

Librarian Liaisons: Facilitating Multi-Disciplinary Research for Academic Advancement

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Abstract : In the ever-evolving landscape of academia, the traditional role of the librarian has undergone a remarkable transformation. Once considered as custodians of books and gatekeepers of information, librarians have the potential to take on the vital role of facilitators of cross and inter-disciplinary projects. This shift is driven by the growing recognition of the value of interdisciplinary collaboration in addressing complex research questions in pursuit of novel solutions to real-world problems. This paper shall explore the potential of the academic librarian's role in facilitating innovative, multi-disciplinary projects, both recognising and validating the vital role that the librarian plays in a somewhat underplayed profession. Academic libraries support teaching, the strengthening of knowledge discourse, and, potentially, the development of innovative practices. As the role of the library gradually morphs from a quiet repository of books to a community-based information hub, a potential opportunity arises. The academic librarian's role is to build knowledge across a wide span of topics, from the advancement of AI to subject-specific information, and, whilst librarians are generally not offered the research opportunities and funding that the traditional academic disciplines enjoy, they are often invited to help build research in support of the academic. This identifies that one of the primary skills of any 21st-century librarian must be the ability to collaborate and facilitate multi-disciplinary projects. In universities seeking to develop research diversity and academic performance, there is an increasing awareness of the need for collaboration between faculties to enable novel directions and advancements. This idea has been documented and discussed by several researchers; however, there is not a great deal of literature available from recent studies. Having a team based in the library that is adept at creating effective collaborative partnerships is valuable for any academic institution. This paper outlines the development of such a project, initiated within and around an identified library-specific need: the replication of fragile special collections for object-based learning. The research was developed as a multi-disciplinary project involving the faculties of engineering (digital twins lab), architecture, design, and education. Centred around methods for developing a fragile archive into a series of tactile objects furthers knowledge and understanding in both the role of the library as a facilitator of projects, chairing and supporting, alongside contributing to the research process and innovating ideas through the bank of knowledge found amongst the staff and their liaising capabilities. This paper shall present the method of project development from the initiation of ideas to the development of prototypes and dissemination of the objects to teaching departments for analysis. The exact replication of artefacts is also balanced with the adaptation and evolutionary speculations initiated by the design team when adapted as a teaching studio method. The dynamic response required from the library to generate and facilitate these multi-disciplinary projects highlights the information expertise and liaison skills that the librarian possesses. As academia embraces this evolution, the potential for groundbreaking discoveries and innovative solutions across disciplines becomes increasingly attainable.

Keywords : Liaison librarian, multi-disciplinary collaborations, library innovations, librarian stakeholders

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