PLAYING WITH THE FUTURE: LIBRARY ENGAGEMENT AND CHANGE

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Libraries, as authoritative custodians and providers of information, are facing a number of challenges as they are trying to adjust to the new information environment. Some challenges arise from major paradigm shifts in recent decades relating to the understanding of the nature of information processes and conceptions of authority. Engagement through serious play is proposed as a way of dealing with discrepancies between traditional roles and contemporary demands, enabling experimentation and exploration of future roles. Two organisational projects from the University of Technology, Sydney Library are used as examples to demonstrate how playful engagement can be applied to planning for the library of the future. Insights from the two projects and literature point towards serious play as a promising approach to library innovation and change.

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The knowledge environment has changed significantly over the past several decades. A paradigm shift influenced by postmodern ideas, changes in the understanding of information, learning and authority, and the emergence of digital cultures have all contributed to disturbing the position of universities as towers of authoritative knowledge. Predominant views that knowledge and authority are socially constructed and that understanding is based on individual experience and interpretation, place higher education institutions, and the academic libraries within them, in a position where they have to reconsider their place and interactions with all the other players in information and learning environments.

Changes in thinking about knowledge and information relate to three main shifts of interest in this article. The first two concern thinking about the nature of information processes. First, the idea that meaning does not exist objectively in its own right but is individually and socially constructed is a corner stone of contemporary information theory. The second shift concerns insights into sensory and emotional aspects of information processes. Although some authors have previously discussed emotional aspects of information-seeking (Kuhlthau, 1993: 185; 1999), the emphasis was generally on rational and intentional processes. In recent years, however, a growing body of research points towards the significance of emotions in information processing (Damasio, 2000a, 2000b). The third shift concerns the conception of authority and authoritative knowledge in postmodern theory. Foucault (1972) and Lyotard (1984), to name just two, discussed the role of power in social constructions of knowledge authority. Discussions about power relations on which scientific knowledge is based have had a significant influence on the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault, 1980: 81). These ideas provided a fertile ground for the rise of open inclusive digital cultures and environments as we know them. Distributed networks, digital information shaped by numerous players, online learning and socialising, all resulting from philosophical shifts as much as from technological advances, irrevocably transformed the information environment. These changes that are resulting in a participatory networked world where knowledge and authority are based on individual experience have led to a deep unease in the library profession.

Libraries as stable institutions and custodians of authoritative knowledge have been trying hard to fit into this changing knowledge environment while preserving their traditionally highly valued functions. The library profession often laments the changing and diminishing role which libraries play in the information society in which, it is often claimed, libraries can or should claim most prominent positions. Yet this is not the case, and numerous initiatives to adjust the way in which libraries operate do not go far enough. The main reasons may be related to difficulties in responding to the three major shifts mentioned above.

Libraries are still operating with their historical role as neutral providers of authoritative information. Some librarians may accept that there is nothing neutral about the selection and classification of information and that any knowledge claim is socially contextualised, however libraries as we know them can hardly function by embracing this position. Instead, the library's central role in warehousing print collections, and operating services to store, sort and teach people how to find their materials is becoming obsolete as physical collections become digital ones, and digital discovery tools are easy and quick to use, and provide flexible and customisable ways to search and order information (Becker, 2006; Davis, 2008: 57-58; Jakubs, 2008; Ross & Sennyey, 2008: 149) .

Library spaces have rapidly changed to enable different ways of working, and to appeal to the senses, but the core collections and services have not changed significantly. Ross and Sennyey (2008) argue that, the wide-spread adoption of new technologies is probably not enough to save libraries, as "once established entities recognize the competitive threat in which they operate, their reflex is to fine-tune the time proven model – obsolete though it may be – rather than

recognizing that the marketplace has made a discontinuous switch to an altogether new model" (Ross & Sennyey, 2008: 151). Whether libraries should follow suit and whether their model is altogether obsolete are important questions for libraries, but the critical issue is that widely accepted answers do not currently exist. Quick adjustments and remodelling are certainly much more difficult for large and well-established institutions such as libraries than for many new information players. What libraries can do, however, is to engage with their users, staff and other actors in the information world to explore new roles and possibilities in dealing with change.

Playful engagement, we argue, is a particularly promising form of exploration of possibilities. Play is a useful step towards enabling libraries to address the dynamism of the information environment in a more than cosmetic way by helping them to become more open and responsive to change. Changing library systems to reflect changes in users' expectations and their modern ways of encountering information is a complex task, and a task made more difficult by the traditional attitude of librarians as custodians and protectors of the past and its artefacts. Using play in an institutional setting revolves around engaging and encouraging librarians' ability to imagine and create through play.

THE NATURE OF PLAY

Phenomenology and, more specifically, the philosophy of hermeneutics provide some useful ideas for considering the tension between objective authoritative systems and individual sense-making in social contexts. Tradition and historical moments define every person and every individual instance of understanding. According to Gadamer (2004), the formation of an individual is determined by connections with social circles and, through them, with a historical period. Tradition never persists because of inertia alone: it is a form of preservation which plays a role in every historical change, even the most violent ones.

Heidegger (1962) famously argued that we always have a relation to the world, we are defined by "being in the world". Our understanding of the world (and, necessarily, sense-making) is constructed individually and in relation to the world. Hermeneutics describes one person's view by using the concept of horizon, "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 2004: 302). The process of understanding develops in the hermeneutic circle formed in the movement between part and the whole. This process of interpreting and reinterpreting develops in the movement back and forth.

Play, a key concept in hermeneutics, is fundamental for our understanding of playful engagement. The concept of play explains understanding, which can develop beyond the limitations of one's own subjectivity. Play provides space for the merging of horizons which does not belong to and cannot be controlled by any player. Understanding, like play, happens in the space in between, in the dynamic movement back and forth. As Gadamer (2004: 102) explained, play is engaging and serious:

> Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play. Someone who doesn't take the game seriously is a spoilsport.

Play is constructed between partners. Gadamer (2004: 104) points out the subject of play is "not the subjectivity of an individual who, among other activities, also plays but is instead the play itself". Since play is open-ended, it cannot be controlled and, consequently, it carries a degree of risk: "Even in the case of games in which one tries to perform tasks that one has set oneself, there is a risk that they will not "work," "succeed", or "succeed again", which is the attraction of the game" (Gadamer, 2004: 106).

The hermeneutical approach to play as a situation for merging horizons corresponds to an understanding of engagement as an activity, which cannot be predetermined, allowing serious and meaningful interactions between all participants. Fear et al (2006: 3) discuss critical engagement as a purposeful but open-ended practice:

> Doing that requires shedding skin: you start by letting go of sacred practices such as allowing yourself to become comfortable with NOT mapping your journey at the outset. We learned that the learning road will take you 'where it will,' as long as the journey is undertaken authentically and responsibly, guided by core questions.

Engagement does not necessarily require play, but it is a condition of play. The play cannot exist without engagement. Play is defined by an intense involvement of players in an activity which happens outside the ordinary life (Huizinga, 1955). Meyer (2010: 132) noted that in play "many are not aware of time passing at all, only the present moment".

Although intense involvement in play is experienced individually, play is essentially a social activity. Even when it is a solitary activity, the presence of a community or audience is implied. Another characteristic of play is that it develops through the use of feelings and senses. According to Sandelands (2010), players use their intuition and feeling rather than analysis and mind. Ideas of change and growth are central to the understanding of play. Not only children play as they grow and try to make sense of the world around them, but adults use play to innovate, adapt to changes and try new identities. Play happens "at the boundary between fantasy and reality where new social arrangements arise to take the place of old social arrangements" (Sandelands: 72). Furthermore, "change can happen as play only in a reality open to fantasy; in a reality that is held lightly enough to be played-upon or played-with" (Sandelands, 82). As Sandelands points out, a "light hold on reality facilitates unfreezing, moving ahead and refreezing" as new arrangements are accepted. The acceptance of possible dangers and creativity in dealing with difficulties are part of this light approach to the reality.

Play offers some promising possibilities for libraries facing a need to 'unfreeze' in order to promote dialogue within their own ranks and with the outside world.

Defined by opening a dialogical space between individuals in social contexts, by tapping into players' feelings and senses, and by being situated in a transitory area between fantasy and reality, play ticks all the right boxes for libraries wanting a change, but struggling with its particular type of tradition based on stability, rationality, and authority.

PLAY IN ORGANISATIONS

Since the industrial revolution, work has been predominantly seen as repetitive labour reliant on control and extrinsic rewards to motivate workers. With the shift towards the 'knowledge economy' there is a growing recognition that employees are a key component of an organisation's intellectual capital. In order to be competitive, it is no longer sufficient for organisations to manage employees who perform discrete tasks. Instead, there is a need to establish a more holistic approach to engage with the workforce and tap into their full potential. In response to this need, employers are increasingly exploring ways of nurturing employees' engagement, often by encouraging play as a part of organisational culture. Meyer (2010) argues that, to achieve organisational success, the workplace needs to become a playspace where play becomes a mindset and regular part of work. Kurt, Kurt, and Medaille (2010) argue for the value of play in fostering library innovation and creativity. The authors analyse examples from Google, 37signals, IDEO, and Pixar Animation Studios to demonstrate how play is used as a key component of an organisational culture of innovation. Through play, an organisation can develop a relationship with employees that engages the whole person, thereby building a culture of commitment, trust, and creativity.

As mentioned earlier, play can also be important in dealing with change and the construction of work identities. Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010: 10) found that "people work at being certain things but play at becoming others." According to the authors, play has been successfully used to manage transitional stages in identity development allowing safe space for experimentation with future possibilities. While identity work is situated in "external reality, identity play generally unfolds at the threshold between fantasy and reality, on the boundary between dreams (i.e. the possible selves in our heads) and reality (i.e. the concrete possibilities available in the world at any given time)" (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 15).

Although the exploration of possible identities is a serious task, identity or any other organisational play may take some apparently superficial forms. The distinction between serious play which taps into creative potential and deals with serious issues, on one side, and diversionary play as entertainment and distraction, on another, is not always clear. In a study of playful behaviours of software engineers, it was found that "[e]fficient programming, paradoxically, seems to be difficult without games, music, place to rest, and other forms of leisure" (Hunter, Jemielniak, & Postula, 2010: 98). According to the results of this study, playful behaviours permeate many organisational activities contributing to employees' positive sense of themselves and their commitment to their work.

Organisations committed to supporting playfulness use a range of strategies to make it possible. Strict social rituals and formalities as well as organisational

hierarchies usually stifle engagement, whereas flatter organisational models tend to encourage openness and exchange amongst team members (Georgsdottir, Lubart, & Getz, 2003: 185). At the same time, a clear sense of support is very important -- the guidance of elders and support of peer groups are essential in transitional processes such as identity play (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010).

Creative play as the most desirable form of playfulness requires committed players with an intrinsic motivation and an attitude that regards work as an extension of natural interests. Indeed, it has been argued that intrinsic motivation which comes from the pleasure and personal satisfaction derived from the task itself, is necessary for creative innovation to prosper (Farr, Sin, & Tesluk, 2003; Lepper & Henderlong, 2000). Intrinsically motivated groups and individuals are usually willing to ask questions, and to use fantasy and imagination to challenge assumptions and seek novel solutions (Farr, et al., 2003: 582; Starbuck & Webster, 1991). However, intrinsic motivation is a personal trait and ability, often remaining outside an organisational influence. What an organisation can do is to use a number of strategies such as establishing a positive and relaxed atmosphere to enable positive moods which, in turn, promote creativity (Sukovic, 2011).

Team work is an aspect of playfulness that can be controlled by an organisation to some extent. Group knowledge, group diversity and diversity of skills are pertinent to the functioning of an effective group. Though the creative potential of diverse groups is high, there is a challenge in quickly establishing a rapport between team members who do not necessarily work together (Farr, et al., 2003: 577). One method of countering this lack of familiarity is to provide a safe and positive group environment, which reduces individual resistance to the group task and allows individuals to free themselves to think creatively (Farr, et al., 2003: 580). Safety is also necessary for experimentation, which has to include a margin for error. In safety, teams can create and recognise errors, which generate problems, but also provide learning opportunities (Root-Bernstein, 2003: 172).

Since play is happening on the boundary between fantasy and reality, one powerful approach to fostering 'serious' playfulness is in the use of imagining, daydreaming and fantasy. 'Guided imagery' is a technique of harnessing our innate ability to imagine which we have applied to an organisational setting. This approach involves the provision of 'scenario script of cues' (Maddox, Anthony, & Wheatley, 1987: 120) and is used for tasks like picturing hypothetical scenarios, imagining the results of various behaviours or strategies, and generating alternatives.

PLAYFUL ENGAGEMENT IN PRACTICE: TWO LIBRARY EXAMPLES

Libraries have a long tradition of engaging with their users. Public libraries in particular have a remarkable track record of exploring new ways to engage with their communities, often by initiating playful and entertaining events. However, in library organisational cultures, playfulness has been normally reserved for parties and informal interactions between staff rather than for strategy development. Experiments with playful engagement to enhance strategic thinking at the University of Technology, Sydney Library (UTS Library) provide rare opportunities to glean some insights into playful approaches to deal with issues of planning for change in libraries.

Like most academic libraries, the UTS Library is examining its current and future role and possible new ways of engaging with users. Preparations for a new library building have opened organisation-wide discussions about the future directions for the Library. These discussions have been focused around the theme 'Library of the Future'. Both aspects of library work – alternative forms of engagement with clients and considerations of the 'Library of the Future' – contributed to an organisational climate which fostered openness and innovation. This atmosphere provided a favourable environment for two projects in 2010 which exploited opportunities for engagement and creative thinking about the library's future. The first was the Library Strategic Planning focusing on engagement among staff members, and the second was the 'Clients of the Future' project, involving engagement with the community. The two projects aimed to explore possibilities for the future of libraries by encouraging creative and lateral thinking in an atmosphere of playful engagement. Although the two projects raised somewhat different questions to suit different groups of participants, both invited exploratory approaches to the future of information work and provision.

LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING 2010

Planning Day is a regular feature of the annual planning cycle at the UTS Library when staff are invited to participate in discussions about proposed plans for the coming year, usually at two forums. The University Librarian and Sukovic (Sukovic, 2011) decided to experiment with a new approach, inspired by the concepts of imagineering and serious play to encourage participation and creativity. Details of the new strategic planning process and related issues of creativity were discussed in some detail by Sukovic (Sukovic, 2011), but the focus in this article is on aspects relating to playful engagement.

The first Planning Day was envisaged as an event where a relaxed, playful atmosphere would be created to enable staff to imagine their 'Library of the Future' and develop a proposal of actions leading to their vision. The approach depended on full staff engagement, so it was essential to ensure that the process had been driven in a 'bottom up' fashion. The removal of barriers imposed by power relations as much as possible was seen as critical in creating a safe environment for a free flow of ideas. In order to achieve a flat and open structure for the event, a group of facilitators from non-managerial positions, dubbed 'team leaders', were selected to participate in preparations for the Planning Day. The work groups at the Planning Day were also intentionally composed of participants from a diverse range of departmental backgrounds, particularly avoiding 'power clusters' of senior managers within any particular group. The role of 'team leaders' was not only to be facilitators of group tasks, but also encouragers, consensus builders, and 'agent provocateurs'– stimulating the discussion and challenging team members to push their own imaginations to create novel and innovative ideas.

Communication of the main idea for the day and its implementation required that 'team leaders' shared not only the same view of what was going to happen, but also a sense of active involvement. This was particularly difficult considering

that some team members did not know each other, most had not worked together before, and there were almost no opportunities for spontaneous interactions among all members of the planning team. Considering that the new approach had the potential to create anxiety amongst some library staff and there was no time for organisation-wide preparations, the decision was made not to discuss details of the Planning Day with staff outside the planning team. A helpful factor for the development of a team spirit was that the group worked 'in secret' on an unusual project. In order to aid team communication, a handout outlining the process and the draft agenda for the Planning Day was distributed to 'team leaders', with the motto 'we take our play seriously'. Digital tools such as Doodle scheduling and Google documents were used extensively, and meetings were opportunities to enhance team work.

THE FIRST PLANNING DAY

Activities for the day were planned to lead from visions based on fantasy and imagination to more practical actions for the next planning period. The program was divided into three main parts: 1. 'In the Future Far Far Away' when small groups of participants discussed their visions for the library of the future and developed representations of their visions, 2. Presentation of group models to all participants and 3. Bridging the gap when groups developed a list of actions for the next planning period on the basis of their vision.

The event started with obvious signals that participants entered an unusual space. Fifty people (approximately half the library staff) assembled in the library's conference room, where most of the chairs had been removed, encouraging staff to stand or sit on the floor. The participants saw a montage of images relating to the history of libraries, and some YouTube clips to stimulate thought and to establish a light and playful tone. After the introduction, the groups assembled in small groups with their 'team leaders' for activities entitled 'In the Future Far Far Away' intending to develop models of the 'Library of the Future'. Groups collected a box with various craft objects such as cardboard, magazines to source pictures from, paddle pop sticks, scissors, glue, paper, pens, glitter, balloons, and some persona enhancing props including toy glasses. The groups could stay in touch with each other and the outside world via Twitter using a Planning Day hashtag.

The first activity was to make one's own name tag from craft materials. This exercise was used as an icebreaker for the teams, in lieu of the standard 'round table of introductions', and helped to set a tone of playfulness for the modelling task to follow. During the name tag building task, some 'team leaders' introduced the main task and initiated a discussion as to what sort of model the group would like to create: a haiku, a written narrative, a diorama, or a symbolic object (for example, the 'library snowball' and the 'library as origami' models were developed on the day). In these groups, material models developed simultaneously with the discussion of ideas. Other groups preferred to discuss ideas first and then think how to represent them. The emphasis was on big, uncompromising, idealised visions. No restriction was placed on an ideas' feasibility, cost or complexity.

Problems, obstacles and negative feelings were also part of discussions. The groups reconvened in the conference room for the second part of the event to present their ideas, which was approached by the teams in a light hearted and playful way.

In the third part of the Planning Day entitled 'Bridging the Gap', lists of realistic actions were developed from the group models. Lists were collected to be organised for the next part of the planning process.

THE SECOND PLANNING DAY

Tasks for the second staff forum were more focused and analytical than on the previous occasion. They required participants' engagement with fewer opportunities for playfulness. Groups of participants used the evaluation matrix to evaluate proposed actions and then they discussed the ratings in a plenary session. A mind map grouping the actions into clustered themes was used to help in structuring the plenary, with salient points arising from the plenary being added to the mind map. The mind map appeared as a live visualisation of the action plan in progress. Because this event was more focused than the 'imagineering' exercises posited in the first Planning Day, small toys like sponge balls and spring boards were arrayed in the room to retain some element of the playful spirit of the first Planning Day. At the end of the day, survey results about the first Planning Day were presented and a slide show of images showing the fun generated by activities was used to close proceedings.

The subsequent part of the planning process required focused work from a smaller group of mainly managerial staff. While play was not part of this part of planning, the spirit of openness and engagement shaped a number of decisions, including the decision to retain ideas and wording of the original Library strategic plan for University purposes.

EVALUATION

The Planning Days were evaluated several days after the events when online surveys were posted to gather participants' feedback. Feedback was also gathered from team leaders and managers, and observation, images and tweets were used to evaluate the new planning format. Details of the evaluation were discussed in Sukovic (2011) but it is worth noting here that the new format was supported by the majority of participants. Particularly popular were its inclusiveness and openness. Initial scepticism about the transparency of the process largely disappeared as staff saw how their suggestions were taken on board. Play, however, was met with a range of, mainly positive, responses. The first survey confirmed impressions from the planning day that some people tremendously enjoyed the experience while others were either more reserved or openly antagonistic. Two or three people retained a clearly negative attitude towards the new format throughout the process. Surprisingly, very few objections concerned the productivity of both events – 31 out of 33 respondents thought that the first Planning Day, when most playful activities happened, was productive. An overall positive feeling about the

process was summarised by tweets like this one: 'I've never seen so many staff genuinely enjoying a planning day anywhere #libpd big success!'

The usefulness of the new approach for annual strategic planning is a very important indicator of how productive the process was for its purpose. A list of actions developed by the end of the first Planning Day reflected the focus on library clients and the library as an organisation rather than staff's self-interest. All of the proposed actions became, in some form, part of the final strategic plan. Fantasy and imagining not only did not stifle more focused parts of the process, but provided a sense of direction, which led to the development of practical actions.

CLIENTS OF THE FUTURE

The project dubbed 'Clients of the Future' was the second opportunity in 2010 to experiment with playful engagement in developing a vision for the library's future. The project was a collaboration between the UTS Library and Sydney Secondary College, Leichhardt (SSCL). The idea for the project arose from discussions at the SSCL about developments of the school library. Sukovic, who was a school parent and a UTS staff member involved in the 'Library of the Future' Project, proposed a joint project between the two organisations in which the school students would have an opportunity to contribute to considerations of future libraries. Since both organisations have fostered the culture of openness, the proposal was enthusiastically supported by the School Principal and the University Librarian.

SSCL is a 'middle school', catering for students from Year 7 (the beginning of high school in Australia) to Year 10. Students in senior years (Year 11 and 12) attend school on another campus. SSCL is a city public school with students from different socio-economic backgrounds and all levels of ability (i.e. classes for students with special needs, comprehensive and academically selective streams). For the school, the project was an opportunity to tap into experiences of a larger library, to consider how to prepare their students for university study and to foster a positive spirit of change by involving both students and teachers in planning for their library development. The UTS library was interested in views of younger high school students who would be university students at the time when the new library building opens. Some experiences suggested that this group had some different information behaviours than older students, particularly patterns of use of social media (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, & Macgill, 2007). It was also expected that junior high school students were mature enough to formulate their ideas, but had not been overly influenced by academic outreach programs and publicity or by specific considerations of university study. After initial discussions with both partners, the UTS Library team, comprising the three authors and another colleague, was formed to develop and deliver the project.

The school selected a group of approximately twenty students who wrote and edited the school literary magazine *Roar*. The members of the magazine team have been self-selected and the only requirement has been their regular contribution

to *Roar*. Students, the majority 12 to 14 years old, visited the UTS Library in September 2010 accompanied by two teachers -- the magazine Coordinator and Teacher Librarian.

The UTS team aimed to welcome the students in a relaxing, stimulating atmosphere, providing enough guidelines to ensure effective work but allowing sufficient freedom for students' expression. After a brief welcome, students were split into two groups and taken for a library 'un-tour' where their exploration of library spaces was mainly self-directed. They were given only as much information as necessary to grasp the range of library services and facilities. The main aim was to ease students into thinking about libraries without influencing them with traditional library approaches and jargon. The School Principal had indicated during preparations that the UTS Library space would be interesting to students as it was and suggested the use of a particular technique to focus students' observations. Following the Principal's advice, we asked students to tell us when they saw something they liked, disliked, or found surprising so that we could take pictures during the tour. While students were having a break, we downloaded pictures to be displayed at the beginning of the next session.

The following session, which took the longest period of the day, was situated in 'Create Space', the room equipped with unusual furniture, an interactive white board and writable walls. While we projected pictures taken during the 'un-tour', the students wrote what they liked, disliked and found surprising on the walls. We discussed students' impressions briefly, showed them a short stimulating video relating to futuristic uses of technology, information and space, and invited them to discuss their ideal literary magazine and how they wanted to work in small groups. The final session involved group presentations in front of a small audience of their teachers and library staff, followed by questions and discussions.

We decided to focus on students' ideas about their work rather than on discussions about physical and digital libraries. First, students' and our ideas of what constitutes the library were likely to be quite different. We did not want to 'educate' students about the modern library and felt that differences may provide opportunities to investigate alternative views. Secondly, our aim was to investigate the future library's role in the information environment so we decided to focus on how students wanted to work with information. Writing for a magazine provided the focus for discussion since it was the students' common interest and it corresponds to what Byström and Hansen (2005) described as an information intensive work task. Discussions about desired ways of working provided opportunities for an exploration of a range of library-related issues without asking direct questions, which may be driven by our rather than students' interests.

Groups were facilitated in a similar way as during the first day of the Strategic Planning exercise. We aimed to encourage discussion, participation and different views while making sure that everyone felt safe to contribute and that discussions did not stray outside the broad thematic scope. In reality, students dealt very well with differences in opinions and stayed on the topic throughout the day with very little need for intervention. Our main tasks as facilitators remained to encourage everyone's contribution and to probe into issues without leading discussions.

The event proceeded in the spirit of serious play. Students explored, in their experience, unusual library spaces, furniture and equipment, developed their imaginary scenarios and presented their ideas, exhibiting a range of behaviours, which clearly indicated that they played and seriously worked at the same time. Towards the end of the day, a small group of library staff gathered for presentations and discussions. Students answered their questions seriously, but often with a good dose of well-articulated humour.

Although we did not have a formal follow-up session or evaluation due to a number of reasons outside the scope of the project, it was evident that the students' response was overwhelmingly positive. They engaged with the activities, used examples from the day to illustrate their preferred way of working, and informal feedback indicated that they enjoyed a very interesting and stimulating day in the UTS library. After the event, all data from the day (i.e. photographs, notes, workgroup outputs) were analysed to identify the main themes.

THE LIBRARY OF THE FUTURE NOT SO FAR AWAY

'Open', 'flexible', 'green' are the key words describing the students' and staff's vision for the future library. Despite all the differences between library staff and junior high school students, their visions for the library of the future were very similar. In this section we will focus more on students' views because they are considered less often in the library literature and because students are less concerned with practical considerations. Their views also express preferences of our future clients and in this way correspond to staff's focus on clients' perspective. Unless indicated otherwise, the following views were described during the 'Clients of the Future' event. However, it is important to stress that students' views are fully compatible with and, in many instances, identical to ideas expressed by library staff.

Our future clients want to work in flexible ways with multiple technologies in digital and physical environments, which 'fire their imagination' and are sustainable. They expressed views demonstrating a strong global orientation and preference for open engagement. They want to work with a variety of people across the globe, to enable creation of content in different languages, and listen to interesting stories of people with unusual experiences, such as refugees. At the same time, they are aware of the significance of a local place. In their description of a global magazine, they wanted head quarters to be in Australia because it 'has to lead in more things'.

They want to work responsibly and ethically with minimal control and regulation with flexible work arrangements, including working at times that suit them, from home, office and any place where research is conducted. Work tasks which allow immersion and concentrated effort over a period of time (several days) are preferred to a piece-meal approach.

Students enjoy working in virtual and physical spaces and expect to have access to multiple physical and digital objects and formats. Flexibility and remote collaboration are important but they cannot replace direct communication with

people, emphasised by both staff and students. This is an important reason why physical spaces are still relevant. Libraries and offices should be stimulating pleasant spaces with unusual objects and artwork to provide room for quiet individual work as well as for group work, socialising, and relaxation. The inviting work space is 'random', meaning surprising, different from predictable and monotonous environments, where a person wants to stay and work. Both staff and students have a strong preference for spaces which bring the outside space inside by having lots of plants, water features, courtyards, and windows or transparent walls with views. Staff and students want to interact with the space by using walls for writing and moulding furniture to their needs. Students wish to work by engaging all senses and prefer spaces and materials which support multi-sensory experiences. Both students and staff are very mindful of sustainable practices and students appeared to be very observant of negligent environmental behaviours.

Although students were not asked to address any practical problems, they were concerned with financial sustainability and copyright issues. One of their suggestions was that fund raising and promotion should be articulated through free concerts and charity.

Technology is important to students as easily used tools which support their work. Students like the use and visibility of technology, but only as much as it is functional and able to extend their work or experiences. They did not express preference for any particular technology with an implied understanding that any technology will be replaced by something new. They like flexible mobile technology which can be used wherever they are. For example, independent work in the field with a regular contact with the office is desirable as well as technology appearing anywhere where people spend time (a computer screen on toilet doors for reading was mentioned as an example). Students want the content to be highly customisable and suggested the use of burstable balloons filled with ideas or suggestions where information can be found. Searching is particularly important and students want to be able to define what and how to search. Their preference for augmented reality relates to their preference for multi-sensory and real-life experiences.

DISCUSSION

At the beginning of this article it was proposed that questions about the roles which libraries play in the contemporary information and knowledge environment relate to difficulties in adjusting to the three major shifts in thinking about information and knowledge – the nature of sense-making, the role of feelings in information processing, and the role of authority. It was also proposed that playful engagement is a promising option for libraries in dealing with changes and possible new roles.

An advantage of play is that it allows unfolding of individual and group understanding in a way that cannot be controlled and pre-determined, or, as one of the survey responses stated, 'no-one could 'highjack' the planning day with their own agenda (or not easily)'. To 'highjack' the day would be possible only if

the event was taken outside the confines of play. Our experience with remarkably similar visions developed by library staff and junior high school students provides some support for Gadamer's (2004) view that, in serious play, players construct meanings in a hermeneutical circle including their individual experiences, perspectives on the world and shared traditions. In the case of these two events, a sense of being in the same world, to paraphrase Heidegger (1962), seemed to override other differences between the two groups. It is quite likely that different groups would come up with different ideas but, nevertheless, play seems to allow the expansion and intertwining of horizons which, consequently, leads to a sense of a shared vision. For the library struggling to reconcile its tradition with the demands of a rapidly changing world, play provides a way of finding a balance.

'Working without strict boundaries' and 'engaging with the world' is the students' idea how they want to be. This view precludes the notion of a central tower of exclusive knowledge but it does not exclude an important role of an open engaging provider of authoritative information. After all, selecting and filtering information is high on students' agenda. If libraries can do that in an engaging flexible manner, maybe there is a future for libraries as authoritative information providers. More extensive identity play may help libraries in adjusting their view of authority and finding the right role among many other authorities.

The use of senses in creating a positive mood and developing understanding featured prominently in our experiments with playful engagement. It appeared that a sensory rich environment and the use of things such as craft materials, toys and identity enhancing objects stimulated engagement and creative thinking. A number of characteristics of this environment were described by students as 'things that fire imagination'. However, the use of senses is not confined to pleasant library buildings or art workshops, but is expected to permeate work and play in which information seeking and use are part of all daily activities. Imagination and creativity are increasingly part of any knowledge work and libraries have to find ways of supporting them.

Enabling play in organisations involves a viscous or hermeneutical circle, depending on the perspective. In order to learn how to support playful engagement, organisations have to look at the nature of play and learn to play by doing it. Playful engagement is hardly possible with too many by-standers and 'spoil sports' who do not take play seriously, especially if they are in prominent positions. In our experience, the willingness of management staff to enthusiastically participate in Planning Days, despite most not having been aware of its structure, was of great assistance. The ability of a leader to show nonconventional behaviours such as sitting on the floor or wearing costume glasses makes it easier for the other participants to follow suit. "[I]f a leader takes risks by acting in ways that are outside conventional norms, he or she makes a visual statement to followers that risk taking is encouraged". This unconventional behaviour "may function as a symbol or image of creativity for followers"(Jaussi & Dionne, 2003: 478). The peer-group can also be an important influence. Our experience is in agreement with Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) who emphasise the importance of elders and peer-groups in supporting identity play in transitional processes. At the same time, serious play has a capacity to become part of the

organisational culture and, in turn, influence managers. Its potential for building trust, engagement and creating a positive atmosphere can influence managers to act in the same spirit.

Intrinsic motivation of participants is necessary for engagement, especially in playful activities. All participants, except senior managers for whom it was a work task, chose to come to the library Planning Days. The school students have had intrinsic motivation to contribute to their school magazine. An excursion such as a day in the Library is usually a sufficient incentive for students to want to participate in an event. Although we cannot make inferences about the nature of participants' motivation, we can say that they all had a level of self-motivation to participate in our projects. At the same time, a sense of engagement plays an important role in strengthening self-motivation. As mentioned earlier, the line dividing diversionary and serious play is not always clear, so well-chosen activities can stir play in a desired direction.

Since play is essentially a social activity, team work is a critical part of playful engagement. A shared purpose tied to a special occasion, playfulness as part of work and a sense of involvement inherent in the activity, all support team building. Since play cannot be controlled, power relations tend to dissolve or be temporarily suspended in playful activities. Diversity of team members has been recognised as very helpful in promoting playful engagement, which was confirmed in our experience with the annual strategic planning exercise. Team facilitators have an important role to play, especially in groups with limited experience with playful engagement at a work place. Non-threatening guidance and encouragement is necessary to make it possible for group members to contribute. De Cremer and Tyler (2005: 160) describe this positive reinforcement as 'possibility of voice'. A sense of engagement, openness and serious play also encourage focused work and responsible behaviours. After the strategic planning, a number of senior staff commented on a well-placed trust in staff to participate in shaping of a strategy. All library staff who encountered students during the 'Clients of the Future' event were impressed by their maturity. Although intrinsic motivation and personal characteristics are certainly important, it is also relevant that school students and library staff have been primed by their organisational cultures and further encouraged to take ownership of their work during the events.

Aspects of the guided imagery process, such as tone setting, relaxation induction, imagery script presentation (Maddox, et al., 1987: 121), closely resemble the programs of the first Planning Day and the 'Clients of the Future' events. In the 'Clients of the Future', for example, the group task was centred around activities the students were already familiar with (running a school newspaper, but in the future) and inferences drawn from these groups sessions then applied to the library's strategic planning, rather than explicitly asking the children about libraries in the future. The aim was to put the children at ease and increase motivation by decoupling tasks from the notion of work to achieve engagement (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). Settings and tasks evoking fantasy simultaneously create a relaxed atmosphere and encourage imagination, which is necessary for the creation of novel ideas and big picture views for strategic insights.

CONCLUSIONS

Playful engagement is a powerful approach to aid libraries' transition in the new information landscape. At times of questioning one's place in the world, philosophy, as always, offers some valuable ideas. In considering its position and possibilities, the library needs to engage with a range of players in developing the hermeneutic circle of interpretation, which will guide library's understanding of its new roles and partners. Serious play not only provides philosophy and techniques for dealing with the change, but it may give an inkling of the future directions. If the views of library staff and students who participated in the two events are anything to go by, a desirable library of the future is the one which promotes playful engagement. In order to probe other options, develop ideas and make sure that most library staff accept the chosen direction, play in general and identity play in particular may be a significant complement to other, more serious and performance oriented, organisational and professional approaches.

The future authority of the library will depend on the ability of library practice and research to deepen our understanding of information processes and shape flexible and novel information spaces. Tradition is a not only valuable, but also an unavoidable starting place. The library future, however, will depend on its ability to engage, innovate and change.

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