

Taiga Forum Steering Committee



Taiga Forum Provocative Statements

March 10, 2006

All statements are prefaced by “Within the next five years...”

1. traditional library organizational structures will no longer be functional. Reference and catalog librarians as we know them today will no longer exist. Technical services and public services will have merged into a new group called “consulting [something]”. Public services and instructional technology, wherever it exists, will have merged or will no longer exist.
2. libraries will have reduced the physical footprint of the physical collection within the library proper by at least 50 percent. Support services see similar reductions and these changes impact the national libraries as well (they are probably merged).
3. the majority of reference questions will be answered through Google Answer or something like it. There will no longer be reference desks or reference offices in the library. Instead, public services staff offices will be located outside the physical library. Metasearching will render reference librarians obsolete.
4. all information discovery will begin at Google, including discovery of library resources. The continuing disaggregation of content from its original container will cause a revolution in resource discovery.
5. a large number of libraries will no longer have local OPACs. Instead, we will have entered a new age of data consolidation (either shared catalogs or catalogs that are integrated into discovery tools), both of our catalogs and our collections. The ERM system and the ILS will be one and discovery will be outsourced.
6. there will no longer be a monolithic library Web site. Instead, library data will be pushed out to many starting places on the Web and directly to users.
7. academic computing and libraries will have merged. The library will be a partner in the Learning and Research Support Services Infrastructure. Its value will depend on its ability to reallocate resources to new curation, workflow, and resource specialization services.
8. there will be no more librarians as we know them. Staff may have MBAs or be computer/data scientists. All library staff will need the technical skills equivalent to today’s systems and web services personnel. The ever-increasing technology curve will precipitate a high turnover among traditional librarians; the average age of library staff will have dropped to 28.



9. publishers and intermediaries will have changed dramatically. Many small and scholarly publishers will fold. Subscription agents and book vendors will have new business models. Dissemination of non-STM serials and books will no longer be commercially viable.
10. e-books and e-book readers will be ubiquitous. Standards will have magically made this possible. Hand helds will be ubiquitous and library resources will need to be accessible to these devices to meet user needs.
11. simple aggregation of resources will not be enough. They have to be specialized for constituency use and projected into user environments (my.yahoo, e-portfolio, CMS, RSS aggregator). Workflow replaces database and website as the primary locus of attention. The library role is to project specialized services into research and learning workflows.
12. 'Intermediate environments' will be as important as consumers of library services as end-users. Intermediate consumers are environments in which users construct workflow and digital identity. RSS aggregators, course management systems, uPortal, my.yahoo, flickr, myspace, Microsoft Research Task Pane, etc.
13. libraries will provide shared curation services for important portions of the cultural, scholarly, historic and institutional record. This will move from ad hoc, sub optimal project working to a collaborative strategy, a shared approach.
14. research support services will become routine. The institutional repository will be one set of services within the wider set of services that assist in the researcher and research administration workflow.
15. the library community recognizes the debilitating fragmentation of its collaborative structures and consolidates around fewer targeted initiatives and organizations. This is driven by the recognition that system-wide efficiencies need to drive local improvement.