



Measures for Our Time

The Value of Libraries

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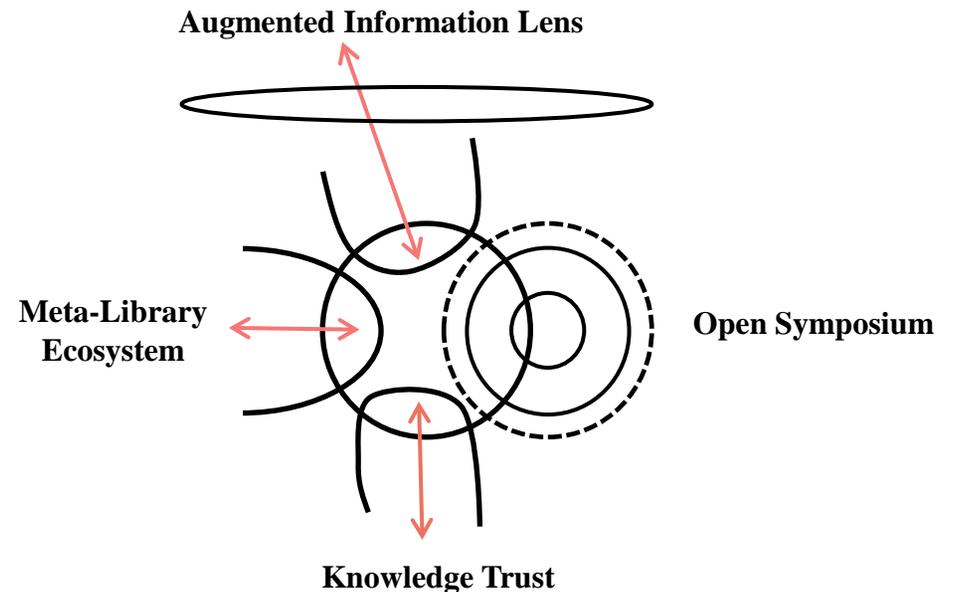
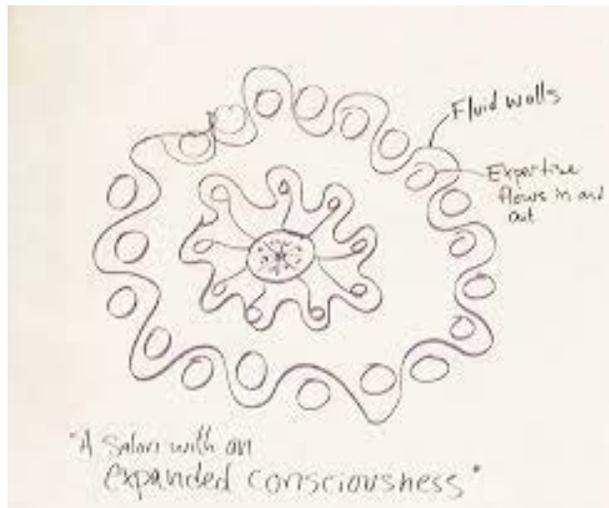
Executive Director

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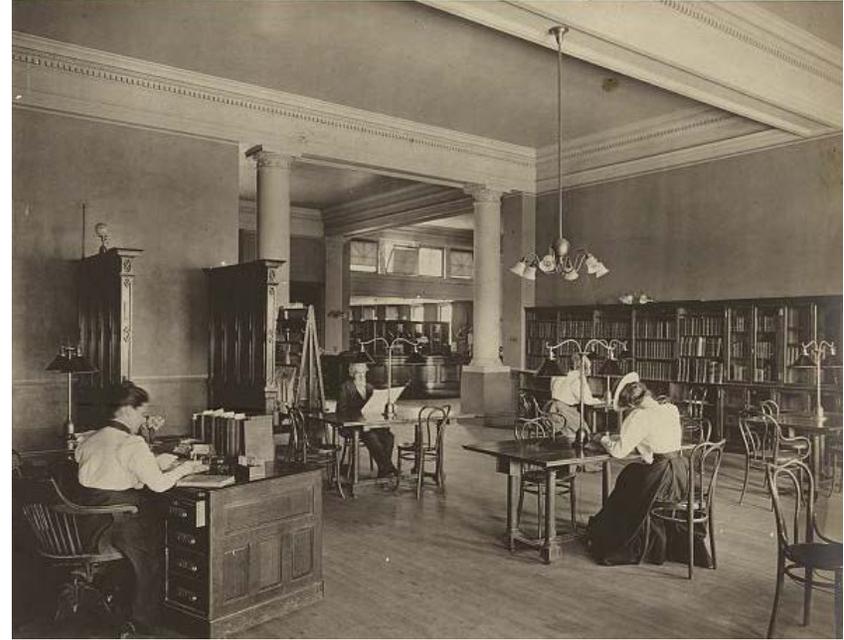
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My Inspiration

- Information gathered on a listening tour of fifty Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member institutions
- Strategic Thinking and Design Process at ARL



Libraries & The Age of Modernity



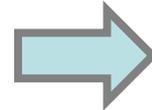
“Opinion is steadily inclining towards making the division of labor an imperative rule of conduct, to present it as a duty..... The categorical imperative of the moral conscience is assuming the following form: Make yourself useful to fulfill a determinate function.”

~ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Pages 42-43

Digital Disruption in Research



The research library used to have a literal, physical monopoly on research – you had to come into our building to access our physical materials



We lost that monopoly over the last 20 years

The world has changed—have we?

On my listening tour, I found that we are:

- **still counting things we can count**
- **thinking about the library as mostly a place**
- **seeing the library as divorced from the larger world of research and higher education**

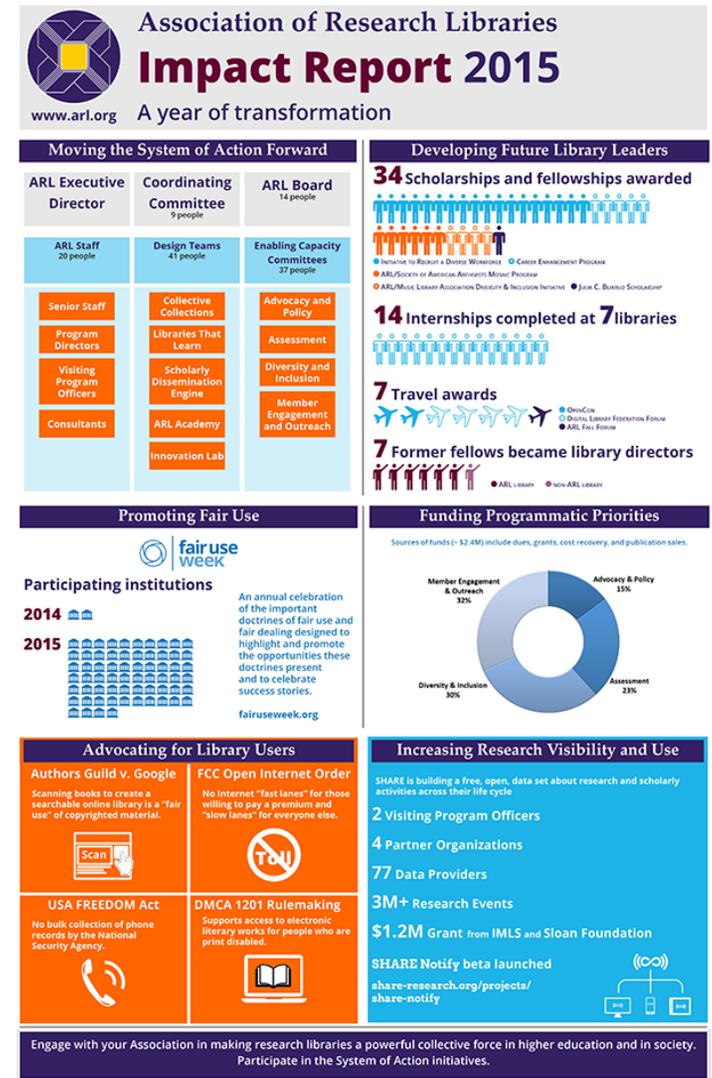
“We need a new, broader framework for understanding the processes of what learning and knowing look like. Where traditional models of learning have moved from models of direct knowledge transfer to broader notions of skills, we believe that neither of these is sufficient to explain and account for the fundamental epistemic shifts and new affordances that 21st century presents.”

~Douglas Thomas & John Seely Brown, “Learning for a World of Constant Change: Homo Sapiens, Homo Faber & Homo Ludens revisited”

A Call for Reform

A future path for library metrics:

- Radical change in the presentation and format of statistics
- Conduct predictive, rather than just descriptive, analysis
- Move from counting inputs to measuring outputs
- More is better is not an underlying assumption of quality – qualitative data should be intertwined with quantitative data to paint an accurate picture of what libraries are producing



My Questions

- ✧ Why do we seem to tackle every new problem with tools that are made for another era?
- ✧ Why do we think more is better?
- ✧ Why do analog models come first to mind?
- ✧ Why don't we measure what scholars actually do rather than concentrating solely on what libraries might provide?
- ✧ Why is there a division in our instruments between computing and libraries?
- ✧ Why do we not move away from descriptive and towards predictive models?
- ✧ Why do we hang on to categories that no longer matter?
- ✧ Why do we present dynamic information in static ways?

Counting for Counting's Sake?

“Yet, in a world of powerful, networked resources in which information created every three weeks is equivalent to the previous three thousand years of recorded history, the only relevant performance captured by these statistics is the counting itself.”

~ Quote from “*Taking Our Measure: The Correlation of Metrics and Leadership*,” by Charles Henry, President of the Council on Library and Information Resources

Ideas from the Field

Scenario:

We saved the university \$10 million in new construction costs by repurposing a floor of the building for student-facing work areas by removing analog materials that rarely circulated and are available elsewhere. How is that reflected positively in my statistics? It isn't.

- **Could there be instead of an investment index a cost-avoidance index?**

Ideas from the Field (2 of 3)

Scenario:

I collaborate with my colleagues so that I do not have to buy as much material and so have more access to more materials for scholarly research – so the less I spend in dollars, the more I spend in building relationships – but it just seems like my investment is going down, not up.

➤ **Could there be a collaboration index?**

Ideas from the Field (3 of 3)

Scenario:

I have a wonderful staff of dedicated and well-educated professionals working in my library – it is a small but powerful cadre of people engaged in the research, teaching and learning of my students and faculty. They are efficient and spend their energy in ways that advance the enterprise of higher education.

➤ **Could there be an enterprise fit index?**

Lessons from the Ancients 1

“But there’s another way of measuring that does not involve placing something alongside a stick or on a scale. This is the kind of measurement that Plato described as “fitting.” This involves less an act than an experience: we sense that things don’t “measure up” to what they could be.”

~An excerpt from “World in the Balance: The Historic Quest for an Absolute System of Measurement” by Robert P. Crease, a professor of philosophy at Stony Brook University

Lessons from the Ancients 2

Let me end by quoting Seneca, shamelessly stolen from Richard Dumont, celebrated by his CARL colleagues on Monday evening. As he was lauded for the risks and the rewards of taking those risks, he concluded with Seneca in a way that I would suggest we should take to heart when we worry how hard it may be to do what we are arguing for in this panel:

“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare, it is because we do not dare that things are difficult.”

Thank you!



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Questions? Comments? Thoughts?