Transforming the Research Library Workforce: A Scenarios Approach

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Scenario Planning

- A mature strategic planning tool – widely used in business & government
- Scenarios are “stories” about what the future might hold.
- Created in sets. No one scenario is “true”
- Requires organizations to
  - Look many years out (20, 30, 50 years…)
  - Focus on the external environment within which they operate
- Used for strategic planning or focused problem resolution
The ARL Scenario Set

- Project led by ARL Transforming Research Libraries Steering Committee
- Set of four “stories” created by 30 representative leaders from ARL institutions (plus provocateurs & ARL staff)
- Released in 2010 along with a User Guide
- Each story features fictional researcher Hannah Chen
- Scenarios intentionally focus on the research enterprise, not the library
RLLF Project Objectives

- To walk the scenarios out a bit further (imagine what the research library might look like?)
- Use the ARL scenarios as a lens through which to view workforce transformation.
- To include new voices (RLLF fellows, HR professionals...)
- To make clear recommendations for how ARL libraries prepare for various futures
- To test the use of scenarios as a planning / discussion tool at the local and collective level
Scenario 1: Research entrepreneurs

- Few universities left
- Researchers are “stars”
- Hannah is a high-flyer

THE LIBRARY
- Courts “the stars”.
- Focus on data repositories
- Most services are online

TRANSFORMED WORKFORCE
(RLLF COMMENTS)
- High technology skills
- Data management / curation
- Cultural diversity skills
- High-level research skills
- Marketing
- Less face-to-face staff
- Small group devoted to designing online interfaces & consortial relationships
Scenario 2: Reuse & Recycle

- Few universities left
- Researchers just recycle work
- Hannah is a contract researcher working on small scale projects.

THE LIBRARY
- Few left
- Traditional roles disappear
- Focus on data management.
- Support itinerant researchers

WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS (RLLF COMMENTS)
- Staff size reduced
- Grant writing & other business skills
- Very little T&L services
- Very little face-to-face service
- Need librarians deeply involved in research process.
- Strong data management skills
Scenario 3: Disciplines in Charge

- Few universities left.
- Support 1 or cluster of disciplines.
- Research dominated by AI
- Disciplines control data & questions
- Hannah works for Economics Co-Op

THE LIBRARY
- Few left
- Specialized (discipline clusters)
- Focus on data curation, digital scholarship
- All services online

WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS (RLLF COMMENTS)
- Deep IT skills
- Strong data curation skills
- Deep domain knowledge to support research teams
- Intellectual property knowledge
- Less teaching expertise required
- Grant writing / business skills
Scenario 4: Global Followers

- Limited government funding
- Focus turned to Middle East / Asia
- New research questions and norms
- Hannah is a tenured professor with Chinese university (working in U.S.)

THE LIBRARY
- Collaborate with Middle East / Asia
- Data is the “new scholarship”
- New focus on mediating multi-institutional needs and IP

WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS (RLLF COMMENTS)
- Culturally diverse staff
- Enhanced language skills
- Deep data management skills
- Enhanced mathematics & statistics skills
- Good knowledge of IP
Key Questions

- Do these implications resonate? What would you add? Delete?
- What new competencies or credentials might be required?
- What can we do today to prepare us for this future (i.e., to develop these competencies/credentials?)
Initial Findings

- Library easier to find in some stories than others.
- Future not always heartening. (Re-Use / Recycle is grim!)
- Certain themes permeate two or more scenarios
  - Fewer staff (some traditional roles disappeared)
  - Deep IT skills (focus on online delivery)
  - Intense focus on data curation / management
  - Strong research skills (supporting research teams)
  - Enhanced cultural diversity / language skills
  - Money issues predominate. Grant writing, fundraising
Questions

- Questions for You
  - Additional voices?
  - Useful deliverables? (Report? Presentation?)

- Questions for Us?