

## 1. Purpose

SCONUL's Executive Board and members of its four Strategy Groups met together on 12 March 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss, and inform the development of, SCONUL's Strategy for 2016-2019.

## 2. Key issues for members

A survey had been conducted among SCONUL's members on the most significant leadership and management issues facing their individual institution and the library community in general over the coming three years.

The most important leadership and management challenges for members' own institution were identified as:

- Adequate library budget to meet library user and institutional expectations (73%).
- Ability to obtain support for library priorities from senior institutional leadership (71%).
- Delivering the library elements of support for changing research practices (69%).
- Demonstrating the value and impact of library services (66%).
- Meeting user expectations for digital resources (61%).

The leadership and management challenges ranked as most significant for the library community as a whole were identified as:

- Connecting library users to the content they need.
- Meeting the expectations of library users in an increasingly competitive environment.
- Capitalising on new digital and technological developments to maximise benefits to library users.
- Increasing cost of content (subscriptions and APCs) during transition to open access.
- Demonstrating the value and impact of the library in terms of institutional missions.

A number of practical, related issues were also raised by SCONUL members including: recruiting staff with appropriate skills sets and training the workforce; the quality and development of library buildings; problems with the market and model for e-books; the international context for HE; staff skills; and the training budgets for library staff.

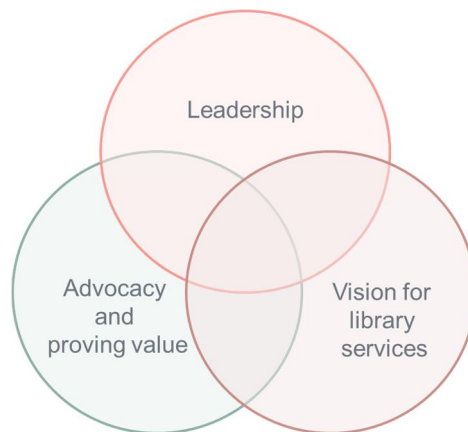
When asked about additional services which SCONUL could provide for members, the following were highlighted:

- support, mentoring and CPD for library leaders
- more support on benchmarking and developing value and impact
- advocacy and lobbying, particularly around content costs
- staff training and support, including workforce planning.

There were also a number of requests for specific new services and for more briefings and information sharing generally.

### 3. Summary of discussion

Discussion at the meeting focused on three closely inter-related cross cutting issues which underpin many of the individual challenges facing member representatives:



Members debated how these cross cutting themes might apply to the key strategic issues identified by members. Key projects or areas for work have been highlighted below.

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			A	B	C
		Context	Vision for the future of our own library / the sector	Leadership development and support	Advocacy and value and impact
1	Adequate library budget to meet users and institutional expectations	Tight budgets. Austerity may be the reality for many members over the next three years. Closely related to all other issues below.	Members need a vision for their service and to undertake service redesign to contextualise budget requests and to demonstrate strategic thinking. This may include being clear about what we stop doing.  <b>This could be informed by national vision (1C) and supported by capacity building (1B).</b>	Heads of service (HoS) need to be able to draw on collective expertise in service redesign. <b>SCONUL could assist by capacity building and facilitating sharing of information.</b>  HoS need to be able to make good use of analytics for service design. <b>SCONUL could assist by sharing intelligence and providing training.</b>	<b>SCONUL should produce a vision for the individual academic library to sit alongside a vision for a national digital library.</b> We need to create the right narrative about the future of libraries. See 6A.  Demonstrating strategic thinking and insight (thought leadership) would help reposition HoS in the institutional hierarchy.
2	Ability to obtain support for library priorities from senior institutional leadership	Greater internal competition for resources and lack of understanding of the library role in a digital environment. Closely related to issue 1.	SCONUL and HoS need to understand development in institutional drivers – more focus on completion/ graduation and employability as opposed to student satisfaction. <b>SCONUL could assist with research/briefing in this area which would also</b>	HoS need better advocacy skills. <b>SCONUL could provide or facilitate training; facilitate mentor relationships and / or develop common core resources.</b>  The sector as a whole needs to build, and demonstrate,	HoS need an evidence base which connects to VC and senior management priorities including evidence of ROI. SCONUL needs the same for the national picture. However, narrative is also important and we must advocate on the basis of the best evidence we have. <b>UUK and BUF DG are</b>

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			<p><b>inform service design and advocacy.</b></p>	<p>leadership capacity. Engaging in SCONUL's work helps deliver this. Succession planning is an important aspect of this.</p>	<p><b>important partners.</b></p> <p>See also issue 4.</p> <p><b>SCONUL should pull together available research to create an evidence base on value and impact. SCONUL could also commission research to fill gaps.</b></p> <p><b>SCONUL should develop common advocacy tools for use nationally and by HoS. See also 1C.</b></p>
3	Delivering the library elements of support for changing research practices	One aspect of the broadening out of the library's role. Also presents opportunities for engagement and advocacy.	<p>HoS need to match staff skills to demand now, and to build a "future-proof" workforce over time.</p> <p><b>SCONUL should undertake research into skills needs and workforce planning across the sector. See also 1A and 1C.</b></p>	<p>HoS need opportunities to share good practice within and across institutions.</p> <p><b>SCONUL will need to continue to work with Jisc, OCLC and other partners to ensure that work carried out on behalf of the sector is meeting member needs.</b></p>	<p>HoS need to ensure academic liaison staff develop skills in advocacy. <b>SCONUL should look at advocacy training for staff across institutions.</b></p> <p>See also 4C.</p>

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			<p><b>SCONUL could also produce tools for institutional use: e.g templates for job descriptions.</b></p>		
4	Demonstrating the value and impact of library services, particularly in terms of institutional mission.	Closely related to issues 1 and 2 but applies to a broader range of audiences than just senior institutional leaders. The high cost of content and diffuse impacts of libraries mean this is a difficult challenge.	<p>See 2A HoS and SCONUL need to be clear about the value and skills of librarians in relation to institutional missions, and to develop this alongside a vision for redesigned services. This might include taking on new roles e.g. analytics and data services. See 1A and 3A.</p> <p><b>SCONUL should help articulate the role of the librarian in the modern institutional context. This is part of the vision identified in 1C.</b></p>	<p>See 2B HoS need to be able to be able to articulate our skills and expertise in non-library language.</p> <p>HoS also need to develop marketing and branding skills to ensure recognition of virtual services.</p> <p><b>SCONUL could assist by sharing best practice internationally.</b></p>	<p>See 2C Many digital library services are not visible – light touch branding and / or marketing our digital presence is going to be important, while ensuring this does not interfere with usability.</p> <p>HoS need to make the most of our staff and users as advocates for our services. <b>SCONUL could (a) help HoS give their staff the tools to do this and / or (b) provide staff training e.g. HEA accreditation.</b></p>

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5	Increasing cost of content during the transition to open access & meeting user expectations and needs for digital resources	Medium term trends are for the cost of content to increase above inflation. Tight budgets mean that meeting user needs will become increasingly difficult for many libraries. Closely related to issues 1 and 2.	<p>We need to identify and understand the potential impacts of increasing content costs.</p> <p><b>A vision for a national digital library will help explain complexities around content costs.</b></p> <p>Need vision for a development of open access.</p>	We need capacity building across HoS to ensure that we can act collectively to minimise increases in costs.	<p>Cost of content need to be repositioned as a problem for the whole institution in order to build support for changes in national and publisher policies. <b>SCONUL should develop a national campaign with partners on reducing the cost of content.</b></p> <p><b>SCONUL should (a) develop advocacy materials to explain the cost of content; (b) lobby decision-makers and (c) provide explanatory and advocacy materials to help HoS.</b></p>
6	Capitalising on new digital and technological developments to maximise benefits to library users	This can be at the institutional or above campus level. Closely associated with the vision and service redevelopment identified in 1.	We all need a clear vision of the future systems and services required by the sector; including shared services; improvements in interoperability in the supply chain and the usability of services.	<p><b>SCONUL should support the development of shared services through facilitating the scaling up of existing services.</b></p> <p><b>SCONUL should continue to lobby for appropriate changes e.g. to DRM, and to</b></p>	<p>Any vision for the future of institutional services must include clarity about which services can be moved above campus.</p> <p>Demonstrating a commitment to efficiency through shared services is an important</p>

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			<p>Our response would be partly informed by the national digital library. <b>SCONUL should develop this. See 1C above.</b></p> <p><b>SCONUL should continue to engage with Jisc, OCLC and other partners to identify potential opportunities for efficiencies through shared services, based on our own vision for future member needs.</b></p>	<p><b>work with Jisc and other partners to ensure that developments meet members' needs.</b></p>	<p>message to decision makers.</p>

#### 4. SCONUL's effectiveness and operational efficiency.

The meeting noted that the current strategy and operational structures have delivered a number of important successes, which our new SCONUL strategy should seek to retain. This includes (a) having built leadership capacity across the Board and Strategy Groups, (b) deepening our relationship with partner organisations, (c) increasing our sphere of influence and (d) briefing members and sharing best practice.

As a result, SCONUL's profile is much improved and we are now represented on the majority of decision-making and policy bodies and groups which are important to members.

It is also reflected in generally positive feedback from members on SCONUL's efficacy and value for money.

The meeting discussed key issues impacting on effectiveness including (a) how SCONUL should measure its impact, (b) what our approach to partnerships should be and (c) how our voluntary structures should be configured to ensure effectiveness.

##### Measuring our impact

The following are all possible ways of measuring our impact and / or success

- Being represented on the right bodies to ensure influence and being consulted.
- The degree of engagement of members, through views on value for money, on survey response levels, and how relevant members feel the organisation is.
- The range of institutions directly involved in SCONUL.
- SCONUL's profile with VCs, PVCs, FDs etc.

The survey of directors carried out to inform the strategy development process should be repeated regularly.

Thought should also be given to renaming SCONUL, which is an old-fashioned name and difficult to explain.

##### Working with partners

- A key part of SCONUL's role is brokering exchanges with peer organisations.
- Another is equipping heads of service with the tools they need for communications, advocacy and service planning.
- SCONUL is the right body to talk on the national stage about the role of academic libraries and librarians and to state the sector's "value proposition".

##### Our internal structures



- The Strategy Groups have been effective, and we shouldn't lose the link to the Board, which has been very useful. However, we need to develop a "value" message for each group, and to consider whether these are the right subject areas / names for the Groups.
- We need to make communications a focus under the leadership of the Events and Communications Group.
- Initiatives need to be community led, with the office providing the supporting structures. One benefit of this approach would be the creation of a learning community.
- Closer links with the regional consortia might be beneficial, particularly around communications, maximising capacity and expertise, and spreading innovation.
- We should look at how we can expand the volume of briefing papers, toolkits, research etc. which members find valuable.
- We need to keep under review the partners that we work with, including the private sector, and make a judgement as to the most appropriate partner based on need.
- We should have a culture of openness in discussion with members and partners, in which we seek to find the solutions together.
- We need to expand our range of influence to cover international partnerships.

## 5. Next steps

The discussions captured above will be used to inform the development of the SCONUL Strategy 2016-2019. They will be circulated to all Executive Board and Group members.