

**Encountering the Idea of the University in the Library:
New Meldings of Metaphor, Methodology, and Theory
in Qualitative Inquiry**

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. No content generated by generative AI tools has been used in the preparation of this thesis. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

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Fiona Salisbury

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ABSTRACT

The idea of the university is an irrepressible concept. The literature debates its universal themes—such as knowledge, intellectual development, and human and social progress—often with foundational concepts recirculating as new ideas emerge. In this search for a contemporary idea of the university, several things are noticeable. First, while the idea of the university should be relevant to all members of the university community, the literature is dominated by academic voices; second, there is a relationship between the university as idea and institution; and third, there is a rich metaphoricity in how ideas of the university are expressed. The contention in this thesis is that all voices are needed in developing the idea of the university. In this research, I bring a different group in the university community—librarians—into dialogue with the idea of the university and pursue an inquiry into how they imagine the idea through metaphor.

What are librarians' ideas of the university? In interviews and a survey, I prompt library staff in four Australian universities to voice their ideas of the university and the library through metaphor, and I ask them to describe how what they express figuratively, relates to their practice. Their imaginaries make clear that the library and university are entangled ideas. An iterative approach to metaphor analysis involving a combination of qualitative methodologies shows three patterns of entanglement: the library and university as intertwined ideas, as ideas in tension, and as a set of echoing ideas. Finding meaning in these connections demands engaging with theories that match the complexity in each pattern of entanglement. Idea Portraits are introduced as a tool for investigating these patterns because they encourage thinking with theory and bring into view new perspectives that would otherwise remain hidden. In doing so, this research widens the debate on evolving ideas of the university. It establishes the value of research informed by librarians' voices to relate the university as idea and institution. And by taking the debate to the library it lays the groundwork for librarians to consider the direction their practice might take if they engage intentionally with the idea of the university. This research also shows that in the liminal space between metaphors and ideas, different theories open up the encounters that are possible. It provides evidence that encounters with the idea of the university can be richer and enlarged through new meldings of metaphor, methodology, and theory in qualitative inquiry.

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I designed the approach, analysed the data, surveyed the literature, wrote the drafts of the MS, and responded to feedback.

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As supervisor for the candidature upon which this thesis is based, I can confirm that the authorship attribution statements above are correct.

Tai Peseta

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CHAPTER 1: EVERYONE HAS AN IDEA OF THE UNIVERSITY

1.1 Why do Ideas of the University Matter?

What are our ideas of the university? Why do they matter? Where do they come from? Our first encounter with the university as an idea, of one kind or another, often happens long before we might experience the reality of higher education for ourselves. I can still remember my mother, who had never been to university, eagerly describing it to me as a small town with two seemingly unrelated features. In her mind, it was, firstly, a locale with its own shops and post office, and secondly, a place where everyone was interested in learning and books. I was charmed by her description. And as a newly enrolled undergraduate, I was not disappointed; it did indeed have its own post office (even its own postcode). Most everyone was interested in learning. And there were libraries full of books. I do not know where my mother got her Idea of the University¹ or whether she was inspired by fact or fiction, but in her Idea, was the beginning of my Idea. In time, however, my adolescent understanding of the university proved to be incomplete, untested, unscholarly, and on reflection based on the functions of the university as institution. But as an idea of sorts, it was affecting. It had drawing power. It had potential for enlargement.

My introduction to the Idea of the University as a scholarly phenomenon came about when I started work as a librarian at a university residential college named after the author of *The Idea of the University*: John Henry Newman. By then, I had been a librarian for over a decade, with a focus on developing library programs to give university students opportunities to develop information literacy and research skills. I had not thought much about the Idea, let

¹ Hereafter, the notion of the “Idea of the University” is capitalised or simply referred to as the “Idea.”

alone how it related to my professional practice, but on discovering Newman’s discourses, I was attracted to his interweaving of the Idea of the University, knowledge, and university libraries.² Moving from Newman College to a comprehensive research-intensive university, I became more interested in how to meaningfully connect the Idea and higher education theory and philosophy on the one hand, and ideas of the library and professional practice on the other. I wondered why librarians, as university professionals, were not more involved in discussing the Idea and what difference it would make to our professional practice—and how we position the library in the university—if we engaged in the debate on the Idea and its current and future form.

Librarians do not engage enough with the Idea of the University as a phenomenon and a scholarly debate. This claim might cause an intake of breath because it does not logically follow that librarians, as trusted custodians of the library—often described as at the very heart of the university—are not conversant with the Idea. But as curious as it might sound, this is what I have observed in my experience as a librarian. A reading of the higher education and library literature provides evidence of the veracity of this reflection. While the Idea of the University has been discussed for some time (Barnett, 2016; Cameron, 1978; Jaspers, 1965; Kerr, 2001; Newman, 1996; Nixon, 2011; Pelikan, 1992; Peters & Barnett, 2018a, 2018b; Readings, 1996; Tight, 2024), the dominance of academic voices in this debate leaves other voices silent. Notably, librarians’ voices, like those of other university professional staff, are

² In the national and international higher education environment, libraries are variously referred to as a “university library,” an “academic library,” or a “research library.” Librarians in universities in Australia most commonly use the term “academic library,” and refer to themselves as “academic librarians.” They use these terms in publications and in practice. In the data collection phase of this research, I often used the terms “academic library” and “academic librarians.” For simplicity throughout this thesis, however, unless otherwise indicated, the term “library” refers to a library in a university which supports the learning, teaching, and research activities of the institution. Likewise, “librarian” refers to professional staff who work in a library in a university.

missing (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008; Tight, 2024). But even if an argument about librarians' exclusion from this conversation or their lack of engagement with the Idea is accepted, there might still be a question about why attention to this Idea by librarians even matters. In this thesis, I put forward that all our individual and collective ideas of the university are important; and they matter not only in the university community but in society as a whole. For librarians, the Idea must matter, not least because there is a continuity in the relationship between the university and the library that suggests an intimate attachment—the library is of the university. Therefore, the Idea of the University holds meaning and opportunities for the future idea of the library.

Librarians' concerns for the future often focus on positioning the library in the university to maintain its relevance to learning and research. Many perceive that libraries are taken for granted and at risk of losing their metaphorical or actual positioning at the heart of the campus (Cox, 2018). It could be argued that this is reason enough for librarians to pay attention to the Idea of the University. The Idea, in effect, is an abundant positioning strategy for the library, and engaging with it has the potential for enlarging two ideas—university and library.

The future durability of the Idea of the University depends on widening the debate to everyone in the university community. As yet, librarians have not responded to calls for more voices to be involved (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008; Tight, 2024). It, therefore, seems timely for librarians to intentionally take up the invitation, join the debate, and participate in the dialogue as part of shaping the Idea. With this contention as the starting point for this thesis, I aim to uncover librarians' ideas of the university and, in doing so, give voice to a professional perspective: to put forward a character study and portrait of an idea in flux, an idea with implications for everyone in the university.

1.2 Who is Thinking About the Idea of the University?

The Idea of the University is a phenomenon, one with a long history of constantly being made, unmade, and remade in our individual and collective imaginations. The extended conversation about the Idea underpins and influences personal and communal decisions, public choices, and policy about what the university is and might be for its own and broader communities. Importantly, this discourse reveals that the Idea of the University is not a single notion but a multitude of overlapping concepts and practices that show up in the expression of abstract concepts and ideals, as well as the practices that constitute institutional reality (Barnett, 2016). Barnett (2016) suggests that there is an interaction between the university as idea and the university as institution in that:

the university as an institution draws, if only tacitly, on ideas of the university; *and* ideas of the university characteristically draw much of their inspiration from the university qua institution (whether the university as it has been historically, is now or as it might be in the future; and whether to endorse a past or present form or to be critical of it). (p. 4)

What is clear is that the university is subject to constant academic interpretation and reinterpretation, and these accounts are full of contradictions: full of both pessimism and promise.

The modern university as an institution can be traced from classical to early medieval to contemporary forms. Its history is continually retold and kept alive in the retelling. Over the last two hundred years, aspects of this history have informed the evolving debate about the Idea of the University (Himanka, 2015; Hofstetter, 2001; Köddermann, 1995; MacIntyre, 2009; Minogue, 1973; Scott, 2006). Barnett (2011) has commented that universities are at once anchored in time and space as institutions “being” and operating in the real world and a multiplicity of ideas in a constant state of “becoming” (p. 2). Academic accounts “explore the

Idea and its form, reception, and influence through key tropes” (Salisbury & Peseta, 2018, p. 244). These accounts are rich in interconnected concepts, references to prominent archetypes, philosophers, and historical models, not to mention tensions between established and new ideas. Perhaps the most challenging characteristic of the Idea is its fluid nature and the number of ideas in circulation. This means that ongoing tensions between the Idea and institutional reality persist (Collini, 2012; Jaspers, 1965). Such tensions can represent either a state of crisis (Bauman, 1997; Biesta, 2011; Peters, 2010; Readings, 1996; Scott, 1984) or a reclaiming of the “practical and transcendent” in the Idea and a redefining of its essence (Pavlenko & Bojan, 2014, p. 97). The search for a contemporary Idea is a dialogue that swings like a pendulum between being considered surprisingly narrow (Barnett, 2013; Davis, 2017) and widening to incorporate new future-focused concepts:

the current oppositional ideas of the university enlist in support concepts such as those of wellbeing, care, otherness (alterity), the public sphere and the global community. And so the conceptual base of the idea of the university is being widened. (Peters & Barnett, 2018a, p. xxix)

Whether the idea is, in fact, widening or contracting, continues to be debated. Certainly, as academics’ ideas of the university continue to proliferate, it makes sense to extend this task of enlargement to all groups in the university community.

1.3 The Metaphoricity of the Idea of the University

What is noticeable in the search for a contemporary Idea of the University is the metaphoricity of the language used in this pursuit. A premise of this thesis is that the Idea needs to be constantly reimagined, and therefore, engaging with the Idea needs an imaginative response. Reaching for metaphor is a natural and creative response to a contested and expanding idea, and academics’ deliberations on the university are rich with metaphors.

1.3.1 What is Metaphor?

A simple definition of metaphor is that it is a linguistic device that embellishes communication by comparing one object to another. In this definition, metaphor is understood as linguistic symbolism and comparison, a substitute for literal language, or an act of substitution that is a “displacement and an extension of the meaning of words” (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 3). Other accounts of metaphor are that it is an interaction (Black, 1962a, 1977) or a conceptual and conventional part of everyday thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). What is not disputed in these various accounts is the importance of metaphor to human communication and thought, in that it can reveal meaning that literal language cannot express. Metaphor uncovers meaning. It leads to a deeper understanding and knowledge of an object. It is both a poetic expression that is understood intuitively and a technical “species of figurative language which needs explaining” to decipher its meaning (Schön, 1993, p. 137).

Schön (1993) defines metaphor as “central to the task of accounting for our perspectives of the world” (p. 137). It is a “perspective or frame, a way of looking at things.” Moreover, it is a “process by which new perspectives come into existence” (Schön, 1993, p. 137). In these descriptions, there is a close association and interdependency between metaphor as a linguistic device used for communicating with others and as part of how we think our own thoughts. Such definitions provide a rationale for the strength and utility of metaphor for investigating ideas of the university based on its implication in “how we think about things, make sense of reality, and set the problems we later try to solve” (Schön, 1993, p. 137). In other words, metaphor is the “linguistic expression of the results of focused analogical thinking” (Zwicky, 2014, p. §5). It is part of how we encounter the world and a way of understanding the world; it wraps up communication with thinking to show “how patterns of meaning in the world intersect and echo one another” (Zwicky, 2014, p. §6). In

metaphor, there is an intrinsic relationship between ideas and reality to the extent that metaphor is “*constitutive of reality*” (Gill, 1996, p. 35).

1.3.2 Metaphors, Old and New

Barnett (2013) insists that an imaginative response to the university needs to be poetic while engaged with the real world. Metaphor is an obvious linguistic device with the stature to deliver on calls for lyricism and representations of the real world. Perhaps not surprisingly, academics’ ideas of the university and debate about higher education are also “shot through with metaphors” (Barnett, 2013, p. 18). Barnett’s (2013) argument that metaphors have utility for reimagining the university comes with high expectations. He is less interested in finding meaning in conventional metaphors, which he argues do little to enrich a debate that is “impoverished” and “lacks imagination” (p. 336), and more enthusiastic about the work that novel metaphors might do for the idea. He invites academics to introduce new metaphors into the debate to replace conventional ones because fresh metaphors will put new ideas out into the world. He also suggests that in novel metaphors, the imagination will “fly and achieve the height of its possibilities” (Barnett, 2013, p. 18). Robertson (2009) also argues for the power of metaphor in this debate because there “are new kinds of activity emerging out of new sets of metaphors” (p. 35). Both these scholars make a clear case for new metaphors as “carriers of possibility” (Barnett, 2013, p. 19), New metaphors summon up “ways of looking at the university that are precisely not part of the conventional metaphors” (Barnett, 2013, p. 18). Yet conventional metaphors for ideas of the university are persistent; they continue to circulate, they are used beyond academic discourse, and equally, they should not be dismissed lightly. They also hold layers of meaning that contribute to understanding.

Müller (2008) argues that both conventional and novel metaphors need to be kept in view in metaphor analysis. Both are needed because the potential for novelty is influenced by context and intention, which applies equally to conventional and novel metaphors. The

“simultaneous advance and retreat” of particular metaphors does not lessen their influence in shaping and reflecting societal advancement and spiritual growth (von Humboldt, 1999, p. 87). It could be argued, therefore, that inviting unheard professional voices into the task of conjuring new metaphors for the university, and relooking at the meaning found in the shadows of their commonly used metaphors, are both necessary. Using both is the approach I take in this research. In conversations with the librarians participating in this research, I use metaphor generation to engage them with the Idea of the University. We imagine the Idea together through their conventional and novel metaphors.

Librarians I have spoken to in this study, while not fluent in the scholarship of the Idea of the University, are, not surprisingly, articulate, creative, and self-assured in discussing contemporary ideas of the library. What is distinctive in their imaginaries of the library is the abundance of metaphors. Metaphors for the idea of the library are also plentiful in the library literature (Flannery, 2001; Giesecke, 2010; Guthro, 2019; Massis, 2010; Meszaros & Lewis, 2015; Nardini, 2001; Walter, 2008). This literature provides evidence of a rich lexicon consisting of metaphors that convey the library’s poetic and practical qualities. Metaphors are used to express an ideal vision for the library, critique its current shortcomings, and conjure up images of the routines of its everyday comings and goings. Librarians’ metaphors have long been recognised as “not only a way to describe the library but also a way to express possibilities” (Nardini, 2001, p. 113). Metaphors, old and new, therefore, are a common thread in how academics and librarians respectively imagine and discuss ideas of the university and the library. A premise of this thesis is that because ideas of the university are at once complex, divergent, narrow and broadening, there is room and a need to have diverse voices in the debate. There is room for new voices to introduce more metaphors, old and new, to the debate.

1.4 Entangled Ideas: University and Library

Since the establishment of Western universities, the library has been a central fixture in the campus environment (Kerr, 2001; Pelikan, 1992): its “symbolic heart” both “spatially” and “emotionally” (Temple, 2024). The library is historically recognised as having an essential role in the university’s responsibility to fulfil society’s knowledge needs, that is, to preserve “all the knowledge which has so far accumulated,” and to disseminate and discover new knowledge (Allen, 1988, p. 102). Being critical to the university’s knowledge endeavour, the library’s presence in the university landscape has been considered ubiquitous. Similarly, the university’s relationship to knowledge has made it ubiquitous in local communities and society more generally. In the university and the library, knowledge and its discovery, dissemination, and creation are ubiquitous. But ubiquity is more than a state. Barnett (2011) argues ubiquity is a gift, one that provides opportunities for new thinking, new ways of being, and new ways of connecting to the world.

Yet ubiquity and knowledge are not all that connect the life of these two ideas—university and library. Both are constantly changing to keep up with or shape the knowledge economy. Both have a history of seeking answers to questions about relevance, future potential, and existential threats. Both are sites of possibility, reimagining, and collaboration. And both have been used as metaphors for the other (Baker, 2023; Barnett, 2024). The university and the library are entangled ideas. This suggests that librarians’ thinking about the Idea of the University needs to be coupled with thinking about the idea of the library. It is a logical starting point, and the consequence of working with both ideas is the potential to create openings for librarians to contribute to the Idea and for this dialogue to influence how libraries are thought about, valued, and function within the university community.

This chapter introduces the research question: What are librarians’ ideas of the university? Because I argue that the Idea of the University and the idea of the library are

inextricably linked, in asking this question, I bring into the same frame *two* concepts—university and library. By taking the position that the university and the library are entangled ideas—that each holds something of the other—I make the case that librarians’ ideas of the library are integral to understanding their ideas of the university.

1.5 Librarians’ Ideas of the University

We know little about what librarians think about the Idea of a University. Our lack of knowledge creates a conceptual and practical gap that could affect the library’s future relevance. To date, the literature does not offer much insight into librarians’ theoretical notions of the Idea. The sense of a greater purpose anchored in a life of knowledge that has always been shared by libraries and universities is being repeatedly disrupted in the digital age. Some academics argue the library is on a “cusp” and, like the university, it is influenced by “multiple forces” (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 149). In this changing environment, the strategic development, positioning, and alignment of the library’s programs, services, collections, responsibilities, roles, and spaces with university directions and user needs are a key priority for librarians (Cox, 2023a, 2023b). Librarians are extremely alert to challenges and change in the university environment and how this influences practice (Brindley, 2006; Cox & Corral, 2013; Delaney & Bates, 2015). However, they do not always make an explicit connection between these challenges and the evolving Idea of the University.

1.6 Why Librarians Need to Pay Attention to the Idea of the University

In this thesis, I take the past, current, and future forms of the Idea of the University as important to librarians and in need of their attention by asking: What are librarians’ ideas of the university? Importantly, the interaction between ideal and real notions of the university has the potential to influence how librarians shape library practice and how the library is

inhabited. Indeed, not thinking about or ignoring the Idea of the University also has consequences for the library in idea and practice.

1.6.1 Absent Voices

Librarians, a group of university professionals, are largely absent from scholarly discussions about the idea of a university (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008; Tight, 2024). From my perspective, it is peculiar that this debate lacks professional voices, especially from those who inhabit and work at “the heart of the university.” This metaphor—the library is the heart of the university—has been used persistently by librarians and academics to indicate the importance and centrality of the library within the university (Grimes, 1998; Lynch et al., 2007; Robertson, 2015). It begs the question: How can libraries continue to be positioned as essential to the institution without librarians making sense of the Idea of the University?

Some scholars have argued that universities “are social institutions, concretely existing in the world” (Barnett, 2011, p. 2). Viewing the university as a social institution is to see it as “something trans-organisational yet socially constructed, something which shapes social interaction and is in some ways susceptible to being shaped” (Bouma, 1998, p. 233). An expectation here is that individuals who are part of a social institution are engaged and participate in dialogue and ideas in ways that are not always the case in other types of organisations. If it is accepted that the university is a social institution, then it seems fitting that all individuals and groups in the university community are included in dialogue and debate about the nature of the idea. Barnett (2011) asks: How might universities be otherwise and how might they realise new possibilities and ways of being in the world? Widening the debate to voices thus far absent invites the different possibilities that their contribution would open up.

1.6.2 A Widening Debate

As discussed above, the discourse about the Idea of the University is currently an academic debate. Still, as Tight (2024) argues, the development, even survival, of the Idea depends on widening the discussion to include everyone in the university community. The relationship between the ideational and practical aspects of the university provides a rationale for everyone in the university community being engaged in the “ideational situation within which universities move” (Barnett, 2016, p. 39). It makes sense to bring together the voices of scholars and professionals in rethinking higher education (Barnett & Di Napoli, 2008). At a time when collaboration (between academics and professionals and across groups of professional staff) has an increasing influence on student engagement and retention, academic success, research success, and the student and researcher experience (Appleton, 2020; DeVille & Sughrue, 2023; Graham, 2013; Oliveira, 2018; Parkes et al., 2014; Pham & Tanner, 2015; Verbaan & Cox, 2014), a deeper understanding of professionals’ ideas of the university is needed to contribute to the evolving nature of the university as idea and as institution.

Finding ways and spaces to widen the conversation to a multiplicity of voices in the university will join up the abstractness of the idea with the concreteness of professional and academic practice. This is important because the Idea of the University has yet to reach its potential (Barnett, 2013), perhaps because the task of understanding the university is never-ending (Barnett, 2013, 2016). Involving librarians, as a distinct group of professionals who work alongside academics in the university, widens the debate, distributes the conceptual labour, and takes the conversation into spaces where professionals and academics collaborate and share responsibility for the university as a set of ideas and practices.

1.6.3 Idea and Practice

The university has theoretical and practical dimensions; it is a concept and a real institution. However, the university as idea and as institution are not always joined up in the scholarly literature (Peters & Barnett, 2018a). This separation is a risk because:

unless we are clear about what it is to understand the university, we are liable to fall short in our hopes and expectations of the university and, in turn, our university practices and our projects are liable to fall short of their possibilities.

(Barnett, 2016, p. 1)

University practices and projects continue to change and expand as the concept of the university continues to evolve. For example, staff responsibilities have shifted, requiring more collaborative ways of working across functions, roles, and classifications. Academic work is being unbundled (Macfarlane, 2011), and professional and academic staff inhabit roles that “do not fit into formal structures or descriptors,” often collaborating in a shared “third space” (Whitchurch, 2024, p. 243). It could be argued that in this changing environment, the Idea of the University becomes increasingly relevant to all groups in the university, and therefore it is equally important for everyone to understand that they are the university.

Librarians do investigate the changing environment and trends and what they mean for new initiatives, continuous improvement and the library’s changing and future role (ACRL Research Planning Review Committee, 2024). However, their tendency to take a practice-based perspective can create conceptual and practical gaps, which means the “conceptual thinking about academic libraries appears to be isolated from theoretical ideas of the university” (Salisbury & Peseta, 2018, p. 252). This gap has not prevented librarians from partnering with academics and staff in other professional units, and librarians routinely collaborate on learning and teaching initiatives (Torres et al., 2021) or research support

activities (Cawley & Mani, 2022; Searle et al., 2015). Librarians' professional practice is situated both within the library and in the overlapping space shared between academics and other professionals. Whitchurch calls this overlapping space the "third space" (Whitchurch, 2008, 2024).

There are multiple academic case studies highlighting the advantages and challenges of third space practice (McIntosh & Nutt, 2022; Smith et al., 2021; Thorpe & Partridge, 2024; Veles et al., 2019; Whitchurch & Gordon, 2017), with librarians recognised as one group whose ways of working require boundary crossing (Veles, 2022). For librarians, however, moving between different sites of collaborative practice can happen without engaging with and participating in scholarly debates about the third space (or the Idea of the University).

The library literature encourages librarians to forge stronger relationships with other parts of the university and leverage their predisposition for collaboration and partnership. This is a strategy to remain relevant and ensure the continued existence of the library in a changing and uncertain environment (Cox, 2023a). More and more, librarians are leading strategic conversations and projects in their universities about academic and digital literacy, open publishing, open access to data and research, generative AI, and the transformation of physical library spaces and collections. Many of these projects theoretically sit in the "third space" (Whitchurch, 2008, 2024). While some librarians find notions of the third space useful in questioning professional identity and career binaries (Campbell, 2023) or as a catalyst to thinking about the "library as place" (Elmborg, 2011), generally, third space theory is yet to be embraced by librarians. They remain on the periphery of the third space discourse. This may be because librarians are clear about their identity and role and are unlikely to see themselves as what Whitchurch (2008) describes as "blended professionals." My interest in using theory to inform and reimagine practice, however, makes me curious about whether

this is a missed opportunity, in the same way that opportunities to provoke thinking about practice might be lost by not engaging with the Idea of the University.

The fact that librarians do essentially work and collaborate in the third space and that notions of the university as an idea and institution are fundamental to their professional practice, is all the more reason to engage with higher education theory and participate in these scholarly debates. Taking an active interest in larger ideas of the university acknowledges that “testing and comparing conceptual ideas may provide a new bridge to deeper and more meaningful collaborations that nourish future relevance” (Salisbury & Peseta, 2018, p. 252). The value of a theorised approach to collaboration that informs practice is recognised (Pham & Williamson, 2020; Pham & Tanner, 2015). What might be possible if librarians see and engage with the Idea of the University as a theoretical concept? There is more to be done for librarians to connect the scholarship of the Idea to library practice.

In all the effort librarians put into continually improving their practice, an imaginative process is at work, resulting in a rich proliferation of purposes, collaborations, innovations, and realised services which are often communicated and expressed through metaphors. This suggests that librarians are well equipped with the “imaginary powers” that Barnett (2013) reminds us are needed for the Idea of the University to flourish (p. 6). It also suggests that librarians have the means to contribute to a space where universities are revitalised in new ways. And the starting point is imagination.

In this research, librarians’ engagement with the Idea of the University is significant for several reasons. First, it supports the deliberations of librarians about how best to engage with the contradictions in the Idea. Second, it brings a new professional dimension—the perspective of librarians—to the current scholarship on the changing Idea. This study engages a new audience in the scholarship on the Idea and invites them into a dialogue critical to their future role and responsibilities—as a form of shared stewardship.

1.7 Imagining the Idea of the University with Librarians

To recap, the research question at the centre of this study is: What are librarians' ideas of the university? While on the one hand, librarians have not explicitly engaged in the Idea of the University, on the other, the close association between the university and library means librarians' ideas of the library are likely to harbour something of their ideas of the university. I intend to look for these associations through metaphor. In this research, I propose that metaphor has utility in engaging librarians in the Idea. Metaphor affords an imaginative response, and librarians are familiar with using metaphors to express ideas of the library. This suggests that metaphor analysis is a useful tool for examining librarians' ideas of the university. How do librarians describe their ideas of the university and the library through metaphor? What are the beliefs and values underpinning the conventional and novel metaphors they use to communicate these ideas? Do librarians' metaphors for the library bring into view something of their ideas of the university or vice versa? Inspection of librarians' metaphors for both the university and the library is necessary to reveal their conceptions of the university.

1.7.1 The Thesis Outline

Uncovering the complex dynamics of how one group of professionals understands the Idea of the University—an idea they do not routinely engage with—presents challenges. To tackle these challenges, the approach in this research is to use written and spoken metaphors as an entry point for bringing librarians into dialogue with the Idea. In the telling of the two ideas at the centre of this thesis through metaphor, metaphor analysis is also a tool for understanding and reimagining the relationship between these two ideas (university and library). Almost all language speakers instinctively use metaphors as a natural way of expressing themselves. Scholars and professionals who work with these two ideas use metaphor to deepen understanding, imagine, and more effectively communicate abstract and

concrete concepts. In this study, I ask librarians to generate metaphors that articulate their understanding of the familiar idea of the library and the less familiar Idea of the University. Metaphor amplifies thoughts and unspoken understandings. It is a language of the imagination. It offers an expansive and creative way to think about ideas. Metaphor has utility for analysing and interpreting librarians' ideas of the university and presenting their ideas in a form that stimulates possibilities, extends conversations, and contributes to increasing the voices in dialogue with the Idea.

In this opening chapter, *Everyone has an Idea of the University*, I aimed to make a case for why ideas of the university matter. I outlined the contentions and premises that underpin the research and that are revisited throughout the thesis. I proposed that everyone has an idea of the university, even if it may only be considered partial, and that the Idea of the University should be a conversation that all members of the university community contribute to. To set the scene, I put forward several observations: first, while the Idea has been debated for at least two hundred years, the literature is dominated by academic voices. Librarians, as part of the university community, are not overtly engaged in discussing the Idea, and this is a significant gap because both the debate and the Idea itself need to be widened. Second, there is a relationship between the university as idea and institution. And third, there is a rich metaphoricity in how ideas of the university are expressed. Because the Idea is constantly evolving, and professional roles in the university are changing, librarians, as a group of university professionals, need to be engaged in this discussion. Considering that there is a general lack of awareness about what librarians think of the Idea and that librarians are familiar with using metaphors to communicate ideas of the library, I proposed bringing librarians into dialogue with the Idea of the University through metaphor. This chapter also aimed to establish the link between the Idea of the University and the idea of the library. It set up the university and library as entangled ideas and signalled the significance of this

connection for uncovering insights into librarians' ways of experiencing and understanding the university.

Chapter Two, *The University Through Metaphor*, presents the Idea of the University as a phenomenon that is in a constant state of becoming. It draws on the language of Barnett's (2016) three planes of the university to appreciate the layers of association and exchange between the university as an idea and as an institution. Against this background, I survey the scholarly literature and use metaphors through time as an organising trope to present selected conventional and novel metaphors for the changing ideas of the university and the library. I argue for metaphor as a bridge to understanding the Idea in higher education contexts due to its power to stimulate the imagination and, therefore, its potential to enrich and expand the Idea. What is noticeable about empirical metaphor studies in higher education is a tendency for qualitative analysis to focus on metaphor classification and coding to themes. This alerts me to the possibility that standard metaphor analysis may not be generative enough to respond to all aspects of this inquiry. In anticipation of the challenges and limitations of qualitative metaphor analysis, I propose taking one metaphor from the scholarly literature—the library is the heart of the university—which is familiar to librarians and is an example of the library and university as entangled ideas, to experiment with a form of writing I call Idea Portraits. Idea Portraits are an approach to interacting with the research object, theory, and data that have the potential to extend the metaphor analysis in this research.

The Idea Portrait in Chapter Three—*A Portrait of Centrality*—allows me to “think with theory” to explore the values of centrality evoked by this metaphor and to offer alternative readings. I start the chapter with an introduction to Idea Portraits and then follow with the Portrait of Centrality. This Idea Portrait, published as a peer-reviewed article, is an experiment that goes beyond metaphor coding, categorising and labelling differences, to

using theory to introduce and challenge perspectives that may not have been considered previously. The article is reproduced in Chapter Three as published, that is in the Chicago style (*The Chicago manual of style*, 2017) with its original endnotes, spelling (U.S.), reference list, unnumbered sections, and placement and numbering of Tables. This maintains the shape, internal elements, and reading experience of this published Idea Portrait. To conclude this chapter, I reflect on the potential of Idea Portraits for the research design.

In Chapter Four, *Methodological Meldings: Contours and Combinations*, I situate the research in the interpretivist paradigm and then present the research questions. I draw on my experiment with Idea Portraits in Chapter Three and offer a rationale for a research design inspired by multiple methodologies. I emphasise the Idea of the University as a phenomenon and establish the role of metaphor in uncovering how people understand and experience phenomena. The research design is an iterative process with three stages (1. Qualitative Foundation, 2. Deepening the Interpretation, 3. Revisiting the Analysis), and I outline the theoretical underpinnings of each stage. I describe the methodological twists and turns from the qualitative foundation to an exploration of the data nuances and then to a subsequent revisiting of the data analysis, with reference to how my thinking about research in the interpretivist paradigm was animated and influenced by post-qualitative approaches. I explain the methods, including interviews and surveys, which were used to gather the data and then detail the approach to data analysis at each stage of the research design. My goal is to show the integrity of the design, its logic and coherence, and the decision making at each stage of its development.

Chapter Five, *Findings and Discussion: Metaphors*, presents the data—librarians' metaphors for the university, library, and related linguistic units—generated in interviews with librarians and a survey of library staff across four Australian universities.

Acknowledging that the frequency tables and other tabulations in the initial analysis are

descriptively flat and do not capture the vibrancy of librarians' metaphors, I re-present their metaphors and verbatim comments in a narrative style as Metaphorical Landscapes—one for the library and one for the university. Then, I bring together both ideas by recoding metaphors for the university and library into Themes. In Themes, librarians' imaginaries make clear that the library and university are connected ideas with evidence of three patterns of entanglement: the library and university as intertwined ideas, as ideas in tension, and as echoing ideas. In reflecting on these patterns of entanglement, I recognise the *Portrait of Centrality* as focusing on a metaphor that is an example of the library and university as intertwined ideas. This chapter finishes by setting up the final revisiting of the data using the patterns of entanglement not yet explored, that is, Idea Portraits for ideas in tension, and echoing ideas.

In Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, I present the second and third Idea Portraits. In these chapters, I revisit the analysis and deepen the interpretation of librarians' ideas of the university through thinking and writing with theory. Chapter Six, *A Portrait of Neutrality*, frames ideas of the university and the library as ideas in tension. It centres the tension between one metaphor—the library is the Switzerland of the university—with other metaphors librarians use for the university and library. I use metaphor tension theory and conceptual metaphor theory for an initial analysis and then move beyond metaphor theory to think with Barthes's (2005) *The Neutral* to ask whether rejection or acceptance of opposing positions is the only valid response to ideas in tension.

In Chapter Seven, I present *A Portrait of Relationality*. Here, I frame ideas of the university and the library as echoing ideas. I examine this pattern of entanglement by concentrating many pairs of metaphors at the centre of the frame. Because of the number of metaphors, I rely less on metaphor theory as an initial analysis and instead distinguish between the different qualities of “resounding” in echoing ideas to think with Pinchevski's

(2022) *Echo*. This prompts questions about the relationships between ideas (university and library), people (members of the university community) and place. All three portraits in the thesis, Centrality, Neutrality, Relationality, bring together metaphor and theory in different combinations, and all three are written to provoke librarians' thinking about ideas of the university. The Idea Portraits in Chapters Three, Six and Seven push the data beyond what is possible in the qualitative thematic metaphor analysis in Chapter Four.

In Chapter Eight, *New Voices, New Imaginaries*, I reflect on the contribution of metaphor analysis and Idea Portraits in bringing attention to the multiplicity of ideas of the university and the library held by librarians. I take the portraits of Centrality, Neutrality and Relationality, together, as a trio to consider how they relate to one another and explore the movement across portraits. This research brings to light how librarians understand the Idea of the University and the relationship between ideas of the university and the library. Chapter Eight underlines the key contributions of this research; that is, first, it contributes empirically researched metaphors for the university and library. Second, it establishes the value of research informed by librarians' voices in the debate on the Idea. Third, it highlights three patterns of entanglement between ideas of the university and the library. And finally, it lays the groundwork for librarians to consider the direction their future institutional practice might take if they engage intentionally with the Idea of the University.

1.8 The Task Ahead: Encountering the Idea of the University in the Library

There is more to be done to engage librarians in the Idea of the University, and this research is a first step. It stages an encounter with the Idea in the library. Yet, undertaking such a task requires awareness that the university is “an interplay of ideas and empirical features” (Barnett, 2016, p. 124) that are not always joined together. It requires an understanding that professional practice often sits within the empirical reality of the university as an institution, when it also needs to be more firmly connected to the university

as idea (Barnett, 2016). And it requires awareness that for librarians, ideas of the university and the library are entangled. Barnett (2016) writes that only through a combination of “the university as an idea and as an institution can we begin to furnish an adequate understanding of the university” (p. 40). This study not only probes the abstract and concrete dimensions of librarians’ ideas of the university, but it also connects these imaginaries with the scholarship about the Idea. An intersection of this nature is significant because viewing the Idea of the University from a professional staff perspective is a move towards broader ownership of the Idea; one that embraces scholarly and practical ways of understanding and inhabiting the university as both idea and institution.

Librarians’ perspectives are a vital part of the complexity that is the Idea of the University. Simply stated, librarians must be part of the debate. We need to hear more about the views of the university held by all members of the university community, including professionals like librarians (Tight, 2024). In fact, this thesis is a call for librarians to join and occupy a conversation not yet exhausted. It also asks the reader to reach for their own Idea of the University (and library) and carry it with them through the following chapters as the lifeworld of these ideas is illuminated through the metaphors of scholars and librarians. The mercurial higher education sector demands a focus on re-invention. For academics and librarians alike, the Idea of the University is a good place to begin (again).

CHAPTER 2: THE UNIVERSITY THROUGH METAPHOR

2.1 What is the Idea of the University?

The Idea of the University is a phenomenon that is practical, philosophic, and poetic. As Rothblatt (1989) reasoned, without the Idea, “our conception of the university is utterly shapeless,” and we have “no way of distinguishing a university from any other kind of educational institution” (p. 28). Rothblatt makes clear that the Idea of the University is important, and this was also my starting point in Chapter One. Furthermore, not only is it important, but the Idea is a complex phenomenon. Its theoretical and concrete dimensions are constantly changing and critiqued. It has a history of varied and disputed meanings that, in turn, inspire new ideas and further debate, to the point that this ongoing dialogue about “the nature of the university” is recognised as a specialism within higher education research (Tight, 2012).

Despite Western universities having a history that stretches back more than one thousand years to medieval Europe, what Rothblatt (1989) describes as the “idea of the idea of the university” is not as old as the reality of the university as an institution. The “nature of the university” or the Idea as an acknowledged scholarly debate and phenomenon has only been evolving since the early nineteenth century. In that time, the academic literature about the Idea has increased in strength, authority, contention, and controversy (Peters & Barnett, 2018a). As a result, the notion of the university has been repeatedly made and remade. Notwithstanding a perceived lack of a unified Idea (Smith & Webster, 1997), the academic discourse continues to influence individuals and communities. Philosophical and provocative arguments about the Idea exist in parallel to the concrete practicalities and the ongoing transformation of institutions, higher education, and knowledge.

2.1.1 A Changing Idea

Ideas of the university are in constant flux; old and new ideas circulate, recede, and resurface in the scholarly literature and institutional spaces. This flow of ideas generates a sense that the Idea of the University stimulates the imagination. It is what St. Pierre calls “a multiplicity, a becoming with a history” (2019, p. 7). As an idea, it is both abundant and always on the move. Peim (2018) argues that research objects in education and the accumulated knowledge about them may not have a “stable identity” (p. 33), and consequently, appropriate ways of engaging with them need careful consideration. If the Idea is continually evolving—in a perpetual state of transformation—it raises questions about appropriate ways of engaging with it as a research object. How can we engage with the past and future of the Idea as an object of research in ways that stimulate the imagination and encourage the creative expression of ideas? In this study, my response is to use metaphor, because “it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh” (Aristotle, 1985, p. 2250). Therefore, I set the scene by making an account of the Idea through academics’ metaphors in the scholarly literature. In this chapter, I foreground a selection of metaphors for the Idea over time to engage with a research object in a constant state of becoming. It is through metaphor that rich and imaginative accounts of the university can be found and are accessible.

Taking a chronological approach allows me to capture the ebb and flow of ideas and draw attention to the metaphors that are part of the changing way academics talk and write about the Idea of the University. I also bring attention to academics’ metaphors for the library to support my contention that the university and library are entangled ideas. Through metaphors, patterns in thinking are highlighted, demonstrating that historical ideas continue to influence new ideas. While the writing on the Idea is growing and global (Tight, 2024), my focus here is primarily on the metaphoricity of Western ideas of the university offered by

scholars from the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, and Australia, whose contributions to the debate have influenced the environment where this research is situated. The use of metaphor, however, transcends cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries. Researchers from other regions and Indigenous scholars in Australia use metaphors drawn from their linguistic and cultural contexts and traditions to theorise ideas in higher education. While discussion of these scholars' worldviews is beyond the scope of this chapter, their use of linguistic and visual metaphors illustrates and expresses "other" notions of knowledge, ways of knowing and being, education, teaching, and research (Dei, 2014; Glynn & Macfarlane, 2024; Haynes et al., 2022; Holt & Perry, 2023; Ober, 2009; van Wyk & Adeniji-Neill, 2014; van Wyk & Higgs, 2007). In these accounts, metaphor can also be a cultural and conceptual bridge that voices and challenges ideas of higher education that are dominant in the Western discourse (Satour et al., 2021).

The following overview of the Idea in the Western world in the past two hundred years emphasises its metaphoricity, beginning in the nineteenth century up until the present day. The goal of this overview is to establish that metaphor is part of the way ideas of the university and the library are expressed, and therefore, it is a valuable tool for interrogating librarians' understanding of these ideas. Examples of metaphor as a device in empirical research in education contexts further emphasise the utility and limits of metaphor analysis, and so, I introduce the notion of thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) to push metaphor and the imaginaries that metaphor can summon in new interpretive directions. This brings me to propose an experiment with a form of writing I call "Idea Portraits" to provide a canvas for bringing together metaphor and thinking with theory as a combination that has potential for researching and engaging with a changing idea.

2.1.2 A Distinction and Connection Between Idea and Institution

By definition, an “idea” refers to the “nature or essence” of a thing or “a conception of what is desirable or ought to be,” and it “is considered as existing separately from the particular things which exemplify it” (Oxford University Press, 2023i). This dichotomy is evident in the university, where the Idea of the University has evolved alongside the history of institutional practices. It is exemplified in Barnett’s (2013) distinction between “idea” and “institution,” or Rothblatt’s (1989) explanations of the university as “ideas great and small,” or “idea” and “lesser issues” or by Minogue’s (1973) description of the university as “essence” and “function.” In other words, the inherent characteristics of a university can be understood as a set of ideals, an object of thought in individual and collective thinking, and as academic and professional practices operating independently of idealistic principles. Viewed in this way, “university” is an omnibus term with a “complex interior structure” and “diverse positions which, when they are opposed to one another, determine the basic issues” (Adler, 1999, p. 134). When Newman (1996) argued that a university, by definition, should teach “universal knowledge” and defended teaching theology as a branch of knowledge because “the very name of University is inconsistent with restrictions of any kind” (1996, p. 25), the tension between the Idea and institutional practices is detectable.

Newman (1996) points out that “universality” is “the very characteristic of a University as contrasted with other seats of learning” (p. 25). The noun “university” is derived from the classical Latin “Universitas,” which means to encompass “the whole, entire number, the sum of things, the universe, the corporate body of people, community” (Oxford University Press, 2023m). For the last two hundred centuries, a tension between the competing ideals stemming from the original meaning of the word and everyday institutional realities has continued to play out. Rothblatt (1989) acknowledges this tension by explaining that “it is precisely the lesser issues that determine how an idea is to be carried out and that in

time supplant any discernible idea of the university” (Rothblatt, 1989, p. 29). This tension signifies the challenge of connecting essence and function and carries a potential risk that practice does not exemplify the Idea or that ideas are lost in practice. The way to mitigate this risk is to view the university as “both institution (involving complex processes) and a set of ideas” that occupy “institutional spaces, conceptual and discursive spaces, and imaginative spaces” (Barnett, 2013, p. 41). Connecting our understanding across these domains is important because “understandings of the university have particular implications for the *possibilities* that might be discerned for it” (Barnett, 2016, p. 27).

2.1.3 Two Ideas with a Shared History: University and Library

Although there is a perceived lack of a cohesive notion of the university (Smith & Webster, 1997), what has not been disputed is that the university has always had a fundamental association with knowledge. Whether it is still the case that “knowledge is the unique claim of higher education” (Marginson, 2011), scholars continue to reinforce “that while the university is entangled with many ecosystems of the world, it is in and through the knowledge ecology that it invests its primary efforts” (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 154).

Like the university, the library is also enmeshed in the knowledge ecology and economy. This common ground is the basis for an interdependence that is an almost taken-for-granted truism. In the writing on the Idea of the University, libraries are seen as “woven into the texture of university life” because they embody “sound educational ideals” in “steel and stone,” a “workshop” for professors and students alike (Flexner, 2020, p. 77). Although scholars writing about the Idea of the University pay scant attention to the library, it is clear that it has been a central part of the university’s knowledge and spatial history from the university’s very beginning (Kerr, 2001). The silhouette of the library is always perceptible in the background of academic dialogue on the Idea. For this reason, selected metaphors that

academics use for the library are incorporated in the following overview. This sets the scene for the analysis of librarians' metaphors for the university and library in Chapter Five.

2.2 The University: A Rich and Imaginative Idea

A fruitful way to approach the nuances and complexity of the Idea of the University is by thinking with theoretical concepts. The theorists who might be assembled to think with depend on the task at hand. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) urge researchers to go to “theorists because they help us think something we cannot think otherwise, or with anyone else” (p. 15). Thinking with theory is likely to prompt different questions about data, too, and so, I put this approach to work initially as a way to anchor thinking about the changing Idea and then later as part of data analysis.

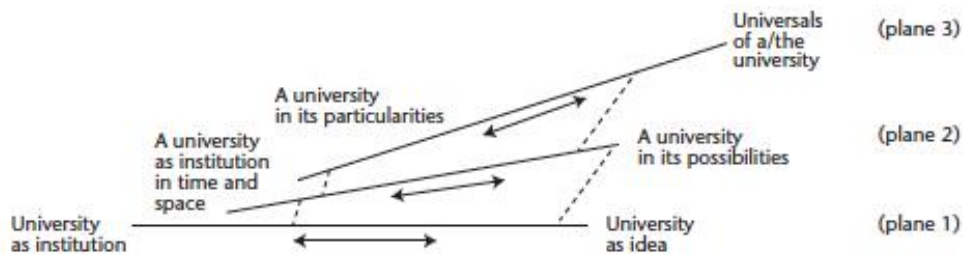
Barnett's (2016) framing of the university across three planes of understanding is a theoretical model that provides an overarching structure and vernacular for reading, thinking, and conversing with the Idea of the University. It is a mooring for thinking about how ideas of the university can be engaged with in thought and practice, including in the library. It balances contemplation and future action. For this inquiry, Barnett's (2016) “three planes of the university” provide what Mazzei and Jackson (2023) call a “conceptual grammar” (p. 171) that facilitates responsiveness.

Barnett (2016) argues that the “university moves on three planes” (p. 55). The interplay and connections across the three planes (see Figure 1) help to understand the university. This framing is also a vernacular to facilitate thinking about the relationship between different ideas of the university. I draw on Barnett's (2016) three planes of the university because they hold the complexity, tensions, and consolations of realist and idealist conceptions of the university that are likely to be lodged in metaphors. For example, sometimes it is valuable to reflect on metaphors for the university as about “universals” in relation to “particularities,” or in “time and space” in relation to “particularities” and

“possibilities.” In the same way, this framing also has utility for thinking about metaphors for the library.

Figure 1

Three Planes of the University



Source: (Barnett, 2016, p. 45)

In the three planes of the university, the endpoints of each horizontal plane are contrasting or opposing concepts. They interact in all directions: vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. The three planes can also be viewed as two sets of three elements that connect vertically. The following extract from Salisbury and Peseta (2018) explains the three planes of the university:

Barnett’s (2016) model for understanding the idea of a university comprises six elements. These six elements are arranged in pairs, with each paired element sitting at opposite end-points of three aligned horizontal planes. This model captures the epistemological and ontological aspects of the university. From its end point on a horizontal plane each element also interacts vertically, as part of a trio. In Barnett’s (2016) view, understanding the university requires “overlaps and underlaps” within and across the planes. The pairs of elements that are split at opposite ends of a horizontal plane are:

1. the university as institution, and idea;
2. the university as an institution-in-time-and-space, and as a set of possibilities;
3. the university as a set of particularities, and as a site of universals.

The two sets of three elements that connect vertically are:

1. the university as institution, in time and space, and as a set of particularities;
2. the university as idea, in its possibilities, and as a site of universals.

The first trio represents a realist view of understanding the university and, the latter, an idealist view. Together, the elements in each trio form “a strength of perspective” that is in contrast and challenge to their vertical opposite. According to Barnett (2016) the “university moves on three planes, and those three planes have to be brought into view in any adequate understanding of the university” (p. 55). More specifically, the horizontal and vertical interplay across the planes need to be in view, and both are needed for a holistic and adequate view of the idea of the university. This is because the realist and idealist end points on these horizontal planes both have shortcomings and it is only by combining the “elusiveness of the ontology of the university” and “the inchoateness of the idea—or ideas—of the university” (Barnett, 2016, p. 40) that a full view emerges.

A good deal of the scholarly discourse around the history and philosophy of the idea of the university sits in the idealist domain. According to Barnett, the shortcoming of this concentration is that it creates an “ontological void.” The university as idea is separated from the university as it is in the world creating a “great hole” (Barnett, 2016, p. 31). Filling this “great hole” requires an inquiry into the wide and deep social ontology of the university. (p. 245-246)

Salisbury and Peseta’s (2018) explanation highlights how the three planes of the university set up a relationship between the university as idea and institution and the movement in those connections. As pointed out in the extract above, much of the academic debate related to the Idea of the University sits in the “idealist domain.” Conversely, it could be argued that much of the debate surrounding the library sits within the realist domain. This

positioning results in missing perspectives. By productively engaging with the Idea, librarians can contribute to filling this gap.

Barnett (2016) suggests that filling the “great hole” created by dialogue that is skewed to the “idealist domain” requires an inquiry into “the social ontology of the university” (p. 31). For example, in a conceptual space, the Idea of the University is seen “as significant in its own right,” and in an ontological space, the university is seen as a “definite institution in society” (p. 39). Barnett (2016) argues that while connecting the conceptual and ontological is an imaginative endeavour, imagination itself is also the biggest challenge in understanding the university. Metaphor has a role here because “the creative imagination works in and through metaphor and presents us with an increased awareness of alternative possible worlds” (Aspin, 1984, pp. 34-35). A metaphor is something understood as something else, and the concatenation of terms that are not usually associated is where the power of the metaphoric imagination lies.

The three planes of the university map the dialectics, tensions, challenges, and possibilities encountered in the Idea of the University. It is a structure for holding together complexity and for enabling different ways of seeing the phenomenon of the Idea (and the library). Helpfully, it provides a framework to support an investigation of librarians’ ideas of the university. It is a reminder to enlarge partial views, and to bridge the gap between conceptual narratives and institutional reality. Importantly, if we are alert to “the gap between the university as institution and as a set of ideas” and pay attention to widening understanding, then “new spaces may open for realising the possibilities of the university” (Barnett, 2016, p. 2). What is of great importance if we are to discern and realise possibilities for the university is “inviting, cajoling and encouraging the university to go on exploring the possibilities open to it in the world” (p. 105). But which groups in the university are being invited and cajoled into this journey of discovery? Barnett’s (2016) framing establishes that

the real and ideal—idea and institution—must be understood alongside each other. It also raises the questions about how the Idea of the University and the idea of the library constitute each other and whether their relationship is more simulacrum or sortal. These questions arise from thinking with theory and, in this instance, with Barnett (2016). These are the kinds of questions that strengthen an investigation into librarians’ ideas of the university through metaphor.

Metaphors evoke what Barnett (2013) calls “sightings of the university” (p. 70). Robertson (2009) makes the case that metaphors are “powerful semiotic moments” that offer “alternative visions of the university” (p. 25). While the volume of conventional and novel metaphors circulating in the literature is vast, the following survey presents selected metaphors from the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries to offer a glimpse of the Idea and demonstrate the power of metaphor in academics’ visions for the university.

2.2.1 Mind, Knowledge and Concourse: Nineteenth Century Metaphors

The contrast between the abstractness of the university as an idea and the reality of institutional practice became distinct and pronounced in the nineteenth century. The basis for this distinction had its origins in eighteenth-century philosophical and theoretical deliberations on the nature of ideas, free will, academic freedom, public good, and knowledge which began to influence institutional operations (Kant, 2018; Rothblatt, 1989; Walker, 2019). Before the nineteenth century, matters of institutional organisation and functional concerns dominated thinking about the university (Minogue, 1973).

The University of Germany was set up in 1810, and in the early nineteenth century it was considered unique compared to other European universities. It was based on the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom put forward by von Humboldt (2018). Central to von Humboldt’s idea was a community of scholars. In his Idea, teaching and research are united for the benefit of individuals and society, academic and institutional

autonomy is protected (regardless of state funding), and philosophy in higher education is considered essential. Von Humboldt (2018) argued that:

universities can only fulfil their purpose when each of them bears continuously in mind the pure idea of science and scholarship, their dominant principle must be freedom and the absence of distraction... The state must understand that intellectual work will go on infinitely better if it does not intrude. (pp. 47-48)

Von Humboldt's (2018) notion of a university as "the highest and ultimate sanctuary of science and scholarship" (p. 53) may be responsible for perceptions of the university as an "ivory tower" in the twentieth century. However, von Humboldt's use of the metaphor "sanctuary" was not an argument to separate the university from society but intended to convince the state that the only way to expand knowledge was "by securing the individual freedom of the scholar" (Nybom, 2007, p. 62).

No overview of metaphors for ideas of the university in the nineteenth century can ignore John Henry Newman (1996). The writing of Newman, a theologian and educator, is rich with metaphorical language. Newman had a crucial role in reforming Oxford University and was the founder of the Catholic University Dublin. Newman was influenced by Coleridge's ideas about the unity of knowledge (Depaolo, 1984; Rothblatt, 1989). In *The idea of a university*, he describes knowledge as a "treasure" (Newman, 1996, p. 217). The essence of the university is:

a place of teaching universal knowledge. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement. (Newman, 1996, p. 3)

Warchol (2020) discusses "a place of universal knowledge" as one of many metaphoric expressions used by Newman related to the conceptual metaphor the UNIVERSITY IS A PLACE. Other conceptual metaphors identified by Warchol (2020) in

The idea of a university include the UNIVERSITY IS A SHELTER and the UNIVERSITY IS A FIELD. Newman (1996) uses numerous metaphorical expressions related to these conceptual metaphors. For example, “cultivation of the mind” (p. 213) and “shelter for the soul” (p. 215). In Newman’s (1996) *Idea*, the “cultivation of the intellect” requires “such pains” as you might take “with your garden or park” to achieve excellence (p. 90). Metaphors that evoke images of cultivation and growth have continued to inform ideas about knowledge and practice in the university (Stewart, 2020).

Newman (1996) considers the functions of teaching and discovering knowledge through research as separate and “distinct gifts” (p. 5). University education is separated from the uninterrupted “seclusion and quiet” required for research (p. 6). This split of the “diffusion and extension of knowledge” from its “advancement” (p. 3) prioritises a focus on the creation of a “pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes” (p. 77). In Newman’s (2001) *imaginary*, the *Idea* is a “light of the world” and much more:

a University is a place of concourse, whither students come from every quarter for every kind of knowledge... In the nature of things, greatness and unity go together ; excellence implies a centre. And such, for the third or fourth time, is a University... It is the place to which a thousand schools make contributions ; in which the intellect may safely range and speculate... It is a place where inquiry is pushed forward, and discoveries verified and perfected, and rashness rendered innocuous, and error exposed, by the collision of mind with mind, and knowledge with knowledge... It is a place which wins the admiration of the young by its celebrity, kindles the affections of the middle-aged by its beauty, and rivets the fidelity of the old by its associations. It is a seat of wisdom, a light of the world, a minister of the faith, an Alma Mater of the rising generation. It is this and a great deal more. (p. 94)

For Newman (1996), central to the university's purpose is to train the mind and enlarge the horizons of the student's mind, based on an underlying principle that university education cannot be disconnected from knowledge itself. In these ideas of the university, Newman draws on linguistic and conceptual metaphors. Both Newman's and von Humboldt's metaphors have a richness and depth that continued to circulate and influence metaphors for the Idea in the twentieth century.

2.2.2 The Fall of the Ivory Tower: Twentieth Century Metaphors

In the first half of the twentieth century, concepts of the university and knowledge continued to be enriched by metaphors and other figurative language. Whitehead (1928) envisaged the Idea as preserving "the connection between knowledge and the zest of life" through "the imaginative consideration of learning" (p. 448). He argues that:

the university imparts information, but it imparts it imaginatively. At least this is the function which it should perform for society. A university which fails in this respect has no reason for existence. This atmosphere of excitement, arising from imaginative consideration, transforms knowledge... The task of a university is to weld together imagination and experience. (p. 448)

In 1930, Flexner (2020) used metaphor to add excitement and newness to the ongoing importance of "the conservation of knowledge and ideas." He makes a case for a modern university "where fresh streams of thought are constantly playing upon the preserved treasures of mankind" (p. 7).

In the first half of the twentieth century, academics' metaphors reflected the increasing diversity of the Idea. Ortega y Gasset (2014) introduced the notion of culture as being more important in the Idea than teaching the professions and research. For Ortega y Gasset, the purpose of the university was to teach culture because it is "the plan of life, the path leading through the forest of existence" (p. 66). A depiction of the Idea as a journey and

an institution with many parts was emerging. For Flexner (2020), the metaphor that sums up the many parts of the university is “organism.” Thirty-five years later, Jaspers (1965) argued for a university with multiple dimensions because the university “is simultaneously a professional school, a cultural centre and a research institute” (p. 53) with responsibility for educating the whole person. Jaspers (1965) uses the metaphor “the university is a community of scholars and students” (p. 19) to capture these relationships. This metaphor puts emphasis on interconnections and shared aspirations. He argues that “an atmosphere of communication that is based on a community of thinking creates the proper conditions for scholarly and scientific work” and that in this environment thought “flourishes” (p. 75). Jaspers outlines three tasks for the university: research, learning, and culture. He brings a new perspective to how these three endeavours interact; for example, to meet the needs of the “practical occupations,” he suggests that the university define the place of occupations in “the whole of knowledge.” Jaspers (1965) is also clear that the university experience is more than instruction. In addition to instruction, “the student is to participate actively in research and from this experience he is to acquire the intellectual discipline and education which will remain with him throughout his life” (p. 19).

Jaspers (1965) looks to the future in his idea of the university. His observation that “nothing can stop the expansion of the university” (p. 101) is based on his belief that “wherever there arises a demand for knowledge the university is responsible for forging ahead in a new field and teaching it” (p. 101). His advice for managing the disruption of new technology incorporates the expression “mutual meeting place” as a metaphor that would not be out of place in a contemporary conversation about the Idea and the possibilities open to it:

Perhaps, the best interests of the intellectual life as well as of technology are served by making the university their mutual meeting place. Perhaps then, technology and the confusion which has resulted from it would be infused with meaning and

purpose. Perhaps then, out of the idea of the university would grow an openness, truthfulness, up-to-dateness in which this idea would prove itself. Thus the university would in effect be transforming itself. (p. 106)

In the early sixties, further considerations of more modern ideas of the university were ushered in with Kerr's (2001) *The Uses of the University*. Kerr reasoned that because the university has multiple purposes, which do not necessarily privilege one purpose over the other, it was, in effect, a "multiversity." He conceptualises the university as a "city," and contrasts this metaphor with "village," and "town" to trace the evolution of the modern Idea from its origins to a "multiversity." A multiversity is "a city of infinite variety," because compared to:

the village and the town, the "city" is more like the totality of civilization as it has evolved and more an integral part of it: and movement to and from the surrounding society has been greatly accelerated. (p. 31)

Kerr (2001) uses metaphors to support his argument for a modern restating of the purpose of the university, which embraces rather than excludes any ideas previously put forward. Others like Leavis (1969) offered a description of the university as "not merely as a place of learning, research and instruction, but as itself a nucleus (one of a number) of the greater public, the spiritual community the country needs as its mind and conscience" (p.30). He maintained that the university must be "the organ through which society has to make the sustained effort (one directed by collaborative intelligence and a full human responsibility)" more than "a center and nursery of the sciences" (p.58). Leavis's metaphors represent an idea of the university through which culture is preserved to "provide our civilization with memory and mature purpose" (p. 58) alongside the progress of technology.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the influence of technology, globalisation, and the massification of education gave some academics occasion to despair and point to the

problems facing the university as idea and institution. Conversations about the university being “in crisis” (Moberly, 1949; Reeves, 1988; Scott, 1984) or even “in ruins” (Readings, 1996) and threats to the Idea prompted a different set of metaphors. Many scholars argued that to respond to a government drive for economic success and return on investment, the ideals of fostering scholarship and advancing learning were replaced with values akin to a “knowledge factory” (Enarson, 1973). In this imaginary all parts of the university are renamed as,

raw material (students), a labor force (faculty and support personnel), instruments of production (classrooms, laboratories, libraries), a production schedule (academic requirements, classes admitted, and classes graduated), management (the trustees and central administration), and a production index (the cost of producing a student credit-hour). (Enarson, 1973, p. 7)

Moves to analytic measurement of teaching, learning, and research were accompanied by the adoption of the language of neoliberalism, accounting, global markets, and consumerism. These new vocabularies were seen as endangering literal words like “students” and replacing them with metaphors like “customers” (Moser, 1989). The foregrounding of the “techno-bureaucratic notion of excellence” (Readings, 1996, p. 14) was, for some, a diminishing of the Idea and a reason to lament. It prompted some academics to turn back to the ideas of Newman and von Humboldt to reclaim a language of hope and possibility for the Idea (Cameron, 1978; Readings, 1996) while still continuing to dwell in the “city” and reimagining it from “the difficult place... where one is” (Readings, 1996, p. 171). As Readings (1996) asked: “...can another way be found to think the university? This is to ask whether the University, once stripped of its cultural mission, can be something other than a bureaucratic arm of the unipolar capitalist system” (p. 46).

The “entrepreneurial university” (Clark, 1998) is one metaphor that dominated the discourse in the late twentieth century. It is an example of Roberson’s (2009) argument that a limited number of metaphors were doing the heavy lifting for the Idea in terms of “particular ways of en/visioning, practicing and knowing” (p. 35). Another metaphor that was used repeatedly by academics in the twentieth century was “ivory tower” (Shapin, 2012). It was used to evoke a sense of “some version of what a university was or might be” (Shapin, 2012, p. 14). While “ivory tower” is not necessarily a historically accurate metaphor for the university in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries—some argue the university has never been an ivory tower or disengaged from society (Durey, 2024; Winling, 2018)—mourning its passing made a point that something was lost. Contrasting new metaphors with the “ivory tower” helped scholars reflect on how universities interact with society. Luria and Luria (1970) asked whether the university is an “ivory tower,” a “service station” or a “frontier post” (p. 79). Such comparisons helped untangle demands for the university to be a “creative force... in the affairs of society” and provide “intellectual stewardship” (p. 76) within an entrepreneurial university system. Scholars referenced the “ivory tower” to make arguments that academics need places where they can work “without having to feel apologetic about it” (Ashby, 1967, p. 421). In response to perceived threats to the Idea, calls for reimagining it gained momentum (Cameron, 1978; Coady, 1996; Neilson & Gaffield, 1986; Scott, 1984) and continued into the next century.

2.2.3 Promise, Possibility, Re-imagining: Twenty-First Century Metaphors

At the turn of the century, the generation of new metaphors and recycling of old ones was part of a continuous search for a meaningful Idea in a time-pressured and digital world. The tensions inherent in expectations for universities to be innovative, open, competitive, collaborative, international, and local intensified. These conflicting demands were perceptible

in metaphors that conjure up images of the Idea as either in a constant state of transformation, or in need of reinvention or repossession (Barnett, 2013; Graham, 2008).

As neoliberalism in society continues to influence the “businessification of universities” (Fleming, 2021), not surprisingly, business metaphors and the language of commercialisation and commodification continue to predominate. For example, the “corporate university” (Barcan, 2013; Collini, 2012, 2017; Jarvis, 2012; Nussbaum, 2010), the “edu-factory” or “factory” for “manufacturing students” and “degree production” (Aronowitz, 2000; Fleming, 2021; Matthews, 2023). Business metaphors might challenge thinking or provoke sighs of recognition or amusement. Either way, they demonstrate the power of metaphor to communicate in a way that commands more attention than a literal description:

I work in the knowledge and human-resources industry. My company specializes in two kinds of product: we manufacture high-quality, multi-skilled units of human capacity, and we produce commercially relevant, cutting-edge new knowledge in user-friendly packages. I hold a middle-management-level position... Let me put it another way. I'm a university teacher. (Collini, 2012, p. 132)

Collini (2012) argues that debates about the Idea of the University continued to be characterised by repetitive “binary oppositions” with constant reference to Newman because nothing in the twenty-first-century idiom explicitly addresses the gap between the ideal and reality of neoliberal influences. A critical difference in recent debates is that, rather than turn to past ideas in nostalgia or lament, discussions about renewal are characterised by an imaginative search for the Idea, “one that is at once realist, critical and optimistic” (Barnett, 2018, p. 184). Webb calls (2018) for “renewed utopian thinking and practice” (p. 98) that gets away from grieving for classic or pragmatic ideas and railing against imperial and corporate ideas and instead looks for openings for new possibilities. It is a call “to generate a new utopian vision that can help inform, guide, and mobilize long-term collective action for

systemic change” (p. 109). These calls sound urgent, forceful, and loud because universities need:

a larger purpose that underpins their existence, a purpose that is more than a marketing slogan. The 21st century university needs to redefine itself as a creator, protector and purveyor of public goods. (Marginson, 2011)

The ongoing task in the twenty-first century is about finding ideas and hope (Connell, 2019) and to “steer the university in new directions in which the university can sustain itself amid powerful global forces” (Peters & Barnett, 2018b, p. 13). What is notable in current accounts is increasing clarity about the new and historical crises that need to be addressed (Macfarlane, 2024) and using metaphors of darkness and hopelessness as a basis for moving to ideas of the university filled with light or promise (Mahon, 2022). For Mahon (2022) and others, the Idea is full of possibility because it exists “not in peril but in promise – as embodying a unique potentiality for wonder, connection, inspiration, and (dare we say it) even joy” (p. 12).

Barnett (2013) listed over one hundred and ten ideas of the university (pp. 67-70), many of which are metaphorical and, therefore, inspire reflection and provoke thought. Some of these ideas (for example, neo-liberal university, corporate university, global university, enterprise university, borderless university, liberal university, virtual university, bureaucratic university, and digital university) are more prominent in the scholarly literature than others (for example, injured university, discontented university, theatrical university, translucent university, foolish university, and Mode-2 university). While all metaphors have the potential to spark imagination and widen engagement in thinking with the Idea, some metaphors get more traction and dominate the conversation. Some scholars take the view that repetition of metaphors limits and constrains expansion of the Idea. As discussed already, the introduction of new metaphors into the debate to replace conventional ones is encouraged (Barnett, 2011). Additionally, Barnett (2011) encourages academics to see imagining the university as a

poetic task that connects the concrete and abstract in new ways. In pursuing educational research as an imaginative activity, Greene (1994) suggests that:

imaginative thinking may be best illuminated by viewing it in terms of metaphor.

Imagination, after all, is the cognitive capacity that allows human beings to construct alternative modes of being, to look beyond the actual in their own experience, to envisage what might be if things were otherwise. (p. 455-456)

The above overview of some of the ideas and metaphors for the university circulating in the past two hundred years is not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive, but rather, it illustrates how metaphors circulate in the scholarly dialogue about the Idea. In this discourse, metaphors have a peripatetic life. In their travels, concepts emerge, circulate and recirculate: ideas collide and flourish in collective and individual thinking. There is no doubt that metaphor has a role in imaginative thinking about the Idea of the University. Learning and thinking about the Idea through metaphor is about expanding “the range of possibilities of seeing the same thing” so “our world grows richer and we have more options for our actions” (Bowden & Marton, 1998, p. 6). In each metaphor, multitudinous perspectives and understandings are possible.

The twenty-first century heralds a renewed optimism for the Idea of the University; one that is “alive and being invigorated. New life is being breathed into it” (Peters & Barnett, 2018b, p. 12). However, Peters and Barnett (2018b) also argue that refreshing the Idea cannot ignore the fact that ideals must be practically implemented. Recent examples of directions for the Idea of the University include Tight’s (2024) formation of the Idea as “up-to-date, accessible, cooperative and a key part of global society” (p. 9), Barnett’s (2024) eight interconnected ecosystems in the “ecological university,” and Matthew’s (2022) post-digital university that uses influential ideas from past as a tool to “to illuminate and encourage debate on the purpose and becoming of the university as a social institution” (p. 686). These

refreshed ideas all have an important characteristic: they are “glimpses of utopia but have a feasibility attached to them” (Peters & Barnett, 2018b, p. 13), and in prosecuting such ideas and bringing them to life, authors reach for metaphor.

What is common in the scholarly discourse of the Idea is making ideas and meaning anew. Eaton and Stevens (2020) argue that universities’ central positioning in society means they are polysemic in that “they are capable of carrying multiple and even contradictory meanings simultaneously” (p. 3). These multiple ideas can be read alongside each other. They are part of an open debate between an idea that is not settled, an idea in a constant state of becoming, and an idea that is expressed through metaphor. My intention in highlighting metaphors for the Idea is to establish the importance of metaphor in colouring the contradictions and complexity in the Idea. I have not outlined all debates in the past two hundred years, nor presented all metaphors, but surveyed some of the main debates and their primary metaphors (mostly from the United Kingdom and Germany) to demonstrate that metaphor is a way of describing the Idea and that it has utility for this study.

2.3 The Library: Another Rich and Imaginative Idea

Academics use metaphors to express understandings of the Idea and sometimes this writing includes metaphors for ideas of the library. In the nineteenth century, Newman presented the academic library as entangled with the Idea of the University based on knowledge. Newman’s idea of knowledge in the university—for its own end and in relation to learning, professional skill and religion—is reflected in his metaphors for the academic library. Newman (2001) saw a connection between old and new knowledge in both ideas, which he traces to the library at Alexandria. He describes this universal library as encapsulating two “great conceptions:” the “embalming of dead genius” and the “endowment of the living” (Newman, 2001). Other academics at this time also refer to the library as a “storehouse of old knowledge” or a “scholar’s workshop” (Pelikan, 1992, p. 112). The

emphasis in Newman's description is on library collections. However, his metaphors also link the library and the university in responsibility for past scholarship and the pursuit and creation of new knowledge—which, it could be argued, is a relationship that has not yet reached the limit of its utility.

In the twentieth century, Pelikan (1992) argued that in the future of the university, “the network of university and library can only become more intertwined” (p. 113). And this entanglement is reflected in academics' metaphors throughout the twentieth century. Flexner (2020) describes the library as a place where “books are at hand ; a workshop for him [the professor] and his students in a congenial atmosphere is created” (p. 77). In the early twentieth century, Kerr (2001) used the metaphor “centre” (p. 67) to describe the relationship of the library to the university. Both Flexner's (2020) and Kerr's (2001) metaphors evoke the importance of the library as place. As Kumar (1997) suggests, if the university is a place to bring people together, “libraries can extend it” (p. 29).

While academics' attention to the library through metaphor is exiguous, the volume of librarians' metaphors for the library is ample. Librarians continually reimagine the idea of the library and its operational functions through metaphor and their use of metaphors over time has been well documented (for example, Boyd & Amedegnato, 2019; Lynch, 2017; Meszaros & Lewis, 2015; Nardini, 2001; Nitecki, 1993; Nitecki, 1979; Salisbury & Peseta, 2018; Smith & Yachnes, 1998; VanScoy, 2016). Some metaphors for the library, like “heart,” “laboratory,” and “workshop,” are persistent and have circulated and recirculated since the nineteenth century (Nardini, 2001). The “library is the heart of the university” is one metaphor for the idea of the library that has been used by both librarians and academics for two hundred years (Breen & Salmond, 1989; Elliot, 1875). At the same time new metaphors for the library continue to emerge, like “café,” “brain,” and “Genius Bar” (Guthro, 2019). It is part of a continual quest for relevance, expressed through novel metaphors or by returning

to past metaphors. Like metaphors for the Idea of the University, metaphors for the library reflect the changing environment and the aspirations for the future.

Digital knowledge in the information age has redefined libraries, and for some academics this means “the library is a cameo of the university,” because like the university, it has shifted from being a place “of contemplation” to a place “of production” (Barnett, 2024, p. 8). These metaphors make me wonder if the library could be more than the Idea of the University in miniature. Quinn (2022) argues that “the library represents an untapped lens through which to understand the university” from its position at “the borderlands between the university and its local community” (p. 1). It is “a bellwether of transformations” and possible futures for the university’s public role (p.2). Quinn’s metaphor for the library as a “bellwether” stands out in the debate about the Idea. Her reasoning suggests the library has the potential to be an incubator of contemporary ideas of the university. While other academics offer glimpses of the library, their sightings, in the language of Barnett’s (2013) three planes, are likely to be located in the university as “institution” in “time and space” and in its “particularities.” Imagining the library as a “bellwether” does not follow the same pattern. Seeing the library as a harbinger, a herald, and a forerunner locates it differently on the three planes—in the “universals,” “possibilities,” and “idea” of the university. Quinn’s (2022) metaphor indicates there is untapped potential in the library to contribute to future imaginaries of the Idea of the University and supports an argument that engaging librarians with debates about ideas of the university is overdue.

2.4 Bringing Librarians’ Voices to the Idea of the University

Librarians’ ideas of the university and their interaction with the idea are under-researched. My approach in this study is to use metaphor at the intersection of these two ideas—university and library—to engage librarians in the Idea of the University. Metaphor is a familiar tool and a step toward uncovering librarians’ not-yet-expressed ideas of the

university. What do librarians think about the Idea of the University? Librarians' ideas of the university are not readily communicated in the scholarly literature. In the absence of ideas explicitly expressed, paying attention to the metaphors librarians use or generate can help uncover their thoughts. My intention, however, is not to involve librarians in a creative process that just generates even more metaphors that represent librarians' ideas. I plan to engage in "reading-the-data-while-thinking-the-theory" in acknowledgement that "knowing is never done in isolation but is always effected by different forces" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743).

Peters and Barnett (2018a) point out that the two-hundred-year-old discourse on the Idea of the University is "an *open and living tradition*" (p. xiv) that requires ongoing re-imagining and renewal. Opening the debate and extending the undertaking of uncovering and reimagining the Idea with others in the university community is an epistemological and ontological endeavour. As Davis (2017) argues, universities need academics and professional staff "who honour a shared sense of what matters" in the Idea of the University and act as "colleagues who steer its destiny" (p. 78). For librarians, uncovering and (re)imagining the Idea through metaphor is a good place to start because librarians do use metaphors. They use metaphors to describe and imagine the idea of the library, which influences thinking and practice. This suggests the potential of metaphor for researching, thinking and practising with ideas of the university in the library.

2.5 What does Empirical Metaphor Research Deliver?

Elliot (1984) identified the function of metaphors in educational research as "introducing fresh perspectives, making illuminating comparisons and contrasts, picking out kinds of phenomena not yet named" (p. 39). In education research, metaphor's power is exercised to "put forward proposals for another way of looking at things and of grasping inchoate intimations of possibilities" (Aspin, 1984, p. 34). For these reasons, educational researchers use metaphor analysis to interpret people's everyday sense and experience of

their world. For example, in secondary education contexts, researchers have used metaphor analysis to understand students' perceptions of textbooks (Çelik et al., 2022), literature (Savaskan, 2022), teachers (Dearden, 1972), and reading and listening (Dincel, 2019). Moreover, in these contexts, metaphor research can “prompt action” (Elliot, 1984, p. 44).

Jensen (2006) argues that the epistemological motivation for using metaphor analysis is to bring to light “new educational worlds that we might not have seen otherwise” and therefore to “expand[ed] theory and offer[ed] us directions for improving practice” (p. 50). The utility of metaphor in education begs the question about how metaphor analysis has been used in higher education research or specifically to research the nature of the university. Metaphor is useful in imagining and expanding the Idea of the University as part of conceptual debates, but does it have a corresponding value in empirical research into the Idea?

2.6 Metaphors as a Tool in Understanding Phenomena in Higher Education

In empirical studies in the higher education environment, metaphor analysis is used to examine perceptions of learning, teaching, and research. For example, exploring the beliefs students have about learning (Bager-Elsborg & Greve, 2019; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2011), and resources (Akturk et al., 2015; Jensen, 2006; Jensen et al., 2021; Jin & Cortazzi, 2011; Jin et al., 2014; Kahu & Picton, 2022; Northcote & Fetherston, 2006; Topalak, 2022). It has also been used to investigate students' perceptions of teachers (Seferoğlu et al., 2009), and perceptions of academics in the university and wider community (Sever et al., 2022). Other studies use metaphor to probe students' understanding of academic literacy (Seferoğlu et al., 2009; Wan et al., 2011), online learning (Jensen et al., 2021), research (Pitcher, 2011, 2013; Pitcher & Åkerlind, 2009), teaching in diverse settings (Brown et al., 2005), discipline concepts (Hunt & Menon, 1995), and libraries (Bourdieu & Saint Martin, 1996).

Common characteristics of these studies include metaphor elicitation (for example, Dincel, 2019; Hazar et al., 2022), selection or ranking of suggested metaphors (for example, Bourdieu & Saint Martin, 1996), and coding metaphors generated into topics or themes (for example, Çelik et al., 2022; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2011). While for some researchers the potential for metaphors to be allocated to more than one category is a challenge (Hazar et al., 2022), for others, the allocation of sub-themes within themes ensures that metaphors are appropriately distributed (Akkaya et al., 2018). Within themes, metaphor frequency or participant demographics are often used in the analysis (for example, Çelik et al., 2022; Dincel, 2019; Hazar et al., 2022; Sever et al., 2022). Across these studies, the terminology used to describe the structural elements of a metaphor varies depending on the metaphor tradition that frames the study. For example, in conceptual metaphor theory, the parts of a metaphor are known as the source and target domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), as tenor/topic and vehicle in substitution and comparison theory (Richards, 1965), or as focus and frame or principal subject and subsidiary subject in interaction theory (Black, 1962b).³

The conclusions researchers draw from examining, interpreting, and comparing themes and categories offer insight into how metaphors shape thinking and the possible implications for practice (for example, Bas & Kivılcım, 2020; Çelik et al., 2022; Hazar et al., 2022; Savaskan, 2022). This suggests that metaphor is a promising and rich approach for investigating the Idea of the University; however, there is a surprising lack of empirical studies in this area.

³ For simplicity, throughout the thesis, I have adopted the terminology “source domain” and “target domain” to refer to a metaphor’s structural elements.

2.6.1 Getting More from Metaphor

There are limited examples of empirical metaphor studies that explore perceptions of the Idea of the University. This is unexpected for several reasons. First, the plethora of metaphors used by academics to evoke or theorise the essence of the Idea, second, the numerous empirical metaphor studies in higher education, third, calls for new metaphors for the Idea, and fourth, the abstract nature of the Idea and that metaphor analysis is frequently used in examining abstract phenomena (Cameron, 2003). Three examples where researchers use metaphor elicitation to explore conceptions of the university are Firat and Yurdakul (2012), Hazar et al. (2022), and Utar Özkan and Sahin (2022). In these studies, participants produce a range of metaphors for the idea of the university, for example, the university as an airport (Utar Özkan & Şahin, 2022), a brain (Utar Özkan & Şahin, 2022), a city (Hazar et al., 2022), a community (Firat & Yurdakul, 2012), a conductor (Utar Özkan & Şahin, 2022), and a factory (Firat & Yurdakul, 2012; Hazar et al., 2022; Utar Özkan & Şahin, 2022). None of these studies includes professionals' understandings of the Idea. The limited number of studies that use metaphors to research ideas of the university often do not go beyond collecting and coding participants' novel and conventional metaphors. This prompts me to ask what is possible beyond coding that can do justice to the richness of metaphor in this investigation of librarians' ideas of the university.

2.6.2 Thinking with Theory

In the empirical studies cited above, metaphors are typically generated and analysed to get to the truth or essence of an individual or collective understanding of phenomena. Similarly, in this study, I collected and coded the metaphors librarians use to express their ideas of the university and the library, categorised the metaphors into themes, and then analysed librarians' metaphors using qualitative thematic analysis. What I noticed, however,

is that this process does not do justice to the utility of metaphor for provoking thinking about ideas.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012) argue that coding in qualitative research is a “simplistic treatment of data analysis” (p. vii-ix). The energy of metaphor calls for something more. It demands a practice that keeps “meaning on the move” (p. 7). To countermand the perceived inadequacies of coding, Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012) practice of thinking with theory drives “research and data and theory to its exhaustion to produce knowledge differently... [and] focus on the constitutive and generative aspects of texts” (p. 7). Adopting their approach of “plugging in,” of using theory to think with data, activates another level of creativity in librarians’ metaphors for the Idea of the University. In this study, I do not stop at coding librarians’ metaphors; instead, I “work the limits (and limitations) of such practices” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. ix). I take advantage of the window of opportunity Jackson and Mazzei (2012) call “after coding” (p. 14) to think with theory. In this study, thinking with theory means active re-interpretation, centring the research object, not the subject, and enacting a process of “folding and flattening” that “is meant to be irruptive in an opening of ways of thinking and meaning” (p. 14). This approach has been taken in other studies where researchers push beyond coding to produce research “through a dynamic and iterative process” and think with conceptual tools or theory to bring a phenomenon to life (Kligyte, 2019, p. 76). This process has the potential to extend coding and thematic analysis in metaphor studies. Metaphor analysis that adopts thinking with theory after coding requires a creative and analytical mode of writing that is provocative, engaging, and attuned to the dynamism and powerful associations generated through librarians’ metaphors. I call this form of writing Idea Portraits. Idea Portraits leverage these associations to follow the contours of librarians’ metaphors for the university and library in an interpretative and generative process. The result is writing that is “a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery”

(Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). Its purpose is to bring librarians' attention to the Idea of the University and to encourage engagement with the Idea.

2.7 What are Idea Portraits?

As a vehicle for thinking with theory, Idea Portraits are inspired by Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) conceptualisation of writing practices as a process of "plugging in," "assembling," and "making and unmaking." Idea portraits provide a canvas for "arranging, organizing, fitting together" data and theory (p. 1). There are likely many portrait painting techniques available to researchers, and different researchers may employ various techniques. All are valid, and there is neither a right nor a wrong way; the most important thing is to experiment in a manner that produces something that suits the nature of the inquiry. My approach to the composition of an Idea Portrait involves arranging data (metaphor), theory, and analysis.

In an Idea Portrait, the intended outcome of arranging data, theory, and analysis is deepened engagement with the research object as part of the portrait-seeing experience. In Idea Portraits, there is space to shift from "what is" questions about meaning to thinking about how meaning changes by taking different perspectives (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018). A single or multiple metaphors representing an idea of the library, the university, or both can sit at the centre of the composition. Introducing thinking with theory to the portrait's arrangement challenges and unsettles normative readings of the metaphor and facilitates (re)looking at the metaphor's texture through "plug[ging] multiple theories into data and read[ing] them through one another" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743). Drawing on Barad's (2007) development of the notion of diffraction as a methodology, Mazzei (2014) also calls this analysis process "diffraction" because it disperses and disrupts thinking and "leads in different directions. It keeps analysis and knowledge production on the move" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743).

2.7.1 The Inspiration for Idea Portraits

In addition to being motivated by Mazzei and Jackson (2023) to bring together data and theory in metaphor analysis, my motivation for Idea Portraits also comes from two distinct portraiture practices. First is the qualitative research methodology called Portraiture, and second is the art genre also named Portraiture. The creative and philosophical considerations in these two “portraitures” from distinct disciplines influenced my deliberations about what Idea Portraits might produce in terms of “enacting theoretical concepts” and “not just a positing of theoretical concepts” (Mazzei & Jackson, 2023, p. 171).

In their account of Portraiture in qualitative research, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) emphasise that the creative aim of this methodology is to “capture the complexity and aesthetic of human experience” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 4). The narratives produced are designed to be both familiar and strange, in order to introduce a perspective that the reader might not have considered. The portrait is designed to “seduce the readers into thinking more deeply about issues that concern them” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 10). Portraiture is a search for a “central story” that can be developed into a “convincing and authentic narrative” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 12) to instigate engagement in discourse. A portrait is intended to reach a broad audience, providing insight into the world of the subject, the researcher, and the viewer, and to invite dialogue across disciplinary fields. The result is to inspire and “deepen the conversation” (Geertz, 1972, as cited in Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 10) through narratives that are “at once complex, provocative, and inviting” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 11). These overarching principles resonate with my intention in Idea Portraits, with the key difference being that Idea Portraits focus not on individuals but on their metaphors.

My second source of inspiration for Idea Portraits comes from Portraiture as an art genre. In their artistic form, portraits “resemble the sitter, capture the character of the sitter,

and express the artist's vision of that character" (Gaskell, 2020, p. 13). Portraits create a likeness that resembles the physical qualities of the sitter and something of their soul and inner character. In galleries and museums, framed portraits invite the viewer into the company of the sitter, and in "an act of imagination," the viewer is drawn into the presence of the absent sitter (Batkin, 1990, p. 17). Art theorists argue that portraits can also be considered from the perspective of the experience they afford the viewer. Giovannelli (2020) calls this experience "portrait-seeing" and describes it as engagement with a portrait that is:

a distinctive kind of vision-based experience, cognitively and imaginatively rich, which focuses on the person in the picture, qua person (i.e., bearer of mental states, character traits, and more generally moral agency), whose presence is entertained in one's experience – is in other words contemplated. (p. 39-40)

These considerations also resonate with my objective in developing Idea Portraits. This description of "portrait-seeing" evokes the sort of rendering and experience Idea Portraits might bring the reader. The object of my focus is not a person but a metaphor—the idea at the centre of the picture—contemplated with theory to bring into the light a particular aspect and draw the reader into the company of ideas revisited, new, or yet-to-be-explored.

Finally, from a more whimsical perspective, Idea Portraits are inspired by a gallery of book titles, which all centre the Idea of the University and have been my companions throughout this research journey:

- *Being a university*
- *Imagining the university*
- *The Australian idea of the university*
- *The concept of a university*
- *The crisis of the university*
- *The digital idea of the university*
- *The ecological university*
- *The good university*
- *The idea of the university*
- *The new idea of a university*
- *The new use of the university*
- *The thinking university*
- *The university in ruins*
- *Understanding the university*
- *Universities between two worlds*

Browsing these titles, something about them makes me imagine them in a different format. Each title holds a picture of the idea. They could be labels on a gallery wall in an exhibition of portraits of the Idea of the University. But looking more closely at the labels, I notice that the artists all come from the same group within their community. There is room to expand the curation of this exhibition to include portraits by creatives from another group in the university community. The Portrait of Centrality is the first example.

CHAPTER 3: A PORTRAIT OF CENTRALITY

3.1 An Experiment with Idea Portraiture

In Idea Portraits, ideas nudge other ideas because, as Strathern (1992) argues, “ideas need ideas to think with” and “it matters what ideas one uses to think other ideas (with)” (p. 10). The Idea Portrait included in this chapter is an experiment in thinking with theory. It explores what happens when ideas have other ideas to think with. Idea Portraits respond to calls for new images for the Idea of the University, “which must be drawn not from some hazy philosophical hinterland, but out of the pulsating, messy and mongrel forms of everyday imaginations and visions” (Bengtson & Barnett, 2017, p. 126). They are intended to add a “new angle of vision,” to give librarians a “perspective that they had not considered before,” and allow them to “cross boundaries they have yet to explore” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Idea Portraits are what Richardson (1997, as cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018) calls a “field of play.”

The Portrait of Centrality that follows is a thought experiment that uses the metaphor “the library is the heart of the university” (hereafter, heart metaphor) as a “chunk of data” that is reworked repeatedly through theory to generate “an overabundance of meaning” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 5). In the heart metaphor, the library and university are inextricably linked. In this metaphor, ideas of the library and university are entangled. While the heart metaphor is familiar to librarians, there is also potential for it to be read differently. The intended outcome of this experiment is to introduce perspectives that have not been considered before, inspire readers to think more deeply, and provoke discussion about two ideas—university and library.

This Idea Portrait insists on the value of relooking at the heart metaphor in anticipation that lurking in its shadows is a new perspective waiting to be seen. Despite

metaphors' richness, the complexity of their meaning is not always easily resolved. A way to set up an even richer interpretative environment is to experiment with taking metaphor to a different theoretical space—in other words, thinking with theory.

3.2 The Heart of the University: Revisiting an Enduring Metaphor

(Published Article)

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Abstract: One of the most enduring and controversial metaphors to describe the academic library is this: “The academic library is the heart of the university.” For 150 years, librarians have both embraced and rejected this metaphor in equal measure. For some, the metaphor is old, dusty, and ignorant of contemporary library practices; for others, it endures precisely because of the place it affords the library at the center of the university. While it is understandable that these polarized views persist, is contestation the only possible outcome of this discussion? Subjecting the metaphor to a more critical analysis has the potential to rekindle an appreciation for it and to reveal other possible understandings hidden within its words. This paper draws on traditions of metaphor analysis to invite questions about how this metaphor might be construed and read differently. In doing so, the aim is to indicate why and how the metaphor remains vital, and to examine how it can refresh academic library scholarship and practice. Its future relevance lies not with the library as the heart of the university, but with the library engaged in the scholarly debate about what the heart of the university is.

Looking Again: Revisiting the Academic Library Heart Metaphor

Faced with the ever-present challenge of describing and communicating the value of the academic library, librarians have long leveraged the creative possibilities afforded by metaphor. The metaphor “the academic library is the heart of the university” is a well-known figure of speech that has been in circulation for nearly 150 years. While it is one among dozens, it has endured. Researchers have identified and categorized the many academic library metaphors,¹ and librarians continue to coin new ones to describe and develop a mythology about the academic library.² Despite vibrant imaginings ushered in by these new library metaphors, the heart metaphor continues steadfastly in the mix.

The power and ubiquity of metaphor in everyday language is used by librarians to promote a common understanding about academic libraries and to illustrate all that the library is, and might be, for the university community. The heart metaphor was used in the late nineteenth century by the president of Harvard University to secure funds for enlarging

library buildings to better accommodate students, readers, and books,³ and it has endured in library literature ever since. Notwithstanding the library's evolving digital and physical forms, the heart metaphor persists in the linguistic landscape and is commonly interpreted as describing the literal and figurative central positioning of the academic library. Over time, however, librarians' attitudes to the metaphor have shifted, oscillating between enthusiastic engagement, indifference, and disapproving dismissal. As illustrated by the selected examples in Table 1, this metaphor has been endorsed, referenced, and rejected in equal measure.

For some academic librarians, the metaphor "has not lost its relevance. It is as appropriate as ever, if not more so."⁴ For those who intentionally embrace the heart metaphor, their endorsement validates and strengthens its relevance. Authors who make neutral reference to it without value statements about the idea, its history, and its past usefulness, help keep the heart metaphor in circulation. For others, rejection will likely diminish its value, and the academic library is more like a "heart with clogged arteries and in need of bypass surgery" than an indispensable contributor to the university mission.⁵

The references to the academic library heart metaphor listed in Table 1 are not intended to be exhaustive: rather, they are representative of its usage over time and the shifting reaction to the metaphor. It would be unwieldy to present comprehensively the frequency of use of this metaphor. For example, the list excludes the dozens of librarians and academic authors who frequently rely on the heart metaphor to offer both real and symbolic descriptions of library purpose and value. What the selected references in Table 1 do illustrate, however, is that the metaphor emerges again and again to illuminate the idea of the academic library—what it might be or should no longer be. The metaphor's persistent inclusion in authors' interpretative repertoire suggests that it continues to resonate. See Table 1.

Given the metaphor's history, what does its recurring use call to attention? Subjecting the heart metaphor to more substantive analysis has the potential to offer new insights about its usefulness and raises the question of whether there is more to understand about it. Why is the heart metaphor so unremitting and so contested in the wide-ranging assortment of implied comparisons that represent academic libraries? How does a distinction between the literal and nonliteral language in the metaphor aid comprehension? What meanings are carried by the heart as a metaphor? Why does library centrality readily come to mind in response to the metaphor? And what new understandings might emerge by using metaphor theory to look more closely at the linguistic structure and conceptual characteristics of the heart metaphor? In this paper, the authors take up each of these questions in turn to make the case for revisiting the metaphor as relevant to the academic library in its present and future forms.

The Academic Library Heart Metaphor

Structurally, the academic library heart metaphor is typical of simple linguistic metaphors: a phrase or sentence where some words are used literally and others are used nonliterally or metaphorically.⁶ Simple metaphors make an implicit comparison, substitution, or attribution between two things that signify “something regarded as representative or suggestive of something else.”⁷ As a linguistic device, simple metaphors “do something highly creative and succeed in saying something that we could not say without recourse to metaphor.” They combine words in an unusual way depending on whether the intended sense of each word is literal or nonliteral.⁸ This combination of words transfers the characteristics of one thing to an unrelated thing. It enables readers to see a subject in new ways and extends the meaning of words,⁹ imbuing them with significance beyond their literal definition and so giving “language users a flexibility that is not available with literal expressions.”¹⁰

In the academic library heart metaphor, *academic library* and *university* are used literally and draw on common knowledge about the meaning of these terms. Readily available definitions about the purpose and function of the academic library make clear that it is a library associated with a university or college of higher education,¹¹ whose intent is to support the institution's mission by providing collections, services, and programs that align with the educational and research needs of the university community.¹² In support of teaching, learning, and research, the academic library is both a physical and digital space.¹³ The literal meaning of *library* is generally understood to involve the information, research, and educational requirements of students, teaching staff, and researchers.¹⁴ Any use or interpretation of the term might also specifically refer to, among other things:

1. the digital collections,
2. the on-site collections,
3. information access services, such as discovery platforms and interlibrary loan,
4. direct reference and research services either online or on-site,
5. capability and skill development for information and digital literacies,
6. the physical building, space, or environment as a center for individual or group study, and
7. the physical and digital environment as a center for academic or social activities.

Researchers have made clear that the phrase *academic library* can, and does, have multiple meanings. Because of that, when used literally, *academic library* inhabits a complexity of layered meanings even before the phrase is associated with the word *heart*. Understandably, questions then emerge about which salient characteristics of the heart are transferred to the academic library, and what the heart—as a metaphor—suggests about the library and its relationship with the university.

Exploring the Heart as a Metaphor

The two intertwined narratives that underpin the heart as a metaphor stem firstly, from the anatomical heart known to science, and secondly, from the notion of a feeling heart of emotion and thinking. The anatomical heart serves a function vital for survival; the organ

receives and sends blood from veins to arteries.¹⁵ The anatomical heart is a precision pump, a working machine that is maintained, monitored, repaired, or replaced, and finally expires when its rhythmic beating stops. Heart metaphors speak to the universal human experience of the heart's regular beat.¹⁶ A healthy heart relaxes and contracts in a steady rhythm to pump blood through the body, and although it is productive and industrial—a “powerhouse supplying fuel to the body's periphery”—in symbolic terms, the heart represents much more than a mechanical pump.¹⁷ The physiology of the beating heart is also linked to psychological well-being and relationships with others.

The parallel narrative of the feeling heart is concerned with mind, emotion, and thinking: the heart is the “physiological canvas onto which our emotions are most easily written.”¹⁸ The feeling heart has its origins in historical cultural practice, ideology, and ancient beliefs about the connection between body and brain.¹⁹ Today, it continues to mean an emotional repository for love, moods, passions, and moral values. Our understanding of the heart as a metaphor is anchored in these two parallel narratives—that the heart is both a driving force that pumps blood around the body and a figurative vessel waiting to convey and be filled with emotional meaning.²⁰ In the metaphoric heart, these concrete and abstract narratives interact, and the boundaries between the anatomical heart and feeling heart are blurred, just as a linguistic conceptualization of emotion is triggered through bodily sensations and symptoms.²¹

The metaphoric heart has numerous features, including size, shape, materiality, temperature, architecture, and geography. Over 40 heart metaphors common in everyday English draw on the characteristics of the physical heart and the feeling heart.²² Meanings of the heart as a metaphor can be grouped according to the categories in Table 2. These interpretations come from a long history of the heart being used to refer to the body, mind, and emotions,²³ which gives the word heart its linguistic significance and power.

The “heart as the center or core of something” is the generally accepted interpretation of the academic library heart metaphor. Metaphors in this category draw on narratives of the “clockwork of the heart”²⁴ and the role of the anatomical heart as the body’s central mechanical driver.²⁵ While physically left of center in the upper chest, the heart’s role at the center of the body’s circulatory system reveals why the geographic hub of a place or thing might also be called its *heart*. For example, the “heart of the city” is traditionally understood to be its geographic center point. This expression of positional centrality is widespread and has an equivalent metaphorical projection in several languages.²⁶ But in a contemporary sprawling metropolis, pinpointing a city’s geographic center does not necessarily locate its heart. This metaphor directs us not just to a central location but also to something that goes beyond concrete location to a more abstract sense of central purpose and value. Finding the heart of the city means a deeper and more complex discovery of the inner workings and essence of a municipality,²⁷ important to its ongoing existence. The anatomical heart’s work is vital for the body’s everyday functioning, for human survival, and indeed for life itself;²⁸ the heart as a metaphor for the center or core of something positions that thing at the center of life.²⁹ To be at the heart of something may conjure up the concrete or the abstract, but nevertheless, what lies at the core is experienced as important.³⁰ Even if the heart is invisible, it can always be heard or felt.³¹ It is the heart “as a centre *qua* centre that makes those shining and illuminating centres emerge.”³²

Academic Library Centrality: A Lively Debate

The freight of metaphor means different interpretations of the heart might potentially be carried from the source domain (the conceptual realm from which the metaphor is drawn) to the target domain (the quality or experience the metaphor describes) in the academic library heart metaphor. In the library literature, both superficial and more substantial

references to the heart metaphor reflect an observable and primary assumption that this metaphor means that the library is central. But is the inferred centrality about position, purpose, or value? When the heart is interpreted as the center or core of something, the notion of centrality has complexity and layered meaning. *Central* is itself a metaphor but does it signal something crucial, convenient, or controlling? Clearly, central has multiple connotations. In addition to vitality, it can also imply prominence, prestige, and visibility.

A central position is the point from which something proceeds, emanates, or develops: a place around which things are situated or gathered.³³ It signifies the most essential or important aspect of something. Library buildings at the geographic center of the campus reinforce the centrality of the library within the institution. The visibility of the library's architecture and position infers and underlines that the library is essential because it dominates the campus landscape.³⁴ But the geography of the campus is not singular in nature. Its texture is plural. It is physical, digital, and conceptual; it is concrete and abstract; and the library is present in the landscape in all these forms. As Jeffrey Pomerantz and Gary Marchionini contend, the digital and physical library share purpose and function: to provide their community with "cognitive spaces that can be intellectually moved through and modified to suit cognitive needs."³⁵ Therefore, centrality (perhaps unwittingly) sets up an opposition between physical and digital geography, and competing ideas of function, purpose, and value make the interpretation of the heart metaphor more complex. What centrality is, and whether the physical and digital forms of the library deliver on all that centrality might entail, are the key concerns in the debate over the relevance of the heart metaphor.

In questioning the ongoing applicability of the heart metaphor, the claim to centrality is what researchers most dispute. Fundamental to this debate is firstly, whether the library achieves all that centrality evokes, and secondly, whether the heart metaphor remains

relevant and provides ongoing inspiration and symbolism in the twenty-first century. In 1991, Lloyd Chapin and Larry Hardesty not only criticized the careless and clichéd use of the heart metaphor, they also suggested that the underlying central positioning it implied was true neither philosophically nor financially. The changing nature of the academic library demands new ways of operating, new partnerships, and strategically (re)positioning the library; in this environment the heart metaphor could be perceived as resembling traditional rather than contemporary library practice.³⁶ Interestingly, the four North American studies that follow have each rejected the heart metaphor.³⁷ Taken together, their reasons and insights provide background for revisiting what the metaphor invokes.

Deborah Grimes was perhaps the first researcher to test the cogency of the heart metaphor as a description of the relationship between the library and the university. Grimes believed the analogy to be imprecise and uneconomical because of the range of interpretations evoked by the word *heart*. For Grimes, the metaphor remained unconvincing. She claimed that the ambiguous nature of the metaphoric comparison “provides neither librarians nor academics with a lens through which to clearly view the function of the library within the university.”³⁸ The inability to limit the comparisons suggested by the heart metaphor meant that it had little explanatory weight to offer “conceptualizations of the real relationships between the academic library and the university” and therefore “no power to inform the practice of librarianship.”³⁹

To explore whether the heart metaphor offered any benefit for libraries in linking the concept of centrality with academic library practice, Grimes surveyed campus leaders in 1994 to elicit their views on what the heart metaphor implied compared to the reality of academic library practice. Although most participants in the study perceived the library “as having a strong symbolic role, in both intellectual and physical senses,” they disagreed with the

metaphor and judged it an exaggeration that did not reflect the practical and operational reasons for the library's existence.⁴⁰

Based on her results, Grimes concluded "that academic library centrality is operationally defined through user success." She identified service, access, and tradition as the empirical indicators of academic library centrality because they bridge definition and practice.⁴¹ Furthermore, Grimes surmised that the heart metaphor offers no evidence to operationalize the definition of *centrality*, nor does it provide new perspectives on the organizational relationships that influence the allocation of financial resources to the library. Grimes's conclusions challenged abstract views of academic library centrality conjured up by the heart metaphor, which by and large, do not aim to signify library value. As an antidote to potential multiple interpretations of the metaphor, she called on librarians to cultivate a realist understanding of what university leaders and administrators (who are directly involved in resource allocation) want and need from the library.

In 2004, Beverly Lynch, *Catherine Murray-Rust, Susan Parker, Deborah Turner, Diane Parr Walker, Frances Wilkinson, and Julia Zimmerman* replicated Grimes's research to measure changes in the understanding of library centrality in the decade since the original study.⁴² Lynch and her coauthors investigated whether positioning the library on a continuum of centrality impacts resources allocated to the library by its parent institution. Like Grimes, Lynch's team interviewed presidents, chancellors, provosts, and chief academic officers about their understanding of the heart metaphor and the extent to which it reflected reality at their campus. The findings from Lynch's study emphasized the need for the library to demonstrate its alignment to the university mission and "to employ strategies that connect what it does to the values and mission of the university."⁴³ Lynch's team concluded that the heart metaphor is not useful in securing resources for the library. Yet not all participants in the study found the metaphor irrelevant and outdated. For some, it served to raise awareness

that “being the heart of the university today really means . . . that library should be accessible.”⁴⁴ Like Grimes, Lynch and her coauthors concluded that the reality of academic library practice and competing for funding was no longer well-served by the heart metaphor. They recognized that when the metaphor resonated with participants, it more likely referred to the physical position of buildings or about the library in a symbolic sense. Lynch and her team acknowledged that in “an emblematic sense, academic administrators still view the library as the heart of the university, a symbol of the intellectual purpose of the institution.”⁴⁵

This debate continues in the work of Mark Robertson, who uses the research of Lynch and her team as a starting point for studying library centrality.⁴⁶ While Robertson does not explicitly investigate the heart metaphor, for many of the study’s participants, the metaphor is the comparison used to describe the library’s essence and how it evokes a sense of place. One of Robertson’s participants puts it succinctly: “The library is in the heart of the campus. It is a critical, critical, critical gathering place . . . in terms of the gathering place, being the heart of the campus, one of the nerve centers where people go to meet, study, talk, and think very carefully about their education.”⁴⁷ The leaders in Robertson’s study see the library as the “focal point of the campus. It’s smack in the middle of the campus. It’s being used for campus events.”⁴⁸ Another describes co-locating the learning commons in the library as ideal because it “really speaks to position in the library at the heart of the university and the support that it provides for all the activities that go on at the university.”⁴⁹ In these comments, participants turn toward the heart metaphor to conjure up and imply the physical and symbolic centrality of the library. Perhaps nostalgia plays a part, or perhaps they lack an alternative figure of speech to communicate the library’s value. For one of Robertson’s participants, however, the heart metaphor has transferability and therefore ongoing relevance in communicating value: “A library, whether it’s a digital heart place or a physical heart place, would still be one of those key connectors for any university.”⁵⁰ The digital form of the

academic library and the proliferation of platforms for providing collections, services, and spaces reflect the changing nature of the library and likely account for periods of rejection of the metaphor. Equally, the shared core values that drive digital and physical forms of the library perhaps explain why the metaphor continues to resurface. It could be argued that the heart metaphor celebrates plurality, just as both digital and physical forms of the library give rise to opportunities for reinvention.

More than 20 years on from Grimes's study, and just over a decade after Lynch and her coauthors published their 2004 study, Adam Murray and Ashley Ireland again tested assumptions of academic library centrality with a large-scale survey of university leaders.⁵¹ Their findings resemble those of the Lynch team in that they conclude that securing funding must be linked to university goals and evidence of the value of the library. Based on their findings, Murray and Ireland also posit that "academic libraries are no longer the symbolic 'heart of the university.'"⁵² Yet unlike Lynch and her coauthors, they do not concede room for emblematic views of the library as the heart of the university.

These four North American studies make clear why the heart metaphor is contested; it is ambiguous and subjective. Nevertheless, these studies also demonstrate that the metaphor remains firmly in the repertoire of symbolic language used by librarians and institutional leaders in universities. While library researchers debate the metaphor's accuracy, ambiguity is seldom considered to reduce a metaphor's effectiveness.⁵³ In fact, for scholars, what works best is an ambiguous metaphor that proposes "vaguely and ambiguously, lines of research along which one may later discover new ideas."⁵⁴ Importantly, the heart metaphor, for all its opacity, continues to provoke thought, discussion, and insights about the function and value of the academic library.

For more than a decade, the question of how academic libraries address value has gathered momentum,⁵⁵ even as the challenges in communicating its value remain. Tove

Frandsen and Kristian Sørensen's review of library value studies reveals that practice inputs (for example, resources, space, and staff) are not the only indicators of the library's worth.⁵⁶ Several studies included in Frandsen and Sørensen's review refer to "the aspiration of the library" and its "higher purpose" as equally important in determining and understanding the perception of library value. Frandsen and Sørensen suggest that metaphors are often used to communicate these abstract beliefs.⁵⁷ While this argument offers some insight into the continued use of the heart metaphor, the possible multiple interpretations of metaphors present difficulties in arriving at an intersubjective view of the library that captures both realist considerations and more intangible ideas of essence and value.

In 2019, Clem Guthro suggested six metaphors that are relevant for the twenty-first-century academic library. He posits that one of these metaphors—the library as the brain of the university—is a fitting replacement for the heart metaphor: it goes beyond the limits of the physical centrality of library buildings on campus to encompass the distributed digital world. While the heart metaphor sets up an expectation of the library as life support,⁵⁸ it overlaps with the brain metaphor, which "builds on the idea of intellectual engagement of ideas with local and global participants and of action that moves from intellectual engagement of ideas to civic engagement on a local and global scale."⁵⁹ Compared to the academic library as heart, the brain metaphor is infrequent in the literature, but it already influences academic and public library building design.⁶⁰

Empirically informed metaphors fail to solve the problem of finding apt comparisons that reflect all that is real and aspirational in the academic library. An example of a new metaphor that was empirically informed was coined by Grimes—the academic library is a crossroads community. Grimes saw the crossroads metaphor as anchored in the reality of practice and considered it a more economical and precise alternative to the heart metaphor.⁶¹ The crossroads metaphor has not, however, gained the traction of the heart metaphor. Chief

among the reasons for this is that the heart metaphor is considered strong compared to other metaphors; not only is it anchored in the longevity of historical debate but analysis of the strength of the conceptual relationships between its source and target domains affirms its potency.⁶² At a time when a global pandemic has prompted academic librarians to question rational economic notions of measuring value,⁶³ value needs to extend beyond measurable indicators of practice. Perhaps in this environment, a metaphor that prompts debate about the library's aspirational role and positioning is more important than a precise comparison that fails to take into consideration the more prosaic ideals of academic libraries.

Supporting this view is George Fowler's argument that the "aspirational library" and the library experience, which provide the opportunity to grow, learn, and integrate "new knowledge into an individual's worldview," are valid interpretations of the heart metaphor.⁶⁴ Comparing the academic library with the heart suggests a resemblance—the library takes on the qualities of the heart and "the *heart* is the courage, the spirit, the desire to be better . . . to strive for the ideal. It is the *anchor* of the public research university."⁶⁵ As a counterpoint to the conclusions of Grimes, Lynch's team, Murray and Ireland, and Robertson, Fowler does not conflate centrality with operational practice; rather, he proposes a more expansive interpretation of the centrality implied by the heart. This potential for finding a higher purpose buried in the heart metaphor is a shift away from a search for precise and functional interpretations of academic library purpose and value toward more evocative and expansive meanings.

The opposing forces of the abstract heart of emotion and the material heart of science work to buttress Grimes's claim that the heart metaphor should be rejected. The position of the authors of this paper, however, is to suggest expansion rather than rejection. We argue that what Jan Zwicky describes as the "flex" of metaphor provides a generative space to revisit the heart metaphor.⁶⁶ In this space, questions do not always suggest clear answers, and

dialogue about metaphor takes the form of a lively debate that embraces a polyphony of interpretations intended to enliven library practice. The flex of metaphor enables alternative narratives and understandings of the academic library heart metaphor and works at multiple levels of comprehension, appreciation, and potential relevance to practice. Appreciating the flex of metaphor and glimpsing the range of interpretations it generates involves drawing on traditions of metaphor analysis. Viewing the heart metaphor through a theoretical lens is to understand how it is construed and to question how it might be read multiply, and differently—this is what it means to work with metaphor.

Using Metaphor Theory to Examine the Heart Metaphor

A good metaphor facilitates creative discoveries.⁶⁷ The possibility for metaphor analysis to reveal hidden insights is motivation for a close inspection of the heart metaphor. According to Murray Knowles and Rosamund Moon, metaphors in speech and writing explain, clarify, describe, express, evaluate, and entertain.⁶⁸ If metaphor is, as Donald Davidson describes, the “dreamwork of language,” what meanings wait to be discovered in the heart metaphor? And what techniques will uncover them? For Davidson, “There are no instructions for devising metaphors; there is no manual for determining what a metaphor ‘means’ or ‘says.’”⁶⁹ The difficulty of providing a full explanation through any single approach allows flexibility to use multiple approaches, thus revealing a more rounded and fuller view of the metaphor. By drawing on the history and development of metaphor analysis, we present three interpretations of the heart metaphor. Each of the three is underpinned by a theoretical view of metaphor analysis that is either comparison-based, conceptual, or a hybrid of the two.

All three interpretations offer a different view of the heart metaphor, and each helps refresh understanding and appreciation of the analogy. The sequence in which the

interpretations are presented is intentional and begins with the simple comparison, then moves to a more complex and universal conceptual view, and concludes with a new reading. If the creative interaction ignited by metaphor not only helps us to see reality but also plays a role in constituting it,⁷⁰ then together these three interpretations provide a more expansive understanding of the heart metaphor. Taken collectively, they offer a way of looking anew at an enduring figure of speech and at the basis for making different claims about its ongoing relevance and utility for academic libraries in terms of idea and practice.

Interpretation One: Comparison Theory View—A is B

From its Greek origins, the word *metaphor* in its classical Latin form *metaphora* means “to transfer.” This linguistic move is “a figure of speech in which a name or descriptive word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from, but analogous to, that to which it is literally applicable.”⁷¹ In this way, metaphor is “the trope of resemblance *par excellence*.”⁷² It sets up and draws the reader or listener into a comparison. A comparison theory view of metaphor emphasizes that meaning is a consequence of the association that occurs in relating the unrelated. In metaphoric expressions, words undergo a linguistic “interchange of qualities, a transference of energies, and informing of each other.”⁷³ Understanding comes from recognizing the comparison and the similarities that can be transplanted. What is unfamiliar becomes recognizable because meaning results from “bringing in the unusual, new or unknown to what is familiar or already experienced.”⁷⁴

In taking a comparison theory view, it is necessary to first understand a metaphor linguistically: the way it has been set up and construed. The simple linguistic form of metaphor consists of three components:

1. the target domain, or A, which is subject of the metaphor;
2. the source domain, or B, which is the term used metaphorically; and
3. the ground, which is the relationship between the target and source domains.

As a linguistic phenomenon, comparison theory provides a view that makes visible the similarities between two domains and brings into sharp relief the features they share. This approach involves identifying the target and source domains, as well as comparing and finding the similarities between concepts drawn from different domains to establish the ground. The ground gives the metaphor meaning. In other words, metaphors are meaningful when the relationship between the target domain and the source domain is determined and comprehended.⁷⁵ In simple metaphors, there is a transference from the source domain to the target domain, and the formula used to express this shift is *A is B*. This formula applied to the library heart metaphor means *library* is the target domain and *heart* is the source domain: The academic library is the heart of the university—*A* (target) is *B* (source).

Application of this formula to the academic library heart metaphor makes transparent how the source and target are to be compared, and meaning is derived by transferring qualities of the source domain *heart* to the target domain *academic library*. In this construal, the word *university* is taken literally. Sam Glucksberg and Boaz Keysar's view of metaphor comprehension involves putting A and B into a common category where both entities share the attributes of B.⁷⁶ It is a process of comparison and transferral of one or some of the salient features of the source domain to the target domain.

As already discussed, the heart as a metaphorical construct is rich in symbolism, and the library as target domain might assume meaning from any of the various categories of meaning for the heart as a metaphor. Perhaps the library will take on the qualities of the heart as a container for intelligence, which can be traced back to ancient traditions that saw the heart as “the locus of cognitive agency” and the point where mind, body, and spirit interacted and converged.⁷⁷ Perhaps the rhythms of the anatomical heart conjure up tempos for receiving and processing information.⁷⁸ Perhaps the heart as a living organism performs functions that invoke fluency in knowledge discovery, filtering, and creation. All categories

of meaning attributed to the metaphoric heart may contribute to how the library is understood, but as discussed earlier, the heart as the center and core is the most readily adopted comparison. To be at the “heart” of something is to stand at its innermost part or its core and to serve as its life force or its essence. This transferral sets up the library as a central life-giving center—of knowledge and for knowledge—the virtual and physical intellectual core of the university community. The implication for the library should not be underestimated: at its central vantage point, the life-giving library has a fundamental role to energize, stimulate, and animate university life.

If the authors of this paper were to exchange their roles as librarian and academic researching the heart metaphor for that of directors of *The Academic Library Heart Metaphor: The Movie*, they would have at their disposal all the categories of meaning of the heart as metaphor listed earlier. But like users of the heart metaphor before them, the meaning they would reach for is the heart as the core or center of something. This classification provides the visual inspiration for the film’s opening scene: a bird’s-eye view of a traditional academic library, which shows clearly how the library as heart and center can be taken literally, with students entering and leaving the building in a steady flow between it and other areas of the university. As the plot thickens, the action might move from this traditional interpretation of the academic library heart metaphor, which positions the library “at the center of the academic building complex” that allows “a healthy person to walk from any academic area of the campus to the entrance of the library within five minutes,”⁷⁹ to a visual representation of the central position of the digital library. In fact, this feature film treats all aspects of the library as central and important, with centrality as the salient characteristic of the metaphorical heart that dominates this interpretation. When asked why the heart as core and center is the focus for bringing the metaphor to life on screen, the directors’ answer is simple: linguistic metaphor derives from conceptual structures.⁸⁰ In other

words, understanding of simple *A is B* metaphors also draws on embodied experience of the world, which is why this cinematic interpretation resonates with audiences.

Interpretation Two: Conceptual Theory View—IMPORTANT IS CENTRAL

Interpretation one uses comparison theory to analyze the academic library heart metaphor. Yet comparison theory fails to adequately explain why the heart as core and center of something is the prevalent interpretation for the heart metaphor. Conceptual metaphor theory, however, provides further insights. According to this theory, metaphor expresses deep emotion and embodied meaning,⁸¹ so that “the metaphorical words and phrases encountered in language are but surface expressions of these underlying conceptual relationships.”⁸² Conceptual metaphor theorists emphasize that metaphors reflect bodily experiences and that “metaphor in both thought and language partly arises from these recurring patterns of embodiment.”⁸³

Conceptual metaphor theory consists of conceptual mappings that show how ideas relate to each other and linguistic expressions. Theorists use *metaphor* to refer to the conceptual mapping and *metaphorical expression* to indicate a word or phrase that expresses the conceptual mapping and is validated by it.⁸⁴ Researchers have identified hundreds of conceptual mappings, and these metaphors have been extensively documented, reviewed, and empirically tested. For example, the metaphor “Love is a journey” draws on experiences of travel and journeys to understand the abstract concept of love, and the words validate such metaphorical expressions as “This relationship is a dead-end street” or “We’ll just have to go our separate ways.”⁸⁵

Of the many conceptual mappings that have been identified, one might explain why the academic library heart metaphor is most often interpreted as being about centrality: “Important is central.” Two bodily experiences contribute to our understanding of the

metaphor “Important is central.” Firstly, the beating of the heart at the center of the body’s circulatory system “is why we refer to a central place as its heart, especially if that place is very important or has a lot of activity.”⁸⁶ Secondly, the focus of an individual’s field of vision puts what is important and demands attention at the center of the space in which objects are visible or within reach.⁸⁷ A wide range of metaphorical expressions involving the heart cluster within this conceptual metaphor. For example, “getting to the heart of the matter” is to talk about what is central and therefore important. With conceptual metaphor theory, there is a justifiable logic in the academic library heart metaphor or metaphorical expression being mapped to the metaphor “Important is central.”⁸⁸ The embodied experiences that explain the metaphor “Important is central” also provide a rationale for why most users of the heart metaphor or metaphorical expression intuitively reach for centrality as the primary interpretation of the metaphor and why this reading remains prevalent.

Mapping the academic library heart metaphor or metaphorical expression to this conceptual metaphor involves understanding an abstract domain of experience (importance) in terms of a different and more concrete domain of experience (centrality). The heart metaphor or metaphorical expression is only one example. Many other metaphorical expressions about academic libraries can be mapped to this conceptual metaphor. For example, the academic library as a center of learning,⁸⁹ an information or knowledge commons,⁹⁰ a town square,⁹¹ or a hub⁹² are all comparisons that can be mapped to “Important is central.” The “Important is central” metaphor is not just a matter of thought and language, it is also realized in social-physical practice and influences spatial arrangements. Zoltan Kövecses illustrates this point with the example that more important people and objects tend to hold more central physical locations.⁹³ Likewise, when the physical library building occupies prime real estate on campus or if the digital library is featured on the university website, it is an example of this metaphor in social-physical practice.

Interpretation two proposes that the academic library heart metaphorical expression is a realization of the conceptual metaphor “Important is central.” The metaphor “Important is central” is a common and conventional figure of speech. George Lakoff and Mark Turner argue that it belongs to ordinary thought patterns and that metaphorical expressions mapped to it are powerful connectors of thought and experience.⁹⁴ This conceptual view reinforces why centrality is the meaning commonly ascribed to the heart metaphor and why it might be universally understood and continually repeated. It applies equally to the digital library, where the metaphoric meaning of central location is superseded by a sense of central function and value. Interpretation two suggests that the continued use of the heart metaphor is not hackneyed and clichéd but underpinned by embodied and ubiquitous experiences of centrality that signify the importance of the library in a way that is meaningful and universally understood.

Interpretation Three: A New Reading—A is B, which is F

Interpretation one took a comparison theory view (*A is B*) and involved direct application of the source domain *heart* to the target domain *library*. Direct comparison is only one way to derive meaning and identify the interchangeable properties of the target and source domains in the heart metaphor. In interpretation three, we use the flex of metaphor to look at how the words in the figure of speech might be combined and read in multiple ways. Drawing on interaction theory,⁹⁵ interpretation three identifies a different relation between the concepts in the academic library heart metaphor that describes an interplay between systems of things rather than a comparison of things. It involves the reciprocal influence of one system (the university) upon another (the library).

The new reading of the academic library heart metaphor offered in interpretation three is prompted by expanding the number of words in the source domain. In interpretation one,

metaphorical significance was ascribed to a single word—*heart*. The word *heart* was identified as the source domain and the words *academic library* assigned as the target domain, with the word *university* considered part of the literal vocabulary. In contrast, in interpretation three, the source domain consists of a combination of literal and nonliteral vocabulary in the phrase the “heart of the university”: The academic library is the heart of the university—*A* (target) is *B* (source).

There is a linguistic variability here that was absent in interpretation one and a subtle difference in the content and context of the source domain in interpretation three: a shift from a one-word source domain to a combination of words that has an indefinite range of meanings. In other words, *B* is, in fact, *F*. This accretion creates ambiguity but also new interactions: The academic library is the heart of the university—*A* is *B*, which is *F*.⁹⁶

Expanding the source domain to include the phrase the “heart of the university” brings a different level of interaction between the words. Borrowing from interactionist metaphor theory, the source domain becomes “a system rather than an individual thing.”⁹⁷ This enlargement suggests “the heart of the university” is an arrangement of relationships and ideas about what a university is. A larger range of characteristics of the metaphorical heart—for example, its role as a connector and supplier of elements needed for various functions—comes more strongly into play. The context of the academic library heart metaphor has now changed because the source and target have the potential to interact differently, and the metaphor becomes an invitation to explore and construct new similarities between domains.⁹⁸

Metaphors become linguistically more complex when more than one word is used metaphorically because multiple readings will more likely compete in the reader’s understanding. When several words are regarded as a single metaphorical element, interesting questions are raised about interpretation. Complexity and ambiguity are characteristic of metaphors in the form of *A* is *B*, which is *F*.⁹⁹ Yet this model also raises questions about what

the metaphor might communicate. The coupling of the words *heart* and *university* makes the discovery of another meaning possible. In this way, interpretation three tends to emphasize emergent properties that the source domain phrase brings to creating the ground and engages a different interplay between target and source domains. This reading enables us to see the target domain in a new way.¹⁰⁰ The message carried is that engagement with scholarly ideas of the university uncovers new possibilities for understanding what the academic library is and might be. This interpretation foregrounds questions about what concepts of the university are signified and represented at the “heart of the university” and how this system of ideas might influence what is meant by the academic library as a system of digital and physical spaces, collections, and services.

Discussion: The Case for the Heart Metaphor

Elsewhere, it has been argued that “the conceptual thinking about academic libraries appears to be isolated from theoretical ideas of the university.”¹⁰¹ Interpretation three goes beyond transferring the qualities of the metaphorical heart to the library and offers a new account: that the idea of the university is key to unlocking novel meaning in this metaphor. This analysis is a metaphorical plot twist. While the ground is easy to locate in interpretation one, the ground in interpretation three has moved. In interpretation three, we can grasp the difficulty of metaphor’s nature and quiddity: it is a word being used simultaneously in different ways “to focus into one meaning many different meanings.”¹⁰² It presents a more complex linguistic challenge that shifts our engagement to an encounter with the contemporary idea of the university—what it is, how it is changing, what lies at the core and essence of the scholarly idea of the university, and what it means for the academic library. The higher education literature is awash with contested views of the university and its function and purpose. For example, Ronald Barnett identified over 110 different ideas of the

university.¹⁰³ While it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore those ideas, our goal is to highlight that the academic library heart metaphor opens up the future of the academic library by engaging with the long tradition of debate about the university. In this reading, the heart metaphor triggers curiosity and is a call for librarians to engage in a journey of discovery about the ideas at the heart of the university. In fact, it invites librarians to engage with the scholarly idea of the university and so widen what the library might become in practice.

Bringing ideas of the university to bear on thinking about the academic library heart metaphor also potentially contributes to a broader conversation about what is at the heart of the university (if indeed it is not the library) in terms of place, people, and philosophies. Where and what is the heart? One way for librarians to revisit and look anew at the heart of the university is by trying to separate the concepts of place and space—whether physical or virtual. If the heart is a location within a larger spatial or nonspatial assemblage, then it potentially has a narrower range of meanings than if the heart is about the notion of place, which has shades of meaning that are much more evocative. According to Jeff Malpas, place must supervene on space.¹⁰⁴ Malpas argues that place is a more open concept because a place always exists in relation to other places—the idea of place is also grounded in experience and brings the possibility of dwelling. These considerations prompt such questions as: What are the ideas that dwell at the heart of the university? And more broadly: Who dwells at the heart of the university? From this perspective, the heart of the university becomes increasingly crowded as people, ideas, and virtual and physical environments compete for positional centrality. Many groups, systems, and networks see themselves at the center, suggesting that the heart of the university is no longer the singular concept signified by the heart metaphor. The competition for positional centrality is well known to academics and professional staff alike. In this congested environment, can the library exclusively claim to be the university's heart? Using the heart metaphor as a prompt to ask different questions about centrality—who,

what, and where is the center—helps to bring fresh thinking to librarians’ deliberations about positioning the academic library in the institution.

Interpretation three brings new awareness of a recondite interpretation of the heart metaphor. The analysis also challenges the meanings based on comparison theory. It does not “establish new internal relations; it shows us ones that were already there.”¹⁰⁵ As a result, it expands our awareness, and importantly, fashions a distinctive connection and a new conversation. Interpretation three reminds us that no single theory suffices in comprehension of metaphor.¹⁰⁶ It is not uncommon for metaphor researchers to traverse metaphor theories to make the required “interpretative manoeuvres” that enable a full understanding of metaphor.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, some metaphor scholars claim there is no limit to the insights metaphor can bring to our attention or the number of theoretical accounts that can be used to study metaphor.¹⁰⁸ One may take the view that the academic library heart metaphor “poses a question, [that] it surprises us, it triggers off a heuristic process, it forces an interpretative task onto us.”¹⁰⁹ In response to this complex interpretative task, we have not been constrained by a single theoretical approach and instead have added to interpretations of how the academic library sits at the heart of the university.

The quest of some researchers for a definitive and economical metaphor for academic libraries assumes precision rather than evocative interpretation. This is not to suggest that the search for an ideal metaphor is a waste of time. On the contrary, the art and beauty of metaphors are that they provoke thinking, discussion, and debate. The academic library heart metaphor will likely continue to be reinforced, referenced, and rejected. The three interpretations presented in this paper support the argument that while the heart metaphor is not perfect, it has a role in the metaphorical lexicon and future imaginings of the academic library.

Conclusion

The academic library heart metaphor has been interpreted variously: as a meaningless, dusty cliché,¹¹⁰ as an outdated truism no longer relevant to contemporary professional practice;¹¹¹ as an enduring symbol of central positioning;¹¹² and as an expansion of the library's value beyond the operational to the aspirational.¹¹³ Librarians often search for apt metaphors to describe the academic library, without yet happening upon the “perfect metaphor that adequately describes the complexity of the research library.”¹¹⁴

This paper presents three interpretations of the academic library heart metaphor. The first interpretation is a traditional linguistic analysis of the metaphor based on comparison theory. It identifies the metaphor's elements and examines the figure of speech as a simple comparative statement¹¹⁵ Analysis in the second interpretation is based on conceptual metaphor theory. It validates the first interpretation and identifies an underlying conceptual mapping of the metaphor.¹¹⁶ As metaphor theory has developed over time, theoretical approaches have often overlapped and interplayed with one another, and they all strive to make sense of literal language used in a nonliteral way. The third interpretation draws on a mix of approaches to analyze what the academic library heart metaphor might potentially communicate. This analysis takes a hybrid view that provides a new reading of the metaphor. By presenting multiple readings of the academic library in this paper, we have been partly engaged in an exercise to understand why some metaphors endure. More importantly, however, it is an effort to fully appreciate, refresh, and discover how the academic library heart metaphor maintains contemporary relevance.

A surprising set of subtleties and differences is found across the three interpretations of the academic library heart metaphor offered in this paper. Taken together, they demonstrate how one metaphorical sentence can produce different readings. All three illuminate different aspects and dimensions of the relationship between the library and the

university, and all three views are needed to appreciate the metaphor more deeply. Communication in metaphor is achieved through the interplay between such different readings, and as Max Black contends, “Ambiguity is a necessary by-product of metaphor’s suggestiveness.”¹¹⁷ Understanding the academic library heart metaphor “is not mere deciding which of these readings is the *correct* one, but accepting them all” and embracing the possibilities triggered by such multiplicity.¹¹⁸

Davidson proposes that there “is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention.”¹¹⁹ Metaphor theory enables multiple meanings of the academic library heart metaphor to be explored and uncovered for changing times and environments. By revisiting it, this paper adds to and challenges the existing dialogue about the meaning and utility of the heart metaphor.

A poem titled “The Metaphor” in the Australian journal *Quadrant* employs several variations on the heart of science and the heart of emotion:

Anatomists insist that the heart is an organ;
 Four hollow chambers and fibrous walls . . .
 It is true that the heart is an engine room, not a bower . . .
 Expanding, contracting, keeping the pace.
 And yet there is a grace in the work of the heart, I say,
 That mimics a love that stays the distance.¹²⁰

“The Metaphor” is a reminder of the transposability and enduring nature of the metaphoric heart. The academic library heart metaphor has not just stayed the distance; indeed, it calls academic libraries to attention—inviting them to engage deliberately with the scholarly debates about the idea of the university.

Table 1.
The academic library heart metaphor: endorsements, neutral statements, and rejections in the literature

Year	Endorsements*	Neutral statements†	Rejections‡
1875	Charles Eliot		
1889	Hiram Stanley		
1924	Harold Leupp		
1944			Fremont Rider
1958			H. Vail Deale
1966	Allan Cartter		
1979	Joseph Nitecki		
1981		Arthur Hamlin	
1984	Patricia Battin		
1991			Lloyd Chapin and Larry Hardesty
1993	Danuta Nitecki		
1998			Deborah Grimes
2000			Felix Chu
2001			Patience Simmonds and Syed Andaleeb
2005	Sharon Weiner		
2006	Patricia Frade and Allyson Washburn		
2007			Beverly Lynch, Catherine Murray-Rust, Susan Parker, Deborah Turner, Diane Parr Walker, Frances Wilkinson, and Julia Zimmerman
2008	Dale Gyure		
2010	Pieter Kleymeer, Molly Kleinman, and Ted Hanss		Joan Giesecke
2011	Beatrice Tice		
2013		Richard Stoddart	
2014	Victoria Okafor		
2015	Richard Danner		
2015		Matthew Sullivan	
2015		Carl Johannsen	
2015			Mark Robertson
2015			Beth Meszaros and Alison Lewis
2016	George Fowler		
2018			Adam Murray and Ashley Ireland
2018		Fiona Salisbury and Tai Peseta	
2019		Clem Guthro	
2019	William Leonard		

Due to space limitations, only short citations are given here. The full references appear in the “Notes” section of this article.

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- †Hamlin, The University Library in the United States: Its Origins and Development; Stoddart, “Straight to the Heart of Things”; Sullivan, “From Warehouses to Workshops, from Libraries to Labs”; Johannsen, Library User Metaphors and Services: How Librarians Look at Their Users; Salisbury and Peseta, “The ‘Idea of the University’”; Guthro, “The 21st Century Academic Library.”
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Table 2.
Categories of heart metaphors and selected examples

Category	English-language examples
A container of emotions and feelings*	From the bottom of one’s heart To pour one’s heart out To open one’s heart To find it in one’s heart To know something in one’s heart of hearts To take heart
A material substance†	A heart of gold A heart of stone
An object of value‡	To offer one’s heart Brokenhearted
A container for intelligence§	To learn by heart
A metonymy for the person#	To win someone’s heart To have a heart-to-heart
A living organism**	To one’s heart’s desire To set one’s heart on something/somebody My heart tells me
The center and core of something††	The heart of the city The heart of the matter/argument The heartland To get to the heart of something

Due to space limitations, only short citations are given here. The full references appear in the “Notes” section of this article.

- *Afreh, “The Metonymic and Metaphoric Conceptualisations of the Heart in Akan and English”; Berendt and Tanita, “The ‘Heart’ of Things: A Conceptual Metaphoric Analysis of Heart and Related Body Parts”; Alberti, Matters of the Heart: History, Medicine, and Emotion; Gutiérrez Pérez, “A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Heart Metaphors”; Mashak, Pazhakh, and Hayati, “A Comparative Study on Basic Emotion Conceptual Metaphors in English and Persian Literary Texts”; Niemeier, “‘To Have One’s Heart in the Right Place,’” in Human Contact through Language and Linguistics, Smieja and Tasch, eds.; Niemeier, “Straight from the Heart,” in Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads. A Cognitive Perspective, ed. Barcelona; Ogarkova and Soriano, “Emotion and the Body”; Swan, “Metaphors of Body and Mind in the History of English”; Yu, The Chinese HEART in a Cognitive Perspective: Culture, Body, and Language.

†Jauhar, Heart: A History; Gutiérrez Pérez, “A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Heart Metaphors.”

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(End of Published Article)

3.3 The Promise of the Portrait of Centrality

The published article that is presented in section 3.2 is an Idea Portrait—the Portrait of Centrality. Does this Idea Portrait, an experiment in thinking with theory, introduce perspectives to the data that have not been considered before? In the Portrait of Centrality, the theoretical writings of three metaphor scholars, Davidson (1978), Black (1962a, 1977), and Lakoff and Turner (1989), prompt thinking about meaning in the shadows of the heart metaphor and demonstrate the potential for using multiple metaphor theories to interrogate and construct meaning. In moving from comparison theory to conceptual theory to a hybrid approach that draws on interaction theory to read the heart metaphor differently in this portrait, conventional ways of thinking are interrupted (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). As a result, at least three interpretations of the heart metaphor are opened up alongside each other. The result is an alternative reading of the heart metaphor and a view of the Idea of the University and the library from another perspective.

Using multiple theories to think with in this Idea Portrait means “each provides a different transformation, a different flight, a different attunement” (Mazzei, 2021, p. 198). The result of looking at the data diffractively is “not a repetition of what is known, but rupture and provocation—a thinking at the limit” (Mazzei, 2021, p. 199). Taken together, these three interpretations provide a more expansive understanding of the transposability of the heart metaphor. In the Portrait of Centrality, new analytical questions about how the heart metaphor can be construed are prompted by thinking with theory. These questions illuminate different dimensions of the relationship between the library and the university, disrupt normative interpretations of the heart metaphor and produce different sensibilities and perspectives, fostering an appreciation for the ambiguity of the heart metaphor.

The Portrait of Centrality offers a basis for making different claims about the ongoing relevance and utility of the heart metaphor for libraries in idea and practice. It finishes with a

call for librarians to engage in the Idea of the University, but in this call, more questions for consideration are lurking. For example, questions about importance, consequence, positioning, and about “who” or “what” is at the centre of the idea, and “who” or “what” has a claim to the heart of the university. In contemporary universities, the heart of the university is a contested space. Ideas of the university and the different groups in the university community jostle for positional centrality. With the library heart metaphor persisting in this environment, can the library exclusively claim the university’s heart? Is the heart of the university now a shared space with a shared sense of community, or a space full of tension as people and ideas compete for the centre position just as the university strives to be central in society? What does being at the centre help you to see about the university as idea and institution? Librarians have experienced the heart metaphor as both meaningful and meaningless. The Portrait of Centrality presents a new likeness of the heart metaphor and assumes the perspective that libraries matter to universities; therefore, the Idea of the University is a matter of importance to librarians.

3.3.1 From Experiment to Research Design

This experiment has helped me understand the value of incorporating thinking with theory as part of data analysis in qualitative inquiry. This is the promise of Idea Portraits. They add a rich, integrated analysis that combines traditional metaphor analysis, thinking with theory, an exploration of how the Idea of the University and the library are entangled, the different voices needed to debate the Idea, and the imaginative demands of ideas that are in a continual state of becoming. Responding to the contentions and the premises introduced in Chapter One requires methodologies that uncover ideas through metaphor and then catch librarians’ imagination and inspire them to work more intentionally with ideas of the university in their practice. There is no formulaic solution to how librarians might think with the Idea of the University, nor is there a formulaic solution to a research design for it. Yet, to

open up the Idea to librarians, what I am clear about is that metaphor analysis needs thinking with theory.

CHAPTER 4: MELDING METHODOLOGIES: CONTOURS AND COMBINATIONS

4.1 Research Paradigm

At the outset, the nature and order of my inquiry—to uncover librarians’ ideas of the university through metaphor—drew me to the interpretivist paradigm. Arriving at the interpretivist paradigm, I expected that “a paradigm implies near certainty about particular methodologies that flow from that paradigm” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 38). But I subsequently realised that approaches to research are less about prescription and more about following a line of inquiry in a way that needs to be authentic to the research question and context. It is a journey with many influences. This has certainly been my experience, and in describing the research design, I also introduce the scholars who have challenged me and informed my deliberations and design choices. For example, reading and thinking with Kuby (2021), Lather (2006), St. Pierre (2011, 2014, 2021a, 2023), Jackson and Mazzei (2012), Peim (2018), and Grant and Giddings (2002) intensified my questions about the limitations of “conventional humanist qualitative inquiry” and the positivist methods that are embedded and continue to thrive in qualitative research (St. Pierre, 2015). A curiosity about what St. Pierre (2015) calls “interpretative social science” and ““post” work” challenged me to consider how qualitative methodologies and methods within the interpretivist paradigm could adequately stretch my study towards a generative and creative account of librarians’ ideas of the university. These authors helped me to see that paradigms and methodologies are not without inconsistency or incongruities and that “we often live and research in contradictions,” which can “create confusions and blurry boundaries for the novice researcher” (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 12). I began to understand the complexity and the complementarity (or not) between approaches and what this might mean for my inquiry in terms of how to structure the steps in the research design and, ultimately, “what gets produced for the world” (Kuby, 2021, p. 43).

In this research, I work within the interpretivist paradigm in a way that makes sense for the specifics of my research—that is, uncovering librarians’ ideas of the university through metaphor and bringing their voices to a debate they have not yet engaged with. Accordingly, qualitative methodologies and methods provide a strong foundation for the study design. Still, having experimented with thinking with theory in Chapter Three, I also recognise that my research question cannot be fully answered with a singular focus on coding that is likely to produce predictable results or “miss the texture, the contradictions, the tensions, and entangled becomings” in the data (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 12).

If the debate on the Idea is to be widened to librarians, the nature of how they are engaged needs to be creative; it needs to fuel imaginative thinking and inspire ways to bring that thinking into practice. Therefore, the research design spans a qualitative continuum. It begins with individual librarians’ descriptions and metaphors for how ideas of the university are experienced in everyday practice to answer the question “What are librarians’ ideas of the university?” But answering “what are” questions, as St. Pierre (2025) argues, “establishes identity and ends interpretation” (p. 284). To extend the interpretation, the research design concludes with a move to centring ideas of the university and library. This move is intended to produce more provocative and creative research outcomes (that is, Idea Portraits) and promote deeper engagement with the Idea. What I have learnt most in the design process is the importance of “openness to methodological possibilities and attention to methodological appropriateness” (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 25). I have become comfortable with “taking bits from here and there” (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 25), intentionally and with thoughtfulness, to suit the research purpose and bring the phenomenon under investigation to the reader in ways that are true to the nature of the inquiry (White & Cooper, 2022). In this chapter, I outline the three stages of the research design and offer a rationale for this design.

4.1.1 Taking a Phenomenological Attitude

Given the Idea of the University is a phenomenon, what does it mean to take a phenomenological attitude? Phenomenology takes the phenomenon as its starting point (White & Cooper, 2022). For the researcher, it involves the process of understanding how people apprehend things and “the relations involved in how we stand relative to things” (Peim, 2018, p. 29). An assortment of seemingly different schools of thought underpins phenomenology (Spiegelberg & Schuhmann, 2013), but what is consistent, however, in accounts of phenomenology is the practice of “an attentive awareness to the things of the world as we live and experience them” (van Manen & van Manen, 2021, p. 1069).

According to Heidegger (2011), a phenomenon “means a distinctive way something can be encountered”, and phenomenology is a methodology that leads “to the things themselves” (p. 32). Heidegger’s (2011) notion of a phenomenon as an encountering and phenomenology as an uncovering of the thing itself are germane to my focus on discovering librarians’ ideas of the university, a phenomenon that is “covered up in the sense that it has not yet been discovered at all” (p. 36). Peim (2018) describes phenomenology as gaining an understanding of the relations between subjects (knowers) and objects (knowns). My subjects are librarians; the object is the Idea of the University, and the mutual world of the subjects and objects is the library within the university.

In the framing of this inquiry, it is also essential to recognise that individual subjects have “different ways of experiencing the phenomenon” (Marton & Booth, 2013, p. 114). A phenomenological outlook involves the researcher in understanding “the relations involved in how we stand relative to things” (Peim, 2018, p. 29). A definition of a phenomenon is “a thing which appears, or which is perceived or observed; a particular (kind of) fact, occurrence, or change as perceived through the senses or known intellectually” (Oxford University Press, 2023). The thing perceived might be a being, an event, an experience, or a

conception. Labelling the Idea of the University as a phenomenon means it is a thing: an object that is experienced and, therefore, examinable as a phenomenon in the interpretative tradition. Recognising an object as a phenomenon is part of generating meaning and gaining “insights into how a given person, in a given context, makes sense of a given phenomenon at a given moment in time” (Cuthbertson et al., 2020, p. Pe97). In this study, the given person is *the librarian*, the given context is *the library* (as part of the university community and the higher education sector), and the given phenomenon is *the Idea of the University*.

On the one hand, phenomenology has been defined as “merely a study of life as one experiences it” (White & Cooper, 2022, p. 158) or “the reinterpretation of what is already known and familiar” (Peim, 2018, p. 43), but it can also “trigger an urge towards rethinking, reinterpretation, repositioning, destabilising of what had hitherto seemed secure and given, established, archived and solid” (Peim, 2018, p. 43). The way I implicate reinterpretation in the research design is influenced by van Manen (2014), whose phenomenology appreciates intuition-based and poetic ways of understanding the meaning of phenomena that are abstract and difficult to describe. I am focused on librarians’ ideas of the university that are readily expressed and those that are yet to be expressed. In the language of metaphor, I am looking for “the totality of what lies in the light of day or can be brought to light” (Heidegger, 2011, p. 30). With this in mind, it is vital that we—researcher and participants—are curious about each other’s perspectives and approach the idea with “a sense of wonder” and “under the spell of a phenomenological attitude” (van Manen & van Manen, 2021, p. 1073).

4.2 Research Question and Sub-questions

What are librarians’ ideas of the university? This is the primary question that this research is designed to investigate. The study aims to uncover librarians’ ideas of the university with the aid of the following sub-questions:

What are the metaphors librarians use for the Idea of the University?

What are the metaphors librarians use for the idea of the library?

What is the relationship between librarians' ideas of the university and their ideas of the library?

What are the layers of meaning that librarians' metaphors bring forward or push back in their ideas of the university and the library?

In tracing librarians' ideas of the university and the library through metaphor, I am responding to my contention that these two ideas are entangled and, therefore, both are needed to understand librarians' ideas of the university. My focus on metaphor as a tool also reflects the metaphoricity that dominates the language academics use to express ideas and arguments about the university. Reaching for metaphor is a natural and creative response to an idea in need of enlargement. It is a logical point at which to join librarians' voices in the debate and integral for each stage of the research design.

4.3 Research Design

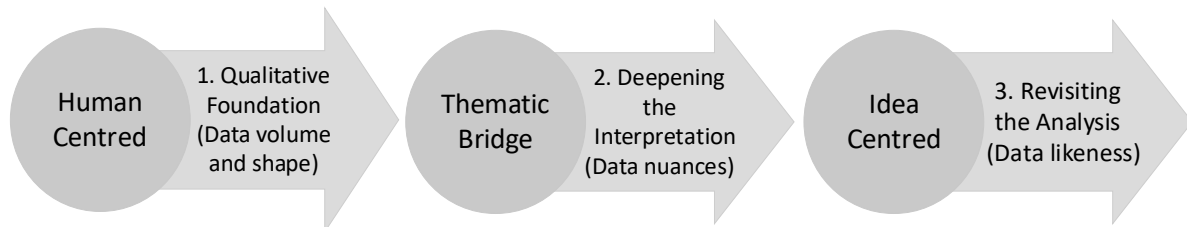
The research design has three stages, and at each stage, metaphors and other figurative and literal descriptions of the Idea of the University and the library form the dataset. Firstly, the qualitative foundation of the research design is a human-centred start that accounts for the volume and shape of the data. Secondly, at the design midpoint, I deepen the interpretation to explore the data nuances, which leads to the third stage—a revisiting of the analysis and developing a new likeness of the data in Idea Portraits (see Figure 2).

The reason for making these moves in three stages is that the fullness of metaphor in language can sometimes demand something more imaginative than a conventional qualitative inquiry might deliver. To resolve this tension and respond to what my data calls me to do, I take metaphor not as an explanatory endpoint but as an interpretative departure point that pushes the data analysis beyond its qualitative foundation and interpretations. The analysis, therefore, moves along a continuum from being human-centred to an idea-centred focus. The risk of choosing to work in this way raises the possibility of a design lacking cohesion and

consistency; however, putting in place a three-stage process supports intentional movement, providing a coherent structure and a design tailored to the research purpose and questions.

Figure 2

The Three Stages of the Research Design



Metaphors are fundamental in understanding ideas; they help people make sense of the world and are central to how people think about and understand abstract concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; McGlone, 2001). In the three stages of the research design (see Figure 2), metaphor analysis is used to understand librarians' ideas of the university. The richness of metaphor sustains analysis at each step of the research design: from giving librarians' ideas of the university volume and shape to deepening interpretation and exploring data nuances, and finally, revisiting the analysis to create a new data likeness with Idea Portraits. At each stage, metaphor feeds a point of interpretative expansion that carries the data analysis to the next level of investigation.

4.3.1 Travelling an Interpretative Continuum: Research Design Influences

In this study I am interested in understanding librarians' ideas of the university as part of their lived experience and what engagement with the Idea might mean for practice. Many of the assumptions of research in the interpretivist paradigm align with these goals. Firstly, an interpretative approach acknowledges that realities are diverse and socially constructed (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Secondly, it recognises the multiplicity of truths and emphasises that reality is shaped through discourse (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Thirdly, this approach highlights the complexity of the social world, emphasising that it

cannot be comprehended solely from an individual standpoint (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Finally, it acknowledges that there is interaction between participants and the researcher (Cuthbertson et al., 2020). However, there are also some characteristics typical of an interpretative approach that are not relevant to this study. For example, I do not bracket my own experience to understand participants' lived experience, nor do I seek to investigate an understanding of the research object—librarians' ideas of the university—through detailed descriptions of the people participating in the study.

What is the meaning of the Idea of the University for librarians? To answer this question, I investigate librarians' metaphors for the Idea. Indeed, locating and unravelling librarians' metaphors for the Idea means that the reality of their Idea “can stand out, excel, be full of or thick with life” (Cibangu, 2023, p. 647). Achieving this level of vibrancy, however, requires the research design to progress along an interpretative continuum. Figure 2 illustrates the trajectory of the research design from a human-centred to an idea-centred focus and analysis. The first two stages are anchored in the traditional methods and processes in the interpretivist paradigm, such as counting, sorting, coding, thematic grouping, and description. My concern about this approach was the extent to which it “mostly repeats what is recognizable, what is already known” (St. Pierre, 2015, p. 85) rather than provoking thought. In response, the shift to an idea-centred focus in the third stage is part of a considered eclecticism in order to think deeply about the data and stimulate thought. The rationale for adding this third stage is, as Tesar (2021) argues, about needing more methodological freedom so as “not to squash that opening, that possibility” (p. 224) for different presentations of data or ways of writing about data.

The move to Idea Portraits in the third stage of the research design is informed by the potential of methodological plurality to accommodate contradiction and complexity in the data. My scholarly reading in post-qualitative inquiry encouraged me “to not consider just

one direction, just one way of thinking or writing or being in the research process” (Tesar, 2021, p. 224). The result is a research design in the interpretivist paradigm which has been influenced by “new empiricisms” (St. Pierre, 2015) and by reading and thinking about post-qualitative inquiry despite the incompatibility of qualitative and post-qualitative approaches.

In developing the research design, I have drawn on many sources of inspiration. I have been inspired by scholars who “cultivate difference by combining methods, methodologies, theories, and philosophical positions in creative ways” (Nord, 2022, p. 196) to tackle issues around the kind of knowledge that warrants our attention and the nature of reality and values. Scholars who have attended to the limitations of taking a single methodological approach by leveraging approaches that are adopted in combination (Mutch, 2009; Nord, 2022; Tesar, 2021) have invited me to see that the “open-ended nature of the qualitative research project leads to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrella-like paradigm over the entire project” (Denzin & Giardina, 2015, p. 11). Reading about post-qualitative inquiry also gave me new perspectives on the relationship between data, writing, and theory.

While qualitative inquiry is “a field that is always already in transition, always already being revised and rewritten” (Denzin & Giardina, 2024, p. 17), St. Pierre (2021b) makes clear that qualitative and post-qualitative approaches are not compatible. Furthermore, St. Pierre (2015) argues that it is not possible “to mix postmodern scholarship and methods-driven research” (p. 81). Indeed, in “post qualitative inquiry, one must begin anew with little “methodological” help” (p. 80). Nevertheless, I have been inspired by post-qualitative theorists. They have introduced me to conceptual paths that I might not have explored otherwise. And these influences help explain the move to Idea Portraits as a deliberate unsettling of representations of librarians’ experience found in the more traditional tropes of Topics and Themes.

In stages one and two of the research design, the focus is on understanding participants' ideas of the university and the subjective meanings they attach to this phenomenon through metaphor. In stage three of the design, Idea Portraits, create a proliferation space where there is room to shift from “what is” questions about meaning to thinking about how meaning changes by taking different perspectives (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018) and thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). The combination of approaches across the three stages of the design is motivated by my desire “to experiment, invent, and create—not just to repeat” (St. Pierre, 2023, p. 28). It is an interpretative and analytical shift from “coding words” to “the creation of the not yet instead of the repetition of what is” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 3).

4.4 Data Collection Methods

Data for the study were collected at four Australian universities across three states: New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria. Approval for the study was received from The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A). Methods included semi-structured interviews and a survey. I piloted the interview schedule and survey with colleagues in the library where I was working at the time. Given that everyone has an Idea of University, both methods were important for engaging librarians in a variety of roles and at different classification levels. Twenty-one library librarians from four universities (each university librarian and at least two librarians from the library management team) participated in the interviews. A survey at three institutions gathered responses from forty-six participants.

Of those participating in the twenty-one interviews, seventy-two per cent were female; likewise, in the survey, seventy per cent of participants were female. This representation is slightly lower than the percentage of women working in the library sector nationally, which is eighty-four per cent (Australian Library and Information Association,

2019). The classification level of the forty-six participants in the survey ranged from Higher Education Worker 3 to Higher Education Worker 10 to the senior management level. The qualifications of participants ranged from Technical and Further Education Diplomas to doctorates.

Involvement in the interviews and survey was voluntary; however, as part of identifying participating institutions, I aimed for one university from each of the four collaborative university networks to ensure representation that reflected network members' shared strengths, priorities, and interests. For example,

- Regional Universities Network (RUN) – comprises seven Australian universities with regional headquarters. RUN is focused on policy advice, development issues, and practice sharing in regional contexts.
- Innovative Research Universities (IRU) – comprises eight Australian universities. IRU is focused on a shared commitment to inclusive education and innovative research to advance communities.
- Group of Eight (Go8) – comprises eight Australian research-intensive universities.
- Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) – comprises six Australian universities. ATN is focused on advocating and shaping policy outcomes related to enterprise, research impact and skills for work.

I invited Australian universities to participate by directly contacting the University Librarian at each institution (see Appendix B). Participating universities are a mix that includes regional and metropolitan, new and established, technical, research-intensive, and low/high-status institutions. Libraries were selected based on their willingness to participate and provide me access to interview staff on-site. Librarians were invited to participate in interviews via email (see Appendix C) and were sent a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix D). The four libraries varied in structure, size, and geographical location, from small libraries with fewer than thirty staff members to large libraries with more than one hundred and fifty staff members. I spent at least two days at each library conducting interviews and making notes about this experience. The survey was conducted at three institutions as a follow-up activity in the fortnight following the interviews (see Table 1).

Table 1

Data Collection Sites and Methods

	Victoria	NSW	Qld	Interviews	Survey
RUN			✓	✓	✓
IRU	✓			✓	✓
GO8		✓		✓	
ATN	✓			✓	✓

At every institution, I was made welcome, and my hosts were generous with their time and interested in sharing their thoughts about their library, university, and the Idea of the University. Everyone I talked to was curious about the Idea and open to conversations about it. While the site visits took place at universities that were unfamiliar to me, at the same time, they felt familiar. What was recognisable were the staff and student rhythms and routines I observed in the libraries I visited and my awareness of the libraries as places of learning, inspiration, collaboration, engagement in the discovery of knowledge past and present, and the creation of future knowledge possibilities. What was different was my role; I was visiting as a researcher, investigating the ideas of participants who, in other settings, would be colleagues. Taking an interpretative approach underscores the inevitable interaction between the researcher and research participants (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Lather, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). I was mindful that this created an unavoidable power imbalance, even though my intention as a researcher was to interact and be in dialogue with participants to uncover their ideas of the university.

4.4.1 Researcher and Participants Attending to the Idea of the University

In this research, I do not bracket my own experience to understand the experience of participants. I have adopted a stance aligned with Michael van Manen and Max van Manen's (2021) positioning of the qualitative researcher as part of the world being researched and not

free from bias. Reality is constructed by all the individuals involved in the research situation. Thus, multiple realities exist (Creswell, 2009, pp. 4-6), and together, we, researcher and participants, are “practicing an attentive awareness to the things of the world as we live and experience them rather than as we conceptualize or theorize them” (van Manen & van Manen, 2021, p. 1071). In this study, however, attention is on ideas as things of the world, making how they are conceptualised also important. Together, we were exploring and sharing understandings and experiences of the Idea of the University and the library in our mutual world. In my experience, the Idea of the University and the library are intertwined in my professional practice. The coupling of these ideas is part of how I make sense of my own professional practice in libraries. But I also acknowledge that my research interests influence this perspective and that participants may not see both ideas in this way.

4.4.2 Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty-one participants to discuss their ideas about the university and library (see Appendix E). In the interviews, participants generated metaphors when prompted and explained the meaning of their metaphors in more detail. Metaphors were also spontaneously generated in conversation. Practising intersubjective listening and acknowledging that I am “embedded in discourses as much as the subjects/participants” (Grant & Giddings, 2002, p. 21) was necessary.

During the interviews, making sense of the Idea of the University through metaphor was a shared experience; we pondered over the Idea together. The act of thinking with each other about the Idea was an empowering act, regardless of whether our starting point was the university or the library. I approached the interviews as a conversation, which ensured openness to participants’ ideas and experiences of the university and sharing experiences. The intersubjectivity that characterised the interview conversations was part of exchanging ideas and recognising common and shared experiences (Grbich, 2013). Each interview was

between sixty and ninety minutes and recorded on my iPhone. OutScribe Transcription Services subsequently transcribed the iPhone recordings of the twenty-one interviews.

4.4.2.1 Metaphor Elicitation

Using metaphor elicitation to encourage librarians to generate ideas about the university works on several levels. It allows librarians to pay attention to the Idea of the University, arouses interest in it, and uncovers aspects of it that are not readily expressed literally. Metaphor elicitation is an inductive technique (Fletcher, 2013; Prince & Forr, 2021; Seferoğlu et al., 2009). It stimulates a “cognitive process for abstract conceptualization and reasoning” (Schmicking & Gallagher, 2010, p. 412). Metaphor elicitation is also an ideographic process in that it focuses on the unique metaphors projected by individuals (Grant & Oswick, 1996).

To elicit metaphors for the university and library, I used two metaphor prompts:

1. The university is... because...
2. The academic library is... because...

The answers to these prompts generated simple A is B metaphors (Cameron, 2003). Simple *A is B* metaphors are technically known as nominal metaphors with a copula construction (see Table 2) because the target domain noun (A) is linked to a source domain noun or noun phrase (B) by the verbal copula “to be” (is). A is B metaphors represent the perception, conceptualisation, and understanding of one thing in terms of another, with the direction of this transfer going from B to A. The metaphorical meaning of B is established because B sits in opposition to the literal meaning of A. This creates “a clash between literal meanings, which excludes a literal use of the word in question and gives clues for the finding of a new meaning which can fit in the context of the sentence and make sense in this context” (Ricoeur, 2016, p. 307).

Table 2*A is B Metaphor Construction and Terminology*

Target domain (the phenomenon)	Copula	Source domain (comparison)	Entailment prompt (metaphor explanation)
The university	is	a/and/the ...	because...

Some researchers have noted that artificiality is a limitation of metaphor elicitation (Jin & Cortazzi, 2011), resulting in metaphors that are generated quickly and do not genuinely reflect what people think. To avoid this limitation, I used the prompt “because” to encourage participants to explain their metaphors (see Table 2). This technique gave participants an opportunity to explain abstract metaphor concepts more vividly and expansively. Their figurative or literal descriptions (technically known as metaphor entailments) helped clarify a particular metaphor’s intended meaning. It made explicit any less apparent connections between seemingly unrelated ideas, and also prompted further conversation. In some cases, participants could not readily generate metaphors and, in response to the A is B prompts, offered literal descriptions instead. Often, their literal description stimulated thinking and then they generated conventional, unusual, or unique metaphors.

4.4.2.2 Spontaneous Metaphor Generation

In the interviews, in addition to eliciting metaphors, I also actively listened for metaphors as we discussed topics like collaboration, leadership, and the reality of the connection between the library and the university. Not surprisingly, answers to the questions on these topics (see Appendix F) were rich in metaphorical and other figurative language. In response to these questions, A is B metaphors were often spontaneously generated in conversation throughout the interviews.

4.4.3 Survey

The survey invitation allowed library staff in different roles to share their experience of the university and the library and generate metaphors for their ideas. Making the survey widely available supports the study's contention that the Idea of the University is a debate that needs to be widened to a range of professional voices. In the survey, I again used prompts to elicit metaphors and explore the connection between participants' ideas of the university and their library practice (see Appendix G). I also asked participants to select metaphors for the university and library from a list of metaphors taken from the scholarly literature. Then, I asked which metaphors best fit their practice. Responses to the survey questions resulted in elicited and spontaneously generated metaphors and other descriptions of the university and the library. And combined with the interview data, this provided a rich source of metaphors for analysis.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis follows the three stages of the research design. Each stage employs a range of metaphor analysis techniques and draws on creative, cognitive and technical approaches to metaphor analysis. Metaphor analysis is considered a time-consuming task (Darics & Clifton, 2023), and I found this to be the case. It involves repeated reading and rereading of transcripts to identify metaphors and entailments, followed by consideration of linguistic structure, individual words, and the meaning and connections between words. Metaphor analysis techniques might include sorting metaphors into coherent topic groups, coding metaphors under major themes, identifying subcategories, quantifying frequencies within topics and categories, identifying overlap and mismatches between language examples, comparing metaphors in the scholarly literature to researcher data, interpreting underlying metaphor values within themes, or generating dominant conceptual metaphors from metaphorical language. These elements of metaphor analysis are evident across both

linguistic-discourse and conceptual-cognitive metaphor research traditions (for example, Bas & Kivılcım, 2020; Cameron & Low, 1999; Darics & Clifton, 2023; Haggis, 2004; Jensen et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2014; Laing & Crouch, 2009; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Northcote & Fetherston, 2006; Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Seferoğlu et al., 2009; Steen, 2017; Wan et al., 2011).

My approach draws on thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019, 2021; Braun et al., 2022) to structure the identification and analysis of metaphors in the interview transcripts and the survey reports using a range of the techniques outlined above. The process for exploring the contrast between contextual meaning and the basic meaning of words in identified metaphors was informed by the metaphor identification procedure developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007).

4.5.1 Qualitative Foundation

4.5.1.1 Metaphor Identification

The first step in the analysis is metaphor identification. I started with a close reading of the interview transcripts and the survey reports to identify participants' ideas of the university and the library expressed through metaphor. I was interested in identifying all instances of metaphor: the “so-called ‘novel,’ ‘imaginative’ or ‘poetic’ metaphors” and what linguists and philosophers call “‘conventional’ ‘frozen’ or even ‘dead’ metaphors” (Kronfeld, 1980, p. 13). Identifying the A is B metaphors generated in response to prompts and generated spontaneously was straightforward. However, rereading the transcripts and survey reports and returning to them repeatedly was vital in identifying other linguistic units—entailments, and other figurative and literal language, words and phrases that express ideas of the university and the library. I was aware that as I identified metaphors, I was simultaneously reflecting on the structure of metaphors and possible underlying values and

meanings of individual expressions. This reminded me of the process of the interviews, where metaphors generated led to our shared reflection on their meaning. Jensen (2006) describes this process as blurring the distinction between data gathering and data analysis because it is at once “reflective and symbiotic” (p. 41). I was also thinking about how I might use topics and themes as part of thematic analysis to account for the totality of the data and how to make arguments about what is important, what it implies, and the researcher intervention required (Braun & Clarke, 2019). In summary, the process I followed in reading the transcripts and survey reports was to identify:

- *A is B* metaphors generated for the Idea of the University and the idea of the library in response to metaphor elicitation prompts
- *A is B* metaphors generated spontaneously for the Idea of the University, and the idea of the library
- Other linguistic units that entail the meaning of *A is B* metaphor or express ideas of the university and the library

All identified words and phrases were categorised by type to differentiate between *A is B* metaphors (using the label MET) and other linguistic units (using the label OLU). After this categorisation process, I generated a set of Topics. My experience was that topics do not emerge but rather come “from our thinking about data and creating links as we understand them” (Ely et. al, 1997, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80).

4.5.1.2 Topics

Topics are high-order categories, which are “strongly linked” to an aspect of the data and do not reflect a “pre-existing coding frame or the researchers’ preconceptions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). I used the structure of *A is B* metaphors to generate seventeen Topics. Topic names are nouns that summarise the literal meaning of metaphor source domains (B). They group metaphors according to this element and account for the number and frequency of metaphors and other linguistic units. This is a pragmatic starting point for dealing with the volume of data. It does not look beyond what participants said and focuses on the “surface

form and meaning” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) of each metaphor. This large number of initial Topics is not unusual in studies that use metaphor elicitation (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018).

Coding metaphors and other linguistic units to Topics was done in Excel for both ideas (university and library). The outcome of this process is count of the A is B metaphors participants used and their frequency. Compared to my recollection of the interviews and the notes I made at the time, this analysis seemed flat; something was missing. In the Topics, I could not sense librarians’ engagement with ideas of the university and the library, nor the links between ideas that I had heard so loudly during the interviews and through reading the transcripts and survey reports. Many empirical metaphor studies do not go beyond topic analysis. However, in this study I considered the lack of a dynamic richness in the Topics to be a limitation. To address this limitation, I considered ways to follow the Topics with another interpretation that emphasised the colour and richness in participants’ metaphors. I was keen to recreate my impression and experience of librarians’ metaphors. I decided to bring their metaphors together in a narrative loosely based on the Topics to amplify their collective voice.

4.5.1.3 Metaphorical Landscapes

Following the Topics with a more creative intervention for each idea (university and library), which I call Metaphorical Landscapes, means librarians’ metaphors and words fall together with the vibrancy and enthusiasm evident in the interviews. As free-flowing narratives, these landscapes emphasise the energy that characterised the interview conversations and participants’ metaphors. Narrative and metaphor are “productive devices by which we make connections” (Hanne & Kaal, 2019, p. 6), and the Metaphorical Landscapes also demonstrate the relatedness of metaphor and narrative. Using librarians’ metaphors to craft a narrative provides “a sense of coherence to the patterns and paths we

employ for perception and expression” (Hanne & Kaal, 2019, p. 3) that is not perceptible in the Topic analysis.

The Metaphorical Landscapes for the university and the library give the reader a sense of the liveliness of participants’ metaphors as I experienced them before they were constituted as a data set and organised in Topics. This narrative treatment of the metaphors represents the energy in participants’ ideas. It brings together the voices of the sixty-seven participants across the interviews and survey as a collective voice. The narrative of the landscapes gives shape to librarians’ ideas of the university and the library, although it does so separately.

While the landscapes for each idea are not a scholarly interpretation of the data, they resulted in a dynamic perspective of the connections between metaphors. Reflecting on this technique prompted me to think about how to build on the topic analysis with a set of themes to extend the analysis. The Metaphorical Landscapes helped me see the value in moving from Topics as an account of things to Themes that represent a deeper interpretation of things in theory and practice.

4.5.2 Deepening the Interpretation

To find the nuances in the data, the second stage of the design is an exercise in using thematic analysis for its “potential for deeply interpretative, theorised analyses” (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 12) by generating themes that work in contrast with topics. Topics are categories that give volume to the data. In contrast, Themes are categories that explore the underpinning values and meanings of participants’ metaphors: the cultural, emotional, and subjective dimensions that librarians’ metaphors invoke. This approach aligns with the broader understanding of metaphors as both linguistic expressions and vehicles with rich cultural and cognitive implications. Themes provide room for “examining how multiple metaphors present competing, contradictory and paradoxical truth claims” (Carr & Leivesley,

1995, p. 61). My aim in recoding the data to Themes is to facilitate a deeper interpretation of the nuances of the data and analysis of particular aspects. Importantly, coding metaphors into Themes does not separate metaphors for the Idea of the University from those associated with the library.

4.5.2.1 Themes

Reflecting on the relationships between metaphors for the library and the university allowed me to generate five Themes. All metaphors and linguistic units were re-coded to these five Themes using Excel. The naming of the five Themes acknowledges that metaphors for ideas of the university can have consequences for thinking and practice. Theme names transcend the obvious and better capture the richness of librarians' metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library. This interpretation facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the metaphors' meaning. It takes the two ideas—university and library—together to identify overlaps and compare metaphors generated to examples in the literature (Northcote & Fetherston, 2006).

The nature of Themes is evident in their ability to work at a latent level. Only selected metaphors and linguistic units were included in this analysis stage. The Themes are focused on what participants said about ideas and practice. In Themes there is room to unpack layers of meaning and consider what the use of a particular metaphor brings forward or pushes back in thinking about ideas of the university and the library. Themes deepen the interpretation and explore the nuances of the data and relationships between ideas. Importantly, Themes also bring to the surface a view of how these two ideas are entangled. It is at this point where my experiment with Idea Portraits can be leveraged to do full justice to the data and take a deliberate idea-centred focus. This is a departure from traditional metaphor analysis to push the analysis further along an interpretative continuum. Themes, therefore, provide a thematic

bridge to revisiting the analysis and producing a different data likeness in the form of Idea Portraits.

4.5.3 Revisiting the Analysis

In revisiting the analysis, the ideas themselves become the focus in the form of Idea Portraits (the Portrait of Centrality in Chapter Two is an example). Idea Portraits are concerned with thinking with theory and writing as data analysis (Lather, 2006; Peim, 2018; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018) and can accommodate data that is contradictory and complex. I was inspired by Lather's (2006) guidance encouraging researchers to see and use "theory as a way to honour the data, as a way of doing justice to what it has to tell us about living in this complicated world" (Lather, 2006, p. 50). For me, getting the right balance in "negotiating the tensions between both honouring the 'voices' of research participants and the demand for interpretive work on the part of the inquirer" (Lather, 2000, as cited in Lather, 2006, p. 50) provided the impetus to conclude the research design with a third stage.

4.5.3.1 Idea Portraits

My reflections on the Portrait of Centrality in Chapter Two provide a basis for revisiting the data and shaping them into Idea Portraits. Idea Portraits present an empirical and theoretical whole that seeks out the "not yet" of the Idea of the University. In writing the portraits, I do not insist that to be valid, research must be empirical and of practical significance in an immediate sense (Peim, 2018, p. 19), but neither do these Idea Portraits centre theory to the point of indulging in solipsism or "extreme self-reflexivity" (Aagaard, 2022). Instead, thinking with metaphor theory (for example, Black, 1962b; Davidson, 1978; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Ricoeur, 1977), and alongside philosophical traditions of many disciplines (for example, Barthes, 2005; Pinchevski, 2022), prompts deeper data analysis. It

facilitates creative transdisciplinarity (Giri, 2002) and provides a language to mediate new interpretations.

Idea Portraits are designed to push past a descriptive account and discussion of librarians' metaphors for the Idea of the University coded to themes, which a qualitative metaphor analysis might typically deliver, towards something more creative. They are an imaginative concluding analysis. The analysis and patterns of entanglement identified within Themes suggest opportunities to subvert expectations about how the metaphors might be interpreted. It is a pointer to aspects of a metaphor that might go unnoticed, and which need to be pulled apart by writing more intentionally with theory. While Themes helped me concentrate on aspects of selected metaphors and the relations between metaphors in the data, the Idea Portraits are my strategy for pushing the data in a different interpretative direction that might generate dialogue about the entanglement of ideas of the university and the library. In other words, Idea Portraits are “intentionally provocative” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016, p. 20).

The Idea Portrait tested in Chapter Two—A Portrait of Centrality—demonstrated using theory “for its ability to uproot and overturn our taken-for-granted assumptions, which helps us approach our empirical domains in new and insightful ways” (Aagaard, 2022, p. 317). Thinking with theory in the Portrait of Centrality influences “what we see, which questions we ask, and what ultimately stands forth in our data as particularly significant” (Aagaard, 2022, p. 317). Idea Portraits match my appreciation of data, theory, and writing as equally important in understanding librarians' ideas of the university. My intention is both to reflect librarians' ideas and prompt librarians to think about the consequences of the Idea in their practice. As a researcher influenced by the research traditions of Portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) and post-qualitative theorists (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018; St. Pierre, 2015), with Idea Portraits, I

make decisions about the research object—“what it *is* and what might be appropriate modes of approaching it and engaging with it, and thinking with it” (Peim, 2018, p. 33). This involved scrutinising Themes for patterns in how ideas of the university and library are entangled and then actively choosing metaphors likely to tell a story, together with theory to stimulate “new questions and different ways of thinking research and data” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 14).

4.6 New Meldings: Metaphor, Methodology, and Theory

With this research design, I am striving for what Benozzo (2021) calls “research that works through combinations... juxtapositions, and connections that generate amazement, that feeling of being seduced by ignorance and knowledge, of being suspended between indeterminacy and indecision that brings us to the world of wonder and displacement” (p. 168). The Idea Portraits combine the object of inquiry, theory, and writing, as a “balancing act” (Rautio, 2021). Setting up this delicate balancing is not about a “foothold in a competition over somehow “right” representations, rather a question of increasing the richness of how researchers can claim things and do things with and through research” (Rautio, 2021, p. 230).

Researching the nature of a phenomenon like the Idea of the University that is always moving between being and becoming requires “open-endedness and creativity” (Benozzo, 2021, p. 168). Working with the Idea of the University as the “not yet” and the “yet to come” requires an approach that acknowledges the dynamic nature and complexity of the Idea so as to avoid what many scholars see as the predictability and limitations of qualitative inquiry (Monforte & Smith, 2021; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018; St. Pierre, 2021a; Stewart et al., 2021). Melding metaphor, methodology, and theory allows me “to experiment and create something new and different” (St. Pierre, 2021a, p. 6). This strategy realises the advantages of “blurred” methodological approaches (Geelan, 2006, p. 101) and moves from a human-

centred focus on what people say to an idea-centred focus. This shift is characterised by what Geelan (2006) describes as the pluralism of the “bricoleur, who adopts a rationality and mode of representation that befits the nature of the context” (p. 101).

This research travels an interpretative continuum; it begins with a qualitative foundation and, from there, makes a series of moves to reach a more generative space in the final stage of the design. Ultimately, I follow an intuitive and creative process, which is more “a view of the research-process-as adventure” (Willig, 2008, p. 2). As the analysis unfolds over three stages of the design, it moves from centring the meaning librarians give to the Idea of the University through metaphor to Idea Portraits, where it is metaphors and meaning interacting with theory which acts as the new centre. Across each stage of the design, the constant thread is metaphor: metaphors written and spoken, metaphors generated by participants to explicitly express the Idea of the University and metaphors spontaneously generated that less overtly hold ideas of the university. Importantly, metaphors lead to a close connection between questioning and thinking (Heidegger, 1968). In all stages, the Idea is approached with “a sense of wonder” (van Manen & van Manen, 2021, p. 1073). The first and second stages of analysis provide evidence of how librarians understand the Idea through metaphor and answer the “what are” questions. But it is in the third stage with the writing of Idea Portraits that there is potential to add to a phenomenon in a perpetual state of becoming.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION - METAPHORS

In the language of librarians, metaphors are ubiquitous and plentiful. In this chapter, I mine interview transcripts and survey responses for metaphors and other linguistic units. My aim is to bring to the surface metaphors for the university and library, as well as other figurative and literal expressions that entail the meaning of metaphors. This mix of metaphors and other words, phrases, and sentences forms a dataset that holds the volume, shape, and nuances of participants' ideas of the university and the library. It is, in effect, what Barthes (1989) calls the "rustle of language" perceptible in participants' metaphors, amplified and shared. My objective in this chapter is to present how participants make sense of the Idea of the University through metaphor. In this process, I am alert to the potential of metaphor to probe thinking because "metaphorical converse provokes some change in the one who attends; it opens the way to unexpected connections; it makes unexpected resemblances visible; it draws attention to alternative modes of being and thinking" (Greene, 1994, p. 457).

The arrangement of the findings follows the three stages of the research design outlined in Chapter Four. At each stage, I characterise the main steps in the analysis and illustrate these moves with reference to the corresponding Figures. The Figures provide a visual device to highlight the steps at each stage. This chapter leads to an interpretative shift in Chapters Six and Seven to revisit the data and emphasise the relationship between ideas. While it sustains the data analysis at each stage of the research design, metaphor is also a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

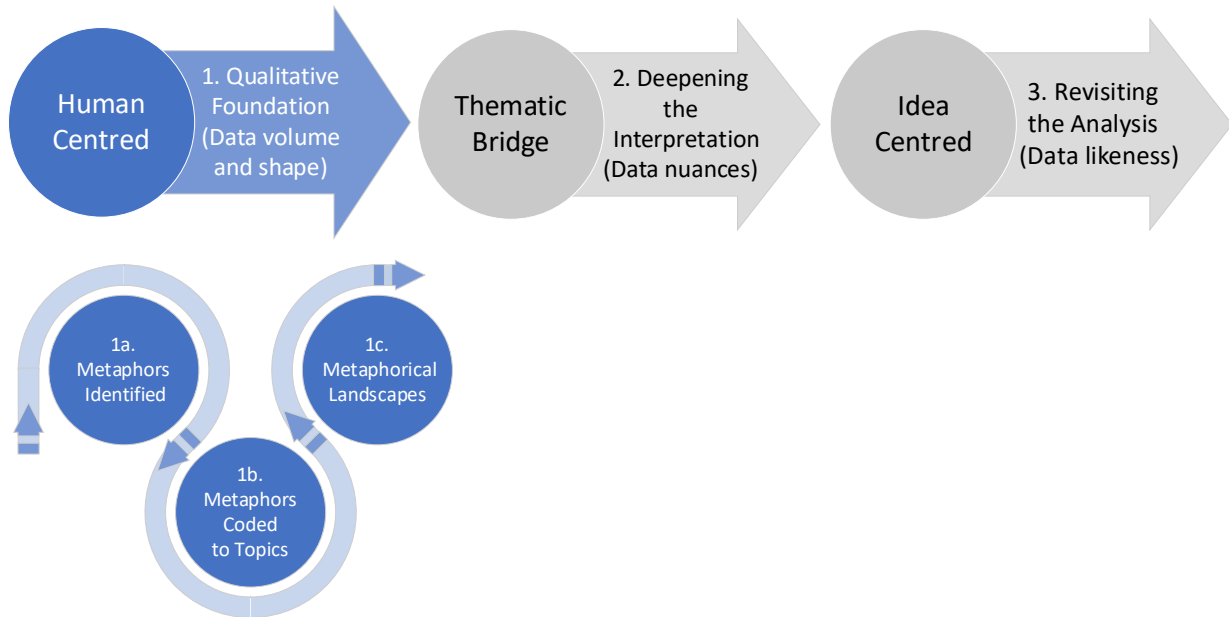
5.1 A Qualitative Foundation: Giving the Data Volume and Shape

The first step in the analysis is to identify metaphors for the university and the library in interview transcripts and survey responses. This is followed by generating Topics and coding metaphors to these Topics as a measure of the volume of the data for each idea. To give shape to volume, metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library are

subsequently given a narrative treatment by creating Metaphorical Landscapes. This sequence of three moves, illustrated in blue in Figure 3 (1a-1c), accounts for the data volume and shape in the first stage of the research design.

Figure 3

Moves in the Qualitative Foundation Stage



5.1.1 Volume

My approach to the metaphor analysis begins with identifying and quantifying nominal metaphors with a copula construction: that is, metaphors in the form *A is B*. Participants used a striking variety of concrete concepts (source domain *B*) to illustrate their perceptions of the university or library (target domain *A*). In identifying *A is B* statements, my challenge was judging whether the intended meaning of the words was to understand and experience “one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 5). I continually questioned whether the words stimulated an imaginative, poetic or visual process with the “unusual juxtaposition of the familiar and unfamiliar” (Mac Cormac, 1985, p. 9), or were being used literally. I assessed the transfer between words using dictionaries to analyse

the difference between their contextual and basic meaning in the metaphor identification process. This approach provided a structured and objective process for determining whether interview and survey participants' use of words was metaphorical. Elicited and spontaneously generated A is B metaphors like "the library is a beehive" or "the library is set in gold" were easily recognised by their copula form and because, if taken literally, are not true and only make sense through comparison to find the similarities. For example, "the library is set in gold" compares the library to a jewel arranged in gold. It carries the qualities and symbolism of gold to the idea of the library as something precious, valuable, and highly esteemed. Novel or creative metaphors like this example always jumped off the page.

In another example, "the library is a place that delights and surprises people," the context in which this metaphor was used made clear that the intention was to make an imaginative comparison between the library and the nurturing of the new and unexpected. Therefore, I considered this an example of a novel metaphor. However, participants also responded to metaphor elicitation prompts with expressions in the form A is B that, on further analysis, I assessed as literal statements because the meaning of the source domain word(s) did not differ from their dictionary-defined meaning. For example, "the university is community-focused," I assessed as a literal, factual and direct communication of the university's commitment to connecting with the community because of how this expression was explained and used in the conversation context. Whereas I considered the commonly repeated expression "the university is a community" to be a conventional metaphor or a literal statement, depending on the context. Sometimes, a single word made the difference between determining whether a response to the metaphor elicitation prompt was a literal statement or a metaphor. For example, "the library is an inspirational place of learning" I counted as a metaphor because it transfers the values of motivation for learning, intellectual growth, curiosity, and exploration to the idea of the library. Whereas "the library is a place of

learning,” I considered to be a literal statement because, in conversation, it was clear that the participant’s intention was to describe the library’s function in a factual way without evoking the library’s transformative role in fostering a love for learning.

After identifying each A is B metaphor, I listed all metaphor source domains for the Idea of the University and the library in separate worksheets in Excel. Then, I set up pivot tables to count the number of unique novel and conventional metaphors and their frequency of use. Study participants generated fifty-nine unique metaphors for the Idea, which they used sixty-nine times, and eighty-seven metaphors for the idea of the library, which they used one hundred and forty-three times. In total, participants generated one hundred and forty-six metaphors for both ideas, which they used two hundred and twelve times (see Table 3). These totals describe the volume of participants’ metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library.

Table 3

Number and Frequency of A is B Metaphors

	Number (n) of A is B Metaphors	Frequency (f) of A is B Metaphors
Idea of the University	59	69
Idea of the Library	87	143
Total	146	212

In addition to identifying A is B metaphors, I also identified other linguistic units: that is, explanatory words, phrases, and sentences used by participants to explain why they chose a metaphor, how the connections between the source and the target domains are meaningful to them, and the implied meanings they associate with a metaphor. I also singled out other instances of language used metaphorically or literally to describe ideas of the university and the library. Combined, these linguistic units add mass and density to the volume of participants’ imageries of the university and library (see Table 4).

Table 4*Number and Frequency of Metaphors and Linguistic Units*

	No. of A is B metaphors (n)	Frequency of A is B metaphors (f)	No. of other linguistic units (n)	Frequency of other linguistic units (f)	Combined number (n)	Combined frequency ($\sum f$)
Idea of the University	59	69	27	29	86	98
Idea of the Library	87	143	103	116	190	257
Total	146	212	130	145	276	357

I was not surprised by the number of metaphors generated by participants, given that metaphor is central to human discourse and understanding (Wittink, 2011). Similarly, the use of metaphors in the scholarly literature substantiates that librarians are fluent in generating metaphors for the library (Johannsen, 2015; Nardini, 2001; Nitecki, 1979; Stoddart, 2013), and I, too, found this to be the case. It is evidence of the utility of metaphor in prolific meaning-making and underlines the uniqueness of metaphors in communicating complex phenomena. But I also noticed that some participants were less confident using metaphors to express their ideas of the university, which is reflected in the smaller number of metaphors for this idea compared to the idea of the library (see Table 4). Nevertheless, where metaphors for the Idea of the University were not forthcoming, participants readily offered literal descriptions as a proxy for a novel or conventional metaphor. Sometimes, the response to my metaphor elicitation prompt was “I’m not very creative” or, as one participant said, “I can’t think of a metaphor for the university, but if I could, it would be something that involves community, knowledge, growth, safety, exploration and fun” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). As another participant explained:

I can't think of a metaphor. The best I can do is sort of have a description, describe what happens in a university that allows society to become better informed and look after its citizens in a better way. (*Interview Respondent #13, RUN Library*)

While these participants were reticent to generate metaphors when prompted, they nevertheless used metaphoric language in their descriptions, and at other times in our conversation they used metaphors in the form A is B spontaneously.

With a large number of elicited and spontaneously generated metaphors identified, I faced a challenge made by critics of metaphor analysis who argue that using these techniques makes it difficult to order and “discriminate diverse categories” (Szukala, 2011, p. 67). As discussed in Chapter Four, I resolved this issue with a pragmatic approach by initially working with the A is B structure and “surface meanings of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84) to generate Topics. This involved generating Topic names that broadly encapsulate the literal meaning of the metaphor source domain (B). For example, the source domains in the metaphors “the university is an *eagle*” and “the university is a *lotus flower*” generated the Topic Flora and Fauna. Based on my initial identification of one hundred and forty-six A is B metaphors, and through a process of trial and error, I created the following seventeen Topics:

- Body
- Building and Infrastructure
- Business
- Centre
- Community
- Flora and Fauna
- Health and Wellbeing
- Journey
- Learning and Knowledge
- Machines
- Material Objects
- Mind
- Natural World
- Organisations
- People and Relationships
- Place and Space

- Sacred Places

Each metaphor and linguistic unit was categorised into one of the seventeen Topics. Metaphors and other linguistic units for the Idea of the University were allocated to sixteen topics, and metaphors and other linguistic units for the idea of the library were distributed to fifteen topics. Quantifying metaphors and other linguistic units was my starting point for analysing the data. I identified over three hundred metaphors and other linguistic units which signifies the volume of this data set. This volume of data and its frequency of use are presented in the following sections.

5.1.1.1 Metaphors for the Idea of the University

Participants (n=67) produced fifty-nine A is B metaphors for the Idea of the University in interviews (n=21) and in survey responses (n=46), which are coded to sixteen of the seventeen Topics based on each metaphor's source domain. Table 5 presents the number and frequency of unique metaphors by Topic, and the concentration of unique metaphors in Topics as a percentage of the total number of A is B metaphors identified.

Table 5

A is B Metaphors for the Idea of the University: Number and Frequency of Source Domains by Topic

Topic	The university (A) is a/an/the ... (B)	No. of unique source domains (B)	% of Total
Business	business (f: 3), corporate degree factory (f: 1), degree churning organisation (f: 1), fiscal black hole (f: 1), neoliberal business entity (f: 1), sausage factory (f: 1), Universities Inc. (f: 1)	7	12%
Journey	driver of the knowledge economy (f: 1), driving society (f: 1), guiding light to the society (f: 1), lost in space (f: 1), paths you never expected to go down (f: 1), ship out at sea (f: 1)	6	10%
Natural World	living organisation (f: 1), living resource (f: 1), metamorphosing (f: 1), ocean (f: 1), rarefied air (f: 1), whirlpool (f: 1)	6	10%
People and Relationships	advocate (f: 1), enabler (f: 1), facilitator (f: 1), investigator (f: 1), parent (f: 1)	5	8%
Machines	connector (f: 4), conveyor belt (f: 1), engine room of society (f: 1), transformer of people (f: 1), complex machine (f: 1)	5	8%
Flora and Fauna	eagle (f: 1), fertiliser to a garden (f: 1), jungle-y (f: 1), organic place that grows (f: 1), tendrils that connect people and knowledge (f: 1)	5	8%
Mind	imagination (f: 1), meeting of minds (f: 1), thinker of society (f: 1), thought leader (f: 1)	4	7%
Community	community (f: 3), kind of society (f: 1), city (f: 2), small town (f: 1)	4	7%
Centre	learning hub (f: 1), pivotal point in the community (f: 1), public-facing knowledge commons (f: 1), central to our humanity (f: 1)	4	7%
Learning and Knowledge	inspirational place of learning (f: 1), learning centre of ancient times (f: 1), aspirational place of scholarship and learning (f: 1)	3	5%
Building and Infrastructure	agora (f: 1), lighthouse (f: 1), threshold (f: 1)	3	5%
Organisations	ideas consortia (f: 1), fiefdoms (f: 1)	2	3%
Material Objects	seat of learning with two arms (f: 1); research bowl of society (f: 1)	2	3%
Body	brain (f: 1)	1	2%
Health and Wellbeing	betterment of the community (f: 1)	1	2%
Sacred Place	church spire (f: 1)	1	2%
Total		59	100%

Table 5 demonstrates that sixty-seven participants constructed fifty-nine different A is B metaphors for the Idea of the University. The highest concentration of metaphors is clustered in the topics of Business, Journey, and the Natural World. The fact that participants generated a high number of metaphors is striking and represents the broad range of perceptions of the university expressed through metaphor. Only four unique metaphors (business, connector, community, city) were repeated by more than one individual. The Topic with the highest number of unique source domains is Business (n=7).

I was initially surprised that Business had the highest concentration, because this volume did not reflect what I had heard during the interviews. My impression was that participants emphasised the Idea of the University as community, scholarship, people, and possibility. Noticing this disparity prompted me to interrogate the data further to verify my experience of the interviews; therefore, in addition to coding metaphor source domains to Topics, I also coded the other identified linguistic units to the Topics. This outcome provided a different picture of the concentration of participants' ideas of the university within Topics (see Table 6).

Table 6*Idea of the University: Usage of Metaphors and Other Linguistic Units by Topic*

Topic	A is B Metaphor Usage - $\sum f$	Usage of other linguistic units - $\sum f$	Combined usage - $\sum f$ (e.g. A is B metaphors and other linguistic units)	Combined usage % of Total
Community	7	11	18	18%
Learning and Knowledge	3	8	11	11%
People and Relationships	6	4	10	10%
Machines	9	0	9	9%
Business	9	0	9	9%
Mind	5	2	7	7%
Journey	6	1	7	7%
Natural world	6	0	6	6%
Flora and Fauna	5	0	5	5%
Building and infrastructure	3	0	3	4%
Centre	4	0	4	4%
Organisations	2	2	4	3%
Health and Wellbeing	1	1	2	2%
Material objects	1	0	1	1%
Body	1	0	1	1%
Sacred Places	1	0	1	1%
Total	69	29	98	100%

When the other linguistic units were coded to Topics, it changed the ranking of Topics. For example, the volume of the Community Topic increased, and likewise, the volume of Learning and Knowledge, and People and Relationships Topics increased (see Table 7). This higher concentration of language related to the Community, Learning and Knowledge, and People and Relationships Topics better reflects the conversations with participants in the interviews and my reading of the survey responses.

Table 7*Idea of the University: Comparison of Highest-Ranking Topics*

Highest-Ranking Topics Based on Count of Unique A is B Metaphors by Topic	Highest-Ranking Topics Based on Combined Usage of A is B Metaphors and Other Linguistic Units by Topic
1. Business	1. Community
2. Journey	2. Learning and Knowledge
3. Natural world	3. People and Relationships
4. People and Relationships	4. Machines
5. Mind	5. Business
6. Machines	7. Mind
8. Flora and Fauna	9. Journey
10. Building and infrastructure	11. Natural world
12. Community	13. Flora and Fauna
14. Centre	15. Building and infrastructure
16. Learning and Knowledge	17. Centre
18. Organisations	19. Organisations
20. Material objects	21. Health and Wellbeing
22. Body	23. Material objects
24. Health and Wellbeing	25. Body

5.1.1.2 Metaphors for the Idea of the Library

Participants in interviews (n=21) and the survey (n=46) produced eighty-seven A is B metaphors for the idea of the library, which are coded to fifteen of the seventeen Topics (see Table 8). For the idea of the library, I repeated the approach I took with metaphors for the Idea of the University, that is, calculating the number and frequency of unique metaphors by Topic, and the concentration of unique metaphors in Topics as a percentage of the total number of A is B metaphors (See Table 8).

Table 8

A is B Metaphors for the Idea of the Library: Number and Frequency of Source Domains by Topic

Topic	The library (A) is a/an/the ... (B)	No. of unique source domains (B)	% of Total
Place and Space	borderless information centre (f: 1), central gathering place (f: 1), central spot (f: 1), home (f: 1), limitless sort of place (f: 1), living room (f: 2), place that surprises and delights people (f: 1), sense of place (f: 9), not an island (f: 1), somewhere to pour your heart out (f: 1), success spot of the university (f: 1), Switzerland (f: 3)	12	14%
People and Relationships	barrier destroyer (f: 1), collaborative guide (f: 1), collaborator in learning (f: 1), contributor (f: 1), enabler (f: 5), facilitator (f: 3), friend (f: 2), partner (f: 13), social glue of university (f: 1), teacher (f: 1), weaver of the information fabric of the university (f: 1), player in the university (f: 1)	12	14%
Building and infrastructure	bricks and mortar (f: 1), bridge across the technological divide (f: 1), conduit (f: 4), connector (f: 3), fulcrum (f: 1), funnel (f: 1), gateway (f: 3), held in a really good light (f: 1), key to success (f: 1), key to your entire experience at university (f: 1), lighting rod (f: 1)	11	13%
Body	beating heart of a university (f: 1), brain extension (f: 1), heart and soul of the university (f: 1), heart of a physical campus (f: 2), heart of the campus (f: 1), heart of the university (f: 13), heartbeat (f: 2), neural network (f: 1), scholarly heart of the university (f: 1)	9	10%
Centre	centre for deep learning (f: 1), centre of the Universe(ity) (f: 1), digital community commons (f: 1), focal point for the community (f: 1), hub of the university (f: 1), knowledge hub (f: 1), scholarly hub of the university (f: 1)	7	8%
Journey	future space Odyssey (f: 1), go to (f: 2), hitchhikers guide to the universe (f: 1), navigator (f: 1), starting point where you are offered keys to unlock a tool chest of research strategies (f: 1), all roads leading to discerning information (f: 1), TARDIS - where Time And Relative Dimension Informatively Surprise (f: 1)	7	8%
Flora and Fauna	beehive (f: 1), octopus (f: 1), opening lotus flower (f: 1), spider web (f: 1), tentacles going out in all different directions (f: 1), tree (f: 1)	6	7%
Health and Wellbeing	cornerstone of a healthy society (f: 1), counsellor (f: 1), life force of the university (f: 1), lifeblood (f: 4), that getting better part of the university (f: 1)	5	6%
Learning and Knowledge	inspirational place of learning (f: 1), learning temporality (f: 1), long line of learners through history (f: 1), symbiotic matrix of the new information and knowledge world (f: 1)	4	5%
Material Objects	part of the furniture (f: 1), retro fibre-optic lamp (f: 1), tool in the technician's hands (f: 1), treasure chest (f: 1)	4	5%
Business	factory (f: 1), information café (f: 1), one stop shop (f: 1)	3	3%
Natural World	in danger of extinction (f: 1), set in gold (f: 1)	2	2%
Machines	cog in the higher education machine (f: 1), search engine curated by humans (f: 1)	2	2%
Sacred Place	academic temple of knowledge (f: 1), hallowed halls (f: 2)	2	2%
Community	community (f: 2)	1	0%
Total		87	100%

As with metaphors for the Idea of the University, each A is B metaphor for the idea of the library was coded to one Topic. For example, “the library is an octopus” and “the library is a tree” were coded to the Topic ‘Flora and Fauna’. In cases where more than one Topic was plausible, I again considered dictionary definitions, entailments, and an intuitive weighing-up of the options. For example, I considered the Learning and Knowledge Topic and the Place Topic for the metaphor “the library is an inspirational place of learning.” In this and other similar examples, both topics are potentially relevant. By reflecting on the options and comparing broad considerations with the context, I could make appropriate coding decisions. In this example, “the library is an inspirational place of learning” was allocated to the Learning and Knowledge Topic to highlight learning as a dynamic process and the importance of the library in fostering learning, inspiration, and intellectual growth. This example also illustrates the ambiguity of metaphor; it is capable of more than one reading, and understanding its meaning involves an interplay between different interpretations (White, 1996).

The high number of novel and conventional metaphors for the library signals participants’ creativity and the power of metaphors to stimulate thinking. Some of the conventional metaphors in the scholarly literature were repeated by participants, such as, “heart,” “partner,” “connector,” “Switzerland,” “hub,” and “gateway” (see Table 5). But mostly, I noticed that participants came up with novel metaphors for the library. For example, “weaver,” “player,” “lightning rod,” “neural network,” “future space Odyssey,” “octopus, hitchhiker’s guide to the universe,” “TARDIS,” “lotus flower,” “retro fibre-optic lamp,” and “set in gold.” The originality of these metaphors for the library signalled and matched participants’ passion for possibility in the library, which they voiced again and again in our conversations. I also noticed contradictions and sometimes tension between their metaphors. For example, the “library is part of the

furniture” and the “library is a place that surprises and delights people” represent quite different perceptions and experiences of the library and contrast realist and idealist views.

Allocating the other linguistic units to Topics expanded the number of Topics used to sixteen (see Table 9). It also added volume to the combined usage, and the combined usage of several Topics doubled (for example, the People and Relationships, and Place and Space Topics) or in some cases tripled (for example, the Centre, and Learning and Knowledge Topics).

Table 9

Idea of the Library: Usage of Metaphors and Other Linguistic Units by Topic

Topic	A is B metaphor Usage - $\sum f$	Usage of other linguistic units - $\sum f$	Combined usage - $\sum f$ (e.g. A is B metaphors and other linguistic units)	Combined usage - % of Total
People and Relationships	31	28	59	23%
Place and Space	23	23	46	18%
Body	22	9	31	12%
Building and infrastructure	18	12	30	12%
Centre	7	14	21	8%
Learning and Knowledge	4	17	21	8%
Journey	8	2	10	4%
Health and Wellbeing	8	2	10	4%
Flora and Fauna	6	0	6	2%
Material Objects	4	1	5	2%
Community	2	3	5	2%
Business	3	1	4	2%
Sacred Place	3	1	4	2%
Machines	2	2	4	2%
Natural world	2	0	2	1%
Mind	0	1	1	0%
Total	143	116	259	100%

Adding other linguistic units to the Topics did not considerably change the Topic ranking (see Table 10) and reflected that people, relationships, place, and space were constantly discussed in the interviews in relation to the idea of the library. This differs from the change that occurred in the topic ranking comparison for the Idea of the University (see Table 7) and may indicate a higher level of confidence and fluency in how participants talk about their idea of the library.

Table 10

Idea of the Library: Comparison of Highest-Ranking Topics

Highest-Ranking Topics Based on Count of Unique A is B Metaphors by Topic	Highest-Ranking Topics Based on Combined Usage of A is B Metaphors and Other Linguistic Units by Topic
1. Place and Space	1. People and Relationships
2. People and Relationships	2. Place and Space
3. Building and infrastructure	3. Body
4. Body	4. Building and infrastructure
5. Centre	5. Centre
6. Journey	6. Learning and Knowledge
7. Flora and Fauna	7. Journey
8. Health and Wellbeing	8. Health and Wellbeing
9. Learning and Knowledge	9. Flora and Fauna
10. Material Objects	10. Material Objects
11. Business	11. Business
12. Natural world	12. Sacred Place
13. Machines	13. Natural world
14. Sacred Place	14. Machines
15. Community	15. Community
	16. Mind

The most repeated metaphor for the idea of the library is “heart,” and, as already discussed, the persistence of this metaphor is also reflected in the literature. Participants

generated seven A is B metaphors with source domains that include the word “heart” either in response to the prompt “the academic library is ...” or spontaneously in conversation. For example, “beating heart of a university,” “heart and soul of the university,” “heart of a physical campus,” “heart of the campus,” “heart of the university,” “heartbeat,” and “scholarly heart of the university.” Metaphors for the library with “heart” in the source domain are well-established. They could be considered conventional metaphors in that they are used repeatedly and “a particular reading has become socially established” (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 17). The heart metaphor resonated with many participants, and this was reinforced in the survey with sixty-one per cent of survey respondents choosing the metaphor “the heart of the university” as one of the metaphors that best describes their library practice (see Table 11).

Table 11*Metaphors in the Library Literature*

The Library (A) is a/an/the ... (B)	Total Respondents (n)	% Total Respondents
Heart of the university (Elliot, 1875; Leupp, 1924)	28	61
Information commons (Closet-Crane, 2012; Duderstadt, 2009; Gyure, 2008)	23	50
Community hub (Closet-Crane, 2012)	22	47
Partner (Giesecke, 2010; Nitecki, 1993)	18	39
Knowledge navigator (Miller, 2010)	17	37
Digital commons (Henry, 2010)	15	33
Gate opener (Bell, 2009)	15	33
Academic living room (Giesecke, 2010)	14	30
Institutional common ground (Fister, 2015)	13	28
Platform for ideas and passions (Weinberger, 2012)	12	28
Storehouse/warehouse for books (Hamilton, 1961; Lerner, 1998; Nitecki, 1993)	9	19
Boundary spanning unit (Weiner, 2009)	8	17
Ecosystem (Walter, 2008)	8	17
Garden of learning (Elmborg, 2016)	8	17
Scholars' playground (Smith & Yachnes, 1998)	8	17
Crossroads community (Grimes, 1998)	7	15
Sacred space (Jackson & Hahn, 2011)	6	13
Academic temple (Nardini, 2001)	5	10
Business or industry (Nardini, 2001)	5	10
Gate keeper (Bell, 2009)	2	4

In summary, establishing a sense of the volume of participants' metaphors for the university and library has been arrived at firstly, with precision to identify the number and frequency of elicited and spontaneously generated metaphors in the form A is B. Secondly, identifying and categorising other linguistic units, and finally, coding one hundred and forty-six

metaphor source domains and one hundred and thirty other linguistic units in seventeen Topics. This approach accounts for all A is B metaphors elicited or generated spontaneously and broadly works with the surface meaning of the data.

The metaphors identified in the interview transcripts and survey reports include examples of both metaphors commonly generated by participants in other studies and creative or novel metaphors. For example, the university is a “factory,” “community,” “town,” (Firat & Yurdakul, 2012) and the library is “the heart of the heart of the university” (Grimes, 1998; Lynch et al., 2007) are commonly generated. In comparison, the university is a “lighthouse,” and the library is a “retro fibre-optic lamp” are examples of creative or novel metaphors. Identifying participants’ metaphors, elicited and spontaneously generated and then coding metaphors and other figurative language to Topics gives a sense of the data volume. However, the Topics seemed descriptively flat. What is perhaps lost in this reporting of volume is the vividness of metaphor—a sense of shape. In order to share what Barthes (1989) call the “rustle of language” that I had heard in conversations with participants and survey responses, I was keen to make their metaphors “speak all at the same time” to release them from being confined within the border around the account of volume in the Topics and find “the élan... or the simple accompaniment of an emotion” (p. 79).

5.1.2 Shape

In this section, the vivid imagery and figurative language used by participants are presented as Metaphorical Landscapes. In our conversations, participants often referred to their practice as situated as an “information landscape,” so I have borrowed their concept of “landscape” to enliven and give shape to the Topics in a narrative form. Farquhar and Fitzpatrick

(2019) suggest that there is a “symbiotic relationship” between metaphors and narrative because they are both about “making sense of the world” and that narrative can create “meaningful connections between sometimes unrelated metaphors” (p. 3). The contours of the narrative in the following landscapes are an exercise in linking metaphors and combining voices. I draw on the Topics to group related metaphors where possible and then create a lively path through participants’ ideas of the university and the library.

In the body of each narrative, metaphor source domains are in bold text, and other linguistic units are in quotation marks. In these landscapes, participants’ metaphors and other metaphoric and literal language provide a textured terrain that tells a tale of the essence of their collective understanding and experience of the Idea of the University and the library. Heard together in the narrative of the landscapes, a collective voice emerges. Metaphors of the university and library evoke the multiple dimensions of participants’ ideas. Participants’ metaphors and descriptive language breathe *their* life into these two ideas.

5.1.2.1 Librarians’ Ideas of the University: A Metaphorical Landscape

One thing we all agree on is that the university is people and relationships, and its people have “many roles.” For example, the university is an **advocate**, for “issues, for movements... for climate change and social inequality:” “trying to make a difference is when a university is at its best.” The university can be an “instigator of change” because it is an **enabler** and an **investigator** of “the grand problems” through “the accumulation of knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge.” Without a doubt, that is its primary function: a **facilitator** between “knowledge and the wider community” so “life, in general, can work better.” But it also has another side: the university is a **parent**. Students, “they’re growing, and they’re learning and

absorbing, and they're the future." The university as a parent provides a nurturing environment with structure, and "that university experience goes with them for the rest of their lives and shapes them into the people they're going to become."

Our Idea of the University is a **community**. It is a **city**, or more precisely a "mini city," with "huge diversity," "competing interests" and "complementary goals;" an "economy in itself, really." Think of each dean like a "mayor" of their town; they run their own **fiefdoms**, and you know how different they all are when you have been to all the boards and committees across town. The university is more than the sum of its parts; it is "empowering communities" and "building citizens that can contribute on a very global basis." In some quarters, the Idea of the University "for the elite might persist," but not for long because the university is a **kind of society** contributing to "the learning of the next generation." The university no longer has walls, it is welcoming, it is "part of a community culture" and connected "to the surrounding communities." Quite simply, the university is for the **betterment of the community**. The university is a **transformer of people**. The university is always **metamorphosing**.

But some say the university is more of a **very complex machine** than a **community**. At worst, a **conveyor belt**, and a **corporate** one at that, "which is only conditionally open to the public as long as they can pay for it". If we are not careful, it will be a conveyor belt to "the decline of the liberal and postmodern aspects of the university, as they cannot survive or thrive in such a commercially driven education and research system." On the other hand, at best the university as machine is the **engine room of society**, you know, universities "are so central to our notion of society and our notion of progress and our ability to progress." The university is a **thought leader** at the "centre of the generation of new knowledge." You might think we "have an old-fashioned notion of universities," but the university is **central to our humanity**.

Ideas of the university assembled around the topic of machines make me think of the university in terms of “commercial production.” I’ve heard so many say **the university is a business** in the “education industry.” What about we call it **Universities Inc.**—an apt moniker for a university that is a **sausage factory**, a **corporate degree factory**, a **degree churning organisation** pumping out “employability at the other end.” And what does it matter if the Idea of the University is “shrouded in aspirational rhetoric?” On the production line, the university remains “an opportunity to explore your full potential, your full intellectual potential, as well as your full social potential.” Perhaps the university as a business might be more compelling if it is the **driver of the knowledge economy**, where the gears of curiosity agitate like clockwork, and ideas flow like currency. But **Universities Inc.** is “more a McDonald’s, rather than a fine dining restaurant.” Education is essential, but “it’s a business... it’s a product we sell; think of it that way.” Education is “our core business, it’s our bread and butter, the students bring in heaps of money... and we focus on making the place efficient, profitable,” otherwise the university is a **fiscal black hole**. But there’s a palpable tension in this equation because “the corporatisation of the university and the economic and market imperative can override or compromise more critical engagement with societal issues.”

To our mind, topics like Learning and Knowledge are more uplifting. The university is an **inspirational place of learning** and a **learning hub**, and its focus on education incorporates that “broader notion of the university stemming from history and tradition.” Someone said the university is the **learning centre of ancient times**, and there are plenty who will argue that the old model is still relevant because the university is still about “talking and discussing the issues of the future and solving the issues of our time.” The university is an **agora**. It is an idea from an

ancient world, which positions the university as “a place of interchange, democracy, assembly and relative autonomy providing conditions for learning.”

The **agora**, in other words, the university is not just part of the built environment or the city centre. In this location, there are buried valued links between topics like Space and Place, Centre, Community, and Knowledge and Learning. The agora has a thick civic texture. Viewed through the lens of what is central, the university morphs into a **pivotal point in the community**. It has been the community’s public centre in the past and should be positioned in the future as a **public-facing knowledge commons** for “change and critique.” That means the university is more than “just buildings where people come to do things, it’s actually got so many connections and it draws from the past, it looks to the future.” We think “it’s an **exciting ideas consortia**, you know.” And at its heart—at the “beating centre of the university’s intellectual body”—is the library.

If we want to talk about topics like the Body, then the university is a **brain**. But in this body, brain power is more than IQ; the university is the **imagination** or “something cerebral.” The university is the place that accommodates a **meeting of minds**, a “place for deep thinking,” it is the **thinker of society**, or the community’s **thought leader**. It is a “labyrinth of interconnected structures” that provokes thought. Society looks to the university to find a “way of bringing knowledge and experience and inventiveness and creation into the world and into our everyday existence.” The university is “how we sort of reimagine our world,” and it is an ongoing journey.

Now let your imagination run wild and think about the university in relation to a topic like Journey. We invite you to dream of a voyage of reimagination and discovery with the university in the driver’s seat. The university is **driving society** and provides a **guiding light to**

society. Its people, courses, teaching, and research constantly “evolve and respond to what’s going on in the world and look to what is needed in the world.” Sometimes, the university is **paths you never expected to go down**. And even if you get **lost in space** or end up like a **ship out at sea**, it won't be for long because, the university is also a “beacon in the dark,” a **church spire** on the hill, a **lighthouse** on the coast: it is a navigation point in the quest for human knowledge, it is the **threshold** of knowledge discovery, always open and waiting to be crossed.

The university has “many parts” and “many guises.” Talking about topics like the Natural World, and Flora and Fauna, is where the university transforms into a flourishing ecosystem, full of life: a **living resource**, a **living organisation**, a community by another name, one that is fast-flowing. It is a **whirlpool** engulfing the surrounding community; “the university and the community come together in a whirlpool effect.” Then, when the whirlpool passes, the university is an **ocean** where learning can “ebb and flow, but deeper learning and understanding comes when you take risks and dive in.” But be careful; it can be a **bit jungle-y sometimes** out there. The university is **tendrils** that “connect people and knowledge,” its tendrils reach “to other people and other places ... at so many layers and levels.”

In the Natural World at large, the university “expands, contracts, moves in an organic way” because, in effect, the University “really is a reflection of the world around it.” In truth, the university is an **organic place** that “grows and changes as the world around it changes”, and it encourages growth because the university is the **fertiliser to a garden**. From the garden, look up to the sky, and you see the university is an **eagle**. It “soars,” or perhaps it is “just gliding” with its “loftier ideals,” and then “perched high it has, you know, a very broad overview of the world.” And if you sense there is **rarefied air** up there, remember our forebears used to say the

university “is in our community so it's our rarefied air... even if we never set foot onto your grounds, it's our university and it's part of us.”

Now please take a seat and reflect our Idea of the University. Be reminded that the university is a **seat of learning with two arms**. One arm is “learning,” and the other is “research.” Resting on the learning arm is “responsibility for, you know, minds keen to learn and keen to amass the skills and knowledge to contribute to wider society,” and for those leaning on the other arm, responsibility for the “discovery of ground-breaking new knowledge” becomes the priority.

5.1.2.2 Librarians' Ideas of the Library: A Metaphorical Landscape

Now you have skipped along a path across a landscape of the university in metaphors, we invite you to step into the relational world of the library with our metaphors. Here, the library is a **player** on the university stage. In the theatre of the university, the library is a chameleon with a character repertoire that ranges from **barrier destroyer** to **friend**. Every role inhabited has the potential to breathe life into the narrative of the Idea of the University. The library is not in the “spotlight,” yet it is “not a supportive role, not a side something but an active partner.” Not to mention a **collaborative guide**, an **enabler**, a **contributor**, a **facilitator**. The library enables and “facilitates knowledge, discovery and literature creation” which is the nexus between the idea of the library and the university. In the role of **collaborator in learning**, the library is a **teacher** that “really strikes a chord with you and that you carry with you for your whole life.” On the topic of People and Relationships, librarians' positioning of the idea of the library is clear; despite what some may say, the library is not an **island**. Rather, it is shifting “from being an island to becoming a partner in learning, teaching, research.” And **partner** from this perspective

means “equal partner.” It is a shift made possible because we are “responsive to change” and “evolving in whatever shape or form the university takes.” The library remains **set in gold**, as it “has gone from a cupboard of books” to a **treasure chest**.

Next, imagine the possibility of the academic in connection between library topics like Buildings, Centre, and Space and Place. The library is **bricks and mortar**, there is still value in its physicality. But the library is more than just its tangible components; “it’s safe, it’s welcoming;” it is “central to the university in both location and connection.” The library can “reach and influence the whole of the university, from the centre (intellectual, organisational and geographical) to the extremities” because it is the **central spot**, the **central gathering place**, for people, knowledge, and ideas. The library has a **sense of place** that evokes an “atmosphere and emotional connection,” where students and staff feel “a sense of belonging,” inspiration, and intellectual engagement. In our hearts and minds, it is a unique and “special place,” more like a **home** or your **living room**. In Danish terms, the library would be summed up in the concept of *hygge*. Everyone can live well in the library—get comfortable, grab a “coffee”, enjoy the conviviality of words and knowledge, and “discuss issues with friends.” The library is a “safe but energising space for ideas to be nurtured.” And in a cozy corner of the room is a **retro fibre-optic lamp**, a reminder that “the library doesn’t happen in one space but at lots and lots of nodes.”

The library is a **conduit**, a **connector**, and a **focal point for the community**, connecting “different areas of the university together through collaboration, interaction and shared ideals and purposes.” In essence, the library is the **social glue of the university**, orchestrating connections between the various parts of the university and playing a role in holding and nurturing a sense of community; the library has **tentacles going out in all different directions**,

and it brings people and knowledge together. The library is the **weaver of the information fabric of the university**.

We suggest you try thinking about the library as a **funnel** for information, it's a **search engine curated by humans**, where library expertise in filtering, organising, and channelling information “enhances student learning;” it is the **key to success** and the **success spot of the university**. Take the key and open the **gateway** that is the library. You won't find yourself in a “storehouse” but rather in a **borderless information centre**, a **limitless sort of place** for “collaboration, for idea generation, for an integral part of an academic experience.” The library is a **fulcrum**, the point where the **key to your entire experience at university** is in balance. Whichever way you look at it, the library is **held in a really good light**, walk its **hallowed space** and experience the library as an **academic temple of knowledge**. The library cannot disappoint because it is a **place that surprises and delights people**; a source of wonder, enjoyment, and unexpected discoveries: a time travelling **TARDIS - where Time And Relative Dimension Informatively Surprise**, because its bigger on the inside that even the most dedicated bibliophile might expect.

If the library were a country, would it be **Switzerland**? Some say the library is “neutral” like Switzerland and sits “in that space between all the faculties and the students, and the divisions.” In other words, the library works towards “reducing those barriers” between people and knowledge and making that “a seamless process” without the complexity of the politics in other parts of the university. Working “in an even-handed way across the university that's consistent” has advantages but it is a pole position that can be wearing, make us weary. Sometimes we need to reinvigorate our weary bones by imagining the library as “a bit more

pirate” rather than **part of the furniture**. “Shake up” the idea of the library—now there is an opportunity, an adventure full of possibility.

Every place has a heart, and **the heart and soul of the university** is the library. In many universities, the geographical location of the library at the **heart of a physical campus** bolsters the work of the library as the **beating heart of a university**. We’ve done the “WiFi data visualisation of how people move through the campus,” and it reflects that the library truly is “the heart, you know, people come in, they go out, it’s such a central location physically, but also in terms of people’s behaviours.” The library as the **heartbeat** of the university is steady and sure. And the library has been at the **heart of the campus** at least “for as long as there has been a physical campus, and for as long as there is that notion of a physical university ...we’re here.” Whether the library is the **heart of the university**, or to press the point, **the scholarly heart of the university**, the emphasis is on describing the centre in terms of learning, knowledge, it is a **community**—and with those words on our sleeve, do you still think the library is **in danger of extinction**?

The library is a **centre for deep learning**, a **digital community commons**, the **hub of the university** because “more than anything else... when students don’t know where to go, what to do, they’ll go to the library.” And in the library, “there are people here that want to see you succeed as a student or as a researcher, to help and to support you.” If you need to, the library can even be “somewhere to pour your heart out” because the library is a **counsellor**, it is a **lightning rod** providing protection because “library people, you know... we’re often here when nobody else is.” The library thus described is not just a functional centre or heart, which “pumps the lifeblood of study and research” from a central **knowledge hub** or **scholarly hub**, the library we speak of here is also the heart in “that sense of love and care.” In the cosmos of higher

education, the library is the **centre of the Universe(-ity)**. And the universe is ready to be explored from the library. In the territory of topics like Journey, the library is a portal to other worlds. The library is a **go-to** and **navigator**. It is the **starting point**. Just follow the **hitchhiker's guide to the universe**; in your hands, the library “unlocks human potential” with **all roads leading to discerning information**. It is the manual for adventurers exploring the vast expanse of literature and ideas and the launch pad for a **future Space Odyssey**.

Now we encourage you to envision the idea of the library as a slice of the Natural World, and Flora and Fauna, where it morphs into a **beehive**, a hoard “of opportunity and possibility, creation and connection.” Or picture the library as a **tree** or, better still, the university and its library “as two trees growing together ...and their branches intertwine. Each one is independent, but so much stronger when they're together.” The library is made for interconnectivity, a **spider web**, for “mutual support and collaboration.” It is the university's **brain extension**. Make a move from the land to the water, and the idea of the library is a **lotus flower**, emerging from muddy waters to bloom as a place of intellectual growth and inspiration. Look under the surface, and the library is an **octopus**: bright and “good at solving puzzles, like escaping from captivity and finding their way back home.” And remember, “octopuses, they have three hearts.” No one would be surprised if the library had multiple hearts, but more importantly, its heart is open, generous and welcoming; there is room for everyone, and people and knowledge belong here.

If you want to raise the topic of Learning and Knowledge, the library becomes an **inspirational place of learning**, an “over the top place in that it's beautiful, ...it's where a student can be inspired to think” among a progression of thinkers past, present, and future. The library is a **learning temporality**. Go into the library; you get the “feeling people from hundreds of years ago are still talking.” It is that sense that the library is a **long line of learners**

throughout history and that this conversation will continue into the future as a **symbiotic matrix of the new information and knowledge world**, “connected by expert people and systems.”

What do topics like Business and Machines make you think about? For some of us, the library metamorphoses into a **factory**, “making life easier for the students” by putting **a tool in the technician’s hand** and fine-tuning processes, ensuring that every **cog** hums efficiently. When things are working well, the library is a **one-stop shop** or an **information café**, where you get the lot: knowledge, skills, exchange of information and ideas, and social interaction. It is an “interactive, comfortable, inviting, and dynamic environment.” This view of the contemporary library as a “completely integrated service” makes sense and points to the future of the library as **a neural network**.

A sideways glance at topics like Health and Well-being, and you can hear a common refrain—people, ideas, and scholarly collections—an oasis of rejuvenation, the library is **that getting better part of the university**. It is the **lifblood** and **lifeforce of the university**, influencing and nourishing educational and scholarly activities like a lifeforce that sustains living organisms. The library is for nurturing “a population of informed citizens, with skills in critical thinking and analysis,” who in turn “inspire and re-invigorate communities, businesses, and individuals.” The desired outcome is “a diversity of ideas, and healthy debate and challenge to the status quo.” With that in mind, the library is **the cornerstone of a healthy society**. Doesn’t that sound a bit like the Idea of the University?

5.1.3 The “Rustle of Language”

To rustle is to make audible the very evaporation of noise: the tenuous, the blurred, the tremulous are received as the signs of an auditory annulation

(Barthes, 1989, p. 77).

In participants’ metaphors for ideas of the university and the library, I heard the “rustle of language,” and once heard, I was not satisfied with the knowledge claim delivered by grouping metaphors into Topics. The Metaphorical Landscapes respond with a narrative interpretation that is another unfolding of meaning. Reading with Barthes (1989) helped me appreciate that the richness and range of participants’ metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library are not only soft sounds, neatly catalogued and categorised, but complex resonances that, when released, have the potential to dissipate in the air and interact with the surrounding environment where discourses of the Idea float, circle, and land within practice. Metaphorical Landscapes connect participants’ metaphors and then release them into the air. Their metaphors have a quality that can be translated and received as signs of an “auditory annulation” interacting with each other and rippling across the surrounding discourse.

In the scholarly literature, the “auditory annulation” of metaphor enlivens the historical and contemporary scholarly discussion of the Idea, giving it a noticeable vitality. The metaphors for the university and library in this study bring to life the complexity of participants’ Idea of the University. In their metaphors, a form of energy is at work. In articulating the energy of metaphor, I draw on definitions of energy “as a quality of written or spoken language” and a “power of expression” (Oxford University Press, 2023f) that is analogous to physical energy in its capacity “to do work by virtue of its motion” (Oxford University Press, 2023g). The energy of metaphor can affect, make an impression, and convey a message. It reflects what von Humboldt

(1999) calls the “energeia,” or the activity of language. Von Humboldt’s view is that language is not static; instead, it is alive with energeia, or “spirit” (p. 49). Energeia amplifies the “rustle of language” in metaphor. It is the sound of potential and possibility; it is both “action and passion” (Chen, 1956, p. 60).

The Metaphorical Landscapes work to enliven participants’ metaphors and make visible the energy in their imaginaries. Nevertheless, these analysis techniques only take the data so far. Against this soundscape, I sensed I had not reached the endpoint of the analysis. I realised I needed to deepen the interpretation.

5.1.4 A Qualitative Challenge

In the Metaphorical Landscapes, I used the Topics to loosely structure the performance of a narrative that connects metaphors. Presenting metaphors along topic lines reassembles the language of individual participants’ ideas of the university and the library as a collective whole, however, it also raised questions about whether this separate treatment misses interpretative nuances at the intersection of these ideas. As already discussed, many metaphors could have been coded to more than one Topic and there are many examples of the same or similar metaphors used for both ideas. What becomes clear in the Metaphorical Landscapes is that the Topics perhaps artificially separate these two ideas.

Coded to seventeen Topics, the university and library have thirteen Topics in common. In the narrative of the landscapes, the nature of what is common becomes more evident; that is, participants have an Idea of the University, and, embedded in that idea is the library. Despite the limitations described above, noticing the energy flowing across the Metaphorical Landscapes supports the contention that, in participants’ experience, there is an interdependency between the

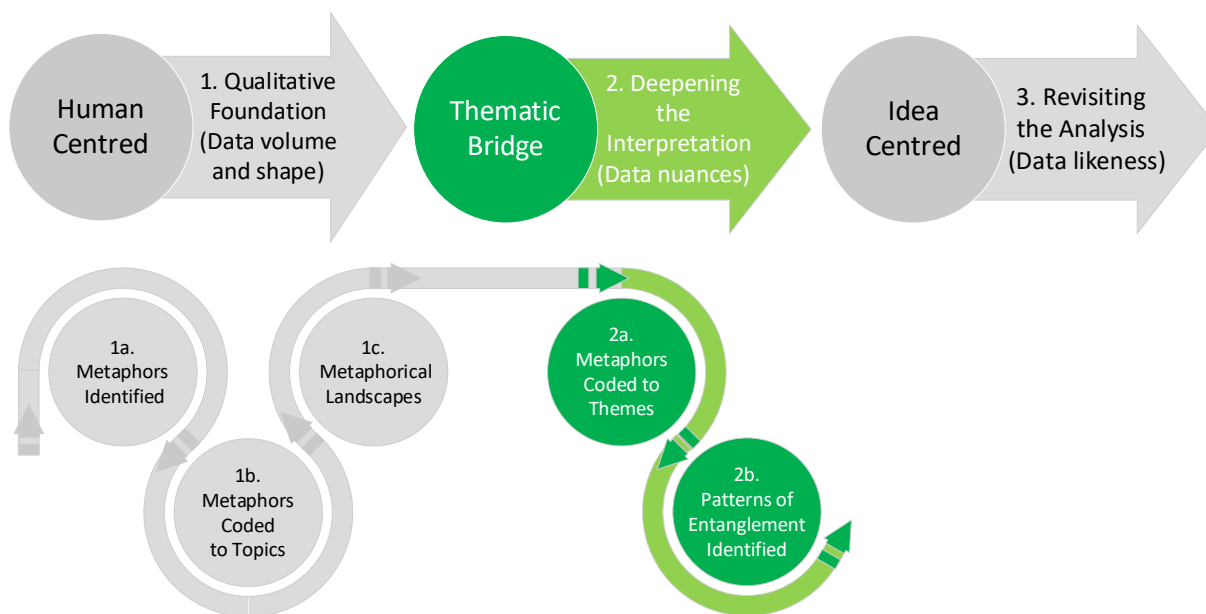
Idea of the University and the library. Perhaps antithetically, the separate analyses of these ideas in the Metaphorical Landscapes (and Topics) support the contention that there is a strong link between librarians' ideas of the university and the library. This analysis, in effect, is therefore not an endpoint but a connecting point. For librarians, ideas of the university and the library are entangled. The vibrancy of the landscapes indicates there is something more generative at the point where these two ideas meet which needs to be more fully captured by deepening the interpretation and probing the nuances of the data.

5.2 Deepening the Interpretation: Exploring Data Nuances

In the Topics and Metaphorical Landscapes, there are points of commonality in participants' ideas of the university and the library. Bringing the focus to what is common and taking the university and library as entangled ideas sets the scene for a deeper thematic interpretation and analysis of both ideas together. The first step in this stage of the analysis is to code metaphors for the university and the library into Themes provide a more comprehensive understanding that connects participants' perceptions of the university and the library. The discussion in Themes highlights the values represented in participants' metaphors, connections between ideas and the patterns in how these two ideas are entangled. This sequence of two moves is illustrated in green in Figure 4 (2a-2b).

Figure 4

Moves in the Deepening the Interpretation Stage



5.2.1 The University and the Library are Entangled Ideas

From my reading of the library literature, observations in my own practice leading libraries in universities, and from the very first interview and survey responses, I noticed that the ideas of the library and university are entangled concepts for librarians, and moreover, that librarians' ideas of the library hold much of what is essential to their ideas of the university. This observation was affirmed by a participant who commented in the survey: "I believe in the university, and the library is central to that idea" (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). The notion that libraries are an essential component of universities is deeply ingrained in the minds of librarians.

To support my contention that ideas of the university and the library are entangled, I rely on Hodder's (2012) argument that entities or things "connect to each other and to humans" (p. 8), just as humans are entangled with things and ideas about things, so too, spheres of abstraction

and “different domains of activity get entangled with each other” (p. 123). This reasoning is based on defining things as entities, material or abstract, with presence and “a configuration that endures” (p. 7). Hodder (2012) also argues that “institutions are things... complexes of humans and things... represented by material entities such as buildings, written documents... and the complex practices of interactions between people and things” (p. 219). This description supports understanding of the university and the library in their durable and material form—as institutions—and it multiplies the complex interactions and entanglements that occur progressively between people and things in the university environment.

The volume of metaphors in the Topics and their shape in the Metaphorical Landscapes do not do full justice to the connection between these ideas in participants’ conscious or unconscious experience. In effect, the Topics provide structure to participants’ metaphors but are interpretively flat. The contours of the Metaphorical Landscapes animate metaphors within a collective narrative, but treat the university and library separately, and do not interpret the gradations of the metaphors’ meaning. To move to a more nuanced and generative interpretation that realises the potential of the university and the library as entangled ideas, I recoded the data to Themes. Themes bring participants’ metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library together in new layers of meaning that were not possible in their separate treatment offered in the Topics and Metaphorical Landscapes. Themes represent “patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept” (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021). Themes build on the vitality of the Metaphorical Landscapes and give more scope to interpret the complexity and possibilities represented in participants’ metaphors.

5.2.1 Themes

I generated five Themes by appraising the entanglement—overlap, intersection, synergy, contradiction, and duplication—between metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library that is evident in the Topics and Metaphorical Landscapes. This resulted in the following

Themes:

- Inhabiting (Place in librarians’ ideas of the university).
- Relating (People in librarians’ ideas of the university).
- Corporatising (Managerialism in librarians’ ideas of the university).
- Living and Breathing (Knowledge in librarians’ ideas of the university).
- Prioritising (Responsibility in librarians’ ideas of the university).

Themes continue where the Topics and Metaphorical Landscapes left off to tell a “thematic story” about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2019, p. 428). Themes accommodate the multifaceted nature of the Idea of the University. For participants, the university and library are a state of ongoing interaction, and the metaphors in each Theme reveal how participants perceive the library and university in various ways, and how these diverse ideas coalesce. Themes also connect librarians’ voices to academic voices in the scholarly literature. Highlighting the variation and convergence between these dialogues demonstrates patterns of thinking about the university and the library at both a meta and micro level; at the level of universals and particularities in the university as idea and institution.

The first step in the thematic analysis involved recoding all metaphors and other linguistic units for the university and the library (n=276) to the five Themes. Then, I interrogated the underpinning concepts and values for A and B metaphors in each Theme by drawing on the textual context, other linguistic units, and dictionary definitions. I used the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2023k) and various metaphor dictionaries (de Vries, 2004;

Ferber, 2007; James, 2018; Olderr, 2012; Palmatier, 1995; Renton, 1990; Sommer & Weiss, 1995) in this process. It was a time-consuming task resulting in a series of tables (for example, see Table 12) that expanded on the underpinning concepts and values for each metaphor. These tables provided the basis for more nuanced analyses and discussion of selected metaphors by Theme.

Table 12*Example Metaphor Concepts and Values Analysis by Theme*

Theme	A is B Metaphor	Concepts (major ideas)	Values (underpinning goals, ideals, aspirations – conventional or novel)
Relating	The library is an octopus	eight arms/feet, caring vs controlling vs overtaking, reaching out, bringing in, highly intelligent mimic, radiating out from a centre, strong influence, unpleasant influence	importance of connections, extending a long way from a base and in many directions
Relating	The university is tendrils that connect people and knowledge	grasping, embracing, clinging, tugging, climbing, curling around an object, twinning of tendrils = growth, attaching to a support, layers and levels of connection, tender and aggressive	collaborate with other places and other people, dynamic connections, importance of linking people and knowledge, importance of leading connections, importance of attachment, importance of finding better places to grow and expand
Relating	The library is the social glue of university	repair/maintenance, community, bringing individuals/parts together to make a whole, mutual bond, facilitating connectedness	Community minded, care for others, willingness to work collaboratively,

Broadly documenting metaphor concepts (central ideas) and values (goals, ideals, and aspirations underpinning metaphors and added by the researcher) supports a more fulsome discussion of participants' experiences and understandings of the Idea of the University and the library. For this task, I used the following questions to reflect on the intersection, overlap, and variation between metaphors:

- How do librarians perceive and experience the Idea of the University as evidenced through the metaphors and descriptions in each Theme?
- What are the values and layers of meaning underneath metaphors in each Theme?
- How are ideas of the university and the library entangled in each Theme?

The presentation of the order of themes is intentional. Each Theme unfolds an interpretation of participants' ideas of the university and the library and builds on the previous theme to continue the thematic story.

5.2.1.1 Theme 1: Inhabiting (Place in Librarians' Ideas of the University)

Many participants experience the university as a bustling location, a lived-in place. The university is a "city," "mini city," or "small town." This comparison transfers the qualities of "a large or important municipality" (Oxford University Press, 2023b) to the university. It fashions the university with municipal, quotidian, and commercial characteristics, that is, density, people, governance, and public and private facilities. The "city" metaphor positions the university "within a social, cultural, professional and geographical setting" (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 138). It reinforces the Idea of the University as an ecosystem. The nuances in the "city" metaphor describe the university as a structured, ordered place with the infrastructure to help life proceed efficiently and where "every faculty runs like a town... with their own mayor" (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*). The university city has coherence in terms of how it brings people together. In this imagining of the university, the library is interwoven into the

city's fabric—metaphors such as “heart,” “hub,” and “focal point” typify it as firmly at the centre of the “city.”

I think it is pretty much that the library is the hub of the University, more than anything else. When students don't know where to go or what to do, they'll go to the library and ask... it certainly is the central place to meet and be. (*Interview Respondent #11, RUN Library*)

The idea of library centrality continues to be promoted by librarians who support the view that “the research library still deserves to stand at the center of the campus, preserving the past and accumulating the energy for the future” (Darnton, 2009, p. 41).

An inhabited and built-up place with the library as its “central place” exemplifies the Idea for many participants: both as an embodied experience and a desired state. For many participants in their Idea of the University, the library is central. It is “the hub of the university.” Metaphors of centrality illustrate how the library and university are intertwined. This is part of participants' experience of the university's physical environment:

The libraries are seen as central to the university physically. You know, if you look at each campus, the library is in quite a central spot. When the library was built on this campus, the staff and students were so excited – I think they almost felt like the campus didn't have a heart until we arrived. But I do remember, at the time, the academic staff saying things like, “Oh, now we feel like a real university.” You know, the perception at that time was that having a visible library building made them a real academic environment. (*Interview Respondent #15, IRU Library*)

Participants' sense of the university as a “pivotal point in the community” (*Interview Respondent #9, RUN Library*) echoes their sense of the library's centrality in the university. The metaphors

“city” or “town” locate the university geographically in relation to other neighbourhoods and indicate that the university is part of a larger map:

As an institution, the university is always positioned within a social, cultural, political, professional and geographical setting... it grows and thrives with other institutions, social and cultural contexts, individual citizens and the totality of the wider environment. (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 138)

As one participant explained, “We connect, quite literally, via transport, to the surrounding communities. We don’t have our own hospital, but we’re adjacent to one and work closely with them. Universities work very much with the surrounding community” (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*).

Explanations of what the “city” metaphor entails project a strong sense of the university’s “community culture” (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*) and the university is depicted as looking outward to the wider community. These accounts portray universities as “civic institutions” that are “key actors in city-based creative economy ecosystems” (Goddard & Vallance, 2013). Goddard’s (2009) description of the “engaged civic university:”

is one which provides opportunities for the society of which it forms part. It engages as a whole with its surroundings, not piecemeal; it partners with other universities and colleges; and is managed in a way that ensures it participates fully in the region of which it forms part. While it operates on a global scale, it realises that its location helps to form its identity and provide opportunities for it to grow and help others, including individual learners, business and public institutions, to do so too. (p. 5)

Nixon (2011) describes the university “as one of the institutional places within the space of civil society to which we might look for civil regeneration” (p. 41) because universities are “places

where people find a voice, a presence; where people participate and become citizens; where they discover the resources of leadership and purposefulness. Partisanship of any kind is alien to the idea of the university” (p. 42). Participants recognised this idea of the civic university as presenting untapped opportunities for libraries. The crucial question is, how do libraries fit into the idea of a civic university, where “engagement implies strenuous, thoughtful, argumentative interaction with the non-university world” (Coldstream, 2003, p. 7). Participants see various ways they can engage directly outside the boundaries of the university community. For several participants, the critical place for interaction with the non-university world relates to transforming access to scholarly knowledge:

There’s definitely a role for academic libraries to drive the facilitation of open access to scholarly information and research outputs, I do think we have a place there to drive policy and advance the national agenda. I do see that is a space for the academic library in the outside community. *(Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library)*

Some participants emphasise the library’s role in community-building and “linking communities together” *(Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library)*, both within but also outside the boundaries of the university. A “common space for all the community” *(Survey Respondent, IRU Library)* is a library value articulated by several participants. It suggests the library could work harder to support the civic university and the Idea of the University as a public good:

And I think there’s a lot we [the library] could do to improve bringing the community into our universities and welcoming them in a way that helps understanding that we’re part of their community and they can learn from us and use our facilities and resources without having to be enrolled as a university student. The library is a learning community that they have access to. *(Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library)*

The library is a “welcome community space” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). It is open to the university’s multiple publics. The “community” metaphor is duplicated in participants’ ideas of the university:

My idea of the university is of a public university because it is open to all comers, students, staff, local citizens, providing a space where learning and community combine. (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*)

Both the library and the university are perceived as institutions that are “open to the public” (*Interview Respondent #19, ATN Library*). For some participants, the “community-focused” culture of the university as implied in metaphors like “city” or “town,” also infers responsibility for its citizens. Participants describe the Idea of the University as a “kind of society” and acknowledge that this carries responsibility for “contributing to the learning of the next generation” and “building citizens who can contribute to the world on a local and global basis” (*Interview Respondent #15, IRU Library*). The underlying values represented through these metaphors envision the university and library with a similar purpose, both as focal points where knowledge and people converge, connect, thrive, and benefit their communities. However, the thriving of knowledge and people must be nurtured and encouraged to grow. One librarian explained, “the university is fertiliser to a garden” (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*). Similarly, the library has a role in nurturing, welcoming, and caring:

We’re a capacity building organisation for the community. The library people, you know, we’re often here when nobody else is. And when students come to the library, they will get support that they would not get anywhere else. We’re often counsellors as much as anything else at the library. And I know we bend over backwards to make

everyone welcome, to make sure people feel comfortable. (*Interview Respondent #8, RUN Library*)

This description evokes almost a pastoral role for the library. One participant (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*) used the metaphor “home” for the library because, in the “city” of the university, the library is “nurturing,” “welcoming,” “relaxing,” “safe,” “warm,” and “full of conversation.” Another participant explained how they contribute to making the library welcoming:

My role in the library is to welcome, help, console, direct and embrace our students and keep them on their path so they feel connected. (*Survey Respondent, RUN Library*)

Other participants used similar words such as “welcoming,” “open,” “connected,” “shared,” and “public” to describe the university (*Survey Respondents, ATN Library; Survey Respondents, RUN Library*). There are echoing and parallel concepts in understandings of the Idea of the University and the library here, in the sense that belonging and being in the university is “not only for work and study programme reasons but for living together in reason and with reason” (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 137). It also suggests a shared responsibility for making the “peaceful university” (Temple, 2024). Examples of other metaphors used for both library and university spaces are “commons” and “hub.” For one participant, the library is a “digital community commons” (*Survey Respondent, RUN Library*) and for another participant, the university is a “public-facing knowledge commons” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). Both these metaphors have echoes of the idea of the accessible university (Barnett, 2013).

The perception of the library as a comforting and welcoming place means it provides a base not just within the immediate world of the campus but also for looking outward.

Participants also envisage both the university and the library as places for new experiences and

journeys of discovery. Journey metaphors resonate in participants' descriptions of the university and the library; they describe the university as the “driver” (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*) or “driving society” (*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*) in the sense of leading the way. As one participant described, “it is not just a response to society, the university is the guiding light to society” (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*). Another participant used the metaphor “lighthouse” (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*) for the university's pursuit of advancing new knowledge. As a metaphor for direction, the lighthouse is an established symbol of safety and security, but also of seeing out and leading the way forward. Journey metaphors for the library also have a future focus; the library is the “hitchhiker's guide to the universe” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). This metaphor echoes metaphors for university as a “guide” and, in addition, transfers to the library the values of a futuristic journey of discovery.

5.2.1.2 Theme 2: Living and Breathing (Knowledge in Librarians' Ideas of the University)

In the Theme of Living and Breathing librarians' Idea of the University is as a place that lives and breathes—lives and breathes knowledge. The sense of the university as living or “a living organism” (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*) might suggest it is “concerned with nothing less than the whole of life” or at least aspires to reach all aspects of life (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 159). An Idea of the University as living rests on a deep connection between the university and knowledge:

So, the university is this: it's the meeting of minds, it's the way of bringing ideas, knowledge and experience and inventiveness and creation and all of those sorts of things into the world and into the everyday existence and how we sort of reimagine our

world. I think the university can do this because it's a living resource. (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*)

This description is reminiscent of Whitehead's (1928) arguments that the function of the university is "the connection between knowledge and the zest of life" (p. 448). As one librarian commented, "In my view, the university is a thought leader because it's the centre of the generation of new knowledge, it brings knowledge to life, and then brings knowledge to the world" (*Interview Respondent #2, GO8 Library*). This sense of the university giving birth to knowledge reinforces the livingness of the university:

I like the idea that the university is an organic place that grows and changes as the world around it changes because the university really is a reflection of the world around it. It expands, it contracts, and it moves in an organic way, with ideas and academic thought at the beginning, knowledge and academic endeavour at the centre, and new knowledge and for the greater good as the outcome. It can actually move into and out of areas depending on what is happening around it. (*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*)

The multiple layers of organic interactions happening within the university and between the university and its environment echo the idea of the library as an "ecosystem" where species interact and collaborate to evolve and avoid extinction (Walter, 2008). The idea of the ecological university is useful for further illuminating the Idea of the University as an organic place in that "the ecological university takes its inspiration from life, understands that it is in life and works for life" (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 145). For participants, the library is intertwined with the notion that "the university is in life" because the library is also of and for university life. In effect, the library too, is perceived as life-giving:

Without the library, the university would be without life because the library is central to academic learning and discussion. (*Interview Respondent #11, RUN Library*)

That “knowledge is edifying for life itself” (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 118) is the basis for a logic that connects ideas. As argued by Barnett and Bengtson (2020):

The production of ideas is full of life. Ideas are invested with life, life is needed if new ideas are to be imagined and articulated, and ideas do not occur by themselves but have to be brought into life by the life of their creator. (p. 54)

In this description, the university is the “creator” that lives for knowledge and brings it to life. Extending this logic, the library is also “from life, of life and for life” (p. 151). For many participants, the library is the organ that supports living, breathing, and giving birth to knowledge in the university. It is the university’s beating heart:

Knowledge is the lifeblood of the university, and the library plays a key (if not vital) role in distributing it throughout the body of the university. The library reaches and influences the whole of the university, from the centre (intellectual, organisational and geographical) to the extremities. (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*)

In metaphors of living and breathing, participants consider that:

the library is the heart of the university and without its heart, the university would be without life. That’s what makes the library central to academic learning. (*Interview Respondent #11, RUN Library*)

Some participants conceptualised the university beyond its corporeal existence, and again, the idea of the library is intertwined with the university’s non-material qualities: “every university has a soul, and in the library, you feel like you find that hallowed space” (*Interview Respondent #21, IRU Library*). While the university has the height, visibility, symbolism and spectacle of a

“church spire” (*Interview Respondent #10, RUN Library*), participants’ view of the university is from the vantage point of the library, and understandably, the library is central. This means that often, when participants have the Idea of the University in mind, integral to that idea is the library: the “library is the heart and soul of the university” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*).

Participants do not just compare the university to a living, breathing human body, but also to other living organisms. Another perspective of how the Idea of the University and the library are entangled was captured in the metaphor “the library is a tree” (*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*). The nuances in this metaphor reinforce the idea of the library and university as intertwined and having a partnership that is similar to mutualistic relationships in nature. The library and university are only complete as companions and facilitate each other’s growth:

I think the library is a tree, which means it has a symbiotic relationship with the university, you know, as two trees growing together, and one will support the other, and their branches intertwine. Each one is independent but so much stronger when they’re together. Between them, there’s an overarching and underpinning web of branches and roots, again that web of support that reaches across the entire University.

(*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*)

In this description, each part grows better with the other than it would alone. The relationship is a perfect synergy and cooperation where partners share everything, including resources for living and breathing.

The Idea of the University as a living organism was taken in another direction in the metaphor, “the university is an ocean,” where “learning can ebb and flow, but deeper learning and understanding comes when you take risks and dive in” (*Survey Respondent, ATN Library*). The threads in this metaphor merit unpicking. For example, to figuratively “dive in” conveys

plunging deeply into a matter but also suggests approaching the unknown with increasing momentum or enthusiasm. It echoes a perception of the library as “paths you never expected to go down” (*Interview Respondent #14, IRU Library*) or a “limitless sort of place” (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*). The idea of vastness and the unknown yet to be discovered brings to mind the “edgeless university”—a university without edges or borders, whose function cannot be contained geographically or technically (Bradwell, 2009). The depth conjured by the ocean metaphor is also conveyed in participants’ descriptions of the university as a place for deep thinking and deep learning. This concept of deep thinking is suggestive of ideas of the “thinking university” or the “thoughtful university” which is characterised by:

a collective disposition to think deeply about matters; not to take anything for granted but to inquire into the world and all that it contains, including present understandings of the world. (Bengtson & Barnett, 2018, p. 3)

Conceptions of the university as “a place for deep thought, that kind of really in-depth thought” (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*), however, are also seen in tension with other ideas of the university as institution across time and space:

I’m conscious that there is a broader notion of the university stemming from a history and tradition. Even within my own lifetime going to university in the 1980s, things were quite different. I think this longer history is rearticulated within present priorities but there are also some tensions operating. For example, the corporatisation of the University and the economic and market imperative is much more dominant now and this can override or compromise more critical engagement with societal issues.

(*Interview Respondent #20, ATN Library*)

These ideas of the university reflect how “the university is embedded in the past, even as it reaches into the future” (Barnett, 2013, p. 66). Likewise, academics’ idea of libraries as “quiet places” (Barnett, 2016, p. 78) reaches back into the past. As one participant put it, the university and the library both connect to the past and future:

The university and the library are more than just buildings where people come to do things; they’ve actually got so many connections, and they draw from the past and they look to the future. (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*)

In the language of the three planes of the university (Barnett, 2016), the university and the library operate in the reality of time and space while looking to future possibilities, despite the tension between sets of ideas. This interaction is summed up by one participant’s metaphor for the library as a “learning temporality” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). It suggests that their objective and subjective experiences of library routines and rhythms continue to be influenced by particular historical contexts and future horizons.

Across both the ideas of the university and the library, participants’ metaphors emphasise the values of opportunity, hope, creativity, and inspiration. And these values are carried across time. Likewise, the trajectory of knowledge in the idea of the library and university shares a past and looks to the future in ways that mirror each other, for example, the library is a “neural network.” This metaphor reflects values from an ontology of knowledge that is more akin to a future of artificial intelligence than traditional library knowledge taxonomies. In another example, the classification and relationship between knowledge and order are disrupted in a library that is imagined as a “retro fibre-optic lamp” because “the library doesn’t happen in a space, but at lots and lots of nodes” (*Survey Respondent, RUN Library*). Similarly, the idea of the ecological university encompasses the university as “a kind of expanding global net of

knowledge nodes” that “breaks through the thinness of the contemporary knowledge forms... to experiment with new ways of comprehending the world” (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, pp. 147-148).

One participant imagined the Idea of the University as “an exciting ideas consortia” (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*). This metaphor is suggestive of some of the characteristics of “the philosophical university,” the university that understands itself as “creating new concepts, new ideas, in helping to fashion a new world” (Barnett, 2013, p. 39):

So, the university is the meeting of minds because it’s this way of bringing knowledge and experience and inventiveness and creation and all of those sorts of things into the world, into the everyday world and into our everyday existence of how we do things in the world, how we reimagine our world. (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*)

Participants’ metaphors acknowledge the Idea of the University as a life force in society and for humanity:

I mean not to get too romantic about it, but I just think [pause]... universities are the engine room of society, you know, I think they are so central to our notion of society and our notion of progress and our ability to progress. The university is central to humanity. (*Interview Respondent #2, GO8 Library*)

As the “engine room of society,” the university is society’s “principal source of energy, activity, or strength” (Oxford University Press, 2023h). By metaphorically positioning the university as “central to humanity,” this participant suggests that the university is both deeply entrenched in human experience and the powerhouse that shapes individuals and societies.

For many participants, the Idea of the University in the contemporary world extends beyond particularities to universal ideas, and participants’ metaphors frequently reference these

universals. For example, the university is the “cornerstone of a healthy society” because it builds “a population of informed citizens with skills in critical thinking and critical analysis” (*Survey Respondent, ATN Library*). The use of the word “cornerstone” emphasises the importance of the university as the basis of a healthy society. For this participant, the health of society is closely tied to knowledge and thought. Often these universals are echoed in participants’ ideas of the library, providing a sense that the library also has a role in bringing universals to life. And therefore, working in the library is a way of “contributing to a healthy society” (*Survey Respondent, RUN Library*). It enlarges how the library makes a difference. As one librarian explained, “the kind of imprint I would like the library to leave on a student for the rest of their lives” is that of a “teacher” who has passed on “knowledge skills,” that “you carry with you for your whole life” (*Interview Respondent #14, IRU Library*). As another participant explained, “the library’s legacy is for students and staff to connect with the resources they need to extend and create knowledge, and to be empowered to have the confidence and ability to seek out those resources for themselves” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*).

Interestingly, the metaphor “inspirational place of learning” was used by different participants for both the library and the university. In this repetition, the Idea of the University and the library are both places that inspire, where learning is inhaled and exhaled. There is a suggestion of wholeness, a continuous and complete process. In the duplication of these metaphors, a singular idea is repeated, and the echo affirms it. What it amplifies is that the library and university both animate and influence learning:

The university and library are places where people come to learn. That would be my idea of what they are all about, and that’s learning, students come here to learn and build their knowledge and then skills for their careers. Academics come here to learn

how to impart their knowledge in meaningful ways, researchers come here to learn to probe and ask questions and do research that changes society. And professional staff too. We're all learning together. I think the university and library are really good places to continue to grow. (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*)

This participant links the university and the library as places to learn and associates learning with growing. Imagining the university and the library as places “to continue to grow” suggests they are for flourishing and “to manifest vigorous life” (Oxford University Press, 2024j). The underlying values in participants’ metaphors support this view and imply that, in participants’ ideas, the university has a fundamental and enduring relevance that speaks to the essence of what it means to be human and live, breathe, think, create knowledge, and relate in the world.

5.2.1.3 Theme 3: Relating (People in Librarians’ Ideas of the University)

What is evident in the data is that participants’ experience of the Idea of the University is about people and involves a broad range of interactions. From the perspective of many participants, relationships in the university are “navigated.” Participants’ relations with colleagues in the university are characterised by the need for “navigating the politics. Navigating the right people” (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*). The metaphorical use of the word “navigating” suggests that these relationships involve wayfinding, steering a course and the possibility of getting “lost.” Sometimes the university can be a chaotic space, where life and relationships are challenging. As one participant put it, “the university is a bit jungle-y sometimes” (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*). For some participants, there is a sense of unpredictability in relationships, implying everyone makes their own rules in an environment that is potentially hostile and presents obstacles and challenges. While participants stressed that

they did not want to come across as negative, these metaphors suggest an underlying tension between order and disorder in participants' experience. This chaotic-sounding environment was a perceived danger for the library, especially when "the machinations of the university will easily go on without you" (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*). In this environment, some participants felt that librarians were absent from the institutional conversations happening around them. As one participant put it, "the library is only a tool in the technician's hands" (*Interview Respondent #6, GO8 Library*). But there was also a keen awareness of the need to strengthen the library's presence and visibility, and to be relevant through resilience, resourcefulness, and working collaboratively:

I guess different work practices, different cultures if you like, sometimes make it seem to other areas of the university that the library staff are all from another planet. And I think actually finding common languages and understanding terminologies and understanding each other's priorities and practices, which can be very different, to actually find the place where communication works so that you're not constantly trying to keep doing the way you do things in your own area in a very parallel way. It's about, like, finding a middle space. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

The tensions and difficulties that are part of the reality of relationships in the university are offset by what librarians bring to those relations: a collaborative approach and a strong belief and motivation "for the library to be positioned in places where they're needed and to be seen as a partner among others in learning, teaching, and research" (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*). The idea of "middle space" as a metaphor for how colleagues from across the university work together echoes Whitchurch's (2013) concept of "third space," which is also a metaphor for fluid ways of working that "defy boundaries, and activities that cannot be

categorised entirely as belonging to either academic or professional spheres” (Whitchurch, 2024, p. 253). This is not to say that there are no tensions in the third space, and Whitchurch (2024) has investigated the “frustration and disappointment” experienced by colleagues working in this space, including misrecognition, which echoes some librarians’ experiences. But for librarians, overall, the difficulties working in the space between professional and academic activity are mitigated by the strong partnerships that develop.

The word “partner” was used metaphorically and literally in participants’ descriptions of the Idea of the University and the library. The concept of partnership was a repeated refrain. Participants see partnership as key to professional achievements and success because “always the most successful things that a library does, the things that have the most impact, are where they’re done in partnership with others” (*Interview Respondent #17, IRU Library*). As one participant explained, “My metaphor for the contemporary academic library is partner because it implies equality” (*Survey Respondent, RUN Library*). Equality and partnership across the university are about making a valuable contribution:

I think we need to focus on where we can really add value and be seen as, you know, partners, equivalent intelligent people, partners in university practice and growth. So, not a supportive role, not a side something, but an active partner and a proactive partner as well. (*Interview Respondent #8, RUN Library*)

For many participants, partnership within the university is seen variously as part of the reality of daily practice and an ideal that still needs to be reached. Even where examples of this way of working are already embedded in practice, repositioning the library requires constant attention and for some, partnership remains an aspiration. As one participant explained, it is about “going from being an island to becoming a partner in learning, teaching, research”

(Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library). While the island metaphor is sometimes interpreted as celebrating the freedom afforded by being away from civilisation, here it implies moving from an idea of the library as a solo performer to collaborative approaches where each partner contributes to the overall rhythm and flow of shared endeavours.

Participants were proud of their capacity and capability for collaboration. They frequently highlighted it as a characteristic fundamental to how libraries work, using a mix of metaphors, idiomatic and figurative language, and literal descriptions. Participants see collaboration as inextricable from how the library and librarians work:

I think libraries are the most collaborative parts of the university, you know, I think collaboration is in our DNA. And I think one of the really interesting functions that the library provides is that sort of, I mean, my idea of the academic library is the social glue of the university or the social capital almost, in terms of connecting different parts of the university, because, you know, particularly through our outreach and liaison roles, the academic library is tentacles going out in all different directions. So I think we're much more outward focused than a lot of other parts of the university are. So, we are often the ones that make connections. *(Interview Respondent #2, GO8 Library)*

As described above, the library's aptitude for collaboration starts with a unique genetic code that holds specific instructions for interacting. That collaboration is in libraries "DNA" confirms it as an important part of who librarians are and what libraries stand for. "Glue" is a metaphor that helps describe and expand on the librarian's role in facilitating collaboration. In librarians' ideas of the university, people and relationships are crucial to exploring and expanding knowledge, and the library is not just integral to this community but the "social glue" of the university. This suggests a layer of closeness and intimacy—a joining up in a social sense,

even if the library in other ways might be, like glue, largely hidden. “Social glue” suggests community mindedness, care, and a maintenance role for the library in bringing various parts together to form a whole. Participants’ idea of partnership is about collaboration in the university. As one participant explained:

The idea of the collaborative university is meaningful to me, because internal collaboration with partners is a driver of excellence in practice both for the academics and the library, all in the quest for student success. (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*)

But librarians do not have a monopoly on collaboration; in the Idea of the University, collaboration is equally valued by scholars:

The collaborative university – as we might term it – is a new kind of university. It takes its networking seriously. Frameworks of understanding are already networked, criss-crossing and overlapping in ever more complex forms. The metaphors themselves proliferate in a vain attempt to capture this complexity. Some conjure images of spaghetti or seaweed tangled in a mess; some point to the fuzziness and interpenetration of boundaries; some call up metaphors of the liquid, referring to intermingling pools, streams and currents; and others refer to the randomness that creativity has now become, with perhaps billions of streams of data, images, representations and texts intermingling in crazy ways. (Walsh & Kahn, 2009, p. xvi)

Walsh & Kahn’s (2009) metaphors for the university—“spaghetti,” “intermingling pools,” and “billions of streams of data”—are similar to some participants’ metaphors for the university and library—“tenacles,” “tendrils,” “whirlpools,” and “networks.” The imageries these metaphors might summon up are of embracing or curling around, growth, layers of complexity, equally

tender and aggressive. They represent a sketch of the underpinning values of collaboration, dynamic connections, and linking people and knowledge.

From a range of viewpoints, collaboration is ubiquitous in the university and evokes similar imaginative responses from both academic and professional vantage points. Barnett (2013) argues that “collaboration is not new” but essential to universities realising their potential (p. 104). His idea of “the collaborative university” is persuasive and compelling because “after all, does it not readily connect with the idea of academic community?” (p. 106). Barnett’s notion of the collaborative university is, in essence, about teamwork, cooperation, and collective effort among academic colleagues. In contrast, the third space emphasises collaboration between academic and professional colleagues. From both perspectives, the collaborative university is a hopeful notion, albeit with an inherent danger in that it can be satisfied with superficial imaginings of the university (Barnett, 2013). For librarians, the idea of collaboration is not superficial but serious (Pham & Tanner, 2015), and participants’ metaphors reflect the importance of reaching out intentionally to bring people together and enable collaborations.

“Enabler” and “facilitator” are concepts that dominated participants’ discussions of collaboration in the library and the university. Collaboration is a key aspect of the library’s mission, with one leader stating, “collaboration needs to be facilitated” (*Interview Respondent #10, RUN Library*), and another adding, “most library leaders that I’ve worked with have implicitly and explicitly facilitated collaboration and valued collaboration” (*Interview Respondent #2, GO8 Library*). The library’s role is not just about making connections but also about “being experts in the standards that enable that and potentially building a mechanism that enables it” (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*).

The library's role as a facilitator is multifaceted. It can "move seamlessly between divisions and faculties and not just work with them but work as intermediaries between groups that otherwise may not be connected" (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*). In effect, the library actively facilitates conveyance or passage between things because the library is the medium that connects people to people, and people to knowledge. This capacity is crucial for enabling access to services and resources, as one participant emphasised, "I want the client to be able to access either our services or the products and services that we provide access to or facilitate access to... in the easiest possible way, because they have their business of knowledge to get about" (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*). What do these echoes mean for the relations between the library and other areas of the university?

For many participants, the benefit of collaborative routines and ways of working is a precursor to partnership. Partnership in the library starts with understanding the idea of the library as a "connector" and "conduit." These metaphors are yet another example of how participants understand the concept of collaboration. The library is a "conduit because it connects different areas of the university together through collaboration, interaction and shared ideals and purposes" (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). The library is not just understood as a conduit through which knowledge and people are channelled; it also fastens things together. In other words, the library is perceived as:

that kind of glue in the middle of it all. Who better to deal with disparate groups of faculties across disparate groups of universities than the institution inside the institution that speaks to all those people? Libraries. Libraries, by their nature, are collaborative and community-focused, a facilitator for scholarly interactions. (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*)

In explaining their use of the metaphors “glue” and “facilitator,” another participant stressed that “glue and facilitator sum up the idea of the library for me. One’s kind of about a sticky place and one’s kind of the social lubricant” (*Interview Respondent #2, GO8 Library*). This explanation introduces an additional element that involves balancing the ongoing effort to connect people while putting them at ease and stimulating social interaction and conversation. Sometimes, this means the library is the place to take “your problems, and it will help you solve them ...if someone’s got a problem, even if it’s not a library problem, librarians have this compulsion to take it on and make it right and fix it;” the library “meets the needs of anyone who walks through the door” (*Interview Respondent #13, RUN Library*). The metaphors “enabler” and “connector” were also used for the university. The “university is a facilitator” because it makes “connections between knowledge and the wider community” (*Interview Respondent #15, IRU Library*). In the words “connector,” “enabler,” and “facilitator,” there is an echoing between participants’ ideas of the library and the university. For participants, this repetition suggests that the collaborative “tentacles” of the library echo the purpose and possibility of the “tendrils” of the university.

5.2.1.4 Theme 4: Corporatising (Managerialism in Librarians’ Ideas of the University)

The *Corporatising* Theme brings into sharp relief discourses about the Idea of the University that have been circulating in earnest since the early twentieth century. Metaphors in this Theme characterise the university as the manufacturer of the future workforce: “a corporate degree factory” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*) and a “degree churning organisation” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). These metaphors are underpinned by concepts of engineering and

industrial production. A factory represents organised systems for creating products, and in this endeavour, the university is perceived as a “well-oiled machine” (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*), suggesting smooth and efficient operations. Factory and machine metaphors were used for the university and the library, reinforcing a contemporary linguistic currency for both ideas. The underlying sentiments, however, are in tension in terms of possible consequences. When used for the library, the factory metaphor means:

making it all run well. I suppose, in a way, you’ve got all the processes going on to make sure that things fit into each other. So it’s about making life easier for the students. (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*)

In contrast, factory metaphors for the Idea of the University were used pejoratively:

I do struggle a bit with that employability thing as well... The fact is the university is a sausage factory, with students coming out the other end the same, rather than having a sort of an opportunity to actually explore their full potential, their full intellectual potential, as well as their full social potential. (*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*)

The university as a “sausage factory” or a “degree churning organisation” conjures up images of assembly lines where products are mechanically created and processed according to specifications and schedules. These metaphors imply that students move through the university in a linear, assembly-line fashion. Processes and outputs are standardised and repeated without sufficient consideration for individual differences, strengths, and learning styles. Organisational reality is being imagined in terms of the functioning of a machine. Machine and factory metaphors suggest a particular approach to power and control that is the basis of bureaucratic organisation. Like a machine or factory, the organisation has interlocking parts with defined

functions. Tohidian and Rahimian's (2019) analysis of machine metaphors in organisational contexts highlights the underlying values of increased efficiency and the maximal utilisation of labour. Individuals are in fixed roles as integral "cogs" contributing to the whole system. Morgan (2006) delves into the human cost expressed through machine metaphors and the inherent lack of attention to humanity in the bureaucratic structures they summon up. These critical perspectives prompt reflection on the potentially dehumanising aspects of rigid organisational structures.

Some scholars challenge the utility of the machine as a metaphor for organisations (Barter & Russell, 2013), and even though participants use the machine metaphor to convey ideas of the university and the library, it is in tension with many other metaphors they use for these two ideas. For example, the brain metaphor. As discussed by Tohidian and Rahimian (2019) the "brain" as a metaphor emphasises adaptability and intricacy. It envisions organisations as self-regulating entities, highlighting cognitive functions within the organisational context (Örtenblad et al., 2016), which contrasts with the values underpinning machine metaphors. A broad point of comparison and tension between ideas is apparent here between metaphors across and within Themes: between growth and flourishing, interrelated subsystems in alignment, and closed systems that demand uniformity.

Factory and machine metaphors suggest standardisation to ensure uniformity and efficiency, as well as revenue growth and profit maximisation. Similarly, these metaphors suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and assessment is not effective. Several participants also communicated the sense of things forfeited through corporatisation and mass production. For example, there is a sense of massification eroding quality as one participant reflected, "I was thinking the other day we're more a McDonald's, rather than a fine dining

restaurant” (*Interview Respondent #6, GO8 Library*). And participants are concerned too about the loss of openness that comes with corporatising the university:

I would like my university to be more accessible and public - however, these values are being rapidly eroded by the transformation of the university into a highly quantified corporate entity much like a conveyor belt. (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*)

The tension between aspects of reality and aspirations for the Idea of the University is perceptible in the above comment. A “conveyor belt” suggests predictableness and the exactitude of interlocking parts that, in effect, are lifeless. In contrast, metaphors in the Living and Breathing Theme offer a counterpoint; they have heart and soul, ecosystems with subsystems that are the basis for growth, development, and survival. Even so, some participants recognised the necessity of corporatisation; it also keeps the university alive:

You know, university education is our third highest export; we can't not have higher education, but sometimes I think not having it is a true risk, and I just don't think our federal government is listening. What happens if students don't come to Australia anymore, if we can't attract the best researchers in the world? What do we become? We've talked about being the knowledge economy. If you don't attract the right people you have an economy that dies. (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*)

In the experience of many participants, the university positions itself as a business with customers, workers, and managers. Here, the university also has corporate characteristics—it is depicted as a place where knowledge and degrees are commodities for sale. As one participant explained:

The university, it's a business... and education, it's a product we sell, think of it that way. It's our core business, it's our bread and butter, like the students bring in heaps of

money. So yeah, the role of education is very important still, as such, yeah, for sure.

But here it's our core business. ... and we focus on making the place efficient,

profitable. (*Interview Respondent #6, GO8 Library*)

Business is a broad term, but in the above conception of the university the emphasis is on buying and selling goods for profit. The metaphoric use of the phrase “bread and butter” emphasises that the Idea of the University as a business entity is an everyday experience. Moreover, the university as a business depends on income from customers for its livelihood. The university is perceived as an “economy in itself” and “making the place efficient and profitable” is the language of commerce and the marketplace underpinned by views of organisations that emphasise productivity and economy.

Business-related views of the university—Bureaucratic University, Capitalist University, Corporate University, and Neoliberal University—were also highlighted by survey participants as dominant ideas influencing their library practice. In elaborating on these influences one participant commented that:

the capitalist university seems like an appropriate description of what we are experiencing when we are removing books to make way for more student seating, which appears to be a result of increased student numbers which in turn brings more money to the university. (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*)

Another participant described the concept of the capitalist university as influencing the:

growing impetus of economic indicators driving the progression of the Library. The increasing use of data analytics, statistics, and feedback indicators demonstrates the contemporary concern surrounding economic results. The university is in a lot of ways capitalist and corporate, it's become a business. (*Survey Respondent, RUN Library*)

Some participants lamented the corporatisation of the university and the consequences for ideas of the university as they perceived them:

The university is a conveyor belt and this has produced the decline of the liberal and postmodern aspects of the university, as they cannot survive or thrive in such a commercially driven education/research system (see the decline of most humanities departments as evidence of this). (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*)

Participants were also aware and sympathetic to these influences on others in the university. One participant indicated that librarians increasingly “have to assist research staff and students to fend off constant attacks from neo-Fascist ideologues who only see monetary and corporate models which are entirely inappropriate to this institution and ignore more important research priorities” (*Survey Respondent, ATN Library*). There was a strong sense among some participants that despite the weight of the corporate in ideas of the university, the library is there to make things easier for people, almost as an antidote to the disadvantages of the corporatising influences that touch learning, teaching, and research, and to mitigate the effects of neoliberal ideas. In the comments above, there are fluctuations “between pessimism and optimism, between attending to the real world and reaching into spaces beyond, and between the concrete and the universal” (Barnett, 2013, p. 34).

In an environment where time is money, some participants perceived their role as that of architects designing and building services that allow others to free up and repurpose their time. For example, libraries can bring about “efficiencies” to “enable researchers to do what they do better” (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*):

I think that what we build enables people to do their research more efficiently. Which means that if you’re spending less time looking for a file, then you have a bit more time

on what's important, or if you have a platform on which you can collaborate and communicate with colleagues then that strengthens the research endeavour and makes it more worthwhile. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

Participants were well aware and attuned to how time is stolen and the implications for their academic colleagues in the process of corporatisation:

Well, I think that the scholarly used to take up a bigger chunk of space; whereas as now other things, reporting and metrics and the managerial stuff kick into it and the corporate imperatives take up more space, which means the scholarly capacity is reduced. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

When I prompted one interview participant for a metaphor for the Idea of the University, they responded without missing a beat, "Universities Inc." (*Interview Respondent #6, GO8 Library*). It is an apt metaphor that captures much of the underlying consequences, values, and key tenets in the Corporatising Theme—standardisation, bureaucracy, centralisation, loss of knowledge and values, assembly line approaches, productivity and competition:

Here they've actually centralised most of the university support staff, IT, admin, finance staff, and so forth. So, the schools and centres now don't have all of the admin staff and support staff that they had. So, people are actually having to manage a lot of the stuff that was previously managed by someone who knew their work intimately and knew how they worked. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

I asked all interview participants how their ideas of the university and their university experience aligned with Barcan's (1996) description of academic work in universities in terms of

three simultaneous discourses: scholarly, bureaucratic, and managerial/corporate. Thirty-five per cent of participants said their experience was managerial/corporate, sometimes reluctantly:

It's managerial/corporate, but it'd be nicer if there was more scholarly and less managerial and less corporate. I appreciate that, why you might need it in a big organisation; you need a certain amount of it. Unfortunately, the Vice Chancellor will tell you that he has to be more corporate than he used to be, so we can't just be our ivory tower of scholarship like we used to be. We now have to get in amongst the sharks and compete for our pound of flesh like everyone else. And, of course, everything has to grow. Like our research output has to grow every year, student numbers have to grow every year. That's now part of the library's thing as well, we're expected to grow and measure growth in so many ways. (*Interview Respondent #6, GO8 Library*)

These comments communicate a strong awareness of the corporate influences in ideas of the university; of growth, competition, prioritising measurable outcomes, and competition between colleagues. There is also a sense that there is not always room for the scholarly side of the university to be explicitly valued when “it sounds all corporate and managerial, and about what have we produced, have we met our KPIs, how many CSIRO committees are we on and not how much good have we done in the world or are our students wiser” (*Interview Respondent #6, GO8 Library*).

While some participants were very clear that the university is a “big business and it's like any other business in the ways it is run,” (*Interview Respondent #13, RUN Library*), they also grappled with the contradictions between this metaphor and more aspirational sentiments, and this was expressed as “a tension as to why we are really here. What is the purpose of the

University? Are we here to be a business or are we here to inspire?” (*Interview Respondent #14, IRU Library*). Acknowledgement of this struggle between ideas of the university reflects leading narratives in academic dialogues: the “marketisation of the university’s goods and services” that means “academics are subject to a continuous stream of bureaucratic demands and injections” and a more optimistic perspective that positions the future of the university as opening itself up to infinite options for engagement and connections with society that will see it thrive as the “critical conscience of society” (Barnett, 2016, p. 63).

Dominating corporate ideas of the university were bemoaned by some participants. In contrast, others saw themselves (and the library) as having a duty to be a “good corporate citizen” (*Interview Respondent #14, IRU Library*), with a civic responsibility to contribute positively to the university. Others were of the view that the library “should not just be a corporate citizen. I think it is important that the library define very clearly what it brings to the university mission” (*Interview Respondent #20, ATN Library*). These different views illustrate how the changing nature of the university influences ways of working and being in the university. Participants were also aware of changes for many of their academic colleagues:

So, in a sense, I think that the university is kind of becoming all the time, but different things at different times. At the moment, it has become an organisation with a lot of unhappy staff, I must say. Not necessarily in the library, but certainly in the academic units and the burden of administrative work and the burden of working to very short timeframes, their workloads are pretty hideous. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

The Idea of the University as “becoming” conveys an experience of the university as “a coming to be, a passing into a state” (Oxford University Press, 2023a). This echoes sophisticated and

theoretically informed ideas of the university as a dynamic and evolving phenomenon (Barnett, 2011; Matthews, 2023).

In the Corporatising theme, metaphors for the university and library are often in tension; the consequences for the Idea are seen as negative, with positive aspects qualified warily:

So, I think that it's a really good thing, is that universities are increasingly looking outside their own walls. And I said that cautiously because then every time we have a town hall meeting they actually come up with how close we are to knocking [... University] off its perch and, yeah. So, basically, there's this real competition. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

Many participants described their university experience as corporate and managerial and held the view that something is lost when a corporate view monopolises the Idea of the University. I heard a sense of regret that perhaps the university is “not really for in-depth thought in the way that it once was” (*Interview Respondent #11, RUN Library*) and this was a concern for participants from the perspective of students' experience of the university:

So, in terms of actually digging deep into things it concerns me that I don't think that's happening in a way it was. Perhaps people are better equipped to work at the end of a degree, not sure. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

For some participants, the tension between the scholarly and the corporate is the basis for extending thinking beyond corporate ideas of the university:

Thinking of the university as being more than a degree machine, more than a corporate entity, and value-adding to society with cultural capital, that pretty much sums it up for me. (*Interview Respondent #11, RUN Library*)

This description suggests that the university as an institution is a civic idea: “a central institution of contemporary life” (Williams, 2008, p. 28), in that it serves a public purpose (Ersson & Lane, 2000) and performs functions for society (Cabral & Pina-Cabral, 2011).

From the metaphors in the Corporatising Theme, a tension arises about whether the university as a business can also be a site of critical thinking and discovery, and whether these positions are mutually exclusive. But despite the tension, which is multidirectional—between the Idea of the University and the library—participants maintained a view of the university and the library as hopeful places of scholarship and discovery.

5.2.1.5 Theme 5: Prioritising (Responsibility in Librarians’ Ideas of the University)

In librarians’ ideas of the university, some overarching priorities and responsibilities are repeated in their ideas of the library. The importance of learning and research echoes across metaphors for the university and library, and it is featured in all themes. Much of what participants consider a priority in their ideas of the library and university is outlined in the discussion of the previous Themes. The priorities already canvassed include collaboration, sense of place, connecting, supporting deep learning, public good, community improvement, relationships, keeping the library visible, guiding and supporting students and researchers, and knowledge. What is common across these priorities is how responsibility for knowledge and people are intertwined in participants’ ideas of the library and the university.

Many librarians convey the essence of their Idea of the University in descriptions of the connections between knowledge and people. Research is expressed to be about the creation of new knowledge, while learning is about taking responsibility for inspiring minds as a contribution to society more broadly:

I think at the crux of my idea of the university are the students, and we have this huge responsibility for, you know, minds keen to learn and keen to amass the skills and knowledge to contribute to wider society. So, I think that's actually an exciting responsibility. But then the research is also a priority as well because that's about really ground-breaking new knowledge. (*Interview Respondent #15, IRU Library*)

For some participants, the Idea of the University provides a motivating force for their practice, and it is an idea that they reach for in their work routines:

Working in the library, I don't think I ever forget about my idea of the university. Yeah, I'm just trying to think how to word this. I find it anchors me. And it drives me in that sometimes when, you know, your general day-to-day business can get complicated or confusing, I always try and bring it back to what are we actually here for and sometimes, you know, I find just walking out to where the students are reminds me of what we're here for. (*Interview Respondent #15, IRU Library*)

The metaphoric use of the words “anchor” and “drives” suggests that for this participant, their practice is firmly grounded in their Idea of the University, and there is a sense of responsibility in that attachment that guides practice. The Idea offers the basis for emotional and professional recalibration and refreshing when needed. It is understood as a foundational source of hope, trust, and stability that is carried into and steers practice:

I feel very engaged with being part of the university, and I see my role absolutely as being part of the university. (*Interview Respondent #2, G08 Library*)

Not surprisingly, knowledge is a priority for participants, and this priority is intertwined in participants' ideas of the university and the library:

The vision for the whole university is about knowledge, and that's also the library's vision; the library facilitates knowledge discovery and literature creation. That's it, and it's fundamental to the idea of the university. And we are partners in enabling that in spaces, and people, and services. (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*)

Partnership is an essential component of how librarians assume responsibility for knowledge. For participants, it has consequences for how knowledge is generated and used in the world. Used as a metaphor for the library, the word “partner” conveys a deep, interactive relationship between the library and the university. It suggests a collaborative and supportive connection, emphasising that the library is an active participant in the process of learning, research, and intellectual growth. The “partner” metaphor positions the library as a valuable ally in the pursuit of knowledge in society beyond traditional curation and access to collections. Partnership is a priority and a responsibility:

The library has an access role but in terms of the library as a partner, then it's also about linking, enabling, and again it comes back to enabling what the university produces to be linked to with other parts of that university story, as in the policy world, the practice world and consumer world so the output of our researchers can inform policy, practitioners, and, you know, digitally literate publics who may be involved in consumer health groups for example. (*Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library*)

The reality of responsibility creates tension in ideas of the university and can get in the way of those ideals that some participants have about learning:

There's a tension, but it's the reality. I'm a very realistic person. I mean gone are the days of free education in this society, as much as I might disagree with that it's user pays, universities aren't funded to do the research they'd like to do. We have to show

our value, we have to have an engagement and impact module to show what value we are providing back to society. It's a reality. It's that you just have to make sure that that learning is still the central piece. (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*)

This tension between the real and the ideal also expresses an appetite for participating in the universal and larger concepts that comprise the Idea of the University alongside the particularities of life in the library. Engagement with the Idea is important to participants even if they do not enact a sense of responsibility to that idea in their practice:

I think it's really important for academic libraries to engage in the idea of the University and to very much then engage in what is the idea of the university library within the University ... it's how do we as academic librarians actually contribute to the thinking that goes on across the university, so that we're actually thinking about learning and teaching as a whole and then come, extrapolating from that as to what the library can bring to the idea of the university rather than starting with the library and moving from there. (*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*)

And,

I think if we can be a partner, we will continue and have a place... an idea of partnering as well as actually being equal in what's going on and actually playing a part in the University rather than just, "We're the library and this is what we do." (*Interview Respondent #14, IRU Library*)

These comments suggest that there is potential for librarians to refresh interaction between the Idea of the University and the library. Not only do the metaphors generated by librarians make clear the multiple realities of the Idea of the University in the library, but for librarians, the realities of these ideas are all "subject to endless formation, reformation, construction and

reconstruction” (Grbich, 2013, p. 9). It prompts questions about what might be possible if librarians take active responsibility for understanding both ideas (university and library) and prioritise deliberately working with them as entangled concepts.

5.2.2 Patterns of Entanglement

Participants’ metaphors offer what Barnett (2013) calls “sightings of the university” (p. 67). The Themes pick up on the overlapping ideas and recurring characteristics and values represented by participants’ metaphors. The Themes bring to attention that ideas of the university continue to multiply, and the links between ideas matter! The discussion of the Themes emphasises that librarians’ ideas of the university hold patterns of the material and abstract entanglement between the university and the library. These ideas are indeed associated. Themes clarify that their entanglement has a typology that was not apparent at the first stage of the analysis.

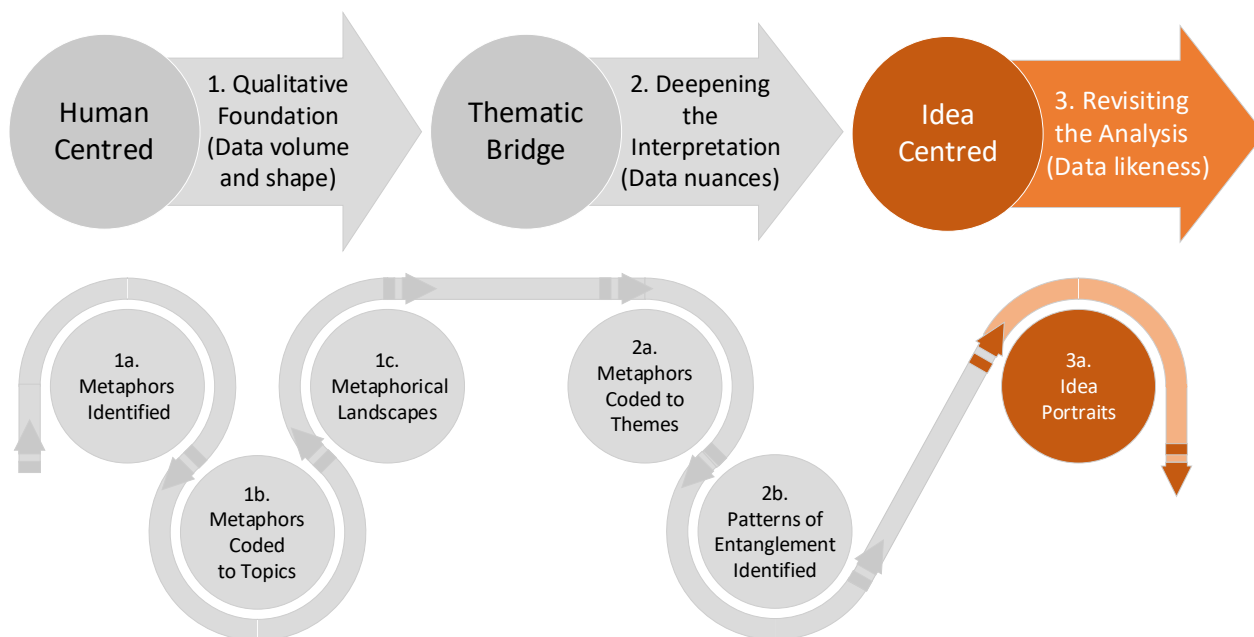
By coding metaphors for both ideas (university and library) to five Themes, I have aimed to progress the data analysis from metaphor volume and shape to an examination and discussion of the underlying values in participants’ metaphors of the university and library. In doing so, I detected three patterns of entanglement. Firstly, it is evident that some metaphors for the idea of the library and university were intertwined or interdependent. Secondly, some metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library were in tension, in that they projected ideas that were in opposition to each other. Thirdly, some metaphors were repeated for the Idea of the University and the idea of the library, which comes across as an echoing.

Themes, bring into clear view three patterns of entanglement in librarians’ ideas of the university and the library: intertwined ideas, ideas in tension, or echoing ideas. Identifying these

patterns in how participants' metaphors for the idea of library and university are entangled provides a catalyst for a concluding revisiting of the analysis. The Portrait of Centrality (in Chapter Two) can now be understood as a specific pattern of engagement, that is, the idea of the library and university as intertwined ideas. As an example of one pattern of entanglement between the Idea of the University and the library, the Portrait of Centrality serves as a model for revisiting the data by developing Idea Portraits for the other two patterns of entanglement: ideas in tension and echoing ideas. This takes us to stage three of the research design.

5.3 Revisiting the Analysis: Finding Data Likeness

The third stage of the data analysis is a revisiting of the data by creating Idea Portraits (see Figure 5). Idea Portraits take a specific example of each pattern of entanglement to push the data to a different likeness. It is an exercise in writing with theory where the human voice is not prominent; rather, the idea is centred, and theory moves to the foreground. Idea Portraits are intentionally idea-centred and emphasise thinking and writing with theory. This final move in the third stage of the research design is illustrated in orange in Figure 5 (3a).

Figure 5*Moves in the Revisiting the Analysis Stage*

5.3.1 A Data Likeness with Idea Portraits

I have identified three patterns of entanglement in participants' metaphors for the Idea of the University and the library. This typology—intertwined ideas, ideas in tension, and echoing ideas—underpins the three Idea Portraits in this thesis. Each Idea Portrait is centred on metaphors that signify one of these three patterns of entanglement. The initial Idea Portrait—A Portrait of Centrality—presented in Chapter Two, focused on a metaphor that exemplifies the university and library as intertwined ideas. In the following chapters, I present the remaining two Idea Portraits; the first, a Portrait of Neutrality, focuses on how metaphors that represent the idea of the university and the library are in tension, and then, a Portrait of Relationality, draws metaphors that are examples of the university and library as ideas that echo each other.

The creation of a new data likeness in the Idea Portraits in Chapters Six and Seven is informed by the Idea Portrait in Chapter Two. That Idea Portrait took a familiar and enduring metaphor from the library literature as its data source—the library is the heart of the university. I used metaphor comparison theory and conceptual metaphor theory as an initial analysis of how the heart metaphor works. Then, a new reading and a unique perspective demonstrated how the heart metaphor might be interpreted by drawing on interaction metaphor theory as an exercise in thinking with theory. Thinking with theory is provocative. It disrupts accepted meaning. It prompts different questions about data. The new reading of the data in the Portrait of Centrality demonstrated “the flex of metaphor.” It established a different relation between the domains in the library heart metaphor that is “an interplay between systems of things rather than a comparison of things” (Salisbury & Peseta, 2018, p. 281). It produced a distinctive experience and reconstitution of the data that counters common interpretations of the heart metaphor and introduced a new connection. This re-seeing of the data—the portrait-seeing experience—led to a call for librarians to engage with the concept of the Idea of the University. The Idea Portraits in the following chapters also have this objective. Their composition is an arrangement of scholarly literature, data, metaphor analysis, and thinking with theory, and the Portrait of Centrality demonstrates the efficacy of this arrangement. While the Idea Portraits in the following chapters are more complex and layered, the approach is robust enough to accommodate additional complexity and expansion. For example, in the Idea Portraits that follow, there are more metaphors in the dataset, more concepts to be unpacked, and there are often multiple relationships between metaphors. Additionally, new theories (which are not usually associated with metaphor analysis) are introduced as provocations to think with.

5.3.1.1 Idea Portrait Composition

The creation of an Idea Portrait starts with noticing metaphors in the data that represent each pattern of entanglement and intuitively selecting and situating metaphors for the Idea of the University, the library, or both at the **centre of the frame**. Sometimes, my eye was drawn to a metaphor that occurs more frequently in the data, and sometimes, something novel or elusive about a metaphor grabbed my attention. After identifying the metaphors to work with, the process alternates between the portrait's background and middle ground, in no set order. For example, in the Portrait of Neutrality in Chapter Six, I start with one metaphor in the centre of the frame, undertake an initial metaphor analysis in the middle ground, shift to the background, and then back to the middle ground, and as a result of following this circuitous route reach the portrait's foreground. Sketching the **portrait background** provides the **context** for how the central metaphor is used and the assumptions, discourses, silences, or attachments that surround it (in the scholarly literature and/or in the data from this study). In the portrait middle ground, the use of metaphor theory to analyse a metaphor in detail is an opening up of meaning and an interpretation of how the metaphor works linguistically and conceptually. The middle ground also accommodates **reconstituting** the metaphor through **thinking with theory** and noticing it differently from the initial sighting. This reassembly of data and theory introduces a disruption of normative readings of the data. The process ends in the **portrait foreground** with the introduction of a **new perspective**.

In the following chapters, I revisit the data analysis with Idea Portraits. Idea Portraits occupy the space that Jackson and Mazzei (2012) call "after coding." Writing theory into data in this space permits a different data likeness of participants' metaphors. Idea Portraits respond to Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) invitation to apply a "multi-layered treatment of data" (p. vii) and

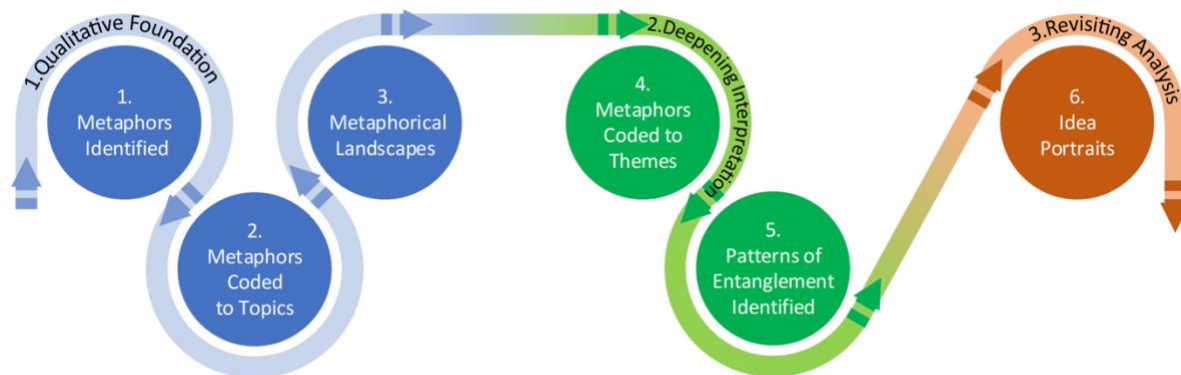
Richardson and St. Pierre's (2018) arguments for using writing as a method of inquiry and analysis. As with the Idea Portrait in Chapter Two, the Portraits of Neutrality and Relationality that follow are intended to be "irruptive in an opening of ways of thinking and meaning" (p. 14) for two entangled ideas—university and library.

5.3.2 From the Qualitative Foundation to Revisiting the Analysis

The three stages of the data analysis can be summarised as operating across six sequential steps or methodological moves (see Figure 6). Each new move differs from the previous step in that it extends the interpretation. Across this continuum, each new move results from reflecting on what the preceding step makes possible. While I was not always sure where a step might lead, reflection was a vital part of the analysis process. For example, reflecting on how the data volume is accounted for in Topics led to the realisation that a narrative treatment of the data would give them a sense of shape, which resulted in Metaphorical Landscapes. Reflecting on the Metaphorical Landscapes led to an appreciation that ideas of the university and the library need to be analysed together in Themes to deepen the interpretation, bring to light the nuances in meaning, and foreground the relationship between these two ideas.

Figure 6

Sequential Moves Across the Three Stages of the Data Analysis



Reflecting on the analysis in Themes led to discerning different patterns of entanglement between ideas of the university and the library, alongside a better understanding of how thinking with theory in Idea Portraits would enable revision of the analysis. Some researchers may argue that the analysis endpoint could have reasonably been reached at the end of stage two or even stage one. From my perspective, however, this would not do justice to the study or to the two ideas at the centre of this study that need to be constantly reimagined. In the following chapters, Idea Portraits are presented as the culminating step and as a concluding creative response to the research question. The first portrait demonstrated the utility of thinking with theory to revisit data using a single metaphor. The second and third portraits multiply the number of metaphors to put a richer dataset at the centre of the frame, which, by the nature of its plurality, generates movement. This movement brings into even sharper focus what might be possible through thinking with theory as part of an interpretative continuum.

CHAPTER 6: A PORTRAIT OF NEUTRALITY

6.1 Ideas in Tension

Sometimes, librarians' metaphors for ideas of the university and the library collide. The metaphors they use to imagine and express what is fundamental to their practice bump into each other and then clash with other metaphors they use to convey their idea of the university. Given that metaphor is used abundantly in language and thought, and that its interpretation goes "deep into the control of the world that we make for ourselves to live in" (Richards, 1965, p. 135), it is unsurprising that metaphors can represent opposing perspectives. Some scholars argue that metaphor is tensive by nature (Berggren, 1962; Ricoeur, 1977), and in this Idea Portrait, I pay attention to clashing metaphors, or rather, to the opportunity offered by ideas in tension. I centre in the frame one metaphor—the library is the Switzerland of the university—that holds layers of tension: linguistic and conceptual. I use comparison, substitution, and conceptual metaphor theories as an initial analysis of how this metaphor works. The contradictions within this metaphor are then reinforced using the tension theory of metaphor. The multiplicity of interpretations points to the multivalent nature of tension. Indeed, it gives licence to add and interrogate another tension: the tension that can be found between librarians' metaphors for the library and the university.

6.2 The Tension in Neutrality

The literal meaning of the words "neutral," "neutrality," and "neutrally" provide a starting point for understanding neutrality's tension. To be neutral is defined as "not taking sides in a controversy, dispute, disagreement, etc.; not inclining toward any party, view, etc." (Oxford

University Press, 2023j). Not being on any side implies that “a neutral position is a vague or ill-defined position” (Johnson, 2016, p. 25), without decided opinions or approaches. A position or state of neutrality is “not clearly one thing or another;” it is a “middle ground” or an “abstention from taking any part in a war between other states” (Oxford University Press, 2024k). Neutrality is needed in “situations where truth is not known” to facilitate consideration of all points of view “without opinion” (Heybach, 2014). In this way, the expected effects of neutrality might be “respectful co-existence” or the “absence of side taking” (Næss, 2022). Watching neutrally means “observation from a detached point of view, non-speaking, non-participatory” (Holland, 2016). But the promise of the literal meaning and the forms of these three neutrals has a counterclaim that seeds tension. Holland (2016) explains that the “essence of the neutral is to negate” (p. 42), and whether related to human or chemical interactions, both interactions “allow for a kind of mutual illumination” (p. 42). This counterbalancing of negation and illumination hints at the complexity of the notion of neutrality and exposes it as tensive and provocative. Neutrality is confusing and value-laden because “once the word has been uttered, one can no longer hope to remain neutral where the neutral is concerned” (Holland, 2016, p. 41). Neutrality’s paradox carries utility for examining ideas in tension, specifically, the tension between librarians’ metaphors for neutrality and their other conceptions of the library and university.

6.3 The Library is the Switzerland of the University

One frequently used metaphor for the library that holds layers of tension is “the library is the Switzerland of the university” (hereafter, referred to as the Switzerland metaphor). It is generally accepted that the Switzerland metaphor implies neutrality, and simple linguistic

analyses of it reinforce this common interpretation. As discussed in the Portrait of Centrality, metaphor comparison theory views metaphor as a form of analogy. It involves comparing metaphor domains: the target domain or *A* is compared to the source domain or *B*. Comparison theory implies a similarity between the two domains and indicates that *A* “is like” *B*.

An interpretation of the Switzerland metaphor using comparison theory creates a link between the domains library (A) and Switzerland (B) based on their similarities and resemblances. For example, the Switzerland metaphor might bring to mind that Switzerland is a country known for its “self-chosen neutrality” with a “humanitarian tradition” protected by “military-based independence” (Ziegler, 2018). In comparison, the library is an independently neutral location that does not belong to any one faculty or department but is open to all students and staff, regardless of their field of study or interest. Alternatively, Switzerland is renowned for its wealth and resources, and in comparison, the library is also rich in resources, books, journals, and digital content. Or the Switzerland metaphor might call to mind Switzerland as a perceived sanctuary in times of conflict. In comparison, the library can be a sanctuary for students, offering a quiet place to study, research, or escape the hustle and bustle of university life. Another comparison might be that Switzerland is known for its cultural diversity, with multiple official languages and a mix of cultures. Similarly, a library also embraces diversity, with a wide array of collections, programs, and spaces that cater to diverse interests. Within the source domain (Switzerland), many possible meanings coexist, and despite the superficiality of some of these comparisons, creating contiguity between the library and Switzerland generates meaning that librarians find useful in describing their practice and relationships. On another level, the comparisons between the target and source domains produce ambiguity by ignoring that Switzerland’s neutrality is problematic historically and politically; it is recognised as a myth

(Ziegler, 2018). The feasibility of Switzerland's neutrality no longer always equates to taking an unchallenged or "superior moral stance" (Fox, 2022, p. 495). What is apparent in these various comparisons is that multiple interpretations are possible—and in this multiplicity, a perceptible tension surfaces.

Interpreting the Switzerland metaphor using the substitution theory of metaphor also highlights how the polysemous nature of the term "Switzerland" is likely to create layers of tension. The substitution theory proposes that a metaphor is a figure of speech in which the metaphorical meaning of a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable (Knowles & Moon, 2006). It is a substitution of one term for another: in other words, the metaphorical meaning of *B* replaces the literal meaning of *A*. For example, positioned as Switzerland (*B*), the library (*A*) is a country that adopts a policy of neutrality, not aligned with any particular bloc, to maintain peace and avoid conflict. It infers a role and a responsibility in the political geography of the campus. Not only is the library's location marked on the university map, but it is also understood as a neutral and safe place. However, arguments about whether Switzerland's neutrality is a myth (Ziegler, 2018) disrupt this interpretation. Likewise, where Switzerland has been used as a metaphor for other parts of the university, the questions posed by researchers highlight the tension in an interpretation based on substitution. For example, university academic development units have also been described as Switzerland to suggest that they operate impartially and take a professional stance that is beyond bias or favouritism (Holmes et al., 2012). Holmes et al. (2012) argue, however, that if academic development units are Switzerland, questions also need to be asked about what happens if these units cannot be truly neutral, then what position do they occupy? Are they situated as middle powers, exerting

influence from a position of relative neutrality, or are they more akin to contact zones, where diverse perspectives converge and interact?

For some participants in this study, the implied neutrality in the Switzerland metaphor defines the library as a haven and safe place:

We're a safe space for mixing to happen, and we're a very non-political space. The culture embodied by librarians that I desperately hope never gets lost is privacy and being non-judgemental; it's that ethic of "I don't care what question you ask, I will answer it for you, and I'm not going to judge you." So, that sort of creates a bit of a safe space, I think. (*Interview Respondent #10, RUN Library*)

A sense of the library as "safe" and "welcoming" is a view that some librarians think defines the library as a location and is worth holding onto. Using conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) to understand the Switzerland metaphor, it could be argued that it and other metaphoric expressions used by participants to describe the library as a "safe space," "refuge," "haven," "sacred place," "sanctuary," "neutral place," or "shelter" are shaped by the conceptual metaphor SAFETY IS A LOCATION. When librarians use these metaphoric expressions, the abstract concept of safety is understood and articulated in terms of the more concrete concept of a distinct location—the library—where all knowledge and individuals are secure, welcome, free from harm, at ease and connected to others. These concepts influence the idea of the library that librarians work with in their practice because metaphor is pervasive in conceptual thinking and has an effect upon how people reason, behave, and communicate (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Rasse et al., 2020). As one librarian explained to me:

The library is a safe, but energising space for ideas to be nurtured. (*Interview Respondent #11, RUN Library*)

Guthro (2019) argued that conceptually, the library is Switzerland because it is a “neutral space” that holds diverse perspectives, ideas, and information available without leaning towards a particular view. He conceptualised the library as a space “held in common by all academic disciplines,” making it “safe and provocative” and for “contemplation and conversation” and “protest” (p. 6). But contrasting concepts like safety and provocation or putting the conversation in opposition with protest potentially sets up a conceptual misalignment in understanding the Switzerland metaphor as an expression of SAFETY IS A LOCATION and only emphasises neutrality’s tension. Moreover, safety, whether physical or related to the exchange of ideas and knowledge, cannot be guaranteed in the library. Does it follow that neutral spaces are safe? Can different views, positions and critiques only be connected in a neutral or safe location? What constitutes neutrality in the library? Are metaphors for neutrality convincing for imagining the library as a safe place, and if so, safe from what? Without questions of this nature, librarians risk a relationship with library neutrality that accepts it as a choice with two positions—attraction and rejection—that are difficult to move from or change. In other words, they risk being conceptually stuck.

6.4 Metaphor and Tension

Using a variety of metaphor theories to understand a single metaphor offers an enriched perspective on how metaphors work, their interpretation, and how they contribute to meaning. As in the Portrait of Centrality, here, I ignore the “methodological “rivalry” in relation to theories of metaphor” (Kövecses, 2019, p. 19). Instead, I take Kövecses’s (2019) advice that all metaphor theories are useful. In this portrait, using multiple metaphor theories offers complementary and compatible perspectives on metaphor tension that may not have been considered otherwise.

Comparison, substitution and conceptual metaphor theories all highlight the tension in the Switzerland metaphor, but Ricoeur (1978) argues that “metaphor invokes a ‘tension’ theory” (p. 48) more than other theories because, in essence, metaphor is a “meaningful self-contradictory statement” (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 194). Ricoeur’s tension theory of metaphor reinforces that metaphor tension works at multiple levels to give a metaphor its “tensive aliveness” (p. 250). It is a process of persuasion and creation as one idea dislocates another, creating new ideas. Importantly, this disruption provokes “thinking more” (p. 303). Therefore, I add metaphor tension theory as another lens through which to view the Switzerland metaphor and to further interrogate its layers of complexity and tension.

Ricoeur’s (1978) tension theory of metaphor is complex. It is grounded in interaction theories of metaphor (Black, 1977; Richards, 1965) which assert that the source and target domains are interactive: “two thoughts of different things active together..., whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction” (Richards, 1965, p. 93). This interaction produces tension due to the similarities and differences between the metaphor’s components. This is not to say that metaphor tension is not perceptible using other theoretical lenses. Still, Ricoeur’s (1978) theory of metaphor tension is much more explicit in its account of the components and consequences of metaphor tension.

According to Ricoeur (1978), the tension in metaphor exists between variations of meaning at both the word and statement levels and involves semantic, ontological, and temporal tensions. For example, the tension within the metaphorical statement between the words in the target and source domains (that is, the juxtaposition of two terms that do not typically go together in a literal sense); the tension between a literal interpretation and a metaphorical interpretation, “whose sense emerges through non-sense” (p. 247); and “a tension between

identity and difference” (p. 6) or whether the function of the copula expresses an “is” or an “is not.” In other words, the tension between contradiction and contraversion, on the one hand, and reconciliation, on the other hand, is needed for a metaphor to make sense. Ricoeur (1978) also asserts that the tension theory of metaphor is not only at the word and statement level, but also extends to the relationship between categories of metaphors.⁴

Metaphor tension theory provides a basis for close inspection of the tensions and ambiguities that occur within the Switzerland metaphor. For example, there is a semantic tension or incongruity between the terms “library” and “Switzerland,” which are not typically associated with each other in a literal sense. Second, the literal and figurative interpretations of Switzerland’s neutrality create tension in how these versions of neutrality are applied to the library. Third, there is also tension in whether the library “is” or “is not” Switzerland. And regardless of the answer, there are downsides to being compared to Switzerland in terms of political decision-making (Sher, 1997), which makes neutrality a constraint. One participant who used the Switzerland metaphor also alluded to an aspect of this tension.

We’re neutral; in effect, the library is Switzerland. Which actually is really good for us, I think in terms of collaboration and partnership, but politically also means that sometimes you get taken for granted. And you also sometimes are not at the table because you’re Switzerland. (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*)

⁴ The categories of metaphor that Ricoeur is referring to are epiphors and diaphors. Epiphor is a term that stands for metaphors that are “the outreach and extension of meaning through comparison,” and diaphor is a term that stands for metaphors that result in “the creation of new meaning by juxtaposition and synthesis” Wheelwright, P. E. (1962). *Metaphor and reality*. Indiana University Press. (p. 72)

These disconnects highlight the tension lurking in the shadows of this metaphor's domains; it hints at the "double-edged sword" of neutrality (Sontag, 1989, p. 5). In the multiplicity of neutrality's interpretations, there is ambiguity and conflict that have practical consequences.

6.5 The Attraction and Rejection of Neutrality in the Library

Librarians are either for or against neutrality or somewhere in between, and this makes for a lively conversation and a polarised debate about neutrality in libraries. Neutrality fits within the scope of a broad liberal paradigm, and considerations of its epistemological, moral, and pragmatic dimensions mean that there is no singular, comprehensive theory of neutrality (Næss, 2022). It is "context-sensitive and pluralistic" (Macdonald & Birdi, 2020). Its nuances depend on whether the context is political, economic, legal, social or cultural. Pierik and Van der Burg (2014) identified three understandings of neutrality in a political context (that is, exclusive, inclusive, and proportional) and argued that neutrality is fundamental to the liberal goal of treating all citizens equally and with respect. Neutrality is commonly understood as a democratic principle: a neutral stance does not "embrace or penalize" particular positions but denotes an impartial framework so citizens can pursue a "good life" as they perceive it (Pierik & Van der Burg, 2014). Müller (2019) labels neutrality a "strange thing" in that it is both dismissed as "unrealistic" or "immoral" and celebrated as explaining the "high living standards" or "competitive advantages" of so-called neutral states like Switzerland, Sweden, or Denmark. He argues that the ambiguity surrounding neutrality in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries obscures its long history and influence in internationalism and humanitarianism in the modern world (Müller, 2019). Despite these varying views, librarians are drawn to neutrality, and their

attachment to the concept is represented in their frequent and persistent use of the Switzerland metaphor.

6.5.1 What Makes Neutrality Attractive?

Since hearing participants in this study use the Switzerland metaphor, I have become more aware of it and have noticed colleagues around me using it and the word “neutral” to communicate ideas about the library. In the scholarly literature, librarians have argued that neutrality and impartiality are vital to protecting the freedom of access to information, and these values have been enshrined in international and national professional codes of practice (Johnson, 2016). Librarians’ explanations of what the Switzerland metaphor means signal a certain commitment to the metaphor’s symbolism, which may explain why it continues to surface in librarians’ descriptive accounts of their ideas about the library. Not only do librarians use the Switzerland metaphor to invoke neutrality, but they also use words like neutral and safety metaphorically. Neutrality means “being of no specific discipline but available to all disciplines [and] enables library staff to act as observers, connectors and relationship builders” (Cox, 2023a, p. 11). For some participants in this study, neutrality communicates a fair and respectful environment or a gathering together so everyone can participate. In other words:

We’re a very neutral space in terms of, you know, how we work with academic staff and support them with their research and decision-making around their research.

Because we’re neutral, we’re able to provide really equitable and considered collaboration in so many different areas of the university. (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*)

Librarians figuratively use the notion of neutrality to imply balance and fairness.

Neutrality is understood to support professional integrity and equal opportunity. It guards against censorship and promotes political freedom. This form of neutrality is regarded as a cornerstone for maintaining equity, fairness, and balance within service organisations (Heybach, 2014; Macdonald & Birdi, 2020; Næss, 2022). It is a view of neutrality in society that is about respect for individual autonomy, protection against harmful policies, and reverence for different perceptions of the common good (Sher, 1997). Arguments in favour of library neutrality are often advanced as they relate to liberal neutrality (Macdonald, 2022; Wenzler, 2019). And this view is reflected in participants' descriptions of the library as a neutral space too:

Our library is essentially a neutral space, but promotes liberal values (equality, empowerment) at the same time. *(Survey Respondent, IRU Library)*

As a “neutral space,” the library is, therefore, a haven. One participant explained:

Neutrality in the library is really about safe spaces, those spaces we create for all types of scholarly needs and requirements. I think it's about the connection of space to safety, intellectually and otherwise. It is a unique value proposition that the library has within its higher education community. *(Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library)*

Neutrality is perceived as meaning that “the library works in an even-handed way across the University that's consistent and, it's always done this, and we keep doing it because it's successful” *(Interview Respondent #17, IRU Library)*. It empowers library staff to contribute constructively within the campus community. In this way, the concept of neutrality is motivating and carries a sense of the library's future value:

So, I think often people have thought that libraries won't be well utilised in the future and their role will diminish, but I think if anything, because we're neutral, our role has

really developed more layers and more interesting ways that we can link into what's going on in the university. *(Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library)*

In many of my conversations with participants, their explanations of the Switzerland metaphor indicate neutrality, stability, and safety. Some participants who shared the Switzerland metaphor with me used it to indicate impartiality. It indicates that their relationships with students, staff, and knowledge are unbiased:

The library is the Switzerland of the university because we're impartial. It's as it ought to be; we take an understanding of how things work into our everyday activities so that policy and practice and life in general can actually work better for university people.

(Interview Respondent #7, GO8 Library)

There is a strong attachment to the concept of neutrality here as the natural order of things. For many participants, impartiality infers objectivity and fairness, and, in practice, it signals a responsibility to smooth things over and make people's lives easier. Being neutral suggests approaching situations and relationships without bias in order to realise practical outcomes:

With the library being neutral Switzerland the last thing we want to do is be the blockage or the barrier between them [students and researchers] and knowledge. We need to make knowledge access a seamless process. And so, all the work that I do is about reducing any barriers to knowledge. *(Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library)*

For these reasons, the Switzerland metaphor continues to be meaningful for their practice and relationships:

I think in the library, we sit in that space between all the faculties and the students, and the divisions, and are this space that, I'd say it's Switzerland because we have a sense of

centrality around how we connect with every part of the university, learning and teaching, and research. And there aren't really other neutral spaces or people or positions that actually make those diverse connections. (*Interview Respondent #3, G08 Library*)

Certainly for some participants, there is no sense of neutrality's tension in their attraction to and use of the Switzerland metaphor. Not all librarians, however, are so accepting.

6.5.2 Why Do Librarians Reject Neutrality?

In contrast to the view that neutrality is a meaningful and coherent concept essential for maintaining intellectual freedom and impartiality in library services, there are perspectives of it as an incoherent myth that obscures power imbalances and reinforces the status quo (Macdonald & Birdi, 2020). While participants did not express these perspectives in this study, in the scholarly literature, the idea of the library as a metaphorical neutral space triggers debate, dispute, and ongoing discussion (Anderson, 2022; Good, 1993; Johannsen, 2015; Larsen, 2024; Lewis, 1993; Macdonald & Birdi, 2020; Mathiasson & Jochumsen, 2023; McKerracher, 2020; McMenemy, 2021; Oltmann et al., 2023). These conversations underscore the complexity of neutrality and the paradoxical ways it is perceived and debated historically within various contexts because “one can observe the most exact neutrality and yet be far removed from impartiality; one can, however, also be completely impartial, and yet not neutral” (Campe as cited in Holland, 2016, p. 43). Some librarians argue that neutrality undermines their ability to advocate for social justice, hides inherent biases, and reduces librarians to mere technicians who manage information without evaluation (Wenzler, 2019). These challenges are framed as a tension between “social responsibility” and “intellectual freedom” or between “advocacy” and

“passivity.” In the higher education landscape, neutrality is framed as “a political choice” that results in acquiescence as a response to neoliberalism in education; choosing neutrality “supports, if not strengthens, the status quo” (Filippakou, 2023, p. 82) and fails to address contemporary social issues and human rights concerns. In this environment, many librarians argue for active engagement with their communities to advocate for progressive values and causes rather than maintaining a position of neutrality (Johnson, 2016; Bourg, 2018).

For many librarians, neutrality is a view of the library as a “free, non-judgmental, and safe” space that is in tension with the idea of the library as “an ideal setting for expression of diverse opinions on political and social issues” (Gibson et al., 2017, pp. 775-756). The key question is whether neutrality contradicts and is inconsistent with social justice, or whether it justifies a commitment to social causes (Foderaro, 2023). Discussions surrounding neutrality often lack nuance and can become polarised, resulting in differing perspectives on its implications.

According to Heybach (2014), neutrality may inadvertently hinder the recognition and acceptance of diversity, suggesting that while it may be perceived as providing safety, it can signify something more hazardous. Heybach (2014) raises questions about the nature of neutrality, pointing out that it always exists in relation to something else. This prompts consideration of whether indifference, under the guise of neutrality, can be detrimental. Furthermore, Heybach (2014) warns that adopting a neutral stance without clear specifications runs the risk of being paradoxical or hypocritical.

What is evident in the outline above is that librarians’ view of neutrality ranges from a philosophical debate to professional practice that enables equal access to all information, to a myth that precludes librarians from advocating for social justice and action. Consensus on

neutrality within library communities is described as elusive, impossible and even foolish (Cheshire & Stout, 2020; Jensen, 1993; Johnson, 2016) because neutrality is impossible for human beings and the world; knowledge and humans are never free of bias (Coyle, 2018; Johnson, 2016). Providing freedom to access information in a society where misinformation is proliferating and open and free access is far from universal is, therefore, not a neutral act (Cheshire & Stout, 2020).

6.5.3 Can Neutrality's Tensions be Reconciled?

Librarians do not agree on neutrality. It is both embraced as a commitment to intellectual freedom and necessary for goodness and objectivity in information access and rejected in favour of articulating a position to redress information and social inequalities. Neutrality's contradictions are writ large in the scholarly literature. On the one hand, neutrality is inclusive, and on the other extreme, neutrality constrains social action in libraries; "a collar and leash to keep librarians from crossing over any abstract line the profession has drawn" (Branum, 2014). For authors with this view, neutrality is silencing (Jensen, 1993) and equated with a passive attitude and practice, while social justice is equated with action and proactive practice (Foderaro, 2023). Neutrality's tension is that it can both exclude or imply respect for difference, and that the outcomes of neutrality, as described by librarians, are not necessarily consistent. Library neutrality has been framed as socially responsible (Gibson et al., 2017), non-partisan (Gibson et al., 2017), impartial (Cox, 2023a; Johannsen, 2015), cold, indifferent, passive, and liberal (Heybach, 2014; Macdonald & Birdi, 2020; Næss, 2022).

In recent years, views that neutrality and social responsibility can be reconciled have added further complexity to the neutrality debate. For instance, Larsen (2024) argues that in

principle, a neutral stance enables libraries “to be diverse and simultaneously address contemporary social issues” (p. 124) because libraries are essentially “independent, neutral and inclusive institutions, where everyone is welcome, and any kind of lawful literature and utterances in principle is available to the public” (p. 123). By leveraging liberal neutrality, libraries can facilitate a more nuanced understanding of various viewpoints and engage in more sophisticated practices. This approach allows for a balance between neutrality and interventionist approaches, promoting dialogue and understanding while actively engaging with community issues (Macdonald, 2022). Supporters of reconciling neutrality’s tensions argue that political activism can coexist with fair and open-minded debate. As a perspective, it emphasises the importance of respecting the moral autonomy of all citizens while providing an intellectual environment that allows for the discovery and defence of personal conceptions of the good (Wenzler, 2019). The conclusion that Wenzler (2019) draws from the tension between “social responsibility” and “intellectual freedom” is that librarians should “maintain neutrality between differing moral ideals to provide an intellectual environment in which every citizen has an equal opportunity to discover, develop, and defend her own conceptions of the good” (p. 64).

What is mostly overlooked in these efforts to privilege either side of the library neutrality debate is the work that the tension between positions might do. MacDonald and Birdi (2020) stand out here in that they challenge polarised views, arguing that such views can be perceived as limiting rather than empowering and may represent a loss of potential for libraries. They suggest that given the variation in conceptions of neutrality, moving from a polarised debate of neutrality to a more nonjudgemental debate “would be a first step to a more thorough understanding of how neutrality can both help and hinder” the library profession (p. 348).

To facilitate a more appreciative understanding of viewpoints on either side of the “neutral–non-neutral” divide, Macdonald (2022) leverages the concept and features of liberal neutrality as a lens to explain the heterogeneous characteristics of library neutrality. Through this lens, library neutrality, like liberal neutrality, can be seen as “nuanced and multifaceted,” and treated in this way, the proposed outcome is a more sophisticated practice where neutrality is a “licence to judge each situation on its morally salient features” where librarians “have a more open discussion about the range of contexts in which neutrality helps or hinders the profession’s wider goals” (p. 593). For Macdonald (2022), neutrality is a “dual commitment,” where the tension between neutrality and social responsibility can potentially be reconciled. This perspective “paves the way for a less polarised and more inclusive debate that appreciates intuitions from both sides of the “neutral–non-neutral” divide” and might “rectify the false dichotomy between the “neutralists and anti-neutralists”” (p. 591). There is less emphasis on taking a side. It reflects Schwartz’s (2013) description of neutrality as “a panoramic position, temporally, spatially, and emotionally, where all (or so it seems) can be taken in at once, where all fit together as a seamless whole” (p. 506). MacDonald’s (2022) argument has merit. It is an example of how focus can be shifted away from opposing positions to the tension between positions. It supports the perspective that the in-between space is productive and generative in terms of movement.

What is noticeable in the neutrality debate is neutrality’s layers and contradictions—its tension. In the Switzerland metaphor, tension springs from the imaginative leap that occurs in the shift of meaning. Layers of linguistic and conceptual tension are expected by comparing or substituting an abstract concept for a concrete term. Neutrality is a multivalent and layered concept which adds to the tension within the Switzerland metaphor. Librarians’ response to the

Switzerland metaphor is also marked by tension because in libraries, commitment to neutrality is not universal, and the Switzerland metaphor is as contested as frequently as it is embraced. The head-on force with which this metaphor for neutrality meets other metaphors for the library and university, typifies ideas in tension. Metaphor is tensive. The Switzerland metaphor is full of tension. Neutrality is tensive. In this study, participants do not explicitly contest neutrality, but rather, it is in tension with their other ideas of the library and university. These layers of tension in the in-between space that separates opposing corners are key to a more nuanced interpretation of librarians' metaphors. Contrasting the tensorial nature of the "Switzerland" metaphor with other metaphors for the library and university offers a deeper interpretation of the data.

6.6 Ideas in Tension

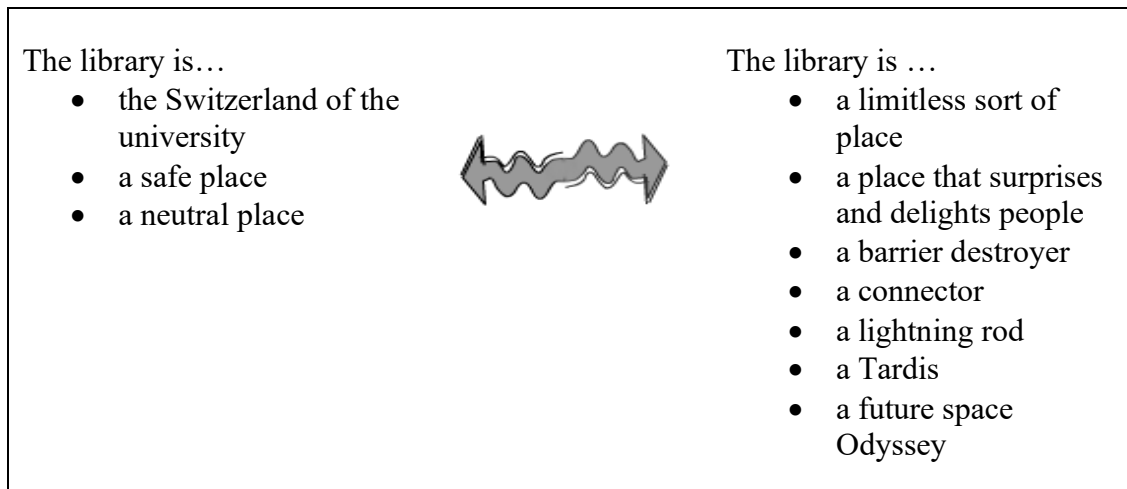
The symbolism of the Switzerland metaphor crashes into other metaphors librarians use for the library or university. This means librarians' talk about neutrality might seem inconsistent with other ideas and imaginings they are equally committed to, which in turn, raises questions about what to do with the tension metaphor generates. As outlined above, metaphor tension works on several levels (Berggren, 1962; Ricoeur, 1977). The Switzerland metaphor holds linguistic and conceptual tensions. In addition, it sits in opposition to other metaphors librarians use for the library and university. The tension within and between metaphors helps locate "the creative interaction between diverse perspectives" (Berggren, p. 244).

Creating a picture of ideas in tension through contrasting metaphors involves bringing into the centre of the frame points of stress, conflict, or strain between metaphors. As the Switzerland of the university, the library pinpoints a neutral site within the academic landscape. If the Switzerland metaphor is interpreted as meaning the library is a peaceful and unifying, yet

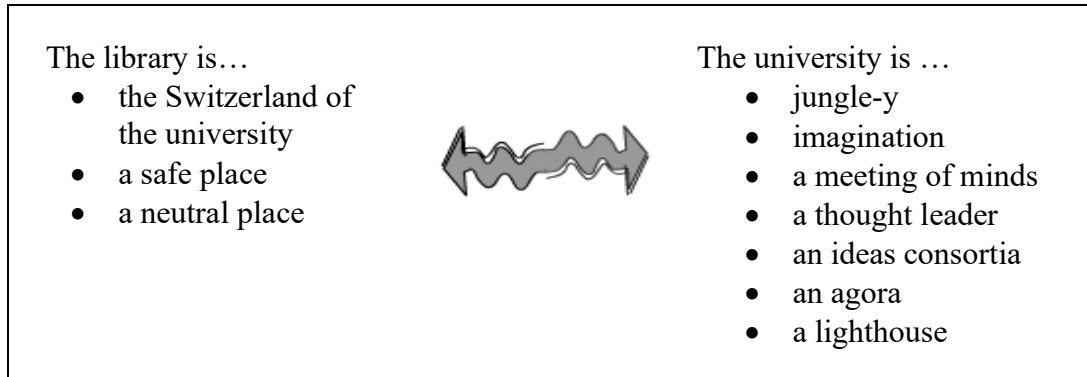
bounded space amidst the university's various partisan departmental and administrative territories, it is in tension with other metaphors for the idea of the library. For example, the library is envisioned as a "limitless sort of place," a "space that surprises and delights people," a "barrier destroyer," a "lightning rod of activity," a "Tardis" that is bigger on the inside, and a "future space Odyssey." These metaphors are in tension with metaphors for library neutrality (see Figure 7). They highlight the library's capacity for providing access to infinite worlds of learning and knowledge, unexpected discoveries, breaking down barriers to knowledge, hosting provocative intellectual debate and activities, offering more than meets the eye, and providing futuristic explorations of knowledge. These metaphors are akin to renderings of the university's association with knowledge as "a matter of air," where "more knowledge, especially of different kinds, allows the world more easily to breathe... allowing the world to see itself afresh" (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 147). But the tension between metaphors suggests knowledge is corruptible, it is not neutral, it "can reduce and even extinguish air" (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 148).

Figure 7

Metaphors for Library Neutrality in Tension with Other Metaphors for the Idea of the Library



Similarly, metaphors for the university present a broad spectrum of ideas in tension with metaphors for library neutrality (see Figure 8). The university is “imagination,” a “meeting of minds,” a “thought leader,” an “ideas consortia,” an “agora” of public discourse, a “lighthouse” of guidance, and a “threshold” to new beginnings. These metaphors emphasise the university’s role in fostering creativity, intellectual collaboration, leadership in thought, and a gathering place for ideas, new opportunities and innovations. They do not evoke a safe place or a neutral place, most likely because the university is not neutral. Higher education is buffeted by strong political views. There is a sense of this in the metaphor “jungle-y” which is in tension with metaphors for neutrality. This metaphor suggests that the university is unpredictable, a dangerous environment where it is necessary to compete to survive. As one participant explained the university is “jungle-y” because “there are all these people representing their area but also representing themselves,” meaning there is “a lot of positioning going along all the time” (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*).

Figure 8*Metaphors for Library Neutrality in Tension with Other Metaphors for the Idea of the University*

Participants' metaphors for neutrality can accommodate many interpretations. But what ought to be done about the messiness of its multiple meanings and the friction created by its disputed interpretations? Theories of metaphor analysis (comparison, conceptual, and even tension theory) only go so far as to interpret and understand the tension in the Switzerland metaphor. Ricoeur (1978) encourages thinking more about the tension in metaphor. The plurality and polarity of neutrality's tension are an additional challenge to the Switzerland metaphor. Therefore, to think more about the consequences of metaphors for neutrality in tension with other metaphors for the library and university, I reach for a more creative space outside metaphor theory. Because tension is a polyvalent and slippery concept, it needs to be examined in a theoretical space that is open to the opportunity in complexity, paradox, and alternative views of uncertainty. Thinking again and more about the tension between library metaphors for neutrality and other metaphors for the library and university makes it apparent that library neutrality needs to be associated with different theoretical neutralities alongside a more abundant exchange with theory.

6.7 Thinking More About Neutrality, Metaphor, and Tension

What would pushing past neutrality's presumptions (on both sides of its arguments) do for thinking more about the Switzerland metaphor, and the tension within and between metaphors for the university and the library? Barthes (2005) suggests that we do not need to "take sides against" neutrality. This suggestion is a bold and courageous approach to neutrality's tension and a move away from being stuck in binary positions. It helps us see the space in-between divergent views of neutrality, as where meaning can be suspended, contradictions can be loosened, and tension is productive. This perspective helps bolster a focus on the space in the middle of ideas in tension. It allows me to argue for neutrality's theoretical utility in "thinking more" about the tension between metaphors for library neutrality and other metaphors for the Idea of the University.

At the Collège de France in the late 1970s, Barthes presented a course called "The Neutral," and his lecture notes from the course were subsequently collected and published as *The Neutral* (Barthes, 2005). In the lectures, Barthes (2005) uses the concept of the Neutral "to scatter the signified, the catechisms" (p. xiii) and set up the study and interpretation of literature as an exchange. *The Neutral* is explained as an approach to reading literary texts that brings readers and writers together in the creation of meaning. At one point, Barthes acknowledges that international law and Switzerland might be a source of sense-making for neutrality, but also explains that The Neutral is not the neutrality of politics, international law, or Switzerland. Barthes's Neutral is positioned not as taking the side of specific interpretations but as being the basis of understanding, awareness, and meaning making. Barthes (2005) presents the Neutral through twenty-three "figures" or "traits" (and some additional figures in the Supplements). These figures (see Figure 9) are expressions of the Neutral's inherent oppositions and tensions

which enable his student readers to engage creatively with meaning in literature. In this way, the figures support the argument that locating tension is critical to thinking more about neutrality.

The variety of figures (see Figure 9) illustrates their range, and that the figures, like the Neutral and its oppositions, are not a simple unitary concept. Importantly, this complexity has the potential for unpacking meaning in librarians' metaphors without the usual limits and constraints of pro- and anti- arguments about library neutrality.

Figure 9

Figures of The Neutral

1. Benevolence	9. Images of the Neutral	17. Oscillation
2. Weariness	10. Anger	18. Retreat
3. Silence	11. The Active of the Neutral	19. Arrogance
4. Tact	12. Ideospheres	20. Panorama
5. Sleep	13. Consciousness	21. Kairos
6. Affirmation	14. Answer	22. Wuo-wei
7. Color	15. Rites	23. The Androgyne
8. The Adjective	16. Conflict	

The order in which the figures are presented is “unstructured” with no intended logic (see Figure 9). Barthes (2005) takes them “for a series of walks along a certain number of readings” (p. 8) or sometimes sees them through works of art to “unthread” nuances. Together, the figures make up “a dictionary not of definitions but of twinklings” (p. 10) for wandering or straying away from conventional interpretations of literature and into new, unexpected meanings or interpretations. The figures are presented in a jumble, without order, to demonstrate that the Neutral scrambles; it is unstructured, a theory in “continuous flux,” and a “refusal to dogmatize” (p. 10). Each figure is both a “search for the Neutral and a performance of the Neutral” (p. 11).

Barthes's (2005) figures of the Neutral are imaginative, curious, and unexpected. He describes them as everything that "outplays" a paradigm (p. 6). The figures of the Neutral are a point of departure for straying into "meaning making" that is irruptive. The nature of Barthes's Neutral disrupts concepts of neutrality that refer to indifference and greyness; instead, the Neutral is used to "refer to intense, strong, unprecedented states," which makes thinking with the Neutral "an ardent, burning activity" (p. 7). In this way, Barthes's figures of the Neutral are intended "to baffle." They are a course in paying attention to meaning and contradiction, and the reward for persisting is freedom from conflicting binaries in meaning. The figures of the Neutral observe conflict in meaning but also create autonomy from the demand to choose between oppositions in meaning and positions that seem predetermined:

the paradigm is the wellspring of meaning; where there is meaning, there is paradigm, and where there is paradigm (opposition), there is meaning → elliptically put: meaning rests on conflict (the choice of one term against another), and all conflict is generative of meaning: to choose one and refuse the other is always a sacrifice made to meaning, to produce meaning, to offer it to be consumed. (Barthes, 2005, p. 7)

The Neutral disrupts ways of finding meaning and, therefore, is useful as an instrument for "thinking more" about the idea of the library and the university as ideas in tension. Barthes's Neutral "is not an objective, a target: it's a passage" (2005, p. 68) that has practicality for seeing nuances and unique perspectives in the tension between the Switzerland metaphor and other metaphors. It prompts thinking more about metaphor tension by asking: What do we learn from a figure? And what new questions does a particular figure help us ask about predetermined or commonly accepted meanings in metaphors for neutrality and their oppositions? In this portrait, I

use a selection of Barthes's figures (Color, Oscillation, and Retreat) to think more about librarians' metaphors. This takes us to the middle of neutrality's tension; this focus on the in-between space helps us move around (and past) ideas in tension.

6.7.1 Color

Is library neutrality “really a breachable, peelable surface, behind which richness, color, strong meaning hide” (p. 50)? This question is promoted by the Figure of Color (Barthes, 2005, p. 49). Barthes proposes that the Neutral is colourless and in opposition with the colourful. The Neutral is monochrome in “values of grey,” it is what is “ordinarily shown.” It hides the colourful. Barthes's references in this figure point to colour as the opposition between festivals and riches, and the quotidian and social conformity (one example Barthes gives of these oppositions is the monochrome closed wings of a triptych that, when open, reveal a richness of colour).

The Figure of Color offers an unusual view of the tension between the library as the Switzerland of the university and other metaphors for the library. For example, the Switzerland metaphor can be re-seen as colourless—it is neutral, unaligned, uninvolved. Whereas “the library is a lightning rod,” for example, is full of colour—it attracts attention or controversy, protects, charges, diverts or absorbs criticism or blame. Seeing tension between metaphors in this way brings to the fore the colour of novel metaphors that are in opposition to the Switzerland metaphor.

The Figure of Color (2005, p. 49) introduces a view of the tension between metaphors as a difference in colour, richness, and what is apparent. This suggests there are “values invested in the opposition between the colorful and the colorless” (p. 49). It is a view of this tension that

asks whether the “neutral is shown in order to hide the colorful” (p. 50). Other than rejecting neutrality in the library, the Figure of Color directs us to what is hiding the shadows of the tension between metaphors and how bringing it into view might influence and activate distinctive ideas of the library. The Figure of Color helps us focus in the middle, where neutrality’s tension becomes “the shimmer: that whose aspect, perhaps whose meaning is subtly modified according to the angle of the subject’s gaze” (p. 51).

6.7.2 Oscillation

Librarians’ metaphors for the library as a “limitless sort of place,” a “Tardis,” a “future space Odyssey” evoke adventurous journeys and wanderings through space and time. These metaphors are also in tension with ideas of the library as Switzerland, as neutral and safe because the imaginaries of movement they conjure up are not necessarily as limited as the movement offered in a neutral environment. The Neutral provides a view of the movement of neutrality as constrained as it “leans on one side and the other” (Barthes, 2005, p. 130), and in this hesitation is the risk of being deprived “of the more agreeable, the unexpected that could occur” (p. 131). A reference Barthes points to is the billiard player whose gestures are both hesitant and skilful as they move against “two contradictory reference points” (p. 134). Barthes’s Figure of Oscillation helps us think more about the tension between these metaphors as a difference in movement where it might be possible to find “a perfect pitch,” a “vibratory energy,” or an “authenticity” (p. 133).

As sites of Oscillation, participants’ metaphors in tension contrast the limited movement of neutrality evoked in the Switzerland metaphor and the movement summoned in other metaphors that are of “comings and goings, scramblings that disconcert” (p. 132). The Figure of

Oscillation represents the character of tension between these metaphors as a possibility, “opportunity,” “an energetic element, an energetic time,” and an “expansive opening up” (p. 172). In the language of Barthes’s Figure of Oscillation, the potential movement between these metaphors affords a shift from the “hibernating winter sleeps” (p. 134) of the Switzerland metaphor to the “mad awakenings” (p. 134) of the library as a “limitless sort of place” or a “Tardis.”

6.7.3 Retreat

The Figure of Retreat also invokes potential movement. It is the “movement of retreating (from the world, from the worldly)” (Barthes, 2005, p. 137). Retreat is also “a place to which one retires” (p. 137) where there is movement from between inner and outer domains: the “fantasy of clandestinity,” the “fantasy of split personality,” the “fantasy of inner depths,” the inner conscious “alienated by the constraints of worldliness” (p. 141). The Figure of Retreat introduces a new set of binaries between the “Public/private,” the dilemma of “One/two places,” and the desire for “two entrances.” These dual dilemmas reflect the tension between the library as the “safe place” and the university as “jungle-y,” a “place of imagination,” a “meeting of minds,” a “thought leader,” and “ideas consortia.” Retreat suggests that, rather than taking sides between ideas in tension, there is a need to account for the differences between ideas not as in tension but as a “search for a topical place” that twinkles with “infinitesimal variations” (p. 145).

Seen through the Figure of Retreat, the Switzerland metaphor has a different orientation. It is “a search for the true place = for the “good” place → = an extremely general form, a movement with various contents” (Barthes, 2005, p. 146). In the library, this search depends on embracing the tension between ideas for a “neutral” or “safe” place and “a place of the

imagination.” The Figure of Retreat responds to the library as a neutral, safe place and repositions it as a “liveable space” and “a space with Landmarks” (p. 146). In the topology of the library, there are multiple familiar and unfamiliar knowledge landmarks that can be in opposition or agreement. While the Figure of Retreat takes issue with polarisation and dominant narrative landmarks, it also presents a view of the Neutral as “the subtle art of keeping a good distance between landmarks” (p. 146). For librarians, it sets up space for openness to ambiguity, and space where the curve of potential movement between ideas of the university and library can be engaged and wrestled with.

6.7.4 Where do Figures of the Neutral Take Ideas in Tension?

In *The Neutral*, Barthes (2005) takes the position that weariness is everywhere. It could be argued that it is possible to hear “weariness” in the discourse on library neutrality. Is this debate and the Switzerland metaphor an example of being stuck on pole positions with a weariness to reset how they sit within our conversations? Yet despite the world being full of weariness, Barthes (2005) asserts “the right to weariness” because “new things are born out of lassitude—from being fed up” (p. 21). Re-seen this way, the tension in the space between ideas becomes a cue to consider how to become unstuck from stagnant arguments and a signal to find different perspectives that are more productive and conducive to potential movement.

Ideas in tension are conflicts of meaning. *The Neutral* (Barthes, 2005) is helpful because its figures permit contradiction and baffle the “opposition structure of meaning” (p. 211). Figures of the Neutral provide a language to irrupt. They invite us to ask: How might we allow contradiction in ideas to be seen not just as in tension, in need of dispute or a moral stance, but as a “twinkling” of possibility? In this way, we can start to understand Barthes’s “desire” for the

Neutral. Indeed, thinking with Barthes awakens neutrality in a new way. For Barthes, the Neutral is desirable because it brings into view the friction of oppositions. Barthes's (2005) Neutral "expands, inflects itself, modifies itself" (p. 9). Might being in the middle of ideas in tension also do this? It is the in-between space that I lean into as I think with Barthes's Neutral. It has utility for thinking more about metaphor, tension, and meaning. Barthes (2005) argues that the Neutral is not flat and depreciated but "could constitute a strong, active value" (p. 211). The active value of Barthes's figures is to open up the tension between ideas from the middle. What is arrived at from this opening up is seeing that binary possibilities can be interconnected. First, they help question neutrality, although not as a choice or a need to take sides. Second, they give permission to disrupt. Third, they provide a re-seeing of ideas in tension as an opportunity for reflecting on what the library holds for the Idea of the University, and what the Idea of the University holds for the library.

While *The Neutral* (Barthes, 2005) invites a way of reading literary texts that, on the surface, seems irrelevant to librarians' metaphors for the idea of the library and university (and the tension within and across these ideas), it also offers something else. That something else is about realising that just bringing librarians' perspective to the debate on the Idea of the University as another point of opposition is not enough because it carries the risk of ideas in tension; that is, the risk of getting stuck.

6.8 Becoming Unstuck

In this portrait tensions are layered: not only are ideas of the university and the library in tension, but there are also layers of tension in the structure of the Switzerland metaphor's figurative and literal meaning, and in the concept of neutrality itself. If the future of the debate

on the Idea of the University depends on widening it to other professionals in the university, it is inevitable that the tension of opposing ideas will increase, as will the potential to get stuck on or between ideas. Being alert to tension between ideas is an opportunity to refresh thinking and move away from the apathy that comes from too little tension or the stress that is a hallmark of too much tension between ideas. It brings to light the importance of moving around ideas to avoid being stuck in binaries.

This Portrait of Neutrality presents metaphors knocking into each other as an opening to notice ideas in tension. Then, by thinking with Barthes, it loosens librarians' tendency to be stuck on a choice between neutrality's oppositions. As demonstrated in the Portrait of Centrality, it has been profitable to unpack metaphors, that on the surface look simple, through thinking with theory. In this portrait, thinking with Barthes's (2005) theory of the Neutral involves viewing the tension within and between metaphors for neutrality differently: not as a choice between arguments for ways of working or being in the library and university, but as an opportunity to embrace contradictions and complexity as sources of surprise and delight. Metaphors in tension, therefore, are a flourishing of thought at the interstices between ideas of the library and the university. This process is vital in inspecting the consequences and possibilities of ideas in tension. How might ideas in tension work for and against the idea of the library in the contested landscape of the university as an institution and idea?

Ideas in tension suggest that the terrain of entangled ideas is not always harmonious, and ideas are not always equal. What Barthes's theory of the Neutral brings to light is the importance of opening up ideas rather than settling on a position, as librarians tend to do in the library neutrality debate. Thinking with Barthes is not a reconciliation of library neutrality but an opening up of thinking about the nature of tension and the difference in and across librarians'

ideas of the university and the library. It establishes a point of potential movement which only comes into view when seeing ideas in tension from the space between ideas. Given that ideas of the university are growing, reflecting on this second portrait prompted me to think about how the space in between ideas might be useful for working across the multiplicity of ideas of the university and understanding multiple relationships. In the third portrait in the following chapter, I reprise a focus on the space in the middle of ideas but bring in other perspectives and theory to again form a new likeness of the data. The new data likeness in this third Idea Portrait, again shakes up thinking about how librarians' movement toward engagement with the Idea of the University (not yet realised) might be activated and what that can mean for the library.

CHAPTER 7: A PORTRAIT OF RELATIONALITY

7.1 Echoing Ideas

From the multiple surfaces of metaphor, librarians' ideas about the library and university can be heard in chorus. This Idea Portrait brings to the centre of the frame a different group of metaphors where there is an echo between ideas. These echoes are audible in pairs of metaphors where ideas are duplicated and mutually reinforce and imitate each other. In this portrait, the metaphors librarians use to imagine and express the Idea of the University mirror those they use to describe the library or vice versa. The reflection sets up a form of “echoism,” with each metaphor “an expression that echoes or alludes to another” (McArthur et al., 2018). In this Idea Portrait, I examine this pattern of entanglement by arranging pairs of metaphors—echoing ideas—at the centre of the frame.

This portrait moves past the ideas in tension in the Portrait of Neutrality and looks at the relations in groups of metaphors that hold echoing ideas. It considers the acoustics of multiple perspectives and relationships in a choir of echoing ideas. I turn to a theory of echo (Pinchevski, 2022) that, by its very nature, deals with polyphony to make sense of these sounds and to ask questions about the relations between ideas (university and library), people (the university community) and place (university and library).

7.2 Thinking with Echo

Echo itself can be a metaphor for an “obsequious adherent” (Wilkinson, 2002), and some metaphors for the university and the library can be heard following each other around, even sticking together. The linguistic traffic created by echoing ideas builds on the movement

produced by the tension among metaphors in the Idea Portrait in the previous chapter. The Portrait of Neutrality was concerned with how some metaphors clash and move away from one another. This portrait also examines movement between metaphors for the university and the library, however, it is concerned with those metaphors that are seemingly heading in the same direction: tones that are more likely to mingle in agreement. Echoes, however, can be surprising. Sounds go out and return after travelling across time and space. Like the phrases returned by the mythical figure of Echo to Narcissus, echoes can be incomplete copies or fragments of the originating sound which creates new meanings. The echo in metaphor pairs at the centre of this portrait also shifts meaning. Thinking with echo again extends this inquiry into how two entangled ideas might influence, shape and potentially modify one another.

Pinchevski (2022) establishes that an echo is more than just the movement and transmission of sound. In the call and response of echo, one action or concept is associated with another. The back-and-forth of echo, therefore, is both about relations and the possibility of relations (Pinchevski, 2022). An echo not only holds relationships between sounds, it also foregrounds them within a specific context. Pinchevski (2022) believes that an echo is a creative, generative medium that conveys our connections with one another and the surrounding world. In conceptualising echo as a relational medium, Pinchevski (2022) draws on Levinas's work on the originary relation with the other. He argues that echo is "open to what comes its way;" sounds go from "side to side and to and fro, thereby creating a space for rendezvous" of getting to know the other (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 53). The echo occupies an in-between position, and it is "by virtue of its intermediary position—being in and of the middle—that echo can act as a medium, that is connecting heterogeneous domains" (p. 53). In metaphor pairs, ideas of the university and the library get to know each other, and we get to know the relations they hold. Echo generates new

correspondences between librarians' ideas of the university and the library, as ideas respond to each other and their surroundings. In this portrait, I am interested in the meaning that transpires in the in-between space created by echoing ideas: what possible relations are suspended in the middle?

Levin (1992) argues that conceptions of the world are “enlarged by metaphor” (p. 93), and in centring pairs of metaphors—echoing ideas—the expansion of ideas made possible by metaphor is multiplied. In participants' metaphors, I heard individuals use the same and analogous metaphors to express ideas of the university and the library. Arranging echoing ideas in pairs magnifies the depth and significance of metaphors' meaning and urges closer scrutiny. The resounding in these metaphor pairs recalls Ricoeur's (1977) deliberations on metaphor and reference in poetry, where the “mirror-play between sense and sound” (p. 224) is an echo, creating a “haven of sound” in which the meaning of things is in close proximity, richer, and more enduring. In metaphor pairs, the echo, in effect, makes visible a different view of relations between things (and people and ideas) (Käll, 2015; Pinchevski, 2022).

7.3 Echo's Relations

Acoustically, an echo is imitative, “a repetition of sounds, which is produced by the reflexion of the sound waves” causing an “imitative sound produced by reflected waves” (Oxford University Press, 2024g). The occurrence and implications of auditory echoes are used figuratively to suggest resemblance, repetition, or close imitation (Oxford University Press, 2024h) or as an action that can generate these states (Oxford University Press, 2024i). Theories of echo draw on science, literature, and myth to offer a variety of tropes to think with.

Pinchevski's (2022) theory of echo brings attention to the "multifarious connections that echo fosters, and to the transformative role it plays therein" (p. 3). Pinchevski (2022) defines echo as:

reflected sound returning at a delay... repetition and response, yet the repetition is often partial, and the response varied... simultaneously embodying likeness and difference: both doubling the original and diverging from it. (p. 191)

This definition suggests that echo is more than mere reflection, and it can do more than mimic; it "can also modify the meaning of the sounds it imitates" (Anderson, 2018, p. 2). Echo, therefore, is a construct of movement and variation. It is considered to be both active and passive, complete and yet incomplete, spanning time and space, and representing action as well as delay (Anderson, 2018; Davenport, 2022; Lewis, 2020; Scott, 2001). Such relations are the source of its richness and hold "creative possibilities" for meaning (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 3). Linguistic echoes in words written, spoken, and performed form part of our experience of language, and whether playful or serious, the intention is often to give rise to new meanings (Davenport, 2022). In other words, echo can transform meaning. Its features have utility for uncovering meaning in the echoing ideas in librarians' metaphors for the university and the library.

7.4 Metaphor and Echo

The features of the concept of echo indicate that it is part of a "family of resounding," which includes repetition, resonance, and reverberation (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 25). Pinchevski (2022) argues that these tropes are often used interchangeably or conflated, but are in fact, acoustically and conceptually different. The distinction prompted me to listen for the different qualities of resounding in metaphor pairs to recognise the variation. I heard the same metaphors

repeated for the idea of the library and university. For example, “the library is an enabler” and “the university is an enabler.” I also heard similar ideas for both the university and library resonate between metaphors; for instance, “the university is the betterment of the community” and “the library is the cornerstone of a healthy society” or “the university is a lighthouse” and “the library is a retro fibre-optic lamp.” I heard possibilities for the library and university reverberate across metaphors. For instance, “the university is lost in space” and “the library is a future space Odyssey,” or “the university is tendrils that connect people and knowledge” and “the library is tentacles going out in all directions.” What is clear in the repetition, resonance, and reverberation in these metaphor pairs is that meaning is multilayered and therefore, interpretation requires an approach that assumes a “dense and multi-layered treatment of data” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. vii). Thinking with Pinchevski’s (2022) theory of echo cuts through the layers of meaning in these data “to see what newness might be incited” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. viii). For the practical purposes of revisiting the data and drawing a new data likeness from familiar surroundings, the pairing of metaphors might be considered what Pinchevski (2022) calls an “echo technique” (p. 132).

Pinchevski (2022) argues that echo “serves as a medium.” It is a “medium for striking contact: wherever echo resounds relation resides” (p.14). It is of its surroundings and without the “holding environment” there is no echo. It is the context of echo’s surroundings that allows something to transpire in the in-between space created by an echo’s call and response. The originating sound goes out as a call that brushes against its environment, and in the interval between call and response, there are alterities: meaning is changed and what is revealed is “an alternative mode of sensing material reality” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 139). Following Pinchevski,

the echo in metaphor pairs is an analysis space where different types of resounding—repetition, resonance, and reverberation—between ideas are examined to reveal meaning.

7.5 Metaphor Pairs: Echo's Call and Response

In this Idea Portrait, multiple metaphor pairs are juxtaposed at the centre of the frame. Noticing echoing ideas in the data prompted me to arrange pairs of A is B metaphors that represent the different types of resounding in echoing ideas. While each single metaphor is not always novel, it is the pairing of metaphors that has the potential to extend the interpretation and lead to a new data likeness. As discussed above, echo involves an originating sound or a “call” and a secondary sound or a “response” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 9). Generally, in my interviews with participants, a metaphor for the Idea of the University was the first A is B metaphor elicited, and therefore, in each pair presented, the metaphor for the Idea of the University could be considered the originating sound with the metaphor for the library being the response. On its own, each metaphor might be understood intuitively and embedded in the everyday language we use to talk about the university and library, but in pairs, the echoic interaction between metaphors is relational and mediates a unique experience. Assembled in pairs, ideas repeating, resonating, and reverberating have the potential to generate different figurations of meaning. In this portrait, I rely less on metaphor theory to reveal meaning and more on thinking with the theory of echo. The theoretical dimensions of repetition, resonance and reverberation are a better creative and critical match for finding meaning in these metaphor pairs.

7.5.1 Repetition

Repetition is defined as “the action of repeating or saying over again something which one has already said” (Oxford University Press, 2024). Generally, such reiteration or repetition

in language “signals importance and affirmation” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 86). When employed intentionally in speech, repetition “is not only aesthetically pleasing (in moderation) and emotionally moving (also in moderation), it is instrumental in driving the point home” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 86). What point is being driven home in the repetition in the metaphor pairs in Table 13? In the call and response of each echo, what ideas of significance are showing up and being affirmed?

Table 13

Repetition

The idea of the university is a/the/an...	The idea of the library is a/the/an...	Type of resounding
1. community	community	Repetition
2. enabler	enabler	Repetition
3. facilitator	facilitator	Repetition
4. inspirational place of learning	inspirational place of learning	Repetition

7.5.1.1 Action and Agency

{ The university is an enabler.
The library is an enabler.

This pair presents often-repeated metaphors for the university and library. The repetition suggests an equivalence; both the library and university are perceived as having a fundamental role in arranging, coordinating, organising, and promoting opportunities for others to succeed, grow, or achieve their goals. Metaphor comparison theory reinforces a simple linguistic analysis that links the target domains—library (*A*) and university (*A*), to the repeated source domain—enabler (*B*). Consequently, the characteristics of the repeated source domain are transferred to both the university and the library, resulting in similarities and connections. For example, an

“enabler” is “one who enables” because they have the capital to supply “the requisite means or opportunities to an end” or to make something “possible or easy” (Oxford University Press, 2023c, 2023d, 2023e). Many participants describe the library as an “enabler.” Metaphorically “enabler” conveys that the library facilitates or empowers certain activities, such as learning, research, or intellectual growth. It implies that the library plays a crucial role in supporting and making these activities possible. As a metaphor for the library, it adds a dynamic and active quality to the role of the library in the context of the activities it supports:

I think the library is an enabler in that it enables the University to be successful in its mission and in that it’s got a broader role in terms of providing access to information that could potentially enable more people to engage and become more well-informed in society. (*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*)

Similarly, the repeated metaphor “facilitator” below suggests that both the library and university support and empower others to reach their full potential:

{ The university is a facilitator.
The library is a facilitator.

When explaining their use of “facilitator” as a metaphor for the library, one participant said the “library is a facilitator because our role is increasing to support individual learning and act less like a repository of knowledge” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). Another participant explained that the library is a facilitator because of its role of “bringing units together internally but also bringing other groups around campus to the library as well” (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*). Similarly, the “university is a facilitator” because it brings together “knowledge and the wider community” (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*). This vision is echoed in

participants' ideas of the library, with a participant stating, "As a library, we're here to facilitate knowledge, discovering knowledge creation" (*Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library*).

In these pairs, the same conclusion might be drawn about participants' ideas of the university and the library. The echo in these metaphor pairs makes visible that participants view the library and the university as pivotal enablers and facilitators of knowledge and community engagement. This mirrored role for the university and library is further emphasised by another participant who stated:

It's our vision, the whole university vision, the library's vision, together we facilitate knowledge, discovery and literature creation, we are partners in enabling that, I think.

(Interview Respondent #3, GO8 Library)

Repetition endorses the synergy and connection between ideas. In the same vein, conceptions of the library and university suggest that entanglement in ideas of the university and the library is not something to resist but something to embrace and entertain. In these repetitions, the library and university are perceived as ideas that need to stand with each other intentionally.

Pinchevski (2022) reasons that repetition is about the relation that takes place. He argues there is agency in repetition and that creativity comes from repeating what has gone before. The doubling of ideas in metaphor pairs reinforces the commonality of relations between knowledge and people. Repetition drives home that the library and university do not stand apart and are not heterogeneous domains. This conclusion challenges the suggestions I heard from some participants that the library is an independent institution within an institution. While this may be understandable in terms of library operations, it potentially limits incorporating larger ideas of the university to inform practice. Pinchevski (2022) uses examples of acoustic repetition to argue that rhetorical echo elevates the response to create new associations and meanings and, in doing

so, “makes the original message susceptible to new meanings” (p. 99). In the repetition in these metaphor pairs, there is a transumption at work that conveys a connection but also provokes thinking about sameness and difference in ideas of the university and the library.

7.5.2 Resonance

Resonance is the correspondence between two sounds (Pinchevski, 2022): when one sound resonates with another, it vibrates sympathetically with the other and activates something in it. It is the “reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection or by the synchronous vibration of a surrounding space or a neighbouring object” (Oxford University Press, 2024m). In some metaphor pairs, ideas resonate; the call evokes a corresponding and sympathetic response. It does not merely repeat the call, it is “synchronous with the originating sound” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 183). Resonance in metaphor pairs is more than repetition; rather, sounds “vibrate at the same pitch,” thereby releasing ideas that might be confined by repetition (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 44). The compatibility and harmony between the ideas of the university and the library in the metaphor pairs are examples of resonance (see Table 14). Their correlation implies a “relation with the outside without duplicating it” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 44).

Table 14*Resonance*

The idea of the university is a/the/an...	The idea of the library is a/the/an...	Type of resounding
1. agora	central gathering place	Resonance
2. betterment of the community	cornerstone of a healthy society	Resonance
3. brain	neural network	Resonance
4. church spire	academic temple of knowledge	Resonance
5. complex machine	cog in the higher education machine	Resonance
6. sausage factory	factory	Resonance
7. learning centre of ancient times resonate	long line of learners through history	Resonance
8. learning hub	centre for deep learning	Resonance
9. lighthouse	retro fibre-optic lamp	Resonance
16. living resource	heartbeat	Resonance
17. pivotal point in the community	focal point for the community	Resonance
18. public-facing knowledge commons	digital community commons	Resonance
19. rarefied air	set in gold	Resonance
20. threshold	gateway	Resonance

7.5.2.1 Information and Imagination

{ The university is a brain.
 { The library is a neural network.

In this metaphor pair, the originating sound, “the university is a brain,” is reinforced by the metaphor, “the library is a neural network.” Here are two metaphors in correspondence. In the space in between metaphors, concepts from neuroscience interact with the idea of the library and university as ideas vibrating at the same pitch. The first metaphor, “brain,” positions the university at the centre of mental activity, memory, and imagination, with a structure that supports these activities:

Structurally, the brain is a complex organ that is composed of billions of neurons and other auxiliary cells that together form an astronomical number of connections.

Functionally, the brain is an organ that allows sensations from the environment to be evaluated, stored, and integrated and that provides appropriate responses to any given situation. (Rasskin-Gutman, 2009, p. 3)

The brain metaphor is often used to imply an institution is “a self-organizing system capable of responding rapidly to a broad range of external stimuli” (Garud & Kotha, 1994, p. 647). The brain’s left and right hemispheres make it much more than “the place where mind meets matter” (McGilchrist, 2019, p. 1). It is “intellectual power, intellect, sense, thought, imagination” (Oxford University Press, 2024d), and its function is to “integrate and coordinate the activities of the nervous system.” It is “the source of the advanced behavioural, emotional, and cognitive capabilities of humans” (Oxford University Press, 2024c). The brain “is not just a tool for grappling with the world. It’s what brings the world about” (McGilchrist, 2019, p. 19). As McGilchrist (2019) argues, the brain constructs the world and challenges boundaries around thinking about the world. It is “a metaphor of the world” (p. 9). It is involved in “labeling an unlabeled world.” (Modell, 2003, p. 37). It carries a powerful conceptualisation of the university that resonates with participants. As one participant explained:

the university is a brain because it responds to the world with a combination of knowledge and imagination, something cerebral is happening. I think of the university as a brain because it enables society to develop and ultimately be a better society and to be [long pause]; I think to be a better society is to be better informed, with more access to knowledge, and more skilled and professional people, to improve life. (*Interview Respondent #13, RUN Library*)

In this metaphor pair, the university pertains to the central nervous system, while the library is the peripheral nervous system—a “neural network.” Thus, the response addresses the original call and expands upon it because:

the unquestionable protagonists of the brain are the neurons. These are specialized cells that assist in the reception, storage, integration, and distribution of the information that an organism encounters throughout its existence. (Rasskin-Gutman, 2009, p. 5)

The library as a neural network amplifies and prolongs this conception of the university as a brain. The sounds in this metaphor pair are “contiguous” and “simultaneous” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 48). In this metaphor pair, resonance’s amplification is a relation without duplicating, “a reply rather than a replication” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 51). It sets up “two-way responsibility” (Rosa, 2015, as cited in Pinchevski, 2022, p. 51).

7.5.2.2 Integration and Wholeness

Echo’s suggestion of two-way responsibility can be heard in the contiguous sounds in other metaphor pairs. For example:

{ The university is a learning centre of ancient times.
 { The library is a long line of learners through history.

And,

{ The university is a pivotal point in the community.
 { The library is a focal point for the community.

Metaphors in both these pairs also “vibrate at the same pitch” (Pinchevski, 2022, p. 44). In the resonance across the space between call and response, a relationship is set up, but not with the

library as a cameo of the university or an institution within an institution. Rather, resonance opens the idea of the library and university up to each other and suggests that what they have in common is the basis for an integrated whole.

7.5.3 Reverberation

In some metaphor pairs, the echoing ideas reverberate (see Table 15). Reverberation sustains and continues the original sound; it is an elongation of sound that indicates continuation and enlargement. It has “grandeur” (Pinchevski, 2022). In contrast to the relative straightforwardness of repetition or the correspondence of resonance, reverberation is a persistence of sound. Pinchevski (2022) describes the effect of reverberation “as enveloping and enhancing the original sound” (p. 38). Reverberation means sounds travel further, suggesting multiple possibilities. Additionally, in reverberation, there is a potential “knock-on effect” or a “repercussion” (Oxford University Press, 2024n). In metaphor pairs, reverberation creates a perpetuation of the original sound that continues participants’ ideas of the university in their ideas of the library and vice versa. The echo is less distinct but with more potential for new relations.

Table 15*Reverberation*

The idea of the university is a/the/an...	The idea of the library is a/the/an...	Type of resounding
1. a kind of society	social glue of university	Reverberation
2. driving society	navigator	Reverberation
3. lost in space	future space Odyssey	Reverberation
4. paths you never expected to go down	place that surprises and delights people	Reverberation
5. tendrils that connect people and knowledge	tentacles going out in all different directions	Reverberation
6. a small town	home	Reverberation
7. city	home	Reverberation

7.5.3.1 A Driver and a Navigator

{ The university is driving society.
 { The library is a navigator.

In my conversations with participants, they had a strong sense of the role of the university in society, which is summed up in the call in this pair of metaphors above. As was explained to me by one participant:

the university is driving society since it is more than a reflection of society. It should be driving society in many ways as well through research creating new areas of thinking and new areas of exploration for society. (*Interview Respondent #16, IRU Library*)

There is a strong sense that the university is steering society forward and a leader in society. In this metaphor pair, the library metaphor “navigator” enhances the university metaphor “driving society.” Together, both metaphors depict a journey where the university is the driver, and the library is not a passenger but a “navigator.” A navigator charts the course to reach a desired location, makes choices, and guides the journey. A navigator must think about the complexity of

the environment and play a role in getting from one place to another. It suggests a different relation between the library and the Idea of the University. The navigator is part of the driving process and understands the direction and purpose of the journey and the relationships involved. The navigator is focused on the relationships that will be encountered during a journey through place and space.

7.5.3.2 Adventures in Space

Similarly, in the following metaphor pair, reverberation between call and response sustains and continues the metaphor's meaning. In this pair, the university might be said to be disoriented, without direction or a clear path forward. It is adrift in the vastness of space. In response, the second metaphor in the pair envelops this idea and enlarges the first metaphor's meaning to be about an epic and evolutionary voyage:

{ The university is lost in space.
 { The library is a future space Odyssey.

The metaphor for the library continues the idea of a journey in space but responds to ideas of disorientation and uncertainty with a form of adventure, wanderings, and potential for a positive future outcome. In the reverberation in this pair, the library becomes an agent for possibilities, made richer through interactions with the Idea of the University.

7.6 Metaphors of Community, Place, and Belonging

What stands out in these metaphor pairs are ideas about community—of connection, people, and place—that evoke a sense of relations between people and between people and knowledge. As discussed above, participants' ideas for the university and library can sometimes repeat, resonate, and reverberate in metaphor pairs and in the literal and metaphoric expressions participants use

to describe the library and university. What can be heard in the different types of resounding are echoes of a sense of community (see Table 16).

Table 16

Echoes of Community

The idea of the university is a/the/an...	The idea of the library is a/the/an...	Type of resounding
1. community	community	Repetition
2. agora	central gathering place	Resonance
3. betterment of the community	cornerstone of a healthy society	Resonance
4. church spire	academic temple of knowledge	Resonance
5. learning centre of ancient times resonate	long line of learners through history	Resonance
6. learning hub	centre for deep learning	Resonance
7. pivotal point in the community	focal point for the community	Resonance
8. public-facing knowledge commons	digital community commons	Resonance
9. a kind of society	social glue of university	Reverberation
10. driving society	navigator	Reverberation
11. tendrils that connect people and knowledge	tentacles going out in all different directions	Reverberation
12. a small town	home	Reverberation
13. city	living room	Reverberation

7.6.1 *Communitas*

Put simply, in librarians' imaginary:

{ The university is a community.
 { The library is a community.

In this pairing, what metaphoric meaning does “community” transfer to the library and university? What does the repetition reinforce and amplify? What meaning is to be found between echo’s call and response? The repetition in this pair affirms that for participants, community is essential in the concept of the university and the library. The immediate signal in

this metaphor pair is an affirmation of the importance of community in university life and library life. This metaphor pair is in tune, the sound is harmonious, and the ideas of the university and the library are integrated and in sync.

The concept of community is multidimensional. It is derived from the Latin “*communitas*” meaning “participation, sharing, social relationship, fellowship, organized society, shared nature” (Oxford University Press, 2024e). Its use has evolved to define “a body of people who live in the same place, usually sharing a common cultural or ethnic identity. Hence: a place where a particular body of people lives” (Oxford University Press, 2024f). It refers to associations between people and experiences. It conjures up notions of shared values, shared expertise, interests, and relationships to places. While the benefits of community have been critiqued as not living up to ideals of relatedness (Joseph, 2002), the characteristics that scholars commonly include in definitions of community are social cohesion and interaction, locus or sense of place, and a need to belong, common ties as manifested in common interests and joint action, diversity, and resilience (Delanty, 2018; Greer, 1969; MacQueen et al., 2001; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). Together, these elements contribute to collective and individual well-being, quality of life, and satisfaction with life.

The repetition in this pair of metaphors accentuates that the key characteristics of community—for example, social interaction, locus, membership, a need to belong, and common interests—are what university and library have in common. It underlines the importance of community in both the idea of the library and the university. This pairing affirms that the university and library stand together. However, is simple affirmation the only interpretation, or is there another possible meaning that this pairing might suggest?

Pinchevski (2022) argues that the relationship that repetition sets up can push back against the originary. Is there pushback here in this metaphor pair? Perhaps the coupling itself is a form of pushback—driving home the point through repetition prompts questions and curiosity about subtle differences in how community might be understood. Interestingly, participants’ descriptions of community in the Idea of the University and the library were commonly described with different adjectives, indicating an underlying variation in sameness and a difference in how community is perceived in each idea. For example, the possessive adjective “our” was matched with “community” when talking about the library whereas the university as a community was more likely to be referred to as the “wider” community. This subtle variance, on the one hand, is not surprising. The university could be considered to be made up of many real and virtual communities: for example, professional or School communities, discipline communities, those based on organisational structure or cohorts, social and interest groups and so on, and extending to the local neighbourhood, region, or world. As one participant explained, “in a university community you’re not just in an enclosed institution, you’re part of the wider community” (*Interview Respondent #18, ATN Library*). There is what might be called a “tension between the smaller community and the larger, the part and the whole” (Greer, 1969, p. x), which for participants is expressed as a concern and a “worry that the library’s role will become undervalued if it takes the role of general supporter of the agendas of others it doesn’t think very clearly about what it brings to the university mission” (*Interview Respondent #20, ATN Library*).

One response to the tension described above is to create a distinct library community, perhaps taking inspiration from how public libraries develop community (Edwards et al., 2013). But the tension in echoes of community prompts the question: Once recognised, should separateness be maintained or put to work in service of the Idea of the University? One

participant described the library as the location for “community culture” in the university because libraries are “part of a kind of an artistic precinct almost—a community—between things” (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*). This description supports what thinking with echo also calls to our attention: that is, taking seriously what can transpire in liminal spaces created by an echo’s call and response. Echo helps us think more deeply about the space “between things.” In the in-between space lies an opportunity for librarians to be less possessive about *their* library community and to engage more openly with the concept of community in the Idea. Between ideas, there is the prospect for looking again at perceptions of community in the Idea of the University and library, and refreshing how relations between place, people, and belonging are activated.

7.6.2 Place

Place is an essential component of a community. It can be defined in a range of ways, and it “exists at different scales. At one extreme, a favourite armchair is a place, at the other extreme the whole earth” (Tuan, 1977, p. 149). Therborn (2011) claims the geography of place matters to social beings because it is “something you can go to, leave, and return to... A place is where people can meet, can come and can be close to each other, where buildings can relate... place means distinctiveness” (p. 500). The importance of place to community resonates in the following metaphor pair:

{ The university is an agora.
 { The library is a central gathering place.

As one participant explained:

The university is an agora because it is a place of interchange, democracy, assembly and relative autonomy, providing conditions for learning. (*Interview Respondent #20, ATN Library*)

Despite the university's spatial boundaries extending into virtual spaces and adding to the diversity of institutional locales, academics continue to argue that the physical campus is more than a space—it provides a sense of place that still matters to the Idea of the University (Bednarski, 2024; Temple, 2014, 2024). In this metaphor pair, the library is “a central gathering place,” is a response that reinforces the idea of “assembly and interchange” in the call. In these synchronous ideas, there is a shared responsibility for creating community and place. Temple (2018) asserts that “place is created by people using space for particular purposes: place, then, is space which has meaning for its users; it is special space” (p. 136). It has atmosphere. It is where the community dwells. As two participants explained:

I think the way people view the library is changing a lot. For students, it used to be the library was about resources, whereas now, it's that sense of place that is most important; it's a place to be with others. (*Interview Respondent #9, RUN Library*)

And:

When students come to the library, they're coming to a sense of place because what they want and need is there, that whole combination that we can offer that nobody else on campus can or does. (*Interview Respondent #10, RUN Library*)

These comments suggest that in the library, atmosphere contributes to a sense of place, and, in turn, plays a role in attachment to place because the unique characteristics of the library make it

“something different from another place, from anywhere, and from nowhere” (Therborn, 2011, p. 500). The distinctiveness of the physical library is related:

to the people and activities of place. They generate a special regularity, dynamism and atmosphere that attract new users and bring back regular participants over and over again. (Seamon, 2015, p. 150)

Community has expanded from being “a physical concentration of individuals in one place” (Greer, 1969, p. ix) to being less bounded by physical place or location. What is lasting in both notions of community is:

its ability to communicate ways of belonging, especially in the context of an increasingly insecure world. In this sense, community as belonging is constructed in communicative processes wherever they occur, be it in institutional contexts, social networking sites or political movements. (Delanty, 2018, p. 229)

In *A philosophy of belonging*, Greenaway (2023) proposes that “questions of personal and social existence are fundamentally questions of belonging” (p. 38). Belonging, like community, is constituted by people, places, and times (Greenaway, 2023). Questions of community and belonging, therefore, are closely connected.

7.6.3 Belonging

Community emerges out of place. What is implicit in much of the discussion above is the idea that place attachment links people “in an overt and visible fashion” (Altman & Low, 1992, p. 10), it contributes to a sense of belonging. When groupings of people give spaces meaning, spaces develop a sense of place and belonging. This attachment “is intimately related to at-

homeness and dwelling”. (Seamon, 2015, p. 150). In this metaphor pair, the relationality that is evoked in a sense of community—belonging, dwelling, and connectedness—reverberates loudly:

{ The university is a kind of society.
 { The library is the social glue of university.

One participant noted, “library equals social lubricant” (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*).

Libraries, by their nature, are “collaborative, community-focused organisations and the library will continue to again and again be a facilitator for those interactions” (*Interview Respondent #2, GO8 Library*). The reverberation in this pair sustains and enlarges the university as a kind of society with “social glue.” Like glue, the library not only joins people but holds them together. A role for the library reverberates in creating connections and taking responsibility for others because the library and university are, in essence, the same community. The reverberation is a shift away from the library and university as separate communities, bringing to our attention what one participant expressed as a theoretical and practical challenge for librarians:

How do we shift that perception, how do people move away from this perception of the Librarian and academic library as within but apart from the university and think more in terms of what it is that the idea of the university, this institution, this thing is doing for the world. You know, how does that translate more into an everyday librarian’s understanding of what we are and what we do. (*Interview Respondent #5, GO8 Library*)

What seems unresolved for some participants is the separateness of the library as place and community, “an institution within an institution,” (*Interview Respondent #17, IRU Library*) in contrast to the perception of the library as central to the relationships between people and place as part of university life. Many participants describe a need to be “focused on and convey the impact the library makes, and that means a distinct agenda and identity that is self-authored”

(Interview Respondent #20, ATN Library). However, not all are sure how to reconcile this with larger ideas. Reverberation suggests that echoing ideas support such contradistinction, but more likely, it is an enhancement of the original sound that has repercussions in practice. The challenge is to recognise that this enhancement has multiple possibilities for rethinking connections between and across community, place, and belonging in the Idea of the University.

Belonging is “to be rightfully or fittingly situated in, or have an affinity for, a specified place or situation” (Oxford University Press, 2024a) and “to have the right personal or social qualities to be a member of a particular group; to fit in” (Oxford University Press, 2024b). The risk associated with this experience is that when we do not belong, we are adrift (Greenaway, 2023, p. 3). It could be argued that the transient nature of the university community represents a cycle of belonging and unbelonging, making belonging hard for lots of reasons. When participants recounted the experiences of students who seek refuge in the library, it as an experience of unbelonging. They attribute this to factors such as scale, transience, and unfamiliarity. Often, the library becomes not just a space but a place where students can find a sense of belonging. As one participant explained, the library is a place that:

brings together the student experience and demands and it tries to meet the needs of anyone that walks through the door. Everyone and anyone can come in, hopefully feel like they belong, and stay, and when they leave be as dependent or independent as they want to. *(Interview Respondent # 4, RUN Library)*

Some participants discussed how a sense of belonging is cultivated in the library, because it can be difficult to find that connection elsewhere in the university. As one participant explained, the library is:

where many students and staff often choose to work, rather than be alone. Although this sometimes may be for group work, I'm more referring to the loneliness many students and staff experience when undertaking their academic endeavours in other areas of the university. There is a feeling of belonging [in the library] and being in a space where there are others doing the same activity, even when it doesn't involve interactions with others. The library offers that shared experience and support. (*Survey Respondent, ATN Library*)

Greenaway (2023) argues that belonging is expansive and involves notions of fit and connectedness. It encompasses dwelling, people and relationships, specific locations and places, moments in time, which can be found in the library. Antonsich (2010) claims that belonging is often used as a synonym for “collective identity or citizenship,” and the focus of scholars is often the politics of belonging where it is granted, rejected or transgressed, rather than the emotion of feeling at home, attached to a place or a situation or “place-belongingness.” He concludes that the politics of belonging and place-belongingness both need to be considered as part of effecting belonging (Antonsich, 2010, p. 646).

Greenaway (2023) explains the experience of belonging is to “both exist-from someone or something and exist-toward that someone or something” (p. 12). Further, when we belong: we experience something like “the perfect fit,” a relation worthy of our time and effort, or even of our entire life. The term “belonging” then suggests a grasp of this sense of perfection as a fit suited to us. (Greenaway, 2023, p. 2)

For librarians, paying attention to belonging involves a high degree of care and fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. Yazdani (2024) suggests that adopting a pedagogy of care within libraries can enhance the sense of belonging among underrepresented communities

and that increasing belonging through activating library spaces with learning and socio-cultural activities also increases engagement—critical in student academic motivation and success. Corral (2022) reasons that “developing and managing relationships, building and sustaining communities and strengthening identity and belonging (especially for minority groups) will be central tasks for librarians moving forward” (p. 130). This argument represents an ongoing progression of librarians’ concept of the “library as place” which recognises that it holds material and social connections and relationships.

Libraries envisaged as both learning-centred and social spaces (Bryant et al., 2009; Leighton & Weber, 1999) encourage student engagement. Librarians recognise that place is “intimately associated with a person’s sense of being, belonging, and ownership” (Rizzo, 2002, p. 457). It is an intentional activation of a vision of the library as a place that is of and for the diverse library community (Yazdani, 2024). Ahn and Davis (2020) use empirical data to argue that a sense of belonging in higher education is multi-dimensional, and surroundings are indeed an important factor. The shift from library space to a sense of place brings forward how participants value intentional activation of the library to nurture a sense of belonging, even if the library is not necessarily seen as having a role here:

The academic library as a physical environment, certainly has always been a home for people to physically come into. It’s always been an open community. I don’t think it’s always an obvious role in the university. But I think there’s certainly a role that we have, linking people and communities together. (*Interview Respondent #1, GO8 Library*)

As a proponent of the “space – place connection” Temple (2024) contends that creating special places and understanding their social relations should matter to universities because:

they are in the knowledge business, and ought to want their physical estates to support knowledge production and transfer, rather than obstruct it... Trying to understand the alchemy of turning space into place – because place is where good university work is done – should be a key task in university management. (p. 64)

Creating places from spaces is about creating meaning through individual, group, or cultural activities (Altman & Low, 1992). Often this means a place is felt as “home” (Antonsich, 2010) because home “is also a set of reciprocal relationships, of everyday events and practices, of accepting and being accepted as a legitimate part of a larger whole, involving both membership and a sense of belonging” (Healy, 2020, p. 126). For some participants, the library has all these attributes in abundance.

7.6.4 Home

One place that is invested with the full range of meanings and relationships of community, place, and belonging is home (Blunt & Varley, 2004). Home is a lived and metaphorical experience that accommodates the relation between feelings of comfort, belonging, and place in both its imaginaries and its physical forms (Blunt & Dowling, 2022; Blunt & Varley, 2004). Blunt and Dowling (2022) define home as:

both material and imaginative, as both a site and a set of meanings/emotions. Home is a material dwelling and also an affective space, shaped by emotions and feelings of belonging... the physical location and a psychological or emotional feeling are bound up together rather than separate and distinct.” (p. 28)

Many participants think of the library as home. Metaphorically, the library and home have similar features. And if the library is home, then the geography of the university resembles a city.

7.6.4.1 *Where is a Sense of Home to be Found in the University?*

{ The university is a city.
 { The library is home.

There is resonance in this metaphor pair that sets up a correspondence between two images—city and home—everything that home contains and delivers in relation to community and belonging is available in a particular location in the university. It is not only symbolic of the “intersection of the physical and intellectual/social dimensions of the university community” (Temple, 2024), but it is also a space that has become a meaningful place. Libraries have been transformed into places have shifted their focus to becoming “a centre of meaning constructed by experience” (Tuan, 1977, p. 151). Increasingly, librarians are taking the view that library spaces are places where they can encourage a sense of belonging (Bryant et al., 2009; Emerson, 2024; Rizzo, 2002; Temple, 2024, p. 38). Librarians want people to feel at home and comfortable in the library, often as a response to their observation that students (especially new students) experience feelings of not belonging in the university, often because of its scale:

And so it takes that time for them [students] to feel comfortable and we also have like everybody, a fairly decent attrition rate and if they don't get past that early time and find where they fit and can connect, we lose them. I think they get a lot of that connectedness in the library actually. (*Interview Respondent #9, RUN Library*)

Tuan (1975) believes that “experience constructs place at different scales” (p. 153). The university and the library—city and home—exist at different scales. The university has the scale of a city:

The university, I think it's a city. It's just got huge diversity, lots of competing interests, lots of complementary goals but lots of competing ones as well... when you're new it

can be hard to find where you fit. It's a very complex machine. It's complex on a massive scale and not very welcoming. (*Interview Respondent #4, GO8 Library*)

In the institutional scale of the university, where it can be difficult to find a sense of belonging, the library as a home provides an antidote because:

Home as a place is a porous, open, intersection of social relations... Home is not separated from public, political, worlds but is constituted *through* them: the domestic is created through the extra-domestic and vice versa. Relatedly, the domestic sphere stretched into and through other scales like the nation and the city. (Blunt & Dowling, 2022, p. 30)

From the perspective of many participants, the comforting interior spaces in the library produce “a sense of place.” The “living room” is another metaphor for the library, and when paired with the metaphor of a “small town,” it amplifies the cosiness of the library.

{ The university is a small town.
 { The library is a living room.

The scale of the library is more intimate compared to other spaces and places in the university. The underlying value emphasised is conviviality. This is encapsulated in one participant's description of the “living room”:

The library is a living room. It's a place to discuss ideas, for students to take a break, make a coffee, lounge in the comfortable furniture and discuss issues with friends. So the library is for ideas to be nurtured. (*Interview Respondent #11, RUN Library*)

Studies show that students feel “at home” in the library (Duffin & Corrigan, 2023; Mehta & Cox, 2021), and library design has a key role in creating feelings of homeliness. However, apart from consideration of design, there is limited research that addresses how to activate a sense of the

library as home within the university and the significance of doing so. The possible implications are that, as Temple (2024) suggests, where people feel comfortable and connected enough to dwell, dwelling in turn has consequences. Barnett and Bengtson (2020) draw on Heidegger to argue that students and teachers who dwell in the university are compelled to protect and cherish the very idea of the institution because to dwell is to belong and to take responsibility for one's home.

At first, the echo in these metaphor pairs related to home sounds like resonance: there is a correspondence between “city” and “home,” “small town” and “living room.” The resounding in these pairs vibrates sympathetically, the response amplifying the call and reinforcing it. But on closer inspection, what is really at play in these pairs is an enhancement of the original, with multiple possibilities. In effect, there is a reverberation in these pairs that implies enlargement and continuation. Theories of home are helpful in taking a more critical look at what is lurking between these metaphors that can be transmitted further.

Barnett and Bengtson (2020) argue that universities sustain living reason, suggesting that learning, teaching, working, and thinking in service of “the life of reason and knowledge” require attachment to a place, a physical environment, that also provides a sense of belonging:

To thrive, the life of reason has to constitute a home, where its inhabitants feel at home.

(Barnett & Bengtson, 2020, p. 143)

This requires spaces within the university that constitute an “intellectual home” or provide “existential footholds” to bring people together in reflection and thinking, habits that can continue to be recalled for future reference (Barnett & Bengtson, 2020). Librarians would likely argue that, for all intents and purposes, such footholds are in the library. However, the benefits of

the library as home, as a place to dwell and thrive, are not always visible in ideas of the university.

As “home” the library offers a sense of belonging and a supported transition to the world. This sentiment is echoed in one participant’s explanation of the benefits of experiencing the library as a metaphorical living room: when a student “leaves the living room, they go while thinking about and applying some of these ideas and knowledge to the world outside” (*Survey Respondent, IRU Library*). While libraries play a vital role in fostering feelings of being at home and belonging, the library is perhaps not appreciated as a tactic for cultivating and sustaining attachment to the university. There is potential here for movement in an unexpected direction.

Arguments that the future durability of the Idea of the University depends on widening the debate to everyone in the university community, and that librarians need to join this debate intentionally, have been well established to this point. However, the chorus of echoing ideas in this portrait suggests that movement in another direction is needed. Is it feasible that this conversation could actively circulate in the library? The library offers a sense of home; it offers possibility as a place where the growing chorus of voices being invited to engage in the Idea of the University can dwell.

7.7 The Idea of the University is at Home in the Library

This portrait is about relationality between ideas, people, and places. Relations are established within metaphor pairs, between metaphor pairs and across the choir of voices that is currently and potentially in dialogue with the Idea of the University. It offers the library as a place where conversations about the Idea belong, and as a home for engagement with the Idea to flourish. For movement in this direction to be realised, the view of the library as holding the

promise of home has to be attractive and gain traction in the university community. Ortega's (2016) strategy of "hometactics" is perhaps helpful here. Hometactics are "practices that allow for a sense of familiarity and a particular sense of "belonging" to a place, space, group, or world while avoiding the restrictive, exclusive elements that a notion of belonging might carry with it" (Ortega, 2016, p. 194). They are everyday practices that remake home within a new location and provide comfort and a sense of belonging without impeding critique. The political context and scale of relations in the university can make a sense of belonging problematic. However, hometactics shine a light on the library as a place of possibility, one that is so attractive and welcoming that a chorus of different voices arrives to expand the multiple ideas of the university already there.

A choir is integrated voices. It is voices that come together. It can be enlarged. It welcomes new voices and works to harmonise sounds. The act of encountering the Idea of the University in the library and thinking about how the Idea is enacted in the library is also a tactic for inviting more voices into the choir that is the Idea of the University. A chorus of voices at home in the library is therefore a metaphor for richer spaces to engage with the Idea of the University. In this imaginary, the library can become a new site for reimagining and refreshing the Idea.

7.8 Ideas and Relationality

The Idea Portraits in Chapters Three, Six, and Seven, each in their own way, are about movement and the relations between ideas. In Chapter Three, the movement is simply to bring librarians' attention to the Idea. In Chapter Six, a view of the tension between metaphors is seen as potential movement and wrestling with what becoming unstuck has to offer in terms of

engagement with the Idea. In this chapter, the echo in metaphor pairs provides movement that amplifies voices in dialogue with the Idea.

Moreover, this portrait introduces echoing ideas; sounds that repeat, resonate and reverberate to give a “new voice to an old utterance by allowing for previously unheard and unknown meanings to surface” (Davenport, 2022, p. 461). Thinking with the theory of echo makes sense of the polyphony and brings a deeper understanding of the nature of the metaphorical dyads at the centre of the frame. All three portraits grapple with how two entangled ideas—university and library—might influence, shape, and potentially alter one another. But in this portrait, what is introduced is that it is also necessary to understand the choir.

CHAPTER 8: NEW VOICES, NEW IMAGINARIES

8.1 Encountering the Idea of the University in the Library

Metaphor in language is everywhere; it is ubiquitous. Metaphor invites multiple interpretations. It “is not merely a stylistic device, but an important means for expressing insights and information which cannot be stated in literal language” (Casenave, 1979, p. 19). It is the imaginative expression of ideas. I take metaphor seriously in this thesis because “the imagination has serious work to do in taking the university forward” (Barnett, 2013, p. 44). For librarians, imagination is at work in the metaphors they use for the university and library.

I began this research with a curiosity about librarians’ ideas of the university and what the library might look like if librarians engaged more deliberately with the Idea. Through metaphor, we stepped into dialogue with the Idea. Librarians’ metaphors set up a fresh encounter with the Idea of the University and add a missing professional voice and dimension to the academic debate about the Idea. Bringing new voices to a discussion about the relationality between the university as idea and institution has the potential to enrich the encounters that might be possible for everyone in the university community.

Inquiring into how librarians understand the Idea through metaphor was conducted in three stages: coding librarians’ metaphors into topics, thematic analysis of metaphors, and finally, a deeper analysis of metaphors through thinking with theory in Idea Portraits. The three Idea Portraits show different perspectives but are complementary. Each Idea Portrait effectively grows out of and builds upon the previous one. The movement across this trio facilitates a reseeing of the two ideas and contentions at the centre of this thesis. In this closing chapter, I view Idea Portraits as weaving a continuous story designed to attract attention, inspire, and

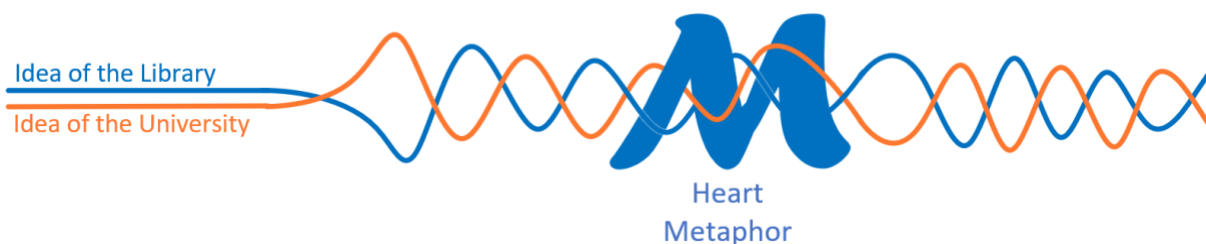
irrupt: they contribute to the ongoing narrative of the Idea. They hold out the hope of further inquiry that engages diverse voices with the Idea; and new encounters with the Idea in the library, too.

8.1.1 A Portrait of Centrality

The first portrait—a Portrait of Centrality—brings librarians’ attention to the Idea of the University. Although the Portrait of Centrality was written before I had identified the three patterns of entanglement, the single metaphor at the centre of the frame—the library is the heart of the university—is an example of ideas of the library and university as intertwined. The Portrait of Centrality crystallises around the heart metaphor, represented by a blue M in Figure 10; however, there are other examples of intertwined ideas circulating in the data. As indicated in Figure 10, the interlacing of the orange ribbon of the Idea of the University and the blue ribbon of the idea of the library represents those other intertwined ideas.

Figure 10

A Portrait of Centrality: The University and the Library as Intertwined Ideas



In the Portrait of Centrality, I analysed how the Idea of the University and the idea of the library are intertwined in the heart metaphor using multiple metaphor theories, as well as thinking with metaphor theory. This produced new interpretations of the heart metaphor and

resets the relationship between the Idea of the University and the library to call for librarians “to engage deliberately” with the Idea. What is unique about this portrait is that it offers a new perspective, one that suggests openness towards the Idea. It also expresses a desire for movement: an invitation for librarians to move towards the Idea of the University and away from ideas of the library that are isolated, self-referential, inward-looking, or static.

8.1.2 A Portrait of Neutrality

After calling librarians to notice the Idea of the University in the first portrait, the second portrait—a Portrait of Neutrality—provokes librarians’ thinking about the intersection between ideas of the university and the library. This portrait holds many metaphors in the frame—ideas that are in tension. To analyse the multiplicity of ideas in tension, the Portrait of Neutrality focuses on the Switzerland metaphor, which represents metaphors for library neutrality. An initial analysis of the Switzerland metaphor underlines its tensiveness and how metaphors for library neutrality clash with other metaphors.

The tension between the Switzerland metaphor and other metaphors for the university and library is polyvalent, slippery, messy, and raw. It is also multidirectional. In Figure 11 below, tension’s movement is indicated by a thick line that stretches between the ideas of the university and the library and through the Switzerland metaphor. In Figure 11, the duplicated orange Ms for the Idea of the University and duplicated blue Ms for the idea of the library, which are located precariously along the tension line, represent the multiplicity of ideas in tension. At each end of the tension line are arrows; their acute points signal potential movement and change in direction. Multiple twists and distortions in the spine of the tension line indicate the stretch,

strain, and stress between ideas. This tension distorts the blue and orange Ms, indicating disruption to ways of thinking about these ideas (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

A Portrait of Neutrality: The University and the Library as Ideas in Tension



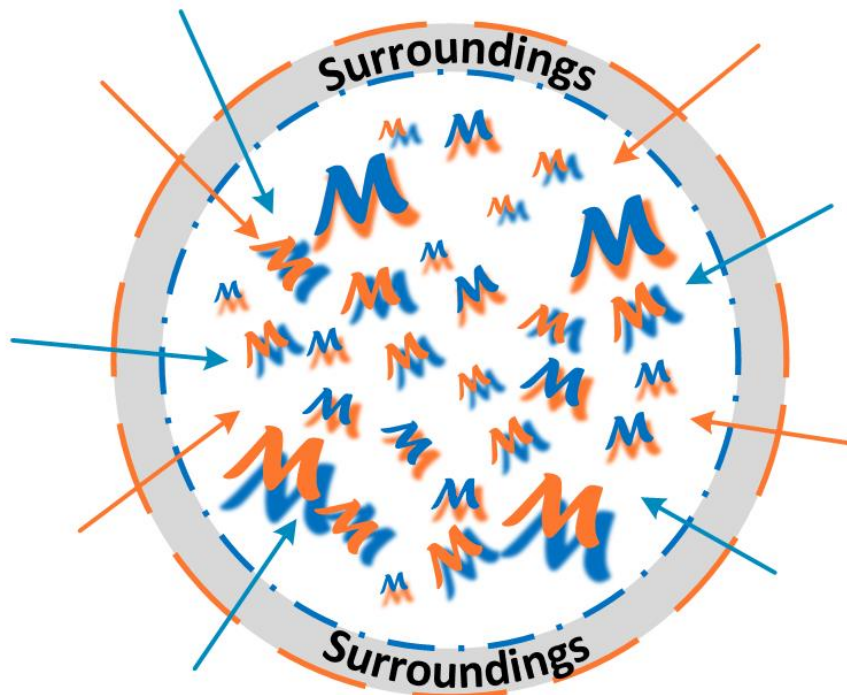
Thinking with theory sees neutrality's tension as potential movement that nudges how ideas of the university and the library might be thought about. The tension in neutrality has mutability; it is not static. It builds on the desire for movement in the first portrait. The tension moving between ideas also foregrounds a narrow in-between space, which is impossible to see without tension's multiple layers. Once seen, tension's in-between space is available as larger and more productive than the tension that seeded it. This portrait suggests that there is potential in choosing to inhabit the complexity of that in-between space. To make use of the tension and take advantage of it, however, requires finding comfort in it. Locating that comfort is a turn away from the kind of stuckness that makes it difficult to question relations in ideas of the university and the library. The in-between space is the basis for a third portrait.

8.1.3 A Portrait of Relationality

Echoing ideas, like those in tension, are polyvalent and multiple. Building on the tension and complexity in the second portrait, the third portrait—a Portrait of Relationality—stimulates librarians' thinking about the intersection between ideas of the university and the library in relation to people, place, and practice. Unlike the previous portraits, this portrait positions many metaphors at the centre of the frame: pairs of echoing ideas. Pairing echoing ideas multiplies relations, and centring many pairs is another multiplier. In Figure 12 below, the orange and blue Ms again represent ideas of the university and the library, respectively. Each pair of Ms, one solid and one less precisely defined, represents the echo. Importantly, the variation between sizes indicates that different types of resounding were used to think with. Echoes of community are the loudest. They hold the numerous constituencies, identities, and responsibilities of people, places, and practices. In Figure 12, they are indicated by the largest pairs of Ms to emphasise how echoes of community stand out against the euphony and cacophony of this chorus.

Figure 12

A Portrait of Relationality: The University and the Library as Echoing Ideas



The space created by offsetting Ms in each metaphor pair and the open white space between pairs is the in-between space created by echo. The echo between metaphors is a space of relations and movement. The white space between and among them represents the expansiveness and generosity of this in-between space. In this representation, the echo is both a pattern and a medium for transmission. This portrait depicts relations: sounds and ideas that, like an echo, are heard and travel in the context of their surroundings. The surrounding environment is indicated in Figure 12 by the dotted lines. The orange dotted line represents the context of the university, and the blue dotted line represents the context of the library. While this portrait, like the first and second portraits, is primarily about the relationship between ideas, it also acknowledges the humanness of people, place, and practice. This is illustrated in Figure 12 by the context lines.

What emerges in the meaning underpinning metaphor pairs is the richness and messiness of lived experience in these two contexts. Echoes exist within a political context of people, the places they work and their experiences and practices, which in effect, determine the nature of the echo. Individuals' feelings, emotions, inherent values, and influences from other contexts contribute to the richness and diversity of this environment. The surroundings determine the air through which echoes move and the atmosphere that might be possible in new sites of encounter with the Idea. In Figure 12, the arrows moving through the context lines, in the direction of the metaphor pairs, represent people in the university community navigating diverse surroundings to engage with the Idea. A chorus of echoes invites people into an encounter with the idea of the University in the library. This portrait suggests that there is possibility in accepting an invitation to the openness of an echo's in-between space. This is also movement toward a sophisticated appreciation of the library's central place in the Idea: as a home for dialogue and open debate; and as an invitation to engage with both ideas—university and library.

8.2 New Methodological Meldings

Each portrait, while unique, picks up where the last portrait left off, and the three Portraits also work in tandem. Looking at the complexity of Idea Portraits as a trio is illuminating. The three figures presented in this chapter serve as a visual shorthand for the value that the Portraits generate as a set. As a trio, the Portraits (and the earlier stages of data analysis) demonstrate the possibilities that arise when different types of analysis are put to work on the same data. In this process, the complexity in what are seemingly simple metaphors becomes apparent, and new spaces for interpretation open up. The methodological meldings used in this study are novel in library empirical research, which has a history of quantitative approaches

(Rochester, 2016). Although more methodological diversity and a variety of methods have been observed more recently (Hider & Pymm, 2008; Lund & Wang, 2021), this research adds even further to that evolving sophistication. In melding metaphor, methodology, and theory, I embarked on an interpretative continuum that, with Idea Portraits, extends into the space “after coding.” Influenced by Richardson and St. Pierre (2018), I “wrote my way into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer program or by analytic induction” (p. 829). By exercising that creativity, this thesis offers an example of a new research design for librarians eager to experiment with innovative approaches to conceptual and practice-based research.

Outside the realm of library research, this study also enhances the use of metaphors in qualitative inquiry in higher education. Pushing beyond the current framings of how metaphor research is thought about provides the stimulus to combine formulaic analytic traditions with more creative and imaginative qualitative approaches. By taking this pluralist approach, this study widens evolving ideas on methodologies. This is what melding metaphor, methodology, and theory in new ways does—it rattles the bars on the cage of library and metaphor research traditions.

A question that might be raised here is about the value of new meldings. Is it worth using one set of theories to conceptualise the research object and a mix of different theories to analyse and revisit one dataset? I think it is. Indeed, Ashwin (2012) suggests that “ways of seeing research objects (the internal language of description)” need to be separate and “different from the production of the outcomes of data analysis (external languages of description)” (p. 954). Importantly, this avoids a “single language of description” and creates an essential “discursive gap” (Ashwin, 2012, p. 950). In many ways, this research locates itself in that gap. By doing so, I

have been able to think more deeply about, and with, data and theory. What is established is an empirical line that runs from the conceptualisation of the research object to different forms of data, to three stages of analysis. It has culminated in thinking with theory to offer a “dense and multilayered treatment of data” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. vii). The resulting three Portraits—Centrality, Neutrality, and Relationality—would not have been possible otherwise.

8.3 A Curatorial Practice for the Idea of the University

Idea Portraits curate imaginaries of the university. Exhibiting the portraits together in this chapter puts on display what they allow librarians and others to see, think, and do differently. Librarians have always curated things: knowledge, access, services, and, it could be argued, spaces too. Idea Portraits make a case for an additional curatorial practice. At a time when the Idea of the University oscillates between being full of possibility and under threat, the library offers an unrealised opportunity to curate new imaginaries for the Idea. It can be a place that invites conversation and hosts productive dialogue that is open to all members of the university community. Indeed, Idea Portraits are expressions of this. They hold out and offer the library as a site for the debate and discussion of the Idea of the University. Importantly, they hold the promise of a new curatorial practice in the library.

8.3.1 Curatorial Practice: New Voices

The purpose of this research is not to make definitive claims but to provoke thought and bring attention to the Idea of the University in imagination and practice. I started with the premise that academic voices dominate the debate around the idea of the university and contended that the future of the Idea depends on expanding the debate to everyone in the university. As a leader of a university library, my intention for this research is to empower my

colleagues to give voice to their Idea of the University. I hoped this study would widen the debate on evolving ideas of the university to librarians, and it has. Librarians have ideas about the university that are important to them and should be part of the wider discussion. I also wanted to provide concrete direction for professional practice. This is more difficult, and a simple recipe for practice would, in effect, limit library practice.

Given librarians' predilection for practice-based perspectives and that I started this thesis with a personal story about the translation and transfer of the Idea of the University in my own family, as I bring the thesis to a close, it seems apt to finish with professional stories, examples of how I have taken deeper understandings of ideas of the university into my practice. What have I done differently in my professional life, and how has engaging deliberately with the Idea changed my practice as a library leader?

To start with, I have invited academics and those who philosophise about the Idea to be part of conversations with librarians about ideas of the university. This has brought the Idea of the University to the attention of librarians in my team as well as colleagues in national initiatives that I have been leading in recent years. By expanding the interlocutors in this conversation, these discussions have turned librarians' attention to theoretical ideas outside their field and provoked their thinking. It has also, once again, demonstrated librarians' curiosity and capacity for engaging with the concept of the Idea of the University.

8.3.2 Curatorial Practice: New Imaginaries

Engaging with ideas of the university as a curatorial practice that can be put to work in the library is an imaginative yet challenging task. In the act of reimagining the library with my team, the Idea of the University, the approaches used in this research, and the insights gained

from it have never been far away. A professional story that illustrates this in practice was our use of metaphors to start conversations about our future library practice. In one conversation about the different types of partnerships that library staff need to invest effort in, the metaphor “students are customers” was used to make a case that partnership with students was not a priority for us because partnership was not part of our existing relationship with students. Like other metaphors shared that day, it provoked our thinking and challenged how we conceptualise our practice. We discussed and debated the meaning harboured in the multiple layers of the “students are customers” metaphor. This metaphor raised tensions in how ideas of the university and the library are entangled and what this means for future practice. Importantly, it opened up conversations about the metaphors we were putting forward, the ideas of the university we are attached to (and the ones we are invited to attach to). It stirred interest in different theoretical readings that might help us become more comfortable with the tensions that had surfaced and be less stuck in particular ways of seeing our university relationships. Noticing how the Idea influences the conceptions we work with in our practice allowed us to re-see relations between ideas, people, and place. It encouraged us to create and curate new imaginaries. It also made us aware of how the meanings concealed in metaphors are not always the ones we want to privilege in our imaginaries of the university and library. (As a coda, we invited students to join us in reimagining the library, which has subsequently transformed practice on several levels.)

8.3.3 The Idea of the University: A Curatorial Project

Ideas of the university need to be curated. The purpose of sharing the professional stories above is to lay claim to the potential of the Idea Portraits. It is what engaging with the Idea of the University looks like. It positions librarians as present in a conversation that matters. It results in

a more profound understanding. Moreover, having these conversations in the library is both a rehearsal for wider debate and an invitation to join that debate. Idea Portraits point to the library as a site for a productive dialogue between all members of the university community engaged in a common purpose—to further the Idea. In short, unless the Idea is curated where professional and academic work happens, it is less likely to be widely engaged with in practice. My goal in this study has been to demonstrate the value of research about the Idea of the University that is informed by librarians' voices. By amplifying librarians' voices, an invitation is extended to other groups in the university community to engage in dialogue with two entangled ideas—university and library.

This research argues for a reinvention of curatorial practice in the library to encompass the voices, ideas, and practices that take the Idea seriously. It is a task that requires assembling, exhibiting, and interacting with ideas to elevate how the Idea can be discovered and experienced. It is likely to lead towards a richer outcome than haphazard or isolated engagement. While the outcome cannot be presupposed, the proposed curatorial practice optimises engagement pathways that would not happen otherwise. The aim is to bring a chorus of voices into the library and invite the Idea into shared and overlapping spaces. This is the promise of the library as a site for curating imaginaries—the Idea of the University becomes richer because it is enlarged and enriched by the voices of all groups within the university. In this way, the Library curates a new site of encounter where there is room for all to debate the Idea of the University.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Human Ethics Approval Letter



Research Integrity & Ethics Administration
Human Research Ethics Committee

Monday, 18 December 2017

Dr Amani Bell
Institute for Teaching & Learning; DVC Education
Email: @sydney.edu.au

Dear Amani

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application.

After consideration of your response to the comments raised your project has been approved.

Approval is granted for a period of four years from **18 December 2017 to 18 December 2021**

Project title: Academic librarians' ideas of the university.

Project no.: 2017/908

First Annual Report due: 18 December 2018

Authorised Personnel: Bell Amani; Bruncker Nicole; Peseta Tai; Salisbury Fiona; Barrie Simon;

Documents Approved:

Date Uploaded	Version number	Document Name
15/12/2017	Version 2	PCF final
15/12/2017	Version 2	Interview PIS final
15/12/2017	Version 2	Questionnaire PIS
11/12/2017	Version 1	Safety Protocol
11/12/2017	Version 2	Recruitment letter for University Librarians final
11/12/2017	Version 2	Recruitment letter for Library Mangers final
11/12/2017	Version 2	Questionnaire final
20/10/2017	Version 1	Interview questions

Special Condition/s of Approval

- It is a condition of approval that any changes to the survey and/or interview questions are submitted to and approved by the Modifications Review Committee (MRC) before they are used with participants.

Condition/s of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.
- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.

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- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
 - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
 - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate *immediate* risk to participants).
- Personnel working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to personnel must be reported and approved.
- Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.
- Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the relevant legislation and University guidelines.
- Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, applicable legal requirements, and with University policies, procedures and governance requirements.
- The Ethics Office may conduct audits on approved projects.
- The Chief Investigator has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research and is responsible for ensuring all others involved will conduct the research in accordance with the above.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

Please contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Sincerely

Dr Jennifer Scott-Curwood
Chair
Humanities Review Committee (Low Risk)

The University of Sydney HRECs are constituted and operate in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) and the NHMRC's Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007).

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate in the Study

Email invitation to the University Librarian

Dear [insert name],

I am writing to invite you and your library staff to participate in an Australian research study that focuses on the 'idea of the university' and librarians. The purpose of this study is to investigate librarians' ideas of the university and bring a professional staff dimension to the existing scholarship on the idea of the university. The research is part of a doctoral study. For participating libraries, the study will involve:

- an interview with the University Librarian
- interviews with any senior library managers who volunteer to participate
- distribution of a voluntary online survey to library staff
- Library visit by one researcher

Attached is a Participant Information Statement (PIS) outlining the details of the study. The PIS describes the aims of the study, and includes important information about what is involved in consenting to participate. The main commitment I am asking for is your participation in an audio-recorded 45-60 minute face-to-face interview. In addition, I am asking that your senior library managers can be invited to participate in an interview and that all library staff can be invited to participate in an online survey. Participation in interviews and the online survey is voluntary. The questions in the interviews and survey will be designed to elicit library staff opinions and experiences of the idea of the university.

I would welcome a response from you before

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me - @uni.sydney.edu.au

Kind regards,

Fiona Salisbury

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in an Interview

Email invitation to Library Managers

Dear [insert name],

I am writing to invite you to participate in an Australian research study that focuses on the 'idea of the university' and librarians. The purpose of this study is to investigate librarians' ideas of the university and bring a professional staff dimension to the existing scholarship on the idea of the university. The research is part of a doctoral study.

Attached is a Participant Information Statement (PIS) outlining the details of the study. The PIS describes the aims of the study, and includes important information about what is involved in consenting to participate. The main commitment I am asking for is your participation in an audio-recorded 45-60 minute face-to-face interview.

In addition, as part of this study all library staff will be invited to participate in an online survey. Participation in interviews and the online survey is voluntary. The questions in the interviews and survey will be designed to elicit library staff opinions and experiences of the idea of the university.

I would welcome a response from you before

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me - [@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto: @uni.sydney.edu.au)

Kind regards,

Fiona Salisbury

Appendix D: Participant Information Statement



ABN 15 211 513 464

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

Dr Amani Bell, Senior Lecturer
Education Innovation, DVC Academic
Sydney School of Education & Social Work

Email: _____@sydney.edu.au

Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

Academic librarians' ideas of the university

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is this study about?

This research study is focused on the idea of the university and academic librarians. The purpose of this study is to investigate academic librarians' ideas of the university and how those ideas reflect the reality of library practice in institutions. The data gathered in the study will bring a professional staff dimension to the existing scholarship on the idea of the university.

As part of this study library staff will be invited to participate in an online survey and library managers will be invited to participate in an interview. The survey and interviews will provide all library staff with an opportunity to give their views about the contemporary idea of the university and express opinions on how the idea of the university might be imagined in the future.

(2) Giving consent to take part in the Study

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. As an interview participant, you will be asked to complete a Participant Consent form to tell the researchers that you:

- ✓ Understand what you have read about the research study.
- ✓ Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- ✓ Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

Survey respondents will also be given information about the study which will explain that voluntary submission of survey responses will indicate voluntary consent to participate in the study.

(3) Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Dr Amani Bell (Chief Investigator), Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Education & Social Work, The University of Sydney, Australia (email: _____@sydney.edu.au)
- Dr Tai Peseta (Co-Investigator), Honorary Senior Lecturer, Sydney School of Education & Social Work, The University of Sydney, Australia (email: _____@sydney.edu.au)
- Professor Simon Barrie (Co-Investigator), Honorary Associate, Sydney School of Education & Social Work, The University of Sydney, Australia (email: _____@sydney.edu.au)
- Dr Nicole Brunker (Co-Investigator), Sydney School of Education & Social Work, The University of Sydney, Australia (email: _____@sydney.edu.au)

- Fiona Salisbury (PhD Student), Sydney School of Education & Social Work, The University of Sydney, Australia (email: f.salisbury@uni.sydney.edu.au)

Three of the researchers involved in this study are also associated with other universities. Professor Simon Barrie (Co-Investigator) is an Honorary Associate at the University of Sydney and also employed at Western Sydney University. Dr Tai Peseta (Co-Investigator) is an Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Sydney and also employed at Western Sydney University. Fiona Salisbury is a PhD student at the University of Sydney and also employed at La Trobe University.

(4) What will the study involve for my library?

For participating libraries, the study will involve:

- 45-60 minute interview with the University Librarian
- 45-60 minute with senior library managers (who volunteer to participate)
- Voluntary online survey distributed to library staff
- Sharing Library and university strategic plans
- Library visit by one researcher

(5) What will the study involve for me?

You will be asked to participate in an individual semi-structured interview taking approximately 45-60 minutes. The interviews will take place face-to-face at your local university. The interviews will take place at a time mutually agreed upon, and will cover a range of topics related to your opinions and experiences of the idea of the university. Alongside the interview and as part of the study's methodology, we will ask to collect additional data about your role.

Being involved in the study means your identity, views, and any information we collect from you related to the study is completely confidential and anonymous in all research outputs. At any time during the study, you can request to withdraw your information from the study.

You will have an opportunity to comment on the interview transcript and to offer any clarifications. You can indicate that you wish to review your transcript on your Participant Consent Form (tick the box).

It is not anticipated that you will be exposed to any risks, discomfort or harm as a result of participating in the study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you choose not to participate, it will not affect your relationship with The University of Sydney or any institution named as being involved in this study.

(6) How much of my time will the study take?

If you decide to be a participant in the study, an interview is likely to last between 45-60 minutes.

(7) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by contacting the researcher who interviewed you (Fiona Salisbury email: f.salisbury@uni.sydney.edu.au) or the Chief Investigator Dr Amani Bell (email: amani.bell@sydney.edu.au) or the Co-Investigator Dr Tai Peseta (email: tai.peseta@sydney.edu.au)

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

- (8) **Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?**
Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.
- (9) **Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?**
Given your leadership role in academic libraries, your experiences and perspectives help set the direction for collaborations across the university, development of library services, programs and capability building of library staff. A benefit of involvement in this study is that your opinions and understandings will contribute to a scholarly conversation about the future idea of the university and how professional staff and academic libraries can be positioned in this dialogue. However, there are no guaranteed benefits of participating in the study.
- (10) **What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?**
Your information will be stored securely on a University of Sydney server consistent with its policy related to research data management, and your identity/information will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. All data from the study will be stored online in a re-identifiable form for the duration of the study, and for 5 years following the completion of the study, no matter the level of consent. After that period, all electronic files will be removed from the server and deleted.
- Study findings may be published. You will not be identified in research outputs. By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.
- Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information not be disclosed, except as required by law. Any printed files will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the university offices/local premises of the researchers involved in the project.
- (11) **Can I tell other people about the study?**
Yes, you are welcome to tell other people about the study.
- (12) **What if I would like further information about the study?**
When you have read this information, Dr Amani Bell (Chief Investigator: _____@sydney.edu.au; _____) or Dr Tai Peseta (Co-Investigator: _____@sydney.edu.au or + _____) will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact the student researcher listed below who has made contact with you:
Fiona Salisbury (PhD Student), Sydney School of Education & Social Work, The University of Sydney, Australia (email: _____@uni.sydney.edu.au, mobile: _____)
- (13) **Will I be told the results of the study?**
You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can indicate that you wish to receive a one-page summary on the key findings of this study on your Participant Consent Form (tick the box). Ongoing updates about the project and any publications related to the project will be made available via the project blog [insert URL].
- (14) **What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?**
Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [protocol number 2017/908]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176
- Email: human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form



Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

ABN 15 211 513 464

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR
Dr Amani Bell, Senior Lecturer
Education Innovation, DVC Academic
Sydney School of Education and Social Work

Email: @sydney.edu.au
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

Academic librarians' ideas of the university

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

- ✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- ✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- ✓ The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- ✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney, other individuals or institutions relating to the research, now or in the future.
- ✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- ✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
- ✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- ✓ I understand that my name, audio from my interview, and extracts from my interview will not be identifiable in research outputs.
- ✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that my unidentified information, data, and views may be used by the research team in those research publications.

I would like to review my interview transcripts

YES

NO

I would like to receive a one-page summary on the key findings of this study

YES

NO

If you answered YES to either of the above, please indicate your preferred contact address:

Postal: _____

Email: _____

.....
Signature

.....
PRINT name

.....
Date

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

1. Why did you decide to become a leader in an academic library?
 - a. As a leader, how do you set up a collaboration?
 - b. What are the institutional conditions that enable a sustainable collaboration?
2. What is the idea of the university that you work with in your role?
3. How would you express your idea of the university in a metaphor?
 - a. Use Prompt: The university is ...because...
 - b. Can you please tell me more about why this metaphor is meaningful to you and explain why you chose it?
4. How would you express your idea of the library in a metaphor?
 - a. Use Prompt: The academic library is ...because...
 - b. Can you please tell me more about why this metaphor is meaningful to you and explain why you chose it?
5. One Australian scholar (Barcan, 1996), describes the university as simultaneously scholarly, managerial/corporate, and bureaucratic. Is your idea of the university similar or different to these concepts?
6. What ideas of the university best reflect the reality of working in your institution?
7. How do you see the role of the academic library in the university?
8. How do you see the role of the university in society?
9. How do you see the role of the academic library in society?

Appendix G: Online Survey Questionnaire

Academic librarians' ideas of the university

You are invited to participate in this survey as a [...] University library staff member. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information from library staff about their ideas of the university and how those ideas reflect the reality of practice in institutions.

The 'idea of the university' has been evolving for two hundred years, and during this time, academics have been discussing and debating the nature of the university. Despite the fact that academic libraries have been a part of universities throughout their nearly one-thousand-year history and the fact that the role of academic libraries is constantly changing, librarians have rarely engaged with the scholarly conversations shaping the 'idea' of the university. This survey provides an opportunity for you to give your view about the contemporary idea of the university and express your opinions on how the idea of the university might be imagined in the future.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. This questionnaire should around 15-20 minutes to complete. Submitting your responses indicates your voluntary consent to participate and that you understand the Participant Information statement [link to PIS]. There are no penalties if you decide not to participate or skip any questions. There are no expected benefits, risks or discomforts to participants who agree to participate, other than giving their time. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential. At no time will your response to any question be linked with your name, or with any other identifying information. As participation is anonymous, it will not be possible to isolate and extract an individual's data from that collected. Data will be stored electronically in Survey Monkey. In completing the questionnaire, you are giving permission for your responses to be used for research and possible publication. No identifying data will be used in any reports resulting from the survey.

Should you have any concerns or questions you can contact:
Fiona Salisbury - @uni.sydney.edu.au

If you have any complaints or concerns about your participation in this survey that we have not been able to answer to your satisfaction, you may wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number 2017/908.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- Telephone: +61 2 8627 8176
- Email: human.ethics@sydney.edu.au
- Fax: +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile)

Part 1 – Introduction

1. University name
2. HEO/HEW Level (3-5) (6-7) (8-9) (10-10+)
3. Gender [male, female, Other/do not wish to disclose]
4. Qualifications

Part 2 – Your practice

1. Why did you choose to work in an academic library? [open]
2. How does your work in the library contribute to the work of the university? [open]

Part 3 – The idea of contemporary academic library

1. The idea of the academic library is often described through metaphor. From the list below, choose the metaphors that best describe your view of the academic library. Number in rank order as many as you feel are relevant.

I envisage the academic library as:

- An academic living room
- An academic temple
- An activist
- A boundary spanning unit
- A business or industry
- A clinic
- A community hub
- A crossroads community
- A digital access point
- A digital commons
- An ecosystem
- A garden of learning
- A gate keeper
- A gate opener
- A gymnasium
- The heart of the university
- A hub of the information community
- An information commons
- An information portal
- An institutional common ground
- A knowledge commons for collective learning
- A knowledge navigator
- A laboratory
- A learning centre
- A learning commons
- An online knowledge server
- A part of campus landscape
- A partner
- A platform for ideas and passions
- A quarry of knowledge
- A sacred space
- A scholars' playground
- A storehouse/warehouse for books
- A wisdom's temple

2. Describe how does your top ranked metaphor reflect your library practice? [open]

3. If you had to imagine a new metaphor for the contemporary academic library what would it be?
 - a. The library is ...
 - b. because...

Part 4 – The idea of university

1. The idea of the university has been described in different ways. The list below comes from the work of Ron Barnett (2013).
 - The accessible university
 - The adaptive university
 - The anarchic university
 - The borderless university
 - The bureaucratic university
 - The business-facing university
 - The capitalist university
 - The caring university
 - The civic university
 - The collaborative university
 - The commercialised university
 - The corporate university
 - The cosmopolitan university
 - The digital university
 - The discontented university
 - The ecological university
 - The edgeless university
 - The entrepreneurial university
 - The ethical university
 - The foolish university
 - The global university
 - The injured university
 - The knowledge/knowledgeable university
 - The learning university
 - The liquid university
 - The lost university
 - The marketised university
 - The mega university
 - The neo-liberal university
 - The networked university
 - The performative university
 - The perverse university
 - The pragmatic university
 - The 'publiversity'
 - The reasoning university
 - The research university
 - The responsible university
 - The robotic university
 - The schizophrenic university
 - The scholarly university
 - The scientific university
 - The supercomplex university
 - The technological university

- The theatrical university
- The virtual university
- The virtuous university
- The university of wisdom

(Barnett, Ronald. *Imagining the University*, Taylor and Francis, 2013. ProQuest Ebook Central.)

Describe how your practice in the library is reflected in any of these views of the university. [open]

2. If you had to imagine a new metaphor for the university what would it be? [open]

- a. The university is ...
- b. because...

Part 5 – Shaping the future idea of the university

The relationship between universities and their academic libraries is constantly changing and evolving. Using metaphor, describe what you think this connection will look like in 5-10 years time. [open]