Chapter 5

Managing Complex Change Collaboratively

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1 Introduction

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the UK Leadership Foundation supports UK higher education institutions to achieve complex cultural change through its annual Change Academy (CA) programme. This chapter describes the creation of a new collaborative network of academic libraries in the north of England following an intensive cross-institutional planning initiative and presence at the HEA Change Academy Conference and subsequent work in 2010-11 that launched the COLLABORATE! Project and the Northern Collaboration. The process enabled the vision of key individuals to be converted into a tangible entity. The interplay between creative thinking, conceptual activity, teamwork and action is thought to be a constructive way to bring about ideas for achieving complex change. I describe the thinking behind the approach, and how this was achieved at a time of volatility (and opportunity) in higher education.

2 Context

2.1 Drivers for change in higher education

The key drivers for radical and fundamental change in the UK higher education (HE) and HE library sector have been well rehearsed by many recently (Nicholas, 2010; Harper and Corrall, 2011; Kidd, 2012). These changes are underpinned by a raft of UK government reforms arising from a constraining financial climate and the perceived need for additional accountability in the HE system; this is coupled with the desire to give more power to the recipients of higher education, most particularly students and employers.

Notable government proposals now being implemented are contained in the Higher Education White Paper on HE reforms (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2011) the UK Independent Review into Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, the Browne Report (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2010) and the UK Government 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 which forecast a 40% reduction in core funding to the HE sector for taught provision, a sum of £2.9 billion by 2014-15 (HM Treasury, 2010). In addition a complex system of student number controls exists aiming to increase flexibility across the HE market (for example HE delivered by commercial organisations). Consequently institutions have

less certainty than previously about their recruitment outcomes and income levels. At the same time research intensive universities are facing changes to the research funding regime in the UK and will have to make significant efficiency savings as a result of the Wakeham Review (Research Councils UK, 2011). RCUK summarise the situation:

> 'Collectively across the entire research community – in HEIs, institutes as well as research and funding councils – it must be demonstrated that savings have been achieved in order to achieve greater efficiency for the investment of public money. All of the funds saved will remain within the ring fence to be reinvested in science and research'. www.rcuk.ac.uk

In Europe, similar ambitious reforms are on the way, including the Horizon 2020 initiative to 'establish a single strategic framework for Research and Innovation' across Europe (European Commission, 2011).

This calls into question the nature of higher education in the UK where key political messages are that universities must become more effective, offer better value for money and understand their cost base more, whilst maintaining their world reputation for excellence (Universities UK, 2011). Set against the development of significant new mechanisms, such as student charters (Student Charter Group, 2011) and student feedback systems, a revised Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Assurance Agency, 2012), the removal of the tuition fee cap for universities and HE colleges, and the introduction of student finance reform, (including the provision of loans to part time students) advocated by Browne, (op.cit.) the HE landscape looks entirely different in 2012 than it did in 2009 (for an overview of the many changes see Business, Innovation and Skills Committee 2011).

In parallel with these developments is the expectation that higher education institutions (HEIs) will work together more effectively in a competitive environment, (and many are), where shared services (also known as above campus services) will exist on a much larger scale than previously. The UK government is thus encouraging innovation in shared services design, further enabled by proposals to remove the Value Added Tax (VAT) payable on shared services by charitable institutions, as set out in the draft Finance Bill 2012 (Higher Education Funding Council for England, HEFCE, n.d.).

Against this complex backdrop, the challenges present within an academic library setting are doubly significant and are outlined below.

2.2 Challenges for academic libraries

- *A changing student profile*. Given increased tuition fees and the fact students are paying full fees to their institution as opposed to HEIs being funded directly by central government, there is an increased diversity in the range of service requirements in the student offer, which means heightened expectations with potentially less resource.
- *The curriculum*. There is an increase in types of course and range of delivery methods, such as active learning and distance learning, new subjects, work based learning, internationalization of the curriculum and a renewed emphasis on employability across all programmes, which means a variety of learning styles must be accommodated.
- *Organizational structures.* The growing trend for convergence and super-convergence of academic learning support and library services means service

delivery via multi-professional teams is becoming more commonplace (Bulpitt, 2012) also referenced in Chapters 6 and 9.

- *Professional skills and knowledge*. New roles are emerging for supporters of learning including library staff (for example new and emerging learner support roles across the student experience) leading to different staff dispositions and skills that are needed in the new learning environment.
- *Uncertainty.* Financial and political constraints and the changes to government policies, the volatility of the HE market, including the escalating costs of learning content, mean that successful ways of managing in the past are no guide to managing in the future. (see particularly Chapter 1).
- *Performance measurement*. There is an increasing requirement for libraries to demonstrate sustainability, value and impact at an organisational and national level. For example the renewed emphasis in the UK on research, intellectual property assets and knowledge transfer, to deliver UK economic advantage.
- *Technology and social media.* The imperative to harness emergent and fast moving technologies to design innovative services that enthuse, engage and retain students has never been more important. (a key feature of Chapter 7).
- *Shared services*. A renewed emphasis on developing shared services, as an effective way to deliver services in these challenging economic times whether that is for goods or for services is underway (Davies, 2012).

Given the above factors, it follows that higher education institutions (HEIs) and their libraries are facing unprecedented change placing a complex set of demands on strategic library managers. The financial and political imperatives to work beyond one's own institution have become of central concern and occupy much of the thinking in Universities and Colleges and indeed across the public sector. Writing in 2010, Jubb successfully summed up the key challenges facing academic libraries in difficult economic times, concluding:

'If they [academic libraries] are to develop new services or enhance existing ones…, libraries must tackle three key challenges:

- First, they must reduce if not eliminate what is routine in order to make space for new activities, for it is unlikely that additional resources or funding will be available. Outsourcing of what can be done more efficiently or effectively by others is likely to be part of the answer in areas including cataloguing and the hosting of library websites.
- Second, they must ensure that users are fully engaged in the development and implementation of new services.
- Third, they must develop new models of working co-operatively to exploit the resources and expertise of their colleagues in the sector as a whole. A recent project sponsored by SCONUL to develop a business case for shared services for all UK university libraries is a significant example of work of this kind'. (JISC/SCONUL n.d., SCONUL Higher Education Library Technology, n.d.) (Jubb, 2010, 144).

In order to exploit the opportunities and mitigate the risks inherent in this new HE context, a group of twenty seven academic libraries in the north of England (see Northern Collaboration below) agreed to attempt to influence the impact of the new and constrained economic operating environment by identifying options for further co-operation. It was felt that by sharing experience and joint ventures, new models of service delivery could emerge. The Collaboration concluded that complex cultural change such as was envisaged would not be easily achieved as part of 'the day job' and a bid to the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Change Academy programme

would create the time and space to develop realistic and tangible plans: the COLLABORATE! Project. The Change Academy Team would work together over a period of eighteen months concerning themselves with fundamental questions such as what can be achieved by collaborative working juxtaposed with the requirement to remain competitive. I call this dilemma the *collaboration paradox*.

3 The Collaboration Paradox

As demonstrated in the first part of this chapter, the UK Government and the funding council for UK higher education (HEFCE) are clear that universities and colleges must change; they must work closely together to enhance the student experience and be more effective businesses. Academic libraries face similar challenges to their parent institution as they seek to position themselves positively in the market and in supporting their institutional strategic aims. There has been much discussion about possible future scenarios for academic libraries (Curtis, 2011) but there is still uncertainty about whether the future landscape will include the need to collaborate very actively or whether a very competitive landscape will reduce the appetite for collaboration.

The changing conditions mean on the one hand organizations can no longer afford to work in isolation from each other as they seek to maximise efficiency and control costs (developing shared services for example), and on the other hand are becoming more competitive because of UK government student number controls for example. Potentially then higher education institutions and their libraries are becoming less willing to share in order to maintain their market position, which would seem to fly in the face of working cooperatively, (however see Chapter 6 on leadership). All this is happening at a time when HEIs are working very hard to involve and meet the demands of their increasingly vocal customer base.

The collaboration paradox was therefore one of the central tensions that concerned the Change Academy (CA) team seeking to develop new models of service delivery among a diverse set of HEIs and was also the reason why the COLLABORATE! project (to set up a new Collaboration in the North of England) was accepted by the HEA on to the year long CA programme in 2010-11.

4 Library Collaborations in the north of England

To further set the scene I will next outline the academic library collaboration landscape in the north of England.

North West Academic Libraries (NoWAL) was formed in the 1990s from the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Manchester (CALIM) consortia (Blunden-Ellis, 1994) a metropolitan network of HEIs, delivering reciprocal access services, staff development, seeking procurement advantage in a single conurbation, (Manchester) with a philosophy of 'enlightened self interest'.

In early 2000, membership was widened to include higher education colleges, in recognition of the importance of the north-west region and of the UK government's regionalism agenda. Similarly in the north east of England other collaborations were/are active, for example North East and Yorkshire Academic Libraries (NEYAL) and White Rose University Consortium, all indicating the wealth of library collections, expertise and services which deserved to be recognised in 'the north'. NoWAL had particular success and a strong reputation in collaboration and delivering projects, joint procurement, conferences, a high quality staff development programme, and

networking events over a significant period of time. The NC project was keen to build on this expertise.

Indeed the success and confidence of NoWAL and other consortia led to the premise that working in concert across all mission groups in the north of England, in a coherent way had potential advantage. Hence in October 2009, following an informal meeting of interested parties, a commitment was made by 20 plus University Librarians in the North of England, UK, to meet regularly over a period of two years to see if there were opportunities for further collaborative practice building on the successful partnerships already in place; the Northern Collaboration was conceived.

4.1 The Northern Collaboration

The Northern Collaboration (NC) consists of twenty seven academic libraries in the north of England. As mentioned earlier, the view of the group was that joining together to plan the future would lead to even more divergent thinking and new services delivered differently. By generating alternative types of clusters and co-operations strategic benefit for minimum outlay could be achieved. There was also a recognition by members that the changing context of higher education needs different approaches, to assure value for money and to align space, learning resources and support with an ever decreasing unit of resource.

Consequently there was an appetite to harness the collective purpose of all the partners and develop future services in a more imaginative way. 'The North' was felt to be a sensible grouping and a manageable number of institutions that collectively could work together to good effect. In summary the vision is to change the way that academic libraries and learning support services conceive their strategic direction using collaboration as a way to challenge and transform services and find new ways of working.

This early intent was an important commitment positioning the group to maximise their impact on learning, teaching and research and to devise new methods of engaging beyond well-established approaches to library collaboration (good as these are). At one of the early meetings of the NC it became clear that the new and constrained economic operating environment offered both challenges and opportunities for academic libraries and their staff which could be exploited more effectively by sharing of experience and joint ventures and by alignment of our strategies to the increased market forces of higher education. As mentioned earlier, the COLLABORATE! Project was conceived as a way to move this complex agenda forward and a bid to the Change Academy was made to assist with the transition.

5 The Change Academy: COLLABORATE! project

The Change Academy is an annual programme for change managers run by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, (LFHE) both UK publicly funded bodies. The HEA promotes higher education by providing strategic advice and co-ordination for the sector, government and funding bodies and others on policies and practices that will impact upon and enhance the student experience; it aims to facilitate the professional development and increase the professional standing of staff in higher education. The LFHE has been set up to serve the diverse leadership development needs of senior managers in UK Universities and Colleges, sharing and championing good practice in leadership, governance and management.

The proposal to the Change Academy aimed to address directly the sector's strategic priority of enhancement of the student experience, which has been identified as key to their own strategies by all participating institutions and meet the challenging financial imperative. At the same time the development of transformational services models, which are founded in collaborative approaches were central to the philosophy and working practice of the Change Academy team, which consisted of nine of the UK Northern Collaboration institutions:

University of Bradford
University of Cumbria (lead partner)
Edge Hill University
University of Huddersfield
Leeds Metropolitan University
Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)
University of Salford
Teesside University
University of York

It was important to have the flexibility to develop plans and to be able to engage the other Northern Collaboration partners. Therefore the deliverables in the actions plans were themselves subject to change and personalisation by the partners, who it was envisaged would opt in or opt out as needed. The CA team also wanted to capture the way of working required in the increased competitive environment and involve additional stakeholders in partners' operating spheres, especially students and senior university decision makers.

The COLLABORATE! Project goals were to:

1. Identify a range of Federated Library Services whereby a service element or resource might be provided via a partnership to achieve economies of scale:
- What would these shared services look like?
- How could they bring about more cost effective and efficient services using a sustainable model by working together?

2. Assess the implications for leadership and identify new staff roles:
- What will the library job of the future be like if collaboration and partnership are the core objectives?
- What might this mean for professional frameworks, accreditation, structures and workforce planning and patterns?

3. Feed project outcomes into planning, service reviews, budgeting and evaluation:
- How to benchmark and assess collaborative initiatives and shared services?
- How to demonstrate added value and sustainability whilst also enhancing the student experience?

4. Develop a collaborative framework to take advantage of the diversity in the north:
- How to develop services which take account of the digital domain for example image libraries on a regional scale, cross domain solutions using web 2.0?
- How to use existing innovations, for example work done in a collaborative context using emergent technologies such as the pilot work done in 2008 on shared services Library Management Systems?
www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/resourcediscovery/lmsstudy.pdf.

It was against this backdrop that the team (see above) from the Northern Collaboration took part in the year long Change Academy in 2010-2011, after the COLLABORATE! bid to the HEA was successful.

5.1 The Change Academy experience

The Change Academy (www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/change/change_academy) is now in its tenth year and is a supportive yet challenging framework provided for higher education institutions to help them create and achieve their change plans. Successful applicants attend the three day Change Academy conference where experts, tools and techniques are combined with creative thinking tasks that allow change teams to work on their projects and produce an action plan to take back to their own organizations. Most HEIs attending the Change Academy are single institutions, however our collaboration project consisted of potentially 27 institutions; it was therefore seen as innovative, difficult and worthwhile.

The Change Academy process enables creativity by providing teams with the tools, techniques and encouragement for 'co-creation', an idea first developed in the USA (Pittilo, 2005). For example, teams are asked to each prepare for their CA conference by thinking about their conceptions of change and by producing a rich picture of their project that they can share with other teams. A rich picture shows the relationships between parts of the project, the influence of project stakeholders, their connections and motivations for engaging with the project, and environmental detail that will set the forward direction of the desired change. By using a variety of mechanisms, for example, text, drawings, photographs, video, speech bubbles, metaphors the team was able to generate new thinking in an entertaining way (see Monk and Howard (1998) for a full description of the method).

Through this process the team arrived at a consensus about change acknowledging:

- the many overlaps between the personal and the organisational and the importance of understanding the motivators for personal change including the value of personal challenge
- that doing things differently (and doing different things) means knowing what to stop as well as what to start
- the importance of having a different mindset, 'letting go' which will lead to a changed state of mind
- that individuals all have differing responses depending on their outlook; change for some means having fun, being progressive and is developmental and exciting but for others means threat and uncertainty
- that professional values help with transition, for example the motivation to make a difference and improve services in turn helps librarians to deal with change
- that collaborative partnerships offer new markets and new opportunities which should be harnessed, especially where current systems and behaviours are not necessarily working.

A shared view was reached on the importance of having goals whether long term or short term and arising out of the CA process it was agreed that tangible outcomes needed to be defined along with some 'quick wins'.

During the three days of the conference, the team developed the Northern Collaboration 'story', using a variety of techniques (including the rich picture)

encouraged by an expert group of facilitators. The power of generating unlikely questions using word association exercises led to different angles and assumptions. For example, thinking about the financial constraints facing library managers, starting with the statement 'senior management need to fund the Library £xxxx", this was rephrased using a positive opposite approach: 'we can succeed without £xxx'. This freed up thinking and allowed new, more positive ideas to flourish. Giving and receiving feedback was a core part of the Change Academy and one of the activities – the Liquid Café – (Seel, 2006) was an opportunity for each team to circulate their plans round a series of themed tables, and for others to ask questions and record observations which the team could then acknowledge. The team also undertook a social network analysis to ensure that the right audience for the project was engaged at the right time.

The value of the tasks was to get insights into assumptions on change, to work towards a common understanding, to feed into thinking about change categories and construct possible quick wins, to begin the dialogue about the project in a safe environment and to team build. At this stage the team focused on how to engage others in the project and changes given NC institutions are very diverse. Milestones, business models and possible shared service areas were examined to inform the action plan and to inject some realism into the project. By the second day a framework had been developed for the project that could be tested with the Change Academy audience and experts. The team were realistic about whether collaboration would deliver, the need for costing and benchmarking data to build the evidence base for any new service model, and the need for student engagement at a high level to deliver process review and sound future investment. It was agreed that adding value through the project would involve a critical review of current services.

This intensive experience developed individuals' leadership capacity and team working abilities as well as generating the actions needed. A strong concept within which to work as a viable collaboration was created including a possible governance structure. The project received endorsement of approach from the Leadership Foundation and the HEA facilitator, which all groups are assigned as a critical friend. The team also received tips about how to communicate the change proposals and how to involve senior staff and other stakeholders appropriately, which was invaluable. Expressing the concept of new library clusters in a clear way that each NC partner could potentially benefit from, without being prescriptive, was a major turning point which would not have been achieved without participation in the CA process.

5.2 Change Academy Outcomes

It was proposed that the concept and framework for operationalizing the Northern Collaboration could be adopted by all the universities in the north of England, with the ability to opt into the particular services relevant to their own institutions. The proposal was discussed with the wider Northern Collaboration group in October 2010 and it received broad endorsement to move ahead. Those present all agreed that the primary objective should be a cost benefit one: to save money, time and/or effort or do more with the same or less, and that robust business models underpinning shared services would need to be developed.

In July 2011, the Principles of the Northern Collaboration were defined and a governance structure put into place that included an overarching Steering Group, hosting Director Forums twice a year. Central to the *modus operandi* is the desire not to create a large administrative overhead, and so far no subscription has been put into place. The commitment of members to the Northern Collaboration over time has

yet to be proven however early signs are favourable and the NC as an entity has emerged with a strong desire to work in three project areas which are next described.

6 Northern Collaboration: current initiatives

The COLLABORATE! Project developed options for the Northern Collaboration to take forward so that the strategic purpose of the collaboration could be achieved. An extensive list of possible initiatives for the Northern Collaboration was generated by the Change Academy Team during and following the Change Academy Conference. These were scrutinised by the project team using the following criteria:

- the cost savings potential
- the shared services potential
- whether the idea provided an element of competitive advantage for institutions
- the level of attractiveness to a wide range of universities and their clients
- the scaleability across institutions and sectors
- the level of duplication, is it already done better by others?
- the extent to which the idea raised the profile and value of libraries.

As a result three projects are being actively explored, taking a business centred approach. These are as follows:

6.1 Project Strand 1: Infrastructure

The project is to create a presence for the Northern Collaboration which will include a central web site bringing together a range of services under the NC banner. This initiative would bring the benefit of making more effective use of publicly funded collections, but would not save money in itself. It would need a critical mass of institutions to participate. It would probably not be viable as an initiative in its own right but alongside another shared service. There may be issues for some universities who would feel a need to differentiate their services in the new fees world so brand identity of the NC is being be carefully considered. A longer term aim under this strand is to widen access to our libraries for all students of the north and work has commenced with interested partners.

6.2 Project Strand 2: Virtual Enquiry Services

The project is defining and developing a model for library virtual enquiry services which can be shared across the Northern Collaboration. Virtual enquiry services are defined as enquiry services offered via telephone, email or the web, particularly outside core hours of operation when students and staff do not necessarily have ready access to library staff.

It was recognised that each institution will have different needs from the 'service' depending on their aims and current service shape, for example some are converged IT and library services, others not. Currently three scenarios are envisaged around which a virtual service might be developed:

Model 1: Outsourced service, hosted by external independent organisation
Model 2: As model 1 but hosted by member(s) of the Northern Collaboration
Model 3: Shared service with contributions from various institutions in the Northern Collaboration

Core work has begun with mapping current enquiry services across the partners, developing a service specification, designing of referral mechanisms, gathering statistics and benchmarking information on volume and enquiry types, including costings. There will be an emphasis on building a service using web 2.0 tools.

6.3 Project Strand 3: Technical services and procurement

Various elements of technical services are being explored, including:
- Procurement including e-services as area of greatest potential cost savings for example patron driven approaches, but without duplicating at national level
- The sharing of technical processing of books / cataloguing / classification / physical processing
- Shared storage possibilities
- Repositories integration or strategic joining up
- Shared Electronic Resource Management (for example how partners might engage with the new SCONUL service (mentioned earlier)
- Scoping of "Flying" specialists, e.g. archivist, or catalogue/web interface expertise needed for short intense projects or to build capacity in institutions

One benefit of conducting the chosen work strands within a regional as opposed to a national setting is the opportunity for tailored approaches to be taken, that are able to draw on national initiatives and apply them at a more local level. Success measures, timescales and risks are also being plotted for each area which is possibly more realistic on a regional scale.

7 Implications for library leaders: leading collaboratively

Leading the Change Academy on such a complex project on behalf of many prestigious higher education libraries was exciting and daunting at the same time (see also Chapter 6 on leadership). There was a positive outcome and there were few areas that weren't anticipated. However this was made possible because of the range of mission groups in the makeup of the project team which meant the diverse views could be taken into account.

The process provided different perspectives on leadership with the creation of a new 'professional community' that transcends structures in one's own institution or immediate sphere of control as advocated in Chapters 1, 6 and 8. Turn-taking and facilitation of discussions were key requirements of members to ensure joint working where accountabilities are not managerial; inspiring honesty and integrity between team members has been essential to build trust. Personal influence has developed through sharing insights and professional views with team members combined with active listening and being open to new ideas.

From the outset a set of 'rules of engagement for the CA team' were identified: there was agreement to:

- respect the confidentiality of team members and to encourage openness
- be honest (to self and to others)
- identify actions at end of each meeting, and to share tasks and workload
- provide summaries of progress at each meeting
- rotate chairing of project meetings so all team members are equal

- communicate outcomes and process to the Northern Collaboration, and home institutions via a communication protocol/strategy
- acknowledge that disagreements may occur but these will not jeopardise working relationships
- commit to the CA project until complete in 2011-12.

Working with such a diverse group of library directors meant there were varying institutional priorities to consider and the team had to continuously anticipate the impact of their ideas on the wider Northern Collaboration members. Involving stakeholders and managing communications effectively were all part of the work process and significant time was committed to these areas. Selling the idea at one's home institution had to be carefully thought through, and seemed harder once we left the conference. A key action area for members was to test tangibles with senior university colleagues including directors of finance, especially around the changes to the VAT rules for shared services models.

COLLABORATE! members were also aware of the need to get the involvement of staff from contributing institutions. This has been made possible with the setting up of the Northern Collaboration Steering Group and the work of the strands which are engaging a range of staff. The team was also very aware of not duplicating the effort of work being done elsewhere and this shaped the NC work plan. Not all NC members immediately warmed to the Change Academy approach: '*the Change Academy is a bit warm and fluffy and accountants would start in a different place'* and "*we need to move quickly to meet external drivers and identify quick wins'* and '*Shared Services hits all the political and practical drivers'* (comments from a Northern Collaboration meeting).

The team gave expertise freely outside the "normal" way of working, leading to some interesting comparisons and abstraction, for example conceiving the change using metaphors. Debate and discussion was robust and without prejudice; it felt liberating to think 'outside the box'. My role as team leader was to help create the conditions for free thought whilst working with the Change Academy experts. This was needed to provide checks and balances for the group, as the whole thing felt destabilising at times. On the basis that more options are generated by the use of the Change Academy techniques, and the uncertainty felt by the team in the early stages had developed into firm plans by the end, the model appears transferable to other change situations and to other problem solving contexts. The rich pictures that were created, the creative thinking that emerged and the collaborative tools that were tried out, brought out new meaning that then led to deeper questions, and more divergent thinking than would otherwise have been achieved. By the end of the Change Academy conference, having spent dedicated time together, the team was functioning as a mature unit.

8 Conclusions

By collaborating and sharing across the north of England, Universities can enhance their services to students and staff for a sustainable cost. There is further potential for the Northern Collaboration to provide savings *and* create competitive advantage for the region, of particular importance in the current economic climate. Its success will assist academic libraries to meet the current political agenda and demands from parent institutions, maximising the potential for shared services now and in the future.

Gaining the necessary support at University level and staff acceptance for shared approaches is not to be underestimated, and the team are actively working with relevant external agencies on the project work strands. All members of the COLLABORATE! project team have benefited from the active thinking techniques and problem-based emphasis and have forged even stronger connections during the process. The level of trust needed for collaborations and the importance of the quality of those relationships for partnership working is also a learning point and future work will be concentrating on both the business side of COLLABORATE! and the strategic gain of working with diverse sets of institutions.

So far the plans are embryonic, and to some extent aspirational. Also the financial environment for some institutions has eased which means they are currently less concerned with saving money. Taking part in the Change Academy has enabled ideas to be both nurtured and tested releasing the actions required to tackle a complex change across a number of very different institutions. Taking a collaborative approach is therefore seen as the best way to unlock that creativity as well as being the objective of the change itself. Herein lies the transformative potential of the Collaboration Paradox – using these variances actively to engender ambition and engage staff in the partner organisations to be part of the change, as seen through the professional lens of librarianship.

It is argued that during times of uncertainty more ways of thinking about change are needed to reveal viable options and models which inevitably mean self knowledge and management of more complex relationships inside and outside the organisation.

Collaboration is no longer a value-added activity it is core to our institutions, our libraries and our professional practice.

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