


# Shaping the Future: A Research Agenda for U.K. Libraries

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Article abstract

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**Methods** – A qualitative Delphi consensus method was chosen for the research, adapted from Paul's (2008) modified Delphi card-sorting model. Contributions from conference programs and 31 individual experts from the U.K. library and information profession contributed to the generation of current themes and trends impacting their library environments. Data were analyzed by the experts in an incremental manner following the adapted methodology, and consensus was achieved through the process.

**Results** – The findings of the research indicated that there were five significant trends and areas of concern which are impacting our libraries at all levels. These naturally include pressing current concerns such as the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), critical librarianship, and censorship/book banning. Library spaces remain a significant issue for the wider sector.

**Conclusion** – The adapted modified Delphi card-sorting method with three distinct sections to the research proved especially valuable in a study where there were many different approaches to librarianship. The use of conference data to seed the initial set of themes has been shown to be unusual and rarely used in this way before. The process of achieving and reaching consensus illustrated the need for the profession as a whole to work more closely together. The outcome of the consensus research should now be taken forward collaboratively by the library profession, with space and training given to staff across all sectors and grades to engage in evidence based research for the benefit of all.

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*Research Article*

**Shaping the Future: A Research Agenda for U.K. Libraries**

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## **Introduction**

The “Shaping the Future” research project outlined in this paper intends to identify sector-wide critical trends through a process of consensus. These trends will benefit from evidence based research. Members of the profession at all stages of their career should consider themselves able to participate in this future research; critically collaborative endeavour and information sharing will enhance the library and information profession.

A research grant was awarded by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), Library and Information Research Group (LIRG) to identify the most important and answerable research questions for U.K. library practice for the future. This study intended to provide the opportunity to identify, through consensus methods, those trends the U.K. library profession could agree were critical going forward. With a return to a “new normal” following the pandemic, together with the associated changes of this upheaval for the profession and with increasing divergences between library sectors, as well as significant funding issues for many, this study prompted closer work between members of the sectors.

The research study explored in this paper focused on:

- With what future developments will libraries in the United Kingdom need to significantly engage in the next ten years?
- Which of these areas are most critical for us to understand and require in-depth focused research to support this (and thus benefit from funding)?

Future success of libraries across the United Kingdom in a post-pandemic world will be influenced by many factors, and it is clear from practitioners, managers, leaders, theorists, and influencers that living with change is ongoing. With funding being a critical issue, there is a need to provide clear direction for members of the profession on current and future evidence based research topics. This guidance is essential for both practitioners and researchers within the field. In addition, individual sectors within the profession appear to be traveling their own paths. This separation has significant knock-on effects on professional career accreditation as the differences between health, public, school, academic, and special interest libraries grow. These tensions are especially evident when members of the workforce endeavour to move between sectors. Conference programs, representing current trends within the profession, are

usually sector-led or thematic. However, even thematic approaches struggle to draw all sectors under their umbrella description, despite attempts to be fully inclusive.

A research-practice gap has been evident over the last two decades, and although developments within librarianship such as the *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice* journal are increasing, the differences between practice and a solid research-focused discipline remain a concern. In recent years, modifications for the evidence based library and information practice (EBLIP) model (Koufogiannakis & Brettle, 2016) suggest that an entire organization would benefit from adhering to the model's approach to evidence based research (Thorpe & Howlett, 2020).

The "Shaping the Future" study provides an opportunity for engaging the library profession as a whole in exploring future trends together and promoting the possibilities of future work undertaken through the lens of evidence based research. Not only could this enable participants to gain a wider appreciation of the wider sector, thereby providing an additional benefit of "cross-pollination" from the research but would also illustrate the advantage of undertaking evidence based research across the whole organization.

This study aims to be forward-thinking on behalf of the library profession in the United Kingdom. Using a variant of Delphi consensus methodology with a panel of members from different sectors will provide the opportunity to reach an agreement on future trends and needs for evidence based research. The outcomes of the study illustrate the powerful nature of consensus and give rise to a positive view of the profession's ability as a whole to work together collaboratively.

## **Literature Review**

The literature on future trends in librarianship is extensive, often presented through strategic overviews (Schlak et al., 2022), or within specific contexts such as academic libraries (Ashiq, 2021; Corral & Jolly, 2020; Feret & Marcinek, 2005) or public libraries (Dallis, 2017). In the United Kingdom, public library reports often review the current status quo (Sanderson, 2023). Some works focus on themes such as artificial intelligence (AI) in librarianship (Cox, 2021), the impact of the post-pandemic library landscape (Appleton, 2022), and data librarianship (Pistone, 2023). Library leaders and organizations have also contributed their views with surveys (Meier, 2016) and reports highlighting future themes for academic and research libraries. Calvert (2020), writing for the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), focused on the future themes academic and research libraries should expect to engage with. Dempsey (2012; 2020) is well-known for their work summarizing current scenarios and strategic forecasting. These sector-specific responses, while useful, are rarely applied across other areas of library work.

Studies in the past that have used consensus methodology to reach agreement on future trends include Maceviciute and Wilson (2009) and Eldredge et al. (2009). Both used a consensus methodology (Delphi) to explore the research needs of the profession. Eldredge et al. focused on a specific sector, the Medical Library Association, while Maceviciute and Wilson focused on the needs of Swedish librarianship. The Swedish study outlined how it was not feasible to expect the wider profession to agree and chose to explore key trends separately within specific sectors. Both of these studies, while useful contributors to the validity of the consensus methodology used, did not consider the profession as a whole.

Future trends are considered by the U.K.'s professional association, CILIP. The current action plan (2023) includes a "We Are CILIP" strategy with new developments planned to focus on three areas: staff skills development, AI, and advocacy for libraries. This has been a useful reminder that there are key areas that

all Library and Information Science (LIS) workers and their libraries can focus on together. However, CILIP's membership model may limit staff involvement as professionals face time and financial pressures and may prefer to invest their professional development time in their own sector (Corrall, 2016; NHS, 2015; Tomaszewski & MacDonald, 2009). Koufogiannakis and Crumley (2006) noted that "it is not clear what happens to [these] agendas at either the institutional or individual level" (p. 333), and whilst CILIP represents the profession, not all staff can take advantage of this. This salutary warning should guide the application of the outcomes from the "Shaping the Future" study through evidence based research practices across the profession.

Future trends in libraries have also been analyzed using several types of data. The current set of publications across the LIS field and its various sub-fields (Taşkın, 2021) is one such example. While the number of publications appears to increase over time, citation data are too simplistic for future trend predictions, especially as it may privilege one sector over another in terms of representation. Another data type, LIS curriculums, could be considered as an alternative measure. However, as Tait and Pierson (2022) noted in their recent assessment of whether AI has been included in the curriculum in Australian LIS, content frequently lags behind current professional activity and is less relevant when discussing future trends.

A starting point for the research was the modified Delphi card sorting method (Paul, 2008), a variant of the standard Delphi method. The Delphi method is a forecasting technique used to moderate opinion information as it is collected from experts. Lund (2020) pointed to the advantages of this method in terms of the iterative process, together with the distinct levels of consensus possible in comparison, for example, to focus groups or surveys. Delphi studies are usually characterized by anonymity and expert input (Eldredge et al., 2009), which is critical. Variants of the Delphi method have resulted in more qualitative approaches, focusing on understanding differences of opinion (Bronstein, 2009; Missingham, 2011; Poirier & Robinson, 2014). Lund (2020) commented on the limitations of using experts both concerning the potential participant attrition likely and with the definition of who an expert is and why their ideas or suggestions should be the most popular or best ideas. In the research study outlined in this paper, the use of conference programs was a useful mitigation for this limitation.

Initial seed data for the research focused on the most current information available in the form of conference programs. Conferences aim to highlight work from early career or diverse workers, or they may focus on more evidence based projects and align themselves to the specific needs of their sectors (Vickers, 2018); they may be organized to reflect the latest state of research in a specific subject and provide a forum for discussion. Waite and Hume (2017) described conferences quite simply as the "principal mechanisms for professional organisations to advance their missions" (p. 127).

From the practitioner's perspective, conference attendance brings inspiration (Vega & Connell, 2007), theoretical understanding, and practitioner evidence together without the lag time that a journal issue or conference proceedings might result in. The call for papers is typically future-thinking, proactively engaging staff on current and future issues (Cheung, 2023). Using conference programs gave us critical evidence of the broad range of practical, theoretical, and strategic interests and concerns expressed by the profession. Mata et al. (2010) commented that conference attendance as students "helped us better understand how practice informs our research and how our research can inform practice" (p. 451). Conference programs have been analyzed in specific library sectors to ascertain their impact on professional development (Young et al., 2020) or on the extent to which conferences influence strategic change (LILAC, 2024). Stewart (2013) examined the International Association of School Librarians conference to explore the future of the conference itself.

A further benefit of using conference programs as noted by Braun and Clarke (2021) suggests “a coding reliability approach”; i.e., it becomes a process of “identifying evidence for themes,” or topic summaries. Coding reliability depends on multiple coders working independently to apply coding to the data, thereby reducing research subjectivity. Muir (2023) explored this approach in the context of library science. Using multiple conference programs, all compiled by many experts across sectors and with differing perspectives is like having multiple coders working on a project.

## **Method**

The intention for the project was to attempt consensus across a number of library sectors using an adapted consensus methodology to determine if there were critical areas for evidence based research for the future. The key to the possibility of consensus was ensuring expert representation across the sectors during the study. Card sort methodologies have been employed in many previous library research studies, but for this research, the additional use of a well-known user experience (UX) research methodology, a card sort methodology, was also employed.

The modified-Delphi card sorting method enabled moderated collaboration through a final workshop that involved group card sorting, followed by individual assessments to achieve consensus. According to Paul’s (2008) model, the seed participant creates the initial structure from a stack of cards and proposes an information structure model. Further rounds of participants comment on the previous model and make modifications or suggest alternatives. The cards and their related groups and relationships evolve into a model that incorporates input from all the participants and the final stage of consensus is reached when there are no more significant changes to the arrangement of cards.

In the “Shaping the Future” study, the researcher modified Paul’s method. From the outset, there was concern about whether experts from different areas of the profession would be able to collaborate effectively and reach an agreement over a final set of critical themes for LIS. To address this, the method was modified in several ways:

- Seed participant data were derived from library profession conference programs reflecting expert opinions,
- A second group of experts reviewed the data concurrently to capture a broader range of views,
- The final steps of grouping, theming, and prioritization tasks leading to consensus, were undertaken in a group (workshop) setting,

To give sufficient scope for a profession-wide study, the focus was on identifying no more than 12 trends.

The revised modified-Delphi card sort method employed for this study is outlined in Figure 1.

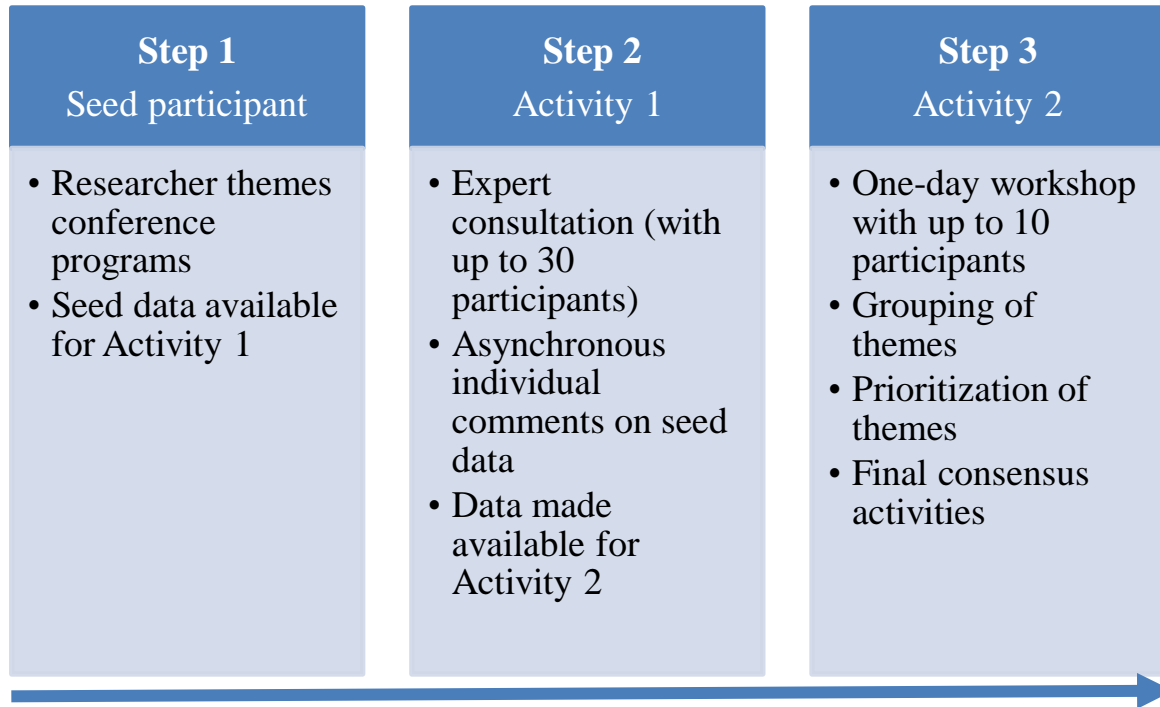


Figure 1  
Modifications made to Paul's (2008) model.

### Research Process

The process entailed a sequential set of procedures with each building iteratively on the output of the previous one. The sequence is described in Figure 1 and outlined below.

#### *Seed Participant: Selection and Identification of an Initial Set of Themes*

Research began by identifying the most recent conferences held in 2023 and those with planned conference themes for 2024 taking place across the library profession. This approach ensured a comprehensive overview of research and practice priorities across the profession. Although these data are not commonly used in this way, doing so aligned well with the researchers' goal of adopting a wider-sector approach.

Included for consideration were 15 programs ranging from specialist areas of librarianship (such as business libraries) to thematic areas (such as information literacy or performance management or critical approaches to librarianship) and wide-ranging programs (such as CILIP's annual conference). Public libraries were represented through Libraries Connected, with school and health sectors also represented. Overlaps in content were expected and served as confirmation of trends. For details of the programs, see Appendix A.

The researchers manually themed individual papers and topics from the 2023 conference programs and proposed conferences for 2024. The theme titles developed in the analysis were chosen to reflect the views of working professionals, even though some conference papers would have been presented by researchers. The themes identified through coding the conference papers were intentionally broad, rather

than specific, or immediately researchable questions. Colleagues involved in the research facilitation reviewed the themes. Modifications were made to the themes that formed the content for the next research phase.

The researchers created 61 key themes in the first stage of the process. In addition, each theme was mapped to conference papers or training events to support the rationale for the theme.

***Activity 1: Consult Library Practitioners Across the Profession on a Themed List***

Recognizing the importance of engaging the broader profession and avoiding sector bias, specific organizations were contacted to promote the research study. The aim was to recruit 20-30 participants for this activity.

Activity 1 recruitment for experts resulted in 21 participants, with the following sectors represented:

- Academic libraries (6)
- Special interest libraries (3)
- Public libraries (2)
- School libraries (4)
- Rare/special collections libraries (1)
- Health libraries (5)

Most experts offered their time independently in response to the promotion of the research, whilst some were contacted following recommendations, for example, from the LIRG committee. In some instances, sector organizers such as the School Library Association and Libraries Connected promoted the study. The stages of career represented varied from early career professional through to university library directors. Some experts were solo workers, others worked in much larger work environments. Experts were predominantly from the academic library sector, partly due to the intrinsic bias often seen across the sectors with more professional library staff employed in academic libraries, and partly because this sector may have volunteered more readily for a research study. The researcher's background in academic libraries must also be acknowledged. However, the academic library representation covered a variety of types of academic institutions including research libraries and teaching libraries.

Activity 1 aimed to review and evaluate the initial set of coded themes with experts. Practitioner input was essential to ensure the key concerns of the wider profession were reflected. The researcher invited experts to contribute additional top-level themes to ensure the list was comprehensive. The focus of this stage of the research was on using this expert opinion to:

- strengthen, or confirm, themes
- question the themes but not remove ones they might consider irrelevant
- suggest additional themes

Participants volunteering to support the research were contacted remotely by email, they were provided with an information sheet that outlined the research project, the risks involved in participating, an explanation of how the data would be used, and permission for any recordings were gathered at that stage. A structured interview method was employed; asynchronous responses were accepted owing to time constraints, and a desire to widen coverage and validity of the data. In all instances, an online face-



to-face option was available for participants if they preferred that method. The researcher sent the following tasks to each participant with the spreadsheet of the 61 themes identified for review:

- The themed items on the attached spreadsheet have been collated from amalgamating conference programs from the library profession in 2023 and looking at calls for papers for 2024. Look through the themes, and from your perspective and understanding of the profession consider whether there are critical themes/issues/challenges missing from the first list. Especially consider those that are critical for future library practice in your sector/area of expertise and interest.
- Add any further clarification or questions you have about the list.

Participants were given the choice of responding in the body of the email or by annotating the spreadsheet sent to them. Many respondents, 81%, opted to respond through a return email with comments contained within the email. All responses were amalgamated and considered in line with the first set of themes; where they were distinct themes they were added to the initial themed list or suggestions were amalgamated with current themes and the document was amended accordingly.

Following Activity 1, new themes (14) were added to the list, 29 original themes were amended and just one was amalgamated with a previously created one. These 74 themes formed the basis for the cards used in the second activity. The full list of themes, including those added at the outset of Activity 2, and related modifications through the process, is included in Appendix B (B.1 – B.3).

### *Activity 2: Card Sorting Workshop with Ten Participants*

Ten expert library professionals were invited to a final one-day in-person workshop for the modified-Delphi card sorting tasks. This final phase of the study aimed to reach a consensus on 12 themes critical for future evidence based research. Of the participants, two represented Scotland, with the rest from England; attempts to draw participants from Wales and Northern Ireland were not successful. Expertise came from the following sectors:

- Academic libraries (4)
- Special interest libraries (1)
- Health libraries (1)
- Public libraries (2)
- School libraries (1)
- Research libraries (1)

Once again, academic library representation was strongest, with representation from subject specialists through research support librarians and those with teaching expertise. There were two early career professionals, and three from senior management positions. Some experts were members of CILIP, and others were members of their specific sector organizations. Although some experts were interested and practiced in research methods none of them had been involved in a Delphi study before and so were especially interested in the methodology.

This element of the research relied on in-person group card-sorting tasks. Conrad and Tucker (2019) referred to a card-sort activity as one that encourages articulating “participant thoughts and feelings, making abstract concepts more tangible for both participant and researcher” (p. 398). This aspect of the

methodology was crucial for ensuring internal validation given the range of the sectors represented by the participants.

Workshop tasks outlined in Figure 1 above are expanded in more detail in Table 1. The focus was on iterative practice, using a traditional card-sorting method for grouping ideas, together with consensus tasks used to prioritize the themes, thereby reducing them to 12, as identified from the modified research parameters.

Table 1  
Workshop Tasks

TASKS	DETAIL OF TASKS	NEXT STEPS
Individual assessment	The researcher sends participants the output from Activity 1 one day before the workshop.	Participants were invited to add themes (cards) to the pack at the start of the workshop.
Card sorting in groups (Consensus/prioritization Task 1)	Participants conducted a grouping/theming task with the cards to allow time for discussion and group understandings to emerge.	Participants were asked to de-prioritize half of the cards.
Card sorting in groups (Consensus/prioritization Task 2)	Groupings and remaining cards from the two groups were amalgamated by the workshop facilitators before the task.	A second round of de-prioritization resulted in 30-35 cards (themes).
Task 3	Voting – the final 30+ cards voted on by participants individually.	Voting results were revealed, and cards were put in rank order.
Final overview of results	The researcher facilitated a final discussion between all participants.	The group could decide whether later changes are required.

Participants were presented with an amended list of themes resulting from Activity 1 before the workshop day. They were allowed to add further themes if they were concerned that a critical aspect was missing. Additional themes were each individually annotated on a card. A further 10 themes were captured resulting in a total of 84 themes. Appendix B.3 notes these additions.

Expert consultation was critical in creating the set of themes explored in the final workshop. Figure 2 illustrates the stages of the research process when key themes were identified. Experts added new themes to the list with the researcher making subsequent modifications to the original seed participant list. This task contributed to the validation of prior stages and highlighted the importance of including expert practitioners and ensuring they represented the U.K. library profession as far as possible.

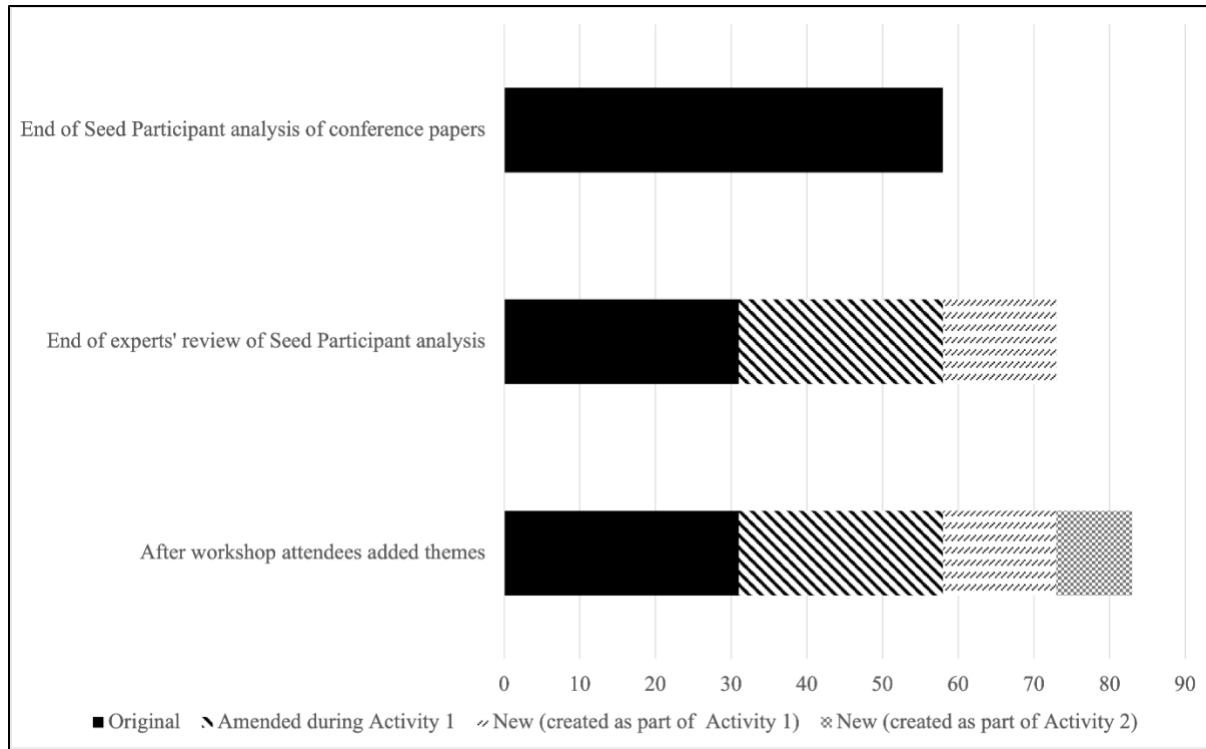


Figure 2  
Contributions to theme creation.

*Card-Sorting Tasks*

Participants were divided into two groups and initiated the process of identifying overlaps and similarities amongst the themes by sorting the cards, each with one theme on them, into broader groups. This activity facilitated discussion and sharing of experiences. The discussion process contributed to a sense of consensus which was important to the outcomes. Once the broad theming of the cards was complete, the groups were asked to nominate just half of the cards as priority themes. Participants were given time at the end of this stage to regroup and identify any issues, noting some uncertainty about how their different sectors would be able to agree on a final set of trends. Further tasks helped to mitigate this issue.

Participants found it challenging to deprioritize and reduce the pile of cards. However, approaching the task a second time after a lunch break meant this activity could be re-visited. Before the second task, the facilitators examined the card-sorting results from the two independently working groups from the morning. Where the two groups had created similar broader themes, the cards were combined. The group's opinions diverged in some instances, and we retained all of these cards for the second round. Three groups of participants worked on the second prioritization task. Facilitators ensured that academic library representation was more evenly spread across the groups. This also had the advantage of ensuring participants had the opportunity to work with others in the wider group, allowing for experiences to continue to be shared and differences of opinion heard widely amongst the group. Participants in the groups were once again asked to reduce the number of themes (cards) by half.

Table 2 can be viewed in conjunction with Appendix B, which includes the full list of themes. It outlines the process involved in removing themes through the prioritization tasks. These data reflect a potential issue of collaborative working between and across sectors. Immediately before this task, workshop participants added ten new themes to the pack. The first column suggests a potential reticence by participants in removing any of those themes in the Prioritization 1 task. By the second prioritization, a level of familiarity and group working had developed which appeared to change the participants' approach to the task. They became more confident in their views. As the ability to collaborate and work across the profession is critical for successful evidence based research activity, similar future studies should include several rounds of prioritization tasks.

Table 2  
Stage of Theme Creation Correlated to the Stage of Removal

Stage of theme creation	Workshop Task: Prioritization 1 removal of themes	Workshop Task: Prioritization 2 removal of themes
1: Original theme by researcher	11	6
2a: Modified original theme from Activity 1 expert consultants	10	6
2b: New theme identified from Activity 1 expert consultants	5	4
3: Activity 2 expert consultants	0	6

The items removed at each stage were examined collectively to ascertain further rationale for their removal. Observations of the card-sorting and prioritization tasks led to a deeper understanding of the factors influencing group decisions. The following broad principles and decisions impacted each group achieving universal agreement.

- Participants agreed on areas of significant overlap with another theme.
- Participants used high level labels to group several themes; for example, any themes related to a broader label such as “inclusivity” formed a group. Experts then identified one or two areas within that broader group as more critical than others.
- Diverse experts in a group discussed their differences at length and came to a consensus through discussing the relative impact of the theme in their place of work or sector.
- At times the group agreed that the theme was not sufficiently “futuristic”. It was agreed that it was valid and important for libraries now and in the future, but libraries have already put considerable effort and research into the area, for example, accessibility.
- Some themes were less important for some sectors or less well understood by participants concerning the wider profession and were discarded early on.

The outcome of this process of prioritization resulted in 31 themes represented on individual cards. Table 3 lists these themes split into two columns, those that both groups in the first prioritization exercise perceived to be priorities, and those which only one or other groups in the first prioritization exercise decided were priorities. This is an indication of potential importance for the themes at this stage of the process.

Table 3  
Prioritized Themes Following Activity 2

Both groups in Prioritization 1 independently prioritized these themes	One group in Prioritization 1 independently prioritized these themes
Strategic delivery of service: effectiveness of strategy for service	Consortia partnerships: staff connecting across the profession
Resources and collections: digital provision and access	Consortia partnerships: connecting across sectors
Sustainable futures	Great School Libraries campaign
Researchers and publishing: impact of new ways of publishing	Systematic reviews
Budgets and resources	Strategic collaboration
Library staff: fair and effective recruitment practices	Ambiguous boundaries: service provision
Diversity: theories in practice	Decolonization: evaluation and impact
Resources and collections: diversity and ethics	Critical librarianship: exclusion and inclusion of staff
Open access: implications for all	Critical evaluation in library context
Reading literacy: creating a reading culture	Searching: effective searching
Evidence based practice: embedding in the profession	Library staff: leadership challenges
Inclusive libraries	Teaching librarians (pedagogy and andragogy)
Library staff: workforce of the future - skills required	Library spaces
Digital literacy	Censorship/book banning
Professional identity (across the profession)	
AI: opportunities, challenges	
Critical librarianship: advocacy, knowledge production	

Different sectoral pressures and issues faced by the individual experts in the workshop had an impact. However, all themes were considered equally in the remaining workshop tasks. Participants reviewed the results and agreed that, despite their different sectors, these were the group’s collective priorities after two rounds of prioritization tasks.

*Voting*

Card-sorting and prioritization tasks were followed by a voting mechanism, designed for participants to distribute their prioritization flexibly and independently.

Introducing voting at this point aimed to mitigate the potential bias introduced by the group setting. Specifically:

- To mitigate the “loudest voices” ruling the day which had been partly achieved by rotating the composition of the groups in the previous rounds, but also through the process of the voting—a blind and individual approach to the last round of prioritization.
- Ensuring that all sectors present were represented in the final round. For example, if the public sector expert’s opinion had been down weighted by an academic librarian during the conversations in previous collaborative rounds, this was their opportunity to represent their views.
- Aiming to enable participants to spread their prioritization with few constraints.

Each participant received 50 counters. They distributed the counters across the cards remaining in the set according to the prioritization weighting they wished to give each card, with the only restriction being that they could not assign more than 8 counters to an individual card. The “votes” were hidden from other participants by placing the counters in sealed opaque containers, mitigating the potential to be influenced by the votes of others in the group. Table 4 provides details of the outcome of the voting activity.

Table 4  
Outcomes of Voting

THEME	SCORE FOLLOWING VOTING
Critical librarianship: advocacy, knowledge production	37
AI: opportunities and challenges	35
Professional identity (across the profession)	34
Censorship/book banning	30
Library spaces	27
Teaching librarians (pedagogy & andragogy)	21
Library staff: leadership challenges	20
Digital literacy	17
Library staff: workforce skills for the future	17
Inclusive libraries	16
Evidence based practice: embedding in the profession	16
Reading literacy	15

Facilitators ensured that participants knew before the voting that although this task had been used to help reach a consensus, it was not the end of the process and that a final discussion about the outcome was critical to ensure full agreement. The following questions were used to guide this discussion:

- What surprises emerged from this task?
- Which themes would they like to advocate for if they did not appear in this list?
- Were there any themes missing from the set of 31 that they would have liked to see reinstated back in the set?

This final discussion resulted in an illuminating collaborative conversation about the general issues all libraries face. Ultimately, three cards discarded before the voting took place were reinstated. These were: misinformation/disinformation, diversity (practical activities), and environmental responsibilities. There were discussions about areas that participants considered fundamental but were not included in the final set. However, it was agreed that the results had been arrived at through a robust process. Participants would have benefitted from more time to understand the themes. However, the workshop ended positively, reiterating the need to share information and best practices between sectors in a timelier way.

## **Discussion**

At the outset, a target of arriving at 12 potential themes through the consensus processes was considered reasonable. Although 12 themes were identified, it became clear by the end of the workshop that a subgroup of 5 themes stood out. A key recommendation from this study is that funding research activity that will bring the most value to the U.K. library profession is focused on these:

- Critical librarianship: advocacy, knowledge production
- AI: opportunities and challenges
- Professional identity (across the profession)
- Censorship/book banning
- Library spaces

The broad strategic themes emerging from this research can be summarized by considering how they impact the library and information profession. The entire profession is influenced by political, economic, and societal shifts, necessitating a constant demonstration of impact and relevance. These influences were key to the conversations during the card-sorting tasks in the workshop. Common interests and understanding developed throughout the day as experts shared their stories about working in the library profession. The consensus outcomes became less about the sector they were in, and more about a shared understanding of key important issues for all. Ethical considerations alongside a professional understanding of the workforce and workplace identity influenced final decisions.

Some top themes have a clear role as “disruptors,” such as AI, which present current and future challenges highlighting the need for “workforce skills development.” To take one example, a comparison of the conference archives of the LILAC conferences for 2023 and 2024 illustrated that AI as a topic emerges strongly in the 2024 conference but is not evident in the 2023 conference. The RLUK Call for Papers, 2024 also illustrates this rapid change.

Although “inclusive” as a general theme did not rank higher in the final consensus task, the “persistence/development of inclusive activity” continues to be important. Critical librarianship was

identified as an important future trend in librarianship. It is strongly advised that future research explores this topic in more detail to ensure it is understood across the profession, making future practices firmly evidence based. Censorship/book-banning pressure was most acutely felt by school and public library experts in the workshop, in particular those who are solo librarians. It also resonated with other sectors. Evidence based practice supporting the wider profession would guide those who are on the frontline, and also increase wider understanding across the U.K. library profession.

During Activities 1 and 2, it became clear that librarians are concerned about how their profession is perceived. "Professional identity" was identified as a critical issue. Conversations during the workshop highlighted that experts were concerned about losing their identity and the de-skilling of the profession. It was noted that discussion amongst workshop members was critical in breaking down barriers and understanding each other's experiences, beyond a general awareness of overarching issues and opportunities. Professional identity is difficult to achieve when perceptions vary; for example, what the profession thinks of a topic, compared to the public or the government and other funding bodies. The final consensus discussion included themes such as "budgets/funding" and illustrated that more could be done to understand and disseminate best practices between sectors. Regardless of definitions of "identity," the profession seems to require constant advocacy.

"Library spaces" were a recurring theme throughout the study, reflecting the ongoing challenges that many sectors are experiencing. Experts wanted to defend and justify "the library as space," regardless of the role or sector they worked in. Library space depends on context but there may be many more ways in which the wider profession can work together and complement physical and digital spaces for the benefit of society.

The outcomes are a snapshot of the opinions of a small group of participants across a selection of sectors, and given the current pace of change, the validity of research results will lessen as time passes. Some themes that emerged from conference programs, such as UX and the impact of the pandemic, were quickly de-prioritized during the workshop. While not seen as critical future trends, these themes could form the basis for specific sectoral work or future research. Potential research questions connected to the most highly ranked themes can now be developed, enabling library practitioners to investigate these areas further.

The methodology successfully combined an initial set of themes from the seed participant with an expert-driven approach to testing these themes and utilizing a collaborative set of tasks to reach a consensus. The powerful impact of the root method, Delphi, is the value placed on the expert input in a research environment where their views and ideas are important. The process of consensus in building and shaping a story is also evident. Lund (2020) noted that Delphi methodologies can overcome some of the weaknesses of other research methods, such as the potential for "conversation dominance/power differential in focus groups and equal weighting of all ideas in surveys and interviews" (p. 939). This iterative and collaborative process allowed participants to consider whether their ideas aligned with the larger group and, as a result, potentially adjust their responses. Conversations between participants meeting face-to-face in the "Shaping the Future" workshop could have continued for much longer, as they spent time understanding each other's backgrounds and challenges.

For this research project, there was an overriding concern about sectoral differences impacting the ability to reach a consensus. For example, the final discussion (after the voting task) led to wide-ranging debates about why themes such as "budgets/funding" or "reading literacy" did not rank higher in the final set.



Despite differing opinions, the experts agreed not to change the list of priorities. Some participants expressed interest in undertaking a similar study using the same method for their sector.

Observations of workshop participants and subsequent conversations demonstrated some differences of opinion in the meaning behind some of the themes which were not solely due to sector differences. Confusion could have been prevented by taking more time to reflect on their understanding of the themes before the card-sorting tasks. Alternatively, documented definitions for each theme could have been captured by participants before any card-sorting activity.

The workshop process was flexible enough to allow for modifications to the original plans, with one such change required. Qualitative methods may need adaptation and subsequent justification; the changes made during the workshop are a good example. Walking through the process in advance is highly recommended but adapting to the environment is also essential.

The seed data—recent library conference themes and topics—used in the Delphi consensus approach for the research project had not been used before in this way to elicit views about the future trends in libraries. The use of conference program data which reflect current issues for libraries resulted in a set of themes relevant to the profession. Revisiting a similar dataset within five years would allow library leaders to analyze the responsiveness of the library profession and confirm or propose new trends for future evidence based research.

Limitations of the modified-Delphi card sorting method included assumptions that can influence the outcomes. Lund (2020) noted that identifying individual expert opinions may have potentially negative consequences for research outcomes. The bias noted above concerning the number of academic library professionals involved in this study is a related limitation. Mitigation through different group formations for the tasks in the workshop helped address this, but it must be acknowledged as an area to improve in future studies. Additionally, experts may have the best, most popular ideas (in our study these are potentially the ones that were given the highest votes in the final iteration), which may not be the case in reality. It is also important to acknowledge the current climate, where “hot” topics like AI emerge and fade rapidly.

A potential area to explore in future studies could be the ability of participants to absorb, assimilate, and analyze information within the time allocated to each task. Activity 1 allowed plenty of time for this process as participants responded individually and had more time available to reflect and send a response. Activity 2, the workshop, could have taken place over two days to allow for a more measured process of card sorting, discussion about differences between sectors, and assimilation of information.

Despite the limitations outlined above, the method allowed a group of experts to arrive at an agreed list of topics and themes critical for LIS experts to explore and research in the workplace in the future. Using all elements of the methodology, the study achieved an important level of internal validity, ensuring that the views of a wide range of experts contributed to the outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

This research study began with two key questions, intending to discover a limited set of critical trends for the wider library profession to focus their attention on. A modified Delphi methodology was used to achieve consensus amongst experts from different library sectors. Three linked individual tasks took place over the course of the research. The initial seed participant activity used conference programs to

represent the most current trends within the profession. The output of this first element of the research was verified and modified by experts who responded individually. Finally, a group workshop used card-sorting and voting methods to arrive at a consensus. Five themes emerged as a distinct group that resonated with participants during the research. It is recommended that this research output should form the focus for future research efforts by the wider profession as anticipated at the outset.

These studies are only useful if the results are acted upon, and if there is an understanding that they merely show a snapshot in time. Repeating this exercise is important, and this modified Delphi methodology could be reused. In addition, regardless of the efforts made in recruiting experts for this study, it is clear that it is not always possible to fully represent the huge diversity of work environments in studies of this nature. However, collaborating closely with the experts involved was an unexpectedly rewarding feature of the research, with many valuable conversations in the workshop, and via email with experts. These findings underscore the need for further research into professional identity examining the related issues of professional development and career opportunities.

Evidence based research at an organizational level would help the profession deepen its understanding. “Shaping the Future” research outcomes represent what library experts agree are critical for further evidence based research. Such research would be most effective if engaged at an organizational level, as proposed through the EBLIP model. This study’s outcomes should be applied across the library profession to demonstrate further validity. Individual library sectors will best serve themselves and each other if they find ways to commit to working together and sharing knowledge in an evidence based research environment.

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### Author Contributions

**Elizabeth Tilley:** Conceptualization (lead), Data curation (lead), Formal analysis (lead), Funding acquisition (lead), Methodology (equal), Project administration (lead), Resources (equal), Writing – original draft (lead), Writing – review and editing (equal) **David Marshall:** Conceptualization (supporting), Formal analysis (supporting), Methodology (equal), Resources (equal), Writing – original draft (supporting), Writing – review and editing (equal)

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## Appendix A

### Conference Programs and Calls for Papers

(CILIP: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals)

CILIPS Conference Programme 2023	CILIP Scotland <a href="https://cilips.org.uk">cilips.org.uk</a>
CILIP Conference Programme 2023	CILIP annual conference <a href="https://www.cilip.org.uk/">https://www.cilip.org.uk/</a>
WHELP: Excluded Voices Programme 2023	Wales Higher Education Library Forum <a href="https://whelf.ac.uk/">https://whelf.ac.uk/</a>
RLUK 2024 Call for Papers	Research Libraries UK <a href="https://www.rluk.ac.uk/">https://www.rluk.ac.uk/</a>
LILAC 2023 Conference Programme	International Information Literacy Conference <a href="https://www.lilconference.com/">https://www.lilconference.com/</a>
The EDGE 2023 Conference Main Speakers' titles	City of Edinburgh Council Conference <a href="https://edgeconference.co.uk/programme/">https://edgeconference.co.uk/programme/</a>
SLA 2023 Events Programme	School Library Association <a href="https://www.sla.org.uk/">https://www.sla.org.uk/</a>
LibPMC Programme 2023	International Conference on Libraries and Performance Measurement <a href="https://libraryperformance.org/">https://libraryperformance.org/</a>
CILIP Libraries Rewired Conference Programme 2023	One-day event 2023 <a href="https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/LibrariesRewired23">https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/LibrariesRewired23</a>
LLS Everyone a Researcher Conference 2023	University of Northampton Library and Learning Services annual conference. <a href="https://libguides.northampton.ac.uk/Everyonearesearcher/programme">https://libguides.northampton.ac.uk/Everyonearesearcher/programme</a>
CILIP Health Library Group Call for Papers 2024	Call for papers <a href="https://ciliphlg.com/hlg-conference-2024-call-for-abstracts-and-registration/">https://ciliphlg.com/hlg-conference-2024-call-for-abstracts-and-registration/</a>
BIALL Call for Papers 2024 Conference	British and Irish Association of Law Librarians Call for Papers <a href="https://practicesource.com/biall-call-for-papers-the-54th-annual-conference-and-exhibition-will-take-place-at-the-queens-hotel-leeds-12th-14th-june-2024/">https://practicesource.com/biall-call-for-papers-the-54th-annual-conference-and-exhibition-will-take-place-at-the-queens-hotel-leeds-12th-14th-june-2024/</a>
CALC Conference Programme 2023	Critical Approaches to Libraries Conference <a href="https://sites.google.com/view/calconference/past-conferences/calc2023">https://sites.google.com/view/calconference/past-conferences/calc2023</a>
ALN Conference Programme 2023	Academic Libraries North Conference <a href="https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/academic-libraries-north-conference-2023">https://www.academiclibrariesnorth.ac.uk/academic-libraries-north-conference-2023</a>
Libraries Connected Innovators Network National Gathering 2023	Public Libraries: Libraries Connected <a href="https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/training-and-events/innovation-gathering-2023">https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/training-and-events/innovation-gathering-2023</a>

**Appendix B**  
**Themes for “Shaping the Future” Research Workshop**

Appendix B is divided into four sections:

- B.1. Themes created by the seed participant through the process of theming conference programs. These themes were retained throughout the three steps.
- B.2a. Themes created by the seed participant and modified following Activity 1 where experts reviewed the list
- B.2b. Themes added by experts in Activity 1
- B.3. Themes added by experts at the beginning of Activity 2.

*Appendix B.1*

**Themes Created by Seed Participant Theming Activity and Subsequently Retained in the Same Format/Name Throughout the Research Process**

Top Level Themes	Conference and Feedback Examples Supporting Theme Creation
Academic skills support: transition	Transition support – transitioning into HE Improving reading skills for students at Key stage 3 and 4 The transition from undergraduate vocational courses into professional life. (could apply to law as much as medicine)
Academic support: frameworks - do they work?	Struggles to integrate IL training Predicting student success with and without Library instruction: improving evidence based practice with IL Framework of skills for inquiry learning (FOSIL) Comparing IL frameworks with accreditation standards for specific subjects
Academic skills support: institutional support	Impact of one-shot teaching interventions Public libraries supporting distance learners - e.g., ways to expand use of Eduroam?
Critical evaluation in library context	Using critical evaluation models Longitudinal evaluation research Importance of data – but a holistic view when multiple stakeholders involved
Researchers and resources	Scientific collecting – developing more collaborative approaches Systematic reviews – development to integrate decolonized searching; grey literature, AI/ChatGPT issues and screening strategies  issues of copyright for SR (supplying papers to one person that we know will be shared)

<p>Researchers and publishing - impact of new ways of publishing</p>	<p>amongst a team - when will copyright become fit for this purpose?)</p>
<p>Researchers and workflows</p>	<p>Rights retention – copyright – as relates to open access papers dissemination (disruptor) moved to a more OA model of content, but imagine publishers will not let go easily so will there be even more barriers          establishing library-led publishing capacity that works for your research community          how to measure impact of research          Funding open access monographs          Speedier/less labour-intensive publishing models</p>
<p>AI opportunities</p>	<p>Welsh language OA publishing          Strengthening researcher’s profiles          Digital experiences – user researcher          AI that benefits libraries          Innovation: for example, supporting tech-enhanced learning          driving business value through AI-powered Knowledge management (reduce mundane work through employing AI)</p>
<p>UX</p>	<p>Role in business, research, and especially financial sector, changing the speed of activity          Health: connecting with users - needs analysis; service evaluation, platforms to engage with users, engaging with literacies          improving the student experience at Aberystwyth University libraries: from library surveys to cognitive mapping          User research informed UX          potential implications of AI for UX</p>
<p>Digital transformation for change</p>	<p>Digital inclusion          Development of equitable knowledge infrastructures          Expanding content types and services          Demonstrating the impact and value of new activities          Data security and data protection          Digital communications          Digital rights</p>
<p>Strategic collaboration</p>	<p>Speed of change requires nimbleness and agility          Digital censorship          Catalyst for community transformation</p>



<p>Culture of collaboration Relational librarianship:  Consortia/partnerships: connecting across sectors</p>	<p>Value and impact community of practice It takes a village (schools' libraries) Building transformative relationships Health and digital literacy partnership with NHS and public library Collaborating with public health services and NHS to increase prevention services in libraries promoting good health. Library at the heart of the community – culture change for university libraries collaborate on research projects with other sectors such as HR Smaller libraries and institutions connecting to large overarching organizations such as JISC, RLUK, CILIP, BL Collaborative approaches between sectors and across professional areas; LibraryON; Public libraries discovery platforms Collaboration in the community – community and school libraries care systems, prisons, education, health (private and public) with skills, tools, resources seamless access goals.</p>
<p>Consortia/partnerships: staff connecting across the profession</p>	<p>Libraries and archives - critical connections Evaluating communication across library departments working, partnering, volunteering, safeguarding the professions, liaising Simpler ways to connect across the profession especially for smaller more specialist libraries or for example between libraries and archives Disconnection and siloed areas of the profession Sharing strategies and techniques and standards with ALL staff across the profession, for example, preservation standards should be shared with public libraries - staff working on local collections Networking for resource sharing</p>
<p>Consortia/partnerships: connecting internationally</p>	<p>International collaboration (IFLA) Improving race equity Leading and managing change to align with external policy landscape</p>
<p>Strategic delivery of service - effectiveness of strategy for service</p>	<p>Role of the library in the delivery of institutional strategy Create good organization policies</p>

Student recruitment/student panels/interns for projects and longer term	What is a "good" library? The measures are changing changing leadership
Wellbeing spaces/activities	Career related User experience – for example, themed for a project for a minority group Student curation the well-being economy Doing things for fun and community and wellbeing Calm zones Reading for pleasure Using games to teach empathy, understanding and promote wellbeing (dungeons and dragons) Table-top gaming in public libraries Sense of belonging Reflective practice
Resources and collections: diversity and ethics	Collaborative cataloguing ethics Introducing more books by people of colour World through picture books Diversity in operationalizing reading lists Gender variance – queer theory and Marxism Supporting adult literacy and improving life chances
Diversity: ethical concerns	Safe and inclusive public libraries - balance concerns around controversial material while protecting freedom of speech. Professional ethics. Successful library EDI Assessment: impact of participatory data collection approaches Multilingualism in the library Diversity – LGBT+ especially in schools Information practices of the homeless Workplace IL readiness for recently graduated students Raising boys' achievements Black voices in the library Neurodivergence awareness for both library staff and students Improving health literacy with easy read guides for those with disabilities Digital content – inequitable access to content
Accessibility: general	

Accessibility: information literacy related	Engaging with disability: the deaf community using archives Public libraries lend and mend hubs - developing a long-term model for circular economy activities, Renaming/rebranding 'reading/library' to 'storytelling' In the context of neurodivergence Emotional research experiences of first year students Audiobooks, inclusion and higher education Referencing styles – barrier for those with SLDs? Developing transparent and equitable assignments Supporting students studying from secure environments, prisons, secure houses, or secure hospitals, as well as students who were in prisons and released on licence. They do not have access to online content (OU)
Inclusive libraries	Inclusive reading list toolkits Use of book groups with specific learning disabilities Institutional choices e.g., referencing styles Glasgow Women's Library "Green Cluster": gardening, documenting action, inspiring change, and reducing carbon emissions buying second hand - when, why, so what? engaging with scientific thinking, not just slogans
Environmental responsibilities	What are the carbon emissions of library practices? (Covering books in plastic? Printing out plastic membership cards? Huge barns of computers often not in use? Servers for institutional repositories? What is environmental cost of an ebook vs. paper copy?) Reduce, reuse, recycle – mantra into action Libraries in support of sustainable development goals (SDGs)
Sustainable futures	empathetic appreciation event management Future funding and resilience Licensing in the "new" economy may become more pervasive, restrictive, and unaffordable for libraries and ordinary people
Library – the empathy heart of the institution	
Managing events	
Budgets and resources	

<p>Library spaces</p>	<p>how to cost a service - e.g., systematic reviews. (we generally either take what we are offered, use a ballpark 30hrs (Baller et al., 2018), or do a different stab in the dark method).</p> <p>Impact of budgeting on staffing constraints</p> <p>Vastly different content procurement models</p> <p>more sustainable buildings and approach to learning space development?</p>
<p>Measuring and managing performance</p>	<p>Measuring the impact of the first year of a library makerspace: the experience of the University of Limerick</p> <p>How and why library maps must evolve</p> <p>preserve historic space and update for needs wellbeing spaces?</p> <p>measuring impact to meet different priorities</p> <p>How data visualisation has delivered service improvement</p> <p>An analysis of faculty use of library services</p> <p>Value of small-scale assessment: looking at a consultation form for complex searches</p> <p>Building the holistic e-resource acquisition transparency (HEAT) communication tool for academic librarians</p> <p>Turning recommendations of a peer review panel into an action plan</p> <p>What does a values-based practice look like?</p> <p>Identifying the characteristics of ethical library assessment</p> <p>A new life for the READ scale: calibrating a time and effort measure for patron interactions</p> <p>Keeping LibQUAL+ current as library users' expectations evolve</p> <p>A whole-service quality evaluation framework</p> <p>Culture of assessment</p>

*Appendix B.2a*

**Themes Created by Seed Participant Activity and Subsequently Modified Following Expert Consultation in Activity 1 of the Research Process**

*Italicized comments indicate where modifications were made.*

<p>Top Level Themes</p>	<p>Supporting Conference/Feedback Examples</p>
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Teaching librarians: *pedagogy and andragogy (adults/professionals)*

Social turn in HE: organizational structures and strategic planning needed to support teaching librarians in the socially conscious library. (disruptor)  
Difference between pedagogy and andragogy - mature students, postgraduates, academics, clinical practitioners might need different approach than undergraduates.  
Teaching online – competencies needed: Student perceptions to librarian/teacher identity  
Techniques and resources for delivering training using diagnostic tools to support independent learning  
Open pedagogy  
Playful learning

Misinformation/disinformation (*Academic skills support*)

what is the point of referencing  
Building critical thinking skills by fostering inquiry based and dialogic learning in research consultations  
critical thinking culturally specific to the Western World vs the rest of the world  
tackling mis/disinformation - which will continue to cause societal division  
Identifying bias and misinformation within online source evaluation

Skills support: pedagogy and technology (*Academic skills support*)

Misinformation and disinformation on social media  
creating active online sessions for large groups of students; Hybrid delivery of workshops; critical appraisal e-learning packages  
Flexibility to support different models of teaching and research.

Digital literacy (*Academic skills support*)

Immersive learning  
Gamification  
Digital literacy  
Rights retention and provision of in-depth copyright training

Open access - *implications for all*

Open research transformation for change  
Open access monographs  
Open access and deals between publishers and universities linking subs to OA publishing tokens is problematic for specialist, smaller libraries, and charities  
disseminating info on OA to all library staff - incl. library assistants to enable everyone to have a working knowledge of OA and its development, changes, and implications over time, plus practical implications re. access for library users

AI perceptions *and* challenges

Libraries, large language models, and ChatGPT  
Implications for collections – how we collect and how we describe our collections  
School libraries: AI – challenges and opportunities

<p>Policy/government/society impact on students and professions engaging with them</p>	<p>Gender bias in the current writing around AI AI and legal tech trends: ethical considerations e.g., copyright for images and films; responsible AI use Replace the role of the business information professional - info service providers combining their products into one platform with the help of AI Perception of attractiveness for budget-cutting services Generative AI and data: role of AI - in academic practice, in being a source of misinformation, in being a valuable tool for research ensuring training is given to library / info management staff at all levels to enable them to have a working knowledge of what is possible, be able to continue to update their skills in this area, in order to be able to beneficially apply these skills for their work and workplaces</p>
<p>Policy/government/society impact on the public</p>	<p>Will universities exist as separate entities? School librarians dependent on internal advocacy; no 'rights' Value of children and young people's library provision: Supporting primary school libraries – embedding research principles into practice Individualised self-driven education Civic role of universities and libraries Impact of strikes Sanderson Report on Public Libraries: importance of policy re public libraries LibraryOn Political uncertainty within the U.K. truth and evidence are increasingly undermined whilst libraries are underfunded From town to gown: breaking barriers to participation and engaging with the hard to reach to improve social and economic well-being</p>
<p>Innovation: creative activities</p>	<p>Libraries brief administered by the Arts Council, but scientific institutions feel unheard how to reduce the effort of making short films Gaming, machine learning; zine maker space skills of staff Canva: novice to expert; practical video/photography skills Future of library technology Learning through change Activism</p>

Innovation: *measure impact*  
Library staff: *fair and effective* recruitment practices

How to measure the effectiveness/impact of all that effort on social media  
Recruitment in the library sector - Fair recruitment practices  
Recruitment practices – social class and equity  
Attracting, retaining, and developing staff  
Workforce recruitment – interviewing for the ‘need to work as part of a team’  
Content analysis on teaching librarians job postings  
What is the evidence base for our interview practice?  
What are the most effective questions? What are the most effective tasks?  
Are EDI strategies enough? Are they working?  
Are we being paid enough following quals?  
Is the "need to work as part of a team" actually discriminating against those who find it difficult to develop good people skills. For example, ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) ... some library tasks in library do not require need to work as part of team; for example, book covering, shelving, processing - could these roles be advertised for separately to ensure true EDI?

Library staff: *wellbeing practices* impact

Being neurodiverse in the workplace  
Random act of kindness  
Wellbeing for library staff – personal resilience and impactful leadership  
Fostering psychological safe working environments  
Imposter syndrome and personal brand  
Workforce of the future: planning for a multi-state workforce study of minoritized academic library paraprofessionals

Library staff: workforce of the future.  
*What are the skills required for the future?*

Do not see a new wave of librarians coming through - what can we do to help this and give opportunities?  
Consider our aging workforce, and how we diversify it as well. Libraries may be still around, but will librarians?  
Avoiding the cost of knowledge loss  
Culture of calculated risk taking and continuous innovation  
Our continued work to integrate, automate and promote autonomy might simultaneously succeed in finally making us completely invisible  
workflow transformation  
Cost of de-professionalisation of the profession  
Legal training - including negotiation, mediation, contract  
Outreach about librarianship pathways at initial stages

<p>Library staff: <i>what is effective</i> professional development?</p>	<p>How to be a new professional and get past the barriers Creating development space for generalists to become specialists Professional skills and qualifications - are library qualifications fit for purpose Skills development including professional registration Teaching qualifications - impact on junior staff undertaking AFHEA Staff skills: coaching, for example, how to gain management experience for the next role when management or budget experience is not in your current role Reflective practice Critical peer review skills Apprenticeships – strategic workforce development Developing and supporting front-line staff to ‘grow their own business’ Starting a new role well More education and training for a flexible workforce. Processes for a day in the life</p>
<p>Library staff: leadership <i>challenges</i></p>	<p>Support emerging leaders How to help culture change, and avoid “cult of personality” leadership Leadership for changing times – including diverse leadership Flexible, adaptable leaders Need to be politically astute to advocate and fight for funding</p>
<p>Critical librarianship: <i>translating theory into practice</i></p>	<p>Social class, capital, and critical information literacy Referencing styles – oppressive? What is the point of a reading list? libraries and their colonial legacy Redefining ‘bias’ Information literacy as a concept and importance Gaps between critical librarian scholarship and library initiatives</p>
<p>Resources and collections: <i>digital provision and access</i></p>	<p>ebook accessibility Licensing of all sorts of resources is becoming really complex Cleaning out the electronic shelves: a look at the lifecycle of e-books Maintaining online learning objects Analysis of multiple EBA programs</p>



Resources and collections: collection development *changes for the future*

Libraries as hubs for discovery, exploration, and connection  
Lobbying publishers for great consistency in interfaces  
Networking to share and distribute resources  
resources that we have inherited (special collections) and are buying now (future special collections) and the information we collect about them (our metadata) will still be being used - in new and exciting ways!  
Scientific collecting – developing more collaborative approaches  
How to secure rare and valuable collections for the future - knowing it exists or making people aware?  
Book usage metric sharing and use guardrails:  
Developing ethical principles and system requirements to protect reader privacy and automate usage data exchange and aggregation

Resources and collections: publishers' impact

Promoting materials for diversity and inclusion  
Censorship in book collections and book challenges and how to tackle them  
Stop predatory practices initiative  
Leveraging scholarly APIs to analyze publication trends  
Institution data analysis for publisher negotiations  
Publishing for diversity and inclusion

Decolonization - *evaluation and impact on changes in user experience*

Decolonizing bibliographies, referencing, and citation practices  
Best practices for decolonizing academics library collections  
Decolonization and diversification creating inclusive libraries  
Wider implications of the “retain and explain” methodology for library collections  
Sharing practical approaches with the wider heritage sector on contested artefacts and collections  
Decolonization of curriculum and collections

Diversity: theories *in practice*

Critical race theory as a framework  
Finding an authentic approach to an academic library's best practice

Diversity: practical (*change from steps to activities*)

approaches to promoting diversity and inclusivity  
Using virtual reality to create an immersive historical experience  
Welcoming Ukrainian families  
Developing authentic youth voice in service delivery  
Exploring and celebrating the creativity of reading  
STEM story time  
Graphic novels and comic books: Graphic novels: secondary and beyond

	<p>Native (U.K.) diversity - celebrating this. For example, will Welsh and Gaelic be used significantly more than it is now?</p> <p>Anti-racist service to leisure readers</p> <p>information literacy practices of LGBTQ+ students' self-tracking</p> <p>engage students in critical primary source literacy and information literacy with content that reflects their own identities and experiences</p> <p>Using applied comics for IL instruction</p> <p>Promoting diversity through fiction</p> <p>Using drawing to support induction and transition into HE</p>
<p>Potential barriers for students <i>moving from one stage to another (replaced 'transition')</i></p>	<p>Use of VLE and comparable sites on mobile devices</p> <p>where do students access their academic books?</p> <p>Black awarding gap – learning development</p> <p>social inequalities</p> <p>Supporting international students through an intercultural approach</p> <p>Safer Internet use</p>
<p>Library services and management systems and suppliers: <i>new ways of working</i></p>	<p>System implementations – complex scenarios often including LMS, reading list system, and discovery layer</p> <p>Supporting students on courses focused on digital readings/texts/reading lists (university decisions to go digital-first in acquisition policies)</p> <p>Open metadata - linked and improved systems</p> <p>interoperating</p> <p>Innovative ways of working with systems</p> <p>Institutional repositories</p>
<p>Library services and management systems and suppliers: <i>usability</i></p>	<p>digital infrastructure needs work; impact of changes on ILL systems</p> <p>Remove the institutional barriers that do exist and future think together...and across many different sectors!</p> <p>critical approaches to the tools we use and pay for.</p>
<p>Knowledge management <i>growth</i></p>	<p>Managing knowledge at scale</p> <p>expanding skills to be able to offer this,</p>
<p>Copyright: <i>keeping up with changes</i></p>	<p>Digital data - who owns the data</p> <p>Issues of copyright for systematic reviews</p> <p>Intellectual property and who owns what information</p>
<p>Evidence based practice: <i>embedding in the profession</i></p>	<p>Best practice in evidencing the impact of libraries</p> <p>How to do library research - skills, writing, searching</p> <p>Using film to share our stories (public libraries)</p>

<p>Empowering <i>school</i> pupils for the future</p> <p>Library staff: <i>fair and effective</i> recruitment practices</p>	<p>Impact of public libraries on loneliness in communities</p> <p>Values-driven advocacy for libraries</p> <p>Supporting positive parenting practices in public libraries</p> <p>Sharing evidence based practice to help understanding across the sector e.g., RSPB Bees example</p> <p>Libraries heart of the curriculum</p> <p>Engage students in exhibitions</p> <p>Wellbeing support for students and staff</p> <p>Through questioning and inclusion</p> <p>Diversity to empower</p> <p>English as a second language</p> <p>Recruitment in the library sector - fair recruitment practices</p> <p>Recruitment practices – social class and equity</p> <p>Attracting, retaining, and developing staff</p> <p>Workforce recruitment – interviewing for the “need to work as part of a team”</p> <p>Content analysis on teaching librarians job postings</p> <p>What is the evidence base for our interview practice?</p> <p>What are the most effective questions? What are the most effective tasks?</p> <p>Are EDI strategies enough? Are they working?</p> <p>Are we being paid enough following quals?</p> <p>Is the “need to work as part of a team” actually discriminating against those who find it difficult to develop good people skills. For example, ASD (autistic spectrum disorder) ... some library tasks in the library do not require the need to work as part of a team, for example, book covering, shelving, processing - could these roles be advertised for separately to ensure true EDI?</p>
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*Appendix B.2b*

**Themes Created by Expert Consultants in Activity 1 and Subsequently Retained in the Same Format/Name for Activity 2**

Top Level Themes	Supporting Conference/Feedback Examples
Global exchange - students and professionals	<p>International student support</p> <p>supporting postgraduates</p> <p>Acquiring research skills specific to a country and an institution is a significant additional workload</p>

<p>Pandemic impact</p> <p>User involvement/input and co-creation activities</p> <p>Searching - effective searching across the profession</p> <p>Data security EDI awareness in all spheres - students and professionals</p>	<p>Home institutions responsibility to ensure that research students know how to access, approach, and use special collections and archives</p> <p>Impact of COVID on attention spans, attendance, professionalism (a short-term impact, but there is something different about the student cohorts today than pre-covid)</p> <p>Staff morale and elevation in post-pandemic and cost-of-living crisis</p> <p>Leadership in a post-pandemic, blended world</p> <p>Resource discovery and usage post-pandemic</p> <p>The impact of the pandemic on “library as place”</p> <p>A desire for in-person services</p> <p>Improving Accessibility, Engagement, and Usefulness of online information literacy tutorials based on student feedback</p> <p>Using co-creation to create information literacy</p> <p>Instruction to better anchor concepts and skills in the day-to-day life of its audience.</p> <p>The profession’s key and defining skill to impart to others</p> <p>Cost-effectiveness of librarians as “searchers”</p> <p>What is the value proposition for librarians as searchers?</p> <p>AI-informed search</p> <p>impact of cyber attacks</p> <p>Best practice inclusivity</p> <p>Equitable learner support</p> <p>critical appraisal for anti-racism</p> <p>racism in medicine (or any professional sphere)</p> <p>Disability support services</p>
<p>Systematic reviews - new disciplines, more complex licenses, pressure on library staff</p> <p>Large scale reorganizations - impact on smaller components</p>	<p>SRs in new disciplines (traditionally only conducted in medicine, now is cross/multi/intra disciplinary, and non-medic librarians do not know how, and methodology cannot be simply transferred owing to differences in databases)</p> <p>Systematic reviews – development to integrate decolonized searching; grey literature, AI/ChatGPT issues, and screening strategies</p> <p>Issues of copyright for SR (supplying papers to one person we know will be shared amongst a team - when will copyright become fit for this purpose?)</p> <p>Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) issues</p> <p>Impact of changing NHS direction/policy - how to ensure we are fit for purpose</p> <p>Global citizenship</p>

Professional identity (sector-wide)	Reframe/expand notions of what the profession is Teaching the profession to advocate for themselves Managing the volunteer pool Librarians as trusted intermediaries
Diversity: outreach	Across health libraries Anti-racist Wales Action Plan – a policy approach to including previously excluded voices Engaging reluctant readers Social outreach engaging in audio-visual heritage using archives Promoting diversity through fiction
Ambiguous boundaries: service provision	Technology and service proliferation have created ambiguity in who does what and why - where does the user go to? Clarifying what a library does is important for future sustainability - we can do this by demonstrating impact. But are we fighting each other? Position academic library as central and critical entity in a university
Marketing library services and resources - skills and effective representation of value	Value added of the business information professional to the business and marketing the role How to market a service that is sometimes for free and sometimes paid for. How to market and sell a service or resource
Reading literacy - creating a reading culture	Benefits to wellbeing and health Motivation issues Reading for a purpose – examples such as exams, health Empower students to choose to be readers - fiction, natural world, Black history, being empathetic
Involvement with professional association for career progression	Case studies (LILAC & Health)

*Appendix B.3*

**Themes Created by Experts in Activity 2 and Retained in the Same Format/Name**

Top Level Themes	Supporting Conference/Feedback Examples
Data to demonstrate impact. For example, isolation, health, inequalities	n/a
Participatory research	n/a
Funding/income generation	n/a
Critical librarianship - knowledge/production/resources and collections cataloguing	n/a

Critical librarianship - exclusion & inclusion (staff) (weight of online discussions, language framing, performativity = alienation of minority groups	n/a
Professional advocacy (more existential than just marketing)	n/a
Real-world impact of information literacy - lifelong information literacy	n/a
Great School Libraries Campaign - statutory school libraries	n/a
School librarians and pastoral roles	n/a
Censorship/book banning - public and schools	n/a