Inspiring Innovation in French academic libraries through the Learning centre concept

Suzanne Jouguelet

Inspecteur général honoraire des bibliothèques

Avril 2010

Outline

1 The context of change in higher education in France

2 The learning centre concept

3 Weaknesses and opportunities in the French academic landscape

1 The context of change in higher education in France

Some legislative milestones :

➢ LOLF: *Loi organique relative aux lois de finances*: 2001 = a transformation of public budgetary rules.

➢ *Loi de programme pour la recherche*: 2006 = setting up the PRES: *Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur* and a new agency, l'AERES: *Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur*.

A major step: la loi LRU

- *Loi du 10 Aout 2007 sur les libertés et les responsabilités des universités*: 37 autonomous universities in january 2010.

- Broader competencies but a more important role of the quadriennal contract with the government.

- A global budget for the university, with a new system of repartition according to activities and performance.

- Precise strategic orientations and better tools for management and measurement required.

A need for « new » libraries

It becomes essential:

• to better integrate the library into the university,

• to demonstrate its value and to prove its impact on learning, research, teaching, success….

The role of the assessment process is growing and formalized by the new agency AERES.

The French academic landscape is redesigned and assessed

The *Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur* is an independent entity assessing the quality of the universities strategy for the accomplishment of their missions and their results.

www.aeres-evaluation.fr

3 sections: *établissements, unités de recherche, formations et diplômes.*

AERES

- It develops methodological tools for assessment and quality criteria.
- The Agency works in a European context and is a member of the ENQA: *European Association for Quality Assessment in Higher Education*.
- The libraries were not the first preoccupation, but a partnership has been established with the *Inspection générale des bibliothèques* for a few months*.

The new *Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur*

➢They are grouping together, according to the local context, universities, institutes, « grandes écoles », diverse research institutions.

➢15 PRES have been officially created at this stage, with precise allocations of means according to their projects.

➢**Some examples**:

➢ in 2007: Aix-Marseille Université; Paris-Est Université; Universités de Bordeaux, Lyon, Toulouse….

➢in 2008: Clermont Université; Université Nantes Angers Maine;

➢In 2009: Lille Nord de France, Université de Montpellier Sud de France….

PRES (2)

➢In 2010 , 3 PRES for Paris intra muros should be validated.

➢One of the aims is to get a better place in the scientific competition and an international visibility, due to a more coherent offer of teaching and research, improved by cooperation: e.g a unique signature for all the research publications of the PRES (PRES Université de Lyon).

➢A major criterion is the level of mutualization between the partners (e.g delivery of diplomas).

An exceptional investment in academic property

- The government has launched in february 2008 a call for projects: « **Opération campus** »: more than 20 projects have been validated, with various statuses and amounts:

- 12 *Plans Campus*, often linked with PRES: for example, the Plan Campus Saclay has received an allocation of 850 M€, the Plan Lyon 575 M€.…

- http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr

Opérations campus (2)

- Other types of campus, with much smaller allocations, have been chosen: *campus prometteurs* (campus numérique de Bretagne), *campus innovants* (Le Havre, Cergy...).

- Libraries are often involved in these operations for new buildings or renovations, bringing together separate installations: for example a project of *médiathèque interuniversitaire* in Literature and Human Sciences in Aix-en-Provence.

Digital technologies at stake

- An important report, written by Henri Isaac, has been submitted to the Minister of Higher education and Research in january 2008: « *L'Université numérique* ».

- After a diagnosis highlighting the delays and the obstacles, it gives many proposals for « *une politique du numérique dans l'enseignement supérieur* », with the following ambition :
« *Préparer l'insertion des étudiants natifs du digital dans la société de la connaissance en réseau* ».

Digital technologies (2)

- Some other recent reports: "*Schéma numérique des bibliothèques*", by Bruno Racine, president of the BnF, Dec 2009 ; "*La politique du livre face au défi du numérique*", by Yann Gaillard, Senator. Feb. 2010.

- A priority for higher education and for digital issues in the report of Alain Juppé and Michel Rocard about the big public loan for innovation. Dec 2009. Prime Minister Conference mid march about "*Le programme d'investissements d'avenir*".

Among the aims of the big loan

- « *1er axe: soutenir l'enseignement supérieur, la recherche et l'innovation* »: one of the proposed actions being the emergence of some « *campus d'excellence* ».
- « *7e axe: investir dans la société numérique* », i.e in innovative digital contents and digital use, with the mention of e-education and digitisation of heritage collections.
- Proposal: to create a digitisation fund of 2 billions Euros.

2 The learning centre concept

« *A key purpose of an Information Commons is to leverage the intersection of content, technology and services in a physical facility to support student learning* ».

Susan Mc Mullen. Sabbatical report*: « Libraries in transition », spring 2007*.

Many denominations, many definitions exist but learning is always at the heart of the concept :
« *Learning, not information, is increasingly the focus* ». Brown and Long, 2006.

For which public?

- Essentially students at L and M (beginning) levels.

- Often in universities with an important proportion of foreign students, and an offer of professional/vocational training.

- A recent trend in North America is to orientate the LC towards researchers and teachers.

The most multifunctional space

• It fulfills multiple and integrated missions : documentary (including the technological offer), pedagogic, social, with a co-existence of real and virtual spaces.

• « *The focus is not just finding information but applying this information in productive ways to deepen and strengthen learning as to construct knowledge.* »

Integrated services

York University, Canada:« A full-realized Learning Commons should:

• Consider success in student learning as its main goal…

• Include a staff that facilitates debate…

• Install sufficient information technology…

• Offer students instruction and assistance in this technology…

• Support the development of Information Literacy…

Integrated services (2)

- Provide an accessible…work space…

- Assess itself on a regular basis…

- Teach the responsible use of information…

- http://www.library.yorku.ca/

The Saltire Centre, Glasgow

- Services for Students:

- The effective Learning Service

- Finding and using information

- Money

- Course registration services

- University information and computer services

- Disability service

- International Student Support Service

- Careers advice and information

The Saltire Centre (2)

- Mental health and Wellbeing
- ICT skills
- Research Collections
- Faith and Chaplaincy services
- Childcare

- http://www.gcal.ac.uk/thesaltirecentre/services/support.html

« Designing spaces for effective learning… » JISC publication, 2006

- The architectural dimension is essential, with some core design principles:
- Flexibility
- Adaptability
- Accessibility
- Functionality
- Sustainability ,
- And workgroup facilitation.

Some LCs examples

• They are located either in a whole building: as in Sheffield (Adsetts Centre and the recent Information Commons); id. in Glasgow with the Saltire Centre; id. in Lausanne…; there are also many LCs on a campus: ex Kingston.

• Or there is a dedicated floor: as in Imperial College London, with the Wolfson IT learning suite; in Royal Holloway, University of London…

•Either a space which is "*the social and academic hub of the campus", or "smaller scale learning centres"*(JISC) co existing with more traditional libraries.

The crucial question of staff

- One key to success is the level of qualification and the involvment of the staff.

- Various coordinated profiles:

- Librarians and IT specialists, AV specialists, teachers, administrative staff…

- Difficulty to bring together different professional cultures.

- A balance has to be found between the integration and the juxtaposition of services, but the logic of « one stop shop » is a real benefit for the users.

The central role of evaluation

• Many forms of assessment are used regularly to appreciate the services of the LCs: assessment plans, observational surveys, online surveys (LibQUAL+ for example)...

• At Kingston University, students are asked each year to express their satisfaction with Learning Resources Centres, IT and Library support.

• The management of the Information Services Department reacts and communicate very quickly about the results and the subsequent actions.

The impact of the LCs

- The impact on the frequentation is commonly observed, but it needs to last (ex Kingston, ICL…)
- The needs and demands of the Google generation are growing.
- « *Do financial pressures provide an opportunity to encourage institutions to look at the position of libraries/learning centres in terms of university decision-making, particularly in terms of value for money?* » Graham Bulpitt*.*

3 Weaknesses and opportunities in the French academic landscape

- French academic libraries have globally got behind with opening hours, open access, digital resources.

- This is due to financial reasons but also to some specific weaknesses: a separation between documentation and research; a professional culture not opened enough to benchmarking.

- But the incentives to change are there: the political will, the pressure of international rankings, the need for a global strategy of the university…

Some pioneer operations

- Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse: the renovation of the sciences library has followed the Spanish example of Barcelone's resources centre : CRAI.

- Région Nord Pas-de Calais: several projects involving the universities and some cultural institutions:

- The cultural side is important, with a logic of thematic centres : religion in Vaucelles; sustainable development in Dunkerque.

Nord Pas de Calais et Paris

- Conseil régional du Nord Pas-de-Calais: http://www.nordpasdecalais.fr/enseignement_superieur

- Paris intra muros: rapport Larrouturou: *"Pour rénover l'enseignement supérieur parisien"*.This report (Feb 2010) presents the possible evolutions of the "bibliothèques interuniversitaires" and the projects of the 3 parisian PRES.

- Among their goals are the mutualization of services and a common project: pedagogic and scientific.

The plan for modernization of French academic libraries

- In Paris 2 PRES plan to create a learning centre, but it is in a very preliminary phase.

- The Minister of Higher education and Research has announced mid February <u>a national plan,</u> with 3 major goals: To give the priority to the users of the libraries; To help students and researchers to benefit from digital possibilities; To promote for the future libraries a new model, with better links between pedagogy and documentation, documentation and research.

The Plan for modernization (2)

- Among the planned actions:
- Increasing opening hours; better coordinating the acquisitions of electronic resources; digitizing the patrimonial collections of the academic libraries; reinforcing the collections development policy (distant storage)…
- For the new libraries: "*Nous allons lancer la création de bibliothèques du 21e siècle sur le modèle des learning centres anglo-saxons*".

No artificial transposition but a combination of criteria

- Each university has a specific context, and "*the LC must be strategically aligned with the university's core values and learning-centered goals*" (S.McMullen).

- But <u>common criteria</u> can be defined and more or less combined to get a "true" LC:

- A priority given to the support for learning, with a common vision of teaching and documentation;

- User-friendly and flexible spaces;

- The greatest accessibility, on site and for distant access;

Criteria (2)

- A staff with multiple skills (polyvalence?); the fact of bringing together various services, with a personal assistance;

- Numerous documentary resources (printed and multimedia documents, electronic resources integrated in the digital environment of the university), AV and computer services.

- *"The 21st century society will need to be a "learning society" in which knowing "what" is less important than knowing how to"*. JISC.

Some conditions to succeed

- Concentrating the means : buildings, staff, documentary and technological resources…
- Some examples of the LCs budget : for investment: Saltire Centre: 25,3M€; ICL (one floor): 5,5 M€;
- For everyday budget: Kingston University LRCs: 13,2 M€/year; CRAI Barcelona: 19M€
- Getting a renewed and sustainable governance
- Involving from the beginning the decision makers and the teachers
- Defining assessment plans and taking quick decisions after the surveys.
- The most innovative part is probably a common work between teachers, librarians and IT specialists for a shared project.

The Europe 2020 strategy

- "*Among the key drivers for growth, the European Commission identifies smart growth: fostering knowledge, innovation, education and digital society*". Five targets are set among which: "*The share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a degree or diploma*".

- The LC concept has surely something to do with these targets!

- Thank you for your attention and your patience.