**Description**

# The Coming "Biblioclasm"?

Academic librarians facing the rapid onslaught of digitization of their collections could be forgiven for turning Luddite and comparing the trend to the burning of the scrolls in Alexandria. Matthew Battles, in his book *Libraries: An Unquiet History*, referred to the demise of library systems in history as "biblioclasms."

While foregoing print copies in favor of electronic copies may seem iconoclastic in its intent, the increased availability and functionality of technology offers academic libraries the opportunity to achieve even greater levels of customer service for their faculty and students.

# A New Definition of Collection Management

The days of a library's reputation being driven by historical documents, bequeathed correspondence from authors and historians, and scrupulously compiled anthologies are coming to an end. Today, and for the foreseeable future, libraries are paying as much attention to digital resources as they are to their printed collections. This trend, at least in its nascent stages, has not necessarily been a good thing.

The rapid arrival of database aggregators has facilitated the preference for quantity over quality, so that research students have immediate access to tens of thousand of journal articles but are left with a sense of total bewilderment as to how they should navigate these vast oceans of data.

# A New Service Model

There is no doubt that flexibility of access to library materials on a variety of devices—laptops, tablets, phones—has been a boon for students looking to study in less austere surroundings than a cubicle in a cavernous reading hall. However, ease of access does not automatically equate to ease of use, and so research librarians can anticipate a more collaborative role through detailed research consultations in supporting both faculty and students.

Availability of materials will take a back seat to expert guidance on which data to pursue, in which database, and in what priority. Expert assistance in separating peer-reviewed from predatory journal material will add more value to student success than ever before.

# Re-orientation not Redundancy

From a financial perspective, if smaller print collections mean fewer books on less shelf space, the obvious question to ask is what happens to all of that square footage? While other departments may jump at the chance to expand their territories, a smaller physical library should not be treated as a given. Remote access to digital content doesn't automatically negate the need for technology access points available 24/7 for students wanting to get away from noisy dorm rooms or noisy shared

apartments. In addition, team or group projects require collaboration space, even if every member brings a laptop. New and improved service models will mean increased staffing for expert researchers, more service areas to support the increased demand for extensive research consultations. The future of academic libraries will be about re-orientation rather than redundancy.

## Category

1. Career Corner
2. PhDs & Postdocs

**Date Created**
2015/11/09
**Author**
daveishan