An examination of the relationships of liaison librarians and academic departments, based upon the experiences of librarians at a New Zealand academic institution

by

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An examination of the relationships of liaison librarians and academic departments, based upon the experiences of librarians at a New Zealand academic institution

(hereafter referred to as 'The MLIS Research Project')

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Dedicated to my parents, Gwenyth and the late Rolf Shortridge.

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to examine how liaison librarians interacted with their academic departments, and what factors impacted on their interaction. Interviews were conducted with twelve liaison librarians at an academic institution and documents such as web pages were examined.

Among the techniques employed by liaison librarians were emails, newsletters, creation of course resource web pages, provision of teaching sessions and personal visits to departments. Librarians concentrated on different techniques in response to perceptions of what worked for the academic department.

As librarians became established in their role they needed to balance the need to liaise with the significant time commitment involved in the delivery of the service.

Liaison librarians regarded personal contact as extremely important to establishing and maintaining relationships. This could be difficult the further the liaison librarian was physically located from a department.

Some librarians saw the standardization of procedures across the library system offered a barrier to the personal service they offered to academics.

The small sample interviewed cannot be regarded as being applicable to all liaison librarians in all academic institutions. However, the study is a beginning point, and further research in this neglected area is needed.

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

A person who works in the role of liaison librarian in an academic institution attempts to build and maintain a relationship with their assigned academic department. The building of the relationship has been the topic of considerable work in library and information studies. The "what" is often discussed – tools and techniques librarians can employ to build and maintain a relationship. Other work is directed toward examining the experience and attitudes of academics towards libraries and librarians. However, the actual experience of the liaison librarians is not widely covered in the literature. The "how" and "why" certain liaison activities might be undertaken or not undertaken are discussed much less.

The liaison's experience of an academic department might be presumed to affect how they undertake liaison actions, but there is little evidence for any in-depth examination of their experience beyond the occasional anecdote. The liaison librarian's first hand experience of the culture of an academic department and the move toward electronic delivery of services and material are worth examining. In an increasingly electronic age, the question of the physical location of a librarian might or might not have an impact on liaison. A study might detect whether there is a noticeable difference in the experiences of liaison librarians located in a centralised library compared with those based in libraries housed in or very near academic departments. Librarians who have been involved in

liaison in both locales may provide particular insight into the perceived benefits or barriers for liaison in the different locations.

There has been concern expressed over the provision of so much electronic material and the advent of internet searching bringing vast stores of information to user's desktops. The concern is that this direct access threatens librarians with obsolescence, bypassing them. It must be asked whether this has had such an impact on liaison librarians, arguably the most involved with academics using the resources. Might the internet instead have provided new avenues for the librarian to liaise? An examination of the sensitive subject of university politics might also impact on the relationship. This could involve the librarian's experience of politics within an academic department, manifested in competing demands for resources. Liaison librarians might also be affected by politics within the library organisation itself, if different library sections compete for the attention of academics. Occasional anecdotes may often be found or uncovered in casual conversation with liaison librarians about all of the above issues. A more concentrated investigation is needed to determine the extent to which these touch upon the liaison relationship.

Any investigation that is undertaken in this project will necessarily be only a brief examination of a small sampling of liaison librarians in an institution. However, it will provide some groundwork for a more extensive study, helping to determine the parameters of the liaison experience. The intent of this study is to closely examine the

experience of librarians engaged in liaison with academic departments, and determine what factors impact upon the relationship?

1.2 Research Questions

A. Techniques of Liaison

A.1. Why do librarians use particular techniques in their relations with academic departments?

A.2. Why might particular techniques have been used and discarded?

A.3 How has the increasing electronic availability of material affected the liaison relationship?

B. Political Aspects

B.1 In what ways do the politics of an academic department impact the liaison librarian?

B.2 In what ways do other parts of the library system impact on the relationship?

C. Location

C.1 To what extent do liaison librarians based in centralised locations differ in opportunities for liaison from librarians in dispersed locations?

C. 2 To what extent does inperson contact with academics affect the relationship?

C.3 To what extent does using only email and phone contact affect the relationship?

D. Opportunities

D.1 What is the effect on the liaison experience of inclusion in, or exclusion from, academic department email discussion lists?

D.2 Has there been any effect on the liaison relationship of the introduction of the Performance Based Research Funding (PBRF) model into the tertiary sector?

D.3 What is the impact of library-created course resource web pages on liaison?

D.4 What scope is there for the involvement of liaison librarians in information literacy in academic departments?

E. Barriers

E.1 Do librarians perceive any barriers to liaison activities from the academic department?

E.2 Do librarians perceive any barriers to liaison activities from the library?

2. Theoretical Framework

An in-depth exploration of the experiences of liaison librarians was intended to provide a basis for some examination and evaluation of the attitudes and encounters of the librarians as they build and maintain their relationship with academic departments.

The purpose of the investigation of the research topic also helped in the determination of choice of theoretical framework. To examine the experiences of the liaison librarian in terms of their relationships with academics, it was necessary to obtain a rich, descriptive account of that relationship from the librarian's perspective to be analyzed. As an example, the intent of the project was less to determine, for example, how many liaison librarians may make regular visits to their departments, or how many visits are made. Instead the intent was to understand why the librarian would visit – or perhaps would not visit - the academic department they were assigned to. What lead the librarian to make that choice? In doing so, the researcher eschewed a more specific perspective. There was caution at the beginning stage about adopting a more prescriptive framework that might limit the scope for understanding data.

Aspects of customer relationship management theory that have relevance to services (such as liaison librarians) argued for study through a qualitative framework. In recent years there has been a conscious move in management theory away from transaction-oriented marketing, which emphasised quantification as a measurement of success (for example, how much was sold). Instead there has been argument for a more qualitative approach, where the aim is to build and maintain a long term strategy in customer

relationship management, concentrating on customers rather than transactions. This move away from concentrating on the transaction added a human element as an important dimension. The argument is that the often intangible work put in by personnel to build customer relationships proves cost-effective in the long term, more so than the expenditure involved in attracting new customers. The possibility of encouraging return custom is argued to contribute toward obtaining greater market share (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007; Gronroos, 1997).

The theory of increasing market share by building relations to encourage use of services and retention of custom can be transferred quite easily to the work of liaison librarians with academic departments. Librarians are involved in marketing their services and the resources of the library to academics. The idea that building relations through value enhanced services can edge out competitors had a direct relevance to concerns over search strategies finding information that has not been properly organized or filtered (for example, someone who uses internet search engines instead of subscribed databases to locate articles). A librarian relationship with an academic can work to embed the librarian (and the library) as an essential service. This could have an impact on the perceived usefulness of the Library itself. Researchers on customer relations management stress that all employee contact with customers works to build a positive or negative image of the organization. This has importance for the contact of liaison librarians with academic departments where they are, in effect, marketing the Library in each interaction with their target group of users (Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 2004; Wikstrom & Isomaki, 2007).

As well as encouraging retention, management theory also argues for identification of clientele where a relationship should not be pursued. It is argued that a poor relationship effectively does more harm to an organization than if a relationship was not pursued at all. A failure to follow up promised services with their actual delivery (or unsatisfactory delivery) contributes to a negative perception overall (Bitner, 1995; Colgate & Danaher, 2000). By this argument it is qualitative research that determines whether a relationship should be pursued, with the gauging of potential for success or failure of a relationship undertaken by people and not through the measurement of the immediate value of transactions (Gummesson, 2006; Wikstrom & Isomaki, 2007).

3. Literature Review

Introduction

Library science literature has devoted considerable space to the liaison librarian role and sheds some light on the question of how to build and maintain relations with academics. The literature has involved discussion about means for establishing liaison programs, reporting case studies on what has worked in a particular library. The evaluation of such programs is also a major topic. There are also arguments over the relevance of specialized liaisons in a multidisciplinary tertiary education environment. A number of themes are recurrent in the literature. These include the perception of a distance between librarians and academics and the impact on the liaison librarian. The concern that libraries, and the liaisons, might be becoming increasingly irrelevant in a world where so much information is now electronic and searchable by the end user is also an important theme. Concern over distance and continued relevance leads to the theme of pushing librarian involvement in matters such as curriculum. The liaison is viewed to be in a prime position to initiate and collaborate with academics on this undertaking. However, despite the material that touches at least in part on the liaison role, there is room for growth in the literature. Areas that have yet to be explored include the impact on the liaison of other library departments and their interactions with faculty. The differing natures and cultures of a given academic department, and how that impacts on the liaison role, have only been lightly touched on. In addition, due perhaps to its relatively recent development, little or no attention has been given to any possible effects of newer University funding models.

Time and Effort

A common theme of many of the studies is the emphasis on the time and effort required to develop a relationship with academic departments. This is linked to the need for the liaison to spend some considerable time outside their library office and in the academic department. This serves to make themselves known to the academic department and to make their services known and available to faculty. Studies evaluating liaison programs emphasize that library management need to be made aware of the time dedication involved in building the relationships (Tobin Cataldo, Tennant, Sherwill-Navarro, & Jesano, 2006; Tucker & Torrence, 2004).

The liaison librarian themselves also needed to be aware of the time that was needed to be devoted toward building the relationship with the department by getting to know the academics on a personal level. It was stated that a librarian might well need to sit down with each academic to receive a better idea of their needs, as well as putting a personal presence in the faculty's relations with the library (Frank, Raschke, Wood, & Yang, 2001; Jenkins, 2005; Stoddart, Bryant, Baker, Lee, & Spencer, 2006). Building a successful relationship with academics is seen as both time-consuming but necessary in itself, but can also lead to more and more pressure on a liaison librarian's time management as they may be increasingly called upon to provide support for the academics by giving class instruction or research consultations (Stoddart et al., 2006).

Coupled with this is the need for the liaison to keep updated on departmental occurrences, through attendance at seminars and perusing departmental web pages, or joining subject specialist email discussion lists (Macaluso & Petruzzelli, 2005; Stoddart et al., 2006). Interestingly, membership of the academic email discussion lists was primarily discussed as a means for the liaison to communicate with the academic department about new resources or to hear about concerns or problems with library material (Glynn & Wu, 2003; Izbicki, 2000; Stoddart et al., 2006; Tobin Cataldo et al., 2006). The full potential for email discussion lists to keep the liaison informed about the department was not discussed. Membership may not just be a vehicle for communication about library resources and changes. The liaison may also learn via the discussion list of the appointment of new faculty, who they may then approach. They may also be kept in touch with departmental seminars that they could attend. It is noted that academic departments can be quite cautious about list membership (Glynn & Wu, 2003). Perhaps also worthy of study is the impact on the relationship with the department if the liaison does not have membership of such a list. Despite the emphasis on electronic communication it is claimed that personal visits to departments have considerable value (Del Bosque & Chapman, 2007; Pinfield, 2001). However, this might depend on the culture of the department. In addition, demands on space could also determine whether a liaison could have a physical space in a department.

Concern over "traditional role"

The literature concerning the liaison librarian role establishes that the traditional role of the liaison librarian and their relationship with academic departments has been centred on the area of collection development. This is a major part of the American Library Association's liaison guidelines (2007). Librarians in a liaison role need to work with academics to determine the best resources to be ordered and tap into their subject specialized knowledge (Jenkins, 2005; Qobose, 2000; Stoddart et al., 2006). In many ways collection development may be the primary relationship academics may have with the library. Some point out that the traditional role is changing. The growth in interdisciplinary approaches among academic departments can change the nature of collection development in terms of what areas a liaison should be collecting. The liaison might become involved in ordering for areas that were never catered for previously, or impact on the work of another liaison (Frank et al., 2001; Glynn & Wu, 2003).

There are questions whether librarians based on subject specialization, of which liaison is a key component, are valid in view of an increasing interdisciplinary academic approach (Biddiscombe, 2002). Tied with this is compartmentalization within a library system. If a liaison librarian is not the only contact academics may have with a library, how does this impact the liaison role? The liaison could be bypassed entirely during interactions with academics. A possible area to study is whether this happens to a greater degree in a centralized library than in a more compact divisional library.

The need to market other aspects of the liaison role beyond that of collection development emerges as a theme. The literature consists of many studies of best practice, or "how to" manuals: how to establish a liaison program; evaluate a liaison program; contact academic departments; and how to engage with individual academics (Izbicki, 2000; Jenkins, 2005; Macaluso & Petruzzelli, 2005; Stoddart et al., 2006). Several consider individual achievements in terms of outreach, such as developing web pages for courses, or introducing new academics to library resources (Del Bosque & Chapman, 2007; Isaacson, 2001; Sugarman & Demetracopoulos, 2001). These are attempts to become involved with academics in ways beyond the ordering of material.

There is concern among liaison librarians that despite attempts to become involved with their academic departments, and the time devoted to publicize their skills, the traditional role of collection development is still seen by academics as the main or only function to be fulfilled by the role of liaison librarian. A recurrent result of surveys gauging responses to liaison programs was that academics thought of liaisons in terms of their collection development role (Chu, 1997; Tennant, Tobin Cataldo, Sherwill-Navarro, & Jesano, 2006; Yang, 2000). Often the academics seemed to be quite unaware that the liaison librarians may have been able to perform other functions. Some writers concluded that academics would not think to approach librarians for research assistance, or, if they did, it would be as a last resort (Frank et al., 2001; Yang, 2000). Although the literature acknowledges the importance of the collection development role of the liaison librarian, this is coupled with concern over the lack of perception on the part of academics of other possibilities for the involvement of the liaison.

Disconnectedness

The concern over the perception of academics that liaisons are mainly collection development personnel relates to the theme of a distance between academics and librarians. Supported by survey results academics are perceived to have a "disconnection" with librarians over the functions and potential functions of their role and what they could offer (Christiansen, Stombler, & Thaxton, 2004; Donham & Green, 2004; Frank et al., 2001). Christiansen (2004) noted that concern over this disconnectedness ran strongly through library science literature but was not addressed much, if at all, in other social science literature. This observation highlights the gap between the two groups on this matter. One group (the librarians) perceives that there is a problem, and writes about finding ways to solve it, while the other group (the academics) does not think that there is a problem, much less writes about it.

Measuring levels of disconnect was thought difficult if not impossible to do. One study pointed out that librarians could take many surveys to evaluate the relationship with academics, but there was strong suggestion that academics who had good relations with the library would respond positively to any library surveys they were presented with, and that academics who did not enjoy good relations would not respond at all (Kotter, 1999). This puts a different slant on positive results reported in articles where surveys seemed to show positive responses from academics.

This disconnectedness is seen to have been exacerbated by the increasing availability of electronic material that academics can access from their desktops. If information can be electronically accessed without the need for the academic to either visit a physical library, or for a librarian to act as the mediator for searching, then the question is asked, what part is a liaison expected to play? It has been argued that the increase in electronic material and end user searching, together with increasing compartmentalization of library departments negates the need for a liaison (Biddiscombe, 2002). Librarians have been so successful in obtaining electronic resources they are bypassed in terms of information seeking so need to develop other methods of interacting to maintain relevance (Biddiscombe, 2002; Frank et al., 2001).

Expanded Roles

The theme of disconnectedness between academics and liaisons, and the library in general, is viewed as a challenge for libraries. There is a perception that the library needs to reduce disconnectedness as a matter of survival, and liaisons need to demonstrate ongoing relevance to academics to obtain their support (Frank et al., 2001; Kotter, 1999). The liaison role is seen as being a position that can best demonstrate relevance. In particular the liaisons needed to expand their role to different areas of cooperation with academic departments, taking on more of a consulting role (Frank et al., 2001; Miller & Pellen, 2004). Although perhaps too early to see discussion in the literature, it would be interesting to gauge impacts of new models of tertiary funding. Perhaps there is a basis for arguing that an unexpected outcome of the Performance Based Research Funding

(PBRF) rounds is that academics engage with liaison librarians to assist in compiling their Evidence Portfolios. Liaisons may have also been approached to help academics better understand the journal impact factor. This may bear further study. Certainly, some liaison teams have responded to the PBRF model by marketing their potential to assist academic departments.

The implementation of information literacy programs in academic curriculums is seen as an opportunity for liaisons to collaborate with academics in a teaching capacity.(Hardy & Corrall, 2007; Winner, 1998) There is a perception that liaisons must build their relationship with academics to the level where they can push for inclusion in such programs (Lindstrom & Shonrock, 2006; Winner, 1998; Yang, 2000; Zhang, 2001). This goes beyond some more traditional roles in bibliographic instruction to instilling critical thinking when students use resources. It is believed that liaisons can ensure their importance for academic departments by doing so. For some authors the motivation for retaining liaison programs is for the library to become involved with teaching via that role. The eventual aim would seem to be that collaboration with academics in teaching would lead to the involvement of the liaison with curriculum development. This is assumed in library science literature to be a natural progression of the liaison relationship (Lindstrom & Shonrock, 2006; Winner, 1998). However, the attitudes of academics toward this intent of the liaison to have input into curriculum matters do not seem to have been discussed. This is perhaps somewhat surprising given the parallel theme of the perceived disconnection between librarians and academics. Also of interest is the activity of other parts of the library in terms of information literacy. If a library has a separate

teaching section, how might that interact with academic departments? Are the liaisons involved in any communication that does take place? As with other sections in the library system, liaisons may have growing competition for their relationship with academics from other librarians.

Conclusion

Literature on the liaison model and liaison relations with academic departments consists of case studies and best practice models of implementation and evaluation. There are also arguments for the need to change the liaison model from a concentration on collection development toward more inclusion in curriculum. Themes include the time and effort required for the relationship. A perceived distance between liaison and academics, particularly with the availability of electronic resources, is of concern to writers. It is thought that the direct involvement of liaisons in information literacy programs will remedy this. There remains scope for research into other aspects of the relationship of liaison and academic department. There are some issues that may yet be too early and too sensitive for study in the literature. An interesting question is the impact of the introduction of the PBRF model into universities in different countries, including New Zealand. With the need for academics and departments to understand journal impact factors and to provide copies of their work as part of this process, has this necessity had an impact on the relationship with the liaison librarians? Given the reluctance noted in the literature for academics to ask librarians for assistance, has this new model changed that? Another matter worthy of study is the impact on the liaison librarian-faculty relationship

of other parts of a library system. This is, of course, a sensitive area for exploration, which is why it may have received little mention. If a library increasingly compartmentalizes its services, how does this affect the liaison librarian model if they can be bypassed? Is the liaison librarian involved in the communication of the other library sections with academic departments? If not, what happens? The literature emphasizes the advent of electronic communication and that physical location of the library is less important to the liaison relationship. Is there, then, noticeable differences in the relationship of liaisons based in a centralized library and those liaisons based in a divisional library that are presumably closer in physical proximity? Frank (2001) and Biddiscombe (2002) argued that as departments became more interdisciplinary and cooperated more with other academic departments that appointing a librarian to liaise with one particular department was no longer relevant. Could this be shown to be an accurate prediction in recent years, or has the interdisciplinary nature of some academic departments encouraged cooperation with the academic library as another department? These aspects are worthy of future research, although the limits of the present study mean only some of them may be addressed.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 The Paradigm

4.1.1 Paradigm Choice

A qualitative method is preferred as means to understand the librarian's experiences. Time constraints prevent the consideration of the research as a case study or ethnographic study, but the methodology used in those forms of research may be utilized for the proposed topic. Aspects of marketing theory inform the paradigm to be employed.

4.1.2 Ontology

Although there has been work on the liaison librarian-academic relationship, there has not been much written on why researchers have chosen a particular approach. Discussion of theory is largely absent from the literature of library liaison. The form of research proposed in this project lends itself to working within a interpretivist paradigm, rather than a positivist or postpositivist paradigm. The research intends to develop an understanding of how the liaison librarian relationship may be built and maintained, from the perspective of the liaison librarian. This will involve an interpretation of the experiences of liaison librarians who are involved in such relationships. Such an approach cannot assume that the experience of the liaison librarians will be the same from person to person. The reality of one liaison librarian may differ from the reality of another liaison librarian.

The intent to examine the construct of reality from the liaison librarian's perspective, and the potential for multiple realities to emerge as a result, is an important aspect of a qualitative approach to research (Pickard, 2007). It is argued that the individual's experience of reality and perception of meanings within that reality is unique to the individual and should not be ignored in research (Gephart, 1999; Krauss, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In contrast, the positivist, and to some extent the postpositivist, researcher, perceives the existence of a single tangible reality that can be studied, measured, and quantified to explain what is happening. The differences that may occur between the experience and perception of the individual is not of concern to the positivist, although more so to the postpositivist researcher. In a real way the human element is removed from positivist conceptions of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Pickard, 2007).

4.1.3 Epistemology

The nature of obtaining knowledge of the liaison librarian relationship with academics lent itself to the use of a qualitative paradigm. The positivist or scientific method tests hypotheses derived from theory. The theory and hypotheses are predetermined, developed before research is undertaken. Given the argument that there is one reality to be experienced under the positivist paradigm, a hypothesis is then a matter of verification for the researcher – or falsification for the postpositivist (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Pickard, 2007). The importance for understanding in positivist research is objectivity. It is intended that this removes the possibility for bias or for the researcher to influence (or be influenced by) the subjects of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 2000).

The nature of knowing is argued to be different when a human element is involved, such as examining the experiences of people. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that investigations using a positivist perspective ignored context and the "humanness" of respondents in the research that was produced (p. 27). Humans differ as research material from other objects that might be studied as humans tend to interpret themselves and present this to a researcher through actions and words. It is these actions and words that researchers must interpret through analysis to build understanding of meaning (Balnaves & Caputi, 2001). The qualitative researcher is a participant in the research, interacting with human subjects in an attempt to improve their understanding of the subject's experience (Leedy & Ormrod, 2004). This brings concerns of trustworthiness and reliability, as the researcher becomes involved in the study. The employment of different methods to collect data will give more basis for context and background to the relationship, and build a better picture from the analysis of different data sets that is intended to offset potential bias.

Although the research topic resembled a form of ethnographic study, its parameters argue against such a study being attempted. Ethnographies examine a culture in its entirety (Pickard, 2007). With the liaison librarian, the performance of liaison duties may form only one part of a librarian's position. It is the relationship with academic departments that was of concern for the topic, and less attention paid to other aspects of the role of the personnel who are engaged in liaison.

The nature of the relationship of a liaison librarian with academic departments is

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dependent on factors that were not easily quantified, if at all. The research topic required an examination of the context of the librarian relationship with academics and the meanings attributed to the relationship by the librarians involved.

The researcher adopted some of the methods employed in ethnographic research and case study to investigate the research problem. Case studies are reported to be done over the course of a year, and ethnographic reports can take many years to prepare, both of which are outside the timeframe permitted (Creswell, 1998; Pickard, 2007). At best only a limited study was able to be made.

The tools employed by case studies and ethnography proved useful as the researcher investigated the experience of liaison librarians. The use of semi-structured interviews, and an examination of relevant documents was intended to obtain a rich description of the relationship with academics to be analyzed. Purposive sampling was part of the methodology. The research question made clear that the researcher intended to examine the experience of liaison librarians. As a result the population that may be studied is limited to those librarians engaged in liaison activities with academic departments. The identification of a particular population to be the subject of study fit with the use of purposive sampling, where only specific personnel are to be utilized (Patton, 1990).

Interviewing was reliant upon access being granted for this to be undertaken. For interviewing in particular a rapport needed to be built between the interviewer and respondent (Creswell, 1998; Wilson & Sapsford, 2006). The researcher had worked in a position assisting librarians involved with liaison for several years, and had come into

contact with other librarians engaged in liaison activity during that time. There was something of a basic understanding for the researcher about the type of interactions liaison librarians had with academics, which could be applied regardless of the academic institution chosen for the study. At the same time the researcher had to recognize the potential for bias given any pre-existing perceptions they might have had about the role of the liaison librarian. The researcher needed to ensure that their interpretation was not coloured by such perceptions that they had about the intended subjects of the study.

4.2 Research Population

The Library system studied had several advantages for the purpose of studying the liaison librarian relationship with academic departments. The Library system served a substantial population of full time equivalent students and academic and general staff members with a centralised library and decentralised libraries. The decentralised libraries are located in close proximity to the relevant academic departments. Among the library staff there are a number of positions in the role of liaison librarian. They are responsible to one or more academic departments. These personnel are specifically engaged in liaison activities as a major part of their job, organized into teams along discipline lines. There was a significant pool of liaison librarians potentially available to be part of the research. There was diversity in the locations of the librarians, with some physically situated in or very near the academic departments and others who are some distance away. The impact of location on the liaison experience is one of the research questions. In the large pool of liaison librarians there is a range in the length of time they have been in their positions. The researcher has worked in close proximity to librarians engaged in liaison activity at

an academic institution and has had opportunities to observe and assist with interactions with academic departments. A purposive selection of librarians was undertaken, selecting those based in different locations or with different populations of academic departments. A sampling of librarians with different lengths of time in their positions was intended to give an overview of the variety in the liaison librarian experience. Human Ethics Committee approval was given from Victoria University for this study.

4.3 Definitions

Term	Definition
Academic	Any member of the academic teaching and research staff at an academic institution.
Academic Department	Any unit within an academic institution that is served by a liaison librarian. The unit may be formally called a Department, Laboratory, Programme, or School.
Centralised Library	Library containing many central services for the academic institution system as a whole, as well as certain liaison librarians.
Decentralised Library	A library located in or very near an academic department. Such a librarian may contain one or more liaison librarians.
Liaison	Any activity engaging in interaction with an academic department. This includes queries from the academic department, assistance offered to the department in teaching, web pages, ordering publications, or with other parts of the library system.
Liaison Librarian	A library staff member who has a primary responsibility for liaison with an academic departments. They may be based in a centralised library or a divisional library. In other institutions this position may be called "Liaison Librarian".

4.4 Delimitations

The nature of the topic defines the population to be researched – librarians engaged in liaison with academic departments. That there is a finite research population of liaison librarians at the academic institution selected is a natural limit. The researcher acknowledges that the restricted time and length of the study provides its own boundary to the research. Due to the constraints only twelve of the liaison librarians will be interviewed for this study.

4.5 Limitations

The researcher recognises potential weaknesses in the research to be undertaken. The requirements of the qualitative research techniques to be employed mean that only a small sample of the potential population may be engaged with in the time available. The librarians to be studied will necessarily be self-selecting, depending upon the response to a request for interview and observation. The research is limited to a small sampling of liaison librarians in one institution. The specific institution, with its size and disbursement, may have particular facets of experience that may or may not be replicated in smaller institutions.

4.6 Interview

The choice of interview as a method for collecting the data was a good fit for with the topic that was investigated. The recorded and transcribed interviews assisted the researcher in interpreting the experience of the liaison librarian by examining their expression of that experience. From a very practical viewpoint an interview meant that material will be gathered by the researcher in person. If the researcher had not been present at the time the data was gathered there was the real possibility of misunderstandings to occur. This may be compared with other survey methods such as a self-administered questionnaire, where the researcher is absent and is usually reliant upon the respondent to fill in and, for paper questionnaires, to return a survey. For research into faculty attitudes to libraries, questionnaires have been argued to be self-selecting in terms of participation; those who are interested respond. Those who have negative opinions

may discuss them privately, but not in a questionnaire. Such responses skew results (Kotter, 1999). The use of forced choice in questionnaires can also limit expressions of experience.

The interview is a directed conversation, where the researcher attempts to obtain knowledge and understanding from the respondent (Fontana & Frey, 2000). During the course of an interview, different areas may be explored at great depth, in ways that cannot be done through over survey methods such as a self-administered questionnaire (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Wilson & Sapsford, 2006). Meanings intended can more easily be determined than in questionnaires where the researcher may not be present. Through the interview a respondent can ask the researcher to make any clarifications about questions, and the researcher can ask for clarification about the answers. This is important as the researcher needs to understand the meaning intended by the respondent in their answers, and the meaning the respondent attaches to their experiences (Charmaz, 2006).

The type of interview used was an important consideration. An interview that was heavily structured, with set questions for all respondents, could have placed limitations on answers. The questions set the bounds and the interviewer may be uncomfortable if matters are raised that go beyond such prescriptive boundaries (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Wilson & Sapsford, 2006). Answers that may benefit from follow-up questions may not be pursued if such that deviates from the interview schedule.

The semi-structured interview was a form that was better suited to the research topic, although its problems had to be noted. The form allowed for a greater amount of flexibility in the exploration of different subjects uncovered during the interview. There was potential for discovery of areas that had not been conceived by the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). However, although flexibility in questions and answers was an important strength of the semi-structured interview, it could also have been a weakness. There was a need for the interviewer to prevent the respondent from going off on tangents that stray too far from the purpose of the interview. However, this had to be weighed against the need to allow the respondent to answer questions in their own time and at their own pace (Leedy & Ormrod, 2004; Wilson & Sapsford, 2006). Attempts to curtail a respondent's answer could have resulted in a negative reaction from the respondent toward the researcher. If the researcher does not let the interviewer finish a long answer, they might miss out on important detail that could arise at the conclusion of the answer. At times during the interviews the subjects talked at some length about interaction with students. Although the topic under investigation concerned relationships with academics it often happened that interaction with students was tied to the relationship with academics.

4.7 Document Examination

In addition to observation and interview, an examination of private and public documentation may be useful for investigating the relationships to be studied. Documents can help to establish a background for experiences. They can complement interviews by providing a different perspective (Charmaz, 2006). They might give some idea of the

expected parameters for the conduct of the relationship if they include material such as manuals for the liaison positions, job descriptions, and intranet content. Such documentation included web pages designed in conjunction with academics, or web pages designed by liaison librarians specifically for use by academics. Web pages tend to be available for open viewing via the internet. However, for some documents (such as manuals and intranet) the researcher needed to approach the liaison librarian and/or the managers of liaison librarians to obtain permission as well as access to the desired material (Creswell, 1998).

4.8 Pilot Study

To test the interview and document examination techniques to be employed the researcher approached one liaison librarian to be a pilot study. This assisted in the refinement of interview questions and technique, and gave an indication of the time involved for transcription and coding. A pilot study also suggested different areas that were outside the draft code schedule. The schedule was changed at that time to reflect the outcomes of the pilot study.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

The intention of the researcher to obtain data through interviews, and documents suggested particular methods to be used to analyze the data. The result of the examination is to identify thematic elements and relationships between data as a representation of the interaction between liaison librarian and academic department. Although the intent of the project is not to formulate a theory, certain aspects of grounded theory, such as coding and constant comparison methods, were utilized to help the researcher arrange material.

5.1 Coding

5.1.1 Open Coding

Coding allowed themes to emerge from the data as it was being analyzed. It involved the creation of conceptual categories and the organization of data into those categories with assigned properties and even subcategories (Charmaz, 2006; Pickard, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding meant that analysis of data began early in the research process, and that data could be organized as it was collected. The action of creating codes for the data means that the researcher had to examine the data carefully and study its meaning within its context, such as interview transcript (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The adoption of grounded theory coding involved the researcher reviewing interview transcripts line-by-line, to identify concepts.

There are several ways of building codes. Some proponents of coding argue that codes may be created prior to data being collected, based upon the research questions that were

formulated (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Strauss and Glaser, the architects of grounded theory analysis, later differed on how codes should be built. Glaser emphasized the need for the codes emerge from the data and argued that Strauss had begun to force data into predetermined categories (Pickard, 2007). In permitting the codes to emerge from the data as it is being studied, the potential for discovery of more exact, or better, codes may appear. It especially encourages the use of "in vivo" codes, terms used by the respondents themselves, that may be preferred to terms devised by the researcher (Charmaz, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Despite the problems noted in predetermining codes, it is noted that beginner researchers might prefer some prior decision on codes to act as some form of organizational structure for the data at the outset of collection (Pickard, 2007). This does not assume that the coding schedule is so rigid that it may not be changed as different concepts emerge in the course of analysis.

The data under analysis may present different concepts, suggesting different categories to the researcher (Pickard, 2007). As the researcher for this topic may be deemed a beginner, a draft coding schedule was appropriate. From the literature review for the topic, the following arose as useful to act categories for open coding:

Open Coding Schedule

The Research Questions outlined for this topic gave a strong indication of aspects of an

Open Coding schedule.

Category	Properties
Techniques of Liaison	What have liaison librarians used and possibly discarded as a method of liaison
Political Aspects – Academic	Effects on liaison relationship of interdepartmental politics in academic department
Political Aspects - Library	Effects on liaison relationship of interdepartmental politics in library system
Location	Perceived impact of location of librarian in relation to department (centralized versus divisional location)
Format	Pertains to change in format of material from print to electronic and how this effects the liaison relationship
Opportunity	Opportunities perceived by liaison librarians for relationship building with department
Barriers	Barriers perceived by librarian to be put up by academic department

5.1.2 Axial Coding

Once open codes began to be established, the researcher detected relationships between

the categories and properties (or subcategories) to develop axial coding. In the

formulation of the axial codes the importance is on examining the conditions for the

category, the strategies employed in managing it, its consequences, and its context

(Charmaz, 2006; Leedy & Ormrod, 2004). As with open coding the act of axial coding

was an ongoing process.

5.2 Constant Comparison Method

A further aspect of grounded theory that was utilized was the application of constant comparative method in analyzing data. In addition to the initial and ongoing construction and refinement of codes, the researcher compared data against each other. Responses given in interviews may be compared with other remarks made in the same interview, as well as with responses made by other interview subjects. In doing so, it was intended that the researcher perceived relationships between the different data sets (Charmaz, 2006). Coding assisted this process as the categories that have been formulated identified material that had been labeled into the same category. The constant comparison method was ongoing through the collection. It required ongoing reflection on the part of the researcher. As the title of the method suggests, the comparison is continuous throughout the data collection. Coding and the constant comparison is usually intended to continue until saturation is reached – that is, when the analysis of data that has been collected no longer results in changes to the coding schedules or provides further insight to the interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). However, the limited period for the project meant that analysis was bound by time constraints before saturation could occur.

6. Liaison Techniques

Both similarities and distinctions between the librarians emerged in the interviews. Some of the liaison techniques that are familiar in the literature that covers the liaison librarian were all generally utilized by the interviewees, but to varying degrees. Others had been tried and abandoned. This variance was dependent on the individual experience of the librarian with their academic department. The techniques for some had changed over time with the move toward automation and email taking the place of printed communication channels and materials. An important aspect for all techniques was the timing of the approach to academics. The librarians acknowledged that academics were busy for much of the year, and for liaison to be successful the librarian had to be aware of when the quieter times were, as there would be more response to offers of teaching sessions or solicitations of book requests.

6.1 Use of Email

Techniques utilized included substantial use of email as a tool of communication, supplemented by phone. Three librarians emailed a list of new items in their designated area that had been received into the library. This email might be to all academics in a particular subject area. Two librarians kept careful track if an item was ordered by an individual academic, and let them know when that item had arrived. Some librarians targeted an email about a new book to specific academics it might be of interest to. New resources or trials of resources such as databases were announced via email. An email that was sent seemed to be particularly successful in reminding the academics about

queries they had for the liaison librarian. A common theme that emerged in five interviews was the ability of an email to obtain replies from academics. The replies received often had very little or nothing at all to with the initial subject of the email the librarian had sent. The reply might be by email or by phone depending on the academic. Receipt of an email from the librarian prompted academics to remember a question they would then ask. This would be replicated for librarians who made visits to the departments. The questions that would be asked varied greatly for one librarian. They remarked that some academics seemed to expect the liaison librarian to know very little about anything, while other academics seemed to believe the librarian had substantial knowledge about subjects well outside the library in the general area of publishing.

For a librarian to email an academic department there were two possibilities. The first approach was for the librarian to maintain their own list of contacts, usually relying on a member of faculty to notify them of changes in staff; one librarian checked a department's web pages for this purpose and hoped that they had been kept up to date. This method relied upon the librarian updating their list of contacts as academics arrived and left. A second approach was for the librarian to obtain membership of an academic department's email discussion list. A librarian might have membership on several lists. This would depend on the department and to some extent its size. A department might have separate lists for academics and postgraduate and doctorate students, or separate lists for different areas within the academic department. Academics and librarians might be members of more than one list or all of them. For the liaison librarian, membership of the lists was perceived to bring both advantages and disadvantages. One librarian on

several email discussion lists commented on the potential to be bombarded with procedural emails, which might be replicated across several lists. This had an effect on the volume of email they received. Any email a librarian sent to such a list would add to the volume of email already being circulated. Because of the number of emails, three librarians perceived that their email could be easily discarded by the academics they were trying to reach. All acknowledged that academics were very busy. Four of the librarians interviewed were not on the email discussion lists of the department. Three belonged to teams in decentralized libraries where the manager of the library was on a list and sent on anything of importance. The librarians who were not on the lists did not see this as problematic, as they trusted the managers to keep them informed of anything relevant. One librarian was glad that, in this way, they avoided being inundated with departmental procedural emails. However, one librarian who was on a list remarked on the importance of the list in keeping them informed about goings on in the academic department. For example, the librarian knew that if emails began to distribute concerning funding rounds that it was not a good time to approach academics about anything as they would be very busy with the submission of applications. The librarian who was interviewed for the pilot study had been denied membership of the academic email discussion list in the past. They did not know why, as the denial was from the head of the academic department, with whom the librarian considered they had a good relationship. The liaison librarian was based in a centralized library, and thought that membership of the list was important for them to keep in touch with the department. A change in department head afforded the opportunity for the librarian to be added to the list membership.

The perception of email volume for a department had an impact on how some librarians chose to distribute information. There would be careful consideration as to whether the information in the email would be of interest to the entirety of the department. If it was not, a variety of avenues for email could be utilized to avoid a global email to all. Three librarians had felt that a direct approach to a department would not be as effective as using an intermediary. This was especially true when the liaison librarian was new in their position and was not known to the academics in the department. It was thought the academics would ignore an email from the librarian they might not know but would read one from a colleague. Several departments had a specific academic designated to work with the liaison librarian. A librarian also often developed relationships with academics in different research areas within a department as a means to communicate with other academics in that area. Those persons acted as the librarian's first point of contact with the academic department if they required feedback on potential databases and journals or had electronic publishers' blurbs to distribute. Emails would be communicated from the librarian to the specific academic or academics. These persons would then forward the email communication on to their research colleagues. In turn the academic would filter responses back to the liaison librarian. In one incidence the academic who liaised with the librarian had to give their approval for book orders.

An academic designated by the department to liaise with the librarian might be employed by the librarian for several tasks. The academic could often be kept informed of budgets, and would approach their colleagues for items to be ordered as required. They would also request feedback on particular products when asked by the librarian, and were often used

as a sounding board by the librarian. Some librarians chose to conduct email communication to the academic department through the designated academic. Such a policy might be thought to be utilized by new librarians whose name would be unfamiliar to their departments. However, the use of the academic as a conduit to the department in terms of email was used by some liaison librarians who had held their position for some period of time. It seemed to relate to the librarian's perception of the standing of the librarian in relation to academic staff. It was felt by newer librarians that as the library email went to academics via another academic that it was more likely to be read and responded to. This denoted a distinction in how academics treated other academics as their equals. It also demonstrated the gradual process a liaison librarian might have to go through to be accepted by the academics. Even those who did consider themselves accepted would also defer to the academic to forward an email on to their colleagues. One librarian found that as time progressed they had more direct email contact with the academics and did not have to approach through an intermediary. The academic appointed to liaise with the librarian was becoming less important as the librarian became better known to the department. The existence of the position of a specific academic to liaise on library matters had been long established between many departments and the library organization in the institution and has been typical in New Zealand universities. However, not all departments have such an official role. Those librarians who do have someone performing this function, and also those that do not, may also utilize several academics unofficially as points of contact within an academic department.

All but two of the twelve liaison librarians involved academics directly in the ordering of material for the library. However, this option was not taken by all. Two librarians in one discipline did not send blurbs to the department by email or other means for historical reasons. One remarked that a predecessor had given over the task of ordering material to academics almost exclusively. The librarian perceived that the result was a collection based primarily on which academics bothered to order, and which did not. The librarian had sought to bring a balance to the collection by taking charge of most of the ordering duties themselves. They considered that they had built up a relationship with the academic department to the point that the academics trusted the librarian's knowledge and judgment, and only occasionally felt compelled to request material. The other ten liaison librarians tended to involve the academics more closely, soliciting requests for material by distributing publishers' blurbs via email or by physically sending print blurbs to specific academics in the department. The results for the liaison librarians were mixed. Two librarians remarked that only occasionally would they receive a book order from academics, regardless of how many blurbs would be sent. Another librarian said the need to send blurbs had lessened as publisher contact with academics became more direct. The librarian was aware that many publishers had automatic alerts set up for academics to directly receive information, bypassing the library entirely. One librarian had set up such alerts for the academics themselves.

6.2 Newsletters

Newsletters provided a point of difference between individual librarians. Some used newsletters as a form of communication but in different formats. One librarian knew of

newsletters that had been tried occasionally but abandoned. They had experience of different colleagues who had initiated an email newsletter to their department quite enthusiastically. However, this enthusiasm had either waned over time as other tasks took their attention, or the particular librarian had left. One way or the other it had gradually been abandoned as a form of communication. Some librarians felt that newsletters could be very time-consuming, involving great effort for little real gain. There were concerns that the newsletter format had to involve a fair amount of detail, and required multiple items to make such a communication worthwhile. It was thought that for a newsletter to be a regular occurrence there might not be enough items of sufficient interest to justify composing it. One librarian linked to an online web page that acted as a newsletter, and then emailed a notification about this to the department. For this librarian and others the newsletters did not seem to be regular occurrences. One librarian remarked that a targeted or general email was more effective than a newsletter, especially if it was only brief. Another librarian used email newsletters but also printed it out and placed the newsletter in some academics' post boxes. It was considered that some academics were not entirely comfortable with email communication, and that paper might provide an alternative to straining eyes on a screen.

Three liaison librarians had worked to include library notices in a newsletter created by the academic department. These newsletters provided an opportunity for the librarians to include library news in an established format that academics might be more likely to read. They believed that academics would be tempted to discard a library newsletter as not being relevant to them, as they would many emails due to the numbers of messages they

received. However, the academics would read the departmental newsletter as a matter of course, as items there might have a direct relevance to them. It was considered to be somewhat less time intensive, compared to putting together an entirely separate newsletter. Several librarians though this was far more effective technique to communicate such items.

6.3 Course Web pages

As liaison librarians differed in their approaches to email and newsletters, the differences became more apparent in the treatment of web pages. Liaison librarians may develop pages for subjects as part of their role, but they could also create web pages for specific academic courses. Not all courses would have library web pages. To some extent this might depend on the capabilities of a particular librarian, although this was less of an issue now than it had been, as the librarians could draw on a variety of other library staff that could assist with the web page development. The major cause for the presence or absence of a course web page tended to be the time commitment involved in putting such a page together. It also depended upon the librarian's interaction with the academic department and their perception of the need for such a page in terms of what the academics would want their students to get from it.

The most common reason for the inception of course web pages was out of an initial approach by the librarian to one or more academics to investigate whether the idea of a course page was viable. Once one course web page had been completed the instigation of

other course pages could take a variety of forms. Several librarians contacted their departments to alert them to the existence of the course page, from which there might be interest from other academics in having the librarian create a similar page for them. More often than this, it seemed, liaison librarians cited examples of where academic staff would contact them about the possibility for a course page as they had been shown them by another academic. Word of mouth between academics seemed to generate a lot of interest, more so than direct approaches by librarians. The endorsement of other academics seemed to rate very highly as the reason for why a librarian might be asked to create more.

Hosting matters could bring their own issues for the liaison librarians. Course web pages could be openly available on the internet, hosted on a library server. However, the page might instead be available on a secure student intranet, in which it was only accessible to staff or students who were engaged for that particular paper. There were advantages and disadvantages for the librarians in both approaches. Hosting the course page on the library website meant that the librarian could retain a degree of ownership over the page. Although a separate section of the library system was responsible for uploading pages to the website, it was the librarian who had control over presentation and content. In addition, a course page on the library website was open to all visitors. Course web pages were seen as a marketing tool for the liaison librarian, as a demonstration of what they could do for academics to tie in with their teaching. The course pages on the open website could also be marketed to other academics. The remarks about word of mouth referrals for web pages indicated this was not a minor consideration. Librarians

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sometimes found that academics who did not ask for a specific course web page for themselves, would often refer their students to an existing page for another paper, as the resources there were also of value to their classes. At the same time, depending upon their location of a library website, the pages might not be obvious for students, or academics, to find.

The hosting on the student secure intranet of course web pages created by the librarian also had advantages and disadvantages. One liaison librarian remarked that there were access issues as they needed to be granted editing privileges on the academic department's student intranet. There might be delays experienced in obtaining this access, as this could require liaising with several different persons. Some librarians noted that the intranet software could be difficult to manage, and could be unreliable at times. At the same time, they noted that the intranet update was instantaneous, and changes could be made very quickly.

The content of the web pages was developed by the librarian in conjunction with the academic. This could take several forms. The academic could be quite prescriptive about the content of the page, essentially wanting the web page to replicate much of what could be found in course readings. Librarians were particularly against this, as it was considered to be merely reproducing course content which was the academic department's responsibility. Instead librarians preferred a collaborative approach, where they might supplement resources given by the academics with other resources and general library information. In their experience most academics seemed quite amenable

to library input. Some liaison librarians saw this as a good way to promote a relationship with the academic that might encourage other collaborative ventures. Creating a course resource web page might be considered a first step to gaining an ally in the department who would recognize the librarian's worth and support them. It also maintained contact with academics for the time that the course page was being constructed, with feedback being sought.

There were differences of opinion among the librarians interviewed as to the preferred content of the pages. Many course web pages consisted of required and recommended readings. This could replicate the course listings of a High Demand collection as well as added supplemental material and resources. For many of these pages links were provided by the librarian to catalogue records for printed materials to show the availability of the items. For journal articles listed on the course page the librarian may have gone further and undertaken deep linking. Where this occurred, a click on a link would go directly to the full text of a specific article. Other course pages concentrated on educating the students about how to search for material themselves. The references were not all provided and there were no deep links to specific material.

This contrast highlighted the differences between what librarians felt should be on the pages. To some extent the presence of direct links was a reaction to what the academic wanted. This tendency could be a feature particular to an academic department where student timetables were very prescriptive. In those incidences, it was essential to the academic that the student be given access to certain material. If the liaison librarian was

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going to create a page it seemed that it was expected that direct access be provided to connect students with what they needed. The concern of the academic was that the student who went to a course web page created by the librarian was connected quickly to the information with minimal problems. Otherwise some liaison librarians suspected that the academic would bypass them altogether and provide other ways of giving their students that information. One suspected this might already be happening for some resources in response to other library systems practices, which will be discussed later. Generally, the academics who expected direct links to articles seemed less concerned about a need for the students to learn how to access that information for themselves, through their own searching, at least as far as the course page might be concerned. This did not mean that the academics were not aware of such a need, but that the course web page was intended to fulfil a different purpose.

Other librarians had very different approaches as far as the content of the course pages were concerned. Instead of providing direct links to articles, one librarian would provide a list of references on the course page, but only provided a link to the library catalogue, not the direct link to articles and books favoured by their colleagues. The librarian was concerned with the possibility of "spoon feeding" students on behalf of academics, and that course web pages could be counterproductive and contradictory. By this they meant that at the same time a librarian could be in cooperation with an academic to run teaching sessions, to ensure students knew how to locate information, with direct linking on course pages, the librarian would seem to be providing all the information that was required anyway. The concern was that with supplying such information the librarians were not

encouraging students to search for the references themselves, and would be less inclined to learn search techniques. Certain librarians were concerned that with the academic there was the potential to create an expectation of the "spoon feeding" of information. To some extent this was in reaction to the type of discipline being studied. For Arts papers, where there could be a lot of reading for a general subject, academics seemed to want more information to be made directly available to students. For the more scientific areas, there was a requirement for more precision. There was less reading required around a subject. This meant that the references listed on a course page might be far less. The librarians who did provide links did not see deep linking as negating the need for students to search; they saw it as an assist to the academic to communicate necessary information, but that this was only a start. In conjunction with the academic sessions could be held for the students in which search techniques were imparted for their assignments, at point of need.

When starting out as a liaison librarian it was viewed that being able to create targeted course web pages for academics was to be encouraged, as it instigated a level of collaboration on the resources for the page and academics were usually very pleased with the results. However, although the creation of course resource pages was acknowledged as a good way of marketing themselves to the academic department when the librarian was new, some librarians were cautious about how widely the service should be offered. In particular, several commented that the creation of course pages on the internet or intranet was very time intensive, each page taking considerable effort to produce. This could sometimes vary with the capabilities of the librarian to produce such pages. The librarians perceived that the academics were not at all aware of the level of work that

could be involved in drawing up such pages. This could be especially true where the page involved deep linking to resources. There were concerns among the liaison librarians that advertising the ability of to create course pages had the potential to be too successful in reaching academics. That is, some were concerned that they could be overwhelmed with requests to create such pages. Some librarians had been heavily involved in such activity. While the interaction with academics and the perceived value of the pages was good, the problem of devoting time to the activity had a flow-on effect to other areas of the librarians work. Time spent on creating course web pages was time not spent on arranging teaching sessions.

Once a course page had been constructed, there might be other difficulties. If a librarian had many web pages for courses it could become quite difficult to be able to update the pages. If a librarian inherited a course page from a predecessor, it could be even more problematic. The librarian might not be aware of the identity of the academic who had been the initial contact as the academic's name could be absent from the page itself. For courses where multiple academics might take turns at teaching part of the paper, changes in personnel were not always communicated to the librarian. An academic new to teaching a particular section of a course, who might only be a temporary member of staff, might not realize that a course web page existed for the paper overall, and not contribute updated readings. Or, if they were made aware of the page, it may be low on the priorities of a temporary lecturer, as encountered by one librarian. Two of the twelve librarians reported that on a few occasions if they tried to update a course page, they discovered then that for various reasons the course was not being taught that calendar year, or it

might have been discontinued altogether for an unspecified length of time. This latter situation had been encountered by one librarian who had put significant work over time with the academic to develop the page. They saw it as quite unfortunate that the course web page was no longer going to be used despite the effort that had been contributed by the academic and the librarian. If a librarian was beginning with course web pages and had only one developed as a showcase for a department, they were more dependent on the academic's continued support for the page. If a change in academic meant that a course page was not seen as important then the page would be taken down and the liaison librarian might have no course pages at all to use as a marketing tool, which had happened in the past when the idea of course pages was very new.

Only one librarian of the twelve was not enthusiastic about course web pages. They acknowledged that such pages could have a place in academic departments, but that this was dependent on the needs of the department and the skills that academics expected their students to possess. They believed that for a volume of information to be delivered course web pages were a good idea, but not if the intent of the academic was that students be educated in searching for resources at the outset. For these academics, course web pages were unsuitable. The librarian perceived that academics needed research techniques to be instilled in their students, and they saw their duty to concentrate on imparting techniques in ways other than web pages, by the arrangement of teaching sessions.

6.4 Teaching Sessions and Information Literacy

The liaison librarians' relationship with the academic department could be built through the offer of tutorial sessions for students tied in with different courses. Ten of the twelve librarians were involved in teaching sessions for students to one degree or another. The sessions were arranged by the liaison librarian with the academics. They would liaise with the academic about content and the outcomes for students. The sessions would be reviewed at the end of the teaching year and the academic would decide on whether they had been successful, which meant their repeat the following year. In preparation for a session, four of the librarians specifically requested sample questions from the academic to use as demonstrations. It was important to the librarians that, if possible, the teaching sessions would take place in a scheduled tutorial or lecture time and that the sessions were directly related to the student assignments. The librarians saw this as essential to getting students to attend. Sessions held outside official class times were far less successful in attracting them. This could require some negotiation with the academics about the best time for the sessions.

The liaison librarians were mindful that lecture schedules could be quite tight, and for an academic to include a library session meant that they would have to give up part of their own teaching time. Three liaison librarians offered teaching sessions to students as part of the approach to new academics. They commented that it appeared easier to obtain cooperation from new arrivals, who were open to new ideas. This could be compared to the responses from many long serving academics that appeared less willing to make

accommodation for librarians by including library tutorials when they were offered. The librarians perceived that these academics were used to a set method for the courses they taught and did not wish to vary this. The librarians would not press the issue as this might receive a negative reaction.

One liaison librarian had spoken to several academics about making a short presentation at the first class for many of their courses. During these classes they would make a general introduction about the library and liaison librarian services to the students. The librarian remarked that regardless of what length of time had been agreed with the academics beforehand – usually fifteen to twenty minutes – the librarian inevitably ended up with a much shorter time or none at all, as the first class was often taken up with administration. The same librarian had more success in the organizing of hands-on teaching sessions for assignments to take place during scheduled tutorial hours later in the courses, although these were voluntary. One year, for one course, student attendance was taken. The academic later made a comparison of the marks of students who had attended the librarian's tutorials with those who had not. The outcome was that tutorial attendance and assignment marks had a positive correlation. The next time the course was taught the academic and librarian used this result as a form of marketing to encourage attendance. Three of the librarians were involved in teaching or lecturing students during the lecture hours. The librarians were introduced by the academic. This was seen as important as the academic was seen by the students as giving official sanction to the librarian.

The particular success of four librarians in organizing teaching sessions as part of courses could be measured in papers where the academic allocated course marks to the library components. For one librarian based in a centralized library this had been come about as a result of an informal conversation with an academic during a departmental visit. The librarian had suggested the tutorial, but it was the academic who suggested an allocation of marks. For the other librarians to have specific marks allocated, this had occurred with librarians based in decentralized libraries. It had come about as a gradual development over a period of time, and specifically where the liaison librarians had become well known to the academic staff. Two commented that the relationship had to be built and trust established to a point where the academic was comfortable with permitting marks to be awarded for library work.

Five liaison librarians commented on the time involved in offering teaching sessions. If the offer of a library tutorial or lecture was taken up by academics that had an impact on the liaison librarians time commitments for the other duties of their position. If classes were large and the teaching was to be hands-on, with students at computers, then the class might have to be broken into smaller groups. For the librarian this meant essentially the same teaching session might have to undertaken several times for the one paper. If this circumstance was repeated across a number of classes then the liaison librarian might spend a considerable proportion of the time teaching. One librarian noted that the most time consuming part of offering teaching sessions was the preparation beforehand. They considered that for a one hour tutorial the actual teaching part was 20% of the time commitment, 80% being on preparation, drafting a script or notes, liaising with the

academic for possible examples, preparing examples, making a hand-out, and rehearsing delivery. Three liaison librarians remarked that if their sessions involved a library component, then the librarian was usually involved in marking that component, also a time commitment. The willingness to employ this technique to liaise had to be tempered with what the librarian could actually accomplish in a timely fashion. Librarians based in centralized and decentralized libraries had other demands on their time. This might mean involvement in committees, or assisting with other library service points. As remarked upon with the construction of course pages, the librarians saw a danger in offering a service that could not be delivered upon as worse than not offering the service at all.

An emerging trend in teaching sessions is an intention to contribute towards the inclusion of information literacy in academic courses through the librarian's involvement. There is not space here to go into information literacy in any particular depth but some comment may be made. Three librarians remarked that the driver for library involvement in instilling aspects of information literacy seemed to have originated with library management. The librarians perceived this as a weakness. By this they meant that for the library to have impact in this area, the governing body of the academic institution needed to give its support and give a directive to academic departments that they involve the library. They said that it needed to be a "top down" process from above and not independently from the librarians. Until such a directive was given, the librarians believed little headway would be made on the topic. The librarians believed that the academics would only involve librarians if the governing body told them to. One believed

that to involve the librarian in information literacy meant that the academic would have to relinquish their control over teaching.

For three of the four librarians that had been successful in getting marks allocated for library components in teaching, this was an independent development over a period of time. In only one incidence was it a result of the liaison librarian raising the prospect of involving a component as part of library management's drive toward librarian involvement in information literacy. The efforts of the other three librarians were independent of this trend. They had encountered specific cases in certain disciplines, the result of a particular circumstance in a relationship. For three of the four librarians, the academic retained the final determination over whether the library component was involved in their courses at all. For seven of the twelve librarians this allocation of marks for library work had not occurred. It may be noted that one or two librarians thought that generic library tutorials mostly involved mechanics of how to use a resource, and could not be offered as proof of library involvement in information literacy as they tended to miss out why a resource should be used. One librarian acknowledged the need for students to become information literate, but considered use of the term itself to be just a current trend. They had doubts that some parts of the library system had any concrete meaning attached to the phrase.

6.5 Departmental Visits

The personal visit of the liaison librarian to their academic department was perceived to

be an essential part of the role for many librarians. Several of the interviewees stressed that when they started in their position one of the most important parts of the job for them was to physically visit their academic department. The primary reason for visits at that time was so that academics could become aware of who the librarian was and become accustomed to their presence. To gain acceptance with their academics two librarians emphasized that it was crucial that they be perceived by the academics as part of the department. The librarians believed that their presence in the department needed to be considered commonplace by the academics, not an aberration. Going to morning tea and having their lunch in the academic department's tea room was seen as one way for the librarian to cultivate this perception that they were part of the department, that they "belonged". If a librarian gained acceptance in this way liaison could be undertaken much more effectively. The librarians saw the need to put themselves in front of the academics, especially when they were starting out, so the academics could recognize them and remember them if questions arose.

To assist with this liaison librarians tried to include themselves in multiple social events to do with the department early on, to achieve the effect of, in a sense, becoming embedded with their academic departments. For several librarians this involved attendance at public lectures hosted by the department. The librarians perceived that their presence at these events was important in two ways. Firstly, the librarian was seen by the academics as showing an interest in the discipline that they had been tasked to look after. This might be especially true if the lecture was outside normal working hours, as this showed the librarian may have made a particular effort to attend. Secondly, it provided an

opportunity for the liaison librarian to engage in networking with their academics, speaking to them before or after the lecture. After some time in their position, once they considered themselves established with the academics, three librarians felt that there was less need for them to visit the academic department to quite the same degree. However, this did not mean they did not visit at all, but that they hoped they had done so enough times that if they did visit it would not be considered by the academics to be out of the ordinary. One librarian commented that a particular academic had been important in arranging social events in a department. Once the academic had left there were far fewer events organized, so fewer opportunities for the librarian to attend.

Five of the twelve librarians commented that in the same way that an email to the academic department would prompt replies completely unrelated to the initial subject of the email, a visit to the department could attract even more queries. The physical presence of the librarian seemed to do much to remind academics about issues they wished to raise. Informal interaction in this way was experienced by all the liaison librarians interviewed, and was deemed one of the most important areas of liaison. At the same time, at least one librarian used the opportunity to follow up email correspondence with academics if they saw them in person.

For three librarians, there was a need to set aside specific times to visit the academic department. These liaison librarians were primarily based in a centralized library. Two of the librarians who had set times to visit the department had initially arranged a room in the department for the time of their visits. Both librarians had abandoned the rooms in

favour of the staff tea room. One librarian scheduled their visit for the time when many academics tended to take a tea break. They remarked that academics would only occasionally visit the designated room for specific queries. However, when the librarian changed their location to the tea room, their presence prompted many more academics to ask questions. The librarian remarked that the academics seemed to not consider a query pressing enough to make a special visit to the designated room, but did ask if they happened to see the librarian in the tea room.

The librarian in the centralized library could at times be some considerable distance from the academic department they liaised with. Even for decentralized libraries, a librarian might have responsibilities for more than one department, one which could be close by but another that could be far. Here location mattered. A librarian situated near to their department could visit easily taking only a short period of time to do so. One librarian based in a centralized remarked on the issue of time involved in visiting a department. Going to the academic department involved some travel, and the liaison librarian considered that visiting might not achieve much in the way of interaction if academics were busy with other matters. They weighed the time spent on a visit against the benefit of doing so if they received no queries. Location could have an effect on service if an academic emailed or phoned a librarian for urgent assistance. Two librarians felt that often it was best to see academics in the academic's office. The academic was often more comfortable in their own surroundings, and if the question pertained to library software issues, it was considered more appropriate often to see the problem at the academic's workstation. In doing so the liaison librarians saw they could deliver a more personal

service. While this could be accomplished relatively easily if the librarian was based near the academic, it could become more awkward if some considerable travel was involved.

At the same time that location could provide a barrier to physical visits by librarians, the increasing availability of electronic materials meant that academics could access more and more material from their office without the need to visit the library in person. Liaison librarians perceived this development to have been embraced by the majority of academics. For four librarians it emphasized the need to enhance different areas of service delivery. Three of the librarians had encounters with academics that seemed to wonder about the need for physical libraries or even librarians as everything they needed was increasingly online. At the same time the liaison librarians were finding that although more resources were electronic there was a role to inform the academics about online and also print resources that had a particular relevance to them. Two librarians noted that for their subject areas not everything was available online. They remarked that some new, young academics seemed to be unaware of print resources that might be the only coverage of certain areas.

Although the electronic availability of journals and databases had led to fewer visits by academics to a physical library, there were opportunities for liaison librarians to interact when online material suddenly became inaccessible. Two librarians remarked that the only time they were contacted by certain academics was when resources would no longer work. One librarian commented that it did not take very long at all for an academic to email or phone if a database would no longer work, or an online journal denied them

access. This inadvertently led to liaison as the librarians worked to correct the problems by contacting those in charge of electronic resources then contacted the academics when the resource was restored. It might be noted that the contact with the liaison librarian at these times demonstrated that the librarian had been effective in maintaining a relationship with the department, becoming the first contact when library issues arose. Liaison librarians had found that an appeal to an academic's professional ego was very effective in obtaining their interest. Two librarians in one discipline followed a team policy of meeting their academic staff at least once a year. To prepare for the meeting the liaison librarians found library material that would be of interest to individual academics, such as the number of citations for their publications. One remarked that one academic had shown little interest in library material at all had some level of interest when their publications were discussed. They noted that a lack of interest in library material by academics tended to happen where the academics were engaged in research in highly theoretical subjects where there might not be much material on their area. For a few of the librarians the introduction of Performance Based Research Funding provided at least some initial interaction with academics to assist in the preparation of Evidence Portfolios. Three liaison librarians were contacted by academics curious about journal impact factors and how to locate these. Two librarians had assisted academics in the location of material for Portfolios. However, this activity was tied to the funding round. The librarians commented that after some initial contact concerning PBRF and impact factors the academics had not spoken to them again about it.

Four librarians remarked on the need to have good relationships with the heads of the

academic departments which could be developed through visits. One librarian who was given a new for a department had a casual conversation with the head of department at a social event who then referred a graduate student to the librarian. The librarian perceived that this interaction had been instrumental for the head who gave support to the librarian's later initiatives. Two librarians had annual meetings with the heads of department to discuss library matters. They believed that this helped keep library matters in the mindset of the heads of departments. Librarians also submitted an annual report to the head of department, detailing activities over the previous year and possibilities for future actions. This could be used to showcase their work to the head of department, although two of the librarians noted that the annual report did not seem to obtain much of a response. This might relate to how far the report might be circulated or whether it stopped with the head of department and went no further.

6.6 Interaction with Administrative Personnel

Part of the visit to the academic department for four of the librarians was to keep in touch with the department's administrative personnel. Although these people were usually non-academic staff, they were viewed as key to maintaining the liaison relationship. They were often the people responsible for 59 organizing social events. This meant that a librarian could cultivate a relationship with them to ensure an invitation to such events. The liaison librarians also saw a good relationship with the administrative staff had benefits in other ways. Administrative personnel could be contacted to find out if any academic staff members were on leave, and if so, who might be caretaking their courses, important if teaching sessions needed to be arranged, or course resource web pages

needed to be updated. The four liaison librarians worked in a number of ways with administrative personnel in an academic department to ensure ongoing communication. This could be particularly useful in alerting the liaison librarian to the arrival of new academic staff which permitted the librarian to begin interacting with that staff member. One librarian had an arrangement that their details were included in information packs given by the department to new academics. Two librarians had an arrangement in place, formal for one and informal for the other, in which new academics would be physically brought to the librarian.

Despite efforts to keep up communication to learn of academic staff changes, it was often the experience of some liaison librarians that the first they learned of such change was when they tried to contact an academic to update a course resource web page, or a teaching session, to discover that the academic was no longer responsible for the course. Occasionally it might be difficult for the liaison librarian to determine which academic was looking after a course, especially as this circumstance could often occur at the beginning of a term, when academics were busy preparing courses and other matters might take a librarian's attention.

Two librarians expressed some frustration with their departments concerning invitations to social events. One librarian had attended events on many occasions to begin with, but later found that they only learned of events after they had occurred. In part this seemed to them to be partly the result of a poor relationship with the departmental administration personnel. The librarian believed that the personnel tended to forget about the librarian

entirely unless the librarian prompted them, and even then there was no guarantee of invitations. The second librarian had responsibility for more than one department and noticed a strong contrast between their good relations with one administrative person, who included the librarian in invitations, and a more distant relationship with the other person, who did not include the librarian.

6.7 Library Systems and Processes:

An area of concern for liaison librarians was the perceived tendency for library systems and processes to work against the development of a relationship with their academics. Some felt that a library system could appear to be in an area of contradiction in terms of providing service to academics. On the one hand the system had processes in place which were necessary to deal with large numbers of personnel, both academics and students. However, at the same time, there had been an appointment of a liaison librarian to help meet the academics needs. The liaison librarian may move to assist academics but find they are hampered by established systems and processes. Specifically, four librarians pointed to procedures for putting material into High Demand collections, lending policies, and interloan systems. One had had experiences where academics had requested a liaison librarian to arrange certain specific functions that were not already being performed. The librarian had considered that the services requested seemed quite straightforward. To them it required only a small effort for the delivery of an enhanced personalized service. However, many of the requested services involved other parts of the library system. Generally they seemed to be at odds with some part of established library practice. To this end, the librarian's requests for such services to be approved tended to be

unsuccessful. The librarian considered this to be an "embarrassment" as they had considered the request to be quite reasonable and then had to communicate the decision on refusal to the academics. Although all twelve liaison librarians recognized the need for standardized library systems and policies for the academic institution, they thought that often the library processes were sometimes for the library's convenience over that of academics. One librarian commented on an apparent perception that because certain practices had always been followed by the library few people seemed to question whether such practices were meeting the needs of users. They believed that the unchanging nature of library systems acted against the liaison librarian role of facilitating communication and service to academics. Time and again, some librarians felt particularly constrained in what they were able to offer, and in how they were permitted to respond to requests from academics.

A particular issue encountered by four of the twelve liaison librarians was a negative reaction by academic s to the library system's insistence on form filling. Although this was required for library processing, it was perceived as being quite odious to academics with limited time. In the liaison librarians' experience academics concentrated on their teaching and on their research. The need for the academic to complete a form for one activity and another form for another activity was seen by the four librarians as a potential barrier to the development of a relationship with academic staff. Exacerbating the need for academics to fill out forms was often the infrequency with which such forms might be done. If an interloan request form was only filled out a few times in a year, two librarians perceived that their academics very soon forgot the requirements for a given

form. One librarian remarked that the introduction of a new method of populating online interloan forms with request details was difficult enough for a librarian to work out. That person commented that many aspects of libraries had the potential to make people feel "foolish" and this might be accentuated among academics who considered themselves to be extremely intelligent and who would react against forms that made them feel less so; it was the belief that academics thought that they should know how to fill interloan forms out, and that if they failed to do so they would react against the need to fill out a form in the first place.

Complicating matters is that despite practices being standardized across a library system in theory, in actuality an academic may have quite different experiences of systems between a centralized library and in a decentralized library. Such practices had also changed over time. In the past, an academic who dealt with a decentralized library might be quite used to bringing items to the liaison librarian to be added to a High Demand collection. The academic could accompany such material with vague instructions as to what the material was for, for what length of time. The academic might present an extremely short period of time in which the material was expected to be available to students. The liaison librarian was expected to see that the instructions were followed through. In the past, in decentralized libraries, they made sure that this was done. When the library system began to introduce standardized practices and specific forms for the inclusion of items in the High Demand collection, this was perceived by the liaison librarians as meaning there was less accommodation by the library. The academic could no longer simply drop material off to be processed, and certainly not with the expectation

it could be processed at very short notice. This was especially true of disciplines where their High Demand collection was included with those for several other subject areas. To some extent this relieved pressure from the liaison librarians, especially as systems became increasingly automated. However, at the same time the requirement for more involved procedures needed to be communicated to the academics.

Those liaison librarians who had experience in decentralized libraries saw this change in policy as a reduction in service to academics. They anticipated the issues that were to arise, namely the protests by some academics over the new procedures. The reaction of the librarians differed. For four liaison librarians the way to prevent a problem in relations with academics was to circumvent the issue with form filling. Four librarians had on occasion filled in the necessary High Demand collection forms themselves on behalf of academics or had a member of their support staff do so. A fifth librarian had arranged for the academic department's administrative personnel to fill in the form for their staff. In this way the librarians worked to ensure what needed doing to obtain the action was in fact done. One librarian commented that the academics had to know that when they needed material to go into High Demand collections they could trust the library system to effect the action. Otherwise the academic would lose faith in the library system. The liaison librarian considered that it was their responsibility to make sure a loss of trust did not happen.

Two liaison librarians have had to liaise with a number of adjunct academics who had been contracted to teach particular courses. Because they were often temporary staff, these academics tended to be unfamiliar with the academic institution in general, and the

library processes specifically. For these staff the two liaison librarians felt compelled to involve themselves closely in arranging library processes. The librarians involved considered this to be problematic as the librarians were based in a centralized library, and encountered a compartmentalization of library services. They perceived that the same processes in a decentralized library were easier to undertake. This was supported by the experience of three of the liaison librarians based in decentralized libraries. From their remarks it was quite clear that interaction between the library staff responsible for the procedures was less compartmentalized. One librarian noted that issues with interloan forms and High Demand forms may have become more prominent in conjunction with funding issues. They perceived that if academic departments had a reduction in funding, and a corresponding reduction in research assistant staff, the academics might have to do a lot more of the form filling than they had to previously. Those academics could no longer call upon a graduate student to fulfil the necessary tasks to place material in a High Demand collection, for example, or to request an interloan item from another institution. Two librarians liaising with scientific disciplines were quite sure that for articles they wanted, academics were more likely to directly email an author for a copy of the article. The authors were generally fellow academics and often acquaintances of the staff member. One librarian said that an area of research in a subject might be so small that only a few persons were involved in the topic worldwide and it was easier for an academic to request an article directly and avoid filling in an interloan form entirely. The problem with this for the librarian is that it encouraged the academic to view the library processes as prohibitive, and to avoid interacting with the library. This in turn made attempts to build a relationship through liaising more difficult.

6.8 Political Aspects of Academic Departments and Libraries

In terms of the politics within an academic department having an effect on the liaison librarian relationship, three of the twelve librarians interviewed seemed to have direct experience of this. For one of the librarians, the politics had nothing to do with the library explicitly. However, tensions that emerged over time in one academic department lead to a reaction by some of the academics against the person of the librarian as part of a general malaise within the department. The librarian in that incidence perceived that the reaction they witnessed was not so much a personal one but was more symptomatic of the academic department's internal strife. The academics worked against themselves to a degree and anyone else it seemed who had interaction with the department. It might be that the librarian, who did not have any particular influence over academic tenure, could be considered a relatively easy target.

A second librarian had a different experience of the politics of their academic department. They considered their relationship with the academics to be very close. However, they worked to maintain a balance between their role and the department, a role that had changed over time. At the inception of their position the liaison librarian was extremely strong about cultivating relationships with the department. However, at the same time they were very aware of the management of such relationships in terms of the politics among the academics they interacted with. They emphasized the importance of the librarian to avoid becoming embroiled in problems between academics. A certain situation of neutrality had to be maintained, without the liaison librarian seeming to

favour one academic over another. To do so, they thought, compromised their ability to perform their function, if they became alienated from one or more academics. Instead the aim was to retain the possibility of being able to interact with any academic, without any presupposition that they liked one more than another.

The third librarian encountered politics in relation to the funding particular electronic resources. Resources were often paid for out of one discipline's library budget. This could sometimes become a problem if a resource was found to have general application for several disciplines. If usage statistics determined that a resource was being heavily used by people from a discipline that was not contributing toward the cost, tensions could arise. Academic departments with library budgets funding a resource used by other disciplines were not necessarily interested in subsidizing the access to material by other academic departments. The general belief was that other departments should at least contribute to the cost, if not have it taken from their library budgets entirely. However, a stalemate might occur if the disciplines that were not paying for the resource communicated an unwillingness to commit their budgets towards the cost.

For all librarians there was an acknowledgement that whatever technique was better suited to their academic department, they had to be conscious of the times they should make contact with them. Typically, contact was most commonly made at the end or the beginning of the teaching year, avoiding times when academics were involved with marking but before the academics went on holiday or sabbatical. It was recognized that this would have a negative impact on liaison if a librarian approached the academic

department when they were already busy, and for liaison to succeed librarians needed to be sensitive to such considerations, that a time suitable for the librarian might not always be suitable for academics. The librarians adapted accordingly.

6.9 Conclusion

Email was a technique common to all librarians and utilized more than any other. However, use of email was carefully considered. Some librarians perceived that emails from the library were a low priority for busy academics with large numbers of email messages and could be ignored. They worked to avoid this by targeting emails to specific academics rather than sending a message to an entire academic department, or used other academics as intermediaries, at least at first until a librarian became known to the department. A separate library email newsletter was thought to suffer the same fate as the general emails, in that it could be ignored by academics and so only two librarians utilized them. Three librarians had instead worked to obtain a space in the academic department's own newsletter. They felt that academics saw this newsletter as directly relevant and library content placed there was far more likely to be read. Librarians were somewhat ambivalent about membership of an academic department email discussion list. While the liaison librarian perceived it was important to keep in contact with what might be happening in an academic department, it was also thought that it was responsible for a large volume of email (the very problem for librarians that they perceived led to academics deleting library messages). However, at the same time an email from a librarian could be very successful in prompting queries from academics on matters

unrelated to the content of the initial message. Seeing the librarians name seemed to remind the academics of the librarian's existence, in the same way the liaison librarian's physical presence during a visit the academic department prompted queries. The personal visit of the librarian to the department was perceived to be essential in building the relationship. With its continuance through the liaison librarian's term their visual presence acted to remind busy academics of their existence, and allowed social interactions to take place that could lead to more concrete forms of liaison. Librarians who had built a good relationship with administrative personnel found that this enhanced their knowledge of the academic department. The introduction of Performance Based Research Funding had not had significant long term impact on liaison activity. There was initial contact from academics with some librarians about impact factors but little since rounds had concluded.

The electronic availability of material created less need for academics to physically visit a library (and some academics seemed to occasionally question the need for a physical library at all). However, there was still a need for the liaison librarian to interact with academics, particularly if the online resources broke down. Some liaison librarians worked to develop a more personalized service to compensate.

For some librarians their efforts to liaise with academics were hindered by procedures within the library system. They recognized the need for standardized procedures, but thought that some were too prescriptive, and did not take note of the activity of academics. In their view the standardization of the system worked against the role of

liaising with academics and provided a barrier to a personalized service. The researcher gained the impression that two or three librarians perceived themselves caught in the middle between library processes and academics, attempting to work with both, but on occasion managing to satisfy neither. The liaison librarian acted as intermediary, and identified themselves as promoting the library and library policy, but also saw the necessity of occasionally circumventing the library system to offer service. They determined that someone had to fill out forms for activities to be undertaken so it might not matter too much if it was not the academic that actually filled out the form. It was more important that the action desired by the academic be undertaken.

For the liaison librarians interviewed course resource web pages and the provision of teaching sessions were among the most common forms of liaison, and could be quite popular among academics as a way of communicating information to their classes. However, there was a resulting effect on time when these were offered that led two librarians to argue for caution when committing to such activities. Librarians were enthusiastic about these techniques when they were new to the role as it proved a good introduction to liaising with academics and demonstrating what they could offer to enhance teaching. However, the impact on the librarian's time often meant that as they became more settled in their role, they might be less inclined to offer these. Having built a relationship the librarian saw the importance in sustaining it, and not over commit their time. The concern was that popularity of liaison techniques could outrun the librarians' ability to deliver on the services and that this was far worse than not offering them in the first incidence. In this the librarians adhered to the tenet of management theory that a

poor relationship was worse than none. The liaison librarian needed to make this judgment based on their experience of the academic department, to know what they should offer and when, what would work, and what would not. Another question was whether something should be offered at all, such as the librarian who perceived that course resource web pages were not suitable for all disciplines.

The limitations of the study meant that some of the research questions could be touched on only lightly. Further research is required to determine whether the conclusions drawn in this project have wider application to all librarians engaged in liaison activities. The research questions uncovered a wealth of material available for research. In particular the effect of library procedures in providing potential barriers to liaison and how librarians operated with such systems to ensure service to academic departments, is worthy of more intensive study than was possible here. The balance required by liaison librarians to know how many services can be realistically offered, and what happens to the liaison relationship when the librarian cannot offer a requested service is also deserving of further study.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Information Sheets

8.1.1 Information Sheet for Library Managers

My name is Bevan Shortridge. I am enrolled in a Master of Library and Information Studies degree at the School of Information Management at Victoria University. For the final part of my degree I am undertaking a research project. The topic of my project is to examine the relationship of liaison librarians with academic departments. My intent is to obtain a rich description of the liaison librarian experience and to investigate what factors impact on their relationship with academics. As part of this research I would like to interview a selection of liaison librarians about their role with academic departments. I would also like to examine web pages and certain documents (such as Annual Reports to Departments) if permissible. It is my intent to examine librarians working in different locations and with different lengths of tenure. All responses will be kept confidential to me, and to my supervisor Lynley Stone, School of Information Management, Victoria University. The writing of the project will ensure that anonymity is maintained and that responses are not attributable. I would like to reserve the right to publish part, or all, of my project if applicable.

I would like to request your permission to approach the Librarians in your team to ask if they would be willing to take part in my project. The interviews may take one hour to conduct. It is my intention not to intrude into their workflow more than is absolutely necessary.

I would appreciate your consideration in this matter.
I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

Kind Regards,
Bevan Shortridge
MLIS Student

My contact details are:

Bevan Shortridge
Email: shortbbeva@student.vuw.ac.nz
Phone: (Daytime) (09) 3737599 extension 85771
Mobile: (027) 344 6082

8.1.2 Information Sheet – for Liaison Librarians

My name is Bevan Shortridge. I am enrolled in a Master of Library and Information Studies degree at the School of Information Management at Victoria University. For the final part of my degree I am undertaking a research project. The topic of my project is to examine the relationship of liaison librarians with academic departments. My intent is to obtain a rich description of the liaison librarian experience and to investigate what factors impact on their relationship with academics. As part of this research I would like to interview a selection of liaison librarians about their role with academic departments. I would also like to examine web pages and certain documents (such as Annual Reports to Departments) that you may have created or have access to, if permissible. It is my intent to examine librarians working in different locations and with different lengths of tenure. The interviews may take one hour to conduct. I appreciate that you may be very busy. It is my intention not to intrude into your workflow more than is absolutely necessary. All interview responses will be kept confidential to me, and to my supervisor Lynley Stone, School of Information Management, Victoria University. The writing of the project will ensure that anonymity is maintained and that responses are not attributable. I would like to reserve the right to publish part, or all, of my project if applicable. I would appreciate your consideration in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

Kind Regards,
Bevan Shortridge
MLIS Student

My contact details are:

Bevan Shortridge
Email: shortbbeva@student.vuw.ac.nz
Phone: (Daytime) (09) 3737599 extension 85771
Mobile: (027) 344 6082

8.2 Consent Form – for Liaison Librarians

Aspects of the relationship of liaison librarians with academic departments
A research assignment undertaken by Bevan Shortridge, MLIS Student.

1. I agree to be interviewed for the purposes of the research assignment named above.
2. I have read the Information Sheet provided by the researcher. The purpose and nature of the interview has been explained to me.
3. I agree that the interview will be electronically recorded.
4. I understand that all responses will be confidential to the researcher and their supervisor. They will not be disclosed to anyone else.
5. I agree that the researcher may contact me for further clarification of my responses
6. I understand that the researcher may wish to publish their research findings at a later date and give my consent to that.
7. I understand that the research notes will be stored in a secure location for two years after the completion of the project.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

8.3 Interview Schedule

What techniques have you specifically employed as part of the liaison relationship?

Have some methods been less successful than others? If so, why might that have been so?

Has the increasingly availability of material electronically affected the relationship?

In your experience, does the politics of an academic department impact on your relationship?

Do other parts of the library system (lending, interloans, learning services, divisional or central libraries, for example) impact on the relationship?

How would you characterise your forms of contact with academics?
Do you know why a method might be preferred? Does it depend on the academic?

Does your experience of the culture of the academic department affect your method of contact?

Is contact from academics prompted by particular occurrences?

How does the physical location of your office affect your contact with the academic department?

Do you perceive your academic department to be aware of, and/or sensitive to, library timetables (for example, spending budgets)?

Does the academic timetable affect your liaison relationship?

What has been your experience of the Performance Based Research Funding?
Has its introduction lead to any particular contact with academics?

Does the academic department make use of library-created course resource web pages?
If so, is inception of such due to library promotion or word-of-mouth from other academics?

What opportunities have you encountered, if any, for the inclusion of library information literacy components into courses?