

# New Roles for the Road Ahead: Essays Commissioned for ACRL's 75th Anniversary

*Steven Bell, Lorcan Dempsey, and Barbara Fister*

*New Roles for the Road Ahead* addresses collaboration, right-scaling, value and values, the need for and role of leadership, and finally an environment of ever-present change.

The commissioned report by Steven J. Bell, Lorcan Dempsey, Barbara Fister explores wide range of topics in three main sections—"Framing the Road Ahead," "Shifts in Positioning," and "Responding to Opportunity: Creating a New Library Landscape." In the first section, "Framing the Road Ahead," Dempsey considers the "rules and roles" of education, technology, and scholarly publishing. From there, readers are given an in-depth look at the traditional four-year academic institutional model versus the nonlinear and unpredictable experience found in alt-higher education. This is followed by explorations of student demographics and how libraries can use these changes to their advantage, creating a bridge between technology and information behaviors tied to workflow, discovery, and space.

The second section, "Shifts in Positioning," advocates academic librarians' ability to shift and change "to meet new and somewhat ambiguous expectations." We are urged to consider the academic library's infrastructure, digital curation, partnership in teaching and learning, assessment, and even our physical space. Physical space takes the spotlight as librarians are asked to consider how to strike a balance between the lack of space and the need for more space in an

environment often deemed sacred in its inherent scholarliness. Furthermore, librarians are encouraged to focus on knowledge creation, facilitation of teaching and learning materials, and collaboration both on and off campus in an effort to connect with the community at-large as well as the institution.

The final section posits the creation of a new landscape, which is couched in terms of both value and values. What is the demonstrated value of the academic library, and how do we express the values academic librarians find purposeful and effective? In this section, the authors lead a more nuanced exploration of breaking down boundaries by exploring new contexts of collaboration through the lens of technology, learning/teaching support, and publishing. Also of importance is right-scaling and how this can "increase efficiencies and impact." The ever-expanding range of professional development opportunities is emphasized, as is the importance of personal and professional branding. Finally, our unique position to provide common ground as a place to both "preserve and share knowledge" is examined.

These wide-ranging topics are bound by the singular understanding that action will need to be taken soon in order to stay current and relevant as ACRL celebrates its past successes and looks ahead to its future. The report also includes an introduction by Nancy H. Allen and afterword by Betsy Wilson.

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