	44	0	17	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	
	2009	48	0	17	0	0	14	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	9	
	2010	60	0	8	0	0	20	11	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	2011	23	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	
	2012	33	15	5	0	0	0	0	1	10	0	0	0	0	2	
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>134</b>
Journal of Information Science	2002	52	11	1	1	0	13	1	2	1	2	0	3	2	15	
	2003	53	17	1	0	0	6	1	1	0	2	0	6	2	17	
	2004	45	11	2	1	0	4	1	2	1	0	0	4	7	12	
	2005	44	12	1	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	0	2	3	20	
	2006	43	16	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	5	3	13	
	2007	49	21	1	0	0	3	2	1	3	0	0	2	7	9	
	2008	56	26	0	0	0	4	3	1	2	1	0	0	3	16	
	2009	47	18	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	6	1	
	2010	50	25	0	1	0	0	5	1	5	3	0	0	2	0	8

Journal Title	Year	No. of articles	Information Storage and Retrieval	Collections	Management	Reference	Professional issues	User studies	Library operations & services	Information society	Education & CPD	Change management	PM&M	Knowledge Management	Others
Journal of Documentation	2011	51	26	0	0	0	4	4	1	2	0	0	10	0	4
	2012	34	24	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>135</b>
	2002	26	10	0	0	1	3	3	3	1	0	0	3	0	2
	2003	28	8	0	0	0	4	4	0	1	0	0	2	0	9
	2004	34	11	1	3	0	1	4	3	0	1	0	6	0	4
	2005	44	13	1	0	0	11	3	4	1	1	0	1	0	9
	2006	36	17	0	0	0	2	7	1	3	0	0	2	2	2
	2007	41	15	0	0	1	0	13	2	3	0	0	1	1	5
	2008	43	16	0	3	0	3	5	2	2	0	0	5	0	7
	2009	42	16	0	2	1	2	7	3	4	0	0	1	0	6
	2010	42	12	2	3	1	5	8	1	3	0	0	2	1	4
	2011	43	15	0	1	0	5	7	4	3	0	0	2	2	4
2012	43	12	3	1	1	6	10	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>56</b>	
Library Management	2002	40	0	1	5	0	15	2	3	0	2	1	2	0	9
	2003	50	1	2	8	0	6	4	3	7	8	0	2	2	7
	2004	47	1	5	6	0	4	0	8	3	7	1	1	1	10
	2005	50	8	11	3	0	3	0	11	2	5	1	3	1	2
	2006	52	2	1	4	0	10	1	6	1	4	5	7	1	10
	2007	49	1	2	14	0	3	2	4	3	3	11	4	0	2
	2008	50	0	2	0	0	5	1	8	1	7	12	4	2	8
	2009	47	4	1	6	0	3	0	5	4	10	5	4	2	3

Journal Title	Year	No. of articles	Information Storage and Retrieval	Collections	Management	Reference	Professional issues	User studies	Library operations & services	Information society	Education & CPD	Change management	PM&M	Knowledge Management	Others
	2010	48	3	1	5	0	3	1	9	2	8	4	5	4	3
	2011	45	0	4	6	0	2	3	8	2	3	3	7	0	7
	2012	45	2	1	8	1	0	5	1	3	2	3	17	0	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>63</b>
	2002	52	3	3	3	1	12	3	7	10	0	0	9	0	1
	2003	45	4	3	1	0	8	3	10	8	1	1	4	0	2
	2004	60	4	1	1	0	11	6	7	13	3	2	8	1	3
	2005	69	8	4	0	4	10	7	16	10	4	0	4	0	2
	2006	69	3	4	1	1	5	8	16	10	3	0	12	0	6
	2007	75	7	4	0	2	12	6	12	16	5	0	6	0	5
	2008	58	9	3	1	2	5	6	6	9	5	1	4	0	7
	2009	57	7	4	0	0	7	6	11	8	5	1	3	0	5
	2010	61	3	4	2	2	7	4	7	14	5	1	4	2	6
	2011	70	6	5	1	1	8	9	11	10	5	0	12	0	2
	2012	50	3	4	3	1	6	5	8	10	1	1	6	0	2
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>41</b>
	2002	38	1	4	3	2	1	1	9	4	0	1	6	0	6
	2003	28	2	3	0	0	5	3	3	5	0	0	3	0	4
	2004	28	5	0	2	0	4	4	1	2	0	1	2	0	7
	2005	30	2	1	1	1	0	2	3	1	1	0	8	0	10
	2006	34	3	5	2	1	8	1	5	5	0	0	1	0	3
	2007	33	4	0	5	0	5	2	5	2	2	0	6	0	2
	2008	30	1	2	0	0	5	4	4	3	0	0	8	0	3

Journal Title	Year	No. of articles	Information Storage and Retrieval	Collections	Management	Reference	Professional issues	User studies	Library operations & services	Information society	Education & CPD	Change management	PM&M	Knowledge Management	Others	
	2009	31	1	3	1	2	5	2	2	4	1	2	6	0	2	
	2010	33	2	2	0	0	13	1	1	3	1	1	8	0	1	
	2011	30	1	1	0	1	2	3	6	7	1	1	5	1	1	
	2012	30	0	1	4	0	4	1	7	3	4	0	3	0	3	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>42</b>	
<b>New Review of Academic Librarianship</b>	2002	14	0	1	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	2003	10	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	5	0	1	0	0	0	
	2004	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	
	2005	8	0	0	1	0	2	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	
	2006	10	0	0	0	0	7	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	
	2007	6	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	
	2008	8	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	
	2009	15	0	0	0	0	4	1	4	6	0	0	0	0	0	
	2010	24	2	0	0	0	3	3	1	12	2	3	0	0	0	1
	2011	12	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	3	3	1	0	0	0	2
	2012	12	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4	1	1	0	1	0	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	

## Appendix 5

### Critical commentaries of descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments: an illustration

Emergent themes	Content	Exploratory comments
<p>Librarianship has important role in society</p> <p>Public's unawareness of LIS value</p> <p>Information and knowledge</p> <p>Knowledge economy</p> <p>LIS being undervalued</p> <p>Poor at communicating value</p> <p>Victims of own success</p> <p>Ahead of its time – early adopter paradox</p>	<p>Researcher: Are you happy with your decision today?</p> <p>Crikey, ... erm ... yes, [triggering an extensile crisis] I mean, I think erm, ... I think being a librarian is a good vocation. I think it's er... genuinely erm important role in society. I think it's not understood to the degree it should. Erm, you know, information and knowledge are fundamental, where you know, we are told that we have an information society, we are told we have a knowledge economy, and erm, people then start talking about, you know, Big Data and computers now, but overlook the role of libraries and in fact, you know, we can see that, contrary to what we expect from the statue books public libraries services are being, erm, you know, decimated and turned over to the big society and volunteers. [And I think there's there's not a, a sufficient value placed on the role of the profession] Erm, whether that means that the right people are in the profession and have been doing the right thing or is been led and marketed in the right way and the edifices been there that's entirely different but I think we've been very poor at communicating the value of what we have done, and in some ways, erm, I honestly think that, we are the victim of our own success because I think we've been at the cutting-edge of a lot of erm, innovation, erm and so by the time it reaches everyone else, they think you aren't doing it. They don't see you done it already. You could talk about, erm, you know, standards, to support shared services, you could talk about machine-readable code, erm, I mean so far ahead of other areas of society and and other sectors, it's unbelievable. And now now people think we we don't have that, we haven't done that, and er, whereas you know I think that's the early adopter kind of paradox, erm, ... Yeah ...</p>	<p>Considered librarianship as a good vocation and has an important role in society. (cf. p.7)</p> <p>Librarianship is not fully understood by people – people overlooking the role of libraries.</p> <p>Insufficient value placed on the role of the profession - librarians poor at communicating the value of what they have achieved.</p> <p>Librarians are the victim of their own success as a result of their successful interventions (being ahead of others) gone unnoticed.</p> <p>Early adopter paradox – an explanation &amp; illustration of librarians ahead of others.</p>

**Comment [1]:** What does this signify? Has never stopped and reflected perhaps? Fear of the outcome of such reflection?

**Comment [2]:** Two-fold: it's not understood and undervalued by society; librarians poor at communicating their value, being victim of own success.

**Appendix 6**  
**Linking emergent themes to middle-level themes**

**Case 3: Carl**

**'Middle-level' themes**

Career & support	1,8,59,
Impact of technology	3,4,5,6,24,29,56,58,
Users the raison d'être	7,9,23,62,63,64,73,75,
Professional role & identity	10,11,12,13,14,15,18,26,27,28,29,30,32,34,54,57,59,65,66,67,74,89,93,95,96,98
Professional pride	16,17,18,90,91,92,
Organisational culture	19,20,21,22,25,36,37,78-88,
Existing pressure & future challenge	22,23,35,44,67-72,
Value & impact - performance metrics	7,30,31,32,40,41,42,43,46,51,53,54,94,
LIS research	38,39,45,97
Library education & qualification	47,48,51,52,55,74,76,77,
Professional knowledge & development	2,30,32,33,49,50,60,61,99,100,

**Emergent themes**

1	Management support enable career development
2	Proactive in own career development
3	Technological development as biggest change
4	Technology affects all areas of people's lives
5	Technology enabled freedom of access – resources independent of physical library
6	Technology enabled greater efficiencies
7	Shift from collection to resources usage and performance
8	Professional duty as mentor
9	Users as raison d'être
10	Professional identity - help people find information efficiently
11	Modernised job title does not change role and identity
12	Tacit knowledge on 'library'
13	Identified self with library
14	Professional identity = purpose of the job – remain unchanged



## Appendix 7

### Linking of emergent themes with the excerpts from original transcript

Emergent themes	Content	Exploratory comments
<p><b>1. Fascinated by positive features of LIS</b></p> <p><b>2. Career foundation</b></p> <p><b>3. Making a difference</b></p>	<p>only when I've been doing that for awhile, em, and probably when I ended up at [anonymised university] which was the next place I moved to, that I thought, em, after a couple of years, yeah, I think er I can see that there are people working, em, at different roles, at more senior levels, it looks exciting, it looks interesting, it looks that they are making a difference, it looks like it's a, you know er, er..., a key job in a university very varied, and I thought I quite fancy a bit of that, and em, and and that's really how it started. Em, looking back, er, when I was a young boy, before I was a teenager, I used to stick different colour dots on books, in my ..., at home, I was doing classification. Em, and, and you you could say, okay, may be that was an aptitude that I should've been aware of, and a lot of my, er, academics studies were in natural science subjects, em, so biology and geology, and quite a bit in geography, where categorisation, whether through, taxonomy, and systematics and all the associated nomenclature isn't a million miles away from, er, what we do in librarianship in terms of, em, categorising knowledge to help people access it, and to preserve and safeguard it. Em so there probably were some cues in retrospect, but it was accidental. And then it was really not until I've been working for a number of years, as, you know, a library assistant that I thought, there was a career path for me that would work.</p>	<p>Beginning to see other sides of the profession. <u>Attitude started to change.</u></p> <p>A profession that has a variety of interesting tasks and appeared to make a difference.</p>
<p><b>4. Possessed librarian's aptitude</b></p>		<p>Aptitude of a librarian at an early age?</p>
<p><b>5. Categorise knowledge to help people access, preserve and safeguard knowledge</b></p>		<p>Associate librarianship with categorisation – features found in natural science subjects.</p> <p>Librarianship is to categorise knowledge to help people access, preserve and safeguard that knowledge.</p> <p>An accidental career.</p>
<p><b>6. Accidental career</b></p>		<p>Realisation of an existing career path for him.</p> <p>Self revelation.</p>

Appendix 8  
Illustration of analytic procedures: single case

**STEP ONE: Developing of emergent themes – linking themes to excerpts**

Emergent themes	Content	Exploratory comments
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fascinated by positive features of LIS</li> <li>2. Career foundation</li> <li>3. Making a difference</li> </ol>	<p>only when I've been doing that for awhile, em, and probably when I ended up at [anonymised university] which was the next place I moved to, that I thought, em, after a couple of years, yeah, I think er, I can see that there are people working, em, at different roles, at more senior levels, it looks exciting, it looks interesting, it looks that they are making a difference, it looks like it's a, you know er, er..., a key job in a university very varied, and I thought I quite fancy a bit of that, and em, and and that's really how it started. Em, looking back, er, when I was a young boy, before I was a teenager, I used to stick different colour dots on books, in my ..., at home, I was doing classification. Em, and, and you could say, okay, may be that was an aptitude that I should've been aware of, and a lot of my, er, academics studies were in natural science subjects, em, so biology and geology, and quite a bit in geography, where categorisation, whether through, taxonomy, and systematics and all the associated nomenclature isn't a million miles away from, er, what we do in librarianship in terms of, em, categorising knowledge to help people access it, and to preserve and safeguard it. Em so there probably were some cues in retrospect, but it was accidental. And then it was really not until I've been working for a number of years, as, you know, a library assistant that I thought, there was a career path for me that would work.</p>	<p>Beginning to see other sides of the profession. <u>Attitude started to change.</u></p> <p>A profession that has a variety of interesting tasks and appeared to make a difference.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Possessed librarian's aptitude</li> </ol>		<p>Aptitude of a librarian at an early age?</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Categorise knowledge to help people access, preserve and safeguard knowledge</li> </ol>		<p>Associate librarianship with categorisation – features found in natural science subjects.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Accidental career</li> </ol>		<p>Librarianship is to categorise knowledge to help people access, preserve and safeguard that knowledge. An accidental career.</p> <p>Realisation of an existing career path for him. Self revelation.</p>

**STEP TWO: Listing of emergent themes as appeared in transcript**

1	Fascinated by positive features of LIS
2	Career foundation
3	Making a difference
4	Possessed librarian's aptitude
5	Categorise knowledge to help people access, preserve and safeguard knowledge.
6	Accidental career.
7	Librarianship has important role in society
8	Public's unawareness of LIS value
9	Information and knowledge
10	Knowledge economy
11	LIS being undervalued
12	Poor at communicating value
13	Victims of own success
14	Ahead of its time – early adopter paradox
15	Rewarding profession
16	Rich in experience and contribution
17	Support research and learning
18	Impact of LIS
19	Putting visions into actions
20	Librarianship compared to Daoist
21	Be the change – action speaks louder than words
22	Critical analysis of professional organisations' roles
23	Leadership is reflected in actions and practice
24	Invisible intervention illustrates success
25	Act as platforms to facilitate and enable
26	Success means intervention goes unnoticed
27	Marketing LIS is a challenge
28	Recognised profession through CILIP's Charterhip
29	Desperate rebranding
30	Branding is a powerful tool
31	Universities are like commodities

### STEP THREE: Linking emergent themes to middle-level themes

<b>Middle-level themes</b>	
Making a difference	3, 221, 222
Be the change	19, 20, 21, 23, 41, 117, 118, 177, 206, 211
Influencing for an outcome	50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57
Behavioural change	68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 79
Librarianship has important role in society	5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 28, 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 45, 46, 60, 61, 62, 129, 171, 172, 203
Common mission	133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 173
Adapt in accordance with professional mission	165, 166, 169, 170, 173, 174, 176, 177, 201, 202, 204, 205
Better position self	125, 126, 156, 157, 158, 207, 208, 209, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218
Students as paying customers	178-198
Demonstrating value and impact	24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 42, 43, 55, 56, 58, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 156, 157, 158
Critical thinking	22, 155, 161, 162, 163, 164, 210, 212
Bandwagon effect	159, 160, 219, 220, 223
Culture of the organisations	142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
Professional-personal identity relationship	74, 75, 80, 81
Competitive market	31, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 122, 123, 132, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 175
Public's unawareness of LIS value	8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 40, 59, 65
Nurturing and developing staff	47, 48, 49
Traditional gatekeeping	106, 109, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 127, 128
Deficiency of professional knowledge	93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 124, 125, 130, 131
Professional educators vs. librarians	82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92
Research value and professional status	151, 152, 153, 154
Career foundation	1, 2, 4, 6, 44
Resources branding	32, 33, 34

Emergent themes that dropped out\*: 35, 36, 55, 76, 77, 100-105, 119, 120, 121, 167, 168, 199, 200  
(N.B. less prominent emergent themes that did not fit in the overall structure above)

**STEP FOUR: Grouping of middle-level themes to create super-ordinate themes**

Middle-level themes	Super-ordinate themes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be the change</li> <li>2. Making a difference</li> <li>3. Influencing</li> <li>4. Behavioural change</li> </ol>	<p>The intertwining of professional-personal self</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrating value and impact</li> <li>2. Bandwagon effect</li> <li>3. Critical thinking</li> <li>4. Culture of the organisation</li> <li>5. Competitive market</li> </ol>	<p>Impact of wider contexts on professional identity</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Common mission</li> <li>2. Better position self</li> <li>3. Students as paying customers</li> </ol>	<p>Adapt in accordance with professional mission</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Librarianship has important role in society</li> <li>2. Research value and professional status</li> </ol>	<p>Affirmed value of LIS</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traditional gatekeeping</li> <li>2. Deficiency in professional knowledge</li> <li>3. Nurturing and developing staff</li> <li>4. Competitive market</li> </ol>	<p>Traditional gatekeeping &amp; professional knowledge</p>

## Appendix 9

### Participant profiles

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#### **'Alex'**

Alex works in the senior management team of a multi-disciplinary new university (post-1992), which was a former polytechnic with over 30,000 students. Starting off his career in research, Alex worked as a part-time Information Assistant with *'no intention to developing into a career'* and, whilst having considered it as *'just an acceptable form of wage slavery'*, he did not join the profession as a vocation. The defining moment occurred when Alex learnt to appreciate the value and contributions of LIS – the difference it makes to society and academia: *'I can see that there are people working, em, at different roles, at more senior levels, it looks exciting, it looks interesting, it looks that they are making a difference, it looks like it's a, you know er, er... a key job in a university, very varied, and I thought I quite fancy a bit of that'*. Five super-ordinate themes have emerged from this case: (1) the intertwining of professional-personal self; (2) impact of wider contexts on professional identity; (3) adapt in accordance with professional mission; (4) affirmed value of LIS; and (5) traditional gatekeeping and professional knowledge.

#### **'Beth'**

Working as a senior information specialist in a prestigious multi-disciplinary university with over 25,000 students, Beth began her career in science and joined the LIS profession at a later stage of her life. Whilst working as a part-time school librarian, Beth decided to pursue her career in the field: *'I realised for myself that I really needed some more, of the library skills. So in the end I decided to do an information science MSc'*. Going from strength to strength, Beth has continued her role in supporting teaching and research and was promoted from an information specialist to a senior information specialist over the course of fifteen years. With her imminent retirement approaching, Beth remains enthusiastic about the profession, urging academic librarians to *'just enjoy it [...] [and] to do [the] best in everything and that's just the way [...] anyone working in librarianship has to be doing'*. Following an initial, then follow-up, interview, seven super-ordinate themes have emerged from this case: (1) connecting professional self with institution's identity; (2) making contact and reaching out: the ultimate challenge; (3) getting out the library: establish the connection and develop the network; (4) prominent research support: a comprehensive service that targets the core; (5) increasing teaching support: a traditional role expanding; (6) 'blowing your own trumpet': demonstrating value and impact; (7) proactive professional development.

#### **'Carl'**

With a career spanning over thirty years in librarianship, Carl works as a manager in a small modern specialist university. Starting from a humble beginning as a library assistant upon graduation, Carl received his training and went on a LIS course in tandem and worked his way up through his career. Highly conscientious and proactive, Carl takes his vocation as a librarian to *'help people find information'* seriously. Having experienced major changes in the profession, including organisational reforms, his wealth of experience has offered perceptive insights into the evolving landscape of academic librarianship. The impact of the various spheres of experience presented in Carl's case has come forward through the conceptual ideas introduced. Following the initial and follow-up interviews, six super-ordinate themes emerged from the narratives: (1) professional mission and identity; (2) the deep impact of organisational culture and politics; (3) supporting 'others': the basis of achievements; (4) users: the *raison d'être*; (5) technology: the biggest impact on professional and personal life; (6) professional qualification and CPD.

## Appendix 10

### Full case story of 'Alex'

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#### ***The intertwining of professional-personal self***

Combining four middle-level themes 'be the change'; 'making a difference'; and 'influencing' and 'behavioural change', these subsumed themes are closely connected with Alex's career and his position in senior management. The result of the process of going through the management experience is what made him the professional he is today. The theme of being the change ran through the interview and formed a significant part of his professional identity. Alex was conscious that he would want to make changes that are within his control, and the concept was referenced in the discussion of a professional mission – 'be the change you want to see', 'I think I just would be the change I want to see and and and, develop as I feel I need to'. Refusing to shift the responsibility to someone else, he believed in controlling what he wanted to see by putting visions into practice. Because '*leadership, isn't doesn't always come where it signified as being, or illustrated via, various em, you know, em, nominal titles or honorary titles, it can be in what people do, 'so do it, em, don't err, preach it, tell the people'* it is then clear that to Alex, leadership must be reflected through actions and practice. Admitting his reservations towards the role of the professional body, Alex proposed a new way to support the professional status of LIS through being a good professional, with its key features being 'deeds, not words and be the change you want to see', 'being seen as a force for change and for good'. Following the rationale, it is reasonable to believe that Alex, the leader, the good professional himself *is* in fact, the change. Although he has never considered his professional mission until the question was being put forward to him ('there might be something I naturally try and do without articulating it so formally' '... I don't really think about this to be honest with you ...'), this principle of being the change was in his subconscious mind which came to the forefront while he was contemplating his professional mission. To be the change is to prevent him from imposing his ways and ideas on to others, and to lead the profession forward by doing. A simile of the Taoist religion was used to illustrate this concept while explaining his practise of being the change himself:

'So if we said is librarianship a religion, then I'd be a Taoist, you know ...'  
'I wouldn't be try to impose my way of doing things on other people.'

According to the Oxford Dictionary of English (2010), 'philosophical Taoism emphasizes inner contemplation and mystical union with nature; wisdom, learning, and purposive action should be abandoned in favour of simplicity and wu-wei', with Tao being 'the absolute principle underlying the universe, combining within itself the principles of yin and yang and signifying the way, or code of behaviour, that is in harmony with the natural order'. The idea of a code of behaviour is particularly significant in highlighting the behavioural aspect of Alex's professional-personal self.

As he progressed through his career, Alex is consciously aware of his behavioural change through his management and leadership experience. When he was asked whether he felt his role and identity has changed, he discussed the issue of a change of behaviour five times in one conversation:

'I think yeah I mean I think as you as you develop through your career and you become more of a mature, practitioner, you view changes, how you behave changes, em, I think you, when you go through management and leadership experience you, learn more about *yourself*. And, if you are successful you'd probably also self aware to a degree ... Em, and I think you probably become a lot more considerate and patient and savvy ... in *how you work!* Em and, you know you-you realized that you have to govern your passion for your profession you have to consider how other people see you, em ..., so I I think yeah you learn to govern your natural instinct better ... So you-you change your behaviour. I think you also learn a lot about em, how to increase your chances of influencing people and you change of behaviour depending on who you are talking to where and

when and how you-you pitch things at the right level. Er now that doesn't mean you are becoming a politician or, I don't mean that in a cynical way in terms of being em, false. But you do you do change your behaviour quite a lot.'

'... so I mean I think your as you progress, er, through the through librarianship you change your behavior, em, and really you have to this bit of natural selection process *I think!*'

It can be understood that Alex's professional-personal identity has changed in the experience, and he has now transformed into a 'mature', 'successful', 'self aware', 'considerate', 'patient', 'savvy' person and practitioner, who learned to govern his 'natural instinct'. It is impossible to separate the personal self from the professional self since it is his practitioner self who has gone through and experienced the career progression and changed him into a wiser person. Although it appeared to be context specific when Alex was referring his change of behaviour within the work context, nevertheless it is reasonable to believe that this more experienced, wiser professional librarian is also in his own right a wiser and more experienced individual outside his professional life, understood as his personal self. The use of the expression 'have to' ('you have to govern your passion for your profession you have to consider how other people see you' 'you have to this bit of natural selection process') implies an obligation, a behavioural change which is a necessity rather than a freedom of choice. Whether that change was a result of past mistakes and lesson learned, or knowledge gained through other means, it is a process which changes Alex from the professional he was yesterday to the experienced senior manager he is today. There is a high level of self recognition and awareness in this transformation process and was not a change of behaviour that was pointed out by others since it was both Alex's personal and professional self who have undergone the experience and came up with such a revelation in the end.

An exercise of control is demonstrated in the process of Alex's behavioural change. In order to create an image, potentially an authoritative image of a leader, he needs to consider how he is portrayed to other people ('you have to consider how other people see you'). This controlled persona that he projects, this image his colleagues are familiar with has formed part of Alex's identity. It is an identity he created so he will appear respectable and well-grounded, which in turn will benefit him in his dealing with people. In the process of creating this controlled persona, Alex's personal self was involved in the creation of this character which makes it difficult to isolate his personal from the professional self. Later on in the conversation, the reason for him having to govern his passion for his profession and his natural instinct is revealed – it is to successfully influence people ('to increase your chances of influencing people and you change of behaviour depending on who you are talking to where and when and how you-you pitch things at the right level'). The adjustment of his mentality and behaviour is to increase his chances of succeeding in influencing people, a task 'that fall to senior management or directors to do, and a lot of that is essentially, em, behind the scenes to many staff'. In his own words, the change of behaviour was a 'natural selection process' that is part of the price he has to pay to progress through librarianship, a process with both a natural choice and a necessary one. It may be reasonable to assume that if Alex has never progressed in his career as he did, the chances of him having to carry out the tasks he has now would be significantly less, which in turn means the chances of him having to adjust his mentality or to change his behaviour would also be less. It can therefore be understood that Alex's career progression and his change of behaviour is all part and parcel and are closely knitted in the process.

The theme of influencing for an outcome is closely related to Alex's experience and his change of behaviour. It is a major theme uncovered in Alex's story. Amongst the biggest change and challenge he has experienced in his career, Alex identified influencing for an outcome as the most challenging and difficult experience for him compared to any other trials. He has emphasised and reiterated the words 'influencing' and 'difficult' over again whilst discussing the subject:

'Em, if I'm honest I think the biggest challenges, er ..., influencing er, colleagues and stakeholders, who, have a different set of priorities and understanding. Er, and typically that could be er, people working in em *IT*, it could be people working in *finance*, em, explaining why why

and how libraries work er, demonstrating value, articulating business requirements you know which might be a two way thing, and then ... , reaching consensus and a shared understanding to, work together, for the good of the organisation. And that's incredibly difficult because essentially you are talking different languages it's it's case of being able to, em, translate em, alien concepts, and reach middle ground, and that's you know, er, sometimes it's personality based sometimes it's politics, er, everyone has an agenda, em ..., sometimes people want to go at different speeds, er, can be very challenging. And, even in a university where you think there's a a fairly high base line of enlightenment and rationality, actually there probably isn't relatively, and em, the ability to make your business case in a compelling way to get by and influence is very important and it's incredibly difficult, and it's something I have to do a lot of work on to improve my approach I think you know a few years ago I would probably be banging on the table and saying but can't you see it it's obvious we have to do this and the feeling that people are just being difficult, and may be they *are* being difficult but that's their nature, em, and er ... , may be looking for the past of past at least resistance is better than trying to change people's nature in that regard I don't know. I think influencing, influencing to get an outcome, er, is is probably one of the biggest challenges ... You know there's all the others leading change and all these kind of thing you know that's that's pretty run of the mill compare to that. You know because if you can't er, get what you want, on the table, and you can't, influence, er, and shape things, you know it's a non starter, you know and a lot of that fall to senior management or directors to do, and a lot of that is essentially, em, behind the scenes to many staff, and no one should assume anything 'coz it's rational anyway.'

The examination of the context and environment around Alex helps to understand the reasons behind the difficulties he experienced. With cross-departmental collaborations being a common practice in academic libraries, Alex is working closely with other teams which he has no managerial control over (typically that could be er, people working in em *IT*, it could be people working in *finance*) and yet they have to work together to reach a consensus in joint ventures. It is apparent that people and politics have constituted to the main challenge and have a key role in making things difficult for Alex. Different work ethics, culture and priorities across the departments can cause conflicts between teams and people, and such differences are reflected in the choice of words Alex used as description – 'you are talking different languages', 'translate alien concepts'. Although they are professionals working for the same organisation, yet they do not share the same understanding or demonstrate the expected intellect as 'even in a university where you think there's a a fairly high base line of enlightenment and rationality, actually there probably isn't relatively' which has created additional obstacles for Alex's influencing task. With achieving results and pushing forward agendas as a major remit for senior managers, successful influencing is of paramount importance to someone in Alex's position 'because if you can't er, get what you want, on the table, and you can't, influence, er, and shape things, you know it's a non starter'. If being able to implement policies and make executive decisions are generic qualities owned by senior managers and directors, then it can be understood that Alex has now shared the identity of the senior managers and directors as he progressed through the management ladder. The persona of an experienced, mature practitioner who has changed his behaviour has once again appeared in the conversation: 'it's something I have to do a lot of work on to improve my approach I think you know a few years ago I would probably be banging on the table and saying but can't you see it it's obvious we have to do this' '... may be looking for the past of past at least resistance is better than trying to change people's nature in that regard'. A degree of thoughts and analysis was invested in the assessment process, where it is implied that Alex, the inexperienced practitioner a few years ago, would have reacted very differently when facing the same situation.

The beginning of Alex's career spring from his appreciation of the value of LIS in particular the difference the profession can make. Making a difference has since remained at the centre of Alex's story and continued as an emergent theme that appeared again in various conversations in the interview. This

sense of calling is something that carries deep meaning and significance for Alex's professional identity both from the perspectives of professional value and personal-professional integrity.

At the very early stage of his part time librarianship work, Alex was willing to accept his 'librarian not' days as a form of wage slavery and had no intention of developing it into a career until the time when he discovered a worthy cause in the profession that changed the course of his career path:

'I can see that there are people working, em, at different roles, at more senior levels, it looks exciting, it looks interesting, it looks that they are making a *difference*, it looks like it's a, you know er, er..., a key job in a university very varied, and I thought I quite fancy a bit of that ...'

As he witnessed the contributions academic librarians made in Higher Education, Alex began to change his perception and mentality towards the profession. It would seem that instead of choosing a career for financial gain and egotistical vanity, Alex was after a noble cause of doing something that can contribute to greater good and create a positive impact to benefit many. There is an evident sense of pride and integrity emerged from the discussion of working in the LIS profession:

'... you're never gonna be rich, working as librarian, em, in terms of wealth, but you're certainly rich in terms of experience and what you contribute, and the difference you can make, um, and particular in Higher Education ...'

Being fully aware that the LIS profession does not guarantee materialistic wealth, Alex took pride in his profession of its values and has considered himself wealthy in professional experience and contributions. Weighing the achievement of the professional ideals above financial success, Alex's pride and integrity are demonstrated through this conscious decision he made on his career, a choice which perhaps uncommonly concurred by many because of its financial drawback. It is however noted that the obscurity and subjective nature of experience and the meaning of contributions can be difficult concepts for people to comprehend let alone agreeing upon since the constitution of value and meaning is only subjective to the individual's value judgement. When it has been established that value and impact are things that are difficult to measure, the value of the subject can only bear meaning to the individual concerned, and in this case it is Alex. Because he can only live according to his own value system, the rich experience and the value of the LIS profession in making a difference are precious and have a significant meaning only to him. To demonstrate how this profession is more than a job to Alex and instead of delivering some mediocre, he is striving to shape a future that can make a difference and create an impact. When discussing the scale of services, his rhetorical question 'is that really what we can best em influence or where we can make a difference ...' suggests a lot of thoughts have been put in to analysing the services' directions. Alex's personal nobility of making a difference is also reflected in his professional sense of responsibility by nurturing the next generation of professionals:

'... I think for me em, helping, nurture and develop talent and help people see, you know where they can go what their potential is and help them get there I think is is one of the most rewarding things, em and probably one of the best ways you can make a difference you know, er.'

Believing the developing of staff as his professional responsibility and a way to make a difference in professional practice, Alex considered mentoring his staff to succeed in their career as most rewarding to him. Whilst illustrating the ephemeral nature of personal success, Alex exhibits a consistent attitude in terms of his wishes to achieve greater good than personal glory:

'Em, in terms of what's most rewarding *to me*, I think er, you know, probably it's developing staff that I manage and lead, and seeing them become successful and recognised in their own right, I think that's probably the most rewarding thing because that's what you are leaving behind, em, there's no other legacy really at the end of the day apart from you know may be you get acknowledgements for helping a researcher in their paper or something or a student in their their

acknowledgements in their theses and and you know everyone depending on their role will have that happen sooner or later or you get a good feedback or something but em, some of these things are fairly ephemeral, and they just slip through your fingers, and you know you leave one organisation and you're just a memory pretty much straight away and and that's always the case ...'

Comparing personal achievements to 'a memory', Alex has demonstrated the impermanent nature of success that is quickly forgotten as soon as the person leaves an organisation. He has illustrated how appreciative acknowledgements and positive feedback from users are both elusive and short lived, and being something that everyone will experience sooner or later in their career has made them even more inconsequential. These egotistical vanities are insignificant and have very little meaning in Alex's mind in comparison with the long lasting impact and a difference that developing the next generation of staff can make to the mentees and the profession.

In the discussion of the subject on professional identity, Alex indicated that he believed his has not changed. Regardless of the various roles and positions he has taken on, he has considered himself a librarian through and through. He has therefore closely identified his professional identity with the one of a 'librarian':

'In terms of my professional identity, you know I think I'd consider myself a librarian in a way I consider everyone who works in in, you know er, with me, a librarian. Em, and I don't mind telling people I'm a librarian, but I wouldn't say, it's the one thing that, identifies me as different from anyone else you know, it's part of who I am, em, that might change!'

Instead of using other terms and descriptions, Alex has chosen 'librarian' as his professional identity, a traditional tacit concept relating to LIS work that people can easily comprehend. The fact that he is grounded in his role is evidenced in his mentality when speaking of his professional mission and demonstrating the value of librarians:

'do we need to be *up there*, you know, do we need to think do we feel aggrieved that we don't have the status as a sportstar. Should we?'

'there might be something I naturally try and do without articulating it so formally.'

'I think I just would be the change I want to see and and and, develop as I feel I need to.'

After identifying his professional identity with the one of a librarian, Alex emphasised this identity is neither a dividing factor nor a totality of his entire self. It is only a part of who he is at this moment in time. The composition of Alex's total self has therefore consist an element of 'a librarian' at present, a librarian not ('for a long time I wasn't a librarian' 'I was at a UK university, er doing research and err I was you know, a PhD student, and em, I had no thoughts at the time about becoming a librarian. I was I was em, pursuing an academic career'), and a future potential professional other ('I think it's fairly typical these days for people to, you know change track every you know, ten fifteen twenty years and to have, a number of careers rather than just one.'). Whilst there is no evidence to suggest Alex is letting his professional identity to consume his private life ('I think there's the difference between you know, your your private life and your work'), he has nevertheless acknowledged that the professional instincts librarians have can sometimes infiltrate into their private life:

I think people have a very individual approach to how their professional identity relates to their personal identity er, for a lot of people it's them it's what they do, they live and breathe it, and for some people it's part of who they are and you wouldn't know unless you ask them, and that doesn't reflect different degrees of success I think it' just a different person's approach of

finding anywhere really. And I don't know if anyone's done a study and gone back to every librarian's home and look at how they how many books they have on their shelf and how they organize them, em, but I'd it wouldn't surprise me if there was a slight difference with the you know, the rest of the population, but there might not be, there might not be, you never know.

Alex did not say he himself is living and breathing his professional identity of a librarian outside his working life, but has demonstrated an understanding that there are colleagues who are thoroughly absorbed by this identity that has become 'part of who they are'. His remark ('it wouldn't surprise me') suggests he believed librarians have possessed certain occupational characteristics and work habits that are different from non-librarians, with their professional identity often revealed through the traces of their habitual behaviour found in their daily lives.

### ***Impact of wider contexts on professional identity***

Academic librarians' awareness of their obligation to demonstrate their value and impact in recent years is a phenomenon of the direct outcome of the pressure LIS professionals experienced from the wider environments. Using the example of CILIP's rebranding exercise, Alex has illustrated the organisation's desperate effort to support the LIS sector to be a recognised profession, which in his opinion 'I just think that's em, throwing the baby out of the bath water it's a kind of you know, knee jerk reaction to, desperate times'. The language used indicates a sense of disapproval, where an implication that a measure with a good intention has gone about the wrong way. Although Alex did not elaborate on his view, the pressure academic librarians faced and to fight for their existence is indicated in the discussion on the subject on strategic lobbying. As a respond to the threat to their identity, librarians are constantly championing their role and value to society, they are according to Alex, trying to survive in their various spheres of existence:

'Yeah there's there's a huge thing there about lobbying as well it's all about, who what message we are gonna trying to give to what audience who we're trying to influence what's the outcome. Are we talking about er, trying to make ourselves appear important to politicians who are policy makers and they are wonks and they are think tanks. Are we trying to make ourselves look important to business so they give us some money. Are we just trying to survive are we trying to make ourselves relevant to higher education, em, or community services, I think I think you know the um, these are different spheres of activity and existence.'

The potential threat to academic librarians' identity that is illustrated through their consideration of strategic lobbying to promote the profession has provided them with the additional role of campaigners, a promoter of the profession and their related services. The ideas of commercialisation and competition under the theme of a competitive market are also some drivers that affect librarians' identity. Within the context (framework) of university and qualification, Alex described the issues of brands and commodities in such view:

'... brands are important higher educations are extremely important you know universities are becoming more like brands everyday, may be not to the extend we we see in North America, em, but ... yeah I'm not entirely comfortable with er, you know, turning it just into a sales pitch ...'

'... we're moving more and more to, marketised environment, em, and that's how it is now. Er I wouldn't necessarily agree with that, em but, er, that's the situation we are in so it's that's become more of a financial transaction, you know, so you you're you're selling a good which might be a qualification and you you're getting some money for that which you put into organizing organisation you invest that and so on and so forth.'

Alex's uneasiness towards the recent development ('I'm not entirely comfortable with er, you know, turning it just into a sales pitch' 'we're moving more and more to, marketised environment, em, and that's how it is now. Er I wouldn't necessarily agree with that') suggested his dissatisfaction of the UK

Higher Education going down the route of becoming nothing more than a product – ‘a sales pitch’, ‘a financial transaction’. The same is true with the organisational culture, with corporate environment as another theme emerged from the conversation:

'I think what we are seeing is that, many er organisations are becoming increasingly corporate because they feel they have to to survive and compete, with each other, and *the rest of the world!*

'So, you know there is an element where things are becoming more corporate things are becoming a bit hard to know in that sense. Er, but i-i-it would I think it's dependent on the culture of the organisation.'

To understand academic librarians do not work in silos means that this wider culture and environment will have a significant impact on their perspectives and the way they function. With the organisations trying to compete for survival, it has made things a lot more unpredictable for librarians in terms of where they stand. The sense of uncertainty ('things are becoming a bit hard to know') permeates into their daily existence, as it affects the operational service delivery, as well as the behavioural and psychological aspects of librarians' professional beings as seen in the discussion on the impact of organisational culture:

'Em, and that's certainly affects how people do their job, everywhere, including er, librarianship and library services. It, I think it affects how we behave, I think it affects how we think about ourselves, I think it affects how we plan how we deliver services.'

A tacit understanding came across in the speech where because organisations are intensely competing in the market, librarians as a supporting service body must therefore follow the same practice and standards and be in line with their organisations in order to support them to succeed in achieving their objectives to 'compete with each other and the rest of the world'. There is an indication that organisational culture has an impact on librarians' identity in a way that they have inadvertently endorsed if not identified themselves with the organisation's value and work ethics:

'And I think we have to become more and more rigorous, around er, why we do what we do. And this comes back to demonstrating value and impact, ultimately.'

For Alex, librarians have to become more rigorous around their practice is a direct result of organisations becoming increasingly corporate. Librarians being in the thick of it cannot escape but have to conform to the organisation's culture. The theme of demonstrating value and impact begins to emerge when librarians feel they have to make extra efforts in showcasing their achievements under the pressure of a corporate environment and counteracting job insecurity.

Another contributing factor behind the pressure of having to demonstrate their value and impact is the intervention of Google. Follow on his explanation on resources scarcity which necessitated influencing, Alex explained the common phenomenon of Google and the advancing of technologies have made the already misunderstood LIS profession more of a battle to defend:

'Er, I think, that what goes hand in hand with that, is a very popular notion er, which might be summed up in the fairly, unsophisticated phrase, "well it's all on the web it's all on Google", what do you why are you spending money on on electronic collection it's all free isn't it? We don't need librarians, and in fact you know I think there was a good example wasn't there that's probably become er er, a myth in its own tea time, but er [anonymised] University were one of the first to kind to test that by, em, going on what I read at the time, sacking information specialists *because of Google.*

'... Em, but I think given that we are going through times of *scarcity*, and given we are going through a time where there is a popular myth that, information professionals and librarians are, by concept, by the age redundant, er, makes it a challenge. Because you feel sometimes you're having to make, argue a case for things which you know, would argued in one, year's ago, em, but *hey*, you know why shouldn't you be challenged? Being challenged if you if you've got the arguments then you should be okay!'

The misconception and exaggeration of what Google and technologies can achieve does not only undermine the value of librarians, but has also created a challenge for librarians to justify their existence and contributions. Instead of getting on with their job, librarians have to constantly argue for something which they have argued before suggests an unnecessary task which could easily be avoided. Although Alex is confident with the value of librarians ('if you've got the arguments then you should be okay!'), the pressure has nevertheless casted a shadow over their professional identity in terms of public's opinion and the way librarians have to project themselves and exhibit their contributions to earn approvals.

Alex believes articulating librarians' value and impact is a useful way to educate people the true picture of what librarians do and to promote the profession:

'... it's it's ... education isn't it. Er, if you show people what the facts are, er, which tell a different story, then you will help educate them as to, what the real picture looks like ...'

'... I think what you got to do is get them on your side tell them a story which makes sense to them, and really, it's about demonstrating value and impact and I think everyone knows that that's quite help and agenda.'

Thrice acknowledging the difficulty of measuring value and impact because of the nature of library work, Alex demonstrates the chaotic situation library users will face with the absence of librarians as a way to articulate their values and contributions:

'... it's about demonstrating value and impact and I think everyone knows that that's quite help and agenda. And and doing that is quite difficult, are you trying to show, what you know, have we got a figure for, the net worth, of librarians in the UK for the UK economy. Em, you know some activities, some professions and activities *would* have a figure there have we got a figure can we calculate it *I don't know*, er, is that the most important thing I mean you know we know that er GDP is important but if you ask the Dalai Lama who talks about you know er, er, greatest national happiness or something instead, so you know and and and we got all the i-i-idiocy about politicians having smile or happiness indexes so, em, some things are difficult to measure by their very nature, but I think we do have to do a lot of work and work is going on, but we do have to look really carefully about how we articulate what value and impact we bring er, to our organisations and to society at large. Em, I know that if you took librarians away from the university and all the services they offer, er, things will get very difficult very quickly, students wouldn't have access to texts, researchers wouldn't have access to the content they need, they wouldn't have the skills to navigate and access their content will use it, er, they'd all be spending a lot more time, trying to do things somebody else did for them, particularly well. Er, so, yeah I don't know, I think we just have to do a lot more work on how we how em articulate our value and impact, and that's the difficult thing to do.'

Despite the challenges of articulating and measuring their value and impact, Alex believes it to be an essential task for librarians and all the related bodies to find ways to make it happen. In addition to the impact from the wider environments of resources scarcity, commercialisation, Googlisation and so forth, a culture that emphasises on accountability and transparency has made the presentation of evidence an obligation in the daily practice for Alex ('demonstrating value, articulating business requirements', 'the

ability to make your business case in a compelling way to get by and influence', 'successfully influencing people to get buy in to your business case'). Since the profession is in a crisis of survival, there is no other way than to educate people the true value and 'real picture' of librarianship once and for all.

A further examination on the subject on influencing reveals that the emphasis of the issue and the difficulty for its implementation are to do with resources distribution which is closely linked to the immediate context and environment surrounding Alex. When he was asked the reasons behind influencing being such an important issue compared to in the past, his response points to a global phenomenon of limited resources and financial constraints:

So so so er er an obvious thing to point to it might be too obvious and it might be a bit er ... a myth I don't know but I I would say that ..., are you in a time of scarcity or is it post-scarcity or, at the moment we are in a in a period of austerity we're under economic pressure there's been massive changes to how higher education's financed. Em, and we will see some institutions fail and that's that's what we'd expect, there'd be a change of government policy will change but em, certainly the world is is changing in the UK, er, er, for higher education. And, what that means is that, you could argue and I don't want to undermine the contribution or challenges faced by, predecessors in years gone by, but, if, resources are not scarced, and there's enough to go round, then, the challenge of, successfully influencing people to get buy in to your business case to your vision to your strategy to how you want to get resources how much you want to do what with, em, is certainly a lot easier than it would be now.

The time of scarcity and austerity initiated the difficult influencing task for Alex by making it a challenge for him to put forward his business case and implementing his vision and strategy in his organisation. Alex believed predecessors of the past had a relatively less difficult mountain to climb because of their more favourable circumstance. Today senior managers having to invest a lot of time and effort in winning arguments and developing strategy to successfully implementing their business plans have provided them with an identity of a negotiator, a diplomat as demonstrated in the case of Alex. His surrounding environments are the instigators of the creation of this new role.

In the discussion of the future trends affecting academic librarianship, Alex has observed a phenomenon of professionals blindly following common beliefs from other people without careful consideration of the evidence and logic. Alex has referenced the concept as bandwagon jumping which he revisited several times throughout the interview, a phenomenon that is much to his annoyance and utter disapproval. The issue was first brought to light when he was asked of his opinion on the subjects documented in professional trends reports. Regarding trends reports as a process, Alex believed the focus should be on practical operations rather than mere discussions, which has echoed his point of 'deeds not words' from the theme of 'being the change'. He has strong criticism on librarians following fashion aimlessly and jumping on the bandwagon without giving sufficient thoughts and analysis on their practicality:

'... you know there's a very horrible tendency for er, some fairly, grotesque bandwagon jumping. Em, and if you look at for example something which which was a bug bear of mine at the time Library 2.0, woohoo, it's a big thing. Is that a-a-an act of desperation? Profession feeling, that they have to, reach out and make themselves look relevant? And with the times? Lack of critical analysis, was shocking. Em, it was terrible. And where is it now? You know if you're being [inaudible] geniis and just say oh well let's just become part of the the fabric so we don't think about to do something separate, rubbish. Most of it's gone. Second Life, we were going to use Second Life weren't we deliver all our services. Okay, well that's an interesting hypothesis yeah let's test it let's play with it let's think about it as may be something blue skies. But anyone who's got any, sense of what's practical what's achievable what's, what's the best thing to do, would say okay yeah it's an idea but it, it's either ahead of its time or it's not quite right. And these are the reasons. And actually let's look at this we can do this it might not be as sexy, it

might not be in the headlines, might not be a bandwagon we are jumping on, might even be something old, that we've always done that we shouldn't stop doing. Might be something we can reinvent, yeah?'

'... How intelligent are you, yeah? Are you just jumping on the bandwagon and turning flicking a switch or are you actually thinking about it, yeah? ...'

An indication of a relationship between the bandwagon effect and the wider environments is presented in this conversation. It can be understood that the pressure being experienced by academic librarians is driving them to go to great lengths to prove their worth and existence. As a fight for survival, librarians are prepared to do whatever it takes to defend their professional existence. With the concept of desperate times first mentioned in the context of professional branding exercise, the idea is reiterated here where librarians are feeling obliged to appear relevant and be in with the time with the aim of promoting their role and defending their profession. The act of 'reaching out' as reflected in librarians' unreserved support of popular believes is a direct response to the threat of their professional existence in which they experienced. Jumping on the bandwagon is therefore a sign of librarians' attempt to defy their subjected invisibility and professional marginalisation. The problem with the bandwagon phenomenon lies in the group thinking nature that can result in an irrational knee jerk reaction and have dire consequences. Alex used the examples of past predictions over the developments of Library 2.0 and Second Life to illustrate how this group thinking behaviour which lacked critical analysis has ended up failing to fulfil expectations and eventually collapsed.

The idea of the bandwagon effect has been brought back in the context of staff development, where Alex observed librarians having the tendency to attend training programmes that are related to the popular trends they gathered from the headlines. He cautioned the investment on these transient products and developments that failed to withstand the test of time will only result in devoting efforts and resources to no avail:

'... Well you know the the the you know the, you you can either plan these things, and you can get too stressed about it and you can say okay well it's Library 2.0 and we gotta have a course and record some of 23 things and you're going to do some social media stuff and oh yeah, well, this thing you've learned, is run by a company who's just mucking around, and they got a bit of money and then they might not exist in two years time. And you invested what in that exactly? Ah ... well you know, okay give it a go, er might not work. What's the risk, what's the loss? May be nothing. Em, but you know this is coming back to bandwagon again. And and and also I think scale, you know so you hear people saying we should be able to do this we should be to go and work embedded in research team and help them understand data. Well who's that? That describes a very small minority of any service. You know and then it's arguable over whether that's desirable or not is that really what we can best em influence or where we can make a difference may be not I don't know.'

Alex was heavily criticising the so-called new developments in the market which librarians have often fallen victims of because of their lack of analysis. The fact that librarians are being too taken up by the trends and fashions has made their efforts counter-productive. Alex believes their anxiety has actually clouded their judgements in making the right choices and decisions simply because they are ever ready to accept unproven trends and fashions just to appear relevant.

The implication of one size does not fit all suggests critical thinking is required in order to plan service provision efficiently and effectively. Alex suggests librarians should avoid following popular believes and making sensible judgements that are fit for purpose and work according to their own unique circumstances:

'I think there's lots of assumptions that can make you have to put those aside, take everything as it comes, em, and not get too carried away by trends and fashions and what people are telling us, and doing the right thing.'

'... don't believe the hype. There's a lot of hype here. Em, a lot of rubbish gets spoken.'

The expression 'doing the right thing' demonstrates a sense of righteousness and integrity, and for someone to be able stand by their opinions and refuse to drift with the current requires confidence and courage. However the determination of 'appropriateness' is pretty much a judgement call. Whilst he has disregarded many 'hypes' and 'rubbish' from the reliable hearsay, constructive debates are still needed and instead of completely ignore the trends and developments, Alex suggests librarians to consider and analyse them carefully so they do not get sucked in and make snappy judgements for the sake of getting on the bandwagon. Whether it is service provision or professional development, librarians need to put the assumptions aside and autonomously examine the practicality, sustainability and suitability of each decision they make.

#### ***Adapt in accordance with professional mission***

Throughout the history of librarianship, Alex has recognised that the profession has experienced enormous trials and changes. In his view, the challenges can be summed up in a stark contrast of the way people use resources in the past and present:

'... it's a very different world you know we've gone from a world where we've we've had scarce resources and people with a lot of time, a lot of attention paid to them and we reverse that around, people who are time poor, em, they tend not to read articles to the end, they used to just dipping in and out of digital media, er and is incredibly you know, greater amount of information available to everybody everyday so it's it's a very, em, different situation than the one where librarian librarianship has travelled through, em but then again, you know librarianship has evolved, in-in over two millennia, so we've been on a journey for a long time and has taken many twist and turns ...'

From print to digital world, librarians have continued to adapt and apply their expert skills and knowledge in the new environments, as demonstrated in Alex's own identification of his professional identity of a librarian and the traditional value and principles of librarianship he affixed to modern days librarians:

'... our role is to facilitate and enable, and to and broker, err you know, may be a glue, er, do things that no one else can do or, they don't want to do or they don't understand, em, and it's a platform for other people.'

'... you could argue that a mission we would have is to create, you know trusted information and environments and act as gatekeepers to the the scholarly world.'

Undoubtedly Alex sees the nature of librarianship as a highly regarded and honourable profession, with its value indicated in its connecting nature ('a glue'), a role where others are unwilling to take on and unable to perform. As he has pointed out earlier, the invisible interventions by academic librarians are not always noticeable to people but are still highly critical to research and learning in Higher Education. Librarian acting as a platform to facilitate is a central element of librarianship, a concept which Alex later returned to. The essence of a platform lies in its connection factor and the lack of it will result in the breakdown of all interactions and exchange.

In the discussion of the core principles and philosophy of librarianship, Alex feels it is appropriate to illustrate the concept through the common professional mission:

'I think really this would be capitulated most practically or most commonly shall we say em, in terms of, what the mission of a librarian would be, what's the common mission. So, er ..., organizing safeguarding knowledge and information so people can use it, have their information needs met ... But I think it's looking at the common mission, I think that's that's where that [philosophy] would emerge, in a practitioner's world ...'

Drawing on the political philosophy, Alex emphasised the facilitating nature of the role of librarians:

'... if we are talking about philosophies if we are talking about political philosophies and we can probably say fairly libertarian and anarchic I don't know it's em, there's an element there where you know we are not making a judgment we are not censoring there's no political dimension or what there might be in that sense, but we are not trying to stop people find stuff we are trying to, facilitate that, we are not making that judgment for them. Em ... I don't know what the philosophy will be there er ...'

The emerging theme of facilitating and enabling has once again come through in the common mission. The Libertarian and Anarchic stance have highlighted the impartial and unbiased nature of the profession, with the role of librarians being to connect people and the information, and subsequently to allow them to independently make their own judgements with the information they found. This supporting role can be understood as the anchor of all operations within librarianship.

Following the consideration of the wider context and its constraints, Alex highlighted the disparity between the philosophical and practical professional mission. Believing the conceptual mission will remain unchanged, he suggested that librarians will have to continue to adapt and go a different way in delivering and carrying out their mission in their daily practice:

'... how that translates after you start looking at what money *you've got*, and what what restrictions you have, and what rules there are, set by, government or organisations, er it's different. So how that philosophy translates into practice is is complex. Er, you know may be the medium is the message information I don't know, yeah.'

'Er but we operate in a in a bigger context. It's not just up to us. And we have to look to adapt, er, and carry on doing what we are doing what we are doing is essentially based around context and philosophies you know, around creating trusted information environments, about helping people learn and how to access information and have skills, yeah? Em, there'll always be need for that what it looks like will will change.'

'I think conceptually philosophically it'll be very similar but it look very different. You know I think we we connect people with stuff, yeah? Er, that's gonna change 'coz people want different things and work in a different context and in a different information environment.'

The reactive position academic librarians are under is illustrated in the language used 'it's not just up to us' suggests the restrictions from the wider environments ('we operate in a bigger context') that will affect the way librarians carry out their job. With the task of 'creating trusted information environments, helping people learn and how to access information and have skills' remained to be the central philosophical mission of the profession, librarians will continue to 'carry on doing what we are doing' based on their common mission instead of transforming into something different. Nevertheless the methods and the processes involved in achieving those ideals will continue to be modified and evolved within the boundaries of 'organizing [and] safeguarding knowledge'. The versatility of academic librarians' knowledge and skills has been subsequently brought to light.

In order to remain relevant and indispensable, Alex believes librarians need to be in a position where they can add unique value and play an essential role by applying their specialised skills and expertise in an effective way. At the outset, a broad understanding and background knowledge is important in a professional context to 'add a richness to to what you do and and where you sight yourself in your in your work'. To prepare for the challenges in the future, librarians need to know their precise position and their own strengths:

'... in terms of where we going we have to understand where we should position ourselves, okay? So em, it's fine to talk about Big Data they are talking about Big Data in there. What is that? What is our role in it? Er, let's find where we can add unique *value* that's legitimate that's real that's within our reach. Let's not over-reach, and let's not be under ambitious, okay? Em, all these things come at a cost.'

'... And I really think you know we should, focus on the things, you know that are within reach and that we should we should be engaged in. Em but, at the same time I think, staying relevant, and you know, finding finding that position that sweet spot where we can do the stuff no one else can do. Em, and that we can help other people understand that we we can do that. I think you know that's how I see it. Em, but also, not too hung up on, tradition ...'

'... stay relevant, er, understand what's going on, you know at wider level ... I-I-I think I think planning ahead and I think trying to shape what's happening is probably very important. Em, not to sit in an ivory tower. Not to kind of build walls, or or live in a silo. What that looks like I don't know.'

The continuing emphasis on engaging in activities that are 'within reach' suggests the practicality and precision are of paramount importance since every decision incurs a cost. Librarians have to understand where their strengths lie so they can find that 'sweet spot' and position themselves to apply their expertise and contribute successfully. The role and mission of librarians are therefore depended upon that insight and understanding of their unique value. Alex refers the concept of uniqueness in terms of doing something others cannot ('do the stuff no one else can do'), a point which he previously raised regarding librarians acting as a platform to connect and facilitate ('our role is to facilitate and enable, and to and broker, err you know, may be a glue, er, do things that no one else can do or, they don't want to do or they don't understand, em, and it's a platform for other people'). 'What is our role in it?' focuses on the proactivity in the application of librarians' input, with the essence lies in the functionality and purpose of that role in connection to a particular service or issue rather than the service or issue per se. Once the purpose of their role has been established, librarians need to ensure that they can continue to hold down their positions by remaining relevant so as to make themselves indispensable. The idea of relevance has been repeatedly emphasised to highlight it as the determining factor of securing librarians' role. Value adding and role positioning are only a beginning of a prolonged battle half won, when librarians need to continue their efforts in marketing their professional service, helping stakeholders understand what they can offer and proving they can deliver by means of continual demonstrations of their value and impact.

Warning of the ivory tower syndrome, Alex encourages librarians to establish a panoramic view and understand broader issues to allow them to connect with the wider environments and make informed decisions. At the same time, librarians should be confident to break away from tradition and popular believes and control their own path. When asked on his opinion of future developments and preparations for librarians, Alex advocates the shaping of the future as the best way to prepare for what is to come – 'Well, the best way would to shape it would be to shape it. You know, if you if you want that control then then you control what happens'. This notion of shaping the future represents a return with the theme of being the change, where a demonstration of control is exemplified in making that future happen the way one plans it. Since Alex himself is the change and has begun influencing that future in accordance with his vision, planning ahead of what is to come has therefore become a mission of twice the results with half the effort.

In relation to their professional mission, Alex believes librarians are 'somebody who imparts knowledge skills experience and help somebody do something with their *learning*', and their information literacy training role is uniquely placed within the Higher Education setting:

'I think, there are some things librarians are uniquely placed to educate, on, and I think er the obvious things are information literacy digital literacy, increasingly, em study skills ...'

'... But I think we have to understand what we are doing, what limits of it are, and where it fits in. University is quite interesting I think information literacy digital literacy we are best *placed*, er, it's also almost most efficient and effective to come consistently from a central service ...'

With 'access to, the web and digital media's become a *utility* you know er, and-and-and the digital divide has lessened' librarians have an essential role in teaching information literacy to allow people to use the basic resources effectively. Working alongside professional academic educators imparting knowledge has motivated librarians to deepen their own pedagogical skills and understanding. Librarians pursuing for an education qualification as a new development has served as a reflection and evidence of librarians adapting in accordance with their mission: 'there have been lots of developments in how librarians can develop their careers and develop specific skills around *how to teach*, and many librarians are now getting em, paraprofessional for a professional qualification and education, and that's very important'. As a traditional task for librarians, information skills training has undoubtedly expanded and gained prominence in the new environments. Their role in helping people find the precise information they need has become increasingly important simply because 'the attention people have to, look for information and use information, I think it's become a bit more complex. Em, lot more choice. Lot more confusion. Lot more information to navigate'. Contrary to popular believe that technologies provide all the answers, Alex argues the distinction between the using of resources and using them effectively which is where librarians come in:

'These new technologies the way information presented you know, we are told there are things called *digital natives*, er, they might be digital natives but th-that doesn't mean that they are digitally literate. We are told we've got a *Google generation* that's the people *who use it*, that doesn't mean they know how to use it particularly well, em so we we know all this it's very obvious'.

There is a strong argument that the Google generation and the digital media have created a bigger role for librarians in delivering literacy training for users. Librarians' determination in advancing their skills and knowledge through further education and professional development is therefore a direct response in undertaking the challenge and evolving with the change.

Technological advances being the biggest driver for change has altered the relationship between the library and users as manifested in the increasing user expectations. Alex comments on the online media and the internet have changed the culture in society particularly the way people interact and relate with the world:

'... So, you know, the ubiquity and the pervasiveness of, online media and em, you know em ... people living their lives online rather than well I don't know I don't wanna ... say it's very becoming ... judgmentally easier, but, the the rise of the web and the role of the web in people's daily lives their everyday lives has become incredibly strong. Em, for younger generation it's become a very different kind of thing than it is for the older generations. Er, we know that having internet access at home has become like a *utility*, but we also know about people's attention, trust, er how they engage with the world around them is very different depending on their age and depending er on their experience ...'

'... So I think techtechnologies is worn and how it works in society, what it means *culturally*, em I think what happens in, er, certainly for university libraries I think what happens in, secondary education is very important, so what are people arriving with.'

With web access becoming a norm and the strong hold it has on people's lives indicate a new culture has emerged in society. The change of behaviour found in the technology used by the younger generation has demonstrated a new age of living with 'toddlers now with who intuitively understand, well developed and designed you know, touch interfaces you know, so, children with with er, iPads, use them in a way adults can't', showing a gap between the different generations. Accompany with the change of culture and environments comes the change of perspectives as Alex illustrates how customary experience can affect expectations as in the case of students arriving at university will be expecting no less than the technological standards and infrastructure they have experienced at secondary school. Such development is going to impact on service provision which means librarians will need to be prepared for the new expectations from users as well as the various digital device and appliances they bring in. In order to successfully provide a seamless service, libraries need to ensure that their infrastructure is compatible with the continual evolving technologies and librarians need to be at hand to help new IT queries. In addition to existing challenges, the rising tuition fee in Higher Education has created a new relationship between users and libraries:

'You know as as students at universities become paying customers, whether we call them that, or we call them learners, then, you know inevitably they or their proxies it might be you know their elliptical parents, who have different expectations. And that you know they might not be uniformly higher, but they'd be different, and we have to respond to that you know.'

The consequence of that new identity of users become paying customers and relationship change has forced librarians to reassess their focus on users, which 'it's always been a goal but I think we you know we probably always have a myth'. A goal yet a myth suggests user focus has always been an area librarians aspired to concentrate on but has somehow taken a back seat because of other priorities. The wider environment change is outside librarians' control. The example of the rising tuition fee is a legitimate challenge and a compelling factor for librarians to respond to such change and carry on with their mission with refreshed methods and new focus.

### **Affirmed value of LIS**

The value of LIS is clear in Alex's mind. He has mentioned twice in separate occasions of how librarians are operating within a knowledge economy, first while reflecting on his decision of joining the profession and the second time when discussing the need to promote the status of librarians:

I think it's er... genuinely em important role in society. I think it's not understood to the degree it should. Em, you know, information and knowledge are fundamental, where you know, we are told that we have an information society, we are told we have a knowledge economy, and em, people then start talking about, you know, Big Data and computers now, but overlook the role of libraries and in fact, you know, we can see that, contrary to what we expect from the statue books public libraries services are being, em, you know, decimated and turned over to the big society and volunteers.

'It's very clear that we are in a knowledge economy, em, you know government investment in science and research reflects that, and er, you would expect information professionals including librarians to therefore be pivotal, em and I would argue that many cases *we are ...*'

'I I think er, you know, you're never gonna be rich, working as librarian, em, in terms of wealth, but you're certainly rich in terms of experience and what you contribute, and the difference you can make, um, and particular in Higher Education, and I think you know if you look at supporting research and learning, I think err, libraries make are, are fundamental impact'

There is no ambiguity for Alex of the value and contributions that LIS professionals have made in society and in Higher Education, particularly their importance in safeguarding and facilitating knowledge, and in supporting learning and research. Alex the librarian has not lost his perspective of the profession's worth despite the challenging environments and them not being understood or appreciated by society and the general public. Such self assurance can be found in the analogy of a successful surgery, where he felt librarians' invisibility is an illustration of their successful intervention that has gone unnoticed. He appeared to be totally at ease of this professional invisibility as a condition of being successful and a risk he is willing to take:

'if we think we are making that contribution, but, we are also em, relatively, invisible, then actually we are being successful'

'and you know when you are successful, then you know your intervention goes unnoticed actually, yeah? If you go for surgery and you come home and you you are like you were before that's successful if you come home and you can't move one side of your body or if you have to have drugs everyday is not then is it? ... if we are successful then, then we risk being invisible'

'many of the people that make the biggest changes in this world aren't on the news and they are not getting, gongs ...'

'but ..., is that reflected in, how, the public, see us? well no, does that matter, if we feel we're under threat possibly, but I'll come back to the point, do we need to be up there, you know, do we need to think do we feel aggrieved that we don't have the status as a sportstar. Should we? I don't know. Em, should we be like a grinning politician? Er, are we publicity seekers well not every not every profession is I mean, teachers and nurses aren't, and they do er important things. Em, need to be careful.'

Instead of feeling the need to be reaching out and screaming his lungs out from the top ('not, shout too loud about how, important we are because, that's a clear indication that we probably think we are not. Yeah? It's that kind of counter intuitive you know, it's a er ... thinks the lady protests too much'), Alex has taken the position of turning inwardly through examining the profession as a standalone entity in a way that, rather than seeking attention and status externally, of which according to him, LIS professionals have already possessed through their invisible success (which sounded a bit ironic!), they should be evaluating their practice and focusing on progressing and staying relevant.

### ***Traditional gatekeeping & professional knowledge***

Professional standard and the required knowledge from future librarians are prominent themes emerged from the discussion of library education and professional qualification. Alex spoke passionately on the subjects and cares deeply about the profession's future in terms of the workforce's quality and the reputation of the profession.

Traditionally, professional qualification was considered an entrance requirement into the profession. However, continued competitions and fresh demands from the labour market have seen a new phenomenon appearing in LIS that is both challenging and changing the conventional presumption. Alex has witnessed a workforce from other sectors joining the profession in recent years where people with equivalent skills are gaining a strong hold and being valued by the profession:

'Em, what's interesting in librarianship is that actually, em, some of the ceilings we put in, or the ... , threshold to want people to reach in terms of you have to have a professional qualification to be a professional before you can do this particular thing, some of those things are, are disappearing. Because we are understanding that people can bring things from other careers other sectors, which are equivalent. Er, so so er at [anonymised University] at the moment, you know we've got a very specific ... , group of roles which would say are professional and that's a small group out of everyone who

works in the library that doesn't mean everyone else isn't professional or doing a *profession*, but the ones who are professional librarianships are a minority. And there's people working at higher grades than them who might not have those professional qualifications, or have come from the same career path.'

With the professional qualification ceased to be an unique identifier for professional librarians, the disappearing of this traditional gatekeeping practice is going to impact on librarians' professional identity. Alex believes it has come to the crunch for changes to take place in response to the new demands and environment. Librarians must find new ways and alternative means to maintain their advantage and regain their standings. Acknowledging librarians have lost their former prestige ('*there was time when we were, one of those es-esteemed minorities who could sign the back of passport photos, and er, you know it's true I don't I don't think we have that uniquely status anymore*'), Alex suggested a forward-looking approach to support the professional status through being a 'good professional'.

When asked whether he thought for someone without a professional qualification to carry out a professional role matter, Alex categorically placed suitability and safeguarding service quality above professional qualification:

'Well, so what hat am I wearing if I'm wearing a hat, someone who's accountable for delivering a service that are standard and at a cost, then I want the right person in the right job. And that right person might not be someone who's got a library qualification.'

'Er, and, you know I've recruited people that what would have been professional posts before who haven't got professional qualifications now, the last time I did that wasn't here, but I appointed somebody at a grade where previously they are defact to have professional qualification ...'

'But er, so with with the hat on with someone who has the accountability and who wants to see a good student experience and support excellent research then I would want the right person for the right job.'

Getting the right person for the right job is more important than professional qualification for Alex. Service quality and the reputation of the profession have priorities over qualification and Alex is prepared to break away from tradition and do what he deems appropriate to facilitate wider good. There is a sense of disapproval in his tone regarding the traditional practice of using professional qualification to gatekeep the profession. His criticism is concerned with the standards observed in the current delivery of library education and the quality of new professionals:

'Em, and I would argue we got an issue of standards because I think a lot of people are going through library schools who aren't talented people. No everyone. Em, but my personal experience is that the bar isn't always set *very high*, er, that might vary by institution that might vary by course, it reflects the institution's er, market approach sometimes you know, in terms of the tariff.'

'Em, because if we seriously wanna gatekeep on the basis of that, we have to look at what we're delivering, and how we set ourselves apart. And you can't be third rate and I think too often we are.'

'I think it has become critical, er, if we want to be taken seriously we have to have, standards and be, selective.'

Alex's comment has gone beyond the issue of self and status which he has already expressed his disregard of the matter previously. It is however the earning of the trust and confidence – 'to be taken seriously', by the immediate college community, Higher Education and society as a whole, that he

believes the profession needs to work hard towards. A sense of urgency is illustrated in Alex's explicit statement 'I think it has become critical' for changes to take place. He believes it is the responsibility of library schools to adjust their standards and recruit the right talent into the profession. Standards and quality should be reflected in both the intake and generation of future information professionals, who will be able to demonstrate their unique value and contributions via high quality services delivery.

When he said 'I don't want to undermine the professional status we have. I want to support it', Alex is proposing an alternative solution rather than a complete dismissal. He believed that a support for the professional status is necessary but the existing methods of depending on professional organisation and code of conduct are what he is disagreed with: 'I don't have much buy in from any of our organisations, em, I certainly think we could legitimately question the role and activity of organisations like *CILIP*, em, ditto *SCONUL*' 'we can talk about codes of conduct ... I'm not really comfortable with that because I think it probably em, I think it restricts personal freedom to be honest with you'. His recommended solution of a reform system has reverted to his passionate argument of being the change and a good professional through one's demonstrated actions and performance: 'how I do that, is is may be not through the professional body. Em, that might be through being a good professional. You know er, so you know er, deeds not words and, be the change you want to see in the world and all these kind of things'. Alex appeared to have more faith in librarians' discretion to uphold their own professional standards and create their own destiny than to have external regulations imposed on the profession which he failed to see working. 'You can't be third rate' suggests librarians must have the autonomy and the desire to proactively upgrade themselves to become an elite profession, and 'not just be a thing people do when they can't do several other things'.

On the subject of professional qualification, Alex believes library school has a significant role to play in determining the future of the profession. Commenting on the crisis existing in the current library education, Alex's main criticism lies in the gap between the library school curriculum and professional practice. He observed the current library education has failed to reflect the requirements of practice and new librarians' lack of professional knowledge posed as a risk to the profession's future:

'I think we have got a bit of a crisis in our library education because I just think it's it's not em, ... re ... sufficiently reflecting the requirements of, of the profession and of practice. Now of course, I'm not saying everything that is delivered should reflect practice because there's a lot of stuff you'll never have access to in practice, and it is important you know whether we're talking about philosophy concept history em ..., you know, wider considerations. I mean you know I I I don't have to read Manuel Castells or, understand the knowledge economy particularly or, think about the history of resource description in my job, but it's useful to know, I think it's useful to know in a professional context, em, its it adds a richness to to what you do and and where you sight yourself in your in your work.'

'It's a common experience, that if you ask senior practitioners, about, intake of, newly qualified librarians and information professionals, that there is a, extremely obviously deficit of professional knowledge, er, which isn't just the kind of stuff you learn on the job, that it's actually bread and butter that it's actually incredibly important.'

'I could also say someone that employs people, and and sits in many interview panels that if someone came to me and said I actually understand this might not understand this in practice but I understand some theory I understand some important issues good, that's a start, that might separate you out from someone else who might know about how to er, you know, do some er, *AACR2* and *MARC*, er, and create some surrogate records for print books but, you know if you are coming in and you understand challenges around ebooks, you know, selection of metadata and discovery and, business models and financial sustainability if you understand about licensing if you

understand about where journals have gone and collection management, these things can be taught, these things can be taught, em there's a disconnect there. That that is a risk to the profession.'

The insufficiency in delivering what is required in practice suggests library schools are out of touch with the profession. The idiom 'bread and butter' described the significance professional knowledge is to Alex, who considers it as a basic sustaining element that is directly relating to practice and an essential mean for librarians to carry out their job. The emphasis on current awareness has been repeatedly advocated by Alex, who believes teaching the background knowledge and theories of the latest issues taking place in the profession can offer new professionals a broader perspective. With the professional future being his principle concern, Alex demonstrates his consistent appreciation towards professional knowledge over qualification and hands-on practice (practical skills). Questioning the disconnection between library education and the requirements from practice, Alex considers professional knowledge can be taught in library school and are vital in the situation of competing for jobs.

Other than library education, Alex believes that it is the duty of practitioners to act as mentors to educate and nurture the next generation of librarians:

'... one thing that I do have quite strong feelings around, is, on, the role of practitioners in educating the next generation of librarians and the formal, you know, library school context. Because quite frankly, my observation is there are far too, far too few practitioners, either in terms of their currency or their achievements as practitioners involved in either setting curriculums or delivering them.'

It is hoped that by practitioners being involved in the setting up and delivering of curriculums, the gap between education and practice can be lessened. Education used to serve as a two way process is beneficial for practitioners to use as an opportunity to educate themselves and develop professionally, while at the same time use their practical experience to inform and improve the curriculum to enhance the professional knowledge of the next generation librarians. Alex saw practitioners' involvement in the formal library school setting an important development for professionals.

Acknowledging the profession is in an increasingly competitive and commercialised environment with universities turning into commodities, Alex envisages the landscape of the profession will change within the framework of LIS philosophies. The implication of that change is going to impact on the skills set requirements and desirable workforce type of the future:

'... what that might ask of the people delivering it, in terms of that competence and that skills of what they can develop or *who they are*, might also change. Em, I think we've seen big changes in the kind of people coming into the profession, over over the years, attracts different kinds of people at different time. Like everything else.'

Alex believes that there will be more competitions entering the profession 'because we are understanding that people can bring things from other careers other sectors, which are equivalent'. Understanding that there are competitions from other sectors provide librarians the motivation to develop themselves and keep up to date for them to remain indispensable. Alex has accepted change as a natural process and used the analogy of Olympic sprinters to illustrate the different kinds of people attracted into the LIS profession over the years ('the height of Olympic 100 meters sprinters, you know that will *go in trends* you know, there will be a decade when actually they are all quite short and stocky, and that might reflect illegal drug take and then there will be a decade when they are actually getting a bit taller or something'). Librarians need to better equip themselves in preparation for the challenge, which Alex recommended the best continuing professional development is to remain relevant and find that sweet spot to add unique value as previously discussed. When asked his advice for future librarians in terms of professional development, Alex's response was a surprisingly pragmatic one:

**Researcher:** ... someone who's just entered the profession and they want to go somewhere and try to develop themselves, what would you say to them?

**Alex:** Say get on with it. You do that by doing. Em, I mean this is something which is really important and, you know we we are living in a consumer society where people think they can buy experience. And I think it's fair to say there is a, er a growing phenomena where people want to become a celebrity, and be famous for being famous. Hence this hideous, relentless, stream of talent shows, on television. Em ... that shouldn't be how we think. You, get good at something by doing it. You know you got to doing something ten thousand times well, before it becomes, natural, and fluent. Em, as long as you are doing the relevant thing it's not a problem you can change. Easy.

Alex's tone of disapproval is resembling his earlier criticisms on the culture of bandwagon jumping and fame seeking ('should we be like a grinning politician? Er, are we publicity seekers well not every not every profession is ') where people are opting for short cuts and preferring gimmicks over keeping their feet firmly on the ground. For Alex, knowledge and experience are invaluable and will only come with time and practice and considered that the appropriate mentality librarians should adapt for their professional development.

## Appendix 11

### Full case story of 'Beth'

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#### **Connecting professional self with institution's identity**

Having started working in librarianship only at the later years of her life, Beth has considered her career path an unusual one. Despite the different positions she held in the organisation of varying focus, Beth believes they were 'the similar sort of role' and that the essence of her librarian role has maintained. And until her recent move to support full time research, her tasks as a subject specialist have remained over the years where 'it was training, it was em ... user guides and web pages'. The advances in technology has only expanded Beth's user training role, which she believes to be the major task that has 'always been important the whole time I've been in academic librarianship' and it 'hasn't changed hugely in the time that I've been in it'. Identifying information skills to be her 'kind of bent, all the way along', 'it was always the teaching and the information skills that attracted me about the whole whole process [...] that's what I always focus on so I haven't I haven't noticed any huge change from that point of view'. Outside her immediate tasks, the main change Beth has experienced was 'the move obviously from the physical media to the electronic which is different, expanding all the time' and has acknowledged that 'there are new things coming in new all the time'. As a result of the changing environments, Beth observes librarians have finally changed with the time: 'until quite recent years here at [anonymised] it's still been a bit of er an emphasise on those sort of physical environment' but 'the philosophy and the library here now at [anonymised] has been much more, to have people available to help, em and to provide support, and not just be, shelving books or whatever I think definitely em has moving away that direction'. With the delivering of information remained at the centre of the service, Beth describes the core of librarianship is to 'provide the information in whatever format it's available. And, enable people to use it, as effectively as possible. [...] Em, which's sort of cover all the things that you have to do to make that happen, both physically and and electronically'. To her, the underpinning value and principles of LIS lies in 'helping [...] help people to find the information in the best way. And that's that's the basis of it all you know. I remember when I was in the school library cataloguing things and helping them to find things, em, and now in electronic world you know helping people to find the right information and use it'. Regardless of the change of media and environment, the library has continued to provide a service that is 'as seamless as possible so that people don't have to jump through too many hoops to get what they want'. Maintaining the same professional mission, 'the library has always sort of trying to help [users] and and give them ebooks and things when they can and whatever whatever that they can' and continued to adapt and accommodate users' needs. Believing subject specialists 'are still maintaining their same role and identity but they can, engage with it', Beth recognises the new situation in academia has provided the perfect opportunity for librarians to apply their role effectively. Using the competitive agenda from institutions as an example, Beth suggests librarians to take advantage of the situation by getting involved innovatively and contributing to institution's success:

'they are really interested in their rankings you know, the Times Higher and the rest of it. And, we've been able to get involved with that and, be talking to the database producers about the issues with our address for example and and, and all the problems with, with getting people to use the correct address em, on their publications'

'one of the latest things I've been doing this year. Em, which is really crucial to help in with the rankings. So for the Shanghai ranking you know that might, *might*, have an influence on where we are in that particular ranking next year'

'So it's that kind of thing where we sort of have to be on the ball, and and ready to help wherever we can em, on that competitive side of things. So you know we are still using the librarian's skills to sort of bringing those to bear.'

To engage with their role, Beth suggests librarians to apply their expert skills and knowledge in areas that are of priorities to institutions. With rankings being the main focus for academic institutions, Beth argues that librarians can contribute by ironing out glitches and tidying up the systems so that the college can achieve their goal smoothly. The emphasis of maintaining an awareness towards the institution's priorities ('to be on the ball, and and ready to help wherever we can') is the basis for contributing effectively in her opinion:

'... where people winning winning grants to do research which is really important part because it's an important part of the REF but it's important part of the college generally because money is really crucial to get keep things going ...'

'I think we just feed into that in the library because by giving the best possible service in the library you know, we we're making it a better college people want to come to'

'getting the bibliometric information in I just think it's interesting because it's it's, it is a useful measure in certain subjects. Erm, I went on the course to learn all about it. Erm and, it it is a relatively new thing that I think it is is worth pursuing. Because it's another way of, estimating that research strengths of of the university. And, it became a big issue, just after the last RAE, when they were investigating whether they were going to go, for this, system using metrics instead. And so you know, just grabbed on that really.'

By showing an interest in the latest areas and development, Beth has strategically put herself in a favourable position to develop professionally and ultimately use her unique skills to contribute to the organisation. Striving to provide a quality service in the library, Beth believes she is 'making it a better college people want to come to'. Her work on the research information system also serves to contribute to the college by measuring their research strengths and boosting their ranking.

Besides allowing her to contribute professionally, Beth's sensitivity and awareness towards the organisation's agenda and priorities have affected her perspectives in terms of her professional ethics and attitude. Having worked in the same organisation for a lengthy period has seen Beth approving and identifying herself with the institutional culture:

'I think you know there definitely a culture of that [anonymised] has to be the best, in everything. Em, and I think that, sort of, that permeates the whole thing really where you know you have to, do provide the best service possible and em keep everybody happy particularly students these days.'

'I think just part of the job really I mean it's it's just part of what I am really because I was like, a bit of a perfectionist, I'm not I don't plan to do everything perfectly but I try and do my best with everything and I think when you are in a college particularly that is sort of always striving to be at the top of the tree, that's what you've got to be doing as well to provide the best possible service.'

Beth's comments have indicated an agreement and support of the philosophy of the organisation. When asked if she would have adopted a different attitude if worked in a different organisation, her response was a negative one: 'I doubt it ... I mean, probably every institution should have that culture anyway and strive to be the best' which further confirms her endorsement on such a culture. What appeared to

be unclear however, is whether Beth's response was a result of the influence from the organisation ('I think that, sort of, that permeates the whole thing really') or was it indeed her personality that has naturally fitted in with the organisation's culture. 'I think just part of the job really I mean it's it's just part of what I am really because I was like, a bit of a perfectionist' presents an ambiguous dilemma: whether Beth the perfectionist is 'part of the job' or is it 'part of what I am' instead. By initially stating that being a perfectionist was part of the job and then quickly changed her mind by saying it was part of who she is, Beth appeared to be trying to convince the researcher and herself that the organisational culture has not impacted on her behaviour. Instead, she believed her conclusion was based on her conscious self awareness and understanding. What has illustrated here is a connection between the institution's identity and the professional self. Since the subconscious is deep rooted the line has subsequently become blurred.

### ***Making contact and reaching out: the ultimate challenge***

The biggest challenge Beth has experienced in her career is 'actually getting to talk to the academics to the researchers themselves' and 'getting to understand what the academics really are interested in and what they need to know'. The challenge of making contact with academics and researchers is a major theme emerged from Beth's story of which she has mentioned repeatedly at the two interviews. Beth considered the establishing of contacts with the academics and researchers the hardest hurdle she faces from an information specialist's perspective. On the information seeking front, Beth noticed academics have a unique research pattern where 'they find their information in other ways even in the old days', and the fact that 'staff don't want to answer emails' has made it 'quite difficult even to talk to researchers':

'because, academics don't really want to answer emails and they certainly don't want to come to training [...] health and sciences academics just don't come into the library full stop it's completely rare. So em, we have to still provide the information for them it's it's possible em but, communicating with them and understanding what their needs are I think that's one of the biggest em, issues and problems that librarians face'.

Circumstances such as the physical access restrictions and the lack of meeting opportunities are other factors which Beth identifies to have made contacting academics and researchers difficult. Although librarians would like to establish contact but the absence of avenue and opportunities have appeared to pose barriers to the service:

'you have to have the opportunity you can't you can't just barge into meetings you know, you have you have to get invited really'

'because you can't just go wandering around among the labs you know, it's it's can't swipe card access you know, you can't get in to labs to talk to people, you can't just sort of almost bump into them around the corridor em, you only do that by luck you know, if they were just going towards their labs. Em you know whole floors up in [anonymised] close so you just you can't you can't get to them [...] And trying to make contact, you know and that's the difficult bit.'

'most researchers in the [Science departments], are behind, erm swipe access. You don't meet them in the corridor. Erm and because they don't come into the library you just don't see them otherwise that's partly why it's hard.'

'They do go to a lot of meetings but their primarily meetings about teaching, about undergraduate teaching. Not many of the information specialists were able to go to any of the meetings about research [...] And the fact there aren't many meetings that are at a school level, about research

[...] They don't have many, what they might call research committee or er you know, for a whole school.'

The modernisation of the library in terms of space and infrastructure has also created obstacle for librarians to maintain contact with users. With information specialists now working in open plan offices and 'most of them don't have individual offices anymore that people could just knock on the door', this traditional method of maintaining the service link has been removed from them. 'So people need to make appointments to see them, you know, which makes it a little bit more difficult even' and librarians have to make extra efforts in arranging to help their users ('they have to go out of the library to help someone'). Inductions being another form of traditional contact which librarians used to have with researchers has been jeopardised because of the change of college's policy. Beth believes the reduction of researcher inductions has made the attempt to establish contact 'quite tricky' for librarians:

'You know in the past we've always done quite a lot of teaching for the undergraduates when they first come in, but I think college tries to sort of erm, cut down the induction for researchers as much as possible because they don't want this huge, long time right at the beginning of their course where they are getting a lot of information.'

With electronic information taken over the physical library, it has revolutionised the way people obtain information and the use of resources. This has further contributed to the disintegration of contacts and made it more difficult for librarians to maintain the communication:

'in the past, the library was the library, and everyone came to the library and did your reference interviews and all the rest of it and just isn't like that anymore. That's the biggest change I think.'

'it's the move obviously from the physical media to the electronic which is different, expanding all the time so that, may be when I was when I first came we did get the odd academic come into the library, not often even with the odd staff come into the library but a few, and now they don't at all. So that's one of the changes that's happened.'

The result of unable to establish contact has made it a challenge for information specialists to find out the issues of interest and concern for academics and researchers. With liaison work serving as a two way process, the implication of the contact barrier is the problem the library will experience in delivering their message across and planning for service provision. Going forward, Beth believes librarians' engagement in research projects and related initiatives that involve researchers and academics will help open up the door and establish contacts. Using the Research Excellence Framework (REF) as an example, Beth demonstrates how 'having projects like this, being involved with the REF which is so important to the academics themselves, em, em helps em, to make some of those contacts'. As a service that speaks to the heart of academics and researchers, the introducing of the new research information system has set the pretext and opened up opportunity for librarians to engage, and 'having something like this, em, sort of helps because then people actually do come to you and say you know we want to know about this or, or you can say, this is happening can we come and talk to you about it. So, where you can't do it for kind of run of the mill stuff if there's something special happening then you will get the opportunity to get in there and talk about it'. High profile projects are rare opportunities which allow information specialists to approach academics and researchers where they would not be able to ordinarily. Beth reckons that when people become aware of new initiatives that catch their attention, it will help open up dialogue and enable communication and relationships to develop:

'... that's why working on something like [anonymised project] is really nice because you can actually go out and show them the advantage of it, and it also is an opportunity to go and talk

about something which is new that they need to know about. Otherwise you won't get the opportunity to go to the meeting. Same as open access because becoming more of an issue, we are now getting the opportunities to go to meetings to talk about it which is great, because it's been [inaudible] for so long.'

Following the intense promotion of the project by presenting to the various departments ('we made a point of going round to every single main department or or big em, other division or department in each school so I think we did I don't know about *forty*, different talks, to different departments'), Beth has noticed a significant usage increase of the system and service ('it's quite interesting to see already we're we're looking on [the research information system] on the portal, that em it's already picking up how may downloads there are of anything that has been put on as full text'). The proven benefits of using new projects and initiatives to develop contacts and promote services are clear in Beth's experience.

***Getting out the library: establish the connection and develop the network***

Besides the physical barrier together with the information seeking and working habits of academics, Beth believes the new library environment in terms of the widespread use of electronic resources and the library's structure and physical layout have made it a necessity for librarians to reach out to users. A stark contrast between the past and present is presented in the following abstracts:

'may be in the earlier year you know may be ten years ago, you might have been on a Helpdesk in a library and staff would have come in to see you and ask you about, finding physical resources, but nowadays with that not really happening so much it's quite difficult even to talk to researchers'.

'because it's not so much you know, in the old days we used to speak about the reference interview and that kind of thing that that's really, or was at that time, based on someone coming into the library to ask you something. Em, where people aren't doing that, em where possible, you need to reach out to them ...'

The cause of the changes was essentially brought on by technologies, where people no longer rely so much on physical resources has led to the removal of staff on the Helpdesk and the abolishing of reference interview. A traditional practice that is based on people coming into the library has therefore been completely revolutionalised by the new model of information and resources seeking. As a result of this disconnection between users and the library, librarians have to proactively get out of their immediate space and initiate the contact with users, which Beth thinks 'it's one of the more important things we do have to be doing in the future. Because I think that it's going to be much more the role of the library in the future'. Evidently, getting out there and reaching out to academics and researchers has emerged as one of the main themes which Beth has reiterated in numerous occasions throughout the interview:

'they have to get out, they have to get out of the library'

'So we were actually getting out there and talking to them'

'it's just sort of getting out there talking to people'

'actually finding time to do the getting out there is quite difficult. But they are working on em, on webcast and things as well now, so at least those might be available for people to see'

'because, staff so rarely come into the library these days that you've actually got to reach out to them'

With the electronic resources and media continue to intensify, Beth believes research support and the reaching out to users will be an increasing role for information specialists – ‘it’s an increasing role, well it should be an increasing role, em ... but different’. And a different service it is when users no longer come in to the library to attend reference interviews and access the collections. To tackle the challenge head on, Beth urges librarians to bring the service to the users if they no longer visit the library: ‘you need to reach out to them, to say you know we’ve got this help we can give you. We’ll come and talk to you, and it’s the going out to them it’s it’s part of what’s changed as well’. Furthermore, ‘the researchers, staff and students, need to be aware that the information specialists are there and they can come to them, to ask for advice. So that message needs to get out there’. The best way to promote the service is to let users know what is on offer and that the help is there when needed. For users to build up their confidence to approach librarians they need to know that librarians can actually help them with their issues (‘making people aware that you do understand what the issues are, and are able to help’). Beth believes one way of achieving this is through public exposure. As the more information specialists present themselves in committee meetings the better chance the message gets delivered and the relationship to develop because then ‘they knew who you were and knew who to ask for things em. That that is quite important, to get get on to those committees’ ‘putting yourself about making yourself available to people and being at meetings’. It can be understood that by putting themselves out there, information specialists are making themselves known and help them to get one step closer to establish the contact they desperately desired.

The establishing of networks has actually helped Beth in the carrying out of her work. Demonstrating with a practical example, Beth shows how she has gained insider knowledge which in turn eased her bibliometrics work through being alerted by her contact of a new service development: ‘luckily I was able to to em, hear about this and I think it was through someone actually contacted me, someone I think from quite high in the research, could even be in the head of the research committee, he let me know this, and because of that, I was able to engage with the people who are on the list of possibles for the highly cited’. Such experience has taught Beth the importance of developing a solid network in her line of work, and it is because of this that she believes it is crucial for information specialists to get out of the library and develop their own network to broaden their own knowledge and vision. Stepping out of their immediate environment and comfort zone does not only prevent librarians from working in silos but it also allows them to broaden their understanding of the overall institutional culture: ‘I suppose making making contacts getting to know other people in the college getting to know people outside of library services I think that has been quite important, to understand the, the, more overall culture of the college and not just the library side of things’. To practice what she preaches, Beth demonstrates her collaborations with other departments outside the library through the different project works: ‘I’ve got to know other people and I’ve got to know people through being on other projects [...] it’s been quite nice that some of the projects I’ve been involved with have, not just been with the library so I’ve had a lot to do with IT people through developing the em the previous [anonymised research information system] and now the current one’. Because of her new role in research support, she is ‘getting to know the other side of the research the other side of of things’ which she values for her professional development. Despite her established contacts through her work, Beth feels she was not proactive enough (‘hasn’t necessarily been my own brilliance that getting to talk to them but opportunities I’ve had, to go to other meetings and therefore get to know them and because I’m in the new directorate now, that I’ve got to know other people and I’ve got to know people through being on other projects’) as she should be and considers it her failing ‘because I know that I don’t actually get out there as much as I should [...] And I’m not quite as good as actually making those contacts and and getting out and talk and and phoning people up and talking to them. Her self criticism shows how the possession of a dynamic and outgoing personality (‘going out and

talking to people') is something Beth considers a merit which she wishes she had in her. Her remark 'I don't know whether it's, a fault of, of the em, the previously thought of librarian temperament that we are, sort of fit into that or not. Em, I'm actually better at doing, a em, organised training, and writing in my own office' suggests a professional stereotyping confirmed by a practitioner who nevertheless considers such introvert practice to be negative and should be discouraged. Arguing outreach service as an important aspect in the research support role, Beth urges information specialists to avoid the professional cliché and their personal limitations and proactively engage in the activity so they can further their network and develop professionally.

***Prominent research support: a comprehensive service that targets the core***

The moving away from 'a repository for books' has altered the library's position where they have to adapt a different attitude in terms of reassessing their services' priorities. Beth believes the research support role gaining prominence can be seen as a result of such a development:

'I don't know whether it is just the development and changes, in the academics' role, or, that, because the the role of the library has changed to a certain extent from being kind of a repository for books, to being a source of help and information, that may be we've realised that the role is important. And may be it was relatively important before as well, but it wasn't part of the thinking at that time. At that time it was thought that if an academic needed help they'd come in to the library and ask. Erm but now we don't expect them to. So I'm not sure that it's so much just the change in what academics have to do but it's just the perception of what the library needs to do is changed a bit as well.'

A new way of thinking is an important concept which serves as the driver for change. Librarians now recognise that they need to take a proactive stance in reaching out to users and learning about their needs. Another issue Beth has highlighted in relations to the challenge of establishing contact with academics and researchers is the discovering of their perspectives: 'the challenge is to understand their point of view as well. Em, and what their em, the pressure they're working under. Em, and how we can help them, basically'. Beth believes that 'the more library services people understand the, the pressures that the researchers are under' the easier it makes for librarians to provide the appropriate support for users. Her idea of engaging with the role is partly based upon that insiders' knowledge, the understanding of what researchers and academics do and 'how important that [research work] is to them'. Essentially it is about learning their customers and understanding their values and perspectives ('I think that the challenge is to understand their point of view') rather than making assumptions. And to achieve that, librarians need to reach out to users and demonstrate a competence in dealing with their issues. Consequently, having a profound knowledge and understanding of the whole research process has become what Beth considers an essential skill for information specialists to succeed in their research support work.

Besides it being her job, research support is an area Beth feels passionate about and the topic appeared to be at the centre of the discussion. The concept of understanding the research process has emerged as one of the main theme which Beth has referred to over ten times throughout the interview:

'one of the things I've been learning much more in the last few years is more about what the researchers do, not not specifically their research as such, but, the other aspects of it, more the dissemination aspects of it. The em, not just the dissemination, em, right through their work, there are things that we have are not particularly aware of. One is how much efforts they have to put in winning grants, 'coz that's a huge amount of work. Em, and I hadn't realise before how much they have to put in to that [...]. So we need to understand that aspect of it and how much, how important that is to them.'

'help people become aware of funding opportunities, so funding opportunities database. Em, so to understand that side of things em. And then, the whole process of, how they're going to publish, you know which journal they're going to publish in, how they submit to it you know [...] and then, just trying to understand a bit more about the process of having to submit publications, submit articles for publication, and how how long drawn out it can be [...] So all that, that side of things. [...] This em, this sort of circles getting the funding doing the research choosing the journal submitting whether it's accepted or not, em, and then, make it open access by whatever route. Em, and then, even after that, em, keeping track of of citations'

'so I was mentioning early that em, in terms of research support, we need to be more involved in the whole publica or understanding the whole publication process em. The things that lead up to it, and then em, being aware of the, the metrics around the actual em, publications once they are out there.'

'the things that I've learned over the last years how how important em the you know it is just just to win the grants, you know that's one of the things em and and the whole process of publication I think may be that's may be something that want to be stressed a bit more for information specialists supporting researchers'

'I think information specialists really need to understand that the pressure to publish and and all the issues around, submitting something for publication that's erm, that's a huge part of what of what researchers do and also erm, submitting grant proposals for getting the money I mean huge amount of academics' time is taking up with actually getting money to do the research'

It is apparent that Beth has greatly valued her experience in her role in research support. It has provided her not only a glimpse into the world of the researchers and academics but the knowledge and insights she gained through the experience ('things that we have are not particularly aware of') are something that she would not have had if not because of her latest role. Besides the technicality of the actual research cycle, Beth is particularly aware of the lengthy process and the relating pressure researchers faced as she repeatedly emphasised the 'pressure' she observed. Her appreciation of the efforts researchers put in to their work is reflected in her determination to help them in the journey. Anticipating that the support of the scholarly communication and research process will continue to be a prominent role for information specialists, Beth recommends that they need to be more involved in the delivery of the service. Instead of providing something lightweight, she believes it is important for information specialists to provide an in-depth research support that is both profound and comprehensive. In order to do that, Beth encourages information specialists to familiarise themselves with the research cycle and all the fine details associate with it, to 'show, that we understand, what [the academics and researchers'] issues are' and be 'ready to help wherever we can'. This returns to the earlier concept of value sharing and demonstrating competence with a view to earn users' trust and confidence in the service.

Acknowledging the research support role performed by librarians has not necessarily been recognised by the general public ('it's perhaps the side of librarianship that some people don't, don't really see, at all' 'for the information specialists to, first of all, get to grips themselves with understanding the research process and the publication process, it's something that, the world if you like, erm understanding what a librarian does, wouldn't think it was anything to do with that') or the wider college community ('in academic circles, erm, even, even in academia itself, academic staff might not think it was a concern of the library that they should be thinking about, that at all'), Beth believes librarians have possessed the professional skills to contribute in the scholarly communication process. Her comment '*we*, have erm, considered that it should be part of our role to help people with that. Because there are some of our skills and knowledge that could help them, erm with those issues' suggests librarians have on their own accord made a conscious decision to proactively apply their

professional skills and contribute in the research process. Beth believes their expert knowledge of bibliographic software, institutional repository, copyright and open access issues have specifically put them in a unique position to assist academics and researchers on their research journey:

'You can help people erm, in choosing what journal to publish in, that kind of thing. Erm, you could help them with people creating grant proposals when they don't I don't know whether anyone has actually ever asked us to do that but they do have to create, bibliographies and things like that. I mean one of the things actually quite a major thing that we did is bibliographic software, as well. So so that helps, with that. Erm, so that actually, is part of the of the whole erm, process because you're finding the information you are storing it and managing it and then you're erm incorporating those references into your your paper or your thesis. Erm, going further with erm, helping to decide where to publish, advising on you know the copyright issues now with the coming up with open access deciding whether to publish in open access, erm understanding the citations that come at the end of it as well. That's all part of it. That's you know, what the information specialists ought to know. So they are available to sort of help with any, any part of that, in the journey with the academic is doing.'

By offering an all-round technical and professional advice, Beth believes librarians are effectively engaging with their role and 'using the librarian's skills to sort of bringing those to bear'. Taking the position that research support is going to be a prominent future role for information specialists, Beth encourages her staff to be more active in providing more comprehensive and high-level research support service for users: 'a research type support [...] at the level of, either postgraduate research students or staff. It's supporting staff that we need to do a little bit more of and the actual PGRs' 'rather than the research senior if you like always going out to talk things it would be good if the information specialists themselves can do that a bit more I think, I think increasingly that would be useful to get them more involved'. Her comments suggest the inadequate research support activity performed by current information specialists which she feels it needs to be changed.

In addition to their contribution and professionalism not being understood by the outside world, the lack of opportunity for information specialists to attend research committee meetings is another challenge librarians faced in research support activities. Beth believes the fact that there are insufficient research meetings run by the college with few information specialists being invited to the existing ones means that '[information specialists] have slightly restricted or, or skewed view really, of what the academics want they are only thinking from a teaching perspective' since the majority of these meetings are teaching related. Apart from familiarising themselves with the research process as a way to overcome the perspective barrier, Beth suggests information specialists to use the committee meetings as a platform for 'absorbing, the, the issues that were important to them [faculties]' because 'at those meetings you you're getting the kind of atmosphere of, what research is like in the college. You're you're seeing what the issues are for them'. Information specialists are encouraged to take advantage of the committee meetings strategically as a way to gather intelligence and discover issues that academics and researchers are concerned about. Such knowledge and findings can in turn feed into service provision and enhancement.

### ***Increasing teaching support: a traditional role expanding***

As a traditional task for information specialists, Beth has witnessed an increasing emphasis in teaching support with the role continuing to expand over the years. In Beth's case, her teaching support role involves all user training activities that ranged from information skills to the broadly inclusive information literacy training. The new format of resources and the increased number of online databases has changed the way library plan and deliver service provision: 'academic librarianship these days is not, just about finding things in books it's finding things, wherever they are, whether they are electronically or in print' 'we are talking electronic information rather than information in the

library itself, there is, there are a lot of different ways of finding that information'. Users with varying levels of literacy mean 'some are more skilled than the others and depends on their age you know what what they are used to. Erm, they're still not often aware of some of the databases that are there available, so often need to get out and tell them'. What Beth seems to be suggesting is that, there are people who will need help with finding information regardless of their background, especially with the number of new online databases continued to appear in the market of which users may not be aware of. Because of the sphere of their professional work, librarians' expert knowledge on academic resources has not only allowed them to alert the services to users but librarians will also be able to demonstrate the using of these resources effectively. The increasing of online databases and resources has resulted in the library changes its infrastructure to respond to users and services needs:

'... in those days [...] we didn't even have the infrastructure you know we didn't have all that many rooms of PCs and things in those days. So I suppose that kind of teaching wasn't really possible. But, it, there are two things that have really gone side by side em, the rooms being available and, and the databases coming online, which really did need you know, a bit of, we need to be able to give people erm, lessons in how to use them but also just to make them aware of them actually, because erm many of them wouldn't wouldn't know anything at all about them really unless you really sort of explained. So that's what we do in the inductions, we, it's a sort of a fairly basic thing in a in a basic induction just to teach them how to use the catalogue basically. But you tell them about the other things and then erm, in the second and third year, erm, you start teaching them the other databases.'

Resources having moved electronically can be seen as the driving force behind the library's infrastructural change and more importantly the illuminating and expanding of teaching support. Reflecting on the early years of her career fifteen years ago, Beth remembers how databases were in their infancies but has since experienced a massive development in the area. With service provision reflecting needs and requirements, the limited availabilities of technologies and the predominant reliability on physical materials 'in those days' did not legitimise the need for resources training hence the provision of training room facility was not on the agenda. The fact that the library evolves from 'didn't have all that many rooms of PCs' to 'the rooms [now] being available' demonstrates how they have moved on with time. Serving as a new focus that has been driven by demand, teaching support has gained unprecedented significance within the role of information specialists. With the high volume of user teaching taking up most of their time, 'the information specialists are increasingly getting involved in much more teaching and a lot more, one-to-one with students' has resulted in less time being spent on research support activities:

'... in terms of time, I would say, their focuses more on the teaching because it's because it's a lot of it. And because it's more organised [...] and sometimes it's just because the teaching takes up so much of your time you don't have so much time for the research work but also because it's more difficult to do because, staff don't want to answer emails ...'

Stating that information skills teaching 'has sort of been my kind of bent, all the way along', Beth admits that 'it was always the teaching and the information skills that attracted me about the whole whole process [...] that's kind of been my bent, my ... the the thing that's been most interesting to me [...] that's what I always focus on'. Beth's statements suggest that teaching support has always been a task performed by information specialists but has expanded and become increasingly important because of the changing environment and circumstance. Regarding the teaching role an important part of their professional remit, Beth has embraced the teacher identity as the one shared by the academics:

**Researcher.** You said information specialists are doing more teaching and one-to-one. Do you feel their 'teacher' identity has defined them?

*Beth:* Yes it probably has. Erm, that's how most of their contacts first meet them in that context the undergraduates, and then also they all go to the teaching committees so it's in that context that that they're em, they are representing the library as people who are interested in in both teaching of the undergraduates by the academics but also they're offering their teaching expertise as well.

In this instance, the argument of librarians' teaching identity can be interpreted on the basis of how they perceive themselves and consequently an image they project. To begin with, Beth considers the information skills teaching conducted by information specialists are within the education framework therefore they are in their own right teachers of information and resources. Because the majority of the users have their first encounter with the information specialists in the induction sessions, their image of a teacher offering knowledge was therefore created in the process. Furthermore, through the attending of the teaching committee meetings, information specialists have proclaimed their commitment to support teaching and research and have established their teaching identity within the realm of information literacy which is where their expertise lies. In this present Google era, the value of librarians' educating role has especially illuminated through their information skills teaching. Regardless of how convenient Google might appear it simply cannot replace the human intellectual learning to generate quality results:

'Google search is pretty clever and its algorithm and all of the rest of it, but it certainly doesn't get you necessarily the best em, results academically. So, I think it's increasingly importantly now really. Em because, em, now that, people just don't come in to the library and borrow books em, and and get their information from there em, the teaching people had to extract information is, is, just a much more prominent side of what the library is there to do. Because you can't just sort of have a physical library there and say you know, come and get it or even, have electronic resources sitting there that we produce for them and say, come and get them because, em, just having them there doesn't make them as useful as if you know how to get the most out of them.'

'those databases are there for anyone to use but you can use them well or you can use them, very well'

'Having them there doesn't make them as useful' highlights the importance of librarians' intervention in demonstrating the difference between quality and quantity. By properly teaching users to find quality information both efficiently and effectively, Beth believes librarians are directly contributing to students' academic success. Explaining how information literacy training has incorporated into the formal curriculum, Beth demonstrates the outcome and influence of librarians' intervention in teaching and learning:

'we do information skills teaching as part of the course it's timetabled into their course, in that sense, we're providing part of the academic teaching which is, part of the whole course that that students do.'

'the better [users] learn how to find the information the better they should do in their actual module where they have to do the, finding the information and then present it to, the rest of their classmark. So in that way, we get quite integrated to a certain extent we can get integrated into what the academics were teaching students.'

Besides having made their mark in contributing to academic success and integrating into courses and academic teaching, Beth has also argued that by obtaining the same teaching qualification as the academics, information specialists have achieved the same standard and on even keel as the professional educators:

'Most of the information specialists are doing that now and they are going to the same course as the academics do [...] to do their teaching training [...] they go to the same class. So I mean

obviously it's a different situation [...] But it's the same, I felt sort of roughly on a par with the academics [...] I suppose it's an ancillary skill but it's such an important skill and I and I didn't feel it was sort of a, poor relation'

With teaching support continued to play a major part in the information specialists' role, Beth believes the teaching skill will be an important skill for librarians to have in order to excel in the profession. Apart from the usual timetabled sessions on the rise, Beth has also noticed a growing phenomenon of academics and librarians collaborations in creating online modules with the occasion papers being marked by information specialists. Whilst stating that such occurrences are rare, Beth feels that by having the teaching skill and 'doing the same kind of teaching as as an academic would' has offered librarians a reasonable status that is comparable to the academics.

### ***'Blowing your own trumpet': demonstrating value and impact***

Associating with the challenge of reaching out to users, demonstrating value and impact is a notable theme emerged from Beth's narrative. Just as information specialists have to bring the service to the users because they have stopped visiting the library, Beth believes for the same reason librarians need to demonstrate their value and impact since questions have now been raised concerning their existence:

'you got to justify your existence haven't you a bit! ... Probably in the past it was considered for the librarian to just sit in the library and wait for people come and ask them questions. Erm, and because academics now, see the library not really the place where they need to come as to the time they might wonder why we actually need certain staff to be there still. So you have got to justify your existence [...] I believe we can still do something useful, but it's changed slightly.'

Following library users' common rationale of perceived obsolete is equivalent to redundant, librarians are compelled ('you have got to') to defend their professional existence and explain their value and contributions in academia. Unlike the physical collection which is tangible and measurable, the development of a digital library accompanied by the disappearance of staff's presence has led to the assumption of 'why we actually need certain staff to be there'. People have simply overlooked librarians' interventions just because they cannot see it: 'you don't see a lot of what we do [...] It's more visible when you are taking a class, and you know you are doing your training'. There is a sense of urgency in Beth's tone as she proclaims the need for librarians to justify their existence and feels obliged to set the record straight because she passionately believes that they 'can still do something useful' and that their value and contributions in academia is self-evident:

'... the college has to recruit the right students and the right staff. I I think we just feed into that in the library because by giving the best possible service in the library you know, we we're making it a better college people want to come to'

There are other legitimate considerations for librarians to actively promote themselves based on a practical perspective of utilizing services. Highlighting the under-utilised of the services and support provided by the library, the concept of unawareness of resources was repeatedly emphasised throughout the interview. The manner in which Beth describes the promotion of services – 'perseverance' 'this is quite an uphill battle actually' 'you just gonna keep plugging your way off I think really' suggests the challenge they faced. Putting it down to understanding and awareness, Beth believes users 'may not be really conscious as conscious of what we can do to help them, 'coz they may think oh we know how to do things we don't need to ask the librarian about it'. Deep-rooted information seeking habits has made people attach to methods they are familiar with, and focusing on the ease of use has resulted in them being oblivious to the better alternatives and the availability of quality resources:

'it's amazing really how many academics don't really, use Googles or will just use PubMed rather than any of the more sophisticated search engines. This is quite an uphill battle actually to sort of, help them to see, what might make things better for them'

'the trend that's already happening of people of academics not necessarily wanting to use the databases we've been training them on for the last fifteen years and the staff are using Google instead, and Google Scholar. Erm ... that's that's a tricky one because, in many ways searching Google and Google Scholar can be very very useful but it's just the things that you can miss if you do it that way erm [...] it's certainly something that's happening more and more that, erm, they want a one stop shop they want to just go to Google you know they don't really want to have to go to the other databases as well even though if they are better.'

'we'd occasionally get the odd even the odd member of staff come to our training course on on you know using all the different databases and they are often quite amazed of what's available that they didn't know about'

'they're still not often aware of some of the databases that are there available'

'They usually are unaware of it when you are actually show them those [webcast] pages'

The increasing trend of academics turning to Google as their first point of call has given librarians reasons to prolong their efforts in information literacy training. The fact that people are unaware of the resources that are available and the expert knowledge librarians have on offer has supported the argument of the need for service promotions and the demonstration of value and impact. With the digital interface continued to dismantle the human interactions, librarians' professional existence is becoming more marginalised. Using a frequent example of moving from print to electronic, Beth describes how users have taken librarians' interventions for granted:

'One of the consequences of everything moving more electronic and also the efforts that the library makes to make that as seamless as possible so that people don't have to jump through too many hoops to get what they want, is that many em, of the end users don't actually realise that we've paid for and have made these things available for them they think they are just there free on the web.'

If the majority of librarians' interventions are invisible by their nature, they have to be able to evidence their contributions in ways that people can see and understand. Essentially demonstrating value and impact in this case is about educating users to appreciate the absolute value and contribution created by librarians. To achieve that, Beth advocates information specialist to reach out to their users to promote the services as well as to educate them the concept of a modernised library service that is both relevant and in time with the changing needs. 'We are here to help you' is the important message Beth feels information specialists need to get across to users as well as the wider college community. The concept of promoting librarians' skills to help people has been reiterated time and again throughout the discussion:

'probably still a lot of the staff in the college, still think of the library in the old way a bit just being the library full of books, and don't realise some of the skills that we have already had for quite a few years but they haven't realised, they haven't thought of us as people to come and ask about publishing side or, erm, submitting grant proposals. And the more we can get out and talk in those other areas of the college, the more they'll they'll realise that we, we have things we can offer them, to actually help them ... So it's getting off the beat and track of the of the various meetings that we've been able to go to in the in the past, erm ... that, you can get the message out more wider in the college as a whole that, librarians do have these skills and they can help people.'

'I think probably what needs to happen is that, the researchers, staff and students, need to be aware that the information specialists are there and they can come to them, to ask for advice. So that message needs to get out there'

'there needs to be I supposed some other way of getting across the message that that 'hey we are here to help you'. So er, we keep trying to do things on the webpages to, to sort of make that clear [...] we were trying to get some slightly more interactive webpages out there so that people can make appointments to come and see people and so on as well [...] Just to let people know that you are there. And if we can go to any of the more of the meetings that have got researchers that you know that will help'

'I think where people see librarians more and more at these meetings and realise that they do have something intention to say, you know, they'll they'll become more, more aware, that people are there to help them'

'A lot of the staff in the college, still think of the library in the old way' suggests a disconnection between the practical reality and common perception. For information specialists to promote their skills and services, Beth advises them to tirelessly make use of every available opportunity and even to improvise innovatively to raise awareness of the services they offer. As a progressive supporter of digital media and technologies, Beth advocates the use of web pages for information specialists to promote themselves – 'so that you are blowing your own trumpet a little bit on on a web page':

'I think [...] the information specialists [need] to be a little bit more prominent on the web, I was actually quite keen for everyone to have their own page, and I hope that that will happen eventually, including a picture and you know the profile of the person [...] you could have it on your em, email signature that kind of thing I think that that would be quite useful.'

Induction sessions, committee meetings and special projects are believed to be some useful platforms for information specialists to promote their skills and demonstrate their value. Whilst attending the committee meetings, information specialists are 'representing the library as people who are interested in in both teaching of the undergraduates by the academics but also they're offering their teaching expertise as well'. Speaking of her experience of attending these meetings, Beth feels her professional background has assisted her in acting as the ambassador of the library not only to promote their services but also to boost up the library's profile:

'I think the fact that I came from the library to do that, that sort of helped the library's em, profile if you like, in terms of em, the rest of er the rest of the college understanding the the library does actually produce provide some useful services. And I I've been quite lucky having been able to go to em, the college research committee for example, so that their and em there is now em er, a specific em, place on that committee for someone from the library [...] So I think that's that's really helpful as well. Em, so the college knows that that we are there and can help them with things.'

Committee meetings have provided the avenue for information specialists to demonstrate their specialist skills and make a case for the information skills teaching they delivered ('I suppose you have to demonstrate it in some ways you know, how how one way of doing things can actually be more useful than the other [...] and show them the advantage of it'):

'You got to fight your corner as well you know and not let people sort of, say in teaching committee meeting you know and librarians really sort of have to speak up for what they believe, is is the case, and, and for their specialist skills'

'I think that's one of the things people have to be aware of, that possibly, you know erm, as time goes on I think it's, always already erm the case, with some academics, that they perhaps won't see the advantage of us still teaching the students to use these databases 'coz they might think that it's available anywhere. So it might be a job that we have to do to actually to convince the academics that we are still doing a good job in the way we are teaching the students erm. And ... we've got to really be able to show them, the difference you know, that a good search can make and what you can find by really thinking something through and doing it properly.'

Comparing the convincing of academics the benefits of librarians doing information skills teaching to a mortal combat, 'you got to fight your corner' displays intense emotions of standing up for the truth and defending their professionalism despite the opposing viewpoint. Differences often caused by misunderstanding and unawareness can be eradicated by service promotion. On the same token, for the academics to come on board and see the advantage and the difference 'that a good search can make', information specialists have to persistently raise awareness and present the evidence which has made the demonstrating of value and impact an increasingly important task. Changing users' mindset requires persuasion and demonstrations, and until people can experience the benefits themselves will their perceptions begin to change as illustrated in the example of a successful research information system project: 'on the portal, that em it's already picking up how may downloads there are of anything that has been put on as full text' 'having something like this [research information system project], em, sort of helps because then people actually do come to you and say you know we want to know about this'.

### ***Proactive professional development***

As a conscientious professional, Beth has remained proactive throughout her career ('my sort of IT skills [...] which was self taught really, just using BBC and archimedes computers learning at home' 'I realised for *myself* that I really needed some more, of the library skills. So in the end I decided to do an information science MSc' 'I did my own posters because I wanted to learn how you did it, and then, because, I knew people have to present posters in academic life'). With an unstoppable appetite for knowledge, she has projected an eager spirit to learn and develop. Demonstrating a special interest in information technology and databases, Beth has been forward-thinking to embrace the latest issues and developments in the profession ('I went on the course to learn all about it. Erm and, it it is a relatively new thing that I think it is is worth pursuing'). Her proactive attitude was rewarded by management's support which in turn has created opportunities for her career progression. The example has offered insight into the advantage of management's support in exposing staff's potentials and facilitating their career development:

'I got drawn in more into the research support role. That was em, partly because em ... I don't really know exactly how it happened, but em [anonymised] for example, she, she's sort of ... knew I don't know either, either directly or because of [anonymised] really he's my boss, em, that I had an interest in in databases and then bibliometrics and so on. Then so she got me more involved in that kind of things she was the person who sent me off on the bibliometrics course in [anonymised]. Em, so I just got more and more in to that kind of thing until I was officially given the role of [anonymised].'

Whilst the environment is fast changing, Beth advocates the upholding of the traditional skills which has remained vital and offer librarians the much needed principles and background to the profession ('you got to still know the basics, but I think those kind of skills are much more important for, for someone in

my role' 'understanding the principles is still important' 'they just need to be aware of the background'). Acknowledging their role is expanding into new areas of bibliometrics, open access and data management ('I've seen quite a number of erm advertisements just recently, erm a lot of universities who are recruiting data management specialists'), Beth believes it is important for new professionals to keep with up the changes to remain relevant. The idea of keeping up as a method for professional development is an important theme that has appeared several times in the discussion:

'just need to, to keep up with things and to make sure that we are always relevant to people'

'Just need to sort of keep up with things you know, they need to sort of being on the mailing lists and making sure they know what the latest trends are really just keep up to date. I always thought that was important. They should be reading you know the, the library em, the the research publications for the librarians and em er keeping up with them. Em ... just making sure they know what's going on and keep up with it. And if they need to go on courses go on courses. I've always sort of felt that that was important and has always been em valued here you know that people should develop themselves.'

Without employing gimmicks, the proposed methods for professional development have appeared practical and conservative, as Beth recommends librarians 'to play to your own strengths really to what what works, for you' rather than aimlessly follow others. Emphasising the importance of showing interests and readiness to develop, Beth advises future professionals to keep their ears on the ground and get their hands dirty whenever possible and cease any development opportunity as they arise:

'Just to be interested really. I mean ... I ... do you remember those poster competitions we had, in in library services. I I did my own posters because I wanted to learn how you did it, and then, because, I knew people have to present posters in academic life. So, er that's what I created some web pages sort of helping people to do that in Powerpoint and then we developed a course, for it with the IT people, to do it using Powerpoint. So, you know, just, just be more aware of the trends really and getting involved'

'I think anyone working in librarianship, has to be doing that that they should be just, doing the job you know and, it's not a nine to five job. You know you have to be willing to put in put in the extra effort I think, and just, do whatever you do the best you can.'

Her final comment 'it's not a nine to five job' illustrates how librarianship as a dynamic profession and a changing organism is continued to evolve accordingly into the future.

## Appendix 12

### Full case story of 'Carl'

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#### **Professional mission & identity**

A conscious and proactive professional with an immaculate record that spanned across three decades, Carl considered the concepts of his professional role and identity are closely interwoven ('they are very closely, I'm you know, I'm an information professional my role is to, help people find information'). Instantaneously relating his role with the 'purpose' and 'functionality' of his profession, Carl believes the essence of his librarian identity is to help people find information, a concept which he reiterated four times in the first interview and a main element of his job he most enjoyed:

'I'd say my role is to, erm, help people, find the information that they want in the, shortest time possible.'

'I'm an information professional my role is to, help people find information'

'helping people find what they are looking for'

**Researcher.** Are there aspects or areas [of your job] you particularly enjoyed?

**Carl:** '... just just helping people really. Helping people find things, that they have difficulties with, mainly'

Believing this purpose and function has remained and will continue to remain the essence of his professional existence, Carl feels his professional identity has not changed throughout his career despite the new environments and challenges he experienced:

'I'd say my role is to, erm, help people, find the information that they want in the, shortest time possible. So I and I think that's always been the case. It's just the means to doing it, have changed now so I don't think, I don't think the, the essence of the role has changed, really. It's just the, paraphernalia surrounding it they are all different now.'

'In my rol my my, the purpose of my job hasn't changed it's just that, the details the way things are done that has changed. Let me you know in in the case of a current academic institution, the library has the library has *always* existed to support teaching and research and they that hasn't changed and, I don't see it changing. The way things the way you do things might change, but the end result has, your reason for doing it is the same.'

The essence of the role – the purpose of the job, is the central theme of Carl's identity as perceived by him. It is clear in Carl's mind that, just like the LIS professional philosophy 'is to unite people with the with the information with good quality information, and I don't think that's changed really', the purpose of the library 'has *always* existed to support teaching and research' and that purpose has not changed nor can he see it changing simply because that is the reason of the library's existence. His status quo to support teaching and research as an end result by means of helping people find information is therefore going to remain the same. What has changed for librarians, are the means and the details of the process in carrying out their role. With 'the change is more, in the way that people, find information', the library with 'the same role as it's always been' now needs to 'help people adapt to, new ways of finding information'. Carl uses the example of the renaming of libraries to illustrate how the peripheries cannot alter the core mission:

'... there was this fashion for re-naming, libraries. That's kind of an an example of that because, the the there's probably a feeling that oh, you know, library perhaps is a bit, bit fuddy-duddy you know, a bit passed it, erm we'll we'll we'll call it something else. Erm, but in the end, library's the term that, that people come back to and students of today, know call the library the library they know what a library is they know what to expect from a library so, the the the, the identity, the function hasn't changed. It's it's the way, it's it's what you offer, you offer, more or different things in the service but the role of the service is still the same.'

The discussion is related to an informal conversation prior the interview whilst touring the campus beforehand, when Carl informed the researcher of the library refurbishment work and the new name the library will be given following the re-opening:

**Researcher:** The library is still going to be called 'the library'?

**Carl:** Well, they've called this the [anonymised] project. But I mean people call, people don't like, a lot of people don't like it because they say, they know people know what a library is, where they don't know what [anonymised] is. So you got this all you know this thing, this fashion that we have, where there was a time when, I supposed it start about the 1980's 90's? When they started calling libraries other things like, learning resource centre or something like that. And then they find after a while, well, well may be library was a good idea afterall, you know, but then, people, people feel bound to, follow fashions if you like, they feel oh you can't be out you got to be in it you can't be out of it in the end you know, it's whats it's what you do that matters not what you call.

Meaning and tradition concepts are what Carl values and feels passionate about as illustrated in this example. 'People know what a library is they know what to expect' suggests the tacit knowledge users have relating to the functionality of a library. The abolishing of a name or even the physical building or structure cannot change the identity and the purpose of the service because 'it's what you do that matters'. Carl believes that it is practical and important 'to hold on to, concepts that, are meaningful. And library still means, something to most people'. Library services will continue to evolve with 'more or different things' but the central role will continue to remain no matter what it is or will be called. The idea of holding on to meaningful concepts was initially introduced through the discovery of Carl's association of his professional self with 'the library':

**Researcher:** You used the word 'the library' - in terms of yourself as a professional academic librarian, have you identified yourself as the library, am I understanding it correctly that's what you are trying to say?

**Carl:** Yes. Yes. Very much so yes. 'Coz I think I think it's important to hold on to, concepts that, are meaningful. And library still means, something to most people.

If modernising the title for libraries does not change the core function and purpose of their existence, then librarians by the same token, do not change their core mission regardless of the new environments and challenges they experienced. Since Carl has related his professional identity with the one of the library's, it can understood that just like the library which has been modernised and still managed to adapt and carry out its function in the present-day, librarians are also doing the same with their professional mission. 'It's what you do that matters not what you call' suggests that names and titles, simply do not define or stipulate the purpose of the role. For Carl, the purpose of academic librarians aka the library has always been to support teaching and research, and that purpose has not or will it ever change. What has changed for librarians as they move on in time, is the expansion of their remit by them offering 'more or different things in the service'. The advancing in technologies also means that their operating procedures in terms of the methods and processes have changed accordingly.

Helping people finding information being his core professional role defined by Carl, this central theme echoes Ranganathan's first four laws in connecting users and information. Because his 'focus has been on resources' throughout his career, the function of Carl's bibliographic work has allowed users to discover the information they required for their learning and research. By affirming their professional role and identity has remained unchanged has somehow supported the validity of Ranganathan's laws continuing to be the core principles of contemporary librarianship.

There are various challenges Carl has identified that have an impact on the operational role of librarians. As a result of the pressure of a customer-focused environment, Carl acknowledges the fact that users are becoming paying customers and making the meeting of information needs a top priority for libraries 'to provide, access to, the most the best quality and the most useful information to help with their course or with their research'. Nevertheless, there are existing challenges and stipulating factors that are affecting the way librarians carry out their job and the delivery of services in practice, with 'the bottom line is the budget isn't it they've got they can only plan according to the money they have.' Conscious of the limitations of what they can achieve, Carl reckons 'they'll have to be er, a packing order of priorities. You can't get round that really' when libraries are stipulated by and depended upon the institutional funding 'to pay for, access to quality resources'. His remark 'you can't get round that really' demonstrates the constraints and the passive position librarians are in to put into practice their service plans.

In the discussion of the paraphernalia around the role of librarians, Carl recognises the competitive and commercialised environment has led to a result driven and end-product oriented culture:

'The fact that erm, there's a there's less focus, on doing, housekeeping things internally, erm, like cataloguing . Erm ... there's more focus on, on perhaps the end product now rather than they're doing of something. Erm, so you are looking more at, again user satisfaction user outcome surveys. People are more because we are in a more, well particularly in academic libraries there are more competitions for students, it's it's much more commercial now, so people, libraries are looking at the, the results of their processes perhaps more than, the detail of the process itself.'

Besides Carl's belief that 'the time has changed, the the culture's changed' as the reason behind the new operational focus on systems and performance monitoring, there is an indication of a connection between existing pressure and this change of practice. 'Again we come back to, customer satisfaction, you know pay, student fees', where Carl is relating the result driven practice with the pressure librarians experienced in meeting users' needs. The change of focus to 'monitoring systems, how things are working and how people are using those systems' and 'can people, find the things they want easily and, how much are they using them' can be understood as the outcome of the customer oriented culture. Like a chain reaction, the commercialised environment is the driving force behind practice when 'libraries are looking at the, the results of their processes' as a way for librarians to demonstrate their value and showcase their achievements.

With the example of libraries following fashion, Carl further demonstrates the pressure librarians are facing due to the competitive and commercialised environments. The idea of libraries trying to be in with the time was first introduced in the renaming of libraries, where Carl observes 'people feel bound to, follow fashions if you like, they feel oh you can't be out you got to be in it you can't be out of it'. When the trend changes, 'and then they find after a while, well, well may be library was a good idea afterall'. Another example of librarians responding to the pressure by following the others is illustrated in organisational change: 'I think there's an element of, want not wanting to be left out, left behind'. The prospect of being sidelined is so daunting that libraries will do everything in their power to stay with the others and be accepted. Often this is carried out in a manner where rationality and practicality are

sacrificed as long as the objective is achieved. Nevertheless Carl has highlighted the importance of assessing the needs according to each individual institution's unique situation when planning for service provision. He believes it is important for institutions to develop their own strategy that is appropriate for their organisation and user group instead of following trends: 'you have to, evaluate that a service or a product whatever it is, and and say well, is this is this really, useful for our, particular group of users because, their needs might be different from, another institutions'. Because whatever the organisation's objectives are, they will affect the focus and priorities for librarians when carrying out their role.

Another challenge Carl has experienced in terms of change is information accessibility related to technology. The problem with information overload does not only apply to users, as Carl noticed the sheer volume of information he has to deal with on a daily basis is unprecedented. It is a challenge which he has not experienced in the past:

'I think the main thing is there are a lot more information out there, and there a lot it's a lot easier to to find it or to be part of it but, that presents its own challenge because you only have so many so much time and you have to, think about what what is useful erm. You know there are so many initiatives going on erm, in in all sorts of areas electronic you know access erm. I think that's the main thing there are so many, there are lots and lots of initiatives going on all over, and you can be because of email and internet and everything, you are aware of all these stuff going on but you can't possibly hope to, appreciate it all an equal interest in all of it. I think there's massive information and the fact that, it's perhaps easier to get swarmed by it now.'

Because information is available everywhere, it is impossible to avoid their presence. Carl's awareness of the various initiatives through emails and the internet has offered a sense of being overwhelmed ('to get swarmed by it'). As an information professional, Carl would like 'to be part of it' and 'hope to, appreciate it all an equal interest in all of it' but the reality of time constraints means he has to be selective when choosing to participate in activities. This decision in itself has presented a challenge in Carl's opinion.

It has been established that the advances in technology has changed the way people find information, and Carl has pointed out repeatedly how the role of the library is to help people adapt in the new environment and to discover information effectively:

'the change is more, in the way that people, find information'

'the way people can, it's the whole way that people can find information'

'help people adapt to, new ways of finding information'

With helping people find information being the central role of librarian, Carl believes the fact that technology has increased 'the range of information it's available and the nature of it and how you, er, find it' has actually illuminated the educating role of librarian. There is an increasing focus for librarians to teach information skills and literacy, as 'they're, teaching people how to, find informa find good quality information and how to use that information' whether it is through 'formal situations like timetabled sessions' or ad hoc information search 'as a result of an inquiry, an one off inquiry'. Stressing the difference between quality and quantity, Carl believes Google has undoubtedly made life easier for people to discover information but there are also drawbacks to the random 'quick and dirty' searching:

'I think it's a question of, quality and quantity. Erm, librarians have an understanding of how, the process that resources go through to be published like journals for instance the fact that they

are peer reviewed erm. Er, so, if if you are not too concerned about, the quality of your or the authenticity of your information then, then Google is fine and if you want a quick answer to something it's fine. But erm, you have to be, beware that of the pitfalls of the internet [...] So, Google has its part to play and Google is useful in many ways but, erm, it's important to keep, quality, in mind.'

The value and impact of librarians are demonstrated through their help and support for users in identifying quality information ('users do benefit, from, being shown how to use, resources and finding information effectively'), an ability librarians possess which Google cannot replace. It is apparent that their knowledge and understanding was built up through years of professional exposure to and processing of scholarly resources. Librarians' expert knowledge in teaching users to find quality information effectively and efficiently is vital in the digital age, where literacy skills as an essential life skills is applicable beyond university education. Carl believes the teaching role of librarians has become prominent and exemplified these days because of the amount of information and data available:

'More so now I think. Because there is much more information around. Erm, people have more choices to make. Erm more decisions to make. So they probably, need more, guidance than they used to. Whereas when when, compared to the time when, for instance everything was, print based.'

The move from print to electronic has provided librarians the opportunity to make use of their expert knowledge in teaching users to find information independently. With resources and information now so easily accessible, Carl believes users can be bombarded by the volume and complexity of information that they will need someone like the librarian to guide them through the information matrix. His emphasis on quality focuses on people's ability to discover information and make a correct and informed choice that is appropriate for their learning and research needs.

Relying on the current performance evaluation mechanism, Carl believes 'there are only so many ways you can reach out to your customers' and surveys and feedback are adequate means to evaluate the standards and quality of service:

'I think the quality of the service will speak for itself but it will be highlighted in erm, surveys and, feedback. So, there should be mechanisms in place, that, that tells a library or how how it's doing. So by just by doing that they will know, about how well if they if they need to, may be promote themselves more or specific services more.'

Holding a pragmatic stance towards the professional status of librarian, Carl believes in service excellence: 'I think I think you just have to do a good job. Judged by how you how well you do the job. And that's all you can do'. Carry out their role to their best of their ability is the only thing Carl reckons librarians can have control over and is considered to be the best they can do. Instead of relying on external means and various gimmicks, Carl feels professionalism can only be demonstrated through actions which in turn will earn librarians the status and reputation they deserved. Furthermore, providing that the measuring mechanism such as surveys and questionnaires are properly designed with the needed reliability ('you need to ask the right questions' 'the questions themselves are they the right questions'), it will then allow an accurate picture of performance and contributions to emerge. Although Carl has adapted a laid-back attitude and is not appeared concerned with the status and image of librarian, he has nevertheless pointed out the challenge and pressure they faced in carry out their role and the overall professional practice. The paraphernalia and the wider environment are the underpinnings of the changes which Carl experienced in his career.

### ***The deep impact of organisational culture and politics***

The long-lasting memory of a bitter organisation restructuring experience proved to be a prominent theme that has emerged from Carl's story. In addition to an unpleasant memory lingering, the experience has somewhat transformed Carl's perspective towards the profession and impacted on his career outlook.

Carl's career story has provided a starting point to examine the transformation of his mentality. As a dynamic young graduate, Carl had a clear vision of things he wanted to achieve and was determined to not let obstacles get in his way. It was demonstrated in his proactive decisions to take control of his professional path 'I wanted to, go on a, part time, librarianship course. But [anonymised organisation], wouldn't give me the time off. So I I applied for, other posts' and the various steps of his career progression 'I did apply for other jobs' 'gradually I, I got more and more responsibilities' 'and I had people, reporting to me'. There was a clear sense of passion for his profession and determination for his own career development. As illustrated in the examples of renaming libraries and modern-day libraries becoming café like, it is apparent that Carl deeply appreciates traditional values and meaningful concepts and has considered himself old-fashioned ('Well I'm very old fashioned I'd rather I'd probably, I don't if I were if I were ... if I were a researcher these days and if I have to do my work in say, for instance our library or any other I'd find it very difficult because the, erm, so much activity going on'). Nevertheless his appreciation for traditional values does not signify an unwillingness to change. On the contrary, his readiness to embrace new initiatives was demonstrated in his attitude towards organisational change. In a conversation prior the formal interview, Carl discussed the restructuring experience his existing organisation was undergoing at the time:

'So it's been, it's been a lot of ill feelings about it. But, wherever you make a big change, you know, there's going to be, unhappiness in some quarters so. Yeah.'

'If you if you want things to run, you want to make changes which you think will bring greater efficiencies then, er, erm you have to look at the jobs people are actually doing. And if they if those jobs are going to change, moderately or significantly then, you have to go through this process.'

'... you know in an organisation doesn't exist to provide jobs for people. It exists to, carry out its business whatever it is, in the most efficient way possible and you know, cost effective way. So, so it's a process that has to you know they have to be reviewed, you know. Otherwise we'd still be, you know writing with quill pens and typing catalogue cards so.'

An acceptance for change is indicated in Carl's understanding of the rationality behind the painstaking process in order to progress. A noticeable quality of leadership from Carl is illuminated when the concept of efficiency is introduced in the discussion, where in order to achieve the desired result change is a process organisations must go through. The repeated use of the expression 'have to' four times also suggests a necessity, where for change to happen service review is an inevitable reality that comes with the territory. 'Otherwise we'd still be, you know writing with quill pens and typing catalogue cards' suggests Carl's position on welcoming new developments and accepting change as a natural process in life for progress.

Having dedicated three decades of his life for the profession, Carl acknowledges that 'I'm probably near the end of my career so don't I don't have great ambitions'. Undoubtedly, his journey from a proactive professional to 'it's just a job to me. Just a job to me' 'I am focused on my immediate remit' is inevitably linked to the golden years of his professional life. However, the turning point of such mentality change was instigated by a bitter organisation restructuring incident he previously experienced which has created a long term effect on his career outlook and acted as an outcome of his change of heart. This assumption is established through the lengthy discussions on the subject during the informal meeting and

at the two interviews. When asked his feelings towards the current and former restructuring experiences from the different organisations, Carl's response to the last incident was distinctively a negative one:

'... the main diff I think the main er, what made me what annoyed me was that, erm ... that exercise was advertised it was called [anonymised project]. It was not called a restructuring, but that's what it was. They knew that they had they knew they knew where they wanted to go, and what processes they wanted to have in place. And they knew that in order to do that, they would have to have a restructure. But they didn't use that, name, and when people you know in the beginning said, is this a restructure and you know that the answer was very careful worded, about you know some along the lines of somethings may have to change or will have to change. So I think I think the thing is for me if you're, if you're up front with people if you are honest, and say this is what's going to happen or this is what very likely to happen, then at least people understand it. They might not like it, they won't it won't make them but at least they kind of prepared, for what's going to happen.'

What has appeared to be particularly traumatising and disheartening was the deceit Carl felt from the mismanaged process which failed to be 'up front' and 'honest'. The 'very careful worded, about you know some along the lines of somethings may have to change or will have to change' response from management provided a false sense of security for staff. With no sign of a drastic reorganisation about to take place 'was a complete shock to a lot of people. And it was a terr and to be told on the same day that, em, the posts were effectively redundant' illustrated the impact of the incident has caused a major blow to the staff. Acknowledging that the learning of the truth in advanced would not have altered the outcome, forthcoming information would however have allowed people the opportunity to prepare themselves ('at least they kind of prepared, for what's going to happen') and to make informed decisions. Believed that they have been mistreated, the dreadful event was considered an insult to their professionalism ('people understand it') and the organisation's lack of basic decency and respect for the staff ('they knew that in order to do that, they would have to have a restructure. But they didn't use that, name') which made Carl feels played.

Even after years gone by, the painful experience continued to remain raw and personal to him. Feeling deeply undervalued and turning into a dispensable commodity, the experience has greatly damaged Carl's faith and trust towards the organisation and potentially his outlook towards the profession:

**Carl:** '... they might say that, their aim is to retain you know the staff are the best, are their most important asset and their aim is to retain them but, when it comes to saving money, then that seems to take, to be secondary'.

**Researcher:** And how does that make one feel?

**Carl:** Well demoralised.

Between retaining their valuable asset and saving money, the organisation chose the latter and staff are considered secondary. After a lifetime of service, what Carl said cannot begin to articulate the pain and disappointment, as it was what he did not say through the unheard words expressed in his mood and tone that offer a glimpse of the degree of devastation. Hence 'it's just a job to me. Just a job to me' 'I am focused on my immediate remit' can be viewed as a direct result of his feeling of demoralisation. In connection with the unpleasant restructuring experience, Carl has considered institutional politics a particularly difficult area to handle outside his everyday challenge:

'... the longer you work, in an institution that, the more aware aware you become of institutional politics, yes, how about, saying the right thing and, being seen to saying the right thing, erm. Perhaps having having your eyes opened. Erm, yeah and it can be a very, difficult area to deal with.'

'very often, institutions, and, have a vision of how they want to be, perceived. Erm, and they take, great pains to, advertise this but, it doesn't always translate into, corresponding, actions. Erm ... you know they might say oh we oh our staff are our greatest asset and we want to retain the best staff but ... the way they go about things, don't necessarily, approve that. I'm not saying all institutions are like that but it's a, it's a difficult area to deal with.'

'There's a lot of erm, emphasis on image, nowadays you know the image of people the image of institutions. And, you know everybody, wants to be able to present a positive image of their institution. Erm and on you know on certain occasion that might mean, erm, perhaps putting your own, personal reservations to the back and, and then, emphasising the positives of, whatever's going at the time. There's something that's hard to, erm, it's not, for some people, it's a natural way of behaviour, I think. And for other people, it's not. It's it's like, it's like playing a game almost. It's like you know respecting the rules of society it's like a bit like good manners you know certain things you do, in a kind of certain situation and there are certain other things you don't do, it's a bit like that.'

'Well ... some somethings come ... well things always have to be presented in a positive way and the emphasise the positive at the, expense of, the the difficulties you know. The way that the difficulties and problems are never called difficulties and problems they are always called challenges because it's a more positive word. So, for instance, the, we had a, we both went through a, situation in the past where erm, an initiative was presented in a certain way, and, and the motives for doing it were, presented in a particular way but in fact, the end results were the results that they were reaching towards was, was something else'

The revelation of a gap between a positively portrayed public image that failed to 'translate into, corresponding, actions' is an eye-opener in Carl's opinion. With organisations attempt to promote their positive image to the outside world, Carl feels the pressure of having to 'saying the right thing and, being seen to saying the right thing' and 'putting your own, personal reservations to the back and, and then, emphasising the positives of, whatever's going at the time' 'I feel sometimes that I have to, emphasise the positive side of things when perhaps normally in an in an ordinary life, everyday life situation I wouldn't'. For the purpose of maintaining a positive image of institutions, staff are pressured into presenting the difficulties and problems they experienced in a positive light. Despite his disapproval to this practice, Carl goes along with it but admits he would have responded differently outside his professional life when facing the same situation. His professional self and personal self with polarising approach are presented here. In order to fit in with the organisational culture, Carl has to deliberately adjust his own believe to get accepted and survive in the organisation and is finding the deception difficult to deal with. Comparing the act of pretence to the socially acceptable behaviour of good manners, conforming to the organisation's culture is simply regarded as 'respecting the rules of society'. Although conforming, like having good manners, is considered 'a natural way of behaviour' for some people, the analogy of 'playing a game' suggests the unnatural nature of an obligatory expectation. The hypocrisy is reflected in the positive image projected by the organisations when in reality 'the way they go about things, don't necessarily, approve that'. The subject on the painful restructuring experience and the feeling of being undervalued and demoralised has once again resurfaced.

Despite the traumatising event, Carl believes his professional identity has not been undermined by the experience ('**R**: Did it [the experience] undermine your professional identity?' '**D**:No') and has simply put it down to '[it] is just part of life'. His professionalism is demonstrated through his advocacy to support organisational value in professional practice:

'I think you should, try to embrace the values of, your organisation. Yes. Yes. Doesn't mean you have to become a 'yes' person.'

Weighing customer experience and user welfare above personal feeling, Carl believes the offering of a cohesive service to be his professional obligation where such professionalism must be maintained regardless of circumstances:

'So that people approach situations in a similar way. Erm, where seem to be a cohesive organisation. Yes, it's better for the service if people are isn't it because, even you know if you go and ask somebody question, and they give you an answer and then you go back ten minutes later and then somebody gives you a different answer it's not very good is it?'

'It's better for the service' demonstrates Carl's concern for the wider good and is prepared to reach a happy medium by embracing the organisation's value without becoming 'a "yes" person'. With the mission of supporting research and learning in mind, Carl is adamant that his professional integrity and principles cannot be compromised. There is a clear difference between 'putting your own, personal reservations to the back' due to a lack of choice in order to survive in the organisation, whilst embracing the organisation's value as a way to provide a professional and consistent service is a practical approach by choice to ensure a quality service experience for end users. Alike a sense of calling, an indication of Carl's professional ethics can be observed in this example.

#### ***Supporting 'others': the basis of achievements***

In the discussion of Carl's professional joy and achievements, a noticeable theme of 'others' has emerged and subsequently run through the interviews. The concept of supporting others was first introduced when Carl described his professional identity as helping people finding information. Considering the support of teaching and research as the main purpose of his professional existence, service for others appeared to be at the centre of Carl's professional mission and established as the basis for his sense of pride. Approaching the end of his career has allowed Carl the opportunity to reflect on his achievements, and the theme of facilitating 'others' has once again emerged from the conversation:

'Well I you know I'm probably near the end of my career so don't I don't have great ambitions but erm, I just want to do, to feel that I've made a, a difference, to, the department that I've I've worked in, erm, getting to, things to work in the most efficient way possible, helping staff to achieve their objectives, that sort of thing.'

'Erm ... supporting er, high profile institutions, I supposed I've been proud of. Erm, and being viewed being viewed as a professional and, helping people find what they are looking for.'

His department, his staff, the institutions he served, the users he helped are all recipients of Carl's services and contributions. It is important for Carl to know that he has successfully made a difference by enabling others to attain their goals through his help and service. To be considered as a professional by the people he encountered within his professional context is another contributor of Carl's sense of pride. Based upon his professional mission, Carl believes one's professionalism is demonstrated through the delivery of quality service that will result in excellent customer experience: 'you want to feel that when people erm, approach for information that, they come away with a good impression, given the feeling that you know if they needed information again, they would come back to you because of their, the quality of their experience that they've had'. Because the library is 'a supporting department, supporting teaching and research', successfully supporting the department and institution by 'getting to, things to work in the most efficient way possible' has therefore constituted to Carl's achievement. Emphasising his support for 'high profile institutions', it is worth noting Carl's pride and his feeling of accomplishment is related to his association with reputable organisations. Because the value of society often equates prestige with high quality and standards, Carl has therefore earned the social status through his professional service and support for these institutions.

By helping his staff 'to achieve their objectives' particularly 'in the context of helping new, staff who perhaps it's their first post', Carl believes it is his professional duty to act as mentor to nurture the next generation of librarians to succeed in their career. Through the example of his decision to apply for other posts because of the institution's rejection to offer day release for him to pursue his professional qualification, Carl understands the importance of management's support goes a long way for staff development. Consequently, to enable his staff to excel and succeed in their career is something Carl considered important for his professional achievement.

### ***Users: the raison d'être***

With helping people to find information being the essence of Carl's professional role and identity, services for others is the foundation of his sense of pride and accomplishment. The purpose of his professional existence to support teaching and research means the focus of his work and all service provision is based around users. Users: the *raison d'être*, is an important theme introduced by Carl who believes users to be the sole purpose of librarians' professional existence:

'they are your, *raison d'être*, if if you know if they weren't there then there will be no role for us. So yes, everything is, focused on them in the end.'

'If they weren't there then there will be no role for us' evidently demonstrates the significance of users who are serving as librarians' livelihood. Carl therefore believes that it is imperative for librarians to readjust their priorities by putting users at the centre of their professional mission and daily practice again, which 'always has been a focus but it's more perhaps more so now'. The heightening of awareness and focus on users was a by product of the changes experienced from the wider environments. On the one end of the argument, 'customer satisfaction, you know pay, student fees' has made raising expectations a reality, and a change of relationship can therefore be seen as a result of the financial pressure where 'the student fees have made, the students, more of customer now more than ever. Whereas before they were just the users of the service you could say, they are actually paying to use the service now. So it's the relationship has changed a bit.' From users of the service to 'consumers of information', it is anticipated that this change of role will only intensify users' expectations of the service. Competitions between institutions and the emphasis on image are other contributing factors that have made user experience a key focus in the organisations' business objective. The fact that 'we are in a more, well particularly in academic libraries there are more competitions for students, it's it's much more commercial now' means institutions have to take appropriate actions to ensure they are well-prepared of what the market needs. Carl believes national reports and publications have made it inescapable ('there's no way of avoiding that now' 'they can't avoid, listening to, what their users want') for institutions to listen and be in touch with customer needs to maintain their image if for nothing else:

'I think they are, I think they are pretty good about, registering what customers in particular need but then, they can't, there's no way of avoiding that now because, information that's published as a result of service like the National Student Survey, is is there for everybody to see so, they're nobody wants to be seen, in a bad light. So I think they, they can't avoid, listening to, what their users want they might not always, get what they want because if only because of money, but erm, they must be seen to be, listening.'

'there's more awareness now of erm, because erm of users because we are in a much more, customer focused environment you know we encourage customer feedback and erm, the National Student Survey things like that people are much more aware of them so it's consumers of information now and perhaps they were.'

The fact that society is becoming a 'customer focused environment' means institutions must demonstrate their awareness of such a development and missing out on the trend is not an option

because 'nobody wants to be seen, in a bad light'. User satisfaction revealed in public documents such as the National Student Survey has put pressure on institutions to address user needs and be accountable for their services. 'They must be seen to be, listening' refer to the recurring concept on image, where institutions are desperate to make an impression and project themselves as receptive and customer oriented. This objective of putting users at the centre of the service will inevitably filter down the organisation and share by the staff. The awareness of this objective means librarians will have to put their priority on user experience and seen in practice: 'you want to feel that when people erm, approach for information that, they come away with a good impression, given the feeling that you know if they needed information again, they would come back to you because of their, the quality of their experience that they've had'. A returning customer is the best evidence to prove the quality and professionalism of a service.

Another contributing factor to the development of users becoming the *raison d'être* is a shift of focus from the librarians' perspective in terms of the reprioritisation of their tasks. Reflecting on past practice, Carl believes 'in the past there was, perhaps more focus on erm, collection, building and collection development'. The change of time and culture as indicated by the technological advances means that 'the whole way that people can find information' has changed accordingly, and librarians now have the new task to 'help people adapt to, new ways of finding information'. The result of this new development has shifted the focus on practice where the emphasis on acquiring resources has now changed to evaluating usage and performance:

'I think a lot of it is all to do with monitoring systems, how things are working and how people are using those systems. Rather than may be, there was an emphasis on acquiring things, in the past, which is not, so much now. It's more about, can people, find the things they want easily and, how much are they using them.'

With the development of electronic resources, librarians have become the facilitator between users and information. Together with the awareness of customer satisfaction, the complexity and volume of available information has result in librarians spending more time in reviewing the function of systems and resources to see how well they meet the research and learning requirements of users. Systems monitoring and evaluation as ways to examine the ease of use and information habits have in turn allowed greater interactions between librarians and users. Carl believes technology has revolutionised the way librarians carry out their tasks.

### ***Technology: the biggest impact on professional and personal life***

Across his professional and personal life, technology has significantly affected Carl both practically and psychologically. Stating technology was and continue to be the biggest change he has experienced ('so I think yeah the challenge personal challenge was technology, for me, and it still is'), Carl shared his fascination of the changes bring about by technology that has 'affected all areas of people's lives' 'in the way, things were done just just through the pace of automation things more things becoming electronically searchable'. Within his professional practice, Carl believes technology has allowed greater efficiency in the process and altered the kind of activities librarians carry out, where 'technology technology has driven away we do things, erm, it applies to all all kind what used to call library house-keeping activities you know circulations acquisitions interlibrary loans it's affected everything. And it's all like do [inaudible] you would think erm, greater efficiencies'. As a direct result of the advances in technology, Carl has experienced a shift of priority in his line of work with 'less focus, on doing, housekeeping things internally, erm, like cataloguing'. The time librarians spent on building the physical collection and other manual activities has now used on automated tasks such as the review of systems and usage. Other than replacing traditional duties, the benefits created by technology have allowed more efficient ways to carry out procedures. Whilst traditional tasks have remained valid, technology has made them subsidiary compared to other automated projects:

'if you look at nowadays, erm, the the growth of shelf-ready services and, the focus is not on these areas erm, you know there's still a need for those things, but they are something that perhaps erm, the library can delegate, to erm, to outsource as you know. Erm, there still has to be standards of course and the, standards have to be met. But erm, perhaps erm, it's just a question of now that there are more efficient ways of doing things. Those things are still there and they are still important but they are not quite as prominent'.

With outsourcing turning into a common practice, librarians can specify their requirements and delegate tasks to their service providers as illustrated in the case of shelf-ready service. The support of technology has freed up time for librarians as a result so they can focus on other areas such as 'monitoring systems, how things are working and how people are using those systems rather than may be, there was an emphasis on acquiring things, in the past, which is not, so much now'. With majority of the information now available electronically, librarians can evaluate how the resources are being used. Automated data extraction from the systems has made it 'easier to view, how much they [resources] are being used'. Evaluation also applies to the monitoring of the performance of service providers to ensure that they have met the required standards.

Changing 'life as a whole', Carl observed how the impact of technology has affected the way users access the library and information:

'So where things were very much, paper-based, erm, things' been paper-based meant that they they were also time and place restricted, i.e people had to come, physically come to a place, the library, when the library happened to be opened. But of course now it's a lot of resources are completely independent of, physical restrictions so, that's that's really the biggest change isn't it?'

'I think perhaps the change is more, in the way that people, find information that, that is not, it's 24/7 now isn't it and it's it's not restricted by, opening hours by by time and place.'

Emphasising technology has removed the physical restrictions, electronic resources have opened up new prospects for the library and how information are to be used. Technology has also changed the library as place, where 'the atmosphere has become more, more cafe like. It's more, it's become more of a place to meet and chat, than at one time you know, exclusively, seen as a place to study and, erm. And that's a lot to do with technology as well'. Because technology has changed the way the library is being used, modernisation and the redesigning of the library has become necessary to 'cater for these two types of use by having, designated areas for, silent study and, not so silent study'. Through technology, library can provide a seamless service while users can easily discover the information anywhere anytime without having to visit the library physically to access the resources. 24/7 opening is a direct response to the changing user needs in the new learning environment.

On a personal level, a discouraging library school experience has created a long term psychological effect on Carl and affected his confidence in using technology:

'Erm ... the biggest challenge to me was technology because I'm not a naturally not naturally adapt with technology. And erm, I had a, a bad experience really at library school with the computing part of the course. Erm, I thought it was very badly taught, and it was it really kind of knocked my confidence because I thought well, it must be me being stupid erm I I never, I never really got to grips with it and you know computers in libraries were in their infancy then anyway, things weren't so kind of, sophisticated as they are now. Erm so that's that was still remains my biggest challenge I think.'

'information technology was really in its infancy when I was, and it was very badly taught in a way it's kind of put me off put me off [inaudible].'

Indicating information technology in library school was in its infancy during his time, Carl recalled his experience of the badly delivered computing module as the origin of his uneasiness towards technology. This 'bad experience' has damaged Carl's confidence and 'put me off' technology right away. 'Because I thought well, it must be me being stupid erm I I never, I never really got to grips with it' demonstrates the negative emotions of feeling incapable and inadequate, the frustration of feeling not good enough. The experience continued to cast a shadow over Carl in the course of time, when he considers his 'personal challenge was technology [...] and it still is'. His believe of 'I'm not a naturally not naturally adapt with technology' illustrates the psychological effect of believing technology is indeed his weakness which potentially could be far from the truth. The word 'naturally' suggests a wholly acceptance of something that is innate and cannot be changed or manipulated artificially. If things at library school were as 'sophisticated as they are now', Carl might have an entirely different experience all together. Thus it can be seen that library school has an important role in the career and future of information professionals.

### **Professional qualification and CPD**

Reflecting on library school curriculum, Carl believes 'the area that's, I imagine, has improved in library school is the area, information technology' which he considers to be a significant area in today's teaching. Despite his bad experience in the area, Carl felt 'having already worked, in a library, before I went, I found that a lot of the things, they were telling me I knew already anyway from working on the job' suggests past library school curriculum was in touch with professional practice in his opinion. Appreciating the value of library education, Carl strongly regards professional qualification as an 'evidence of commitment to your profession' and 'a commitment and determination to, to progress'. Illustrating the value of library qualification, Carl has compared it to other entrance requirements as a standard practice in other professions: 'it's like, you wouldn't be a lawyer without having your lawyers exams or your bankers exams or your solicitors exams would you?' 'it's like any of the profession really that you've, you've been you had training in your profession and you've shown, evidence of, continued professional development'. Obtaining library qualification is a natural step towards becoming a professional and Carl considers that is 'the main thing' that signifies professionalism. Other than serving as an evidence of commitment and continuing professional development, Carl believes library qualification provides an advantage under competitive situations: "if it comes to choosing between two [...] people for a post [who are] fairly equal in all of the respects, erm, the qualification would count in one person's favour'. The comment demonstrates the significance of library qualification as a determining factor for being accepted into the profession. Having a professional qualification is also a necessity for career progression as 'there's always been, you know if you start at the bottom, you don't need a qualification don't you?', but then it would be an essential criteria if one is aspired to progress in the profession. Such observed phenomenon is regarded as a standard traditional practice in the trade which Carl considers 'I don't think it has changed really'.

Looking into the future of the profession, Carl believes new information professionals have possessed the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their job but they continue to need the all important practical experience to develop those skills ('they got the knowledge but they need experience to develop those skills'). Stressing experience as the underlying principle of becoming proficient, Carl sees no better way to develop than 'just by working really on the job experience'. Because of the nature of their work, librarians are expected to 'be familiar with the key, and quality resources and their in their area, which people might not, easily come across', nevertheless to enhance their professional knowledge they need 'experience and keeping up to date. And signing up to, appropriate, alerting type services'

besides the 'formal training like library school'. Carl's experience of having 'made some very good appointments recently' indicates a healthy trend of quality professionals presenting within the profession who 'must be doing something right' by successfully meeting the requirements. Going forward, Carl values the traditional skills and considers them essential attributes that are valid for practical purposes with a 'lot of them around, customer service. Er, intellectual curiosity, erm, facility for, using information technology-based information. And, desire for, accuracy, attention to detail', which 'are kind of constant really. They've always been there'. With the formats of information and the digital era continue to evolve, it is predicted that the focus on 'technology is [going to be] more important than it was ten years ago'. As helping users to 'adapt to, new ways of finding information' will continue to be a crucial role for librarians, Carl encourages colleagues to keep up to date with the latest changes and development so that they are ready to deal with new queries and be at hand to help.

For the profession to avoid experiencing a leadership gap, Carl believes 'planning ahead' is the key to ensure the next generation of leaders are prepared of what is to come. Internally, organisations can 'support staff by encouraging them to go, on training events, current awareness courses'; while beyond the immediate organisations, they can collaborate broadly to 'think of what's going to be required in the future by collaborating with other sectors perhaps. Well may be industry, commerce. Erm ... well I'm thinking of in the information units within these types of organisations'. Leadership training is considered an important area for continuing professional development, and the collaboration with other industries will allow librarians the opportunity to develop and broaden their horizon.