



Writ Large

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"I've been here three years and I've never been in the library." Such comments are not uncommon among our students – and sometimes our faculty. So who needs the library, anyway? I recently participated in a discussion on this topic that followed the publication of an article on "The Changing Place of the Library" in *Inside Higher Ed* (<http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2007/01/05/rein>)

When I became a librarian, everyone understood that libraries were the trusted repositories of the end results of research and scholarship, as well as the repositories of original source materials. We selected and acquired materials that had been carefully reviewed; organized and provided access to materials; archived and preserved them; and helped people to locate information and to use specialized research tools.

The framework in which we fulfill these traditional roles is changing dramatically and new roles are being added. Today we no longer have a monopoly on information; we are able to acquire a smaller percentage of the total research output; there is a growing reliance on digital content but we still need to acquire and preserve many physical materials; and there is declining use of some building-centred services. With a reduced dependence on the library as a physical place, we need to rethink both our space and our services.

New technologies have provided us with tools that provide exciting opportunities for reaching more people than ever before. We are challenged, however, to use the

new technologies effectively and deliver relevant services with them while maintaining the existing services that many of our users still want.

Today there is access to a wide array of digital content. The Dr. John Archer Library will soon be creating new digital collections of library and campus materials. Today researchers around the world have desktop access to digital representations of materials that in the past would have been difficult for any but the most experienced and well-funded researcher to locate and use. However, the increasing use of digital resources sometimes creates unrealistic expectations of instant access to all information and the perception that if it's not in digital form it doesn't exist at all.

People today are more self-reliant and look to the web first in their quest for information. On the web, however, no one is playing the role of gatekeeper and assessing the quality of the information found. For librarians, that challenges us to increase our role as educators, to help people evaluate the information they find outside the confines of the library, and to make effective and appropriate use of it.

The Dr. John Archer Library is striving to develop a new service vision in order to play an increasingly vital role in the life and growth of the University of Regina. I would like to invite all of you to contact us, tell us what you need, and tell us what we're doing right and what we're doing wrong.

Writ Large is written by campus leaders and is intended to challenge readers to engage with and learn about the various 'parts' that make up the wider University of Regina community and connect us to the world. If you have a topic suggestion for Writ Large, please e-mail communications@uregina.ca and include your contact information.