Virtualising the Bookshelf

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Libraries should take advantage of the rich visual tradition of the book cover and the opportunities offered by modern information technologies to restore to our readers some of the discovery opportunities we have lost in the transition from paper to electronic, a transition that is being driven by client demand for online materials that are available anywhere, anytime.

In particular, libraries should recognise shelf browsing and new books displays as a valued part of our discovery tradition that has been eroded and diminished by this relentless drive towards electronic monograph content. Restoring serendipitous discovery should become a strategic imperative if libraries are to retain their relevance as places of discovery in the online age.

Curtin University Library has responded to this challenge by producing an award winning virtual bookshelf software that provides an exciting way for presenting library materials using the cover images of books, both digital and physical, which provides for discovery in a manner reminiscent of traditional browsing.