

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Blurred Boundaries: Exploring interaction between managerial, economic and information objectives in UK specialist collections with some EU and US examples – a few perspectives regarding future thoughts and plans.

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Declaration

I declare that this submission is entirely my own's work except those parts that are identified and referenced in the text.

It is within the specified word length and complies with the regulations specified in the Student Handbook.

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The Library exists *ab aeterno*. This truth, whose immediate corollary is the future eternity of the world, cannot be placed in doubt by any reasonable mind. Man, the imperfect librarian, may be the product of chance or of malevolent demiurgi; the universe, with its elegant endowment of shelves, of enigmatical volumes, of inexhaustible stairways for the traveler and latrines for the seated librarian, can only be the work of a god. To perceive the distance between the divine and the human, it is enough to compare these crude wavering symbols which my fallible hand scrawls on the cover of a book, with the organic letters inside: punctual, delicate, perfectly black, inimitably symmetrical.

(Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel")

"Looking at the future is not just about saying what will probably happen.. It's about looking at the different possibilities, deciding where we want to be and then developing strategies to get there"

(Inayatullah, "Creating the future" pars. 4, 5).



BSTRACT

Everybody has a right to equal access to the arts and to information through education. The foundation of the public libraries is part of this 19th century concept – but our current Library was built for the 20th century and as we approach the third decade of the 21st we have not fully worked out how to reconfigure it for the future.

Libraries' current uncertainty about their prime purpose is probably due to insecurity and to the fact that skills of Librarians and Archivists have been changing for a while. Data mining has brought a new age and has had a tsunami wave effect on storage of materials and on weeding of unwanted information. Predictions are always dangerous but the issue of digital abundance means that we are likely to need librarians and archivists more than ever. In the meantime, librarians themselves hold contradictory views about their role, as they go about their daily tasks, often in buildings which are one hundred years out of date, with inadequate staff and never enough money.

The main purpose of this study is to define what a collection is nowadays, what it is meant to be and where it will be five or ten years from now. The study is based on research I have carried out in the past year, in some specialist collections and it is driven by an interest in the ideals of the library service and a frustration at its current state. Using a combination of conclusions from personal interviews with professionals and examples of current academic practice, the research tries to outline the benefits of cooperation, the need for standards and where we should be providing access, licensed or unlicensed to the unique materials stored in special collections. The rest of the research elaborates on the scope for future development of such institutions in the light of funding cuts, impact of digitization and conservation issues and for their potential as participants in the cultural sector.

The early part of the study is a statement of the current collecting policies of specialist collections in the UK (with one or two overseas examples), together with their application in various areas of collection building. The latter part tries to find common ground among specialist collections and examines their thoughts and plans for the future.

The study concludes that while each institution retains its own individual character, there are major changes and developments that specialist collections face as a whole which might change the way we interact with them forever and which are already providing models for others to follow.

The findings are mostly drawn from in-depth interviews with representatives from several libraries – listed herewith - which take a proactive stance on the issues considered here and which are attempting to develop a public-facing approach and endorse further engagement with a wider public through exhibitions and increased access to their materials:

THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY – Inderbir Bhurlar – Information Librarian

ST BRIDE'S PRINTING LIBRARY – Nigel Roche – Librarian

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART – COLOUR REFERENCE LIBRARY/RAC LIBRARY, Neil Parkinson, Library Manager, neil.parkinson@rca.ac.uk

WELLCOME LIBRARY – Richard Aspin – Head of Research

THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY - moreinfo@thewomenslibrary.ac.uk

VICTORIA MUSIC LIBRARY (WML) – Ruth Walters – Library Manager

INIVA – Sonia Hope, Library manager, library@iniva.org

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - Daniel DiLandro, College Archivist and Special Collections Librarian, dilanddm@buffalostate.edu

RIBA – Wendy Fish – Deputy Director at British Architectural Library, RIBA

TATE – Jane Bramwell – Head of Tate Library, Archive and Collection Access

MONALIESA – Feminist Library Leipzig – Hella Roessiger, Library Manager

Word count: 16,800

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1. CHANGING NORMS



ims, objectives and research questions.

The discussion in this paper concerns a future role for a specialist library in a world where technology and communication give instant access to information. In its document: Promoting Designated Collections, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), recognizes that organizations with designated specialist collections are of ‘outstanding national and international importance’ and as such, care for a significant part of England’s cultural heritage. The fact that the MLA itself is winding up and undergoing a process of role re-orientation together with Arts Council England is all the more significant of this current period of transition, in which we interact with information and access, share and process data increasingly differently – and which means more investment in digital resources and engagement.

These are early days yet it feels like we might not be going fast enough. There are still old fashioned notions on who is collecting what, especially in an area where budgets are being severely cut down and libraries are buying less than they used to. There are also many patrons who still want to read and consult books. While all this is going on, libraries must figure out how to collect in a way that is collaborative and in a way which enables collections to share the responsibility of preserving knowledge and of providing expert information in both traditional and alternative formats. The Collections considered in this research are doing their best to reconcile profound change and fundamental continuity in a difficult economic climate. At the same time, they are watching what works for others and how users get help. The picture that emerges is one in need of development.

2. CATHEDRALS AND BAZAARS

The pride of the specialist whose unique knowledge has been publicly called for...

(Miller, A – “The Crucible” – Act One, Narrator: Reverend Hale)

2.1 The Librarian as guide

Libraries are community resources of a special kind, places where printed materials sit together with online digital resources. Library users move in sophisticated ways between digital and physical environments. Facebook and other sites created a real community, bringing people into physical engagement with the building and collections but ease of

access to materials and to institutions is still a confused area because the library service is to some extent, a hybrid environment. Today we have still many splendid spaces such as Oxford's Ashmolean, Cambridge's St John's or the Harvard Law Library. Besides hosting fine collections full of old, rare and unusual material these places offer scholars all over the world access to the latest textbooks and IT facilities. Next to these temples to knowledge there are what we may call bazaars, public reading spaces for homework and research with as many books and magazines as online resources and where increasingly, young people and to some extent academics, like to operate. Traditionally, specialist librarians have been good at being the high priests in the temples to knowledge and less good at being the guides in the bazaar.

Government agencies tend to focus on the public library, leaving the specialist libraries in a grey area. A special collection usually houses heritage materials but its priorities and methodologies are not easy to define. There is no clear definition of what makes a great collection, what its unique materials are and how they can be made more accessible.

Preservation of materials is taken very seriously by all the institutions in this research – but collections cannot take on the archiving and preservation role for everything. It follows that they have to learn to be non exclusive and less competitive and to become better collaborators by working together with other libraries. The future of specialist collections may lie precisely in the creation of an eco-system that's reliable both for access and preservation.

Typically, most large-scale collections hold materials in a wide variety of formats, archives and manuscripts. There follows that there is a major role to play for specialist librarians, not just in the subject area but also in related fields. This point was made clear by Wendy Fish, Deputy Director of the British Architectural Library, when she discussed the relevance of RIBA and other specialist collections.

I think they (specialist collections) do have a very important role – ironically now that information is so readily available because there is so much of it, it is hugely difficult for people to get a hand on specialist areas (Fish, interviewed 04/2011).

The one crucial thing to work out is how to walk users or students, through the jumble and how to help them to the good stuff. The role of a specialist library is still very important and it is likely to remain so because only information professionals who know the subject can guide users and ultimately enable them to make informed choices and considerations.

2.2 Blogging the Collections

Right now many public library branches are threatened with closure. Half way through 2011, a bit of Googling reveals that in the London Borough of Hammersmith there are moves to transfer some libraries to local schools, turning them into community centres, leaving the borough with less and less publicly run facilities. This situation is becoming more and more common in the UK. In the Laser Foundation report (2003) *Overdue: How to create a modern public library service*, published by Demos, its author Charles Leadbeater says: 'The library service is sleepwalking to disaster and it needs to wake up to that fact.' (Leadbeater 2003:10). *Overdue*, other reports including most recently Arts Council's *Culture, knowledge and understanding...*, many user surveys and population statistics show a decrease in the proportion of library users especially of ages under 55. In the current fiscal squeeze it is hardly surprising that the role of libraries is questioned. Public services might no longer be able to afford and preserve research material in every single format nor maintain staff expertise involved in collecting, exploiting and maintaining material in special subject areas.

In 2010, in an effort to show that libraries are vital to people and communities and that public perceptions perpetuated by the media do not match the reality of the service and its staff, the DCMS formed the *Future Libraries Programme*:

(http://www.culture.gov.uk/news/media_releases/7379.aspx). More recently, in Spring 2011 the Arts Council published *Achieving Great Art for Everyone*, a report which among other things discusses how best to include museums and libraries in its strategy for the arts in the next 10 years. Both programmes look at how joint working can create efficiencies, and maximize opportunities to deliver high quality, innovative and best practice library services at a time of financial constraint. A good library service must help people enjoy books and reading in whatever format or die – because the service is there for communities and anything that helps people learn about the world and how to improve themselves is surely a very good thing. But no programme can ignore the influence of technology on reading and research habits. We may be on the nursery slopes of e-books and e-learning but new things happen almost by the week. Access to e-books and digitization are still confused areas but libraries can derive strength from sticking together and work in conjunction with publishers, authors and booksellers to offer and showcase e-books to users. One much talked about option is issuing a license for each library with a

set of conditions attached – e.g., users being able to borrow items for free any time they want.

In June 2011, Amazon.com. Inc. announced that sales of the Kindle eclipsed sales of books printed on paper. In the same month, Google and the British Library announced a digital book deal. The agreement enables Internet users to read, search, download and copy thousands of rarely seen texts published between 1,700 and 1,870 and it is a tiny step towards the library's goal of making the bulk of its 14 million books and 1 million periodicals available online by 2020 ("There is still a long way to go" says BL's chief executive, Lynne Brindley.) Peter Barron, Google's European spokesman, said that the company's goal is to make a range of items available online. "Having richer content means people around the world are searching more for it, and that is good for our business."(<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/technology/tech-news/google-and-british-library-announce-digital-book-deal/article2067604/> accessed 04/2011)

Meanwhile, general and specialist libraries are keen to encourage writers, artists, celeb readers and personalities to call in and show their support in these difficult times. There is a dearth of cultural activities, centered on local communities, e.g. all-nighters, World Book Night, acoustic music shows, debates and Q&A and a lot of libraries started blogging about their collections and activities. This is great community outreach which will help and inspire some people to discover and use some libraries.

The truth however, is that the model of a librarian behind a desk where a user approaches and asks a question does no longer hold in the online environment. The library as a big stone building, as a temple to knowledge that *you* have to enter and in which you play by its rules, has totally ceased to exist. When we shift it from a world defined by a scarcity of knowledge to one defined by the – at least perceived - ubiquity of knowledge, the library cannot simply sit back and wait for everyone to come to them. A much more proactive engagement is required and one that takes place largely on third party platforms. We, all of us leave our buildings, physical or virtual and we go out and engage with the world. Whatever library works still exists, happens out there, on YouTube, Flickr.r, Tumblr., Twitter feeds etc where library users already are.

2.3 Defrosting the Collections

Next to all the blogging activity and to the forward-looking British Library's Google agreement, there are collections that have gone in the last ten years: recent local examples are Camden Council who are rumored to have sold their art collection

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-12656222> accessed 04/2011), Hammersmith who put their law collection into store (http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Images/FmCHSLibrarysurvey_tcm21-76873.pdf accessed 04/2011) and K&C who sent their music collection to the Royal College of Music – all as part of dramatic budget cuts (<http://kensington.londoninformer.co.uk/2011/03/council-agrees-blood-bath-budg.html> accessed 04/2011). A few years ago, Westminster Reference Library got rid of EU and Medicine but kept their designated fine art collection. These are all different collections with different fates and reasons for their demise. It is interesting to look at the ones that survive and thrive and to explore the threats that could destroy them and the opportunities such as partnerships (e.g. Universities) that could help them succeed.

Prestigious examples of special collections such as RIBA and the Wellcome Trust, have had high profile developments. Others, such as Westminster Music Library (WML), see themselves as particularly relevant because of their specialized nature. Music is and always has been an expensive commodity to buy or hire, and most importantly, music libraries should be open to the ever changing advances in technology.

Despite such examples, many specialist libraries run the risk of being perceived as sterile research collections that no one knows about and as such as not being relevant to the public at large. The pattern that emerges here is that any collection that is frozen in time and has not been added to, seals its fate in doing so.

3. WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT 'SPECIAL'?

3.1 An Attractive term

In the process of conducting several in-depth interviews, this research came across a variety of definitions of 'special collection', rather than a single, all-encompassing one. The term probably needs more clarifying - in some cases 'special' implies that it does not belong to a library in the traditional sense (i.e. an archive of printed text materials). This could be a Photographic Archive, like the Picture Library at Oxford's Ashmolean, which consists of transparencies and negatives in various formats and media, or the Colour Library at the Royal College of Art. Most librarians agreed that to be 'special', a collection must be dedicated to a specific area of study, knowledge or enjoyment. Specialist collections must contain in-depth, unique or of great interest, encyclopaedic information including rare and/ or valuable items. Given that they hold rare and primary source materials there is a strong argument for their existence and surely the

most important thing special collections can do is provide access to such materials. There is little to no point having rare materials locked away gathering dust and placing them online is not necessarily the best way of providing access. A balance needs to be struck. The physical object and the reality of its material can say something about the item beyond the intended. Having said that, good quality online resources can entice and engage people to visit repositories where they can (hopefully) find and be inspired to other areas of interest. One of the most interesting examples of this is the success of New York Public Library which is at the forefront of innovative online projects and is flourishing, contrary to the floundering general trend. (Madrigal 2011)

'Special' also implies that the collection's materials are not for the use of the public at large. It may also mean that these have special status because of their provenance – if they were donated by the president of the Institution they belong to, for instance – or if they hold some other identity or status which depends upon the way they were acquired. However, any adequate and clear definition should consider not just the materials in the collection but resourcing and staffing issues and what skills are needed beyond subject expertise.

Sonia Hope of Institute of International Visual Arts (INIVA) says that 'Special collection' means that the focus of a collection is subject-specific - as for example, INIVA's Stuart Hall Library which focuses on international visual art or The Women's Library in London which focuses primarily on women's history in the UK. Others define what is in special collections as anything that is rare, valuable or unique. There might well be a scientific definition – but in a way what is attractive about the term is that it covers everything that cannot really be summarized. It is after all, a term that only librarians use. Chances are that members of the public, if asked, could not easily come up with a definite explanation.

Neil Parkinson, Librarian at the Royal College of Art says:

When I introduce new students to the collection I say that what we have is stuff that no other library will have and that's my catchphrase to try and catch their attention – *please don't nod off*, I'm trying to make this as interesting as possible for you. Because everybody likes to think that they're seeing something they can't see anywhere else (Parkinson 2011).

With increasing digitization and mass availability of materials there is a kind of cynicism, seen coming through mainly in younger students and researchers, a sort of presumption

that if things haven't been digitized or cannot be found on Wikipedia they don't really exist. What we are yet to capture is the idea that only a tiny percentage of reading materials have been digitized (as per the small percentage in the British Library's/Google agreement). This is likely to remain the case for many years. There are vast amounts of riveting, paper-based material, still sitting in repositories all around the world and the amount of time and costs involved in large digitization projects is phenomenal.

3.2 A Liberal Archive

'Archive' is a liberal, expanding term – and one that is easily misunderstood. The general public's perception is of a repository of any kind of collection of junk, which is not - or should not be - the case. In the last few years, the Royal College of Art has run a series of student workshops called 'Introduction to Archives' – a useful interdisciplinary exercise for a university library. Students at RCA's Department 21 – a research group which runs events and roundtable discussions – attend sessions on Archives so that they can think about what paper trail they leave behind in their kind of activities and in all the projects they work on. The idea behind this course is to show the documentation of work, find out about what goes into the finished product and to show how things came into being. Library Collections Manager Neil Parkinson who runs the course thinks this is a definite eye-opener:

I show what decisions were taken, what was left out, what was taken in, what was rejected and so on – and that's of interest to anybody who is researching the process as opposed to the end result' (Parkinson 2011).

There is appeal in the idea of unpublished material – 'unpublished' is a term that may sound interesting to the public because it conjures up images of secrecy and confidentiality. If that is often the case, even more often 'unpublished' may consist of a variety of dull memos and minutes of meetings that are utterly tedious, and that were not seen in print because there was no reason to publish them in the first place.

It is possible that special collections can be exploited to engage the public because they are perceived as more curious and because they can provide a source of raw material for research, even in digital form. Browsing is a useful activity but help from specialist staff should always be at hand as questions are asked. Although not necessarily subject experts, library staff at the very least should be able to show users how to look through the catalogue, explain how the classification work or find materials on shelves. Ideally,

Information professionals, familiar with the materials, should be guiding users through the bazaar.

As previously mentioned, the term 'special' means different things to different people and in the case of the Wellcome Trust Library - it is not even considered particularly helpful. The Trust was founded by Henry Wellcome at the end of the 19th century. Wellcome's main interest was to create a museum of history of medicine – broadly based on the concept of mankind's ongoing struggle to maintain health and combat disease. This subject is such an integral part of the whole human experience that soon enough the museum collection became impossibly enormous and unmanageable.

The Trust is the umbrella body – a bio-medical organization that funds medical research in many UK universities and spends a small proportion of its money on medical humanities (medical history and medical ethics), exhibitions and public engagements in science and medicine. Head of Research and Scholarships Richard Aspin exemplified how the term 'special' is open to individual interpretation from each institution:

Special collection is not a term that we use very much in this library – we were unhappy about the term – all our collections are special' (Aspin, 2011).

Further probing revealed that the Wellcome's most important distinction lies between those collections that people can freely browse off a shelf, and those that cannot be consulted without help from a librarian.

3.3 A Physical Archive

Perhaps the library of the future will include a lot of digital content, text and pictures online but people are likely to remain interested in the book as an artifact, as a technology and eventually as a historical curiosity. Users of the St Bride's Institute's Printing Library are still interested in the book as a physical object – in particular, in how books technically came into existence, i.e. how the type is set, how letters are put together and so on. Here the collection is divided between: i. books to be read and, ii. Books to be looked at, often through a magnifying glass.

Some users will have an interest in a specific, narrow field within a very narrow field, e.g. the printing of mathematics or the printing of music – this is a very specialized skill and it calls for a very different technology from the printing of words. When I visited St Bride's in 2011, I saw users consulting material whose focus is so narrow one would despair of their

sanity. This type of material is likely to end up stored in glass cases, in an unchanging state, like a museum object.

It remains to be seen whether all the things that survive and could theoretically be preserved – will be preserved. It is doubtful that we shall have the wherewithal or energy or resources to do it all. Somebody will have to accept the responsibility for exclusion and there will have to be some process of balanced selection. Most of the physical objects – the books – may eventually disappear.

It has been argued that there is nothing intrinsically valuable about a special collection. In all the cases examined here, any philosophy of these distinctions is replaced by practicalities. The definition of special depends on who's using it – what it is special for each user is whatever they are looking for and how they are going to get hold of it. For example, the Wellcome's one and only distinction is 'between materials which people can find without help and those that they need help to access' (Aspin, 2011).

Other distinctions will be found in multi-purpose spaces of small projects such as the Mona Liesa e. V Feminist Library in Leipzig, Germany (<http://monaliesa.leipzigerinnen.de/frauen.html>). The Library started as a project in 1990 – after the fall of Berlin Wall – with some small boxes filled with books and a few shelves. Almost 20 years later, Monaliesa is a non-profit association for women and girls engaging in education, culture and arts who want to research women's issues in politics and society. Similarly, the Colour Reference Library at the Royal College of Art is a sort of special library within the library and one of the largest world collections of materials on the subject of colour. The collection was put together two of the College's alumni at different stages of their life – It's very interdisciplinary. It covers applications, standards, theory and psychology of colour and relationship between colour and the environment – i. e. in hospitals or leisure buildings.

4. ACQUISITION/COLLECTIONS POLICY

4.1 A flexible policy

All the libraries examined in this study have as primary function to support art collections and research. There was overall agreement over adhering to a draft library collection development policy albeit with a high degree of flexibility and discretion. Often the policy needs updating, as since the time it was written the remit of some Libraries expanded. In these cases, over the years there is a need for library teams to adapt policies with regard to each library's artistic programme and to individual institutional aims, objectives and

sometimes, new functions. The picture that emerges is fragmented though all interviewees agreed that an acquisition policy is at the very least, a useful document to use as reference.

A starting point for a collection policy is that somebody must accept the responsibility for exclusion and be able to make the most balanced selection possible. Since it is not possible to have every single book on the shelves, a librarian should have the understanding and experience to create the necessary cross section of choice. In a specialist library there are inevitably going to be priorities – some subjects are absolutely central to the collection thus the library will want to acquire every single book that has ever been produced in that narrow area. Then there are concentric bands around each area which work out to the edge, with each one slightly less exciting than the goal in the middle, until eventually one will fall off the edge of the target and eventually be outside the subject remit of the library.

This could be thought of as an archery target – with a score from 0 to 5, five bands. If it is 0 the subject is not of interest and if it is 5 it is really comprehensive and the library will want every book on it. 4: probably sufficient to sustain good doctoral research, 3: good Masters. 2: 1st degree, 1: good adult collection – the system can be refined further by for example, extending the collection to every book on that subject in English, then on all known languages and so on. When scoring you would also take into account what other libraries have already got – which means there will be some subjects that might be marked as low because library provision of the same will be in other places (i.e. Westminster Reference Library or National Art Library at the V&A).

Having established this as a benchmark, the picture of development or collection policy varies according to each library. Katherine Wodehouse, at the Ashmolean Picture Library confirmed that the library does not have a collections policy as such. This is because the Picture Library does not acquire collections but simply holds the image archive for objects which are in the Ashmolean's collection. When new objects are acquired by the museum then they may be photographed by their Studio to add to the Picture Library but this is usually decided on a case by case since they do not have the resources to photograph every new acquisition. New photography is carried out, again on a case by case basis, for internal museum use and external customers on a rolling basis.

The Women's Library have a Collections Development Policy which is reviewed every

five years. Their latest incarnation is freely available online at

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/aboutthecollections/collectiondevelopment/>

The Tate Library collections have a formalised development policy. Decisions about what material they acquire are discussed as a team in accordance with this policy with final responsibility taken by Library collections Manager.

The NY Public Library has recently taken over archival material from institutions that have been in the process of closing in the past. Staff will look to marry these to their collection specialties, which adhere to their curriculum - for example local theatre collections. During the course of my interview, Daniel DiLandro, Special Collections Librarian at New York Public Library, gave as example, the case of a local theatre that was closing giving its archival collection over to the NYPL. Because this theatre collection came with no staff or funding (though in other examples they tried to fundraise via the collection within the community), the newly acquired materials became somewhat backlogged. Expecting another round of New York state budget cuts, NYPL are now looking to impose a much stricter moratorium on incoming collections. Unless it comes with some funding, it may prove increasingly impossible to store and catalogue archival material. However, as in the example above, it becomes immediately problematic not to assume material if this is in imminent danger of being permanently lost.

The Mona Liesa Feminist Library houses a wide range of literature on the topic of feminism and women studies. Currently, they hold a collection of approximately 19,000 books and 400 journals, academic papers, CDs, DVDs, videos, games and much more – everything from, for and about women. MonaLiesa also run a library for girls. This is a place where young girls are able to browse literature undisturbed – fiction books as well as non-fiction books on topics like “growing up” or “love and sexuality”. Since 2007 they also host the gender library of the Leipzig University Students Union. Surprisingly, they do not refer to a formalized collection development policy even though their stock is continuously growing through systematic purchase of current and historical publications. As previously mentioned, they largely rely on state funding to acquire new materials.

The Wellcome Trust has a Collection Development Policy – though admittedly they do not always do everything according to its rules. Broadly speaking, the Wellcome library acquires material both through purchase and through receiving donations. Material has to be within their collecting theme, namely human/ animal science or medicine – and

depending on how much the Library may desire certain things, the management team might be prepared to pay for it. Materials are acquired sometimes from auctioneers, other times from private individuals. Often however, there are no sufficient resources and once materials arrive, the real challenge is to look after it properly. Richard Aspin, Head of Research at the Wellcome gives an interesting example:

We wanted something very badly – the papers of Francis Creek – and we paid a lot of money for them. After that we were afraid it might be the beginning of a slippery slope but luckily other people haven't come back since asking us for lots of money in exchange for materials - that seems to have been our one exception (Aspin 2011).

The Wellcome's narrow escape might be due to the fact that Science and Medicine have not yet developed a culture of cashing in on archiving. More often, it is political and historical archives that might prompt people to sell papers – as in the case of a family estate – and it is more expected in the latter fields.

Storage is always a problem. Library staff at the Wellcome Institute regularly weeds printed materials – manuscripts and documents - unless they are very rare. Journals are transferred to other premises on a regular basis. In case of unique materials, that do not exist anywhere else in the world, they will strive to find somewhere to store them.

As previously mentioned, it is in the nature of collections that they tend to increase. Librarians must take responsibility of choosing what to add to and what to eliminate – this is a rare skill – throwing things away is much easier – but this tends to be frowned upon – so the only other thing left to do, unless the building undergoes expensive refurbishment, is to rent more and more storage space.

We can never throw enough away to have enough space and we have to rent outside storage which the Wellcome doesn't like very much – but they don't have any other solution – they say we don't want you to have outside storage, why do you have all this stuff? (Aspin 2011)

The Stuart Hall Library at London's INIVA has a formal collection development policy which defines the geographical, chronological and subject scope of the collection. Future collecting priorities are informed by the programming plans which are decided by curatorial staff at INIVA, and also by trends in international visual arts research. The Library also monitors the subject areas that their users are researching.

RIBA's Library Collection Development Policy is a 25 page-document which the institute revised in 2010. The document represents the international interests of the architectural scene and related disciplines, such as interior design and the technical aspect of building. In terms of some of rare items, archives, photographic collections and drawings, RIBA rely on donations – if there is something particularly rare, and often after protracted negotiations - they might bid for it. Here again, space is an issue and a lot of issues are considered before taking on new materials. The two main policy criteria are strategic digitization and strategic collection development – both points are an attempt to shape future collection development, to think about gaps that should be filled and to assess whose archives is worth establishing relationships with.

Most libraries have no massive acquisition budget nor are they in a position to pay a lot of money for something. Much material is often donated to collections but this may not be as good as it sounds. As we have seen, it is a big deal to take on other archives. With books, it may be relatively easy to determine by how much a collection will grow and what resources it is going to take to catalogue them. An archive is a much more complicated beast. Archive materials might range from one or two boxes of someone's papers to hundreds of boxes, ephemera and digital files. It is not uncommon for the libraries in this study to discuss and negotiate with individual institutions whether to take on their archives, then to negotiate for somebody to come and do the cataloguing. This is generally done on a case by case basis. In the case of major acquisitions, most libraries will not immediately say yes, they will tactfully ask details first in order to assess if it is of any interest. Naturally, the more material is acquired, with no sufficient resources to catalogue it, the more difficult it will be to look after the collection properly.

The RCA's own archives were first properly put together in 1980 by the then librarian – Hans Brill. Brill made a case for the library to start collecting and centralizing a lot of documentation – he noticed that the College library did not seem to have any particular reason to hold on to materials nor to eliminate them. In effect, library staff was throwing things out in an ephemeral, 'look forward-don't look back'–approach. Hans Brill thought this was calamitous and he made a case that the library should start managing formally their materials – but by the time he managed to run around each department and gather the remaining papers, a lot of materials had already been got rid of. This resulted in massive gaps within their current archives.

The college officially dates back to 1937. There are various turning points in its history but the earliest items in store are from 1896, so most of the 19th century is missing - which

from the collection's point of view is unsatisfactory as many enquiries about the 19th century have to go unanswered. In addition there will be long gaps followed by periods of material overload. For instance the collection is in possession of several great photos from the 1920s and 30s but there is no documentation to accompany them. There is also a lot of material relating to most of the RCA's degree shows, prospectuses, annual reports, all useful resources for anybody researching the rich history of the College – but Neil Parkinson, RCA's current librarian, finds that he has to run around and badger departments to hand over their departmental publications to him.

The collection also holds tangential archives, papers from ex members of staff who taught at the College for a period of time. An interesting example of this is the archive of Professor Bruce Archer who was Professor of design and research at the RCA for many years and among other things worked on the design for the standard NHS hospital beds. In addition to all this, the collections hold several publications belonging to the College itself and that represent a wonderful research resource – such as a well known students journal called Ark Magazine, which came out in the 1950s and was published through the 1960s and 70s and sold all over the world. There are also small collections of delicate artists' books – apparently very popular with the students who much like them because they really are an excellent interdisciplinary resource – and a random collection of rare books – some of which are too old and fragile and valuable to be in the main library. Last but very much not least, there is the College's Colour Reference Library which was discussed earlier on.

4.2 The cataloguing struggle

It is common for archives from past papers to arrive, stuck randomly in any number of boxes, which makes cataloguing a real struggle. In some cases the quality of the materials makes all manners of cataloguing efforts worthwhile but more often than not, random acquisitions put a strain on the resources of an organization. Neil Parkinson now recognizes the importance of using a formal acquisitions policy for the RCA's special collections. Parkinson himself went through the RCA's basic document and identified a few points which he thought were particularly relevant to whether or not the collection should acquire something. He then took this to the library's committee at the College and they ratified it after a discussion. A formal document of about 20 pages which covers the whole of the library, their Collections Policy is now available on the RCA website.

There are about 2 pages to cover special collections, archives and rare books. As in all cases examined here, each offer is considered on a case-by-case basis but the RCA's guidelines for acceptance of new stock are if: i. it complements the materials they already have without duplicating, ii. there is some connections to the RCA through staff or students, and last but not least, iii. there is enough space.

The policy is worded in such a way so as to look quite precise on paper. This type of document gives an institution the power to tactfully decline when materials are not deemed suitable for the collection. It also allows a bit of flexibility in case of an impulse acquisition, when some item doesn't quite fit the criteria but it feels like the collection would be a lesser one without it.

Trying to decide what to collect is definitely both an art and a science and one must learn to balance the two. For instance, the RCA make a point of saying that they will not pay to acquire material: 'If people want to donate it that's fine but we are not going to pay otherwise' (Parkinson 2011). In some past cases, payments were made where documents were seen as particularly desirable.

This idea no longer appeals to the RCA. They are not alone here, The London School of Economics, another MLA's designated collection, has a policy of never paying to acquire archives. The tradeoff is that if documents are handed over to a library that is happy to have them, the library will look after them and make them available to researchers. If materials are not donated in that spirit, then the library is not likely to be interested.

Some of the libraries mentioned in this paper are prepared to pay for acquisitions but it makes perfect sense for any collection to acquire materials without having to pay for them. Looking after archives costs money – all sorts of expensive materials must be bought, binding must be arranged, archival quality enclosures must be created for photos or other fragile items, archival quality boxes must be purchased, expensive air conditioning must be installed and so on.

There is always likely to be a good home which might be interested in acquiring valuable materials. In those instances when the library must turn down materials, whether for lack of room or some other reason, it may be possible to think of another collection that might have relevance to it as well as more physical space to house it – this should be part of professional ethics.

The main point made here is that large or small, each institution cannot afford not to be scrupulous and basically say yes to everything. This is actually quite an irresponsible thing to do which benefits neither the collections nor the users. If there is no commitment in terms of time, staff, resources or even just the necessary shelving: 'Things might as well carry on sitting in somebody's garage' (Parkinson 2011).

4.3 A Collection to die for

The RCA generally will not take on artwork, particularly if it's by former students rather than College's staff, unless it is by a big name. This may sound somewhat cynical but it is in the library's obvious interest to take on papers that people are actually going to come and use. No organization can afford to invest resources and space to catalogue and display materials, however valuable, if then no one is interested in looking at them.

St Bride's modern collection and most of their more technical materials were mostly acquired through donations. The library actively seeks donations and staff will go as far as networking with people whose archives they are after. Sometimes they will make friends with them and as frankly admitted by the Library Manager: 'practically wait for them to die' (Roche 2011), as in the case of the London Society of Compositors' (the most important union in the printing trade) text books. The Institute does have a written collection policy which dictates that the library should buy within certain parameters, however: 'if somebody is giving us gifts we will stretch the parameters' (Roche 2011). This is another case where decisions are left at staff's discretion.

St Bride's wanted a big central collection to rival the big printing collections of Leipzig and Amsterdam. In the words of their first librarian: The question of whether a book was of value was replaced by the question of whether the book was on the shelves (Roche, 2011) This quote sets the scene for their collection policy. The detail of whether materials are affordable is still of primary importance but since that first librarian wrote those words in 1915, St Bride's collections actively sought some sort of comprehensiveness.

Another one of their aims is to expand the subject coverage of the library which remains amazingly consistent. When comparing the year 1900 to 2000 – not too many subjects have been added to their collection and for the past 120 years the Library maintained an interest in all form of graphic representation. At the time, nobody however seemed to realize that with any archive materials, rare books or any valuable material, it is necessary to separate out storage area from the actual reading room and work space for security and preservation reasons.

5. STORAGE & PREMISES

Even with a relatively small collection, storage and premises are usually the biggest challenge. Ideally libraries' reading areas should be kept separate from storage and digitization rooms - which in an ideal world would be temperature-regulated, possibly a little too chilly to permit lengthy study and research work but comfortable enough to host group visits or workshops with creative arts students and postgraduates.

Where possible, storage rooms should be fitted with metal racking operated by handles that you can roll back and forward - this usually doubles the storage as it holds twice as much. In reality, though provisions are sometimes made for purpose-built rooms, these are not terribly well set up because they go back to ancient developments. Above all, many collections continue to grow and they all sooner or later, will run out of space. Lack of space and resources often means that some materials will end up neglected in corridors, not under lock and key. In such cases, even great resources can become a burden.

In the case of the RCA, the introduction of metal racking would increase security and make more suitable reading space available and staff would be able to lock sections while visitors browse the materials. Increased storage also means that there would be more room to house collection from elsewhere in the college because each department has archives that are currently neglected.

You can't get a more specialist, dye-in-the-wool library than the one at the St Bride Foundation. The Foundation started in 1891 when a charity was set up using City of London money for a cultural institute and - as the original building stood in the centre of the printing trades in Fleet Street - a College of Printing. In late Victorian times, such Institutes were educational but also recreational, supposed to feed the hearts and minds and bodies of the local workers, mainly night watchmen and caretakers. In those days, the whole printing trade and the entire world's press were in Fleet Street, a very intense concentration of trade in a restricted space. The College of Printing was set up as the centre of the book trade and it remained so right up to the 1990s when all of a sudden printers and newspapers all went - almost overnight - moving down to Docklands and other sites.

The St Bride's Library however remains in Fleet Street. It was deliberate policy to make it an all-encompassing library for the school of printing. 3,500 books on printing history found a home there and still form the nucleus of the collection. St Bride's is a significant

example of a very specialized library. Increasingly, people who go to these places will have a very restricted field of interest and need access to unique materials, not just to Institute's special collections but to their archives. At St Bride's they are mostly academics or researchers with a very specific interest in one font or method of binding, at the Wellcome, they will be humanities historians, post-graduate university types who are studying some humanities or social sciences subjects and at the RCA Colour Library, researchers with a narrow interest in an application of a specific colour.

6. FUNDING

Daniel Di Landro, Archivist and Special Collections Librarian at NY Public Library is quite clear on how he stands on funding: I absolutely believe that libraries not only should, but certainly need, regional and nation funding. (DiLandro 2011) The NYPL currently gets funding from the NY regional Library Council to digitize certain materials. Library managers are always looking for larger, national grants to supplement staff and process their special collections, making them more readily accessible.

Main European libraries charge users an annual membership fee but that barely covers certain costs. Inevitably, some libraries will close due to the current economic downturn. The Feminist Library Mona Liesa in Leipzig, charges EUR20 pa. It is a small organization with only one paid member of staff and the rest are volunteers. There is no fundraising strategy as such – the library's own staff does networking with organizations and politicians – but 95% of their funding comes from the state. They have 30,000 books and some shared resources but their e-catalogue is not accessible online. Any books bought come from their small new books budget or they write to publishers and ask for donations. The amount they receive from the state changes every year and they are never sure how much they are going to get from one year to the next. It is thus difficult for them to adopt a long-term strategy. They are currently discussing future plans. According to Library Manager Hella Roessiger, the number of their visitors is dwindling though they have regular visitors to come and network, discuss and debate and conduct live interaction in their two meeting rooms

Ruth Walters, Manager of Westminster Music Library (WML), thinks that core funding for all libraries used by the public should come from the public purse. She says with only the slightest hint of irony that: Funding is a wonderful idea – there should be more of it (Walters, 2011). Most libraries effectively exist on a shoestring and actively seek out sponsorship and funding, sometimes smaller amounts in order to buy individual,

particularly rare books. The WML recently received funding to buy Sibelius, a leading music notation and composition software, which up until now was only available to students from universities and conservatoires. This service is currently freely available to WML's library members who are able to attend taster sessions every Saturday. 'It has proved to be so popular that we are now taking bookings up to a fortnight in advance.' (Walters, 2011)

A report was written in 1994 examining the possibility for a national music library to be established with funding from external organizations: *Towards a Music LIP: A Library and Information Plan for Music in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland* by Susi Woodhouse and Pamela Thompson. Sadly, the whole project faltered due to lack of support and funding. Attached here a few paragraphs about the history behind the report:

The Music Library and Information Plan Written Statement was published in July 1993 after twelve months of intensive work. The project officer, Susi Woodhouse, conducted surveys, interviews, and attended national and regional meetings in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The project was directed by Pam Thompson, with assistance from Royston Brown, information consultant, Malcolm Lewis, President of the branch, and the Music LIP steering group. The report concludes with 53 recommendations for improving music library provision in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. These are currently being followed up by the Music LIP Development Group. The whole project was run on a shoestring budget and so relied heavily on the goodwill, hard work, and dedication of members of the branch and the music profession. The Music LIP Development Group is prioritizing the recommendations, exploring sources of funding, and discussing future plans with the appropriate bodies (IAML, United Kingdom, Report 1993).

The International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres (IAML) has frequently returned to this idea and there have been many discussions to revive it over the years. The current (and most important) priority for IAML is to advise and support its members during these increasingly difficult times of financial cut backs, making sure that as many music collections as possible remain accessible, and that they continue to provide the good services that they offer.

The management at the Royal College of Art have discussed sponsorship – and it is not unimaginable that the Colour Reference Library could one day be sponsored by industry

(Dulux comes to mind). Adopting a relatively new initiative, the Colour Library recently produced a leaflet, designed by two College alumni to explain and illustrate the collection. This is a kind of low cost device that could easily be sponsored by an outside company. It is a useful thing to give away to visitors and it helps promote the library and raise its profile. However, sponsorship is not something these collections actively pursue – there might be more these collections can do in terms of Friends schemes or of encouraging donations.

7. RESOURCE-SHARING

All examples looked at in this study are in favour of sharing resources and eager to learn from other models. The Tate Libraries are currently looking at the New York Art Resources Consortium (NYARC) as a model ([http://nyarc.org/.](http://nyarc.org/)) In the longer term, a likely outcome will be to investigate a variety of collaborations between all DCMS- funded, London art libraries as per the current NLT campaigns to encourage use of general libraries as an aid to reading (<http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/libraries>)

The Tate Library would even consider sharing members of staff: 'though we would have to have the agreement of Directors and Trustees.'(Bramwell, 2011)

The London's Women's Library currently 'share' some of their staff and resources with their wider university colleagues (e.g. London Metropolitan University), vice versa to help with other departments and with projects that require assistance.

The St Bride's Foundation is part of the Distributed National Collection (DNC), a form of collaborative purchasing of printed materials. This type of collaboration might bring clear benefits to the service but – for reasons that this paper is not in a position to consider - it would also create problem. (Genoni 2002)

Smaller collections taken individually such as INIVA – with only a team of two – maintain skeleton staff. In most cases, it is almost impossible to share staffing with other institutions though staff agree that there is always scope for collaborations:

We are a reference library and therefore we do not take part in inter-library loan schemes but we exchange duplicate material and INIVA publications with other library and archive institutions (Hope 2011).

Staff at the New York University Library, maintain partnerships with outside civic and community organizations. In these cases however, they pretty much only store their

records ('which uses, alas, too much of our dwindling space!' DiLandro 2011). In other instances they will also arrange and describe outside materials – albeit to a very basic level. Further, though, as they need more staff but are faced with budget cuts, they might consider employing something like a *travelling* librarian/archivist – that is, someone who may be able to work between college archives and, perhaps, a local museum. In order to do this, the Library might apply to an umbrella organization which funds such initiatives such as the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS), a grant-making federal agency which supports all types of US museums and libraries, but that is, admittedly, a bit of a long shot! (DiLandro 2011)

Despite the attempts outlined above, the NY University Library is a good example of a successful working relationship between educational institution and archives and special collections. These working relationships are one way of keeping the service extremely relevant. The University's special collections are generally unique, relevant to the region, and almost never online. Other state university libraries may maintain electronic databases and circulate books throughout the collections.

The NY University Library make it a priority to publish scope notes regarding their collections to the web; but one major issue that this and other institutions are finding is that, once published, they receive a several-fold increase in requests. Westminster Music Library's increased web presence opened up the library to a much wider audience which created a significant increase in e-mail enquiries. As WML Library Manager says: 'It takes up much of our staff's time to handle email enquiries but it is one way to know that we are being seen as extremely relevant' (Walters, 2011).

Via avocation with their administration, special collections may be seen as truly viable. Perhaps more importantly in times of economic crisis, they may be seen as revenue generating (e.g. via copying and reproduction fees) and as creating fundraising opportunities. It makes absolute sense for a library to publish or otherwise make known what exactly they maintain. Again, this often means a collection-level record in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), a global, not-for-profit library service organization, and in other databases, or in general blog posts, or some scope note that can be published on the Web. It is essential to actively promote material: It generates interest, goodwill, and that elusive institutional prestige. As mentioned, though, it also generates a lot more reference queries – and these can be difficult to handle with limited staffing.

In recent years, Kensington Music Library donated some of their music collection to the Royal College of Music while more materials will most probably be taken on by Westminster Music Library. WML are considered as the back up to the British Library music collections. They regularly receive information from the International Association of Music Libraries UK & Irl (IAML), regarding collections that are at risk or under pressure to reduce their stock, with a view to WML taking material that would otherwise be sold. In the past ten years, WML have taken on large amounts of stock from Barnet, Enfield and Hackney Libraries, and more recently from the BBC Music Library. Unique materials (plus performance sets and other more general stuff) supplied to other libraries, both in the UK and overseas can be shared for inter-library loans.

Another resource, On-line song index – compiled and maintained by WML (<http://www.ebscohost.com/public/music-index>) is accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Staff expertise is also shared to certain extent. Ruth Walters is currently on two IAML working groups: Trade and copyright and Provision of Recorded Music in Libraries. These groups inform other library authorities about new developments, compile papers and submit reports that outline and discuss how music might add to a public library service (e.g. IAML: 2011.)

The RCA collection supports experimenting with the interdisciplinary nature of the College. Students of Textiles, Jewellery, Painting Printmaking and occasionally Industrial Design and Architecture all use the specialist RCA library collections. A lot of students write their dissertation on the subject of colour: they'll practically move in and spend a long time with a lot of the books (Parkinson 2011) which is rewarding for the librarian. It is a source of obvious gratification and professional satisfaction if at the end of the academic year, a student's final work is evidently inspired by texts consulted within the collection and by studies conducted in the RCA library, .

8. ENGAGEMENT WITH AUDIENCE

8.1 Harvey Goldstein Libraries Inc.

Libraries are constantly striving, across all sectors, to broaden access and inspire more people in an attempt to create a role for themselves now and in the future. For the past few years, they have integrated IT/digital resources into their daily functions and into formats of materials. Many, particularly public libraries, have reinvented themselves as local social spaces and run regularly a structured programme of events for sections of the community.

This highlights two possible outcomes:

- i. The Librarian as impresario – by expanding a traditional role, librarians coordinate a festival of cultural events of interest to the local community.
- ii. The Live experience – an engagement with a live experience, which though book/collection-based, creates a relationship between platform and audience, artist and community.

Both outcomes strengthen community's understanding of culture and the arts and explore possibilities for collaboration.

At the St Bride's Foundation's building in Fleet Street, there is a Conference service with meeting rooms that can be used to host anything from The Women's Institute's annual convention to local amateur dramatics' productions. Westminster Reference Library does the same, regularly turning the library floor into a theatre set for a play or stage a live music gig. All these events are usually entirely public and offered free or at low cost. Exhibitions take up limited space or staff time and can have an impact of thousands of people. Local artists are offered a platform from where their work can shine - the library thus becomes an important supporter and catalyst for creative talent in the local community.

All through 2010, INVA's Stuart Hall Library held events to launch its new zine collection, self-publishing and artists books and to launch issues of a journal relating to gallery education. The library also has a monthly reading group. Libraries in other sectors hold events regularly, and make good use of social media as part of their outreach. Many have a dedicated education programme to work with young people.

WML holds orchestral set collections. A commercial hire library may charge in excess of £750 to hire a set of parts for let's say, Haydn's Creation for one month, whereas WML charge £30.00. In the current financial climate when many orchestras (a lot of whom are supported by charities or have very small budgets) would not be able to put on the programmes that they do without such support from public service. Likewise, WML's community events are often attended by children and young people who otherwise might not have the opportunity to engage with classical music.

Special collections librarians benefit from some competence in the basic of promotional tools such as social networks and web page design. Publicity, both web and paper-based

is critical but as in most cases libraries have to work without a marketing budget and leaflets are printed in-house and used for mail shots or to hand out to visiting groups and distribute during membership drives.

8.2 Audience care and development. Start talking to strangers!

Research collections usually have their place in universities or other academic institutions, where the majority of users will know what they are looking for and seek no intervention or other activities. WML and Westminster Reference Library, the latter with its designated fine art collection, started out as the sort of collections geared towards serious academic research. Both these libraries have (and hopefully will continue to have) many unique books, letters, scores and manuscripts for study and research, which are not available anywhere else in the world, and are all now listed on-line. It is the responsibility of a specialist librarian to invest some time and effort in promotion and outreach to enhance the value of the collection, and in so doing acquire a wider audience.

‘Institutions that are willing to accept a special collection and benefit from the prestige of such holdings also acquire a responsibility that extends beyond the mere housing of materials to their preservation and access’ (Bradshaw & Wagner, 2000:529).

It is to be hoped that public institutions will be able to offer a greater opportunity to engage with the collection on a more down to earth level, for those who are not seeking anything other than for example how to learn to play an instrument, how to write a song or a project on street art. While serious academics are still a target market, public special collections should seek to attract broader user groups who traditionally would not think of venturing through the door.

The Mona Liesa Library, as well as a specialist library is keen to describe itself as ‘a meeting place for with and about women’ (Roessiger, 2010). Knowledge and information is freely shared and exchanged with the all-female users. The materials in the collection are as important as the venue which is used for events, meeting place and centre of communication for women of all ages and backgrounds. MonaLiesa aims to give girls, women and men the possibility to deal with female identity through offering different educational events and knowledge. The Association, part of a national feminist network, offers space for creativity and personality-development. Within this network, the association stands up for the elimination of gender discrimination and violence in an active

manner and the library's community engagement plays an important part in disseminating information and encouraging debate. Library staff organize events, use the gallery for exhibitions and so on, all to encourage a deliberate discussion on women's body of knowledge and achievements all over the world.

The Library Management at RIBA, recognizes that engaging with an audience is an important part of what a specialist collection should do. The Library is there primarily to help members with enquiries and the general public knows them less well. The building has physical limitations – 'we don't have the structure and we do need to be quite imaginative' (Fish, 2011). They have an education department and are naturally going down the digital route in order to let professionals and the general public know about what they have to offer. Nowadays, they are keen not to be seen as an exclusive gentlemen's club library. Their main challenge – common to most collections visited – is how to promote themselves more.

There is of course, a drive to think about income and costs. Due to budgetary cuts, high costs and lack of revenue (they do not charge external researchers for instance), the library lost some staff and didn't replace it – they also reduced opening hours and they are currently closed on Thursdays. Not surprisingly, visitors' numbers have gone down.

The RCA offer an astonishingly good facility – they do not charge students to use their photographic service – 'They can never believe it and think that's amazing' (Parkinson 2011). RCA's current Rector, Paul Thompson, spent some time working in the US and came back to the UK with lots of ideas about endowments and sponsorships. The RCA now run an active development office that looks at fundraising and it is a very important part of College life.

Thompson decided to look at possible areas of revenue generation and only selected those that were truly cost effective on a year to year basis. If charging for a certain service creates great and onerous administration that becomes obviously counterproductive and defeats the object. For instance, the RCA will get many genealogical enquiries every year, e.g. requests for graduation photos, which they could conceivably charge people a small amount for. Provided people were prepared to pay this small charge, the effort of collecting payments and processing, sending invoices, making sure they are coded correctly etc would not justify the amount made every year thus would make little or no difference to their budget.

8.3 Collaborations & Partnership

Libraries that have another dimension, either because they run a programme of events or are part of a bigger institution such as Wellcome or RIBA, with a particular theme, such as Medicine or Architecture, are better placed than a general public library, circulating books for lending or a basic reference. Users nowadays can fulfill all these basic functions online. Admittedly there are still users who claim to prefer such exchanges in a physical environment but it is mainly an older generation. Eventually these people will no longer be there to sustain the provision of this service and demand will cease. A large number of general public libraries will probably close their doors forever. The ones who survive will probably end up joining forces as in a district hospital – with one library specializing in music and another in the performing arts. There may be a library with no books in it at all, one which will cover some other function, educational or medical – all this is of course, mere speculation.

In the meantime, good partners and outreach are perceived as important features as they help a service to grow in strength and relevance to the public. As an example of best practice in this, Westminster Music Library established links with the BBC music library, the major music conservatoires and with many other academic music faculties. In theory, sharing knowledge and advice should have a knock on effect. Libraries collections are promoted to students, stock may be offered if it is felt that it might be better suited to another collection, and users are frequently alerted to programming (such as the Proms), changes in syllabus or areas of study, which could see an influx of students to the library.

The Wellcome Trust shares links with PubMedCentral (PMC), a free online archive of scientific and medical journals and they also collaborate with the big national libraries (including the British Library). This is considered essential as it provides access to back files which have no longer financial value for publishers. The Wellcome runs the Library's 'Insights Sessions', free talks which explore various medical subjects drawn from library materials. Visitors are treated to a presentation by a member of staff around a topic, i.e. exotic travels, or women's health through the ages. The audience is made to listen to audio or look at pictures from the collection's own archives though due to conservation issues, no originals are used. Information is disseminated through the Insights' website and through Library blogs.

This kind of community event can be a successful tool of knowledge-sharing. Knowledge of the collection itself is enhanced, staff develops new skills and everybody gets to know the collection materials better:

‘One measure of excellence in museums and libraries is in the degree of their engagement with people, which is critically dependent on the quality of the experiences they offer and the depth and authenticity of those experiences...

..There is a big opportunity for libraries to lead the way in increasing engagement across the cultural sectors’ (Arts Council England, September 2011:9)

This is all very exciting stuff but the danger is that it may also become a one-dimensional experience. If visitors may be inclined to come once to listen to librarian and an archivist talking about a particular subject, should the experience fail to solicit any further interest, audience participation is likely to dwindle never to be kindled again. Yet, it would be interesting to develop this type of event by asking external experts to come in and bring outside and more global perspectives and experiences. There might be a ‘theme of the day’, which if properly promoted might solicit enough interest to a large enough group to come in to participate to debates and interact with an expert/s. Each collection would supply content to the exhibitions and publicize the library holdings through these exercises.

Most of these sessions at present are very small scale because audience numbers are limited either due to lack of specific interest, limited themes, lack of expert staff or simply room facilities. There is plenty more that libraries could cover but so far, little has been achieved.

The Royal Institute of British Architecture’ large collection is costly to manage and to develop. The Institute’s move to its current home at 66 Portland Place coincided with a time when architecture publishing really exploded internationally and the library began to collect international material. Prior to that, RIBA was very much seen as a members’ library for a professional institute. From the 1930s onwards, and certainly post-2nd world war, it became a far more general architecture library, a collection that represented not only British and members interests but also global architecture ones. Today RIBA has one of the largest architectural periodicals collections in Europe if not the world.

RIBA has a complicated membership organization – it gains 6.5m per year through membership. They encourage partnerships and sharing ideas and resources. Taking

advantage of organizations helps digital services but most of these sit outside the academic sector and any institution will have to shout louder and louder to be heard. The Library is involved with every aspect of their events management.

RIBA shares resources in terms of location and materials for exhibitions. There is a small gallery at the V&A, manned by RIBA's own staff, that RIBA use for their own exhibitions. This is as part of their 10-yr old partnership with VAM's Architecture gallery. A lot more material in the V&A architecture gallery belongs to RIBA.

9. OPEN TO ALL

All the people interviewed in this paper agree that ideally, lending collections should be made accessible to as many categories of users as possible and examples were given of a variety of functions on offer. St Bride's organize several exhibitions every year and belong to the Open House initiative (<http://www.londonopenhouse.org/>), when hundreds of great London buildings open their doors to the general public. They have no plans to charge for exhibitions or for provision of research. The Head of St Bride's says that the Institute is: 'like a Village Hall in the middle of London. We are open to the public and always have been and everybody can have access to all materials without any problems' (Roche, 2011). Within constraints of storage and materials, non-specialist researchers, members of the public or students who constitute a huge amount of specialist libraries' core users, use the collection in many different ways. This enables a collection to develop and evolve much more than if was simply a professional library. There would be not much impetus to develop an archive whose materials are consulted by specialists only.

All librarians interviewed in this paper agreed that restriction of access would be the kiss of death. Special collections should be open to all interested users. However, this may be dependent upon the collection in question, its rarity and fragility, the financial and human resources required to manage and to make material available to the public.

The Wellcome Library started more or less as a staff reference library for the museum curators. The Library opened to the public in 1946 and has been in the building in Euston Road since the 1930s. An anecdote mentioned during the Aspin's interview revealed that the Wellcome's first librarian didn't want to open the collection to the public – he could not be persuaded to give up the idea of working in a private library and thus had to be sacked. For a long time, the Library wasn't very well known nor was it used much. Nowadays the tendency is very much for open usage – provided obvious safety measures and basic supervision are implemented.

RIBA, which is the largest collections on architecture in Europe, was set up as a charter of the Royal Architectural Institute in 1834 – the purpose-built Portland Street building they are in at present with their purpose- built library opened a century later (1930s). Currently the Institute Library is open to everyone free of charge – all users have access to their texts on architecture but also their rare book collection, stored away in temperature controlled rooms. Certain materials are on request only. RIBA's own information service addresses many of their users' initial needs and answers their queries, but depending on the type of their research, RIBA's members and professional researchers are likely to use materials in quite a specific way. It is however fortunate that such a truly attractive space as this purpose-built library is freely accessible. As previously mentioned, increased usage can only enrich a collection.

The Library at the RCA accommodates about 300 visitors a year to the special collections – which are open to the public. While this is great in theory, Library Manager Neil Parkinson was quick to point out that, due to limited staff resources, in practice this is tricky to manage. At the current level of demand, one librarian is just about enough to sustain the enquiry service. A minority of students and researchers will know exactly what they are looking for. Most users will have trouble finding the right materials, even knowing exactly what their particular research needs and sometimes they will pay many repeated visits. The average length of time of each visit can be up to between two and three hours. Dealing with individual researchers and assisting that level of enquiry will take up quite a chunk of a librarian's time. Not many libraries can sustain this level of one-to-one service.

10. DIGITIZATION

10.1 The Peanut's Shell

'Even when one is no longer attached to things, it's still something to have been attached to them;...' *Charles Swann* - Marcel Proust, *Cities of the Plain*.

One problem arises when looking at items within special collections - that of quantifying the importance of a physical artifact. How important is it to preserve the essence of an object? This question arises when considering that the intrinsic value of an artifact cannot be replicated in the digital environment because it is tridimensional and because we can access it through our other senses (we can - as yet - neither smell nor touch online).

If asked, most visitors to libraries and museums are likely to say that there is something intangible and symbolic about having a close, proximate relationship with a particular

object – particularly that which might have been handled by some historical person or that bears the handwriting or inscription of somebody or that in some other way speaks of the past or to the human experience. This may not be just about the physical, tri-dimensional of the object nor just about engaging our physical senses with it. It may be something else altogether, a spiritual element perhaps or a value that may be near impossible to articulate, isolate, let alone quantify.

The question of whether there is relevance or added value to a physical object besides its text is a philosophical one. Once the text or intellectual content is extracted from a book – as you would extract the nut from a peanut shell - what value if any, remains for the physical artifact? In the peanut's case, we are left with an empty shell and it is arguable that there is any value in that. This is heightened by the fact that there is still a huge quantity of text and thus of intellectual content of special collections that is not yet accessible online in digital form. Often little or no thought is given to preservation and it is unclear whether materials will be made available in a format that ensures long term access.

It is a real challenge to define whatever it is that we are left with, once the intellectual content of an artifact has been sucked out into the digital sphere. Years from now, technology and resources might provide an answer to this unresolved question. Until that happens we won't really know if there is any residual value in special collections above and beyond the intellectual content. It might never be possible to establish exactly what that value will be.

10.2 How do we digitize Librarians?

As previously mentioned, we know this is increasingly an information culture, yet libraries are feeling irrelevant and moving towards obsolescence against a backdrop of an internet culture of rejection of any form of history. It is worth thinking about the fact that there is something about the relationship between these forces. If collections are simply piles of stuff – archives – we should focus on exactly what is the mission and relevance of their materials and whether and at what cost they should be preserved. And despite the best intentions to update online records to a certain standard, nobody in this research so far has had the time and resources to do so.

Above all, what can we expect from a new generation of users who have grown up in an entirely digital context? How will they be driving library services and the information resources that they provide? What's the right role for library staff in the online

environment? There is immense knowledge and expertise invested in librarians and librarianship as a profession but it is unclear how to map that in a digital context and online social interaction. We hear a lot about digitizing collections but how do we digitize librarians? Blogging, web video series, reality-TV etc all externalize knowledge and put it out there to be consumed freely, in a way that can be sorted, categorized, tagged and aggregated and disseminated through internet channels.

10.3 Digitization, a work-in-progress

Considering knowledge as a consumptive good raises the question of who owns the phenomenon. Should there be internet governance or should portals have no gatekeepers? Should we start archiving the web? How do we preserve our cultural heritage to a future generation of users? Do we have a responsibility to preserve web pages, library blogs, email correspondence?

It will take a while to find answers to these difficult questions. In the meantime, no serious library would contemplate being without a digitization programme of some sort though the picture that emerges is fragmented as each collection is a case in point. Worse than that, many collections that hold unique materials such as archives and manuscripts, do not have the resources to embark on large scale digitizing projects.

The RCA currently digitize key texts for one particular course and make them available on the page for each course's learning environment. These texts are also made available on a central page in the RCA's own intranet that forms a virtual library of all the College's key readings together. It is a clumsy way of moving to e-books but at least it is done under a scanning license – the RCA pay about £5,000 pa for this blanket license. The fee is calculated according to the number of full-time students they have each year. One library Assistant can help with the photocopying but enthusiastic tutors have been known to do it themselves. They will bring ready photocopied text to the librarian to check that the RCA owns the copyright. Rightly owned copies are digitized and stored in a central repository. However, this becomes a rather clumsy process because the Copyright Licensing Agency's current procedure does not allow RCA to build a kind of permanent virtual library. At the end of each academic year, the RCA are forced to erase all digitization. 'It will all become blank again and we start all over again next year so it's a bit like pushing a rock up the hill, we never quite get there' (Parkinson, 2011).

The RCA, like most collections, grows every year. There is a large amount of stuff available that they would normally be able to clear if they had time to go to individual rights

holders. In addition, the Library runs a photographic studio with a full-time photographer. The studio offers a digital photography and duplication service available to all RCA's students who are able to put together a professional portfolio of their work, free of charge. At the end of the year, the photographer will snap comprehensively all the degree shows. The images will be then catalogued by the Librarian and made it available online through something called The Show Gallery

(<http://www.rca.ac.uk/Default.aspx?ContentID=511825>).

This digital image portfolio of students' work enables access to past work and it is freely available to download and to be used as a learning, teaching and reference resource for tutors and students. The service can be considered to act as a special collection within the collection. The photographic record of the students' work is stored on slides dating back to the 1950s. In those early days, students' work was captured on slides in quite an ad hoc way. It did not become more centralized and comprehensive until the late 1970s when the then Librarian, Jan Merton, together with the Head of General Studies, Christopher Frayling, who went on to be the Rector of the College, set up a plan to photograph the students' work methodically from 1979 to 2003. In addition, they scanned a lot of the so called 'Greatest Hits of the RCA' which include student work from David Hockney and Zandra Rhodes up to Alice Temperley, and other illustrious ex students. The College used an in-house digitization programme, with a Nikon Slide Scanner. Staff at the Library selected some of the most interesting images, in consultation with Heads of Dept, and in total, the department is now in possession of over 5,000 digital copies, out of the 30,000 slides which were originally scanned. These are currently stored locally but the RCA plan to make them go live soon. All the images have been loaded to collections' pages through a digital art data site. Essentially, once all the images and all the RCA's metadata have been imported and gone live across all departments – at the moment of writing this it is still on a testing serve – a terrific resource will be made available to the education community. It will remain an in-house resource however as the Library made a conscious decision never to release it as a commercial enterprise site.

There is also The College Collection, which comprises mainly of students' paintings, and work by members of staff and by people who were somehow associated with the College. This particular collection however is not part of the library's remit; it is looked after by a curator based in senior management offices. All the paintings in the College Collection have been photographed in high resolution and those will also become available for education and research. At the time of writing, the RCA is in the process of working

together with their press office to try and find the best way to promoting this unique Collection. Not many art institutions take the trouble and responsibility to compile and store a record of their students' work. These days, all students are perfectly able to self-promote by uploading their own images digitally and at little or no cost. It is quite possible that The RCA is able to do this because it is a relatively small organization. Overall, the College counts fewer than a thousand students, all of them postgraduate which not only means that the number is manageable but also that their work is of a high enough standard and thus likely to be more worthwhile cataloguing. In a library's environment of limited resources, such efforts take precious time, staff and resources away from more basic functions. Not many organizations would take this trouble with the work of undergraduates.

When The College Collection goes live it will be an invaluable resource for any design historian. It is always interesting to be aware of what work comes out of art colleges and to compare how students' work mirrors their subsequent careers – or not as the case may be – at times it may look quite different – as in the case of artists like Orla Kiely. Kiely studied at the RCA and her student's work doesn't look like anything like what she developed in her career. This kind of observation must be extremely valuable to both artists and researchers.

It is important for all collections to think strategically in terms of copyright about what they want to digitize and to plan things around that in terms of staff, materials and length of time needed. Digitizing is a very expensive project and most libraries will have to try to seek outside funding.

Wellcome Images (<http://medphoto.wellcome.ac.uk/>), is the Wellcome's Trust image database. This digitization program relates to a quarter of a million images – mainly digital photographs and images of other graphic content from the library collection. The Wellcome has not digitized many books. The Trust contribute to a collaboration called PubMedCentral (PMC) which digitizes journals of medicine in the UK but in the case of the Wellcome, this is done through an outside company. Most of the Wellcome's digitizing efforts are going to their archives. Due to costs and effort involved this is not done by many collections. Journals are much easier to digitize because they are largely the same size, same – printed – format, to which Optical Character Recognition (OCR) applies and that can be searched. Archives come in all different shape and sizes – say when it is the matter of people's confidential correspondence etc – and in many cases copyright is much trickier to regulate.

RIBA's digitization programme is work in progress – The Library use a resource called Ribapix which, at 50,000 images, is relatively small. A library committee, chaired by members of the profession, meets quarterly and discuss funds for certain value added projects. Cataloguing is a big part of it, rare books and digitizing take second place. RIBA's plan is not entirely formalized and any decision on what materials they want to digitize is ultimately referred to the Institute's chief executive, who has little or no experiences of how libraries work. The main priority at the Wellcome Trust is to fund infrastructure and research – their chief executive now realizes the library is an important factor and there is substantial funding in place. However, the Library's managers try to look strategically at how they can manage a digital library without forgetting the physical collections – which is still considered hugely important – one should not be at the cost of the other.

Digitization does not seem to be the most urgent thing at St Bride's, though the Institute's Library recognizes that there is an obvious place for it. The main argument against a formalized program is - according to their head librarian - that for most of their collection, digitization would be next to completely useless. St Bride's library materials more than any other collection's, are difficult to replicate online.

There is a limit to how our material here could be digitized – and even if we did digitize it, many people would still say: 'I want to *feel* it - they still want to feel the paper (Roche, 2011).

Even if resources were available to digitize all special items, certain physical evidence necessary for research or scholarship - such as illustrations, watermarks, typeface, binding etc - becomes available only upon examination of the original item.

Naturally, digitization holds value in that it allows any collection to be searched faster, and in a minute, provides access to a wealth of information through which patrons and cataloguers would have needed to wade for a whole year, however all the materials the library is most famous for, their samples of printing, samples of new metallic ink that were being introduced in the 1930s and 40s etc, could not be represented on a screen, their metallic nature and embossing would be missing. Digitization of that sort of thing is at the moment a very poor substitute for the real thing. In this case more so than in others perhaps, the feeling is that, however much improvement there will be in future technology, nothing will replace the feel of actual paper, the original – to look at rather than to read -

book. With all the benefits that it brings, technology is likely to complement, rather than entirely replace traditional library practices.



11. CONCLUSION & REFLECTIONS

11.1 Is there a role for a specialist library in the 21st century?

It has been suggested that in a world where information is at everybody's fingertips, traditional notions of library and librarians have reached their sell-by date. Transition to the digital age has revolutionized the way we access information but the core service should be wary of hype. Some people lament the demise of the printed matter while many collections continue to live and breathe. Books may no longer be the only source of knowledge dissemination – but they are still considered a reliable source of knowledge and an artifact of some value, to look at or to hold.

In the future, libraries might retain their archival function only and become mere repositories of disappearing printed material, doomed to sink into a kind of information Limbo. But new roles are being considered, proposed and investigated on how to use a collection and how to define its relationship to users.

Institutions that are willing to accept a special collection and benefit from the prestige of such holdings also acquire a responsibility that extends beyond the mere housing of materials to their preservation and access (Beckley Bradshaw & Wagner 2000:529).

Special collections materials enhance any reference work and contribute greatly to the scholarly and local community for teaching and research, ultimately bringing benefits to all.

Few institutions command the resources or the numbers of people that make regular use of the library service. There is an unlimited public which needs to be guided through the bazaar of discovery channels. By definition, we don't know what there is over the horizon until we get there but it is clear that Digital is not everything yet and that it is still a confused area. These libraries could still have a crucial part to play in the cultural life of a community as generators of impulses, sources of live interaction and debate or in the

words of Professor Robert Usherwood: 'providers of imagination services' (2010, personal communication).

The research here shows that while we wrestle with the same problems, there is agreement between collections on development policy, funding strategy, education and outreach. Increased access and educational outreach increase goodwill and were found to be beneficial in terms of audience development and to aid funding opportunities. The library space is given much consideration because of common problems with storage and lack of physical space.

There is no total consensus between individual voices from the public and institutional voices – the perception is that they are different perspectives. Assumed that access to this vast amount of knowledge will provide some answers – instead of simply raising more and more questions – the best we can do is try to reconcile these two perspectives in today's difficult economic climate, redefine the profession and come out of the current state positioned well to engage and going forward.

11.2 Rethinking the ethics

The ethical question in the dissemination of information concerns the ways in which digitization of printed matter, user-generated content and social networking applications force us to rethink the role of libraries in the 21st century, and how all this creates new challenges to copyright, fair use and civil liberties.

There is a lot of institutional concerns with copyright and with the kind of materials – say, a particular DVD – that Libraries as providers of knowledge, decide what to give access to.

Information specialists are aware that most of the censorship cases that we hear about from professional libraries and information science organizations deal with censorship of print material or internet. Much of this research however is concerned with the implications of the current social and economic context for specialist collections and this study does not raise ethical problems beyond those of freely quoting from legitimate interviews.

APPENDIX 1

Research ethics checklist form

If the answer to the following questions is NO then the project needs to be modified	<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
1 Does the planned project pose only minimal and predictable risks to the researcher (student)?	Yes
2 Does the planned project pose only minimal and predictable risks to other people affected by or participating in the project?	Yes
3 Is the project supervised by a member of academic or research staff of the School?	Yes
If the answer to any of the following questions is YES, you MUST apply to the School Research Ethics Panel for approval (You should seek advice about this from your project supervisor at an early stage)	<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
4 Could the research uncover illegal activities?	No
5 Could the research cause stress or anxiety in the participants?	No
6 Will you be asking questions of a sensitive nature?	No
7 Does the research rely on covert observation of the participants?	No
If the answer to any of the following questions is YES, you MUST apply to the School Research Ethics Panel for approval and your application will be likely to be referred to the University Research Ethics Committee for consideration (You should seek advice about this from your project supervisor at an early stage)	<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
8 Are the research participants under 18?	No
9 Could the participants be classified as vulnerable adults?	No
10 Do the participants have learning difficulties?	No
11 Does the research involve animals?	No
12 Does the project involve pregnant women or women in labour?	No

<p>The following questions must be answered YES, i.e. you MUST COMMIT to satisfy these conditions and have an appropriate plan to ensure they are satisfied</p>	<p><i>Delete as appropriate</i></p>
<p>13 Will you ensure that the participants taking part in the research are fully informed about:</p>	
<p>(a) The procedures affecting them or affecting any information collected about them, including informed about how the data will be used, to whom it will be disclosed, and how long the data will be kept?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>(b) The purpose of the research</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>14 Consent forms from the participants of your research will be necessary if the research aims to gather personal, medical or other sensitive data about them. Will consent be obtained by the participants?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>If YES, provide the consent request form that you will use and indicate who will obtain the consent, how are you intending to arrange for a copy of the signed consent form for the participants, when will they receive it and how long the participants will have between receiving information about the study and giving consent, and when the filled consent request forms will be available for inspection (NOTE: subsequent failure to provide the filled consent request forms will automatically result in withdrawal of any earlier ethical approval of your project):</i></p>	
<p>15 When the individuals have agreed to participate in the research, will it be made clear to them that they may withdraw at any time without any penalty?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>16 Have you made arrangements to ensure that material and/or private information obtained from or about the participating individuals remain confidential?</p>	<p>No</p>

<p><i>If YES, provide details of how the confidentiality of private information collected from participants will be preserved:</i></p>	
<p>17 Will the research be conducted in the participant's home?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>18 Will the data collected be sent or used overseas?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>19 If the research is taking place in the participant's home, or other non-University location, has the safety of the researcher(s) been considered?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><i>If YES, provide details of how the safety of the researcher(s) will be preserved:</i></p>	

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