Recently, Matt Pickles at the University of Oxford, posted a piece on Medium entitled "How do you design the library of the future?" In it, he attempts to explain how, despite the widespread availability of information on the Internet, libraries seem to be busier than ever. His article is really about the library as a space, which is a hot topic. Pickles quotes Dr. Christine Madsen, Head of Digital Programmes at Oxford, whose doctoral thesis analyzed how digitization is changing the relationship between a scholar and their library. She conjures the image of the Library of Celsus (135AD, Ephesus, Turkey), where the staff would arrange accommodations, food, and essentially a gym for the scholars who traveled long distances to visit. Madsen wrote:

'We need to return to the original purpose of the library, which is to support all the various needs of the scholar and provide him or her with a place to come up with ideas and make breakthroughs that would not otherwise have happened.'

This type of thinking has been on my mind a lot lately. My background as a librarian is with special collections and archives, followed by over a decade of experience with digital projects and programs on a large campus of a research university. In January, I
switched gears and am now heading a small Penn State campus library. Our total enrollment is approximately 700 undergraduate students, and we have a small faculty. For the first time in years, I am on the front lines, and observing every day how our students, faculty, and staff seem to be using the library, and envisioning ways to change the space to better accommodate their needs. Our library building is relatively new - it opened in 2008 and is one of the more modern spaces on our campus. However, many things that were considered necessary less than a decade ago already seem quaint or outdated. My colleagues and I have already implemented small changes and are brainstorming new ways to change things around. I suppose we’re carrying out our own informal ethnographic study. I’ve started to categorize all of these different functions and have been trying to think about which should rise to the top. Recently, "bossladywrites" wrote something in a post entitled "The Contentious Job of the Library Directory" that resonated with me. The quote is addressed to faculty, but I feel it represents my philosophy about how our library should function: ...what we’d really love to do is help your students do better work, think critically, and become informed citizens of their communities. We want to help you form students into thinkers, doers, and, sometimes, scholars.

With that in mind, here are just a few of the roles I see our library playing today, this year, in the immediate future.

**Library as Place of Research**
Almost all the research in our library is conducted on computers. We have 40 computers in a library that only contains 30,000 physical volumes and is 7,600 square feet. Students who ask us for detailed reference assistance is rare. Can we change this?

**Library as Academic Support**
Our library provides various types of academic support to students and faculty. We make a point of placing textbooks on reserve, and hold training sessions when we learn of new technologies that might enhance teaching and learning (Box and Doceri are two examples)

**Library as a Place for Group Study**
We have three official group study rooms and one conference room, all of which are usually heavily utilized during the semester. We also have an instructional lab which is occupied by groups when not being used for classes. We have several group study tables
and just ordered one more. One thing I have not observed on our campus is heavy use of the "comfy" sofas and chairs. This surprises me, because we are a commuter campus, and in other universities I've observed lots of sleeping on those popular pieces of furniture. I have to wonder if the bright light and open space of our facility just does not lend itself to napping.

**Library as Entertainment Center**
Our DVD collection is varied and interesting, with a wide selection of popular and educational titles. Currently, they are stored behind our circulation desk, for the purposes of security, I suppose, although I would love to come up with a way to allow people to easily browse the titles. We will let students come behind the desk and browse the wall of DVDs, but this seems like a silly barrier. Originally there was a flat screen television mounted into the wall at the front of the library, at sort of knee level to match the low comfy chairs. The television was attached to a cable box. We have decommissioned the cable, which no one ever used or asked for, and are planning on repurposing the television into part of a mobile media cart.

**Library as Coffee Shop**
My colleague, Megan Mac Gregor, conceived "Brain Boost" as a time to feed students snacks, coffee and cocoa in the week leading up to finals. We have a table set out with hot coffee, hot water, and this year we provided an assortment of Nutri-Grain bars, Krispy Kreme donuts, and candy. In addition, I contributed an espresso machine and a few daring souls showed up regularly every morning to down a shot. People love Brain Boost. The students went through 96 donuts and over 100 Nutri-Grain bars. And trust me, there could have been more. Originally, our building was supposed to have a cafe on the first floor where the classrooms are located. It is instead a window that I believe opens occasionally during evenings to dispense snacks - sort of like a glorified vending machine. I wish we could always have free coffee and snacks for our students. I realize this probably would not scale in a practical way on larger campuses, but it seems like such a simple and relatively inexpensive way to make people so incredibly happy.

**Library as Post Office**
People ask us for stamps all the time. There is no post office on campus and no public transportation, which makes getting around especially difficult for some of our international students. I have been looking into getting stamps printed with our logo. I
can't explain it, but it kind of breaks my heart every time I have to turn someone away over a 49 cent stamp.

**Library as Kinko's**  
Our campus offers free printing to students. The main printer for the library is located directly outside of my office. It is used all of the time. One of our biggest expenses is printer toner. I don't mind. I have not observed wastefulness, and I have not observed frivolous use of the printer. We also have an antique photocopy machine that still takes dimes and that I am hoping passes quietly in its sleep one of these days. It has its own unique cubicle fence, built into the floor. Our patron scanner is not very useful for patrons, and I am in the market for a good book scanner to replace the photocopy machine. But what to do with the photocopier cubicle?

**Library as Exhibit Space**  
There is an wall-mounted exhibit case in the front of the library that can be viewed from the inside or the outside. My colleague Megan keeps it interesting year-round. We are exploring ideas to make the exhibits tie into other campus events and courses, and also into expanding the "exhibit" aspects to encompass the rest of the library space. Currently, we're mounting the top posters from our campus's Undergraduate Research Day on top of the book shelving. Our high cathedral ceilings make this possible. As I sit here writing, I've observed two students walk by and actually slow down to look up at the posters. Success! We have other ideas for combining programs with products that can be used to decorate our large windows, and a special secret idea for a winter display that will just be really, really neat if we can pull it off.

**Library as a MakerSpace**  
Tied to the exhibits is the idea of bringing more creativity into the library. We have jumped on the bandwagon and purchased a 3D printer. It hasn't arrived yet. But we also have some projects in the works with our Engineering faculty to actually build a 3D printer from a kit, and also to experiment with several different brands of printers. This campus has a heavy technology focus, and somehow it feels responsible to learn how circuits work. The problem is that we do not really have a good space to set aside for this type of work. Our library has an open floorplan and I am hesitant to appropriate any study rooms. Right now, we're thinking of taking over the comfy-chair area in the front of the building. No one really uses it, and the lack of walls could be a good thing at first - we want people to enter the library and ask "What is that?"
Library as Playground
We bought toys. Tinker Toys. Magna-Tiles. Mini Spheres. Not only are they bright and eye-catching, but people actually use them. We’re thinking about mounting a marble run on the wall. Our goal is not to turn the library into a loud, chaotic place, but rather to provide gadgets and tools that people feel comfortable using. Things that might inspire ideas or just allow people to meditate away from their work for a while.

Conclusions?
I could probably come up with a dozen more categorizations. The key is not to be afraid to try new things. Every institution and every library has to find their own path. For us, it’s obvious that certain things are not appealing to our community. Our "Casual Reading" collection sits generally untouched, so we reduced its size. No one cared about the cable television, so we stopped paying for it. One range of periodical shelving will probably be repurposed to hold our fledgling MakerSpace supplies. The loaner iPads are just not popular, but headsets are in demand. Students like the Magna-Tiles and Tinker Toys. I am comfortable with these changes. We still provide all the traditional library services - instruction, outreach, reference, collection development. I’d be curious to hear what kinds of small changes others have made that have made an impact in your library spaces. Things that make it feel uniquely 2015.