The Evolving Landscape of Library Leadership in UK Higher Education: Insights and Case Studies

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Introduction

2017 saw a flurry of activity concerning academic library leadership in the UK. The sector's professional body, SCONUL, published a succession of "state of the nation" reports under the aegis of its Leadership Task and Finish Group. Around the same time, Prime Minister Theresa May announced a major review of university funding and student finance in England and Wales in response to concerns over high levels of student debt arising from the current system of university finance (Morgan, 2017). This is a system which has helped fund many new university library buildings in the past decade not to mention subsidising library information resource budgets.

In December, the merger of the three UK higher education (HE) agencies with overlapping responsibilities for developing staff leadership was approved (Higher Education Academy, 2017). These are the Higher Education Academy (HEA), Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE). The HEA and LFHE in particular have helped many librarians progress to senior management roles in the past decade or so, often beyond the confines of the library.

Wider changes to the UK HE regulatory framework for teaching and research also commenced with the formation of the two major regulatory bodies, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Office for Students (OfS). Associated senior appointments

to these organisations followed throughout 2017 (not to mention hints of future policies in various speeches), even if their formal inaugurations were not to be until April 2018. These bodies will shape the future of UK academic libraries in so many different ways whether directly (e.g. setting Open Access funding policy for research publishing) or indirectly (e.g. enforcing the contractual rights of students in course and support provision).

Having led academic libraries in three very different UK institutions since 2011, it would therefore seem an appropriate time for me to reflect personally on my experiences of library leadership at the dawn of a new HE era. After a brief literature review, I therefore present these libraries as case studies for the basis of my reflection in this article. I then use a reflective practitioner methodology in the discussion section to add further detail via consideration of some interwoven themes and I finish with some personal reflections on the future of library leadership.

Literature review

The main SCONUL report is important because it captures rarely-heard UK senior management opinions of their libraries and library directors across a range of institution types. Key findings include that libraries are "seen and not heard" in so far as they are not scoring highly on institutional risk registers or causing problems which require senior management attention. Library leaders are urged to take on additional cross-university projects to improve their status as well as go beyond their safe library walls and parochial concerns when expressing opinions (e.g. concerning learning and teaching matters). In this brave new world of blurred institutional boundaries, it was felt that there would come a point when libraries would no longer need to be lead by professional librarians (Baker & Allden, 2017a).

The second, shorter report (Baker & Allden, 2017b) adopts an international perspective on library leadership, focusing on those UK library leaders who have moved out of the UK to lead libraries abroad. As well as commenting on the usual cultural differences concerning the institutional status of the library in the respective host country, a common emphasis on academic libraries needing to increase their research support activities in order to preserve their futures was noted. Finally, the project provides an up-to-date, thorough and annotated library leadership literature review (Baker & Allden, 2017c).

Also of recent relevance to library leadership is a separate SCONUL study commissioned by their Transformation Group on the future of the academic library in the next decade (Pinfield, Cox, Rutter, & Cox, 2017). Using a survey approach alongside Delphic interviews, the authors uncovered a rich and complex picture which they translate into paradoxes, nexuses and paradigms. Their work nicely complements the Baker & Allden research as it reinforces the latter's warnings of the dangers of institutional insularity and senior management apathy towards library services.

Prior to these studies, the paucity of citations to library and information science (LIS) leadership material in the 21st century even ten years ago has been noted (Hernon & Schwartz, 2008). The point has also been made that the concept of "leadership" did not start to appear in library catalogue subject headings until the 1990s. Nor was there any agreement at that time about what exactly constituted "library leadership" anyway (and its associated skills) despite the launch of leadership training programmes by the likes of the American Library Association, Special Libraries Association and Association for Research Libraries (Mason & Wetherbee, 2004). If anything, "library leadership" seems to have been equated with "library change

management" in the literature or diluted to become "personal leadership". I characterise the tenets of the latter as: any librarian can be a leader regardless of rank in so far as they can strive to lead themselves to perfection in whatever library setup they find themselves.

What is generally missing from the LIS leadership canon is the equivalent of the business autobiographical memoir from former senior librarians reflecting on their careers and providing insight and colour from their leadership experiences, safely retired so as not to offend their former colleagues or employers. Line (2005) does provide one pithy example but deliberately omits detail from his late career senior management roles at the British Library. Even the often frank letters of one of the most famous academic library directors, Philip Larkin, do not dwell on his daily working life when he was in charge of the library at the University of Hull apart from mentions of new building-related stresses (Larkin & Thwaite, 1992). The one rare exception is the self-published memoir of the late Donald Urquhart who founded the National Lending Library of Science and Technology in the UK (which later became the British Library at Boston Spa). Urquhart details the thinking behind decisions both he and others took, often referring back to original committee minutes as evidence, as well as giving his forthright opinions on aspects of librarianship and the role of SCONUL. Noting that he considered himself to be "only" the team captain, it is still a surprise that neither "management" nor "leadership" feature in his own subject index (Urquhart, 1990).

Reflection methodology

Grant's systematic review of the use of reflection in LIS literature over a forty year period is an essential guide for the practitioner (Grant, 2007). Using analytical

reflection and non-analytical reflection categories along a "distant past" and "recent past" timeline, she found a "…gradual yet consistent shift from reminiscence and retrospective accounts of careers…lacking insight into how experiences changed, influenced or informed future practice through to analytical accounts of reflection both '*on*' and '*in*' practice",(Grant, 2007, p. 164).

Reflection after the event (i.e reflection on practice) is the norm in LIS literature as analytical reflection during an event (reflection in practice) requires the keeping of a private reflective journal, blog or diary and a running commentary which is difficult to formally publish as an article. Thankfully, Forrest (2008) provides' a handy overview of various models of reflection for LIS practitioners from which I have chosen a version of Gibbs' reflective cycle model to use in this article (Gibbs, 1988). The six stages in this cycle are:

1. Description (What happened?)

2. Feelings (What were you thinking and feeling?)

3. Evaluation (What was good and bad about the experience?)

4. Analysis (What sense can you make of the situation?)

5. Conclusion (What else could you have done?)

6. Action plan (If it arose again what would you do?)

Faced with a wealth of personal leadership experiences gained across three different institutions, I have decided to concentrate on library strategy development as my reflection topic. Firstly, this is a defining part of any library leader's job description. Secondly, it is the one common leadership task that I have undertaken at all three case study libraries in succession so is an ideal focus for reflecting on my actions over time. Finally, as strategy always looks forward into the future and brings into

play internal and external factors, it is something from which wider implications and lessons can be drawn, neatly fitting into the reflective model. Accordingly, in the next section, I describe the circumstances I inherited at the start of my tenure at each case study library so that the baseline for strategy development at each institution can be better understood.

Case study descriptions

Case study 1: a library supporting a research-intensive institution – London Business School Library (LBSLib)

LBSLib in Spring 2011 was at a strategic crossroads and, arguably, in a state of disarray and decline. At its heyday in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it was the lead part of a converged Library & Information Technology department known as the Information Services Division (ISD). It drove complex institution-wide projects such as the external website and intranet implementations with, for their time, advanced capabilities in authentication and role-based content management. It also pioneered interesting enterprise ventures with external partners in the academic business information sector in an attempt to leverage value from in-house intellectual property (see Dudman, 2005; Hickey, 2008). LBSLib also lead a sector-wide project in business information, the RSLP funded SCoRe project for collaborative UK collection management of company annual reports (see Dwyer, 2007). Last and by no means least, it also had its day job of servicing the library and information needs of a demanding set of postgraduate business students and research faculty.

Delivering all of the above initiatives required a sizeable LIS staff and management contingent for a relatively small institution (Dudman, 2005). When the School was faced with a sudden, dramatic fall in income from its lucrative Executive Education

arm in 2009 (an after-shock from the 2008 stock market crash) and needed to balance its budget quickly, ISD was the inevitable target of the first-ever School compulsory redundancy programme. The department's wide portfolio of non-core activities and a mushrooming resources budget became a millstone overnight.

Senior ISD staff left the institution quickly either by agreement or by early retirement (the Director, Deputy Director and 2 Deputy Heads) but the pain was also felt at the middle and junior levels. The Library team was halved in size from twelve to six staff and now reported to an acting Director of IT pending the appointment of a new leader to a substantially downgraded post.

Case Study 2: a library supporting a teaching-intensive institution – University of West London Library (UWLLib)

As with LBSLib, UWLLib was also at a key point in its history before I arrived in January 2014 but had yet to experience the pain of the axe that was hanging over it. Formerly part of a converged Library, IT and A/V service, it too had experienced a rapid exodus of senior staff but these were unplanned (although perhaps inevitable in light of various structural and interpersonal issues). The opportunity was taken to de-converge the service with the appointment of a new Director of IT in 2012 who was given a restructuring brief but the Library section was left to limp on for nearly a year without an interim or acting Director in place. Other staff vacancies were deliberately left unfilled so that budget savings could be made to help finance other institutional priorities. Relatively small for its size with c.30 posts spread across 3 sites, the majority of Library staff predated the formation of UWL in 1992.

Case study 3: a library supporting a not-for-profit scientific research institute – Rothamsted Research Library (RResLib)

RResLib has only had six Head Librarians in its long history supporting the agricultural research of the Institute since its foundation in 1873. Although it had shifted back and forth in the organisational structure between different groupings of non-Science departments during that period, the Library remained relatively unscathed. Most changes to space and staff numbers occurred after the consolidation of site and departmental libraries in the 1980s (see Wales & Allsopp, 2018). Its core staff of three had remained fixed for some time after its heyday of nine employees. Nonetheless, in Summer 2016, it too was impacted by organisational changes. The Chief Information Officer post to which the Library reported along with the IT Department was abolished after the first and only incumbent of the role resigned. The Library's reporting line was then put under review with the Institute Director taking interim responsibility. The incumbent Head of Library decided to take her retirement at this point.

Discussion

Reflective feelings

Reflecting on my own emotional state at the point of strategy formulation at each of the three case studies described above, it is no surprise that I felt more confident at RRESLib embarking on the exercise than I did at LBSLib, having already developed and implemented two other strategies previously with good feedback received. At LBSLib, I was very cautious and fearful at times as it was not clear what the rules of the strategy game were nor who were the referees (i.e. who would ultimately be approving the strategy) in light of the recent turmoil. I was also fearful about my own job security for the first time in my career as my own manager, the Director of IT, resigned after a conflict with his boss only a couple of weeks after I had started. He

was shortly followed by one of my manager peers for a similar reason, leaving me feeling professionally isolated in my first leadership role. Given the organisational and historical context described above, it did not seem appropriate to set the Library on a path that would increase its budget and scope again. On the other hand, would I have been bolder in seeking answers and floating opinions if my original manager was still in post?

The situation at UWLLib was even more complex and emotionally demanding. Having been told to develop and implement a staff restructuring exercise in my first six months and then ensure the delivery of the new main library building would remain on schedule for Summer 2015, I was conscious that I needed quickly formulate the strategic direction and associated objectives required. But I also had to deliver those major twin goals without the opportunity of getting a strategy discussed, developed and approved beforehand. I was conflicted in that I could not discuss or float my ideas with my own staff as I did not want to prejudice the restructuring process nor did I have my own management team at that point in the process.

In the end, my UWLLib strategy development defaulted to being a bottom-up, iterative process derived from those component parts that I could get approved or implemented along the way. These could be items incorporated as part of the new building programme (e.g. extensive self-service technology implementation) or items based on my analysis of internal data (24/7 opening) or, frankly, ideas copied from peer group libraries (mixed use study space designs and zoning).

At RResLib I was acutely aware that there was a danger that I could take an expedient short-cut approach and try to reapply the same strategic templates that I had used previously at the other case study libraries. Why change a successful

recipe and ignore my own professional instincts? I was also feeling acutely self-conscious about my lack of a scientific background and was irrationally developing a strategy in my mind based around scientific subject enquiries. I tried to address these feelings at the horizon-scanning stage by taking up my Director's suggestion of visiting my equivalent at a similar BBSRC funded institute during my induction period. I used this opportunity to identify best practice and research institute cultural 'norms' whilst testing the validity of my own presuppositions from the university sector when interviewing my peer.

Reflective evaluation

In all three strategies I deliberately incorporated my horizon-scanning findings into a section on sector trends (with a self-assessment of achievement against them). This served various positive ends:

- Demonstration of transparency of purpose

- Testing of ideas from a safe source (peer group)

- Demonstration of effort and professionalism

- Offered senior management a means of prioritising effort against benchmark institutions.

However, on the negative side, the above practice should not hide the fact that there was precious little debate about the end results in all three institutions. This was due to multiple factors:

- The length of time that had elapsed since anything like a LIS strategy had been produced before

- The downgrading of the library's status within each institution

- The low risk attached to library activity in the overall institutional risk assessment

- The comparatively low percentage of institutional expenditure on LIS activity

- The lack of clarity around reporting lines

- The lack of an organisational champion or sponsor

- The lack of external scrutiny

- The absence of user-derived imperatives for change

- The lack of organisational interest

- Implicit trust that the head of the service would know what best to do in any case.

On the other hand, I should not forget that I had the unique opportunity to develop a strategy (including recommendations for associated staff structures etc) at each institution after either a previous library leader had left somewhat hastily and/or alongside the departure of an associated senior institutional manager. There had been no *serious* attempt (or perceived need) previously to make radical changes during the previous library leader's tenure until other factors had accumulated to force the issue. I therefore had free reign in what I decided to do and how I went about it.

Reflective analysis

In this section, I seek to make sense of the situations in which I found myself when formulating my library strategies by discussing two factors that I have identified subsequently as being important across all three case study institutions.

Locational factors

Looking back, it is amazing to consider the extent to which locational (or geographical) factors influenced the strategic evolution of all three case study libraries, both before and during my respective tenures. At UWLLib a decision was taken by the Vice Chancellor's Executive (VCE) before I joined the university to decant and relocate the main library from the St Mary's Rd site in Ealing to an office block on top of Ealing Broadway station some fifteen minutes walk away. This would be an interim measure for two years pending the creation of a new library as part of the main campus redevelopment project. From a strategic point of view, VCE always acknowledged that the institution would "take a hit" in NSS student satisfaction scores during the period of these building works. They believed these scores would then rebound to higher levels once the students experienced the new facilities.

From my point of view, the promise of increased visibility in a new central location compared to an "out of sight, out of mind" temporary location provided a strategic opportunity too good to ignore. For it meant I could cite "student experience" as a justification for requesting additional resource or ask for senior support for library strategic initiatives that hitherto would have been regarded as low priority or unpopular. Key examples of these include sustained investment in 24/7 opening during exam periods or permission to undertake unilateral mass stock withdrawals "to save on removal costs" and release space in the new library for new student textbooks – an exercise resisted by library staff in the past for fear of academic staff protest.

For RResLib, there was no question that changes in the Library's location signified its decreasing institutional importance. It was forced to move out of the first floor of the oldest building at the front of the site in 2013 due to pressure on the Institute from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) to

reduce its overhead costs. RResLib was relocated to a smaller space forming part of the main Stores building that was not on the main thoroughfare for staff or visitors. With such a move required at relatively short notice, a rapid reduction in stock was necessary without the time to consider any implications for future Library strategy. I therefore had to come up with a strategy which would make sense of this status quo – but the strategic direction of travel I chose - *inward facing to support science* was completely different to the one I would have chosen if RResLib had remained in its former prominent location – *outward facing to support visitors.*

Location factors were also significant for the future of LBSLib. The School's decision to acquire the leasehold of the Old Marylebone Town Hall (OMTH) from Westminster Council in 2012 provided a once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire a sizeable amount of real estate for teaching in the vicinity of the School in an already expensive area of London (Bradshaw, 2012). It also required a rethink of its estate strategy and associated co-locations of facilities and services. Not least in the knowledge that English Heritage had indicated that they would look favourably upon a planning application that included reuse of the original public reference library fittings in the old Library Annexe of the OMTH complex as part of a new working library.

From my strategic point of view, there was a trade-off between attracting rare, additional investment in the Library space in a signature building facility against being hidden away "out of sight, out of mind" in an Annexe ten minutes walk from the main site where the faculty were located. Alternatively, I could have made a possible case for remaining in the existing location in the student services centre in Taunton Place. This location was equidistant from the main site and OMTH but would require a temporary decant and a unknown reduction in footprint in the near future as the

gym and leisure facilities needed to expand to meet student demand. I also calculated that staying put would mean a likely five year period of zero investment in Library facilities due to the need to focus capital expenditure on refitting OMTH first which was in very poor condition.

Having been asked at short notice to set out a strategic vision for the Library beyond 2017, I set out four different options with a subtle steer towards the one that moved the Library into OMTH (see Wales, 2014 for a full discussion). But looking back, would I have made the same recommendation again? The answer would have been less clear-cut as yet more locational factors came into play after I left with the School's subsequent expansion westwards into the former teaching facilities of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Staying in a central location whilst capitalising on the subsequent change of reporting line from IT to the new Learning Technology team to better embed the Library's content and training into teaching programmes would have been my revised preference.

User factors (or lack thereof)

The extent to which the library user played a significant role in shaping strategic development in the three case studies is also worth reflecting on, not least because it provides an indication of the organisational culture of the case study institutions.

Only UWLLib was subject to regular, formal and benchmarked user feedback via the library-related question and free-text comments in the UK National Student Survey (NSS). It had been scoring in the lowest sector quartile for at least three years before I joined. For those that were curious and had access to the right SCONUL data, the reasons for the low student scores were evident. In the 2010-2011 academic year alone, UWLLib had the lowest loans per capita amongst SCONUL member

institutions with one of the smallest information resource budgets (SCONUL, 2012). For a teaching-focused university this meant that there were neither sufficient nor current core texts to support reading list provision in courses and so students were accordingly voting with their library cards. As we have heard earlier, the UWL VCE were pinning their hopes on investment in new facilities to mollify students and increase NSS scores but I also believed they had under estimated the state of the collection and the lack of reading list provision. A fortuitous combination of events I engineered succeeded in raising the issue up the agenda – the unilateral stock withdrawal meant that the new library shelves were noticeably bare when the VCE did their first informal tour and a sudden operating budget freeze forced some creative accountancy to release funds for long promised new book purchases. The net result of my diverse strategic efforts was a 13% increase in the NSS Library satisfaction score for the reporting year during which the new library opened.

A different set of user factors were in play at LBSLib. Data from the annual EBSLG membership survey showed that it continued to be the largest spender of its European business school library peers on business information even after its restructuring. However, the majority of this expenditure was not aimed at its student customers. As a postgraduate institution, LBS did not participate in the NSS and the various business school rankings which performed an equivalent function did not comprise any scoring element vaguely connected with library resources. I even discovered that an annual Operations customer feedback survey was undertaken with various library service facets for scoring but no management attention was given to its results nor did they form part of any performance assessment. Crucially, LBS students were provided with all they needed for course materials as key course textbooks and case studies were bought for them, reducing their expectation of

Library provision. Indeed, I was told by one of the Student Association representatives that the holy trinity of library provision for LBS's postgraduate students was "good wifi, coffee and a place to study 24/7". These were in place already by the mid 1990s with the opening of the Taunton Place Student Centre explaining why student feedback was not a significant factor for LBSLib. Library information spend was therefore primarily supporting faculty research to the point that it was referenced in the Research Environment section of the School's REF submission as a unique feature. My strategy development had to recognise that fact.

As for RRESLib, there was neither a tradition nor expectation of continuous user evaluation, perhaps a reflection of the scientific culture of its institution and also of the traditional "seen and not heard" expectations of former government or civil service support departments. There was a traditional view of what the service should do, bound up (sic) in its print collections, reinforced by the long years service of library and scientific staff with little chance of innovation from new blood. When the first customer survey was carried out in the Summer before I joined, it was no surprise to learn that most staff were satisfied with what the Library offered with only tentative suggestions offered for additional electronic resources and silent study facilities. There was no mention, for example, of removing the need to manually write out loan slips to borrow items or register multiple times to use different library services. This, of course, reflects my own biases and preconceptions of what 'ought to be' important and perhaps underestimates the strength in depth of the collections' ability to support literature reviews. Nonetheless, I would have expected more user challenges from an institute renowned for its ability to innovate in various disciplines through the application of new technologies (especially applied computing in statistics).

Reflective conclusion

One aspect that I neglected at all three institutions was involving LIS staff in my strategy development and thereby achieving better buy-in to the eventual outcome. There is no doubt that, at UWLLib, I did not think there was enough time to undertake this properly. I was also undoubtedly of the arrogant opinion that strategic development was what I was paid to do whilst my staff ensured the library service kept operating. Given what my staff had been through at UWLLib and LBSLib in terms of negative experiences, I also did not believe them to be capable of thinking positively or imaginatively about the future at that point in their careers. Nor did I consider them to be sufficiently cognizant of the wider institutional contexts or external trends, based on the interactions I had had with them. The majority of staff that I inherited at all three case study libraries had not worked at other institutions for some time, if at all, nor had engaged with professional peer groups/networks, whether through lack of management encouragement or self-motivation. There was thus no natural influx of ideas from experiencing other ways of working at other institutions. I was also very wary of certain dominant staff members (whether through personality, attitude or status) negatively influencing the outcome of any strategy development exercise. Finally, library staff are generally very aware of "presentational spin" and I felt they would have looked cynically at any half-hearted attempt on my part to involve them in what may have come across as a done deal in terms of the strategic priorities under consideration.

Reflective action plan

The following reflections address the final 'action plan' component of the Gibbs' model, akin to "lessons learned". These I have reframed as recommendations to my future self if I were faced with the same situations again.

1) The best time to initiate a change of service title or job title to reflect new strategic priorities is within the first six months of starting in the role – if nothing else it puts a marker down with the institutions' senior team that the leader is serious about initiating change and also sends the same message to the library staff.

2) Although an indication of cost or a provisional budget is often expected to accompany a new library strategy, this does not mean that it will be incorporated, honoured or remembered at the time of the next library budget setting. In some ways, budget setting is a leadership ritual or rite of passage.

3) Patience is needed when recommending changes to a library service's reporting line within the wider institutional structure as part of ta library strategy. Opportunities may only arise when key senior people leave or join the organisation and their portfolios reviewed. Build alliances in the meantime ready for the opportunity and then make direct representations at the appropriate time, drawing on the strategy as evidence.

4) Library metrics and key performance indicators are a double-edged sword and perhaps should be omitted from the strategy and considered separately. Leaving aside the amount of man hours they require to collate and analyse, they can help bring change in a teaching or customer-focused institution if there has been a period of neglect or decline. But in a complex research-intensive institution, the same metrics will carry less weight due to the focus

on grant income and peer-group indicators for which library activity is tangential. Even value for money indicators evidencing good budget management and high usage per user capita when defending budgets may merely result in a shrug of the shoulders from the purse holders who expect such things as a matter of course from their leaders.

5) Staff restructures that are required to deliver a new strategy need both HR department and senior university management support *in public and in private*: if one of these pillars is missing then the exercise is likely to fail

6) Library strategies normally adopt the timescales of any wider institutional strategies and often end up being three to five year plans. In reality, the fast moving nature of business and "real" life mean that they are in fact best treated as one to two year plans in all but name, especially as they have to fit into annual institutional planning and budget cycles. This means there needs to be a good balance of inspirational aims and pragmatic achievable ones in order to demonstrate progress whilst acknowledging loftier ideals.

Conclusions

In this final section, I refer back to some of the key findings from the SCONUL interviews with university senior managers (Baker & Allden, 2017a). It is my view that the organisational boundaries around academic libraries' activities have already blurred to search extent that we have effectively become "academic middleware": anticipating, bridging and filling the operational, service and knowledge gaps between different disciplines, departments and customer groups. However, this has led to us being "jack of all trades, masters of none" which is not necessarily a good thing for our profession in the long term in spite of the encouragement of our bosses to spread our wings. Any major innovation or influence in the last decade or so has

been developed outside of the library profession, usually from technology or publishing partners, funders or policy makers. These two aspects taken together are leading to the value and contribution of librarianship as a discipline being less easy to see, define and measure but much easier to be taken for granted or ignored.

The prevalence of this type of interfacing librarian role interfacing between other institutional specialists also explains why traditional library roles such as subject and system librarians are becoming harder to fill (and justify to management). At a senior level it explains why the convergence pendulum has swung back in libraries favour with Directors of Libraries increasingly being expected to take on management of other front-facing support services (but not IT) as they seek to create seamless service provision across traditional departmental boundaries. This change is reflected in our library leader job titles with the word Library dropping out and variants of Director or Associate Pro Vice Chancellor creeping in along with a greater emphasis on softer transferable skills rather than traditional more library-centric skills. And so it follows that we are nearly at the point when a library qualification is not a prerequisite for a library leadership role as hinted at in Baker & Allden's report.

This evolution at the top of the library tree has already impacted senior library management team roles with the traditional Deputy Librarian role becoming extinct in the UK (except in the really big federal library systems of Oxford and Cambridge) in favour of a downgraded head of service role. This change is important because it has also led to a reduction in pay for senior library roles compared to our professional peer groups and which, in certain areas of the UK, limits the potential applicants for vacancies created from retirement or restructuring.

One positive from this emerging state of affairs is that promotion from within becomes easier if there are flatter structures with less role specialisation. However, that is presuming that there is a form of succession planning in place in every institution with a pipeline of ambitious librarians to draws from. As I have found from my own experiences in my case study libraries, so often that is not the case. Promotion defaults to the person who has served the longest or whoever happens to be the last senior member of staff left after restructuring. Such people have rarely gained vital experience elsewhere or had the relevant training and rarely feeling empowered to make substantive changes.

Worse still, short term financial strategies from above tend to kick in to balance the pay budget whenever there is an absence of library leadership. Replacement or vacant roles are often downgraded or underplayed as a result. This was the case for all three of the leadership roles advertised at my case study libraries before I was able to make the case for regrades. The point I wish to make here is that this state of affairs undermines already devalued posts and perhaps contributes to the overall decline in status of the respective library services in the eyes of senior managers. An incoming library leader of the future could therefore be forgiven for thinking that they are being asked to manage their services' graceful decline. However, thankfully that is not the case and I should remember my own words on the future of libraries in yet another work by Baker:

I think the future of university libraries is fairly secure: they will continue to offer an evolving and vital 'third space' demanded by students; they will continue to develop virtual collections and services to researchers…and there will be more collaboration between institutions around physical collection storage and access…Ultimately,

library skills will always be needed in some form but the job titles and organisational entities requiring them will continue to change. (Evans & Baker, 2017, p.19)

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