

*SCONUL Focus* is the journal of SCONUL, the Society of College, National and University Libraries.

*SCONUL Focus* aims to bring together articles, reports and news stories from practitioners in order to generate debate and promote good practice in the national libraries and the university and college sector. As well as the paper copy, the current issue of *SCONUL Focus* is also available electronically via the SCONUL website (<http://www.sconul.ac.uk>). Contributions are welcomed from colleagues in all fields and at all levels: we merely request that the items contributed are concise, informative, practical and (above all!) worth reading.

Opinions expressed in *SCONUL Focus* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SCONUL.

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## The austerity issue

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The last issue of *SCONUL Focus*, number 50, celebrated the development of the newsletter from 1994 to 2010 – a period that we may well look back on with fond nostalgia, realising that ‘we never had it so good’. As we were collecting the copy for this current issue the economic realities were starting to bite and every conference presentation, blog post or news article seemed to be forecasting difficult times ahead and discussing how to face them.

I could not help thinking that this was not the best of times to be taking over from Antony as chair of the editorial board. He was always going to be a very hard act to follow – he carried out his duties with such enthusiasm, cheerfulness and charm, knows everybody and writes with an elegant, effortless and witty style I can’t hope to emulate. We shall miss him on the editorial board and shall do our best to maintain the same high standards, hoping that he will still be at the end of the phone for advice from time to time. Producing the newsletter is very much a team effort and we have an excellent group of dedicated staff on the board and in the SCONUL office, making my task in coordinating activities very enjoyable. Tough times can help to concentrate the mind, so I feel very positive that we will be able to help disseminate good practice in the newsletter that will assist us all.

A clear theme of ‘doing more with less’ emerged in this issue. Tim Marshall gave permission to reproduce his blog post ‘Five factors for success in a challenging world’, which seemed to sum up the current mood. The reports of the SCONUL shared services meeting and the autumn conference both pick up on initiatives in the sector that will take us forward into a more uncertain future. We have several contributions on the use of statistics: ‘knowing your numbers’ will be crucial in making our case for future resourcing. There are also several reports of technology-based projects showing how we can increase efficiency and enhance services by doing things differently, a theme that I am sure we shall come back to in future issues. I allowed myself a bit of initial self-indulgence for my first issue in the editorial chair, and took a trip to Hull to find out more about Philip Larkin, discovering along the way that he faced economic challenges with which we can all identify during his time as university librarian.

Although we try to select a broad theme for each issue of the newsletter and will commission articles that sit well together, we are always pleased to hear about any interesting developments, particularly if the ideas can be adapted in different settings. So if you have completed a successful project, please remember to tell us about it – either in an email, by phone or using our new twitter account @sconulfocus. We encourage ideas from first-time authors and can help you develop a short report or a longer more reflective piece. There is a lot of very innovative work going on and we look forward to hearing about it.