

The Social Turn in Literacy Development and Education Strategy: Impact on Library Practice

Connections

Interactions

Relationships

Networks

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Partnerships



The Social Turn in Literacy Development and Education Strategy: Impact on Library Practice

Agenda

- Setting the scene
 - The social turn research programme – Three guiding questions – Defining concepts
- Considering the context
 - Social turns in business, professions, communities, higher ed, libraries and literacy
- Progress and prospects
 - Literacies facilitated by academic libraries – Pedagogies adopted by library teachers
- Implications and impact
 - Professional development – Library management – Service philosophy



Setting the Scene

The social turn research programme

Our point of departure – three guiding questions

Defining concepts:

– social turn – participatory culture – network society

“the recent surge of ... interest in collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with specific social constituencies”

(Bishop, 2006, p. 183)



The Social Turn Research Programme

Investigating frameworks and models to advance thinking and practice for academic libraries in the network society

- State-of-the-art surveys, conceptual overviews and empirical studies
- Application of intellectual capital, social capital and social network concepts, theories and techniques to library practices
- Promotion of relationship building, development and management as a threshold competence for library and information work
- Conceptualisation of the relational librarianship service model of democratic professionalism and values-based practice
- Publication of Biblio-Glossaries for IC concepts and the social model of HE available at www.facetpublishing.co.uk/socialfuture



THE Times Higher Education

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Seven strategies to turn academic libraries into social organisations

For libraries to secure their future on higher education campuses, they must embrace a model that prioritises partnerships and collaboration, says Sheila Corral

SDGs Research Teaching and learning Outreach and communication

Editorial

Alignment, Collaboration and the Social Turn: Our Agenda for the Relational Library

Sheila Corral  

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Our point of departure

“we are seeing more and more **additional literacies** being taught by librarians across all spheres, such as **data literacy**, **financial literacy**, and **maker literacies** ... librarians will begin to take a larger role in such metaliteracy efforts that will help students become not only skilled members of the workforce but also informed and engaged citizens” (ACRL, 2021, p. 15)

Three guiding questions

- How extensive is the range of information and related literacies and learning facilitated or taught by academic librarians?
- Which theories, strategies, methods and frameworks are librarians using with students to develop emergent and established literacies?
- What are the implications of engagement with an expansive literacy agenda for professional development and library management?

The Social Turn \simeq Socially Engaged Practice

“Socially engaged practice describes art that is collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work ... can be associated with activism because it often deals with political issues. Artists who work within this field will often spend much time integrating into the specific community which they wish to help, educate or simply share with” (Tate, n.d. after Bishop, 2006)

- Term used from 1970s-1980s, promoted more widely from 2000s
 - Linked with art, language, literacy, philosophy, politics, STEM and more
- also known as* public turn, community engagement and embodied activism

“a philosophy focused on interaction and social practice” (Gee, 1999)

The Social Turn – as a series of turns or shifts in a much larger turn (writing studies perspective)

1. **Classroom pedagogy** – teaching and learning as collaborative, interactive processes
 2. **Critical theory** – examining and critiquing the signifying practices that shape the formation of subjects and disciplines within the framework of economic, social and political conditions
 3. **Embodied activism** – moving beyond identity-based politics to a more nuanced sense of how the personal and political intersect
- “the shifting social turn ... serves as a powerful lens through which to see [our profession’s] ongoing grappling with socioeconomic and cultural disparities” (Rhodes & Alexander, 2014, p. 482)

The Social Turn – Related Terms and Concepts

Participatory culture

“a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for **creating** and **sharing** one’s creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices” (Jenkins et al. 2006, p. 3)

“People participate through and within **communities**: participatory culture requires us to move beyond a focus on individualized personal experience: it is about an ethos of ‘**doing it together**’ in addition to ‘doing it yourself’ (Jenkins, Ito & boyd, 2016, p. 181)

“Participatory culture shifts the focus of **literacy** from one of individual expression to **community involvement**” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 7)

The Social Turn – Related Terms and Concepts

Network society

“Networks constitute the new **social morphology** of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of **production, experience, power, and culture**” (Castells, 1996, p. 469)

“the key **social structures and activities** are organised around electronically processed **information networks**” (Castells, 2001)

*The Internet provides both the **technological basis** and the **organisational form** – the **network** – for the ‘Information Age’*

“**Literacy skills** for the twenty-first century are skills that enable **participation** in the new **communities** emerging within a **networked society**”
(Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 55)

Considering the Context

Social turns in

- business, professions and communities
- higher education
- academic libraries
- literacy thinking and practice

“The new literacies almost all involve social skills developed through collaboration and networking”
(Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 19)



Social Turns in Business, Professions and Communities

From *The Wealth of Nations* to *The Wealth of Networks*

- Corporate social responsibility
- Business ethics
- Prosumption/produsage/UGC
- Invisible/intellectual assets
- Sustainable development
- Virtual community/online sociality
- Citizen science, journalism, etc.
- Communities of practice
- Participatory culture
- Network society
- Triple bottom line (TBL/3BL/3Es)
- Commons-based peer production
- Democratic professionalism
- Social media/networking services
- Web 2.0 + apomediation
- Crowdsourcing
- Working out loud
- Multicapital frameworks

The Professional as Catalyst of Public Awareness and Competence

Sharing Tasks and Conveying the Value of the Scientific Method (Dzur, 2004, pp. 9, 10)

Social Turns in Higher Ed – Competing Missions/Values?

Entrepreneurial University

(technocratic, expert-based)

- Economic globalisation, Eurocentrism
- Triple helix model (uni-industry-gov)
- Employability learning
- Enterprise/entrepreneurship education
- In-house R&D, commercialisation
- Task-monopoly with applied research and training for technology transfer
- Science parks/business incubators

Academic capitalism (IPR, privatisation, income generation, profit-taking)

Transformative University

(democratic, socially inclusive)

- Widening participation, multiculturalism
- Student lifecycle model
- Lifelong and lifewide learning
- Civic/citizenship education
- Citizen science, open innovation
- Task-sharing with public as co-producer co-creating knowledge for sustainability
- Community building/engagement

Social capital (VFM, public good, regional asset development, not-for-profit)

Social Turns in Academic Libraries – *Personal Help for Learning, Research, Growth, Wellbeing, Success, Identity + Belonging*

- Personal and first-year librarians
- Pre-arrival programs and resources
- Residence outreach and liaisons
- Recreational reading collections
- Affordable textbooks and OERs
- Universal design/disability justice
- Employability LibGuides/toolkits
- Alumni engagement and giving
- Maker spaces and design studios
- Collaboratories and co-working
- Crowdsourcing cultural heritage
- Community portals and archives
- Green library movement and SDGs
- Liberation/decolonisation projects
- Deliberative forums/civic literacy
- Edit-a-thon and datathon events
- Research cafes and SciPop talks
- Multiuse meditation/reflection rooms

“Personal Librarianship aims to foster relationships beyond the point-of-need with a focus on sustained communication” (Resnis & Natale, 2017, p. 144)

Social Turns in Literacy Thinking and Practice

A basic technical skillset

- Reading, writing, oral
- Numeracy (component or supplement)
- Other enabling skills
 - multiple literacies

An applied situated practice

- Universally applicable
 - functional literacy
- Socially and culturally situated
 - new literacy

(UNESCO, 2005)

A conscious learning process

- Individuals making sense of experiences
 - constructivist meaning-making
- Groups transforming their communities
 - critical reflection and interpretation

Enactment and recognition work

- Reading, writing and meaning situated in specific social contexts and Discourses
- Understanding language-in-use (with other practices, ways of thinking, doing, etc.)
 - discourse analysis

The New Literacy Studies and the ‘Social Turn’

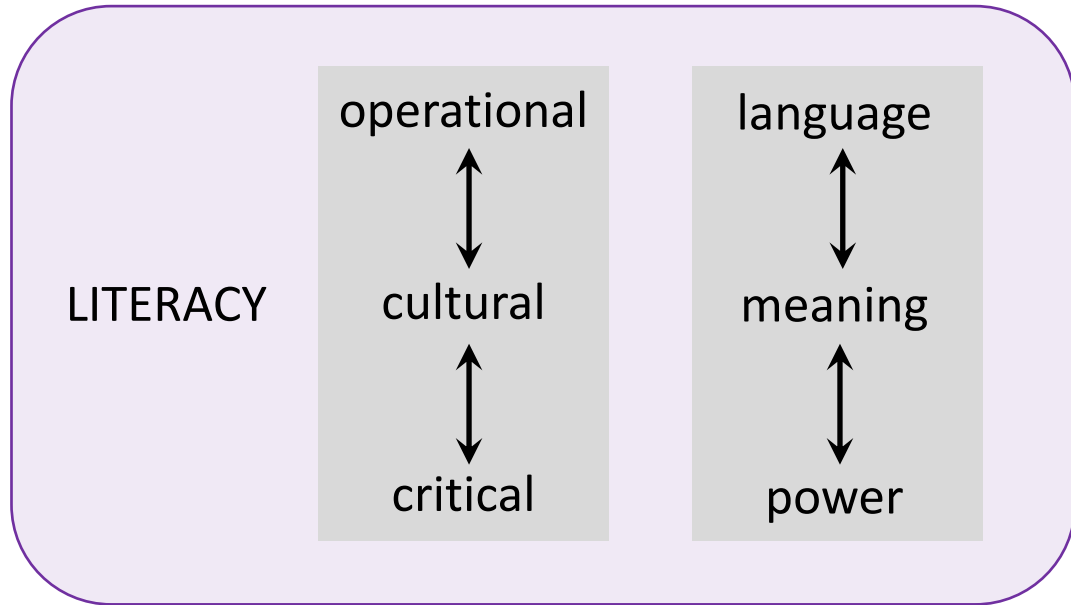
“The New Literacy Studies (NLS) was one movement among many that took part in a larger ‘social turn’ away from a focus on individuals and their ‘private’ minds and towards interaction and social practice.”

“it is striking that the ‘social turn’ and the new capitalism's interest in sociotechnical designing of social practices arose at the same historical juncture (and ... the digital computer was debunked as a theory of mind by the ‘social turn’ movements just as new connectionist/networking computers offered the new capitalism an important new technology for integrating work processes and leveraging knowledge built up out of practice/experience)” (Gee, 1999, pp. 1, 6)

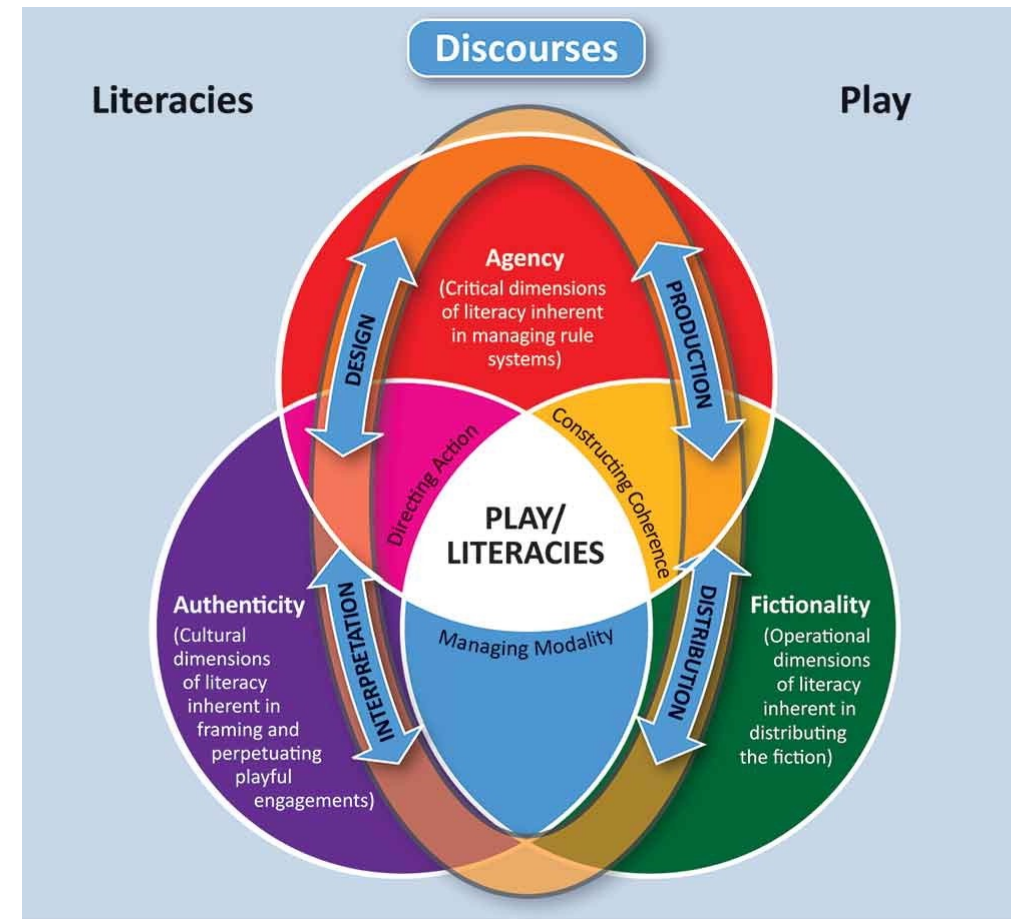
Technical → Critical, Product → Process, Individual → Social

“To be ‘literate’ then does not simply mean having acquired the technical skills to decode and encode signs, but having mastered a set of social practices related to a set of signs which are inevitably plural and diverse” (Archer, 2006, p. 450)

Holistic Models of Literacy



Literacy in 3D: An Integrated Perspective
(Green, 1988; 2002; Green & Beavis, 2012)



Dynamic 3D model of game authorship
(Figure 2 of 3, Colvert, 2020, p. 158)

3 interlocking dimensions and layers: **operational–technical** (communication = skills-based), **cultural–experiential** (meaning = *context-specific* + specific *content*) and **critical–political** (power = reflective + reflexive); *start with the cultural, draw in the critical and operational...*

Progress and Prospects

Literacies taught or facilitated by librarians

❖ Infodemic literacies for living with a pandemic

Emergent education practices of librarians

- Review of findings on social shifts in literacy activities
- Review of findings on social shifts in library pedagogy

“the new media literacies: a set of **cultural competencies** and **social skills** that young people need in the new media landscape”
(Jenkins et al., 2006, p. 4)



32 Literacies Taught/Facilitated by Academic Librarians

Multiliteracies

Tools & Modes (1980s–)

Computer literacy	Information literacy
Network literacy	Media literacy
Technology literacy	Spatial/map literacy
e-Literacy	Visual literacy
Digital literacy	Multimodal literacy

Infoliteracies

Breadth & Depth (1990s–)

Computer & information literacy	Data (information) literacy
Critical literacies	Archival/primary source literacy
Metaliteracy	Privacy literacy
Transliteracy	Copyright literacy
Digital & information literacy	Algorithmic literacy
Indigenous information literacy	

21C literacies

Lifelong & Lifewide (2000s–)

Career information literacy	Quantitative literacy
Academic literacies	Science literacy
Mobile information literacy	Health literacy
Entrepreneurial literacy	Sustainability literacy
Maker literacies	Financial literacy
	Civic literacy

Infodemic Literacies



(after Koltay, 2023, pp. 269-280)



Core and Derived Literacies for Living with a Pandemic



Information Literacy

Information Literacies

- Critical Information Literacy
- Media Literacy Data Literacy
- Map Literacy Visual Literacy
- Media and Information Literacy

(Koltay, 2023, pp. 269-280)

Media Literacy

- Critical Media Literacy
- News Literacy
- News Media Literacy

Data Literacy

- Quantitative Literacy
- Critical Data Literacy
- Critical Big Data Literacy
- Data Infrastructure Literacy
- Data Visualisation Literacy
- Personal Data Literacies
- Privacy Literacy
- FAIRness Literacy

Science Literacy

- Civic Science Literacy
- Digital Media Science Literacy
- Cognitive Science Literacy
- Science Media Literacy
- Critical STEM Literacy

Health Literacy

- Digital Health Literacy
- eHealth Literacy
- Biology and Health Literacy
- Critical Health Literacy

A complex-pluralist Literacy Landscape



COVID-19
Coronavirus

20 Emergent Education Practices of Academic Librarians

- Cognitive and social constructivism
- Co-created learning packages
- Universal design for learning/instruction
- Connectivist learning (social networks)
- Critical library instruction
- Decoding the disciplines
- Living-learning communities
- Community-based/service learning
- Hip-hop and punk pedagogy
- Constructionist learning (maker spaces)
- Studio-based learning (writing centres)
- Culturally relevant teaching
- Asset-based (strengths-based) teaching
- Connected (relational) teaching
- Contemplative practices
- Transparency in Learning and Teaching
- Social justice education
- Trauma-responsive pedagogy
- Anti-racist pedagogy
- Identity-conscious strategies

“librarians need to address the student’s whole self

– mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical” (Loyer, 2018, p. 145)

Review of findings on social shifts in literacy activities

- The expansion of information literacy activities into related literacies has always been part of our practice (and also predates the formal naming of information literacy)
- But the **social focus** has turned – and is continuing to shift – from the **sociotechnical** to the **socioeconomic** in tension with the **sociocultural** in complex-pluralist settings
- Librarians have a vital part to play as “**third-space professionals**” who can “**work alongside academic colleagues to perform translational functions between academic agendas and the interests of external agencies**” and address “**persistent equity gaps**”
- Literacy models should foreground the cultural dimension (for authenticity) and draw in the critical (for agency) and technical (for operationalisation) as needed (for activism)
- Literacy frameworks should be designed “**for education, employment and citizenship**” and enable learners to build **social, cultural, economic, political and moral capital**

(Archer, 2006; Colvert, 2020; Folk, 2022, p. 194; Gee, 1999; Green, 1998; Higdon, 2016; Mawson & Haworth, 2018, p. 101; Rhodes & Alexander, 2014; Whitchurch, 2010, p. 630)

Review of findings on social shifts in library pedagogy

- Educational practices are influenced by **institutional strategies, pedagogical theories, sociocultural change, technological developments** and **political/activist movements**
 - Library pedagogies have evolved from behaviourist, transmissive modes of teaching to more **collaborative, interactive, inclusive** and **participative learner-centred** models
 - Literacy learning can be facilitated via one-shot sessions, credit or non-credit courses, online tutorials and LibGuides, onsite or virtual reference and unplanned encounters
 - Instructional styles are shifting in classrooms, at help desks and around the library from one-size-fits-all “show and go” transactions to customised side-by-side experiences in **“an empowering, collaborative model”** for **“relationship building through discovery”**
 - New 21st-century lifewide literacies for personal, occupational and social wellbeing are typically developed through partnerships of liaison librarians with subject experts
 - STEM literacy often targets pre-college students via complex community partnerships
- (Decker, Givens & Henson, 2017, p. 20; Deineh, Middlemas & Morrison, 2011, p. 6)

Implications and Impact

Implications of the social turn for

- professional development and competency frameworks
- library management, organisation structure and culture

Impact of the social turn on academic library practice

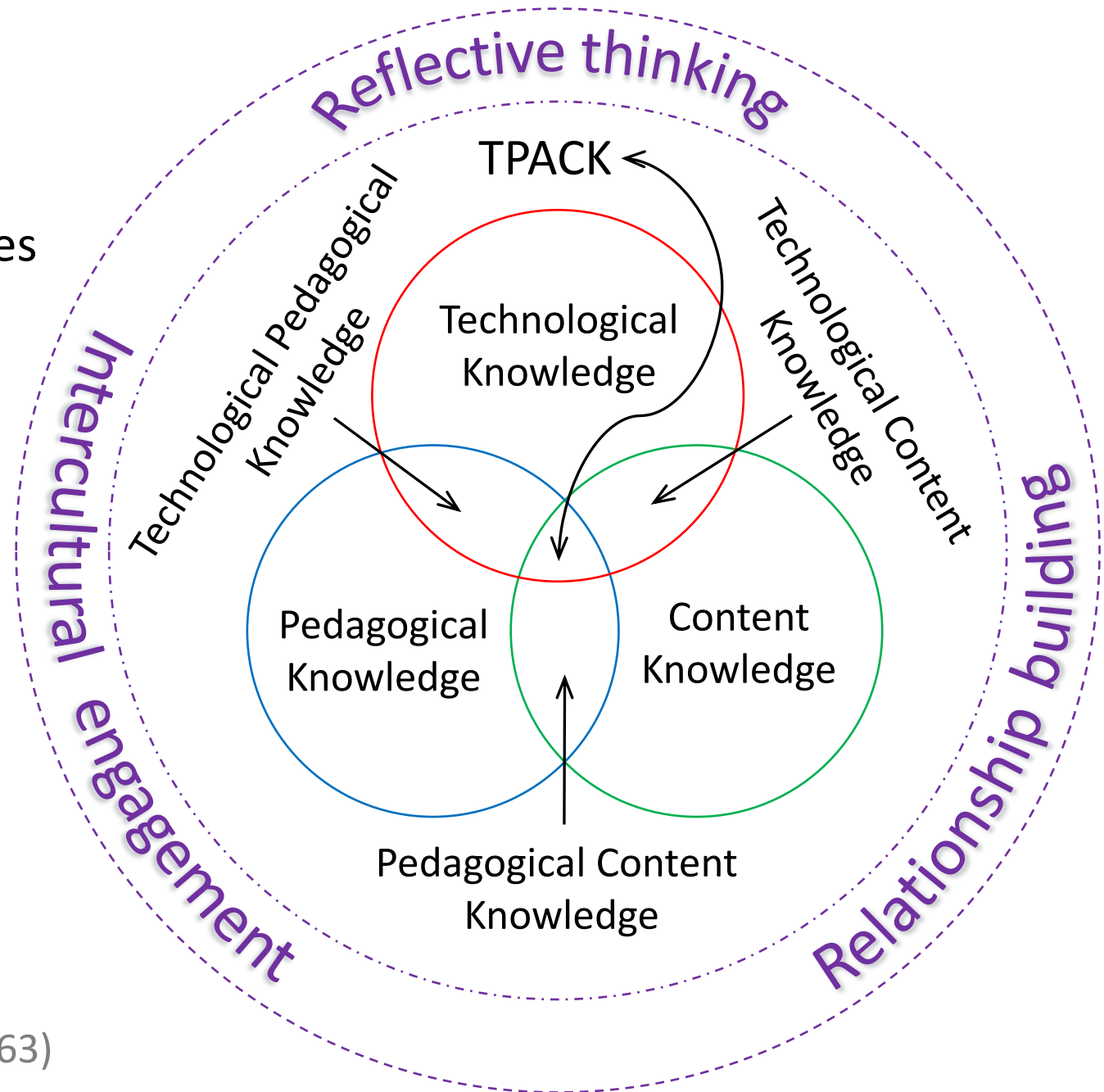
“A **joint team** pairing disciplinary expertise and language/cultural knowledge can make a significant difference in the success of [international] MBA or engineering students”

(Kenney & Li, 2016, p. 9)



Implications for Professional Development

- Teaching 21st century literacies requires a blend of technological, pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK)
- Professional competency frameworks need to be revised and expanded to develop collaborative capacity
- Three key capabilities should be designated **threshold competences**:
 - Relationship management
 - Cultural competence
 - Critical reflection



(Figure adapted from Koehler & Mishra, 2009, p. 63)

Implications for Library Management

- Developing 21st century literacies requires library **organisation designs** that facilitate cross-boundary interdisciplinary and multi-agency **collaborative working** – ideally with library **subject-based teams** aligned to campus structures and supported or led by library **pedagogy specialists** with expertise in ID, ed tech, etc.
- 21st century libraries need management structures and **professional cultures** that promote a collaborative, community-engaged, participatory **service model** – purposefully moving from transactional to relational styles of service and support with improved systems and processes for documenting and **assessing relationships**
- The shared vision of a **diffuse library** as **trusted partner** in learning, teaching and research can only be achieved if the whole organisation buys into relational teamwork

“**roles and responsibilities** ... are changing **from transactional to relational** in many academic libraries” (Kranich et al., 2020, p. 285)

Impact of the Social Turn on Academic Library Practice

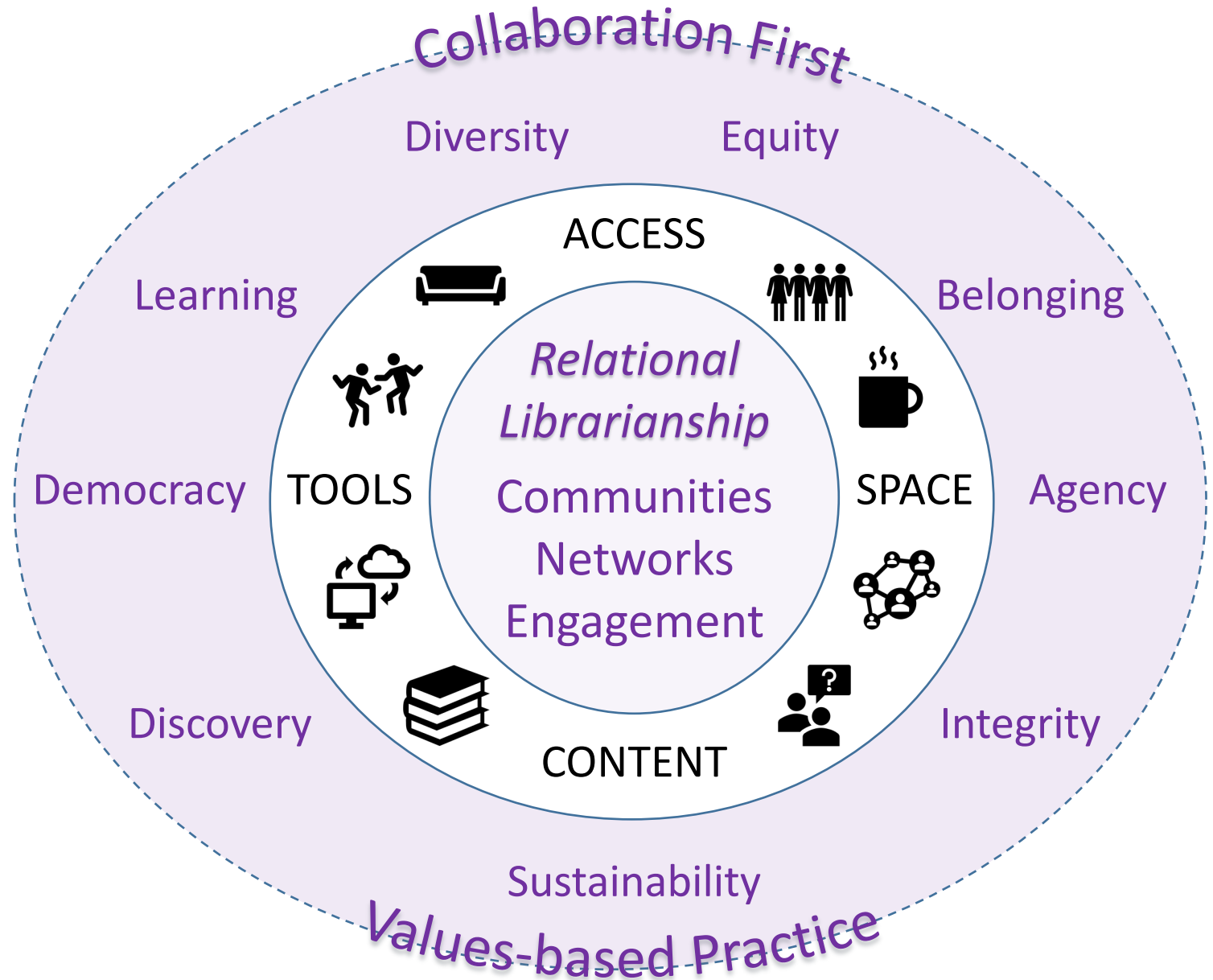
- Academic libraries share a common vision of repositioning from support service to proactive partner and are accordingly “**Moving from collecting to connecting**”
 - collaborating with academics, other professionals and local community agencies
- Library strategies present **collaboration** as the default *modus operandi* but progress on the ground varies significantly across the sector and within individual libraries
 - **UX librarians** and **IL practitioners** are leading the way towards the collaborative, participatory, empowering, more personal and more social style of service needed
- The collaborative relational shift represents a return to traditional assumptions around the unique importance of “**Personal relations between librarians and readers**”
 - updated to reflect the agentic and communal values of 21st century librarianship

(Bell, 2014; Green, 1876/1993, p. 54; Kranich et al., 2020, p. 285; Tyckoson, 2003)

The Social Turn ...

Key takeaways

- Literacy programmes have evolved from personal and academic skills to preparation for professional and social lives
- Library teaching involves more collaborative, relational work with academics, professionals, students and external partners
- IL practitioners are serving as pathfinders and role models for professional transition to the relational library model



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“Libraries are fundamentally **relationship organizations**”
(Town & Kyrillidou, 2013, p. 12)

Questions + Discussion

“our work increasingly revolves around forming **complex relationships** and **ongoing interactions**”
(Mathews, 2014, p. 461)

“The differentiating capacity of the future academic library ... is **personal relationships with academic librarians**”
(Bell, 2014, p. 380)

“reimagining library work in a way that values **relational activity and practice** as highly skilled work” (Douglas & Gadsby, 2019)



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