Why change a good thing?
Change is inevitable.

Some things should never change.

Does that have to be a contradiction?

For more than 150 years, UK libraries have been places of discovery, transformation and community. Yet, as we all know, the Internet has become the primary destination for information seekers. Libraries need to bridge this divide while maintaining a role at the centre of community activity and information.

In this new world, we’ll need to make changes. But we also need to define those things that we should not change because they define the values that make libraries a vital part of our communities, our culture and our lives.

As a worldwide, membership-driven organisation, OCLC has the benefit of being managed, led and advised by the libraries we serve. Today, we work with libraries all over the UK to connect users to the world’s information, giving public libraries the tools they need to deliver exceptional service in this changing environment.

From cataloguing and reference services to interlibrary loan and eContent delivery, OCLC provides many of the products that public libraries need to meet the demands of these changing times. Member libraries provide us with feedback and ideas about how to constantly improve our suite of services and our overall direction.

Idea Stores are helping UK libraries and users navigate change, combining the best of traditional library offerings with technology services and lifelong learning opportunities. Aileen Caskie, resident of Tower Hamlets and a user of the Idea Stores, says:
Getting broadband Internet access, information services and help from knowledgeable librarians at the Idea Store helped me immeasurably during a job search. Everything I needed was there in one place.
Where change meets tradition

OCLC has worked with libraries for years to meet these challenges with services like UnityUK and Enquire. And we’re deploying major Web platforms like WorldCat.org and WorldCat Local to connect libraries, users and information in more ways than ever. The ability to make personal, meaningful connections is something that libraries can’t afford to change, and shouldn’t.

Enquire is a great example of how OCLC is working with libraries to help users at their point of need. One of three People’s Network services commissioned by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), Enquire is a virtual reference service that delivers live assistance to information seekers via Internet chat. Run by libraries in partnership with OCLC, the service gives public library users access to a cooperative network of librarians who answer questions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Libraries the length and breadth of Britain are participating, and are also providing information for the Yahoo! Answers service. Over 70% of answers provided by Enquire librarians are ranked “best” by the users of Yahoo! Answers.

“Enquire is an excellent way for libraries to offer support and assistance to people who are having trouble sifting through the avalanche of information available on the Web.”

Kevin Crompton, Chief Executive, Luton Borough Council
Another example of how collaboration is benefiting libraries throughout the country is UnityUK, the first nationwide network for resource sharing. Fully 70% of public libraries participate in the system, increasing access to more than 37 million holdings at over 400 locations. Provided by OCLC in partnership with The Combined Regions (TCR), UnityUK demonstrates the kind of success that follows from cooperation on a grand scale.

UnityUK has benefited our customers in Newcastle because of the depth and quality of the information available, all in one place, quick and easy to use and very accessible.

Eileen Burt, Senior Library and Information Manager (Central Services) for the City Library in Princess Square, Newcastle upon Tyne

Materials in UnityUK will get even more visibility later this year when its holdings are added to WorldCat, OCLC’s catalogue of over one billion library items. WorldCat, which began decades ago as a union catalogue, now incorporates products and features that connect the materials of 69,000 libraries worldwide. It is one of the world’s best examples of how cooperation can lead to innovation, cost savings and better service.

As more and more libraries, organisations, national collections and publishers contribute to WorldCat, related services from OCLC are becoming “destinations” for library information on the Web. Many member libraries, for example, choose to promote their materials on WorldCat.org, the OCLC Web discovery portal. This service—free to end users—provides a compelling experience for library discovery. To keep up with ever-changing expectations, OCLC performs regular updates, adds new features and improves the user interface on a regular basis. Extensive, ongoing usability testing ensures that the service meets the expectations of Web users.

WorldCat.org gives users access to the more than 100 million bibliographic records in WorldCat, representing more than one billion items in 112 countries and 470 languages. And strategic partnerships with key sites such as Google, Facebook and Yahoo! help promote materials in places outside the traditional library environment, helping users find materials as part of their daily Internet experience.

For a more localised view, WorldCat Local provides a version of WorldCat.org that each and every library can literally “switch on” on top of their own library catalogues, allowing libraries to take advantage of the compelling nature of the WorldCat.org environment. One search box replaces multiple interfaces, making the “discovery-to-delivery” process even smoother.
Cutting-edge research

No one can say with certainty what the future will bring. But we can make choices based on solid research combined with a vision toward productive change. Our ongoing industry research is augmented by specific OCLC membership reports. These book-length studies provide in-depth insight and understanding into issues and trends that affect librarianship. The most recent of these reports is From Awareness to Funding: A study of library support in America, funded by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Among the findings from the report:

- Library funding support is only marginally related to library visitation
- Perceptions of librarians are an important predictor of library funding support
- Users who see the library as a ‘transformational’ force as opposed to an ‘informational’ source are more likely to increase taxes in its support.

OCLC will be conducting additional research on this topic to better understand the connections between user attitudes and library support.

I think the report is particularly interesting in its segmentation of library supporters, and analysis of the views of the different segments. I think many of these segments will have parallels in the UK and other countries.

David Bradbury, Director of Libraries, Archives and Guildhall Art Gallery at the Guildhall Library, and OCLC Members Council delegate

To download a full copy of the report, please visit: www.oclc.org/reports/funding/
What does the future look like to you?

Today OCLC works closely with hundreds of public libraries. Our goal is to strengthen your ability to deliver information, while enhancing your place as the centre of community learning. We can always do more, improving on strong achievements to date, if we can engage directly with libraries and their representative bodies to better understand forthcoming challenges. OCLC has a governance structure that consists of libraries as members—they tell us what the needs of the library community are and we respond.

We want to ensure that as a truly representative organisation, UK public libraries have a voice. Any library that today works with OCLC on any of the aforementioned services is entitled to membership in OCLC and we would welcome the opportunity to engage directly with you to discuss further what membership can mean for your library. Get in touch today by contacting uk@oclc.org to find out more about the value of being a member of OCLC, and how you can get involved.
OCLC has a variety of products and services to help your public library keep up with the changes in our digital age.

**UnityUK**: Leading-edge functionality for union catalogue management, cross-database searching, holdings and item location, interlibrary loans and resource sharing.

**Dewey® Services**: Dewey Decimal Classification® system in print and Web editions.

**CILLA**: Co-operative of Indic Language Library Authorities.

**Polish List**: Expert help delivering new language materials to support the Polish community.

**NetLibrary® eBooks**: More than 150,000 frontlist, full-text eBooks on a variety of topics.

**NetLibrary eAudiobooks**: More than 4,700 eAudiobook titles covering 30+ categories.

**CAMIO®**: Catalog of Art Museum Images Online; 95,000 images, rights-cleared for educational use.

**CONTENTdm®**: Flexible software solution for managing digital collections.

**Enquire**: A collaborative, real-time, 24/7 digital reference service provided collaboratively by UK librarians. An integrated approach to information delivery, encouraging digital citizenship.

**WorldCat®**: The premier database of library content. WorldCat holds 100 million bibliographic records that represent more than one billion items owned by member libraries. It encompasses 470 languages and all formats, including rapidly growing numbers of electronic resources and digital objects.

**WorldCat.org**: A platform for broad, Web-scale discovery and delivery of library resources.

**WorldCat Local**: A localised version of the WorldCat.org platform.

**WorldCat Cataloguing Partners**: Improves cataloguing efficiency by reducing time your staff spends editing records, handling titles and searching for records on multiple systems.

**WorldCat Registry**: A free Web registry that lets libraries centralise the management of data that describes institutional identity, services, relationships and more.

**WorldCat Selection**: Streamlines the materials selection process, saves staff time and makes materials available to users more quickly.

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