

# Blithwapping or Number 8 wiring your library learning system

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## **Abstract**

*How do librarians thrive and flourish in an era when the Virtual Learning Environment is gathering momentum, when digital resources are becoming more widespread and often less centralized? How do librarians remain important when the electronic matrix and the wider organisation is creating uncatalogued and unregistered information? This is a purposely-provocative paper that questions the way librarians conceive of, and use the resources they have available. The author asks that we as librarians rethink traditional design methods for information literacy and other programmes in the Virtual Learning Environment, to make fuller use of the available resource. The Author asks that we as librarians go beyond standard resource management and standard perceptions of the library and role of the librarian.*

# Blithwapping or Number 8 wiring your library learning system

“**Blithwapping** (BLITH wap ing) - v. Using anything BUT a hammer to hammer a nail into the wall, such as shoes, lamp bases, door stops, etc.” (British Council 2000)

“**The Ingenious No. 8 Wire** New Zealanders have long believed that they are blessed with a mysterious quality known as "kiwi ingenuity". This refers to an alleged ability to make do and invent things with limited resources. It involves varying amounts of cunning and economy, typically requiring a piece of no. 8 gauge fencing wire, and what was known in pre-metric days as a "four-by-two" length of timber.” (Project Kiwiana, Otorohanga 2001)

## Blithwapping

Recently, whilst speaking to a colleague, we began, as so many librarians do, to exchange baking stories. My colleague told me the story of how as a child, when her mother was faced with the task of baking a large wedding cake, she realized that she did not have a mixing bowl large enough. Mum did not let this stop her: with a little bit of ingenuity and quick thinking, she used a common old household bucket which could easily hold the amount of wedding cake mix required.

Of course, not wanting to be outdone by a fellow colleague, I tried to top this story with my own baking story. I remembered back to a time when I was flatting with two other young men, and we also decided to bake a cake. As young sugar-dependent men we had the will to bake and eat a cake, but unfortunately we were severely lacking in resources. The recipe naturally called for the butter and sugar to be creamed. All three of us had seen our parents cream butter and sugar, but they had always used an electric beater; unfortunately this was one of the utensils we lacked. We did however possess an electric drill, a very powerful and robust Black and Decker drill. After some careful consideration, we filed down one of our kitchen forks so the top of the handle resembled a thin sliver. We then attached the thinned down fork to our Black and Decker Drill, and had our very own high-powered electric beater. We flatted together for nearly two years, cooked a number of cakes, and never owned a proper electric beater, just our No. 8 wired, blithwapped, fork and drill set.

So what do these allegories have to do with library and learning systems? Firstly they prove my contention that most librarians have at least one good baking story. Secondly they illustrate that often we have the resources available to meet a need. The question then becomes: do we have the ingenuity to connect our needs and our resources. Often libraries have led the way in the blithwapping of resources to meet a client need, and I shall examine some of these. Counter-balanced against this, we often work in organisations that stifle ingenious and innovative solutions, or we become trapped in the belief that unless we throw vast sums of money at a problem, then anything else is not good enough. We lose our jack-be-nimble-jack-be-quick resourcefulness, instead becoming slow ponderous dinosaurs unable to change and at risk of extinction. Libraries, public and tertiary, are now having to accept the reality faced by their private counterparts that they are no longer ‘sacred cows’. Their governing bodies do not necessarily believe they are of fundamental importance and deserve budget increases. When your budget doesn’t increase at the rate you believe necessary, when in fact the library budget may even shrink, blithwapping may hold a possible answer. Blithwapping is about using all the resources of your organisation and not just the

library. It does not mean that your costs will necessarily shrink, or that you will have the latest hardware and the best software. Often blithwapping will not produce your ideal or best solution, but it should provide a solution that you can implement quickly, efficiently, and often with low start-up costs. Blithwapping may not provide a solution that is scalable into the future, but should enable you to prove a concept and provide a service that integrates you into the future of your organisation.

Although this paper is intentionally provocative, it is not, I hope, intentionally negative. It is my contention that we as librarians stand at a momentous time in our profession, a time when we can move bravely forward or retreat into isolationism; these values are well expressed by Stanley Chodrow (1996, p.4) when he says "Now is the time for the library community, which has hovered between isolationism and international cooperation for decades, to make a decisive commitment to cooperation."

It is indeed an exciting time for us as librarians, as epitomized by the writings of David Moschella (2003) when he says; "More broadly, the need for much more formal labeling and language suggests a new phase of IT industry focus. Whereas the PC and Internet industries were once described as the "revenge of the nerds," looking ahead, the emphasis on detailed classification and information management might well be described as the "revenge of the librarians." However, the excitement of these times should not blind us to everyday realities.

## **Alarm Bells**

Let us briefly examine two trends that should ring alarm bells for us in the library profession. One involves New Zealand Public Libraries. It is, I believe a sad fact that the concept of a free public library service in New Zealand is fast becoming an antiquity. The trend towards user pays is a parasite rapidly gaining greater predominance in the New Zealand Public Library system. There are now a number of Public Library systems that charge an annual membership fee for adults, and a number of district councils and councillors are suggesting this should also be applied to children. The New Zealand Public Library System has for many years now upheld the right to charge users to read particular genres of fiction, and in some cases non-fiction. The charges to rent these books have in recent times reached new dizzying heights, for example a new bestseller can now cost \$5.00 a week to rent from your public library. New Zealand Public Libraries run the real risk of creating a form of censorship based on your ability to pay, or not to pay. At a time when we talk about improving information literacy and access to information, it seems that we are prepared to sacrifice old-fashioned reading.

Another concerning trend is the view that libraries and librarians are obsolete. This view of obsolescence is not helped by vendors and database providers side-stepping an organisation's library in their drive for sales. When an organisations' information sources become decentralised they often become the property of a small cartel, and we begin the creation of the selfish learning environment, rather than the virtual learning environment.

Many librarians have organisational colleagues who are happy to express a view that countenances the end of libraries. These views are perhaps epitomised by the four Information Myths listed by Prue Mercer (2002) – President – ALIA Information Literacy Forum:

- “Finding Information ought to be easy
- Information Literacy = ICT literacy, media literacy, digital literacy
- All information is on the web
- The internet has made libraries and librarians obsolete”

In workplaces today, we find non-library staff connecting to information without the involvement of the library, in ways which may satisfy their immediate requirements, but which are not in the best interests of the institution. The individuals’ and institutions’ knowledge may often be left incomplete, or information retrieved may even be inaccurate and unverified.

In July 1994 the University of Waterloo, Ontario Canada, found the following trends:

**“(sic). Duplicated material**

1. There are 23 known subscriptions to sections of Current Contents (includes the Library's subscriptions to 7 parts) on campus costing over \$14,000 U.S.
2. Several users have access to Medline (Index Medicus on line) through one of a number of sources.
3. While many faculty, staff and students use the Internet for e-mail, readnews, and library catalogues, few of them know what is available and have used many of its resources or know how to find their way around the Internet.

**2. Unique materials**

4. There are some CD-ROM and on-line databases that have been subscribed to by individual faculty members that have not been subscribed to by the Library nor by faculty members in other departments. Most subscribers tell their colleagues about these databases and do searches for them if requested.
5. Many CD-ROM publications (non-database text and audio) have been purchased by faculty members for their teaching and research, e.g., animation in Kinesiology; maps in Biology. These CDs may be of interest to others.
6. There are many slide and photograph collections around the campus. The largest collections are located in the Fine Arts Department and the School of Architecture. Some slides have been purchased from commercial vendors while many have been created by faculty members for their own purposes.
7. Most videos are provided or created by the Audio/Visual Centre; some have been purchased by the user and others have been created by faculty members using camcorders.
8. While most data files purchased by the Library and individual faculty members are located in the Data Resource Centre and the Leisure Studies Data Bank, some are held by academic departments and faculty members. Of those not held by either the Centre or the Data Bank, sizeable collections are held by the School of Accountancy and the Centre for Election Studies.
9. Members of the Faculty of Environmental Studies have a large collection of satellite and aerial images (Landsat, Spot, SAR, etc).

**B. Fugitive material (material created by students, faculty or staff members at the University of Waterloo or elsewhere and not readily available to others.)**

10. There are many slide and photograph collections around the campus. The largest collections are located in the Fine Arts Department and the School of Architecture. Some slides have been purchased from commercial vendors while many have been created by faculty members for their own purposes.
11. A large number of overhead collections have been created by faculty members for their own purposes.
12. While most videos are provided or created by the Audio/Visual Centre or purchased by the user some have been created by faculty members using camcorders.
13. While most data files have been purchased or created from purchased files, some data files have been created and are maintained locally by individual faculty members.
14. Non academic Departments create data sets such as mailing lists; computerized ticketing systems and lighting plots for the theatre; systems for personnel functions etc.
15. Plant Operations has a large collection of drawings, maps, slides, photographs and aerial photographs of campus land and buildings. While most are of use to one department alone, some may be of value to other departments on campus.” (University of Waterloo Library 1995)”

Davies (1998) found in his review of higher education in 1998: “A further salutary aspect of user behaviour is the range of options for information gathering. Users may not necessarily rely on documents or the library for information. Users may by-pass the formal LIS edifice and obtain their information from people - colleagues, friends, specialists, and others. They may also use other institutions which are perceived to be most useful, or helpful. In addition, ICT and the Internet may provide a convenient, though in some cases chaotic, avenue (not quite yet a signposted and obstacle-free superhighway) for vital information. The library may not be the last resort but it has to be recognised that as things stand it is not always the first resort of the seekers.”

Unfortunately, for many librarians in tertiary institutions, these trends do not seem to be abating; they are simply manifesting in different ways. The advent of virtual learning environments is creating a plethora of ‘fugitive materials’. These virtual learning environments, although filling a gap, and providing a balm to disparate user-groups, are often by their very nature inefficient and group-centered. Instead of the people qualified to manage information, i.e. librarians, we have lecturers, teachers, and researchers organising and manipulating resources, content, and information. They are creating links to relevant websites and documents, digitising articles and book chapters. What is more, material is provided, via virtual learning environments, to small segments of the organisation or student population, rather than to the whole organisation. Although virtual learning environments create multiple opportunities for teachers and students to create new resources and access information, they are not the most qualified to catalogue, classify and manage this information. Only by applying the tools of librarianship, can the potential of these digital resources be properly released to a wider population through an amalgamated and integrated system.

## Seduction

The great problem with blithwapping and No 8 wiring your library and learning system is that technological skills are not enough. Blithwapping and No 8 wiring is 'a state of mind not a state of play', it is about changing the way we view our environment, connecting the dots in a different pattern. How do we achieve this? Change requires a fundamental shift in the mindset of many librarians, it means accepting a new competitiveness in the information marketplace, and it means being prepared to resort to seduction, subversion and new forms of packaging. For many librarians the concepts of seduction and subversion would seem to be in rigid opposition to the science of information. The analogy of seduction, as enticement, fulfillment, and the promise of more, is an intriguing example for information providers today. Revolutionary thinking and subversive actions can also inspire information professionals today to examine their role in delivering information services. Are we taking advantage of the opportunities available to us? If there are no apparent opportunities, are we creating them? There are also many librarians who maintain a xenophobic obsession of not listening to anyone outside the world of library science. A fundamental question facing the library sciences is: why is it so difficult for us to look at the world in new ways? Many librarians appear to have extreme difficulty in questioning the foundations of their science. I suggest librarians are often unable to move bravely forward because they have developed a set of strict mental paradigms, they have turned librarianship into a science and forgotten about the art. Such paradigms or mindsets have evolved so that librarians can respond automatically to things of importance, but by having such mindsets, librarians, like many other professions, are intrinsically prejudiced.

It is time for librarians to realise that seduction and subversion are modes of communication and management that overlap and interact with information. The information/seduction relationship involves more than the type of information and the librarian's intention. The patron's motivation and the context or situations in which communication occurs are important factors also. Gone are the days when libraries could rely on their market dominance, when functional information was enough. There are still examples of purely functional information, a TAB or betting agents monitor is pure functional information, yet a gambler waiting for their big win will make full use of the monitor – no need to seduce this audience. On the other hand many of our library patrons are not as motivated if the information is hard to decipher, not easily accessible or not seductively packaged. They will ignore the content and use other providers in the marketplace.

Information only becomes knowledge when someone cares to make use of it. To make someone care, librarians have to help create desire. To create desire I suggest they use seduction. For many, seduction immediately connotes sex appeal or sexual enticement. The sexual aspect is less the essence of seduction's meaning than are enticement and appeal. The Collins English Dictionary helps sum it up in one of its definitions of seduce: "to win over, attract, or lure".

Seduction for librarians should be more than this. It should include a promise and a connection with the patron's goals and needs. The three step process of seduction outlined by Khaslavsky and Shedroff is both humorous for its sexual overtones but also instructive for librarians and for the technologies that librarians develop:

1. Enticement attracts attention and makes an attractive promise
2. The Relationship stage gives small fulfilments (or feedback) and promises more fulfilment.
3. Finally, there is delivery on final promises, and the experience ends in a memorable way. (Khaslavsky 1999)

This type of process has been used well in the development of LIBTEL, the telephone based library catalogue for vision-impaired users.

1. Users are promised access to the library catalogue unhindered by intermediaries and without having to purchase expensive technologies.
2. They are guided with well-executed voice scripts and voice help through a complex library catalogue, which gives them constant reassurance of the process and ongoing feedback.
3. Finally they are able to request items and receive them in the mail.

If we as librarians now accept that we are a part of a larger information industry, that we can learn from this industry, and apply our skills and ingenuity to help move it forward, then we can truly start to number 8 wire and blithwap our library and learning systems. We can in fact make our systems more seductive.

## **The Experience**

This point was well illustrated by my previous involvement in the tertiary sector; managing a medium sized specialist branch library, part of a larger tertiary library system. The problem faced was that the university department serviced by the branch library had embarked on a rather ambitious and innovative programme of distance education. It had developed a programme of delivery that by university timeframes was very speedy, and the crux of the matter was that the library was expected to keep pace. The main university library had no real virtual reference services, and a very small distance support programme. The specialist branch library, which I managed, had a very simple choice - it could either blithwap the technology made available by the university department, or it could risk forgoing its chance to be a part of this exciting venture.

The specialist branch library therefore went about integrating its library services into the virtual learning system that the university department had purchased. It carried out this process with the blessing of the central university library system, yet it required dedication and innovation by a small group of people, committed to keeping the library at the information centre, and often doubting that their efforts were recognised by the central library.

One of the guiding principles during this process was that the library had to move beyond the warehousing of information. It was not simply enough to dump large amounts of electronic resources onto an accessible site and call this a distance library service. The warehousing of information may have been an easy solution, but it would not have met the needs of the

university department, and it would not have led to the library integrating itself into the virtual learning system chosen by the department.

The specialist branch library firmly believed that a library service included the development of relationships. It may not have been expressed as explicitly as Khaslavsky's and Shedroff's process of seduction, but it was certainly felt that the library experience, either digital or analog, should be fulfilling, satisfying and memorable for both staff and clients. To this end the library staff worked within the learning system to create a library forum, a space that allowed for interaction with librarians. A major step in this direction included the development of an information coaching programme, where a librarian worked collaboratively with a lecturer to deliver course content. The librarian would be an active participant in the online classroom, suggesting resources and prompting students in the use of information, and aiming to improve general information literacy. This process of information coaching worked well, and yet proved difficult to sustain as the online programme grew exponentially.

Once again the specialist branch library had a very simple choice it could either blithwop the technology made available by the university department or it could risk being marginalised from the role in information literacy that it had nurtured and developed through the information coaching strategy. Going back to the learning system that was being used by the university department, the library decided to try and modify the system to encompass a virtual reference desk service. Although the library was eventually able to launch a virtual reference desk service within the learning software, the launching of this product and its further development highlighted some further challenges which I will outline.

To start the blithwapping process we now began the development of what we termed a virtual reference desk. At this point not surprisingly a number of other stakeholders raised their heads above the parapets. No longer was there a level of calm tolerance and general support from within the greater library system. Now there were librarians who felt we were treading very much upon their toes and that we were breaking acceptable boundaries. There was resistance to what we were developing, despite the reality that any move by the central library system to develop a virtual reference desk would not meet the limited timeframes, and might, not be built on the learning platform into which we had already integrated our information coaching programme. The main cause of objection was fear that the service developed by the specialist branch library would create expectations from the wider user population, expectations the central library system may not have been able to meet. Although this objection had a certain validity, the specialist branch library felt that not proceeding would jeopardise their role and future in an academic environment that was intent on pursuing online teaching. This feeling by other players within the library was so great that in the end a compromise was reached whereby the final product was not called a virtual reference desk; the name was modified to recognise its specialist nature.

Another challenge in further developing the virtual learning system was that the system had come of age, it was no longer a cutting edge development by a group of innovative and excited people. There were now technical support people, software developers, and committees. To effect change we had to work through a number of groups, most of them not librarians, and often holding a different perspective and agenda. As librarians we had to communicate our values and ideals in new and exciting ways, we had to capture the imaginations of technicians, gurus and academics. We had to prove our value to the online learning process. As librarians we had to accept that we didn't know everything, there were areas of expertise in which we had to acknowledge our own lack of competence. Once again

blithwapping became dependent upon a state of mind and not a state of play, it was not necessarily about the skills we brought to the table, but rather the attitude we applied to our challenges.

The solution of integrating library services into the Virtual Learning System was not necessarily the most cost effective long-term strategy, nor was it necessarily the most scaleable solution. Integrating library services into the Virtual Learning System did make use of available resources both within and without the library and was an immediate cost effective solution. It did move library staff into closer relationships with academics, and it did position the specialist branch library to play an important and vital role in the support and development of online teaching.

This specialist branch library was involved in a process of blithwapping and development that is now an international movement. Many academic libraries throughout Europe are now discovering the benefits and difficulties of integrating their library services into their virtual learning systems. Many of them are having to blithwap existing structures and processes. This is clearly illustrated by the papers delivered at the recent CERLIM - The Centre for Research in Library and Information Management conference "Libraries without Walls 5 - The Distributed Delivery of Library and Information Services 19 - 23 September 2003" Under the special theme "The integration of library services and Virtual Learning Environments" Papers from the following institutions addressing some of the themes expressed in this paper and experienced at the above specialist branch library: Edge Hill College, (UK), Delft University of Technology, (The Netherlands), Open University Library, (UK), Tampere University Library, (Finland), Department of Library Science, Higher Technological Educational Institution of Thessaloniki, (Greece).

## **Subversion**

I have already mentioned that blithwapping needs to be driven by a sense of the seductive. The other competitive edge that I suggest librarians employ in the new information market is that of subversion. Many librarians and libraries find themselves portrayed as the dowagers of the information marketplace. Steele and Guha (2000) help identify some of these attitudes: "Historically it is clear the two professions of IT specialists and librarians, have a very different working style. While the traditional librarian allegedly seeks stability/perfect standards with scant regard for time, the IT specialist's approach emphasises speed and efficiency". Library managers can find themselves faced with the challenging task of how to drive radical innovation and growth when confronted by: a workforce often resistant to change, the constraints of large bureaucracies, and an information sector and academic sector in which some individuals still believe the role of librarians to be superfluous. A 1998 dialogue between academics and librarians at Birbeck College well illustrated the differences in opinion "IT was mentioned by both groups. Academics felt it might render librarians irrelevant or superfluous. Librarians felt it was having the reverse effect, and saw it as an opportunity which was enhancing their role" (Armstrong, 1998). Further a simple search of the records of the ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) will find little mention of libraries apart from digital libraries, seemingly these are the only type of future library, and comments within these papers often play down the role of the librarian. As Thornton A May (2003) observed in a recent Computerworld "Unfortunately, most organisations aren't currently set up to prosper in a truly "infomated" economy. For the longest time, IT management has treated the following not as a phrase but as a single word, with emphasis on

the last four syllables: information-technology. Historically significant practitioners of the information arts (librarians, archivists, content managers, content creators, intellectual property advocates and taxonomy creators) have been nudged further aside in the Napster-swapped/Google-searched early stages of the Information Age.” To succeed in the difficult task of driving radical innovation and growth, librarians need a subversive strategy which transforms their environment by changing the rules of the game.

Subversion will commence the concept of ‘stretch’ is introduced into the organisational and personal lives of librarians. Stretch is caused by the difference between present reality and the desired future. Stretch is also an important way of closing what some commentators are calling the ingenuity gap.

## **The Ingenuity Gap**

The ingenuity gap is illustrated by the events of September 11. Think back to the point at which the second plane hit the world trade towers. Within minutes the speculation and questions began. We hear American TV commentators ask, “How could we have not known about this? How could our intelligence people not have known about this?” The reason: there was a gap. A gap in the information collected and understood by the intelligence people. This gap is clearly one of ingenuity. Later events would prove to us that the intelligence communities of the world had the information to predict September 11, they simply had not comprehended the scale, magnitude, or audacity of what was about to occur. Within that gap the story that climaxed in front of us was written and played out. Plans were made, resources were marshalled, and three airplanes filled with passengers slammed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It was a group of terrorists who were able to out-think some of the most sophisticated counter-terrorism agencies in the world by conceiving of their resources and their world in a different way, a world where a plane becomes a bomb. These comments are not intended to criticise the intelligence community; it simply illustrates that blithewapping can achieve stupendous results when we change our conception of the world.

## **Stretch**

If we are going to close the ingenuity gap by using ‘stretch’, then for librarians stretch has several challenging features. Firstly librarians must be open to experiencing an individual and collective feeling of professional humility. This experience of humility or acknowledgement of a lack of competence must be managed so that librarians look for a solution that relieves the stretch effect. In this way stretch becomes a potential source of creativity in the acquisition and deployment of resources. This is not to say that librarians are incompetent, it is to say that one of the greatest hindrances to creative thinking is professional arrogance.

Secondly we as librarians must learn to fantasise. We must expound and live our own and our organisation’s dreams. These dreams must be inspirational and emotionally involving, allowing librarians to develop a powerful visual and verbal representation of what the future could be. We need this process to be a normal part of our professional lives and our organisational practice not as is so often the case a once a year or every five year event

Thirdly we as librarians must be excessive, we must play hard and go home hungry. We must be entrepreneurial, taking risks, going beyond the use of existing resources, and simple

incremental steps. We must formulate visions where at the point of departure one cannot necessarily see the point of arrival. Public librarians have for generations provided reader adviser services, so why do so few library automated catalogues provide a digital equivalent? Why was it the entrepreneurs at Amazon.com who led this development? Why are so many public libraries now following bookstores in the development of user-friendly environments rather than leading the charge? Why have New Zealand public libraries not drawn a line-in-the-sand over user pays? Being excessive and controversial does not always come easily to librarians; we must stand-up and be counted, not in arrogance but in conviction.

Fourthly we as librarians must be deviant; we must re-embrace the art of librarianship, breaking the mental paradigms we have locked about us, going beyond present frames of reference and conventional library thinking. What resources are being created in our institution that we are not aware of? How do we document informal conversation and chat sessions in a meaningful way? We must find ways to integrate ourselves into our organisations, not just as the stereotyped librarian, but also as - the mind mapper, the recorder of organisational knowledge, the resource manager, the integrator of the matrix. We must no longer look only to off-the-shelf products; purchased databases, and the Whitakers Almanac, we must live and breathe the knowledge that our organisation creates on a daily and hourly basis.

Through deviance, excessiveness, dreams, and humility, librarians could develop subversive strategies. We can save ourselves from being sidelined by the information revolution. We will be able to create organisations, and encourage one another to, reach goals through radical change in practices and ways of thinking. Libraries will be able to use resources differently and break the mental paradigms, in order to reach a future that has nothing in common with the present.

Librarians who hold personal visions that coincide with their library's vision can move an organisation forward. These librarians may appear deviant, excessive, and subversive. They may be hard to manage, and they may often have an understanding of their own failings. However they can be passionate about the future. Instead of trying to make these librarians fit into our defined mental paradigms, we should embrace their subversiveness and save our libraries from becoming the dowagers of the information world.

I must reiterate blithwapping is not a prescriptive process, it is a 'state of mind' not a 'state of play'. You cannot be told how to blithwap your library and learning systems, yet I can sew the ideas of possibilities and hope to reap a harvest. In a sense it is not just about creating a virtual library and learning environment, it is about creating a virtuous library and learning environment where technology will have a role, but other factors must also be included.

## Beware the Matrix

In brief, the following features are those most commonly found in virtual learning systems. They are the drivers of the virtual learning environment, and the area where blithwapping for libraries holds the greatest potential.

- Web linking – to allow the attachment of resources to course work
- Chat facilities – often manipulating or extending traditional email allowing group messages, and one-on-one dialogue
- Structure – so that course design is somewhat systematic and consistent, allowing for course and modular description
- Timetabling

Librarians in some instances may simply have tried to transplant content from one forum to another. This is what some commentators describe as the content plus support version of online learning, with the levels of content and support varying. It is more the warehouse attitude towards online learning, that we will put traditional resources out there in an electronic format, and we will try to support access. The advantages of this model are cost and scalability. There is nothing wrong with it per se. Yet as an online learning model it fails to truly blithwap the available technology, and more importantly it fails to acknowledge our most important resource; the relationship between librarian and client.

The model that truly pushes the boundaries of blithwapping is the ‘integrated model’ where content and support are blurred into a homogenous whole. It is about using resources, people and electronic, in a collaborative way, building relationships; librarian and academic, librarian and computer geek, librarian and student. This is the process we were trying to model in our specialised tertiary library, yet it is equally as relevant to the private and public sector. Most importantly it is dependant upon the development of a learning community, a truly online - university, school, workshop. The pedagogical implications are enormous; learners become teachers, and resources are built through a process matrix rather than by an individual delivering content. It is important for librarians to become involved in this matrix. If we as librarians want to truly blithwap our information literacy services, we should become involved in the virtual learning environment of our parent organisation. As librarians who want to stay relevant in our resource provision and management, we should become involved in the virtual learning systems of our parent organisation.

The matrix of a virtual learning system will create resources as it grows, including new web pages, a growing discussion archive on a local server, a coursebook produced by a teacher, and online e-journal articles and reports which the teacher wishes to include among their course resources. How do we librarians know which resources are being added? If we don’t know, we cannot make decisions on which resources to select for description in the library’s systems.

There are now products, referred to as ‘middleware’, developed to try and solve some of these problems, a notable example being the ANGEL project. Middleware still has its limitations if the matrix is selecting the learning resources of their classroom on a particular course, then it is obvious that the instructor leading the course or the matrix itself should preferably work collaboratively with a librarian. This implies that library staff should be involved in course teams – a practice which is not unknown, but far from widespread in the tertiary environment.

## The Roadmap to Blithwap

We all work in organisations that are unique living entities. I cannot tell you how to blithwap or No. 8 wire your unique organisations, I can provide you with a 'roadmap to blithwap'.

1. Seduction - constantly evaluate the way you present information and service. Is it seductive? Do your clients feel enticed and fulfilled, is their library experience memorable?
2. Humility – be prepared to learn from others within your profession, even those in a different type of library. More importantly be prepared to learn from those outside your profession.
3. Fantasy – dream the dream; expound a vision of where you believe your library can be within the organisation.
4. Excess – be entrepreneurial, take calculated risks.
5. Subversiveness – do what it takes to integrate yourself and your library into the organisation, live and breathe the organisation's information.
6. Ingenuity – Look at everything in a new way, people and products. Both are often much more than they seem.

This roadmap is not just for the tertiary organisation using virtual learning environments; it can be applied to any situation and organisation. From baking a cake to enhancing the virtual learning experience, from circulating books to using email, the possibilities to blithwap and No 8 wire are endless. For some of us this roadmap will provide challenges in the way we think and feel about our profession and our daily work. Some librarians will disagree with these ideas and that is the sign of a healthy profession. All I can hope is that each of you will now look at the resources in your organisation in new, creative, and ingenious ways.

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