

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AND EMBEDDED LIBRARIANSHIP: RECONSTRUCTING LIBRARIANS' ROLES FOR STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

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BACKGROUND

Higher education landscape

- Politics of access
- Underfunding
- Expectations of increased enrolments
- Demand for prioritisation & alignment
- Accountability for resources allocation

Academic library landscape

- Technologies
- HE pedagogy
- User behaviours, needs & expectations
- Areas of specialisation
- New roles

Rhodes University Library, 2010-2015

- A new building
- Faculty Library model
- New structure
- New JPs for new posts
- Changed leadership
- Strategic plan, 2013-2015

FOCUS

An analysis of how the role of librarians is constructed within the RUL Strategic Plan (2013-2015) and related institutional documents, and the prevalence of embedded librarianship in teaching, learning and research.



Strategy
determines
practice

Involvement of
librarians in
teaching, learning
and research

Prevailing
elements of
embedded
librarianship

Provision in the strategic plan
for appropriate skills and
competencies of staff

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic planning and academic libraries

“A systematic process of envisioning a desired future and translating this vision into broadly defined goals or objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve them”
(Robert and Woods, 2012:10)

Integrated and collaborative approach to the strategic, financial, functional and physical aspects of the university (den Heijer, 2012)

Good management practice

a library's future, its conditions, changed circumstances, improved efficiencies, services, practice models and sustainability

Value proposition

Alignment

Focus on user orientation

Agile, open and responsive to change

Advocacy

Embedded librarianship: redefining academic librarianship

“Providing specialised services, relationship building with faculty/academics/researchers, strong or specialised knowledge of the user group and the delivery of highly sophisticated, value-added services to specific user groups”

Shumaker and Talley (2009)

Embedded librarian

A professional who is focused “on the needs of one or more specific groups, building relationships with these groups, developing a deep understanding of their work, and providing information services that are highly customized and targeted to their greatest needs”

Shumaker and Talley (2009)

Proactive, anticipatory, dynamic and specialised role

Co-responsible for the success or achievement of the community's goals and objectives

Embedding in teaching, learning and research

“...as the nature of research within our institutions change, so must the role of the library in supporting research... As research activities evolve, research support must evolve with it.” (Auckland,2012:2)

- Teaching and learning
 - *Department*
 - *Learning management system*
 - *Information Literacy modules*
 - *Undergraduate research*
 - *Via social media*
- Research
 - *Perceptions*
 - *Embedded Librarians in research*
 - To meaningfully engage towards fostering close coordination and collaboration

From liaison to embedded librarian

Liaison librarianship
1970s

Collection development and information services

Integration in curricular instruction activities

DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN LIAISON AND EMBEDDED LIBRARIANSHIP

Liaison Librarianship	Embedded Librarianship
• Responsive	• Anticipatory/proactive
• One-on-One individual interaction	• Team/ collaboration mind-set
• Standardised	• Customised
• Single transactions	• Project based
• Defined services	• Partnerships and collaborations

Embedded activities (EA) in teaching, learning and research

Department	Learning Management System	Information Literacy	Undergraduate Research	Social Media	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course design collaboration • Hours in the department • Visit the department • Integration in the daily activities • Attend department activities, meetings • Serve on departmental committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded reference • Access to course syllabus, materials and class discussion boards • Course level interaction including promotion and use of LibGuides, Ask-a-Librarian • LMS Course design collaboration • Partnerships with eLearning, Information Technology and instructional designers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IL Instruction is embedded in assignment-based courses • Collaboration with course instructors for effective IL integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to course syllabus, assignments and course materials • Being a regular presence in the classroom • Providing appropriate training in the use of relevant resources • Embedding tools such as LibGuides on course pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of social media for communication with students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in the research process • Data management and curation • Scholarly communications • Dissemination of research outputs • Embed IL in the research team • Critical engagement with a researcher or research team

Attributes of liaison and embedded librarians

Liaison librarians

- User-focus within the library
- Located within the library
- Transactional
- Single interface between the user and the library
- Predominantly generalists with subject librarians occupying senior positions
- Library supervisor or manager
- Reliant on library skills
- General collection development and management
- General library induction and user education in the efficient use of library resources
- Built on a need for service delivery

Embedded Librarians

- Focused/defined user groups or community
- Located in user spaces beyond the library
- Provide targeted value-add services
- Member of a team
- Specialists or experts in subject knowledge; new technologies or research
- Non-library supervisor or team leader
- Reliant on both subject knowledge, library skills and new technologies
- Strong correlation between course content and collection analysis and synthesis
- Contextual and subject specific
- Built on trusted relations and advice towards partnerships

Both ensure that services are directed towards fulfilling current and changing user needs albeit in different settings.

Competencies and skills

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continuing professional involvement and development through research and publication; ■ Broaden their knowledge and understanding of research processes, needs, environments and resources; ■ Willingness to acquire or increase subject knowledge; ■ Creativity and innovative thinking; ■ Interpersonal and relationship building skills; ■ Advanced technical expertise and knowledge of new technologies; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advanced communication and presentation skills; ■ Marketing and promotion skills; ■ New programme design/ development skills; ■ Understand team dynamics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>roles and responsibilities</i>, - <i>ability to collaborate or work independently within a team</i>; ■ Able to adapt to traditional and non-traditional settings, and the capacity to respond to changing needs and priorities. |
|--|---|

Competencies and skills: Research support

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and understand the research landscape, policies, funding structures and the research cycle • Advanced information discovery • Advise on the use of bibliographic management tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>citing and referencing protocols; author rights, copyright legislation, intellectual property rights, plagiarism and standards</i> • Data Curation and Management • Digital Repository development and management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly communications - promote current trends in research publication and dissemination; facilitate open access and open publishing practices and protocols • Promote new technologies for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>added value within the research environment</i> • <i>communication, collaboration and visibility</i> • Use of altmetrics, bibliometric tools and citation analysis for research impact and visibility • The ability to advise on international metadata schemas and standards, and the application thereof |
|---|--|

Themes and sub-themes

Organisational change

- Strategic management
- Alignment with institutional priorities
- Leadership
- Organisational culture

Roles and perceptions of roles

- Role of the library
- Role of the librarian

Relationship and collaboration

- Relationship between the University and Library
- Relationship between librarians and academics/ researchers
- Relationship between librarians and students
- Strategic collaborations

Elements of Practice: LL & EL

- Undergraduate support
- Teaching/ academic support
- Research support

Skills and competencies

- Learning organisation and culture
- Training and development aligned to institutional strategies/ priorities

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Research design and approach

- Empirical qualitative study

Methodology

- Single case study – real world context
- Diachronic approach – how and why over time change may have happened

Data collection method and analysis

- Document analysis - “how the reality under study is documented” (Flick, 2014)
- Thematic analysis

Applicable theory

- Social systems theory
- Diffusion of innovation theory

DATA-SETS

- *Rhodes University Library Strategic Plan (2013-2015)*
- *Rhodes University Library: Divisional Priorities 2011-2012*
- *Rhodes University Library Annual Reports*
- *Rhodes University Annual Research Reports*
- *Rhodes University Library Job Profiles*

- Policy, progress and technical documents
- Contextualized RUL within its own reality and that of the University

- Selection process (Gray, 2014):
 - *Define the focus of the research*
 - *Decide on what kind of records are appropriate to the study*
 - *Create a data list of the sources most appropriate to the research focus*
 - *Evaluate the data set against the following:*
 - What was the original purpose for the data to be collected?
 - What kind of data are they, and how were they collected? Who collected the data?
 - When was the data collected?

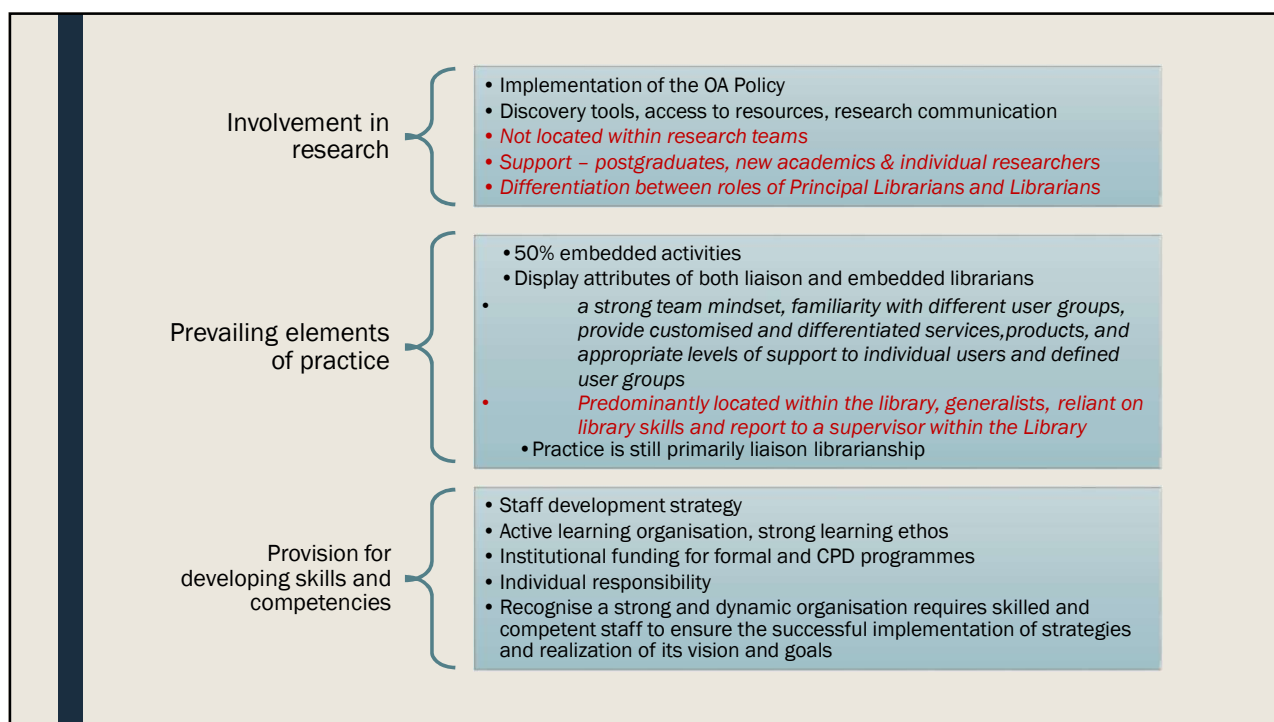
FINDINGS

Strategy and practice

- Strategic management mindset
- Clarity of purpose, role and value proposition
- Position the Library as a partner
- Strategic alignment and practice
- Redefined organisational culture

Involvement in teaching and learning

- 2011-2015 – consolidated practice as FL librarians
- Mindset shift towards their role, alignment and responsiveness to faculty needs
- Differentiated and customised services, products and appropriate levels of support to individual users and defined user groups
- Integrated in curricular instruction and academic support
- **Defined boundaries and hierarchies**
- **Lack of internal sharing and information exchange**
- **Varying levels of engagement by librarians**
- **Barriers to building relationships with academic departments and individual academics:**
 - *length of service, diverse environments, historical hierarchical relationships, perceptions of their roles and communication barriers exacerbated by a lack of confidence, limited subject knowledge, limited knowledge of relevant available resources, and an inability to work collaboratively*

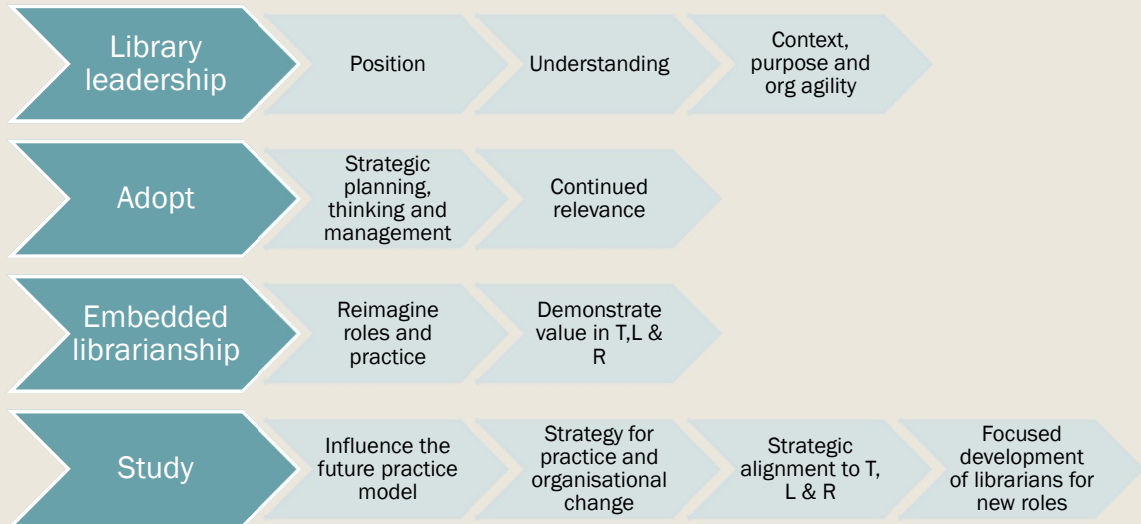


RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Research librarianship** to be addressed in a more strategic and focused way for greater embeddedness;
- **Measure the depth** of embedded practice and its effectiveness;
- In the absence of an institutional performance management system, **design an internal framework**
 - *job performance,*
 - *professional knowledge, abilities and skills,*
 - *professional contributions, and*
 - *professional qualities could serve to measure and evaluate librarian's knowledge, abilities and skills so that levels of professionalism and stature may be elevated (Hirshon, 2012);*

- A further **review** of Librarian: Faculty Liaison **job profile**
 - *to reflect changes in academic librarianship and new skills;*
- **Marketing Strategy** review
 - *greater awareness of the **role of the librarian** in teaching, learning and research;*
- **Skills audit** to determine specialised training needs
 - *ICTs in an educational environment, principles of blended learning, communication and presentation skills towards greater confidence and professional growth;*
- Adopt a **project management mindset**
 - *to expose librarians to the concepts of collaboration, knowledge and skills sharing.*

CONCLUSION



To be an embedded librarian or to embrace embedded librarianship, as a practice, is a bold strategic step towards imprinting a demonstrated value-added 21st century leadership role for the academic library and librarian in the academic project.

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