

Gazette Supplement



Topic for Discussion: the libraries and their future

The following is the text of the Discussion in Congregation at 2 pm on 13 November on the topic of the libraries and their future.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: The business before Congregation is the presentation of a topic for discussion on the subject of the libraries and their future. Please be seated.

The topic for today's discussion will be the libraries and their future. Members of Congregation may be aware from the Congregation webpage that a resolution concerning the libraries was received by the Registrar on 6 July 2012. As indicated in the briefing note of the Council meeting of 9 July, it had been planned to put the resolution on the agenda of the Congregation meeting of 16 October, week two. However, following discussion with the representatives acting on behalf of the signatories, and subsequently at Council, it was agreed that the proposed debate should be replaced by a Congregation Discussion on the topic of the libraries and their future. As a consequence of this agreement the resolution received on 6 July 2012 shall lapse.

In accordance with the regulation governing topics for discussion, no vote will be taken at this meeting but Council will be required to give consideration to the remarks made and will do so at Council's meeting on 26 November. A transcript of today's meeting will appear as a *Gazette* supplement as soon as possible. I hope this will appear with the 22 November *Gazette*. It will also appear on the University website prior to that. The procedure for today's discussion will be as follows: I shall ask Professor Ian Walmsley, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Academic Services and University Collections, to introduce the discussion and give an overview of the matters for consideration. The topic will then be opened to the house. At the end of the discussion I

shall ask Professor Walmsley to make any final points. I intend to close this afternoon's meeting at about half-past four. Please could speakers come forward and speak into the microphone, first giving their name and college or department. Speakers from the floor of the house are asked to follow the usual convention of not speaking for more than five minutes. Some of our speakers will no doubt be familiar with the device positioned to the side of the lectern, but as a reminder this anti-loquutur device has green, amber and red lights to help speakers with the timing of their speeches. The lights will change from green to amber once four minutes have elapsed, at which points speakers are asked to begin to wind up their remarks. The amber light will remain on for a further 55 seconds, after which it will be replaced by the red light leaving speakers just a few seconds to conclude their remarks. I shall have to ask speakers to bring their remarks to an end if these extend beyond the five minutes.

A number of members of Congregation have indicated a wish to speak today and I will endeavour to call them all but I cannot guarantee that I will be able to do so. Priority will be given to those who have indicated in advance that they wish to speak and I would ask that additional speakers rise from their seats at the end to indicate their wish to speak but only if they have new points to add which have not already been raised by other speakers.

In accordance with health and safety guidelines, the stenographer who is helping us to transcribe today's proceedings is entitled to a break after an hour and a half. Therefore, if speeches are still being made at 3.30, I shall call for a five-minute break. I would be grateful if any speaker who uses a written text would afterwards provide a copy of that text to Mr Burns, the officer who

is collecting such speeches, as this will be of assistance in preparing the published record of the discussion in the *Gazette*.

I now ask Professor Ian Walmsley to introduce the discussion.

Professor Ian Walmsley, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Academic Services and University Collections), St Hugh's, Department of Physics

The head of the National Library of Argentina, Jorge Luis Borges, provides a vision of the library as a representation of the universe. His metaphor resonates with Oxford in two ways. First, the library is a means by which we, as academics, can pursue our own explorations of the universe. Second, it embodies physically a critical element of the fabric of the University. Borges' library is complete, unchanging and infinite. Ours is necessarily incomplete, changeable and finite.

The topic of discussion today is how we envisage, collectively, both in what ways our libraries should change, and by what manner we should effect that change. How should we ensure that putative alterations render the Bodleian Libraries more suited to their purpose, enabling us to meet the challenges of twenty-first-century scholarship, research and education across the disparate disciplines and interdisciplinary activity, from English to Epidemiology, Astronomy to Anthropology, and Business Enterprise to Biomedical Engineering? Further, how should we ensure the library fabric is appropriate? Borges' library is also a metaphor for space, an infinite or feigned infinite arrangement of hexagonal rooms. That is also a necessary part of our conception of the library and will continue to be so.

Moving from the University Church in the fourteenth century to Duke Humfrey's

in the fifteenth century represented a major expansion of the collections. In the eighteenth century the Radcliffe Camera was incorporated and in the nineteenth century the establishment of the Radcliffe Science Library provided a separate space for researchers that was in close proximity to the University's first built laboratory – the Natural History Museum. But space in the future will also encompass the ethereal space of the digital world and the very different physical embodiment of information that it uses.

So how should we determine what things should change? Clearly the libraries must meet the needs of academics and students. Of course we have a primary responsibility to those who are part of the University, but the Bodleian is a key national library as well as an international resource.

You will hear others speak today on specific aspects of change that are happening now and on the horizon: the emergence of digital resources; the drive towards open access for research outputs; the changing modes of use; the expectations of students; the spaces needed for both journal and computer; the conservation of heritage material and proper access to it; public engagement with the collections; storage of books and their access; the future of legal deposit. These present great opportunities for us as we define the foundations for the scholarship of the future.

How should such change be agreed, prioritised and managed? Because it is a critical component of the University, so central to our purpose, the Bodleian is naturally governed by academics. The University Council appoints the Curators of the Bodleian Libraries to ensure 'that provision is made for the University's library and information requirements for teaching and research and for ensuring that the University's major research libraries...are maintained as a national and international scholarly resource'.

The Curators are a committee of 18 persons, 14 of whom are academics, including the Chair, myself, and the Senior Proctor, one of whom is a college librarian, two of whom are students, and two of whom are external members, most recent being an academic from UCL (who is now a head of house here in Oxford) and the head of the University of Cambridge libraries. The Curators oversee the libraries' strategic plan, as well as its implementation, along with matters of space and budgeting. Bodley's Librarian and her staff report on these matters and on operations regularly. Of course, the connections with academic divisions,

students and other readers and library users are critical to ensuring robust, transparent decision-making. Routes for this include the divisional Committees on Library Provision (the CoLPs) open consultations, for example on building and other estates projects, and divisional faculty consultations, for example on provision for specific disciplines. The communication of actions and decisions is likewise critical. In the recent past this has occurred via the CoLPs, the divisional boards, the published minutes of the Curators and electronic and other messages from the Bodleian. These are neither perfect mechanisms for gathering and digesting information and opinion, nor for the dissemination of decisions and outcomes regarding libraries. Curators are reviewing and revising these approaches this term and will bring forward a report to Council on how they propose to improve these approaches.

Importantly, the only way any of this oversight will work effectively is if there is good engagement with library users. And this requires a two-way conversation. As John Stuart Mill noted, settling a relationship between the common good and the individual good demands a 'great increase of disinterested exertion'. Let us not shy away from that exertion on any or all sides and, using both effective and efficient dialogue, let us together create the future of our own Bodleian Libraries.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: The discussion is now open to the House and I ask Professor Gregory Hutchinson to speak first.

Professor Gregory Hutchinson, Exeter, Faculty of Classics

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, dons grumble, dons fuss. But this issue is not like that. A large number of researchers and teachers have been greatly concerned by a matter central to their work. It is implausible they are fussing over nothing; and such widespread discontent in itself presents a problem. Luckily, it can be resolved; we have been desiring a transformation in approach and it looks as if it has already begun.

In a nutshell, we want assurance and interaction. We want to know that decisions which substantially affect us and our students will be arrived at through early and adequate discussion with all the relevant faculties and subjects. We want the development of provision for individual subjects to be based on a close interaction between the expertise of librarians and the expertise of academics. The speeches you will hear from my colleagues will demonstrate how much is to be gained from

such a union. Their deep understanding of scholarly study and their lively thought will help you to realise what fuller interaction would offer. You will see too how much we value the diversity and individuality of these very special libraries. I have spent all the time I can in some of them for 37 years but my own perception of them has been changed in the last five months by talk and email with my colleagues. And the same goes for talk and emails with library staff who have been imaginative, practical and quick to help. Fuller interaction should not be seen as a means to keep the noise of grumbles at a reasonable volume; it would be a fundamental contribution to the work of this University.

You will notice the speakers are not just talking about the research of postholders, although research from the Humanities Division at Oxford stands in the front rank of scholarly endeavour. We are also speaking on behalf of graduates and undergraduates, and of scholars from all over the world.

How is fuller interaction to be achieved? The protests of the summer have led to Council, Curators and libraries acknowledging that communication needs to be improved and undertaking much activity. Promising indications were mentioned in our flysheet – signed, you may have noticed, by the deputy to Bodley's Librarian. Add now the Humanities Board setting up a divisional consultation forum on library provision. The Bodleian Libraries' programme of consultation is to include meetings with faculties and departments. Such meetings would be an invaluable complement to town meetings, rather less well attended than this Discussion, and to the general questionnaire for all readers. In Classics we try experiments. Our subject librarian will attend the termly meetings of the Joint Sub-faculties and we are exploring ways of enlarging the contact between our subject librarian and the Classics readership. Modern Languages are setting up a Taylorian Users' Group. Structures seem previously to have thinned and weakened full and direct discussion with subjects: news of decisions taken has trickled down the piping of successive committees. But the Humanities CoLPs themselves are now considering ways of making the structure more effective. Thought and resolve, formal structures and local arrangements, should bring us to the destination we so wish for.

We will, of course, want to measure how things are going. In a year's time we would expect to view a very different state of affairs from that seen in the summer. A vital test will be willingness to show widely plans

for the Weston, that great achievement; likewise any schemes for Duke Humfrey's. All of us in this theatre are eager to maintain the libraries and to advance the way they run; authentic cooperation offers too much to be dismissed. Just suppose it were. Readers were formerly quiet about libraries as well as in them, but they could not now revert with a shrug to the austerity of silence. The libraries matter too much to us all.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Sarah Thomas.

Dr Sarah Thomas, Bodley's Librarian, Balliol, Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, the passion with which Congregation, Oxford students and the 'Republic of the Learned' regard the Bodleian is heartwarming. Today, when many predict the demise of libraries in the digital age, our libraries are thriving. How fortunate we are that Oxford libraries are full, not deserted; that books are used, not abandoned; and that the University preserves its heritage buildings and collections. Over 400 years ago, Sir Thomas Bodley created a public library of renown. In 2012, this institution remains vibrant, adapting to the internet age whilst honouring its illustrious past.

The libraries are in a partnership with you to shape the services for achieving our common mission. Guided by the Curators of the University Libraries and in consultation with Congregation, the libraries have proceeded along a path for strategic change. Since 2000 six new libraries have been constructed and 19 libraries have been merged into larger administrative or physical units. In less than two years the rejuvenated new Bodleian will reopen as the Weston Library. The scope has been captured in a monograph entitled *Transforming the Bodleian*, which will be published by DeGruyter this month. The Amazon summary, should you wish to preorder, begins:

The transformation of the Bodleian Libraries provides an example of how major libraries can meet twenty-first-century challenges: in 2008, it was facing a failed library system installation, a failed plan to cope with its storage needs and the threat of losing its status as a repository suitable to house important manuscripts. Three years later it had a new state-of-the-art repository suitable to house its seven million items under full automated control, a new advanced library system, transformed reader

spaces and the reconstruction of its major building well underway. This was achieved in record-breaking time without significant interruptions in service.

But the pace of change *is* dizzying. It is not surprising some readers regard recent moves as a bridge too far but there is much more to be done and we will be stronger if we work together in common cause. Working in concert we can ensure our spaces are designed to nurture the academic mission[, with access to the books and journals students and academics need and undergirded by a robust digital infrastructure. We'll collaborate to curate exhibitions; present masterclasses; organise symposia, concerts, and readings drawing on the Libraries' unique holdings; grapple with the demands of Big Data; and implement requirements for Open Access. The opportunities are immense. Our partners in these exciting endeavours span the entire University and beyond, including academics, students, IT Services and OUP and proceed under the oversight of the Curators of the University Libraries.

To build collections rich in research value, the Bodleian is raising funds and actively seeking donations of important papers. The future also holds the potential for a library on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, developed in consultation with the faculties of the Humanities Division and others¹.

Continued innovation will increase global digital access to Oxford's distinctive holdings as well as those of other partners, such as the Vatican and the National Library of China. These projects, developed through scholarly advisory boards, will open the hidden collections of great repositories. In our bright future, Oxford collections will be easily found and accessed, secure and safe, and the libraries' outstanding staff will place the reader at the heart of all they do.

It is a tall order. We work in a world with constant change and relentless economic pressure. Collaboration can be challenging. But if we focus on shared values and common goals we will, together, create a Bodleian that builds on its proud foundation, uniting its magnificent heritage with the spirit of innovation to be ever better in its contribution to educating the next generation of world leaders and to pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge.

¹The text in square brackets was originally to have appeared in Dr Thomas's speech but she omitted this section when, due to a fault with the anti-loquitor, she believed she was running short of time. It has been agreed with the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar that the missing text may appear in this transcript.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Ms Frances Cairncross.

Ms Frances Cairncross, Rector of Exeter

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, I am the Rector of Exeter; I am also a Curator but I am speaking in a personal capacity. Around the world university libraries are changing at a breathtaking rate and Oxford urgently needs a considered and informed debate about what that change means and about how it can be managed. Sometimes the debate has seemed peculiarly lopsided. On one side are the libraries and their Curators, such as myself, who are trying to understand how to accommodate the astonishingly rapid change in study habits of a very large proportion of Oxford students and academics. I note that there seem to be few academics here from the divisions in which those changes have been most dramatic.

On the other side are members, mainly of the Humanities Division, whose contributions to the discussion have frequently focused on issues such as shelving, study space and security. Now, all those matters are important for the libraries' managers to get right – and sometimes they have made mistakes. But these are surely issues that can be dealt with courteously and without the need for indignant letters to the newspapers.

Far more important is the subject that we are asked to discuss today: the libraries and their future. I come from the world of print journalism, and I have seen at first hand the hurricane that is destroying so many newspapers and magazines. The impact of digital delivery on libraries will be just as savage, unless we manage it carefully.

If you don't believe that, you just have to look at some of the curious things happening in universities in the United States. More and more libraries there are shedding books – not just some books, but in a few cases all books. It is a dozen years since Kansas State University – its engineering school – went bookless. Two years ago, the University of Texas at San Antonio abandoned print for ebooks and ejournals. Stanford University's engineering school last year pruned 85% of its books. And Drexel University in Philadelphia has just opened a new library, with hardly a single print book – just rows and rows of computers.

For those of us who love books this is a terrifying and depressing prospect. Yet for anyone studying and researching in the sciences, and in most of the social sciences, almost all of what you need is now available online so no wonder there are so few

scientists of any sort here with us today. The Bodleian has simply been immensely efficient at meeting their needs.

These changes are also going to come to the humanities, and that is why it is so essential this discussion isn't hijacked by matters of everyday management. We need instead some sense of broader priorities. When budgets are limited, should we concentrate on digital resources or on books? How important is physical space once materials are readily available online? Is it more important to preserve individual faculty libraries or to bring the humanities together on the Radcliffe Infirmary site?

When I list such questions, I realise how the libraries have changed since I first became a Curator. When I started, the New Bodleian was a perilous firetrap, two million books were stored at huge expense in salt mines in Cheshire, plans for the Osney bookstore were in chaos, the budget was bleeding cash, the IT that ran our catalogue and search facilities was creaking and fundraising was almost non-existent. Yet I don't recall at that stage articles about that in *The Spectator* or angry demands for a University-wide debate.

Since then, the Swindon bookstore has been built, on time and on budget. An astonishing seven million items have been transferred there with hardly any interruption of service to our readers, and in fact most users barely noticed this extraordinary achievement.

So please can we start talking about what really matters? As my wise colleague Professor Hutchinson has just pointed out, the Bodleian needs to hear from large numbers of readers. Engagement with those readers needs to be real, as he says, and, I would add, should include a wide representation of students and of disciplines. Our libraries exist not just for mature academics in the later stages of their research careers, but also for the undergraduates and the graduates who have chosen Oxford for its sheer availability of intellectual resources and we need to discuss how to build for that future and not focus only on preserving the past. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Christopher Gray.

Mr Christopher Gray, OUSU Vice-president of Graduates, Merton

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, I am here today to discuss the future of university libraries and the University library here, from the perspective of the 20,000 or so users who are students. I know a lot of people here are going to

discuss communication and consultation and I think it is obviously very important that the student voice is heard in all those conversations. But I think today it is probably more important that I talk about provision itself and what students look for in a library today and will look for tomorrow.

My overriding message today is that libraries now and in the future must come to accommodate the diverse users of the University library in 2012. Furthermore, this diversity, and the new ideas and demands that come with it, should not be seen as in conflict with existing practices but rather as symbiotic with them. As has already been demonstrated, here in Oxford and elsewhere, new practices can flourish within and alongside all that is unique about the Bodleian, not least its cherished architecture, its incredible spaces and its vast collections.

For most students, this diversity will come in the ways that they use the library and they access its resources. They increasingly require flexibility in the mediums through which they access information and in the times within which they can do so and in the spaces which are provided for them to work in. In terms of mediums, we all know that students increasingly look to access information online, whether that be journals or books or other forms of information. At the same time they want to access audio, video and data resources to complement text-based work, and they want to be able to make use of all these resources at any time of day and regardless of whether someone else is using them on a different computer somewhere else in the world.

With this comes a desire for more flexible spaces to reflect the variety of work that a student on a modern degree is asked to do. One week a student might be required to sit alone in the library and work their way through hard-copy text as they produce an essay. The next they will be looking for a silent space but with abundant computer access to look at the data we have just had mentioned, look at the audio recordings I have talked about or just study the online journals in their own time. The next week they may have to complete a task which includes group work and will need a space in which they can discuss ideas and collaborate with others as part of that. Users today also desire spaces that they can access at times that reflect the pace and variety of their workflows. This is something that I'm sure we've all heard time and time again but an undergraduate may find they have papers due on the Friday, another paper due on the Monday and actually they are

forced by the timetable they are given by the University and by their department or their college to work over the weekend. At the same time a postgraduate student may find that for periods of their research, either due to their enthusiasm, breakthroughs they are having or deadline pressure, they need to work late into the evening or over the weekends if they are to get the best results possible in their research or in their projects. All of this is part of what is so special about university. The chance for keen minds to work whenever they want to, to be creative and independent in their thought and, for a short period of their lives, to be freed from the nine-to-five working patterns.

Commendable progress has been made in these three areas but there remains more to be done. As students' working patterns evolve further so too must our libraries and, if they are to remain a great facilitator of academic study, rather than an obstacle to it, they must evolve with them.

Beyond these more mainstream concerns there is also a demand from the student body that University libraries are accessible to the biggest number of people possible and the biggest number of students possible. For students this means disabled access must be a priority, as it already is for the Curators going forward, and that other student groups that have trouble accessing the Bodleian are accommodated for. In the diverse student body here at Oxford this includes student parents and it includes part-time students, both of which are groups who tend to be neglected in the British university sector as a whole. These students need to be able to access the library at flexible times and, at the very least, student parents need to be able to pick up and drop off books in a location where they can have a child in tow.

At the same time we must also consider the diversity of Oxford and the city that this University is a big part of. The library of the future, the University of the library of the future, looks for ways to open its doors to outsiders, as many other universities have already started to do. It allows local residents into the Bodleian to make use of its incredible spaces during vacations. It opens up its collections and advertises them beyond University walls, and encourages local schools and communities to make visits to the Bodleian to see both the wonders of our libraries and the wonders of Oxford as an educational institution.

To conclude, the Bodleian libraries are an immense asset to Oxford and have served students and scholars here well over the centuries. There is much to be proud of and

a huge amount to preserve and treasure, but as with all these things there is always a need to look to the future as well as the past. I do not wish to argue that the library becomes nothing more than a service provider for students but rather that it must develop, as many of us speakers have already said, in collaboration with its users and with all its members. Thank you very much.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Professor David Norbrook.

Professor David Norbrook, Merton, Faculty of English Language and Literature

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, here is a question: would you like to 'Continue to acquire knowledge resources - from archives and primary source materials to publications, ebooks and digital resources'? Yes or no? Well, I think if you ask a question that silly you are not going to get a very serious answer. It typifies, I think, the problem with this pseudo-consultation process of debating a Strategic Plan so bland and general as to avoid all real questions, not giving us any relevant data for an informed answer; that is why I supported this call for a Congregation meeting where I am glad to see we will be able to debate these questions very seriously.

In all that blandness of the Strategic Plan one thing does stand out - nowhere is specific mention made of physical books. Back in 2005 there was a sense of panic that Oxford was overflowing with far too many of the things. Since then, of course, the digital revolution has massively accelerated and we need to establish now some principles not over whether we continue to buy books and digital resources but their relative balance, the way we use them and how we gain critical purchase on them. As many speakers will bring home today, this summer's events showed a disquieting gap between how readers, especially in the humanities, use a library and how they were believed to use it. What I think was striking was the relative novelty of actually articulating a case for having reading rooms - in the past we have taken this for granted but now the counter-arguments are so strong it seems a novelty to hear the case.

Now, of course, we have much that is positive happening in the Bodleian, with new reading spaces coming up and far better conservation, and I must put on record that I can't remember a time when cooperation between academics and librarians in my field was closer. But documents like the Strategic Plan still make me worry about the larger managerial assumptions. The case

for physical books will still need to be made against huge and increasing pressures from national policymakers to move away from physical resources, and clearly we need to keep distinct the definite arguments for academic benefits for online resources and the other kinds of arguments that may be driving changes: non academic ones.

Firstly, there is the obsession with global league tables, with what one might call the airport lounge model of higher education, the aim of eliminating any difference between one university and another to make them world class. That is an argument that has been used for lending more Bodleian books - because other libraries do it - and from such a perspective the Bodleian's goal has to be to get equal with our global competitors in digital resources. The fact that the Bodleian's library facilities are simply unique in the world, a magnet for scholars and students, and a key element in keeping people working here, just won't register on such tables. The very range and multiplicity of our holdings can look confusing by world-class standards, especially when you factor in all the college libraries. But that multiplicity can be a strength and I am concerned that the overall drift of the Strategic Plan is always in the direction of assuming that uniformity is good and diversity bad. On academic grounds that may be far from clear.

Secondly, of course, there is simple cost-cutting. There is a high cost to privileged locations that could be used for apparently more economically productive purposes and the specialist staff that proper reading rooms need. The online survey asked me whether I wanted a courteous and caring librarian. Correctly, I would rather have an informed one than either but they would certainly cost more. Digitisation seems, of course, an answer to this prayer. Why do we need the books when you have ebooks? But they are not always the same thing, as the Rector of Lincoln and I recently found when we compared the ebook version of an edition we had published with the original. It turned out to be full of mistakes which had been introduced by the scanning process, undoing, of course, an elaborate and extremely arduous process of proofreading. The publishers, I am glad to say, withdrew this book for correction - but only because we had asked. Over the years I have again and again asked librarians why we list as the same text electronic and digital versions when the latter may be seriously inaccurate. This proves to be one question librarians don't always answer courteously and I think there is a degree of denial here. Faith in the complete accuracy of digital versions means

you can relegate the print versions to deep storage or a worse fate. We need assurance that there is proper quality control of these materials, including the Google books which bear the Bodleian's imprimatur. What is at issue is not technology - online texts can be checked and some digital resources have a very high standard - but cost-cutting, outsourcing the critical judgment of authors to machines and perfunctory checks. Thirdly, and relatedly, there is a pressure to apply software resources that were not designed to our own purposes. I won't chronicle the problems with SOLO, just say the shift to it was a massive change and we still, I think, need proper explanation of its rationale and purpose which doesn't seem to be helpful necessarily for those searching for books.

I am not saying we need to ignore the digital age but we need to make changes on clear academic grounds and, where they are also cost-cutting, be open and honest about this.

This is not just not a parochial issue for a few readers in the Bodleian; it affects our public libraries, which remain in a precarious position, and libraries internationally. There has just been a heartening reprieve of reading room space in the New York Public Library in a major reversal of policy. So the direction of travel is not always and does not have to be inevitably one way. Of course the digital age is still happening and intensifying but the Bodleian can still take its part in that and take a lead also in a campaign for real libraries.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch.

Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, St Cross, Faculty of Theology

Mr Vice-Chancellor, it is cheering to find us debating the future of our library so seriously and so close to its first beginnings eight centuries ago in the University Church. Back in the sixteenth century, things were not so healthy. In the reign of King Edward VI the University authorities, from the Chancellor downwards, cheerfully acquiesced in the destruction of the entire University library, with the exception of a handful of books that were happily out to readers and, no doubt, overdue back. I have been saddened to listen to some of the criticisms of Bodley's Librarian and her staff over the last year or two, for occasionally they have implied that present plans for development are equivalent to Dr Richard Cox's drastic downsizing in 1550. Instead we should see all that is going on as a brave and realistic response to the simple fact that one century's ideal library can be less than ideal in another.

I speak in this debate as somebody who spent nine years in Cambridge and now 17 years in Oxford, and so I have had some reason to reflect on the contrasting evolution of two great libraries. In the early years of last century, Oxford and Cambridge were faced with similar problems in their libraries. Historic and picturesque buildings were reaching a crisis in their ability to hold and deliver books. Cambridge's problems happened to be more obviously acute and that forced a radical solution: a central library on a new site, the ideal solution at that date. Oxford dons were then presumably no less perceptive or creative than their Cambridge colleagues but, fatally, their buildings were not quite so inadequate as in the Other Place. So Oxford decided to muddle through, unhappily lurching from expedient to expedient to make do. The Bodleian was kept going by the outstanding quality of its staff, making the best they could of buildings which were certainly beautiful but were, and are, decidedly not user-friendly.

When I first arrived here in the late 1990s and interviewed people who wished to work with me at graduate level, I often asked them whether they really wanted to come to Oxford when the library system in Cambridge was so much more usable and coherent. I would not dream of posing that question now, as changes unfold which make our libraries not merely one of the great world collections but one of the most accessible and well run. We have the same buildings, but better disposed and rapidly being augmented. Above all, we have the huge asset of all that has happened in electronic communication in the last decade: the fact we can summon up periodicals and an ever-increasing range of books online at our own desks, or even in an airport lounge, or the back bar of the King's Arms. That great fact alone means it is time to think creatively about how we use our physical library space. This is a golden age for the research scholar. It is a wonderful time for undergraduates to find how exciting and welcoming a library can be, whether it is a physical or a virtual space. It is also the perfect time to excite and welcome donors to our libraries, donors both of new collections and of much-needed cash.

As a reasonably neutral observer, I felt that much recent comment addressed to our senior librarian colleagues has been unimaginative, verging on the ill-natured. Our current Bodley's Librarian has spearheaded efforts to find a solution as radical and as appropriate to its age as that of Cambridge in the 1920s. She deserves our support, not our carping. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Professor Catriona Kelly.

Professor Catriona Kelly, New College, Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, there is much to welcome in the recent history of the library system. The increasing availability of material in digitised form, the vastly improved arrangements for access to recently published books in English, the fact that a book is no longer regarded by administrators as an actuarial unit obstructive to the processes of smooth financial regulation.

But more is still needed. I speak for one important and often overlooked category of the libraries' readers – those whose primary needs include material that is not in English. Our collections in European languages – including Eastern European languages – were built up over many decades by dedicated scholar-librarians. They were augmented by donations from the scholars who founded such study of these subjects and from the libraries' readers and admirers. The collections of the Taylor Institution particularly span a remarkable compass of materials from early dictionaries to contemporary artists' books, from modernist journals to rare editions of texts by world-famous writers.

The collections are of international importance. In Russian and Eastern European Studies, for example, they would be the envy of most libraries in the world, including those of the home countries, given that the ideological twists and turns of twentieth-century regimes led to major losses – books burned, pulped and simply dumped. We should publicise the history of this collecting, honour those responsible for it and make this remarkable story the foundation of new initiatives to improve still further the resources that we already have, and to safeguard the work of the specialist librarians without whom book acquisition is simply impossible.

No-one would expect the University museums to survive without expert curators in European art. The library system depends on comparable expertise.

We need to give more recognition to the value of these outstanding collections. The information currently on the site libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk, like signposts in London, is extremely useful for those who already know their way around but it does not do enough to publicise the strengths of the holdings. By contrast it only takes five seconds to locate on the site of the Widener

Library in Harvard a detailed account of what materials the library holds, including a list of named collections.

Planning for the libraries should explicitly recognise the specific needs of those who use non-Anglophone source materials. Specialist collections should not be lumped together at random in order to free up space – as has happened with the Slavonic and Greek collections, downsized in space terms in the mid-2000s, and now under threat from shoehorning into the main Taylor building, itself already overcrowded, or from a merger with materials in Linguistics that is no more welcome to specialists in that subject.

Storage arrangements for materials that are not in English need particularly careful review. Databases such as JSTOR have a built-in English-language bias. The mass outhousing of journals on the basis that 'it's all available online' works poorly. Given that the staff of the long-distance stores usually cannot read the languages, and in some cases the scripts, of the materials stored, misunderstandings become a significant problem. In my experience, roughly one in five Russian items ordered from the depositories turns out to have been confused with something else.

We urge the managers of the libraries to recognise the treasures that they have in the Western and Eastern European holdings and to make special provisions for them in publicity, fundraising and general planning. We all owe the libraries and their staff a great deal. The holdings are vital for our work and for the work of our colleagues and students, not just in the so-called 'modern languages' but across the University. We would not wish to see them dissipated or made subject to an Anglo-American provincialisation that would make the University, in the global world of academia, a laughing stock. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Richard Ovenden.

Mr Richard Ovenden, Deputy to Bodley's Librarian, St Hugh's

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, central to the discussions about libraries in recent months have been issues surrounding communication and consultation. These are indeed important issues. I would like to add another 'c-word' to this discussion, which is 'collaboration'. This word has not featured in the discussions but it is my contention that collaboration between the Bodleian and the academic community is what sets this institution apart from others and is a factor, alongside

another c-word, our 'collections', of course, in what makes this library 'great' as opposed to 'good'.

Collaboration with the Bodleian takes many forms and happens across all disciplines of the University. We have seen this in recent years in exhibitions, for example: six of the last eight exhibitions in the Bodleian were curated by, or included significant involvement from, Oxford academics. This has been deliberate library policy in response to approaches from academics. In addition to the shows, the collaboration takes the form of books, websites and lectures. We don't do all of this for the sake of REF Impact Factors, but because we want to collaborate with academics to support their research through working with our collections.

The digital realm is another space where a collaboration between the Bodleian and the academic community is thriving. The Cultures of Knowledge Project, funded by the Mellon Foundation, is a collaboration between academics in History and English and specialist staff in the Bodleian. Through this collaboration, digital technologies are being developed to sustain an intellectual network of scholars working on the intellectual networks of the seventeenth century. The Saïd Business school's major redevelopment of its digital research repository has Bodleian collaboration as a vital component. I would cite many other examples from every corner of this University.

Collaboration also happens in teaching. A series of Masterclasses in Medieval Manuscripts which began nine years ago with four sessions has now expanded to over 20 each year, covering numerous other subjects. Our Deputy Map Librarian received an Oxford Teaching Award last week in recognition of his teaching of digital mapping in collaboration with subjects from Classics to Epidemiology. Our subject librarians have been collaborating deeply with the newly established Doctoral Training Centres.

Academics at Oxford can be very demanding in their suggestions for collaboration. The former Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon once called me to suggest we collaborate on the acquisition of a book. Which one? I asked. The last Anglo-Saxon manuscript of Boethius in private hands, he replied. How much would it cost? I said. £750,000 to £1m was the answer. When does it come up for sale? Oh, next week. We didn't have time to raise the funds but I did contact the buyer and persuade him to deposit the manuscript in the Bodleian

so that the manuscript could be studied before it disappeared into a private vault. This was an exceptional case but lower-cost collaborations over acquisitions from scientific databases to seventeenth-century annotated books are happening daily.

If Oxford academics can be demanding they can also be incredibly supportive. The Professor of Islamic Art, hearing a presentation on the Weston Library, immediately saw an opportunity to bring a potential funder into play and asked the donor for support to enable the improvement in teaching and research facilities in that building. Another colleague in Modern Languages was instrumental in introducing the Bodleian to a donor who supported our acquisition of Kafka's letters to his sister Ottla.

These examples are the tip of a large iceberg. This kind of collaboration is so much more a feature of Oxford than it is of the other universities and libraries that I have worked in. It is one of the things that makes working here enjoyable, interesting and rewarding. Bodleian staff want to do more. We are genuine in our desire to collaborate. We need to collaborate more if our shared love of the Bodleian and its collections and our shared respect for the importance of learning and research is to be fostered at the highest level. We face huge problems in terms of declining funding and I am currently experiencing my tenth successive year of budget cuts in the Bodleian, competition from other institutions, the challenges of new technology, developments in publishing and the pace of change.

There have been mistakes made in communication and consultation by the Bodleian. We have been under huge pressures and have at times slipped up. But the three c-words I have invoked involve more than one party. They are two-way activities and both parties must improve, must recognise their responsibilities and show mutual respect if we are to face the challenges that await us. I urge this Congregation to view the future of our libraries in a spirit of collaboration.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Hugh Doherty.

Dr Hugh Doherty, Jesus

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, what follows is a plea for diversity and duplication in our libraries. One of the great strengths of this University as a teaching and research institution, is, and has long been, its happy multiplicity of libraries. Each of these libraries represents a distinct bibliographical ecosystem, formed,

developed and sustained by the interaction of readers and librarians over succeeding generations. Many of these ecosystems are themselves constructed from a host of smaller ecosystems, equally coherent and complex, no less treasured and valued by their users; the Lower Reading Room would be one such small ecosystem. These libraries are vital to a range of competing and interacting communities of readers, undergraduates as well as graduates, visiting scholars as well as Oxford-based academics. They are no less crucial to research teams engaged in the sort of research projects now so critical to the funding streams and competitive standing of modern British universities. Having served on two book-intensive research projects based within the former History Faculty Library, I now count myself fortunate to have been able to work in an office embedded in a specialised library with access to whole runs of books organised in a comprehensible and browsable system. At a time when individuals and departments are under more pressure than ever to undertake major research projects, and in a climate in which the search for project funding is ever more competitive, the existence and operation of multiple libraries containing rich and overlapping collections is an asset to be nurtured rather than neutered.

All this deserves to be stated very clearly because of the emergence of two closely related trends. The first is the new logic of centralisation, cost-saving and simplification. This trend perceives the very strengths of the bibliographical ecologies of this University – the duplication of books, the diversity of collections, the use of multiple systems of classification – as features to be reformed rather than maintained through investment and professional support. The second trend is the deployment of, and reliance on, systems of book classification which serve the dictates of current library thinking but which deny readers the essential advantages of informed browsing and the benefits of constructive serendipity. The combination of these two trends threatens to turn a multiplicity of integrated libraries, specialised, browsable and staffed, into a series of flagship book depositories, clean, cheap and faceless. The events of this year have reminded us just how quickly these independent and fragile ecosystems can be damaged by strategies of so called rationalisation pushed through without adequate consultation.

Those of us who pursue our work in these libraries and who hold their front-line staff and collections in high regard are not

insensitive to the need for innovation, improvement and financial responsibility. If there is a special place in hell reserved for professional academics, as there surely is and where we are all surely destined, such a place would doubtless consist of academics being forced to manage libraries in the face of a growing chorus of conflicting demands and on limited and steadily diminishing budgets. But it behoves us to remember that Libraries were made for Man, not Man for Libraries. Indeed, as a member of the Humanities Division I should like to stress here today that these libraries are our laboratories, our crucibles for research and innovation. Surely, therefore, reform and renewal in our libraries can take place without the sort of damage and conflict witnessed this year? It is not break out zones or the latest method of book classification or even the one-size-fits-all reader survey so recently offered to readers which will determine the health and long term success of our libraries but their diversity, multiplicity and independence. And our views and actions on this point have wider importance and resonance. The scale on which local libraries are being closed across the country and the degree to which the command structures of other libraries and other educational institutions look to us for potential ideas and solutions should remind us of the importance of preserving our own bibliographical ecosystems; how we act, so others may follow.

As James Martin himself has stated, in a world of growing complexity and increasing rates of change, the best solution lies in 'localised units' where 'skill and initiative call the shots'. The multiple libraries of this University have long existed as the very exemplars of localised units brimming with skill and initiative. In other words, the diversity of our libraries, and the duplication within their collections, are qualities to be cherished and as far as possible sustained. If we do otherwise, if we accept the preference for so called accessibility over usability, for uniformised order over integrated diversity, for bland simplicity over flexible creativity, we may all soon find ourselves, librarians as well as readers, doing no more – to use the words of a twelfth-century knightly proverb – than licking honey from a sword.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Caroline Warman.

Dr Caroline Warman, Jesus, Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, let me tell you about the Taylorian Library's Voltaire Room. It houses the eighteenth-century French collections

put together by Theodore Besterman and bequeathed by him to Oxford. It is open to any student or scholar who wishes to use it, and all of its books are on the shelves available to anyone who wants to take them down. Its principal feature is that it has every edition from the eighteenth century onwards of the works of Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau, along with most of the relevant works of criticism, also reaching back to the eighteenth century, and a complete run of the key journal in the area – published here in Oxford, as it happens – although only in paper form. It has WiFi, of course, and what with SOLO and its digital resources, the internet more widely, and the books themselves, there cannot be a better place in the world to study those authors.

I mention the Voltaire Room because it is a very focused example of the sort of specific multi-levelled collection which has been nurtured in Oxford over the years, a collection which teaches us as it makes research possible in the first place. It is *not* an impossible ideal, unrealisable in today's world: it is what we've actually got! And of a type which, in the case of the Bodleian and the various reading rooms on its central site, we seem to be happy to contemplate dispersing, if we have not already done so.

It's as if what our libraries can offer is being reduced to what other libraries with smaller collections can offer, as if what is in their case a very sensible strategy of attracting readers by complementing limited physical collections with digital resources and a sort of high end coffee culture has somehow become our model too, except that for us it is not an *extension* of our possibilities, it is a *reduction*.

Nor does it work to differentiate student needs and use of libraries from researcher needs and use. Students need more than access to multiple copies of borrowable set texts, translations, JSTOR and Wikipedia. They need to work in multifaceted library environments just as much as we do, because, if they don't, their understanding of the humanities disciplines they are learning about will be severely restricted in ways that we can't even conceive of. The current generation of students are brought up with the internet, we are told. They are used to reading online and to working with digital material. They don't need paper like previous generations. I say they do, for this reason: because they need to be able to understand a world communicating by paper or vellum or papyrus, because if they can't they won't be able to make any sense of anything prior to 1995.

An example: I recently gave a lecture to second years and finalists on the *Encyclopédie*, a key text for anybody working on the Enlightenment. I had arranged for us all to go into the Voltaire Room for the last section of the lecture and to look at the original. That is what I repeatedly said we were going to do and I had told them when it was published: between 1751 and 1772. We went in and I gave out the volumes for them all to look at. They were a very engaged group and asked lots of questions. Then one of them asked how old the volume he was holding was so I said it was the original, ie from the eighteenth century. They all looked up and said: What? There was a generalised double take and they refused to believe me. And I still find it extraordinary to relate: they could not believe they were being allowed to look at books of that age, although I had told them we would be, and also, more importantly even, they didn't recognise what they were looking at. I am assuming that most of us in this room would actually be incapable of *not* recognising and roughly dating a book on sight. They could not do that, any of them.

So what happens once we have removed many of the books, put them in store or made them otherwise more difficult to access, so that you need to know they are there to know you need to see them, and replaced them with survey and anthology volumes and recent criticism? Humanities students would always be at several removes from the text they work on and they would never be able to overcome that gap or get that familiarity with books and book culture which we all take for granted, which we need, and which our libraries taught us simply by being there. We need to realise that a room filled with shelves of books is actively teaching us many things, some of which can be extended by the incredible possibilities of digital space but not replaced.

Funding shortfalls seem unlikely to disappear any time soon and we must acknowledge them and collaborate with the librarians to work out what to do. But I think we can no longer allow ourselves or anyone else to assume that of the tripartite funding allocations of the library budget – ie staff, collections and physical space – the last one, space, meaning *books on shelves near desks with readers*, is the least important.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Georgy Kantor.

Dr Georgy Kantor, St John's

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, let me begin with a personal story. I first came to Oxford eleven years ago

as an undergraduate from Moscow visiting for a week. I got a Bodleian reader ticket and went to the Lower Reading Room. Within an hour I realised that if I wanted to do graduate work in my field I needed to be here, so I came and stayed and in the end became a college tutor. My motivation in coming here is by no means rare among graduate students in the humanities, and if we do not take care with how we are changing our libraries we risk losing our attractiveness for them.

The CoLP representative of ancient history graduates, Aneurin Ellis Evans, organised a survey in response to the changes that were taking place in the Bodleian over the summer, and within a week, in the depth of the Long Vacation, he received about 40 spirited responses to it from graduates in such fields as Classics, Ancient History, Byzantine and Ancient Near-Eastern studies, and later even Old English. Among the respondents were many people whom one expects to find working in the Bodleian or Sackler whenever one goes there. As he has not been allowed to present his findings directly to Congregation today, I stand here before you as a rather less eloquent substitute for him.

The overwhelming feeling in this 14-page dossier sent to Bodley's Librarian in July was one of considerable worry that the needs of graduate research are not being considered enough in the current changes. In the rather stronger words of a Byzantinist DPhil, and I quote, 'this gloomy picture has nothing to do with the exemplary image and function of a flourishing Bodleian three years ago.' A Classics graduate writes, to give you another fairly typical response, that recent changes 'have considerable unwelcome consequences for anybody engaging in research'.

The responses emphasised a whole number of recurrent concerns: difficulties in finding books taken to the Gladstone Link; removal of important journals in languages other than English, based on a parochial assumption that 'journals [ie many journals in English] are now online'; blanket application of general rules leading to disappearance of constantly used reference books from reading rooms. The idea of introducing conversation areas in the libraries was particularly unwelcome. To quote Mr Ellis Evans's summary, 'There is absolutely no support whatsoever for [them]. Graduates want to work in reading rooms which are as close to perfectly silent as humanly possible. Stairwells and nearby cafes are more than capable of meeting our conversational needs.' More than one

graduate notes that where these areas already exist they are generally used for silent work.

I need not elaborate on these issues further now. Many of them have already been recognised by the Bodleian administration and one has high hopes that the particular problems of this summer will be resolved in the spirit of mutual goodwill.

Two more general points emerge, however, of some importance for the future. First, there was a strong force in all graduate replies on the accessibility of material on open shelves. Unlike senior members, graduates do not have offices in which to store private libraries, nor do they have sufficient means to build up such collections. College libraries are meant primarily for undergraduates and graduates see themselves as the heaviest users of central University libraries and want the books they use to be easily available.

This leads to the second, even more important point. It is unclear to a lot of graduates why they are not a bigger part of our debate - over the summer the Bodleian consistently spoke, mistakenly, about the conflicting interests of postholders and undergraduates. But graduates are, to quote one of the responses, 'a major community of researchers in the University' in their own right and they want recognition of what they actually do in libraries as researchers, not as some kind of 'customers'. Many have felt that the market-oriented focus of recent surveys of library users does not even begin to address the issues they are worried about.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, we need to listen to their concerns. They are our future. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Stephen Heyworth.

Dr Stephen Heyworth, Wadham, Faculty of Classics

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, 'The Bodleian is a fantastic resource for students who are unable to find books in the libraries of their own colleges at short notice and is a truly inspiring and motivational place to study.' That is a quotation from a Classics undergraduate, one of those who responded to a request for views on our topic today. They appreciate the expansion in weekend opening but, above all, they stress the importance of a library where key books and journals can reliably be found on the shelf.

At a Sub-faculty meeting a few years ago the news was passed on from the CoLP that the journals in the Lower Reading Room were to

be removed to a basement area, that this was not open for discussion, but that the space released would allow an expansion in other holdings of importance to members of the faculty. There was considerable disquiet, but the proposal sounded as though benefits might possibly outweigh disadvantages. Some terms later, the Gladstone Link opened and it was a relief to find the library had discarded the plan: the journals had not been moved and it was obvious why - the new reading room was not in the basement of the Old Library but four minutes away.

The sighs of relief turned out to be foolish: the plan had not been discarded and in July, with barely any warning, 90% of the journals were stripped out. At the same time the library started further rearrangements of the reading room. There are three rooms on the northern side: one mainly with Greek material, one with Latin and one previously called the 'Academies' room, with most of its shelving used for dedicated Classics journals but with some more general volumes. This whole space has been enormously successful, liked and used by students, faculty and visitors. This is partly because it provides access to the enormous holdings of the Bodleian stacks and in Swindon - and I should add my view that the opening of the Swindon facility has been a great success - but also because the shelves have provided quick access to the basic material classicists need, whether as undergraduate students or researchers. The mixed economy of texts, commentaries, reference works, monographs and journals enables one to move with ease and efficiency from reading to enquiry, from analysis to checking evidence, indeed from first-year essay to DPhil thesis and beyond. As one undergraduate has said, 'Good libraries turn undergraduates into researchers.'

What happened in the summer was that the delicate ecology was hacked away at. It is of course true that much material is now online, but we do not need a Bodleian desk to read online nor is it easy to write notes on a laptop while reading an article on the same machine. But the journals that were removed included some that are not online at all: this was an obvious disaster for undergraduates who do not have the time while writing a tutorial essay to go and check a reference in a volume several minutes away, especially when the journal in question may already have been taken to yet another reading room.

In addition, the amount of shelving dedicated to Classics was reduced by the removal of most of the material in the Academies room, which has been turned

into a consultation and reference space. The seating in that room was taken away too, despite the fact that the northern half of the Lower Library is regularly overcrowded in term time.

There has been a good short-term response to the requests that were made for immediate amelioration, with a more rational selection of journals available and enormous folio volumes no longer precariously on top shelves. But there is much still to do and the fact remains that a faculty that has no faculty library has lost a significant amount of space, especially in seating, and this without proper consultation of the faculty or of this body. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Grant Tapsell.

Dr Grant Tapsell, Lady Margaret Hall, Faculty of History

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, speaking in opposition to recent changes is a difficult business. As an historian, I am keenly aware of the extent to which those on the wrong side of 'progress' can come to be marginalised or even to appear rather ridiculous. Is it not time to move on from the established fact of the History Faculty Library's transfer from the old Indian Institute building into the Radcliffe Camera and the Gladstone Link? Several colleagues have robustly offered such a view. In particular, it has been said or implied that to criticise the recent changes is in some way to denigrate all our librarians and to depress their morale. This is nonsense. I bow to no one in my regard for Oxford's librarians. Yet it is irresponsible to muffle or mute criticism, and foolish to pretend that all is well when it patently is not. We need to learn lessons from this episode, not turn away from it and risk repeating the same failures. I am especially concerned that a certain kind of managerialism be confronted, and quickly. Academics and students are the lifeblood of this University, but library collections are being subject to bewilderingly rapid change, leaving readers only belated opportunities to ameliorate damage inflicted on the hoof.

Today I speak as someone privileged to be a college tutor and deeply aware of how few student voices – undergraduate and graduate – have been adequately heard in connection with the HFL move. I say 'adequately' advisedly. During the desperately rushed consultation exercise undertaken in Hilary term this year, the History Faculty nevertheless undertook a survey of student opinion, kindly supplied to me by the History Librarian, Isabel

Holowaty. Although the summarised findings of that survey ran to 37 pages, they were never widely discussed or integrated into the decision-making process, before the lamentable faculty vote that sealed the fate of the HFL. Looking through the survey it is striking that several respondents recognised that the questions being put to them were leading ones and that the whole thing was clearly a done deal. I was proud of their insight and cynicism: history teaches us to be sceptical, or it should do. I was also proud to see the strength of feeling on display. 'Don't move us into the Rad Cam! It's the worst idea ever!' cried one undergraduate, admittedly with some hyperbole. Time and again, tributes were paid to the atmosphere, layout and general working conditions within the Old Indian Institute, a stark contrast with the disdain evident for the Gladstone Link as a working environment rather than a bookstore.

Deep anxiety was expressed about likely overcrowding in the Rad Cam and of the likely impact of having lending and non-lending collections cheek by jowl; it was not self evident that 'rationalisation' or 'integration' was, in fact, a good thing. Students were at pains to emphasise that the variety of different libraries available to them was a cause for celebration. The Rad Cam, Upper Reading Room and HFL (as was) were places to move between when doing different things. To reduce the variety would be to hack away at something wonderful in Oxford students' intellectual world. To do so at a time when fees were just about to triple struck a number of respondents as odd, to put it no more strongly.

I could go on mining this rich seam of student sense for much longer. It would be wrong, of course, to claim that all students were dismayed: a minority were in favour of the proposed changes, a very small one in the case of undergraduates, a more significant one in the case of graduates. But it was a research student who put their finger on the terrible nub of the issue when they wrote the following: 'Future generations of historians deserve their own library and I think it would be an absolute shame to close down a common space for those engaged in a common field of study.' I agree with those passionate sentiments. To say this is not to bury one's head in the sand or to evoke a mythical golden age. It is to urge the need for more open discussions like this one in which our librarians can hear what we and our students care about. Libraries are too important to be left on the margins of committee agendas or to be shuffled off into anomalous 'town hall meetings'. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Conrad Leyser.

Dr Conrad Leyser, Worcester, Faculty of History

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, I am speaking in my capacity as former Acting Chair of the History Faculty CoLP. I had responsibility last year for proposing the transfer of the History Faculty Library to the main Bodleian site to the faculty, and for staging the consultation with colleagues and students, and for working with the library on the move itself.

The HFL was only part of the library story – but it was taken to be emblematic. 'Loss, closure, rapacity': these were all words used in connection with the HFL move last year and they coloured the wider discussion in what I think was an unhelpful way.

For the record then, the History Faculty Library did not close: it is over there. The library proposed the move, the History Faculty CoLP supported it, the student representatives included, and the faculty voted in favour. Of the 65 members of the faculty who voted on the move, 41 were in favour including 29 postholders, 24 against including 13 postholders – including, I imagine, the previous speaker, whose grace in the debate I also wish to put on record.

As is well known, the Oxford Martin School offered the library a sizable donation in return for use of the Old Indian Institute. As is still not well known, for the two years previous the HFL had been under threat of real closure, barely able to meet the space charge for the use of the building, let alone keep pace with acquisitions. The latter, not the former, was the main reason for the move. We could not pay the rent. Instead of throwing us into the street, the Bodleian Library and Humanities Division offered to move us into the main Bodleian site, to convert on a recurrent basis the space saving charges into an increase of our acquisitions budgets and to support – again, on a recurrent basis – the Sunday opening of the Old Library. The alchemy of rent owed into books acquired and time to use the library is what sold the proposal to me and to the majority of my colleagues – along with the written assurance that the move would involve no library staff redundancies. In fact, again not widely known, it was a staff retention issue: we would have lost staff without the move and, again, I wish to put on record, as my colleagues have done, the dedication of the History Library staff led by Isabel Holowaty. It is a thing of wonder.

If you consult the latest History CoLP minutes when they become available online imminently you can see the immediate

effect of the move. There is the acquisition of a number of key titles and electronic resources in English and other languages; overall a 30% increase in acquisitions budgets and, again, it is recurrent, it is not a windfall.

How full does the glass have to be here before the fraction of its emptiness ceases to be the centre of attention? It is to do with perspective.

I am not trying to muffle debate nor to say that the end justifies the means; many things we would all do differently in terms of the move. We should have started the consultation much earlier; there shouldn't have been a false cue given about the deadline. In fact, the gravity of the whole situation of the HFL should have been discussed two years previously, and then people would have been in a position to make an informed decision about the best option in the situation.

The gravest problem to emerge, I would submit, is that of interfaculty discussion. The faculty CoLPs can't catch this and by the time matters get to the Humanities CoLP that body is, by definition, too unwieldy to treat the matters at hand. The most positive move I would have said to come out of this is the formation of a Lower Reading Room CoLP to consider what to do with that room which is, I entirely agree with Hugh Doherty, a classic example of a very precious ecosystem. I can think of about five rooms in the world that hold pre print texts like that one does. It needs to be saved; perhaps the CoLP should be based on reading rooms and not on our convenient faculty lines.

Even asking the questions about ends and means, I submit, is a luxury many institutions can't afford. I have not done a survey, but I doubt if there is a History Department/Faculty in the country with a 30% increase in its budget. Nationally we are in a time of famine, of empty cuts. If you run your hands along the shelves of the John Rylands University at Manchester - the largest campus library in the UK - you can feel the point at which the famine started in the 1980s; it is like rings on a tree in a year of scarcity and they will never get the books back. We are fortunate in that famine has not struck us. It may do, as the near plight of the History Faculty suggests; as the pausing of the ROQ project also reminds us. At the moment, however, we have the enviable problem, and the dire responsibility, of a cup running over.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: I now call Dr Alice Prochaska. After Dr Prochaska has spoken, we will take a five-minute break after which I will call Professor Nicholas Cronk.

Dr Alice Prochaska, Principal of Somerville

I am the Principal of Somerville College and that is the college where the annotated library collections of J S Mill could perhaps help to shed some light on the necessity for the 'great increase of disinterested exertion' that was referred to earlier on.

I also come from a background where I have been privileged to work in more than one great scholarly library and for many years I was the University Librarian at Yale, a library even larger and more complicated than the Bodleian, if possible, and a library which is happily not shedding books. I just wish to give in support of my colleagues at Bodley, where I greatly esteem all that they have managed to achieve, some anecdotes from my own experience of library consultation.

How did one deal with the medievalists who wanted to find all their books in one place and complained with great justification that they were scattered between about six different library buildings and, at the same time, satisfy the needs of, for example, those who cherished the Slavic Studies Reading Room where all Slavic materials, including medieval books, were kept? We at one time had a large and rather unloved library named after its somewhat infelicitously named donor, a Mr Mudd, where all sorts of little used volumes were put in very difficult and close conjunction and when the Mudd library had to be demolished in order to make room for new student accommodation - not something that the library had any control over - I learned through consultation that the psychologists and the specialists in East Asian studies were highly perplexed by the fact that we thought we could move their collections in different directions. There is a lot of very important work on psychology done in East Asian journals, I learned.

Similarly, when building a new library for undergraduates and consulting with meetings of academics I was dismayed to discover one academic misconstruing the over enthusiasm of one of my library colleagues who was thrilled to be able to report that some of the multimedia collections that he had been putting together in a very learned and interesting way would in future be made available in this great new underground library. I was assaulted by one of my colleagues, a professor of English, because she foresaw that the library that we were designing with such care and consultation was going to be turned over entirely to multimedia. I rather was tempted to assert that no, of course, it was not going to be a multimedia

library, or not entirely, because we needed the lower floor for a spa. In fact, when the library opened and my fair minded friend and colleague first visited it she came to my office and said, 'I can't believe it; there are lots of books on the shelves.' So, good.

I know how much consultation goes into running a very, very complicated library on many different sites and I know that it is impossible to get a great research library to serve all of its users equally all of the time. Consultation has to flow in both directions, and quite a few other speakers have said that too, and I think perhaps the most important message that I take from my own experience is that consultation requires a common language. If the librarian speaks about collections then possibly that librarian may be referring not just to books but also to the manuscripts that formed the lifeblood of her early historical researches. That is certainly my case. So to say that not referring to books is somehow some terrible sin or that it implies over managerialism is to miss the point: we need a common language. We need the collaboration of which Richard Ovenden spoke earlier on and we need to make sure that consultation comes in both directions and in a friendly and constructive spirit to help the organisation that we all love.

VICE-CHANCELLOR: Professor Nicholas Cronk.

Professor Nicholas Cronk, Director of the Voltaire Foundation, St Edmund Hall

Mr Vice-Chancellor and colleagues, I would like to say something about issues of communication as they will affect libraries in the future, and I speak wearing two hats: as a Curator elected by Congregation and as a humanities researcher whose work depends crucially on the Bodleian Libraries. The discussions over the summer have been difficult - we have talked about them already today - but they have had a really positive effect. They have reminded us all how passionately we care about the libraries and it encouraged the Curators to think hard about ways we can further improve communication and collaboration between librarians and the different categories of readers. The Curators are about to propose to Council a series of changes to our present practices, in particular quite a radical overhaul of the way the CoLPs work, and I am confident this will make a very significant difference to how things proceed in future. And I think it will mean that some of us will have to devote more time, more systematic and regular time, to collaborating with library staff. We are all rightly proud

of Oxford's democratic structures and that means we have to be prepared also to put in the time to make those structures work effectively. It is essential that we get this right, because if good channels of communication between researchers and librarians are important now, they are going to be even more crucial as we go forward and that is briefly what I would like to talk about.

Take the example of building the collections. It is almost something we could take for granted. In the past, this amounted pretty much to deciding which books to buy, and that was that. In future these decisions will be much more complex and will increasingly require the input of readers and researchers. Resources will be available, both on paper and in digital form, with different purchasing options; we might need to join consortia in order to be able to afford certain deals; electronic resources are now being clustered into larger bundles by publishers, and thus difficult choices will have to be made about which resources suit our purposes and our purses. As these decisions become very, very much more complicated it will be crucial for all of us, as readers and researchers, to collaborate with our subject librarians to work out the best ways in which the collections can grow in our own best interests. This is an obligation on us perhaps but it is also an interesting opportunity.

Collegial collaboration will be essential too for the ways in which we, as humanities scholars, carry out and publish our research. We are all accustomed to the model of the single researcher working in the Bodleian to produce an article or book. That model will continue, of course it will – indeed, the library's commitment to that model will be powerfully reinforced when the beautiful purpose-built reading rooms for our special collections open in two years' time in the Weston Library. Going forward there will be other models too: humanities researchers will sometimes want to collaborate in projects. Oxford has unrivalled riches in its research collections and our collaborators may well in future include the academic staff in our libraries and museums. Many of these projects are likely to have a significant digital element and the Bodleian Libraries, going forward, will have an increasing role, not just in fostering research, but also in publishing it. The new appointment, for example, of an Associate Director for Digital Library Programmes is a bold step in that direction.

University libraries in the future will be increasingly at the heart of scholarly communication, and librarians and scholars will necessarily work more closely

together. The Mellon Foundation has just recognised this with its decision to appoint a professional university librarian, for the first time, to its board of trustees and the fact they have chosen Bodley's Librarian for this key role is a great compliment, to her, and to the reputation of all of us and of our libraries. We are all properly ambitious: ambitious to have the greatest university library in the world, and we should be, and ambitious to have the best humanities research programmes. Crucially, these twin ambitions will, in the years ahead, become increasingly interconnected as the libraries become less a static archive and more a dynamic laboratory for our research and for the diffusion of our research. This means there is a lot of change ahead but it is an exciting prospect. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: I now call Dr Philomen Probert.

Dr Philomen Probert, Wolfson, Faculty of Classics

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, recent events make it clear that those who take care of our libraries want to listen to readers and respond to our concerns. Readers' protests over the summer have been met with helpful responses and action. But for readers it often feels as if the way to understand what's about to happen is to wait until it's already happening and then, if we don't like it, to launch a protest. It would be more efficient for readers and library services if we could reach mutually acceptable decisions in advance.

Some have been blaming subject CoLPs for ineffectiveness. The Curators recognise that there's a problem here, and there's the will to do something about it. I welcome that very much. I don't at all think the problem lies with the hard-working individuals who serve on CoLPs; I think the problems are structural.

I've served on two subject CoLPs, and I chaired the Classics CoLP a few years ago. I've also served on rather a lot of other committees, and every other committee I've experienced has the remit either to make decisions on certain issues or make recommendations on certain issues. And if it's a recommending committee, it's clear which body will then consider the recommendations and make a final decision, and how those final decisions are then reported back to the recommending body. But I've come to the conclusion that a subject CoLP has no constitutional role at all – no remit either to decide anything, or to recommend anything. In my time on the Classics CoLP we did discuss lots of

issues, but we were never asked to come up with concrete recommendations, and the constitutional place of our discussions was opaque. I don't want to put this in an unseemly way, but it *felt* as if the CoLP was a forum for the library services to engage in 'consultation', and then to do whatever they felt like.

There's another aspect to the problem. The minutes of the subject CoLP go to the relevant faculty, and at the same time go to the divisional CoLP, and from there on up to the Curators. So, although a faculty gets the minutes of the subject CoLP, the faculty feels left out of the loop, because often the first anybody hears about a plan is at the subject CoLP, and by the time the minutes of that meeting are being considered by the faculty, those minutes are also making their way up the ladder through the divisional CoLP. A few years ago, when a particular plan made classicists very unhappy, we heard about it at the subject CoLP but, even so, all we felt we could do was to appeal to the people in our faculty with real clout, the really big guns, and those people then launched a big showdown with OULS. Again, that's not how we should all be doing things.

I think it would be really helpful if subject CoLPs were to make formal recommendations. But it also needs to be clear to whom those recommendations are being made. My suggestion is this: CoLPs consist of small groups of people to whom faculties delegate the business of thrashing out initial recommendations on library matters. It's appropriate for us to delegate that first line of thinking to a small group consisting of senior members, undergraduate and graduate representatives, and library staff. But each subject CoLP should be making formal recommendations to the relevant faculty; the faculty should then make its own recommendation, informed by the CoLP; and the faculty's recommendation should go up to the Curators. Personally, I would abolish the divisional CoLPs, and save all those hardworking people one afternoon per term.

That's just my suggestion. What's important is that CoLPs and faculties are part of a transparent process for reaching mutually acceptable decisions.

Libraries are a complex operation, decisions often affect multiple faculties, and faculties can't all have their way all the time. The Curators will need to make final decisions. The Curators are, of course, answerable to Congregation, and I know that they take that seriously. But nobody wants to be resorting to Congregation meetings, constantly, as a

way of sorting things out. The most efficient way of letting the Curators know the views of Congregation is to give the faculties a *real* part in the decision-making process. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Ralph Waller.

Dr Ralph Waller, Principal of Harris Manchester

Mr Vice-Chancellor, colleagues, we are living in a period of accelerating change. Twenty-four years ago, when I took up my present post, Harris Manchester College had one electric typewriter, one librarian with a part-time assistant and one catalogue card system, and not a computer in sight. Today we are awash with computers; indeed, like most colleges, we actually have a graveyard of obsolete ones too. We have two librarians, two IT officers and an online catalogue system. The old card index system is no longer kept up, much to my own sadness, but even I, who hate change, have come to realise that to maintain two parallel systems is a misuse of valuable resources.

Changes in the library world have come about because of the competing demands for resources and the changing in the very nature of information and how it is obtained. We have all benefited from some of these changes that we now take for granted. In the same way as a university is more about the people than the buildings, so too is a library more about the collections of materials than about reading rooms, so even if one building closes and another opens, the collection itself is what matters. In my time here the Faculty of Theology, for example, has been located in three different places: Pusey House, 41 St Giles' and now the Radcliffe Infirmary site. But what is important is that collections still exist and the library services continue to give valuable help in accessing that collection.

C T Oakes, writing as recently as 1986, defined a library as a room or building in which books are assembled and arranged in some way that will enable them to be more conveniently studied. Today we have come to realise that libraries exist in many forms: specialist collections, circulating collections, archives, digital material and born digital material such as ebooks; many of these do not depend on buildings. The nature and use of libraries is changing and we shall access some of those resources from the study and the home and the laptop and the mobile phone, as well, of course, as our much beloved reading rooms. So even the word 'library' is changing in meaning.

It is also worth remembering that libraries, by their very nature, are paragons of

organisation; how else would we ever find anything? Therefore, the changing of the stock, the moving of books, a new circulation system, can be hard on staff and readers alike. In 1934, the Cambridge University Library packed its entire contents into 23,725 boxes and moved them to a new site by horse and cart, which took 689 loads to complete the task. Now our librarians have overseen an even greater change than this, but the experience of all libraries is that, given time, they invariably become organised again. But we do need to be patient in times of change.

Over the last ten years, against this background of change, I have asked two questions at Principal's Collections to undergraduates and graduates three times a year. Firstly, 'Have you been provided with good library services by the college and by the University?' And secondly, 'Is there anything else we can do or anything we can do to make your life better?' As you can imagine, I have had some amusing answers to the second question but to the first question I have received nothing but a high level of praise for our libraries and their staff. I can recall no complaint over a ten-year period. We have in this University an outstanding Bodley's Librarian, and excellent library colleagues, whose hearts are in the right place and are doing their very best for the University and each of us while overseeing massive changes. Of course it is important for people to express their concerns and be heard, but, in these times of change, let's resolve to work with our librarians, let's resolve to support them, let's resolve to encourage them. For we in this great University know, perhaps better than most people, that the secret of education is discerning encouragement. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Professor Susan Cooper.

Professor Susan Cooper, former elected member of Council, St Catherine's, Department of Physics

This meeting results from problems in consultation and communication about the libraries but the problems affect much more. One irony is that in Trinity term a vacancy for an elected place on the Library Curators went unnoticed and no-one was nominated. The main blame here is on members of Congregation for not paying attention to their democracy, but, to be fair, our *Gazette* could win a prize for the most boring format. Surely it could be improved. Calling attention on the front cover to particularly important things, like elections or a Congregation discussion, brings some danger of bias in the decision of

what to highlight but would be better than a format that very few can force themselves through. Providing additional information for Congregation wide elections, such as whether an incumbent is eligible to stand for re-election, would be additional work for the administration but, I think, worth it in helping people to see where a vacancy really needs to be taken seriously.

Old-fashioned, you say, go online. Well, the Oxford homepage could win second prize for boring and at least the printed *Gazette* calls attention to itself by appearing weekly in your pigeonhole. However, the online *Gazette* could enhance our communications if, like many online newspapers, people could post comments to articles. Then you could easily make your concerns known; see if anyone else has similar, or other, concerns. The administration would get early notice of concerns and could quickly clear up simple misunderstandings. Today's Discussion could continue online. In addition, we could have an online forum, like Cambridge does, where any member can start a discussion on any issue. Consultations need to be open to all – not restricted to the hierarchy of standing committees, because issues can affect people who are not typically on committees.

There is something about being on a committee that puts people to sleep. The job covers a large range of issues, only some of which interest you. A person who is on one committee is probably put on several others and gets overloaded, while others, who are interested in a particular area, have no access, as most committees have no elected places to stand for. Council approves some committee appointments but, despite seven years on Council, I still don't know who comes up with the names or how. I have repeatedly suggested that there be an open call for volunteers and suggestions and at one point even the previous Vice-Chancellor agreed, but it doesn't happen.

Once on a committee, you're likely to find that your role is a passive one. Between meetings there is silence. Then a pile of papers comes shortly before the meeting, most written in a smooth form that calls for approval without drawing attention to any issues that concern the writer or subcommittees. There is no time to discuss things with colleagues outside the committee. The chair may open the committee with a hurried look and saying 'if we are disciplined we can get through this in an hour'. After the meeting it is unclear whether your role includes communicating results to colleagues in your faculty, so silence returns.

It would take work to turn these sentences around. Democracy does take work and needs support from both Congregation and the administration. We need two-way communication if we are to collaborate, including on operational matters without which no grand strategy is of any use to scholars. I have been making these suggestions for years. If you agree, or have other ideas, Oxford needs your input. As things stand, I don't know how you should give it. We need some leadership on this. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Professor David De Roure.

Professor David De Roure, Director of the Oxford e-Research Centre, Wolfson

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, the practices of scholarship and learning are increasingly enhanced by the adoption of digital approaches. Today's scholars have the opportunity to use a wealth of online information and tools with new techniques and methods assisted by computer. These facilitate our scholarly endeavours, and sometimes make research possible that simply could not be achieved otherwise – from decoding the world's oldest undeciphered writing system, to more recent studies of intertextuality into the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Republic of Letters, and the transcription of papyri and musical scores through Oxford's world-leading citizen science capabilities.

Innovation in scholarly practice occurs throughout Oxford. For example, our interdisciplinary e-Research Centre brings research expertise and advanced ICT to the practice of digital scholarship – from text and image to 'Big Data', across a diversity of disciplinary challenges (archaeology, astronomy, biology, classics, climate change, energy, engineering, materials, musicology and neuroscience – that is half the alphabet but I fear the amber light) and from supercomputing to smartphones. For the last three years the centre has also led a national programme of Digital Social Research as scholarship in social science establishes digital methods and worked with new sources of data to achieve novel insights into our increasingly digital society.

The e-Research Centre is just part of a constellation of activities in Oxford helping scholars realise the assistive and transformative opportunities of digital information systems and in which the library has a leading role. We also enjoy collaboration with the Oxford Internet Institute, the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities, IT Services and many of our

academic departments (our citizen science comes from astrophysics, for example), colleges, museums and the Press. These are centres with international profile, digital scholarships and global enterprise.

The library's digital role and capability – for scholar and librarian alike – is fundamental to today's researcher and even more so tomorrow's. Our Bodleian colleagues have already embraced this agenda and indeed have a significant role and reputation in setting that agenda within Oxford and on the national and international stages. Clearly our consideration of the future of the library should sustain that position of leadership in digital scholarship. This vision is complementary to the crucial role the libraries play in looking after our books and special collections, but is also an important extension of it as the skills of librarianship extend critically into the arena of digital collections, preservation, curation and access, in looking after our digital intellectual assets, old and new.

However, I wish to push this a step further. I believe we have an exciting opportunity before us by bringing together the innovators in digital scholarship in Oxford: drawing together expertise in digital research and its methodologies and our providers of digital services. The collaboration of the Bodleian with the other centres presents a compelling and incredibly distinctive capability which benefits the Oxford scholar and is set to have a significant influence on the rapidly evolving international stage.

So as we move forward I propose then we formalise such a collaboration within the University. Its objectives would be to advance digital scholarship, to benefit the scholar in working with our outstanding collections and to facilitate international collaboration in advancing digital scholarship and librarianship. This is not a vision for the library alone but for a powerful symbiosis in which the future library has a crucial role – the conduit through which individual researchers and centres can move digitally assisted research forward – providing insights that will in turn inform the long term evolution of libraries around the world.

So in short, we are already very good at this. Let us make more of it, put a sign up and realise the library's enormous potential and vital role in advancing scholarship in the digital age. This will undoubtedly go a long way to defining the future of the library but also has a lot to say about the future of scholarship here in Oxford.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Brian Ward Perkins.

Dr Bryan Ward-Perkins, Trinity, Faculty of History

Mr Vice-Chancellor, fellow members of Congregation, the background to what I am going to say is that I have been a researcher, and then a teacher, in Oxford for over 40 years and for several of which, in recent years, I have been a Curator of the Bodleian Libraries and Chair of the Humanities CoLP, the CoLP that Philomena wants to abolish. I do, by the way, remember her rather sceptical face at our meetings. I have therefore seen the issues facing our libraries from a number of different perspectives and been introduced to the full complexity of library provision in the early twenty-first century.

These experiences have fostered in me a deep sympathy with librarians. They face impossible challenges. First, providing us, the readers, with what we want in terms of materials, both in print and online, and in terms of reading rooms, whether we are visiting researchers to the special collections, senior academics, young postdocs, graduates or undergraduates, and whether we are from the Natural Sciences, the Social Sciences or the Humanities – all these groups with very different needs. Secondly, meeting the demands of us, the University, to eliminate a deficit and shave nearly 10% off the annual budget – and I remind you that we are in the third year of that cut. Thirdly, to do all this at a time of spiralling online and print inflation, an ever-increasing flood of both print publication and electronic resources, and the requirements in some subjects to duplicate print and online materials, and when we are being compelled by the rising expectations for conservation and storage to completely rebuild our special collections library! These are circles that quite simply cannot all be squared to the immediate satisfaction of everyone.

The main point I would like to make this afternoon is an appeal to my academic colleagues to better understand these conflicting pressures, to realise that our own particular use of the libraries is only one of many (all of which are important), and – above all – to treat our librarians as colleagues, on the same side as us, and deserving our respect. This afternoon's debate has been studiously polite and genuinely very helpful all round. But not all the emails and face-to-face communications from academics to librarians have been so careful – they have, on occasion, strayed into the territory of the bullying. This is

straightforwardly unacceptable: librarians get hurt and they are not allowed to answer back.

I would also like to point out that the most serious problems that we face in library provision are within our, the collegiate University's, power to emend, not that of the librarians'. Primarily, of course, the budget. If we ended retention payments and professorial salary increases, and reduced the number of academic posts that we consider essential, we could reverse the 10% cut on the libraries; if we did the impossible – centralised the resources currently allocated to college libraries – we could have the best University library in the world. Almost all the recent unhappiness with library provision has come from the Humanities and here, of course, the strikingly absent elephant in this room is the unbuilt library in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. If we found the vision and the money to build, we could improve synergies between subjects, reduce costs, and take much of the hustle and bustle out of the central Bodleian site. Our librarians remain committed to this vision; can we see it through? It is up to us.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr David Shotton.

Dr David Shotton, Wolfson, Department of Zoology

Mr Vice-Chancellor, fellow members of Congregation, I am one of those rare creatures here today, a research scientist. As such, the web is now the universal platform for my research and for scholarly communication and I have spent the last two days at the Wellcome Trust in London participating in the Science Online 2012 Conference, where discussion focused around online tools and services to support and assist scholarship built over openly accessible publications and research datasets. So I want, this afternoon, to talk briefly about possible services, and tools that the Bodleian can establish to enrich what we have already.

We have already heard a classical dictionary definition of a library as a building containing collections of books and periodicals for use or borrowing, or words to that effect. However, my definition of a library is quite different. I think of a library as an institution that facilitates access to scholarly information, and I conceive of librarians as the knowledge navigators of the twenty-first century, guiding academics through this new world of online scholarship.

Now, of course, the Bodleian is already a hotbed of digital innovation under the hood

and has a long list of digital services and projects. In particular, we have both the Oxford Research Archive and the Oxford DataBank, our digital repositories for documents and datasets. Both of these store their metadata – the descriptions of their holdings – using semantic web technologies, giving these descriptions unambiguous meaning that can be processed and integrated automatically by computer. But we need to take this further as part of a wider move to what Wolfram Horstmann – the Associate Director for Digital Library Programmes and Information Technologies who has already been acknowledged this afternoon – to what he calls 'Semantic Oxford'.

So I have five recommendations for today's librarians, for our twenty-first-century knowledge navigators. The first is to play a key role in promoting open access, administering funds that we are getting to pay for gold open-access publications in journals but in doing so to insist on true full libre open access, giving freedom to reuse and to mine the text, rather than just gratis open access which gives you freedom to eyeball it but not do anything with it, such as is currently practised by Elsevier and many other publishers. Then, using the Bodleian's considerable negotiating muscle, I think we should try to negotiate new contracts that bundle journal subscriptions with agreements to provide full gold open access for all Oxford papers in those journals.

Second, we must adopt wholeheartedly the web as the platform, acknowledging that electronic resources will become the norm and that card index descriptions must give way to rich, faceted browse and semantic search capabilities. In particular we must employ semantic web technologies wherever appropriate, and the Bodleian should aim to become a major player in the scholarly Linked Data world, following the lead of the British Library, the US Library of Congress and the National Libraries of Canada, Australia and Germany, who have all adopted Linked Data principles and opened their catalogues to the world.

Fourthly, we must embrace data. We must realise that our libraries must become data centres as well as text centres and, more importantly, that we must become major publishers of the data, the information, the knowledge produced by Oxford scholars: a new role for the libraries which hitherto have primarily acted to receive information from third parties elsewhere.

And finally, we should develop a new service, a service that I have called OxWorks. That will provide authoritative

documentation about all scholarly output from Oxford University members and publish this information as Open Linked Data, for use both by the scholarly global community and more particularly by ourselves. This should have sophisticated search, browse and visualisation capabilities along several semantic axes, including publication year, citation record, academic role, departmental affiliation, co-author network, geographical location and so on. There are services that exist already –

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Shotton, could you wind up, please.

Dr David Shotton: Yes. Google Scholar and Thomson Reuter's Web of Knowledge are incomplete and erroneous in the data they have and rather, if we develop an OxWorks service, we will provide a better service to our scholars. And we must not forget the humanities scholars for whom original texts are their research materials, albeit increasingly online. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Dr Kate Tunstall.

Dr Kate Tunstall, Worcester, Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Mr Vice-Chancellor, members of Congregation, last time I spoke at this gathering it was at the vote of no confidence in the Minister for the Universities and his policy of 'putting the student at the heart of the system'. On that day, most of us observed that we had never met a student who wanted to be put at the heart of the system that Willetts was proposing and which has now been implemented. I feel something similar about the reader that is sometimes being imagined in parts of the proposed and implemented system for Oxford's libraries.

I have never met a reader who does not want a desk to work at, meaning you don't have to lean your computer on top of the book on your lap thereby bending the spine, resulting in its being sent for repair and being made temporarily unavailable to other readers. And that is quite apart from what it does to your own spine. Nor have I ever met a reader who does not come to the library for a quiet place to work. Last time, that is, the first and last time, I had a conversation in the Gladstone Link conversation area, a student made the noise at me usually associated with librarians. She shshed me. She was right. Oxford is full of conversation areas. Outside the library it is one big conversation area.

I wonder how the shshing student might feel about the recent Library Quality Lite customer survey, I mean reader survey.

My sense is that she would, as one of my colleagues did, take the question that asks us to rate the Bodleian as a place for 'group learning' as more of a threat than anything else. On the survey's FAQ page, which is where you go if you are, as I was, unable to collaborate with the survey's terms of reference, you discover that what it is imagined you might be irritated about is... cue drum roll... that the survey is spelled in American English. That is to say, you are constructed as parochial and as a pedant.

Actually, I couldn't care less about the spelling. I do care that I am obliged to answer every question or my response gets refused. And the first question asked me to rate on a scale of one to ten how the Bodleian met my needs for 'electronic/printed journals', which I can't answer for fear of endorsing the claim that electronic and print are equivalent, which, to a humanities scholar, they are not. (I also discovered from the survey that Oxford's Health Care Libraries have been renamed 'The Bodleian Knowledge Centre', which tells you all you need to know about how the humanities are now being envisaged.) As for my being asked to rate my need for 'caring library staff', the question is an insult to the knowing librarians who have already been issued with badges saying 'We're here to help'. Just imagine the Vice-Chancellor issuing the lecturers with badges.

What the survey and others of its kind do, however they are spelt and even if they ask decent questions, which this one does not, is isolate us from each other. Each reader is asked what he or she wants, or, rather, gets to evaluate, alone in front of her screen, someone else's badly informed and occasionally insulting projections of what she might want, and once the survey centre has received all that information it gets to tell us what it was we wanted. It is called consultancy, I mean, consultation.

Libraries have long been a place of protest. In November 2009 the Radcliffe Camera was occupied by students protesting at the tripling of the tuition fees and at their transformation into customers. Its image has since been tarnished. Incentivised by money from the James Martin Institute for the Study of the Last Ten Years or So the History Faculty put its narrowly conceived local interest before that of the academic community as a whole, as well as that of some of its own members, and took up residence there with some of the disastrous consequences that others have already described and it is inconceivable that other faculties will not be subject eventually to the same kinds of pressure.

So that's why we are here. We would be pleased to have librarians shush us in the library, but we would rather not be shushed about the libraries. And though we don't want conversation areas in the library, that doesn't mean we don't want to talk to each other. And though we don't all want 'group study', that doesn't mean we are not a collective. The current policy invites us to disaggregate in silence; but we are congregating.

So what do we in the Humanities want? Faculty libraries for our undergraduates. With desks in them. And multiple copies of borrowable books. Research libraries. With desks in them. And reading rooms. With shelves. That have non-borrowable books on them and print journals. And an end to any downgrading and dematerialising of the Humanities in the libraries of the University of Oxford. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: That brings us to the end of the listed speakers. Are there any other members of the Congregation who wish to speak this afternoon? If not, then may I call upon Professor Walmsley to make final points and conclude the discussion.

Professor Ian Walmsley

Mr Vice-Chancellor, this Congregation discussion has, I think, recognised the weight of issues involved in approaching talking about, and planning for the future of, as venerable an institution as the Bodleian libraries. As chair of Curators, and I should say as an American citizen and therefore a part-time American speller, I am pleased by the good intentions of all parties and a desire to engage in substantive discussions over priorities, governance and funding.

We have heard several times this afternoon the idea of the libraries in terms of an ecosystem and I think that metaphor is a good one because it is in a sense a microcosm of the University as an ecosystem of ideas. Professor Doherty has pointed out that ecosystems require diversity in order to survive and recognised that that induces complexity, from the number of readers we have to their diverse types: students to senior academics. Indeed, ink versus electronic; I am both old school and new school.

Professors De Roure and Shotton have painted a vision of digital scholarship based on Dr Ovenden's idea of collaboration and I am particularly taken by the hint that Dr Prochaska has given us as to how we might incorporate a spa into the whole setup as well. But, importantly, ecosystems do not survive if the environment changes too rapidly. They don't survive if they are

too small and they don't survive if they fail to change. A key message that many speakers have brought forth this afternoon is the idea of improving dialogue. Ms Cairncross pointed us first to the notion of informed debate, proposals by Professor Cronk and Professor Probert for revision of the processes by which the Curators and the CoLPs engage with the University community. Professor Cooper has rightly reminded us that we need to pay attention to our democracy if we are to make it work properly. And through all this we must recognise that not all of our wishes will be fulfilled but optimally our current and future needs will be properly identified, prioritised and met.

Dr Leyser has pointed out to us that we should not forget that responsibility flows from success and Mr Ward-Perkins that we are in a very fortunate position with respect to many institutions. So let us engage in future collaboration to define the future of our libraries, mindful of our privileged position as academics at the University of Oxford.

THE VICE-CHANCELLOR: Members of Congregation, that concludes this afternoon's discussion; may I thank all of you for participating. Thank you.