



Where ALIA's Research Committee brings you news from the world of library and information services research.

### The future of research libraries: lost in the clouds?

*Given the phenomenal growth in the variety of information resources and changes in the practice of research, is there a future for research libraries as we know them? In this review of the landscape Dan Hazen identifies and analyses the factors impacting on research libraries.*

Hazen begins from the premise that research libraries may differ in size, style and services but until recently they had one thing in common and that was a primary focus on collections. His paper covers a comprehensive list of current challenges facing research libraries and posits some possible actions that can be taken to overcome them.

Hazen's paper will be of most interest to those working in academic or other research institutions, however much of

In the predigital days research libraries concentrated on collection building in narrowly defined spheres of knowledge; their status and performance were judged on the degree of depth and breadth of their collections in specific niche areas. Digitisation has changed this – information is abundant and ubiquitous and no longer contained by physical boundaries. Likewise, scholarly communications have been altered irrevocably by the internet. Barriers to participation in scholarship have broken down, meaning anonymity of authorship is easy; reliability, credibility and accountability are all questionable. The internet has no hierarchy and results are decontextualised; search results appear equal whatever the quality. The classification and cataloguing systems, bibliographies and taxonomies

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what he says regarding the changing nature of information resources and accessibility applies across all sectors. Hazen writes clearly and articulates very well phenomena that readers may be aware of to some degree but have never quite grasped. This would be an excellent article to read if you are about to have an interview for a position in a research library as it gives such a good overview of the current climate.

traditionally applied by librarians to printed content have not translated to the web where the keyword search rules.

Selection and collection building have previously been key roles for librarians working in research communities. Patron-driven acquisition and the purchase of large bundled journal packages lessen the efficacy of these activities and efface the work librarians do in providing access to materials.

### From our collection

Hazen, Dan. 2011 "Lost in the Cloud: Research Library Collections and Community in the Digital Age." *Library Resources & Technical Services* no. 55 (4):195-204.

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So what can research librarians do to maintain their role and identity in the digital environment? Hazen provides a range of suggestions for redressing the balance; open access may overthrow the dominant subscription model, collection cooperation can ease financial pressures and less focus on collections means more room to work on services.

Hazen sees an uncertain future for research libraries but certainly gives the reader a comprehensive picture of the current environment and a range of options for the way forward.

You can read the full article via the ALIA online journals at **[www.alia.org.au/onlineLISresources](http://www.alia.org.au/onlineLISresources)**.

Dr Diana Hodge  
Manager of Academic Library Services, Education Arts and Social Sciences, University of South Australia  
[diana.hodge@unisa.edu.au](mailto:diana.hodge@unisa.edu.au)