

*Supporting 21st Century Learning & Teaching: Who's got the power?
Academic Libraries at the Heart of the University.*

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Abstract

In the higher education (HE) sector there has been increasing interest in delivering a range of support services within a single physical space. This space is often to be found within the library, and the services provided have been termed as converged service models (Bulpitt, 2012). These service models have taken precedence over the last two decades (Hanson, 2005) and have become synonymous with the provision of library services (Melling & Weaver, 2013). This paper identifies the models of converged service within the current published literature, recognises the main drivers for their inception and discusses the power wielded by the providers, the university, and the recipients, the students, of academic library services. It is hoped that by understanding the differing ways the models have been planned, implemented and evaluated will help to uncover a starting point for the future analysis of current service models. The paper also provides evidence to support the further analysis of current models for converged service delivery within HEI libraries, and to understand whether the academic library still retains its status as the 'heart of the university' (Oakleaf, 2010)

Keywords: Keywords: Higher education, academic libraries, convergence, customer service, management, change, power

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Introduction

Academic libraries have historically held a strong position of power within their institutions as they have been associated with being at the ‘heart of the university’ (Oakleaf, 2010; Jankowska & Marcum, 2010). This ‘power’ can be contextualised by the very nature of the libraries service relationship with its students. The relationship is dictated by the requirement for students to use the library and its services to enable them to satisfy the learning prerequisites within their journey toward degree fulfilment throughout the entirety of their student experience, places the library at the top of the students service needs. However the power that academic libraries might receive from holding this central position may now be disputed if the library does not develop within the changing environment faced by the higher education (HE) sector over recent times (Bulpitt,2012).

This paper argues that the development of particular service models, through collaboration and integration with other student services, generally within the library environment, has been the main way in which the library has sustained its power at the heart of the university. It is argued that this development has had a major impact on the successful delivery of a more satisfactory student experience (Pugh, 1997; Hanson, 2005; Bulpitt, 2012; Melling & Weaver, 2013). This integration of services to support the student experience has been described as ‘converged’, and is largely defined in HE as “The bringing together of the library and computer service, possibly with other separate support services, under the management of an executive director...”(Pugh, 1997, p.3).

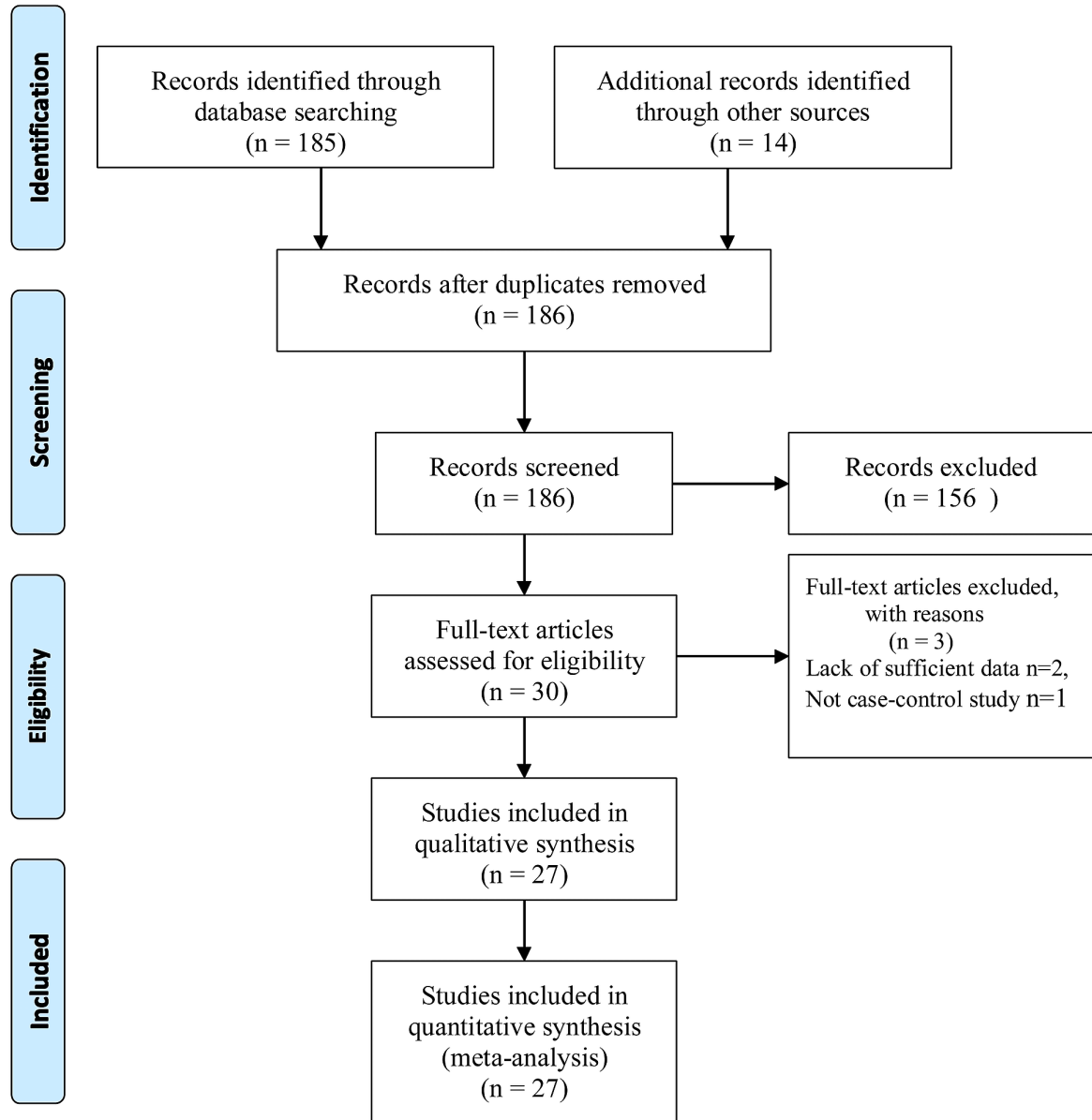
This paper identifies the models of converged service that have been implemented within the HE environment in the United Kingdom (UK) by examining the published literature on converged service provision. The literature will also be examined for reference to the main drivers behind the implemented models of convergence, and seeks to question why individual models have been chosen by the institution. It is further hoped that by understanding the differing ways the models have been planned, implemented and evaluated, it will help to uncover a starting point for the future analysis of current service models which are implemented within HE, as a means to support future developments within library services.

Literature Review –Search strategy

In order to determine the accuracy of the statement ‘library at the heart of the university’ using the development of converged service provision, a search plan was undertaken to identify the relevant literature. Three main databases were chosen from the field of librarianship, education and management, and these were searched for English language journals covering a period between 1998 and 2015. Databases searched included Proquest Central, Emerald and JSTOR, with follow up searches targeting smaller databases within which had higher relevance to the statement. Hand searches of the primary literature were also conducted to ensure all relevant literature would be reviewed. This followed Fiegen’s (2010) methodology for conducting a systematic review of business literature within libraries to support evidence based research. Each index was initially searched using the terms Further Education, AND (“one-stop shop*” OR “converged service*”). Results were then narrowed down where necessary by including only full text, or in the case of the larger databases abstract only searches for the search results. To see the search strategy in action

please see the PRISMA diagram below (Figure 1.), and an example of a literature search Template.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow diagram



(Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group 2009).

Table 1. Literature search strategy template

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Search terms (AND, OR, NOT) and truncation (wildcard characters like *) | Education AND “one-stop shop” or “converged service” | Education AND “one-stop shop” or “converged service” | Education AND “one-stop shop” or “converged service” |
| Databases searched | <i>Proquest Central</i> | <i>ERIC</i> | <i>Proquest Education Journals</i> |
| Part of journals searched | <i>Anywhere 20317 anywhere except full text 1099 AB 671 Scholarly journals only 41</i> | <i>Anywhere 31 Scholarly journals 20</i> | <i>Anywhere 697 anywhere except full text 58 Scholarly journals 8</i> |
| Years of search | <i>1987-2014</i> | <i>1987-2014</i> | <i>1987-2014</i> |
| Language | <i>E.g. English</i> | | |
| Types of studies to be included | <i>Scholarly journals</i> | <i>Scholarly journals</i> | <i>Scholarly journals</i> |
| Inclusion criteria (why did you include it?) | <i>HE, FE or education in general Customers were primarily students Provision of multiple services from one place</i> | <i>HE, FE or education in general Customers were primarily students Provision of multiple services from one place</i> | <i>HE, FE or education in general Customers were primarily students Provision of multiple services from one place</i> |
| Exclusion criteria (why did you rule it out?) | <i>Digital or online provision, concerned with physical convergence Customers were not students Outwith HE/FE</i> | <i>Digital or online provision, concerned with physical convergence Customers were not students Outwith HE/FE</i> | <i>Digital or online provision, concerned with physical convergence Customers were not students Outwith HE/FE</i> |
| Total included at first search | 6 | 5 (2 found in first search) | 2 <i>(1 Non-scholarly)</i> |

The search was widened to conduct a second pass through the identified databases using the following search terms: Education AND “student hub” OR “merged student service*” OR “integrated student service*”. The third pass then identified “collaboration” AND “Co-production” when used in the context of higher education. Relevant sites were searched using where possible identical or similar search criteria such as Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) archives. This was made more difficult by the variety and efficiency of search engines linked to each of the websites. Where possible all attempts to retain consistency in

search terms were used. Whilst initial search criteria brought up a large number of results, screening using the initial inclusion and exclusion criteria reduced the number of full text articles to be assessed.

As the literature review seeks to identify not only instances of convergence within UK HE, and as the focus was on the library environment, an Evidence Based Librarianship (EBL) process was chosen to help answer this research question. This was considered appropriate as its five step approach required the following:

1. A focused, practical, answerable question that directly relates to librarianship, and has a direct bearing on carrying out operational duties.
2. The search for an answer in both the published and unpublished literature for the best available evidence;
3. A critical appraisal of the evidence;
4. An assessment of the value of expected benefits and costs of intended action(s) and
5. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the action(s) (Eldredge, 2002).

This approach has been identified due its widespread use and relevance to practice within Library Science, and as such is widely supported by the sector (Eldredge, 2006; Booth & Brice, 2004). EBL, as Eldredge (2006, p.342) suggests, “..assists librarians in applying the best available evidence to answering the more important questions facing their practice, their institutions, and the profession”. The review concentrated on the physical convergence of services into an identifiable location. The services included library and IT, but sought to identify other student support services involved in convergence and super convergence, and the provision of student service one-stop-shops.

Convergence over three decades in the UK

The convergence of Library and IT was first evidenced however, not in the UK, but in the United States (US), with several institutions such as Columbia and California State Universities being the first to introduce the concept of ‘Chief Information Officer’ (CIO). The CIO was given operational and strategic oversight of both the IT and library directorates. However convergence has been more pervasive in the UK due to two main drivers. In the first instance the development of IT and its impact on student services has provided an external driver for change, and secondly the increasing pressures brought about by funding constraints have prompted HEIs to become more resource efficient (Riley, cited in Hanson, 2005).

In 1993 and 1996, two reports were published which reviewed the future for academic libraries in the UK. Both the Fielden and Follett Reports were commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which formed part of The Review of Libraries (which included Scotland and Wales) to examine the changing face of UK academic libraries (Follett, 1993; Fielden, 1993). The Review of Libraries was primarily driven by the implications surrounding increasing student numbers, changing in the funding streams for HE, and the developments in learning and teaching brought about by the increasing use of technology. The impact of developing technologies within libraries was further evidenced by Field (1996), who stated that the cumulative use of IT within libraries was being seen to drive a change in library

and IT structures as the potential to maximise the use of information technology and the resulting overlap between service providers became increasingly apparent.

The start of the new century (2000) heralded the development and amalgamation of technology within the new theories of learning and teaching, with the 'Learning Centre' as a direct consequence. 'Learner Centred' pedagogies combined with technologies enabled some universities to construct, or develop existing library buildings in to new areas which combined flexible learning with traditional library designs. Beard and Dale (2010) argued that students had started to expect a wider range of other services from those previously delivered by traditional library spaces. They point out that students had started to expect these services to be delivered from a single, physical space. They went further to describe that whilst technology remained a major factor for change, the learning space within the academic library was now under constant adaption which reflected how the variety of ways students wanted to learn.

A review of convergence in UK HEIs over 20 years was compiled by Hanson (2005) who included 16 case studies. His book also proffered a historical view of convergence in the UK, as well as a global analysis of the convergence position. This book proved to hold a fairly unique stance within the published literature in that it attempted to offer an alternative to the provision of converged service provision. However the book offered no discussion on the service implications following the implementation of convergence, de-convergence or non-converged models.

Within the book two of the 16 case studies discussed the reasons behind choosing a non-converged service model, and one case study outlined its journey between de-convergence, convergence and back again. In the two cases of non-converged services, one stated that a merger with another institution was taking precedence over convergence, and that they were reluctant to change as there was yet no successful template of convergence to replicate. They also stated that as "...world-class institutions do not have converged service delivery; world-classness tends to be related to funding, and naturally the services are better resourced. Equally most comparisons measure inputs rather than service outputs or quality related factors, which are notoriously difficult to either collect or benchmark. In another paper it would be possible to give extensive attention to these matters but it is not relevant to the convergence debate."(Clark, cited in Hanson, 2005,p.157). In the other case of non-convergence the institution felt that it was not in the correct position to allow for convergence due to the presence amongst other things of '...the lack of a long history of collaboration between the services as services, or among the senior staff as individuals...; a lack of readiness among the university community to welcome integration'(Taylor, cited in Hanson, 2005, pp.166). Interestingly this institution implemented a one-stop shop model converging computing and library services which had been implemented at a more local level a year after writing the case study.

Within the 13 case studies that had converged, whilst there were a number of differences in planning, implementation and delivery of the converged services there were three key factors:

- There was a drive to become more service orientated
- A 'single location' helped this drive
- There was a requirement for efficiency in both planning and resource deployment

Another benefit to the research by Hanson (2005) was the provision of an international perspective on the delivery of convergence in HE. Hayes & Elliott (2005) described the position from an Australian viewpoint, and identified a similar rationale and list of benefits to that of UK HEIs. They concluded that there has been a wholesale change within the global HE environment, which has as a consequence increased competition amongst educators. This is as a direct result of increasing student expectations which include the delivery of education and educational services on an anytime/anywhere basis, which has led to the increasing need to develop converged services.

The last decade has continued in a similar vein with the changes to the HE environment perhaps becoming more apparent, with a growing belief that universities are now operating in what is now felt to be a more business-like or consumerist market place (Saunders, 2014). This has largely been driven by the changes to HE funding such as the implementation of 'top up fees' in 2006 which has seen students directly paying for their university degree, and this, it is argued, has been a significant factor in students perceiving themselves as customers (Lipsett, 2005 cited in Jones, 2010). One of the main reasons generally cited for moving toward a converged service in HE has been as a means to satisfy these increasing customer-like student expectations (Vauterin et al 2011).

This increasing perception of students as customers has however led to a highly contentious debate within academic circles. Despite vast quantities of research into customers and consumer perception and behaviour in other sectors, HE in the UK has been slow to identify whether students within their institutions perceive themselves as customers (Ibrahim et al, 2013). Work undertaken by US researchers have led to a notion of 'students -as - customers' (SAC), a term coined by Finney & Finney (2010) in their work into US college students perceptions of customer status. Their work has now been mirrored across the global HE sectors, and whilst this remains a provocative argument for academia, there is a general consensus that university services need to operate in a more student-centric manner (Mark, 2013, Saunders, 2014).

This increasing student expectation has, it is argued, led to the next generation of convergence with the rise in the provision of 'super-converged' services within HEIs during the 2010's. The definition of super - converged services is seen as moving beyond the normal pairing of library and IT, and has been described this report as situations where HE providers "...bring together a range of support activities that are generally focused on student support and ...include library, IT and AV support with.. including-but not limited to-careers, welfare and counselling, student administration, chaplaincy support, student finance, learning development, study skills and programme administration" (Bulpitt, 2012, p.3).

Bulpitt's (2012) research into the incidence of super convergence in five UK HEIs took similar a case study approach to that of Hanson (2005) in the previous decade. The report focused specifically on super-converged models and the integration of this type of model within HE. Bulpitt identifies the student experience as the major driver for change in HE, and he argues that this is the case as students "...are committing substantial sums of money to their studies and are behaving increasingly as consumers"(Bulpitt, 2012, p.3). However this external drive for achieving student satisfaction he argues is offset by the increasingly internal driver for change, the necessity for institutions to counteract the fiscal implications of funding cuts which have been driven by governmental policy. Consequently HEIs must now find the means to balance achieving high levels of student satisfaction in a more efficient manner to meet these new budgetary restrictions. This in itself can be a massive challenge for institutions on an operational level, as Bulpitt states "These developments place services to students in the front line ..Because student services depend on staffing levels and require substantial accommodation for study, available for long hours, they are expensive to operate" (Bulpitt, 2012,p.4). The challenge therefore is to provide high quality services that achieve student satisfaction but are delivered in a cost effective manner. A challenge that Bulpitt argues can be satisfied by the super-converged model.

This report offered a higher level of detailed information pertaining to the planning and development of the converged service models, and as a result provided a deeper understanding of how the changes were implemented, and what effect these had on the student experience. This was in direct contrast to the earlier case studies by Hanson (2005) which reported only from an institutional perspective. His report identified the benefits of convergence which had been less evident in the previous literature. For example, the use of standard benchmarking surveys such as LibQual, a perception based library survey, identified increasing student satisfaction with converged service models, and an audit by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) noted the effectiveness of the provision of a physical common helpdesk, or one stop shop.

However there are multiple limitations with this research. There were only 5 cases reviewed, within which no alternative models were discussed to balance the report. This report only featured UK case studies and the presence or delivery of super-converged services outside the UK was not discussed. Only these five case study submissions were received by the author during the research phase, and as such do not purport to hold an objective view of super-convergence at this time. There were no attempts to discern how many institutions were using super-convergence at this time, and as such it is impossible to describe whether this supplied a representative sample of the total number of models implemented in UK HEIs at this point in time.

In contrast to this single sited multi-converged service within the library, the last decade, since the early 2000's, has also given rise to a new type of converged services, one which is not based or integrated with the library. The 'Student Support Service' Model has seen a myriad of non-academic student facing support services converge their service provision away from the library and Information Service Centres. These tend to be (but without further research it is difficult to determine) cited within more traditional HEIs, and provide a physical co-location in order to

provide services such as Careers, Disability/assistive services, Counselling and Funding support activities. These services have co-opted the terminology ‘one-stop shops’, which was used to describe the physical co-location of any converged student service provision (Melling & Weaver,2013; Chu,2014). This is evidenced not in the published literature, but by a large community of practitioners operating from JISC Mail, a service delivered by Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). This community organise an annual ‘One Stop Shop’ conference to share best practice, and are a combination of different student service models which operate out of newly refurbished or purpose built areas.

In summary, the increasing role of IT in learning, the changing nature of the HE environment, and the changing face of student expectations have resulted in a myriad of different types of converged service model, as shown in figure 2. The table shows 6 main types of converged service model identifiable from the literature, which, although developed in the previous decades are still prevalent in many institutions today. However, without further research into the use of converged service models the actual position within UK HEIs will not be clearly identifiable. It is possible that hybrid or new models of convergence may have developed in recent years.

The Library has established itself as a constant and dominant force through three decades of change in HE, taking the lead and supporting the vision for change. Throughout the development, implementation and delivery of converged student services, the Library has attempted to cement its position as the heart of the university by offering services that students not only need to use within their learning journey, but by offering services and an environment that students want to be involved with during their university experience. However libraries are therefore unable to remain stagnant and retain the status-quo if they hope to continue in this central position in the future. Libraries must continue to understand what their students expect and evolve within their changing environments. With the future of the library in mind, further research is required to identify and establish the current position of convergence within UK HEIs to offer more detailed recommendations for future direction and development.

Figure 2. Models of Converged Service Provision within UK HEIs

| Model | Description | Focus | Era | Origins |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Learning Resources Model | The development of material in audio-visual formats led to the first experiments with integrated services. | Library, media, educational support | Mid-70's | Pioneered by the polytechnics of Brighton, City of London and Plymouth. |
| Information Services Model | Originally used to describe the integration of library and computing services. At its peak 50% of institutions used this model. | Information provision | 1980 for US Mid-1980's for UK | Pioneered in the US Academic libraries of Columbia, Carnegie Mellon, California State & Virginia Polytechnic Institute. St Andrews College of Education, Glasgow, Plymouth, Salford and Stirling Universities (Field, quoted in Hanson, 2005). |
| Information Supremo Model | Centred on the appointment of one lead over Information Services. | Leadership & control | 1990s | As described by Royan (1994) where 35 of the 76 responding institutions had appointed an 'Information Supremo'. |
| Learning Centre Model | Using space as a catalyst for change with the focus moving from information to learning. Drew together information resource, computing, multimedia, educational research and e-learning. | Learning and space | Late 1990s-today | Gathered momentum following the Follett Report (1993) and saw a number of learning Centre models purpose built such as Sheffield Hallam & GCU. |
| Student Support Services model | Where student support services are brought together without library and/or IT departments. Has taken over the terminology in recent years One –Stop-Shop. | Student focused/ Location orientated | 2000's to present | Appears in more traditional universities where multiple or large libraries are cited such as Glasgow and Edinburgh. The physical co-location of student support services out with the library. |
| Super-converged model | Draws together a range of activities beyond library and computing. Range of support services may be included. One of the features is variety. | Student focused | Late 1990s-present | 20 institutions in the UK stated as such - quoted by (Heseltine, 2000). |

(Source: Author)

Limitations

In attempting to establish the historical development of convergence within UK HEI, the unique characteristics of library literature has presented several challenges to uncovering the best available evidence. This, it is argued, is due to a major portion of the knowledge base residing in the realm of 'grey literature', comprised of conference papers and posters and supplemented by oral histories within respective workplaces (Eldredge, 2002; Genoni, 2004). As a consequence funding is made available to enable librarians to present papers and display their posters at conferences, but does not exist sufficiently to fund both the financial and time requirement necessary to allow for the publishing of their research in peer-reviewed literature. As Eldredge (2006, pp.345) states "This pattern seems laced with irony, given our professional role of assisting users from other subject domains or professional literatures in the effective extraction of information from their own knowledge bases".

Another major limitation was identified whilst conducting a search from secondary sources. The compatibility and restrictions placed by individual site search engines made it difficult to find relevant material. As an example, 5 case studies dating from 2004-2011 were identified as relevant to the search criteria from the HEA website, but proved to be difficult to source in a published format. When using key word searches it was identified that the "collaboration" had a meaning more widely linked (within the context of libraries and higher education) with external organisations or with non-structural changes and 'project styled' initiatives (Cordova & Vecchione, 2011; Montgomery & Miller, 2011).

The literature review identified that research within libraries and support services relies heavily on perception based data, and as such may require a higher level of validity and reliability (Abdullah, 2010). This will be an area to focus on whilst conducting future research. However, the evidence contained in the literature can still be seen as valid within library science as it contains a rich mine of data (Yin, 2009). Statements which convey the success of the models can be transferable and identifiable in the context of qualitative study data without the apparent rigour of studies undertaken in clinical settings (Fiegen, 2010). Lee and Tan (2011) suggest that a more diverse method of data collection would better support this type of evaluation, and that this would provide a deeper understanding about the provision of converged models. However there are examples of rich data offered by the evidence which I believe clearly indicate the current gap within the literature:

"..the move to convergence has brought undeniable benefits. These have not yet been formally evaluated..however management feels that the move to a converged structure has facilitated better strategic planning..improved the management of...staff and financial resources..a broadening of skills..clearer management lines and accountability..Haines, Methven & Yoah on Kings College London (Hanson, 2005)

"The super-convergence of student facing service teams is one such response, taken by a growing number of universities. Evaluation of this approach is in its infancy and is challenging because of the different approaches taken across the sector. There is a clear need to embed monitoring and evaluation into the model to develop robust impact measures" (Melling, in Melling & Weaver, 2013.)

This review has highlighted the current gap within traditional evidence-based librarianship in relation to its implementation of converged services. It is suggested that research articles which are executed in more consistent ways could be combined

to make more credible evidence for decision-making in this area (Nicholson, 2006). This would in turn support those working within libraries and HEIs to identify to their managers, stakeholders and students the implications both positive and negative for delivering new models to develop services now, and in the future.

Future research

Whilst the literature review has recognised the changing face of convergence within UK HEIs, and has allowed a Convergence Model Framework (Figure 2.) to be identified, it is not able to define the current position of convergence within the UK. The last UK wide survey which was able to examine the position was conducted by Pugh in 1997. All subsequent research has largely been conducted on a case study basis, which makes it impossible to ascertain the national position. It is my intention that a current position for UK HEI support service models is conducted in order to provide a more up to date model framework for future development. Fiegen (2010) suggests that future research should be conducted to identify the results of new model implementation in a more rigorous way, to deliver higher levels of transferability, accountability and credibility.

The literature review has set out to identify whether there is evidence of the provision of converged services within HE, and has shown a high level of evidence to support the usage and implementation of converged service models within the sector. There is less evidence published surrounding the use of non-converged or de-converged service models which makes it impossible to offer an alternative view. The evidence has also focused on a certain type of research methodology, which although arguably sound (Yin, 2009) can be characterised by a less rigorous and valid format. Future research will attempt to create a more practical, credible evidence source to support the identification of best practice models for converged service delivery within HEIs. The research will look to reduce the existing gap in the literature by delivering a piece of qualitative research that identifies the contemporary issues and current basis for the implementation of converged service models.

Conclusion - The library at the heart of convergence

These continue to be changing and challenging times for academic libraries, and it appears that standing still is not an option, "Time is running out for academic libraries locked up in historical print-world routines..we are seeing new forms of academic libraries.. (Bulpitt,2012). But libraries have increased their value to their students by offering "...different and highly integrated services centred on the user...(Schopfel, Roche & Hubert, 2015). Whether this continues to be the case for libraries is difficult to determine without further research into the current position of convergence within UK HEIs. It will be interesting to determine which model of convergence is now preferable, the 'super-converged model', or at the opposite end of the scale support service models that preclude the library, or is there indeed a new model of convergence taking precedence? Without further research it is difficult to say what the future may hold for library convergence models. There is however perhaps a wider consensus amongst library professionals that whatever the model, convergence is here to stay, and that '... the story of convergence is moving from that opening period of initial exploration to a mature period of well-informed achievement, much to the benefit of librarians and library user alike' (Joint, 2011, p.643).

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