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# Authentic leadership: a personal and career journey

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# Am I an Imposter?

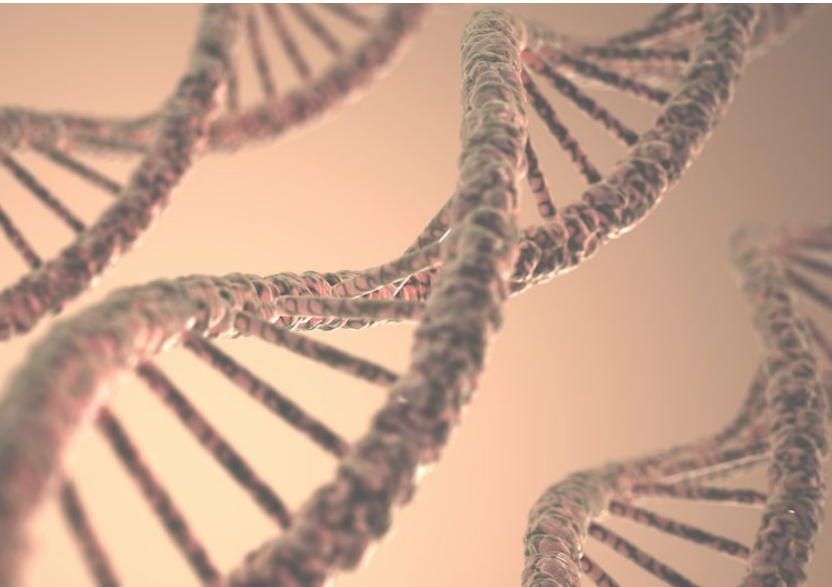


This will be a personal talk.

# 1994

I was around 13 years old

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First exposure to a large  
national library

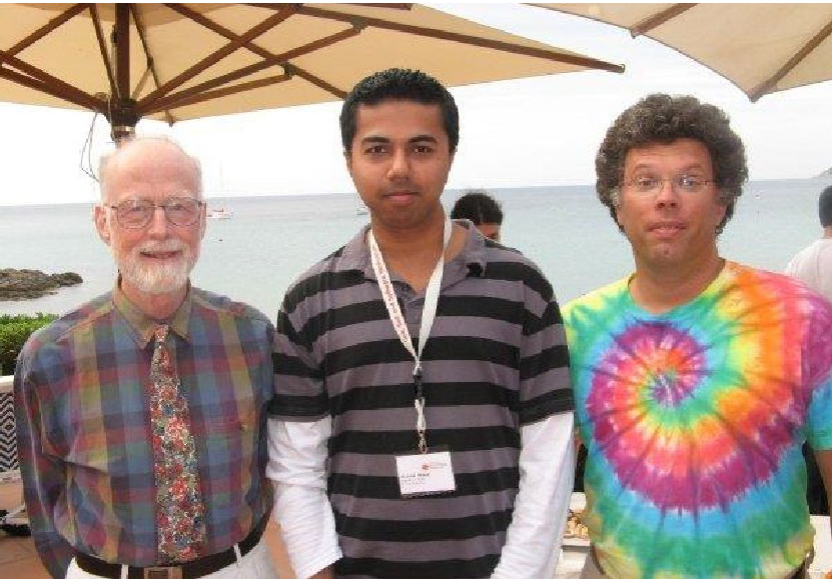


Point of reference – Libraries ran in the genes.

# 2006

First experience ever of travelling and studying abroad

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University of Birmingham



Point of reference – Leaders in your field or in general are at their core, just people



# 2007 – 2009

Move to Oxford and Libraries in my world!

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Lesson 1 – Never say never to any opportunity in life.

# 2009

Difficult academic decision but best life decision

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Left my PhD  
Got married  
Looking for a proper job



Lesson 2 – Make difficult decisions in life. You go through a tough time but it gives you resilience.

Lesson 3 – Don't let peer pressure persuade you, carve your own career pathway in your area of interest/passion.



# 2010

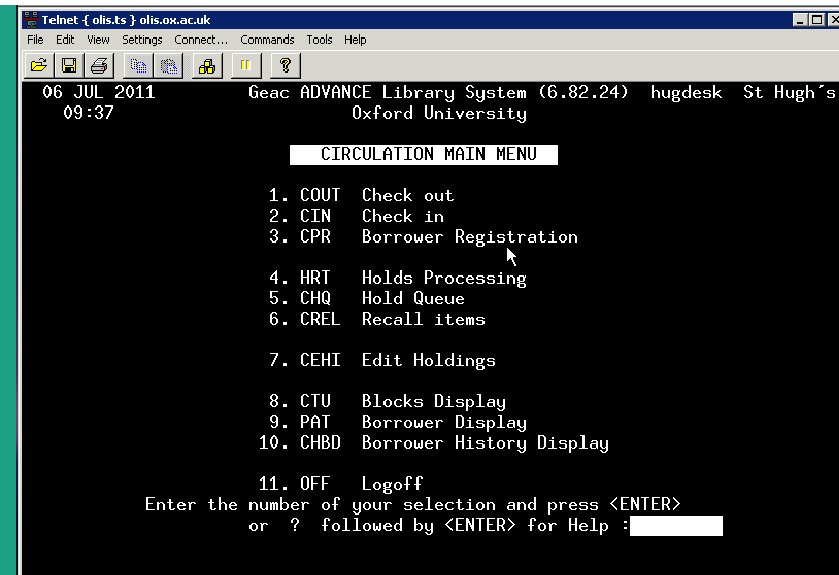
My first real job and my first ally!

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## Head of SERS

## Geac Advance to Aleph & Primo Migration



Lesson 4 – Sometimes support and allyship comes from where you least expect it.

# 2010 – 2013

Oxford – Love and Frustration relationship!

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Stress without  
major responsibility

Really expensive!



Lesson 5 – Make horizontal change if it makes sense.

Lesson 6 – Let others support you, especially your close allies.

Lesson 7 – Think beyond your organisational unit, develop institutional and external profile.



# 2013 – 2018

My first proper leadership role

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Moved to Lancaster  
University Library

Head of Digital Innovation  
(& eventually) Research



Lesson 8 – When an opportunity comes, grab it with passion and give it your best shot. I was thrown in the deep end quickly.

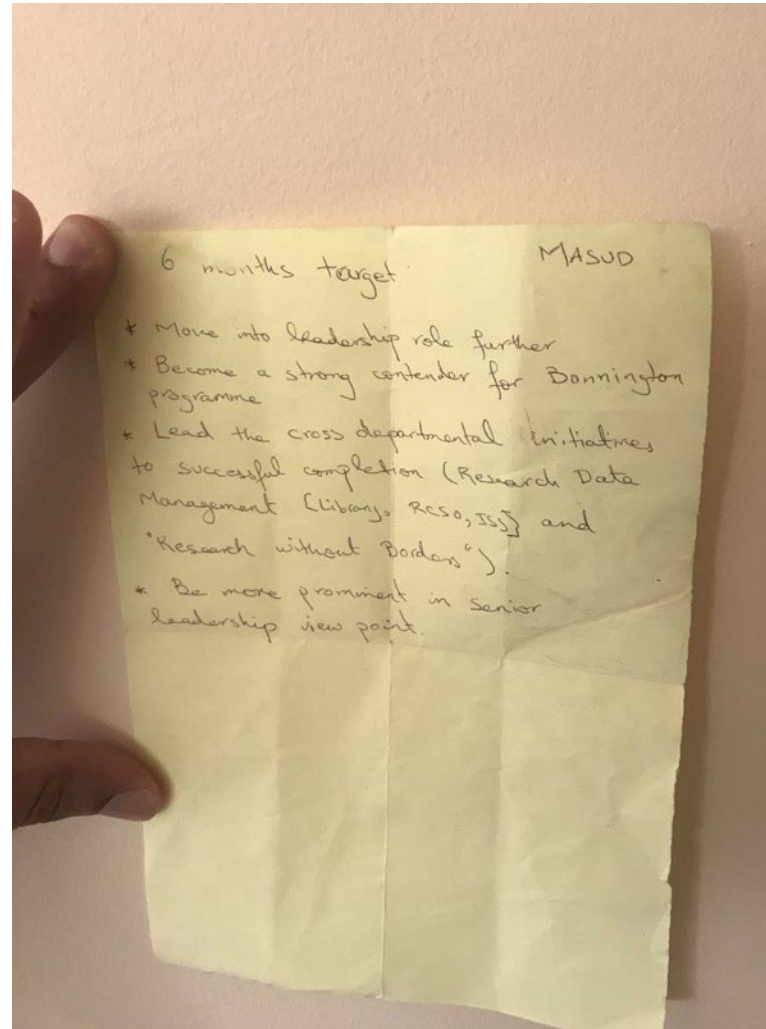
Lesson 9 – Have/develop allies. Seek as much support as possible, internally and externally.

Lesson 10 – To achieve something new and to achieve it well, let go of your existing specialisms. Not as easy as it sounds!

# 2013

Set goals early on in your journey

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6 months target

MASUD

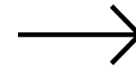
- \* Move into leadership role further
- \* Become a strong contender for Donnington programme
- \* Lead the cross departmental initiatives to successful completion (Research Data Management [Library, Reso, ISS] and "Research without Borders").
- \* Be more prominent in senior leadership view point.

# 2013 – 2018

## Personal Development Phase

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Deploy two most powerful 3 word sentences in leadership  
(in my opinion)



I was wrong  
I need help

Management Development Programme

Internal & External Mentors (2 each)

Bonington Leadership Programme

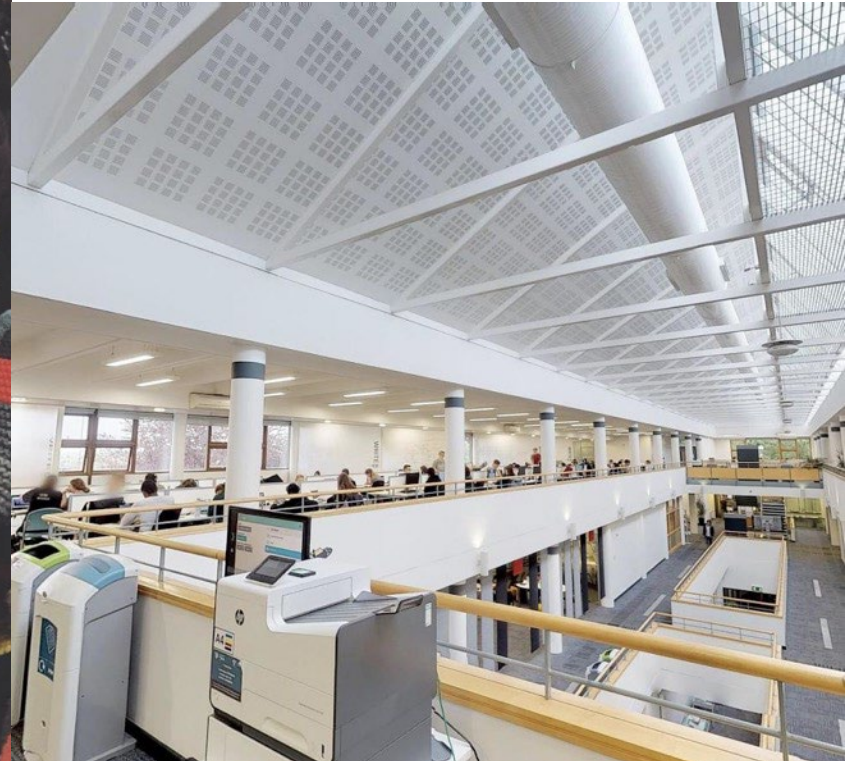
Lesson 11 – Be pro-active in developing relevant networks & connections. Apart from your key allies, no one else will do this for you.



# 2017 – 2018

## Major life incidents

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Point of reference – Reflection around Christmas 2017 and a major move – new baby, new job, new house.

# 2018 – 2022

## Becoming a University Librarian (twice)

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Does it feel different?

It is a lonely job!

Steep learning curve first time

Be authentic to who you are



Lesson 13 – Change the definition of success, both in terms of what it means to you but also in terms of timescales.

Lesson 14 – Express vulnerability. You don't have all the answers and expressing that fact makes you an authentic leader. People connect with you and respect you more.

Lesson 15 – Institutional leader first, then Library leader.



# 2018 - 2022

York and Leeds

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Be curious

A radical candour approach

Your team is your success

Elevation & Leadership styles



Lesson 16 – For best outcomes, deploy radical candour. A great introduction is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLBDkz0TwLM>

Lesson 17 – Mindset shift – I had to shift my mindset quickly particularly with finances.

Lesson 18 – Servant leadership model doesn't always work. I have shifted my style to be more decisive, particularly during pandemic.



# 2016 – 2023

## The RLUK journey

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The leadership journey is not just internal, it is about the sector as well

Joined RLUK board in 2018, and led on Digital Scholarship and Digital Shift strands of the strategy.

Stood for vice-chair in 2021, and will become chair in 2023.

RLUK has acted as a network of friends and peers who are here for each other.

RLUK has also given a great opportunity to expand horizons, particularly through IARLA.

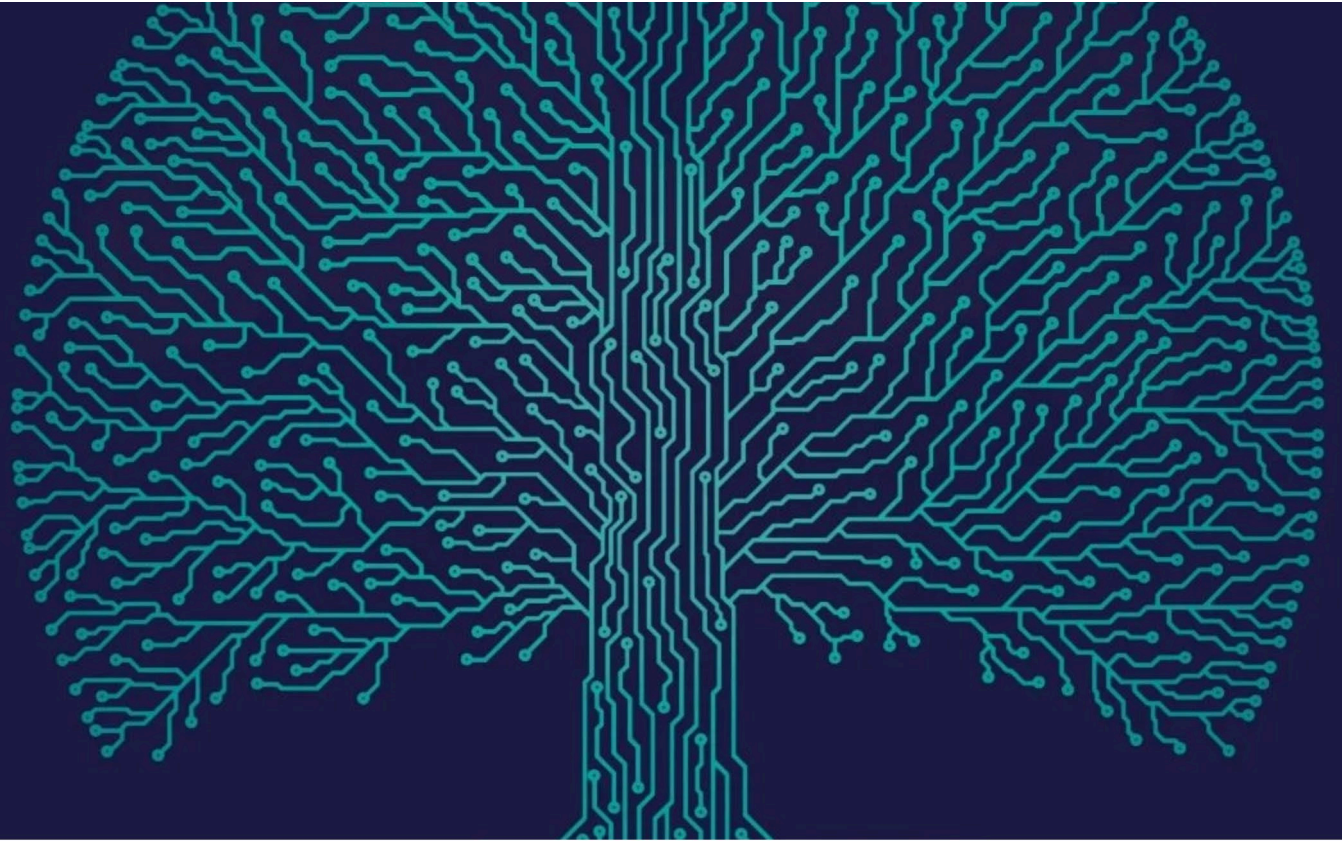
It has allowed me to do political positioning of libraries within the institution, develop a level of confidence in ideas that are backed by the collective, and push the boundaries of what we can do together.

# 2021

Developing the vision

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## **Knowledge for all: University of Leeds Libraries Vision for 2030**



<https://spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/libraries-vision/>



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# Thank you for listening.

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