




# Convergence

Anne Poulson & Gary Horrocks



**Convergence**



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[www.kcl.ac.uk](http://www.kcl.ac.uk)

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*"It is the rare library that exists in a vacuum; most are part of a system... which requires interaction and cooperative activity. In order to best serve those who need them, libraries must cooperate widely with entities other than themselves."*

*2004; 'Resource Sharing & Information Networks'*

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### Socio-Economic Drivers

- Coherence, consistency & high quality
- UK Government White Paper
- 'Browne Review' of higher education funding & student finance
- New funding dynamic: up to £9K a year tuition fees
- Consumer ethos, market focus, return on investment
- Joined-up thinking and Professional Services collaboration
- Student Support Services integral to the 'student journey'

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### IT or not IT: Pros

- IT and information landscapes intrinsically linked
- Library users see no distinction between web, portals & VLEs
- Rich digital presence enabled by IT
- Convergence offers collaboration, staff development, logical career pathways
- Core enterprise applications, identity management, licensing managed more effectively

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### IT or not IT: Cons

- IT is an enabler that underpins business processes; Library Services inform and contribute to them
- Library as a brand is respected; less so IT where major incidents can impact on reputation
- Profile of Library Service can diminish in the face of high profile IT project investment
- Transition to 'cloud computing' may make reliance on IT departments less essential?
- Collaboration is just as effective as convergence, but negotiation skills are required in order to stay at the front of the business critical project priority queue when you are 'just another customer'

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### Space

- Engagement with Campus learning and teaching space strategy crucial
- Flexible and imaginative use of space required to create technology-intensive libraries & learning environments
- Convergence through co-location of front-line services at King's College London
- Innovations in student computing and pervasive mobile technologies
- Holistic approach to space re-design: whole building as a learning resource

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## Changing Face of Subject Librarian

- Emerging new skills set
- Outreach and customer relationship management
- Expectations management
- Contributing to business-critical strategies
- Research Management
- Teaching & learning Support

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## Research Management

- Research Libraries UK (RLUK) 'Re-skilling for Research' – January 2012 - addresses the changing needs of researchers and its impact on liaison librarians
- Optimising data management
- Digital storage and back-up
- Enterprise content management
- Researcher profiles
- Bibliometric analysis
- Research evaluation
- Graduate researcher development
- Research Excellence Framework

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## Teaching & Learning Support

- Technology-enhanced learning
- Virtual Learning Environments
- Electronic resources underpin electronic learning: online reading lists, digital course pack management...
- Copyright advice
- Academic study skills & Plagiarism support

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## Super-Convergence

- Integration of all student services in order to streamline provision
- Total amalgamation of organisational structure and business processes embraces IT, Library, AV, Careers, student welfare, counselling, finance...
- Library as obvious home for these 'hubs'
- Multiplicity of models
- Reduces the pressure on academics to navigate complex teams

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## Super-Convergence@King's

- Top 30 world universities; 23,500 students from over 140 countries
- De-convergence of Library & IT Services formed part of much wider super-convergence of student-facing services early in 2011
- Registry, quality assurance, governance & legal compliance, student administration and student services (including libraries)
- One single entity of contact and accountability
- Seamless ownership for the student lifecycle and student life
- To act as filter between academic and student requirements and corporate directorates

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## Super-Convergence@King's

- Transparency and joined-up business planning
- For students: one clear point of responsibility for their student journey
- Academic benefits: clearer understanding of professional services and less seen as complex, unwieldy, expensive & irrelevant
- For Professional Services within the Directorate
  - Shared and improved understanding and knowledge across boundaries of what we offer to students
  - Opportunity to move between roles and "professions"
  - Real credible flexible and multi-skilled roles
- However need to streamline frontline processes and historic HR anomalies

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## Integrated Student Services@King's

- Blue print outlining vision for all front-facing student services
- Co-located model: Library and Student Services based in each campus library
- Notion of one single desk to serve such a complex and dynamic demographic rejected, BUT...
- All front-facing staff trained in core tasks to ensure multi-tasking, efficiency and consistency of experience
- Shared culture and shared values

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## Integrated Student Service Work Streams

- Four key work streams
  - Query resolution: online self-help environment where students can log and track queries
  - HR: revised terms and conditions to enable flexible working; revised JDs and competency based profiles
  - Service Catalogue: transparent portfolio of all frontline services with referral guidelines to specialist tiers
  - Workforce development: drive convergence and change management through training programme: up-skill, re-skill, multi-task and motivate

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## Conclusions (1)

- Convergence is a fact of life in HEIs regardless of their organisational structure
- Many HEIs have developed converged working practices to respond to the demand for seamless, intuitive access to resources and services
- The drive to improve the student experience requires collaboration and converged thinking; but not necessarily a totally converged organisational structure
- Library services interface with external relations, marketing, HR, estates & facilities, research management and HR is as important as that with the academic community

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# Convergence

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## Conclusions (2)

- Drive to compete, articulate an institutional brand and USP in the HE market place is driving convergence and service design
- Shared services agenda is initiating a radical new form of cross sectoral convergence
- In the shared services world there are still many questions around operational and managerial structures, service level agreements, logistics of distributed service delivery and the dilution of individuality and competitive edge
- AMOSSHE, the Student Service Organisation in the UK is leading on the value & impact agenda: more work has to be done to develop and evidence base and measure the success of convergence

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