

FINDING NEW WAYS OF
SERVING REAL NEEDS:
THE FUTURE OF INFORMATION
SERVICES

Paul Sturges

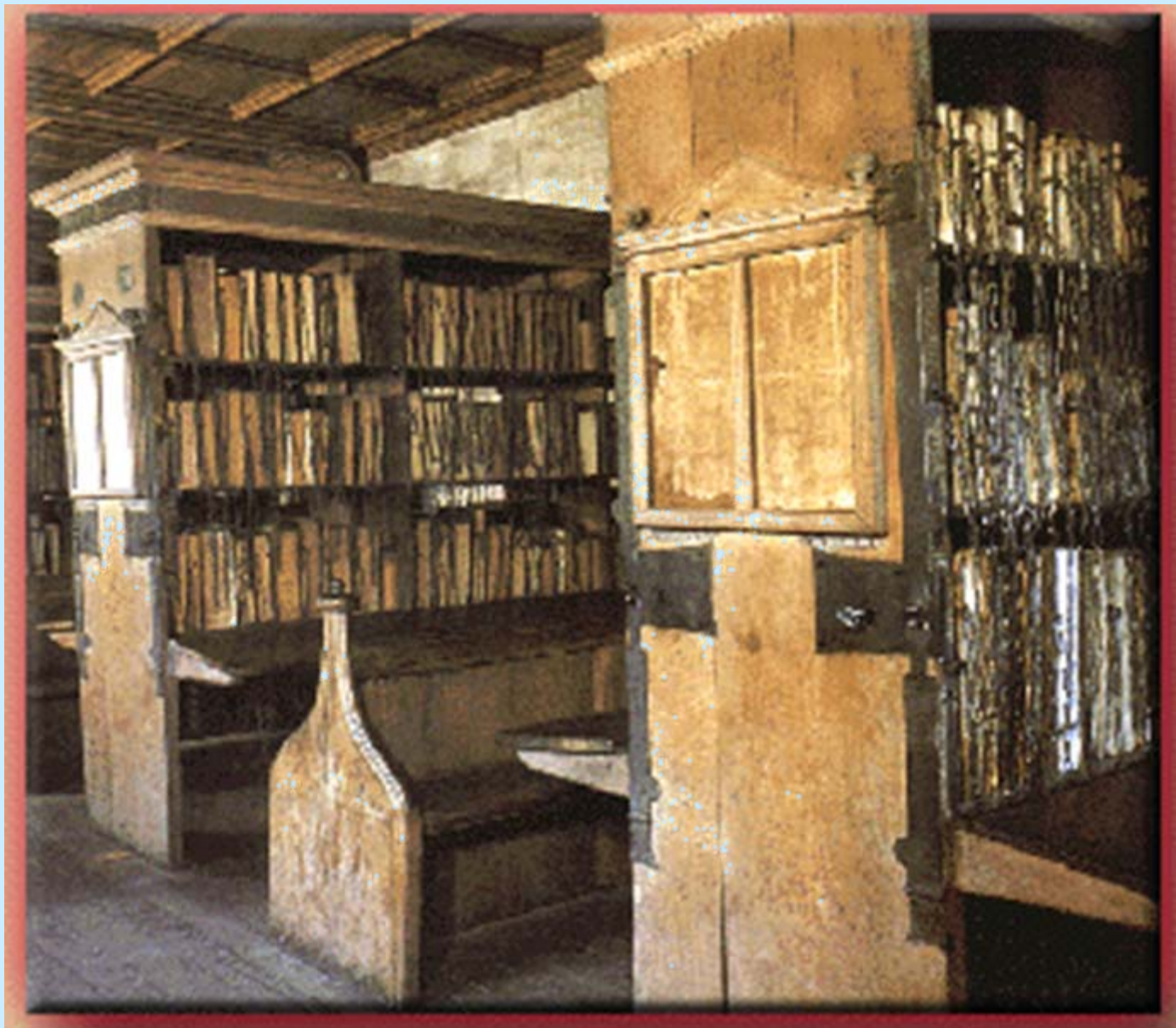
Loughborough University, UK

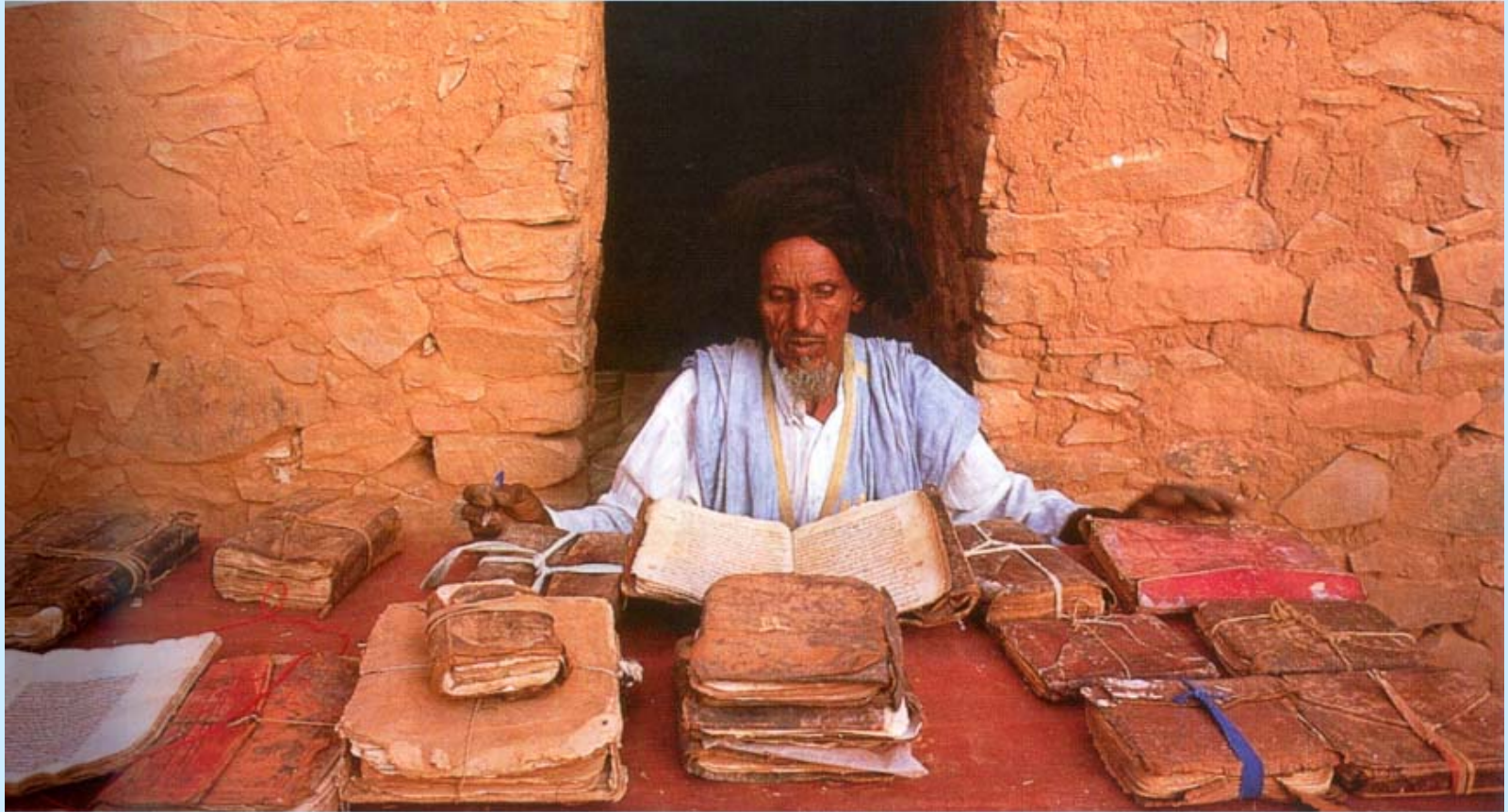
AN APPROACH TO THINKING ABOUT INFORMATION SERVICES

- Two approaches that can help in designing good services for the future are:
 - Looking at the past and identifying what is still useful and what is not
 - Understanding the differences and similarities between societies in different parts of the world

AN EXAMPLE OF INFORMATION SERVICES FROM THE PAST: LIBRARIES

- Librarians were often more concerned about preserving their information than they were about making an information service available to possible users





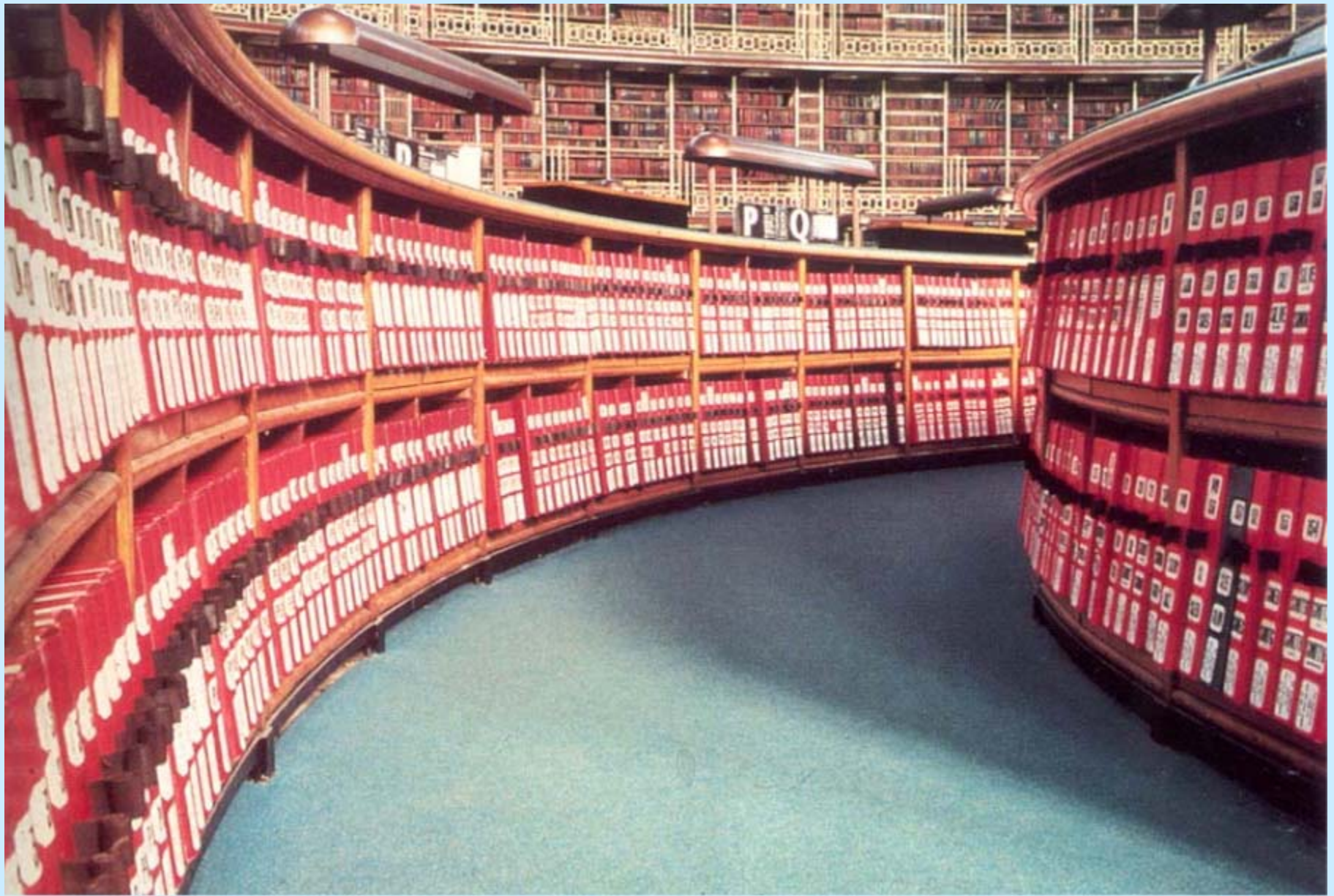
LIBRARIES WERE 'RESPECTABLE'

- Libraries were about reading
- They were about reading 'good books'
- They were about good behaviour
- They were not always friendly or welcoming.



LIBRARIES WERE PROPERLY CATALOGUED

- Librarians saw their job as creating catalogues and bibliographies that would list everything ‘properly’
- Users were expected to find their way through these catalogues, so they could ask for the information they wanted.



LIBRARIES WERE MONUMENTS

- Libraries were sometimes built as cultural statements, rather than as useful and accessible places
- The size and architecture could be more important than the function of the library



SUGGESTED PRINCIPLES FOR AN INFORMATION SERVICE FOR THE FUTURE

- People want information brought to them
- People's culture must be respected
- People learn in different ways
- People are sociable

PEOPLE WANT INFORMATION BROUGHT TO THEM

- The idea that you can just collect information together and people will come to it is very often wrong
 - People may not be willing to do this
 - They may be too far away to do it
- Information has to be taken or sent to people by technology, suitable transport or to suitable places like community centres









PEOPLE'S CULTURE MUST BE RESPECTED

- People's culture may be communicated by song, dance or visual arts. Print cannot be expected to take over immediately
- People's knowledge may not fit comfortably into the European scientific and philosophical tradition
- Communities that have distinctive beliefs (like believing in demons) still deserve respect, and information resources that relate to community norms







PEOPLE LEARN IN DIFFERENT WAYS

- Some people learn by reading, others by listening and talking, others through the arts
- Some people study best standing up, others prefer to sit down (some even prefer to lie down)
- Some people want a quiet environment, others like to listen to music, or are happy with noise and movement around them











PEOPLE ARE SOCIABLE

- Although some people may need to do their reading and study in quiet places, many people are happiest in sociable places
- Successful libraries can be more like a café than a traditional library
- Some of the earliest public reading places were eighteenth century coffee houses



CAFES IN LIBRARIES

- Some academic and public libraries now have a mixture of different spaces, some quiet, some more sociable
- It is becoming common to have a café in the library
- Loughborough University has done this and the café is so popular it has been tripled in size
- The café might look like this



A CAFÉ AT THE CENTRE OF THE LIBRARY

- A new library in the city of Zadar, Croatia, used a building with a courtyard
- The courtyard is a café (or performance and cultural space)
- The café is at the centre with a modern library around it.
- Zadar City Library, Croatia
www.gkzd.hr/new/en/html/users/datum_.html







CONCLUSIONS

- Providing information services for the future requires us to learn from the past, which may mean discarding past examples
- We need to look at how people behave, what they need and what they want, in the specific society where we are working
- The information institutions that we design on this basis may look very unfamiliar, but they are likely to be more successful